

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Sites Engagement – February to March 2026

1. What is the purpose of this sites engagement?

This engagement is an early opportunity for landowners, agents, Town and Parish Councils, and infrastructure providers to comment on the sites currently emerging through the development of the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. It allows us to check site information, understand availability and constraints, and gather feedback before preparing formal consultation documents later in the process.

2. Is this a formal consultation on the Local Plan?

No. This is **not** a formal Regulation 18 or Regulation 19 consultation. It is an informal technical exercise which falls within the Regulation 18 stage of plan making. Its purpose is to help the Council refine the evidence base and understand which sites may be suitable, available, and deliverable before moving to the formal stages of Local Plan preparation.

3. What work has been done to date in preparing the Local Plan?

Since starting work on the new Local Plan, we have collected and developed a wide range of evidence on housing needs, employment land requirements, the economy, environment, transport, and infrastructure. We have also engaged with neighbouring councils, infrastructure providers and local partners to understand the opportunities and challenges across Buckinghamshire. This has fed directly into our emerging assessments of potential development sites and spatial options.

4. What information is being published as part of this engagement?

We are publishing several evidence documents and tools to support the engagement, including:

- **Position Statement on current development needs vs. supply**
- **Draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)**
- **Interactive Map of all assessed sites**
- **New and Expanded Settlements Study (Assessment summary)**
- **Draft Green Belt Assessment**
- **Sustainability Appraisal note**

These materials allow stakeholders to view and comment on the sites currently being considered.

5. Who is being invited to provide feedback?

We are seeking feedback from:

- Landowners of sites identified in the draft HELAA
- Agents acting on behalf of landowners or developers
- Town and Parish Councils
- Infrastructure providers (utilities, health, education, transport, etc.)

This is a targeted engagement stage rather than a public consultation.

6. How can landowners or agents respond?

Landowners and agents can review the information on the interactive map and in the draft HELAA, then provide information on:

- Whether sites are available now or likely to become available
- Site boundaries and land ownership details
- Potential deliverability, constraints and opportunities
- Any new or updated evidence to support inclusion of the site

Responses should be submitted using the channels provided on the webpage.

7. I represent a Town or Parish Council—what type of feedback is helpful?

Town and Parish Councils can comment on:

- Local knowledge of site opportunities or constraints
- Infrastructure issues (schools, healthcare, roads, utilities)
- Environmental considerations and community impacts
- Alignment with local priorities or neighbourhood planning work

This input helps ensure local factors are fully reflected in the emerging Local Plan.

8. Does inclusion of a site in the draft HELAA mean it will be allocated for development?

No. The HELAA is an **evidence-gathering tool**, not a list of proposals. A site being assessed in the HELAA **does not guarantee** that it will be taken forward into the Local Plan. Many sites will not progress beyond this initial technical stage.

9. What will happen after the engagement period ends?

We will review all the feedback received, update our technical assessments, and refine the list of reasonable site options to form our proposed spatial strategy. These outputs will inform the next stage of the Local Plan.

10. How does the Green Belt Assessment fit into this process?

The Draft Green Belt Assessment evaluates how different areas of Green Belt contribute to national Green Belt purposes. It does **not** make decisions about removing land from the Green Belt. Instead, it informs the Council's understanding of where development may or may not be appropriate, alongside environmental, landscape, transport and infrastructure evidence.

11. What is the New and Expanded Settlements Study?

This study examines whether new settlements or major expansions of existing settlements could help meet Buckinghamshire's future housing and employment needs. Parts 1 and 2 assess potential spatial options and high-level deliverability considerations, while the Part 3 report we have published provides the overall assessment of the candidate sites.

12. Where can I view the interactive map?

The interactive map is available here [Buckinghamshire Local Plan - Sites Engagement](#).

13. How are sites with planning applications considered when assessing future infrastructure needs in the Local Plan?

Sites that already have planning permission are treated as **committed development** and are included in the baseline when planning future infrastructure. Sites that have submitted applications but **do not yet have permission** are only included if they are being considered as potential allocations in the Local Plan. Sites that are speculative or do not align with the emerging strategy are assessed through the planning application process rather than through the Local Plan's strategic infrastructure modelling. This approach ensures that infrastructure planning is consistent, avoids double counting, and reflects the most realistic picture of future growth.-

14. What if a site appears in the HELAA and is also identified as suitable in a Neighbourhood Plan?

If a site appears in the HELAA and is also identified as suitable in a Neighbourhood Plan, this does **not** guarantee that it will automatically be allocated in the Local Plan. The HELAA simply confirms that the site is *potentially* suitable and available for development, while a Neighbourhood Plan may indicate local support or policy intent. The Local Plan still needs to assess the site against wider strategic

considerations—such as infrastructure capacity, sustainability, environmental constraints, and the overall spatial strategy—before deciding whether to allocate it. In short, the site will be considered, but it is not assured of inclusion.

15. What are the HELAA conclusion categories?

Explanation of HELAA Conclusion Categories – February 2026

Category	Reasoning
Backland development	Backland development is characterised by the construction of new dwellings or buildings on land located behind existing buildings, typically former rear gardens, backyards or unused plots. Backland development can often be multiple dwellings crammed into a small area and can create unsatisfactorily living environments for existing and future residents.
Coalescence between settlements	Development of the site would result in coalescence between settlements.
Designated local green space	The site is a designated local green space which should be retained.
Existing Employment Site	The Employment Land Review recommends the sites to be retain for employment use.
Existing Local Plan designations	The site falls within an area which has been previously designated within the legacy local plans, and which is still relevant.
Flood risk	The majority of the site falls within Flood Zone 3 and is therefore unsuitable
Green Belt	The site is determined to be Green Belt as per our Green Belt Assessment. Currently there are no exceptional circumstances to justify release from the Green Belt. Further work may be undertaken if it is the Council consider that exceptional circumstances exist.
NESS	This site overlaps with a site within the New and Expanded Settlement Assessment (NESS). To see the outcome of the larger site this falls within, please look at the NESS documents.
Not available	The site is not currently available for development.
Out of character	Development in this location would be out of character for the area.
Part Suitable	Only part of the site considered is suitable for development.

Planning status	Permitted development has been completed or commenced and there is no further development potential on the site
Provisional Grey Belt	The site is determined to be Provisional Grey Belt as per our Green Belt Assessment. Currently there are no exceptional circumstances to justify release from the Green Belt. Further work may be undertaken if the Council consider that exceptional circumstances exist.
Settlement pattern	Development would not follow the existing settlement pattern and would be out of keeping with the character of the area.
Suitable	The site has passed the first stage of assessment. Further technical work is being undertaken to confirm suitability.
Too small	The site is unable to deliver 5 or more dwellings on the site.
Trees	There are a number of trees on site that are protected by a TPO (Tree Protection Order).
Unacceptable harm on Archaeology assets	There are significant archaeological concerns about the site. The site could be within or close to an Archaeological Notification Area, a scheduled ancient monument or locally listed archaeological site. The site may also fall within a Scheduled Ancient Monument
Unacceptable harm on Ecology	The site is of high ecological value and/or comprises a priority habitat/protected species/priority species. The site may also fall within the buffer of or within a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area or a Special Area of Conservation
Unacceptable harm on Heritage assets	Developing the site would have an adverse impact on designated heritage asset/s (listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, registered parks and gardens or conservation area).
Unacceptable harm on Landscape	Developing the site would have an adverse impact on the local or national landscape.
Unacceptable impact to woodland	Developing the site would result in an unacceptable loss of woodland. The sites may also be designated as an Ancient Woodland
Unacceptable intrusion into the open countryside	Developing the site would result in an unacceptable intrusion into the countryside.
Unacceptable Loss of community facility	Developing the site would result in an unacceptable loss of a community facility or car park.

Unsuitable Access	The site does not have suitable vehicular access or suitable vehicular site access is not achievable.
Unsustainable location	The site is isolated from the built-up area of the nearest settlement and remote from nearby services and facilities.