WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN 2039[1]

PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT SUMMARY OCTOBER 2026

[1] This is a working title. Any decisions on the plan period will be made following further consultation.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL PLAN?

Wirral Council is preparing a new Local Plan to guide future development across the Borough. The Plan will set out a long-term vision and planning framework for housing, employment, infrastructure, environmental protection, transport, town centres, community facilities and sustainable development across Wirral.

Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan, adopted in March 2025, and will form part of the statutory development plan for Wirral. It will be used to help determine planning applications and guide future investment, growth and regeneration.

WHY IS A NEW PLAN NEEDED?

The Government introduced a new plan-making system through the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. Under these new regulations, Wirral Council is required to commence preparation of a new Local Plan. The Plan will be informed by a comprehensive evidence base and public consultation.

The new Local Plan will ensure that Wirral has an up-to-date planning framework that:

- Meets national planning requirements.
- Plans for future housing and employment needs.
- Supports economic growth and regeneration.
- Addresses climate change and environmental challenges.
- Protects important landscapes, heritage assets and ecological sites.
- Promotes healthy, inclusive and sustainable communities.
- Aligns with emerging Liverpool City Region strategic planning policies.

HOW WILL THE PLAN BE PREPARED?

The Local Plan will be developed in key gateway and consultation stages. Work is currently focused on gathering information, engaging stakeholders, identifying other relevant plans and programmes and analysing the scoping consultation.

Key activities include:

- Reviewing existing evidence and commissioning new studies where required.
- Assessing potential development sites submitted through the Call for Sites process.
- Preparing a Vision and Strategy for the Borough.
- Consulting residents, businesses, landowners, infrastructure providers, statutory consultees and community groups.
- Preparing draft planning policies and site allocations.
- Independent examination by a Planning Inspector before adoption.

PLAN TIMELINE

The figure below demonstrates the current Local Plan timetable. The Council published a 'Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation' (Regulation 19) and the Local Plan Timetable (Regulation 4) on 30 June 2026. We are currently at Gateway 1 stage. The published timetable is for 32 months to allow 2 months for pre-election and election periods in 2027 where decision making is paused.



GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

The Local Plan programme is overseen by a Local Plan Oversight Group consisting of key senior council officers. A Local Plan Working Group provides member engagement throughout the process, ensuring elected members are informed and able to contribute to key stages of plan preparation.

Major decisions, including submission and adoption of the Local Plan, will be subject to the Council's formal decision-making processes.

EVIDENCE

The Local Plan will seek to:

- Deliver housing growth to meet identified needs.
- Support investment, regeneration and employment opportunities.
- Improve access to services, jobs, homes and green spaces.
- Support the Council's climate change and net zero ambitions.
- Protect and enhance biodiversity, heritage and environmental assets.
- Plan for sustainable infrastructure, transport and community facilities.
- Ensure future development contributes positively to the quality of life of residents.

In order to support achieving these key objectives a comprehensive evidence base is needed. Key studies include:

- Strategic Housing Market and Needs Assessment.
- Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment.
- Employment Land and Premises Study.
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (Level 1 and 2).
- Habitat Regulations Assessment.
- Sustainability Appraisal.
- Transport Modelling.
- Health Impact Assessment.
- Equalities Impact Assessment.

Where appropriate, existing evidence prepared for the adopted Local Plan will be updated rather than duplicated.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Community involvement is integral to the preparation of the Local Plan.

The Council will undertake engagement and consultation at key stages of the process and provide opportunities for residents, businesses, community organisations and other stakeholders to help shape the future of Wirral.

Consultation activities will be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements and the Council's engagement principles.

Information on forthcoming consultations and opportunities to participate will be published on the Council's website and through other communication channels.

MANAGING RISK

The preparation of a Local Plan is a complex and significant programme of work. At this early-stage key risks identified include:

- Changes to national planning policy or legislation.
- Delays in securing evidence and specialist technical studies.
- Resource and financial pressures.
- Challenges associated with preparing one of the first Local Plans under the new planning system.
- Managing competing demands and expectations through consultation.
- Ensuring the Local Plan is legally compliant and capable of being adopted.

Risks and mitigating actions are monitored regularly through the governance structure.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Local Plan is currently at an early stage of preparation. Further information, consultation material and project updates will be published as work progresses.

Residents and stakeholders can keep up to date with the Wirral Local Plan and be notified about future consultations by signing up to our Consultation Database.

Paper copies of the document can be viewed at all main libraries during normal opening hours, which can be viewed on our website here: Find a library | wirral.gov.uk

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