

Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 – Pre-Submission Draft

Cabinet

Date: 17th October 2012

Author:	Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Strategic Planning and Head of Planning
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 is the main planning policy document for shaping the development and growth of the Borough over the next fifteen years, and provides the policy framework to deliver sustainable growth. The Local Plan provides a clear strategy for how Swindon can address the challenges we face and identifies how much, where, when, and how new development will take place in Swindon Borough
- 1.2 The Local Plan includes a series of policies to ensure new development is of the highest possible quality design and sustainable construction, meets the requirements to take account of and mitigate for flood risk, provides opens space and affordable housing where appropriate, and ensure developers contribute to the necessary infrastructure. It also includes policies to protect green spaces, historic assets and important landscape features and provides for the continued separate identity of the villages adjacent to Swindon and a 'buffer' zone between the Commonhead development and Coate Water Country Park.
- 1.3 Swindon Borough Council has a responsibility to continue delivering the much-needed regeneration of the town centre but also to plan for growth in a way that benefits existing and future residents of the Borough. Sustainable development is about providing homes, local jobs and a vibrant and successful town centre; and; it is also about creating inclusive, cohesive, safe and healthy communities. Fundamental to this is the timely provision of infrastructure.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to recommend the Council;

- 2.1 To endorse the Swindon Borough Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft for an eight week public consultation as soon as reasonably practical, in accordance with the arrangements detailed at paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of this report; and
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Planning and the Director of Law and Democratic Services to make minor changes to the content of the document (if required) prior to publication, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Strategic Planning.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Phil Smith, Direct Dial 01793 466443, psmith@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 2.3 Authorise the factual data, including technical studies and other relevant information used to inform the Local Plan Pre-Submission document, as well as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) incorporating Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Diversity Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment to be made available for public inspection and comment alongside the Local Plan, in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
 - 2.4 Authorise the Head of Planning and the Director of Law and Democratic Services to submit the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 for independent examination once the period of consultation is complete, together with the relevant documents and all comments received from the public consultation, subject to there being no material significant changes arising as a result of that consultation.
 - 2.5 Authorise the Head of Planning and the Director of Law and Democratic Services to undertake any further consultation if directed by the Inspector at the Examination of the Local Plan and/or make any minor changes in order that the Plan be found sound through the Examination, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Strategic Planning.
 - 2.6 Authorise the Head of Communications and Head of Planning to work on an explanatory summary to assist local residents during the consultation period.

3. Detail

- 3.1 Swindon Borough Council requires a new Local Plan, and the provisions in the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF), make it important that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as soon as possible.
- 3.2 With an up-to-date plan the Borough Council will have a clear strategy for the future growth of the town and will not be reliant on the NPPF in determining planning applications. Furthermore, it allows the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy to secure pooled developer contributions for infrastructure, and ensure Swindon is in a favourable position to bid for future funding to deliver our ambitions.
- 3.3 A full draft of the Swindon Borough Local Plan Pre-Submission can be found in the Members Room, and has been distributed to members electronically. A copy of only the key policies can be found in Appendix 1a.

The Content of the Local Plan

- 3.4 The legal requirement for Local Planning Authorities is to produce a Local Plan that is "aspirational but realistic" and only include policies "that provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal."

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- 3.5 The Local Plan sets out a number of strategic priorities in line with those of One Swindon, specifically enabling economic growth and continued regeneration of the town centre whilst providing a place where people have active, healthy and quality lives. A copy of the Local Plan can be found at Appendix 1b and a copy of the Proposals Map can be found at Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The Local Plan includes policies to deliver:
- 3.6.1 The homes and jobs needed in the Borough;
 - 3.6.2 The necessary infrastructure to support growth and regeneration;
 - 3.6.3 The provision of health, education, community and cultural facilities, and
 - 3.6.4 Climate change mitigation and adaption, conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment, including landscape.

Economic and Housing Growth

- 3.7 In line with the draft Economic Strategy and independent assessments, the Local Plan is based on an increase of 19,600 jobs in Swindon over the next fifteen years. To provide for business growth and investment, the location of 77.5 hectares (191 acres) of employment land, together with 90,000m² of town centre office space is set out, and is in addition to 43 hectares (106 acres) of existing permissions. This provides a large 'buffer' to ensure growth is delivered throughout the plan period, and enable investment by the business sector.
- 3.8 The housing requirement has to meet household and population projections, taking into account migration and demographic changes. The main consideration is the forecast reduction in average household size, largely as result in a growth of single person households, which is predicted to require one third of all the predicted new dwellings in Swindon, and economic migrants attracted to job opportunities in the Borough. It is critical for business retention and growth that a sufficient local workforce is provided for. A further consideration is to reduce unsustainable net in-commuting so that more people live and work in the Borough. These factors produce a requirement for 22,000 more dwellings for the period 2011 to 2026 (including those already with planning permission). This requirement is supported by independent figures and trends from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- 3.9 To maintain housing growth in line with economic forecasts and demographic changes, and prevent the unnecessary release of additional greenfield land, the annual average requirement for the Borough will be set at 1,150 for the period 2011-2016. The long term average housing completion rate over the last twenty years in the Borough between 1991 and 2011 is 1,043 per year.

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- 3.10 The completion targets will be regularly reviewed so if economic and housing growth is sustained in line with the Local Plan, then the housing target will be increased in 2017 to ensure an average of about 1,450 dwellings per annum over the plan period. If economic and housing growth is not sustained in line with the Local Plan, then the target will be reviewed.

Strategic Allocations

- 3.11 The Local Plan must allocate strategic sites within the Borough where housing should be located. It is important to recognise that while there are significant a number of houses with planning permission in the Borough, only a proportion of these can be completed within the next 5 years, including those at Wichelstowe, Commonhead and Tadpole Farm. If the Local Plan does not allocate sites then the Borough Council will be unable to properly defend against less sustainable unidentified sites coming forward, potentially through the appeal process, and small short term opportunistic sites. The Council must retain its ability to plan and deliver the required infrastructure in a timely and cost effective manner.
- 3.12 The strategic allocations and remaining distribution of housing and employment land is shown in Table 1 below for the period 2011-2026.

Table 1: Strategic allocations and remaining distribution of housing and employment land

	Dwellings	Additional Employment Land & Floorspace
Swindon's Central Area	about 1,000	90,000 m ² office
Remainder Swindon's existing urban area	about 3,500	
Northern Development Area	589	
Wichelstowe	4,064	12.5 hectares
Commonhead	890	15 hectares
Tadpole Farm	1,695	5 hectares
New Eastern Villages	about 6,000	40 hectares
Rowborough	about 1,500	

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South Marston Village: Greenfield Brownfield	500 about 140	
Kingsdown	about 1,650	
Highworth	at least 200*	5 hectares
Wroughton	at least 150*	
Other Villages	at least 100*	

*The Neighbourhood Planning process allows for the additional allocation of specific numbers of dwellings above that set in adopted Local Plans.

- 3.13 In order to provide for a continuation of employment land in the short-term it is anticipated that the allocation land at the Eastern Villages is released early within the context of the overall vision for the area.

Town Centre Regeneration

- 3.14 The Local Plan reinforces the Councils approach to Swindon Town Centre. It also includes policies to ensure the town centre is the first choice for uses that appropriate to be located there, including a regional leisure destination facility.

Other Policies

- 3.15 The Local Plan includes a series of policies to ensure new development is of the highest possible quality design and sustainable construction, meets the requirements to take account of and mitigate for flood risk, provides the requisite opens space and affordable housing, and contributes to the necessary infrastructure.
- 3.16 It also includes policies to protect green spaces, historic assets and important landscape features. It provides for the continued separate identity of the villages adjacent to Swindon and a 'buffer' zone between the Commonhead development and Coate Water Country Park.
- 3.17 The Local Plan sets the context for Neighbourhood Planning, by which Parish/Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum can develop detailed plans and strategies for their area. Any Neighbourhood Plans produced will have to be in accord with Swindon Borough Local Plan to be found sound and to proceed to adoption.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Phil Smith, Direct Dial 01793 466443, psmith@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.18 This document sets out a fully costed estimate of all the infrastructure needs for Swindon over the next fifteen years and is provided alongside the Local Plan (Appendix 3). This infrastructure represents total expenditure in excess of £1.4 billion in Swindon. Examples of infrastructure include schools and roads.
- 3.19 This infrastructure will be implemented in a controlled manner over a 15-year period and will be delivered by both the public and private sector. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will serve as an important policy document to help the Council seek external funding and focus its spending. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be a key document for bidding for government funding to cover any shortfall.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 If Cabinet recommends the Pre-Submission Draft of the Swindon Borough Local Plan to Full Council and approval is subsequently endorsed, the Local Plan will be available for public consultation for a period of eight weeks as soon as reasonably practical. Copies of the Local Plan, and accompanying documents, would be distributed to a wide range of statutory consultees, including Town and Parish Councils, community councils and residents' associations. The documents would be made available for inspection at the Civic Offices, at libraries throughout the Borough, and on the Council's website. A statutory notice and press release will be made available to local media.
- 4.2 Following completion of the public consultation period, all representations and suggested minor changes by the Council to the Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State along with the Local Plan. The Local Plan will then be subject to an independent examination undertaken by an appointed Planning Inspector. The Inspector will then prepare a report which will recommend any changes to final version of the Local Plan before it is adopted. The Inspectorate has been informed of our timescales.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council could delay the Local Plan and instead rely on the saved policy framework contained within the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 and the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan. However, in March 2013 the existing adopted planning documents will be superseded by the NPPF, therefore it is important that the period between March 2013 and adoption of our Local Plan is minimised so that sites do not come forward with no means of control. Without an up-to-date Local Plan, the Borough has no defence in accepting development that may be in the wrong place at the wrong time and without essential infrastructure. Additionally if the Local Plan is not adopted by April 2014 the Council would not be able to adopt a Community Infrastructure Levy, meaning that infrastructure would not be funded. Finally the Local Plan provides a means

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of supporting our aspirations for how the town should develop to 2026. Without a clear strategy SBC will be at a disadvantage in bidding for infrastructure funding.

6. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 The financial implications arising from publishing and consulting the Local Plan are to be met from existing Forward Planning budgets for 2012/2013. A reserve is in place to cover the costs of the Examination as part of medium term business planning.
- 6.2 The Swindon Local Plan is a Strategic Planning Policy document, and as such, it does not necessarily commit the Council itself to funding proposals contained within it.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 6.3 The content of this report will not have a direct implication on human rights issues, in so far as greater opportunities will be available to individuals to partake in the planning process.
- 6.4 There are no direct legal issues arising from the report. The production and adoption of the Local Plan is a process covered by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated regulations.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 6.5 The Council has a duty to ensure that the preparation of the Local Plan is in accordance with the sustainability principles of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.6 The Local Plan has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment and Health Impact Assessment to ensure that the impact of proposals can be minimised with the least negative impact possible on the Plan area.

Links to One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies

- 6.7 The Swindon Local Plan will have a key role in implementing many of the Corporate Plan's priorities and are fundamental in delivering key elements of the themes of "One Swindon".

Diversity Impact Assessment

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- 6.8 The Local Plan has been subject to a Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) and no major adverse impacts were predicted. Updates to the DIA will be made, if required, as the Local Plan progresses to adoption.

Risk Management

- 6.9 Delay to the Local Plan could undermine the Council's vision to create and realise Swindon's aspirations for development at Swindon will not be achieved, as sites will come forward with no means of control. Furthermore, if the Local Plan is not in place by March 2013, the NPPF will serve as a material consideration until such time it is adopted. This could mean that the Borough has no defence in accepting development that may be in the wrong place at the wrong time and without essential infrastructure. If the Local Plan is not adopted by April 2014 we would be at risk of not having a development plan in place on which to base our Community Infrastructure Levy.

7. Consultees

- 7.1 The Board Director, Finance, Revenues, Benefits and Property (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Swindon Borough Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPDs – Revised Proposed Submission (March 2011) and Strategic Environmental Assessment incorporating Sustainability Appraisal.

9. Appendices (electronic copies on the Council's Website and in the Members Room)

Appendix 1a: Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 – Key Policies

Appendix 1b: Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 'Pre - Submission Document' and Appendices

Appendix 2: Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 Proposals Map

Appendix 3: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) incorporating Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA), Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the Duty to Cooperate Statement

10. Key Decision/Decision in Forward Plan

- 10.1 This is not a Key Decision as the Council will adopt the Local Plan and is included in the Cabinet Forward Plan/ Work Programme for October 2012.