

Three Rivers Local Plan *an update*

The council will consult later in year on a revised plan

Background:-

Government housing figure of 12,624

Much has changed since we first started on the requirement laid down by government to agree a new planning framework for Three Rivers, including the national planning system. Amongst these changes was the introduction of a national standard methodology for calculating the District's local housing need. The Housing Target for the Three Rivers Local Plan is 12,624 dwellings (633 per year) based on the Government's standard method for calculating housing need. This was an increase on the previous figure of 180 dwellings per year.

All Councils in England are required by the Government to plan for future population growth, the demand for homes and jobs, and to submit a plan to them for approval. The new Local Plan for Three Rivers is a blueprint for how the District will develop till 2038.

Since 2017 we have undertaken a series of consultations on the emerging Local Plan. The most recent was the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options and Sites for Potential Allocation document in 2021. The council consulted residents, businesses, community groups and other organisations on the preferred policy options covering 29 different subjects and 88 sites for potential allocation and received over 20,000 responses. The Council rejected 230 sites. Officers and councillors have been diligently analysing and reviewing responses to update policies which control the type, scale, and nature of development to ensure they not only meet local but national requirements especially relating to climate change.

The final Local Plan is required to set out which land should be provided for new homes and jobs that are needed within the district and

where they should be located.

It will also consider the need for infrastructure such as shops, community facilities, transport, open spaces, sport and recreation and health and education facilities.

Where are we in the process?

Following the 2021 consultation 18 potential new sites were submitted for the council's consideration together with a further 3 previously considered sites with amended proposals. These sites have been assessed by planning officers and councillors and 6 sites were agreed by all councillors to be consulted on as they might be preferable to some earlier proposed sites. The other sites (15) were rejected as being unsuitable or not viable, along with a few sites that are no longer being promoted by their owners or now have statutory objections. Even if all the sites in this and the earlier consultation were agreed to be included in the draft plan submitted for approval it would still be below the government housing target of 12,624.

Six new sites are currently being consulted on and we would welcome your thoughts by the close of the consultation on the 10th March. **Your views on these sites and the earlier consulted sites will be important in deciding which sites might be suitable for new housing in a new Local Plan as now proposed.**

Find out more here:

www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/new-local-plan

Three Rivers Council to propose new plan with lower housing numbers

In December the council agreed to prepare a new alternative Local Plan with a lower housing target that is considered to more appropriately meet the district's needs and prioritises local circumstances.

Our Vision for Three Rivers

Our preferred Local Plan and housing numbers

is expected to go out for consultation in October this year.

This new Local Plan proposal that the Council will bring forward is based on the timeline below.

It will not be based around the government's calculated housing figure of 12,624 but one the Council thinks is best for Three Rivers.

The Council will submit this to the government for approval following public consultation with you, which may change what is submitted.

The Council (cross-party) has been clear that the government's method of calculating the housing numbers resulted in an unacceptably high number for Three Rivers requiring release of large areas of Green Belt, it has objected to this and remains committed to getting this reduced whilst still

providing areas for new and suitable homes for future generations. As 76% of Three Rivers is Green Belt, some removal is likely to be necessary as our area does not have large brownfield (previously developed) sites available. The Council is restricted in what it can propose and can only put forward sites proposed by land-owners.

The Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities announced in December that the government will now consult on changes in calculating how many homes are needed in an area and that the figures will now be "an advisory starting point" and on other planning policies. The council will seek your views and stakeholders on a Local Plan that takes the government's consultation into consideration.

This new plan will include looking at the effects of the global pandemic, the changed relationship we have with shops and services, increasing our reliance on delivery and online services, but also reconnecting us with local places and nature. It will consider population changes and the sustainability of any new developments along with strengthening our planning policies.

January 27 – 10 March 2023	Consultation on additional sites
October 2023	Consultation on our vision for Three Rivers - our preferred Local Plan and housing numbers
August/September 2024	Regulation 19 Publication of Final Draft Plan
August/September 2025	Submission of New Local Plan (Start of Examination Process)
October 2025 – March 2026	Examination, followed by adoption of New Local Plan

Why another consultation later in the year? What about planning applications now?

Before any Local Plan is submitted to a government inspector the Council is required to seek the views of its residents. If it fails to do so such a plan is likely to be rejected. Landowners, who have proposed sites for allocated development which the Council excludes without assessing and consulting you, are likely to object.

The Council already has robust policies in place to manage development. Your views on the policies which are being revised will help the Council in decisions on future planning proposals as part of a

new Local Plan. The Council has in the meantime submitted to the government for approval what is called an **Article 4 direction- this seeks to protect employment and key shopping areas from unnecessary development.**

So when will I know what sites might be developed?

The final decision on what is in the Local Plan is made by the Government Inspector, who may request changes to the plan, so based on the timeline above (which might change) it may be in 2026.