

Draft Island Planning Strategy

summary paper



The Isle of Wight Council is consulting on a new draft Island Planning Strategy (IPS). This replaces the draft IPS that was consulted on in 2018/19 when over 9,300 comments from 3,800 respondents were received. A significant number of these comments related to the housing number of 9,615 new homes across the 15-year plan period, or 641 dwellings per annum (dpa). The response from local stakeholders and the community was overwhelming in opposition to the number of houses to be built, with a primary focus on the lack of capacity of the island to firstly deliver and then support the level of development required by the Government housing number.

What has the council done since the last consultation?

A comprehensive package of evidence has been gathered which provides a clear indication that the island has a reduced ability to deliver homes given the restrictions in the housing market generated by the island location, a combination which itself is unique across all local authorities in England. The average number of houses that the island has delivered in the past has remained relatively stable, regardless of the number of sites allocated and the number of units per annum planned for. The council also declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and the need to conserve and enhance our natural environment has never been more important. In June 2019, UNESCO designated the Isle of Wight as a biosphere reserve and this status highlights that the Island is one of the best places to explore people's interaction with the natural world.

The evidence, both from a housing delivery and environmental perspective, supports the position that delivering the 668 new homes currently required by the Government every year across the entirety of the 15-year plan period is not realistic or deliverable on the island.

How many new homes are now proposed?

As a result, the new draft IPS is planning for 7,290 net additional dwellings over the 15-year plan period of 2023-2038, or an average of 486 new homes each year. This is a significant reduction of 25 per cent from the previous draft IPS and reflects the level of development that the council believes is deliverable on the island and is based on the average number of homes delivered in previous 15-year plan periods.

The 7,290 is made up of a number of large sites that already having planning permission (1,083 homes), new allocations (4,707 homes) and windfall sites (1,500 homes from small sites under 10 homes that are not allocated in the plan).

In total, 75 sites have been removed from the previous version of the draft IPS.

What changes have been made to the sites proposed for housing?

A set of guiding principles has been developed to help steer the approach to where housing is planned in the new draft IPS. These principles will also help to deliver the vision for the island, as set out in the Isle of Wight Council corporate plan:

- a Improve the delivery and affordability of new homes to best meet Island needs, in the most sustainable locations (reducing the reliance on private transport).
- b Prioritise the use of land within existing settlement boundaries, particularly where the land is brownfield and/or in public sector ownership.
- c Reflect the importance of a high quality built and natural environment and the associated positive impacts on wellbeing and contribution to maintaining our UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status.
- d Create certainty through the adoption of a local plan over what is expected of development proposals and how places are likely to change as a result of the plan.

Using these principles, the IPS will plan to build the right homes in the right places and some of the key benefits of the draft IPS are:

- **98 per cent** of the total homes allocated are within the adjusted settlement boundaries of primary and secondary settlements (87 per cent are in primary settlements and 11% within secondary settlements);
- **60 per cent** of the homes allocated are on brownfield land, including two key priority sites at Camp Hill and Newport Harbour, both in public sector ownership. The plan also includes a new brownfield sites policy that supports and encourages development on previously developed land to come forward;
- **72 per cent** of the homes that are allocated on greenfield land are already in the planning application or pre-application process;

Key policy themes within the draft IPS

The draft IPS is split into a number of sections that cover a wide variety of different topics and issues:

Section 4: Environment



This key section of the plan includes policies to protect the historic environment, secure ecological protection and enhancement, provision of open space, protecting landscapes (including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), preserving the identity of different settlements, flooding and managing water resources. In combination, these policies will help to maintain and enhance the value of the natural environment on the island that has been designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

- Protecting and providing green and open spaces – development proposals will be expected to protect and contribute to green and open space, with a network of over 40 local green and open spaces included within the draft IPS, including new local green space sites suggested to us during the last consultation. Recognition and protection of our highest quality landscape, especially in the AONB, remains high priority.
- Dark skies – the plan maintains support for the creation of a dark skies park in the south west of the Island. Development proposals will be supported within the proposed dark skies park where they have demonstrated that all reasonable and proportionate opportunities to reduce light pollution have been explored and incorporated.
- Ecology policies in the Draft IPS have been revised and, in line with the Environment Bill, will require all new development to demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain providing significant benefits to the network of habitats across the island.

Section 5: Community



This section will support the provision of sustainable and healthy communities and improving the health and wellbeing of island residents.

- Improving our health and wellbeing – providing flexible community open spaces that can be adapted to the health needs of the community and encourage social interaction – this is an issue that has become even more important during the pandemic and the policies will ensure new development places wellbeing at the front of design.
- An emphasis on the delivery of high-quality design and the conservation of heritage assets, referencing the national model design code with an ability for local distinctiveness to be achieved.
- Other policies centre on encouraging community led planning through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, reducing carbon emissions, achieving higher levels of renewable and low carbon energy, reducing flood risk and managing coastal change.

Section 6: Growth



Policies in this section of the plan include the locations where development and growth will be prioritised; identifying what developer contributions are required to help pay for necessary infrastructure and making sure that when planning permission is granted, development is delivered as quickly as possible.

Some of the key changes in housing approach from the last Draft IPS are summarised below:

- The removal of the two proposed garden settlement areas of search.
- The removal of sites outside of settlement boundaries.
- Settlement boundaries adjusted to include all allocated sites.
- The removal of some greenfield sites adjacent to settlements that do not represent the most sustainable extensions to settlement boundaries or where site specific issues reduce the certainty of delivery.
- 'Hard' settlement boundaries, so the removal of the support in principle for development on sites outside, but adjacent to the settlement boundaries set within this plan.

The result is that only around one per cent of the Island is allocated for residential and employment land.

Section 7: Housing



Policies in this section will establish the quality, location and mix of housing to be built on the island over the plan period. It identifies the sites allocated for housing development, the general requirements that proposals need to meet, how affordable housing requirements will be met, and guidance is given on rural and First Homes exception sites and self-build housing.

- To help address the acute affordable housing issues the island faces the plan only allocates sites over 10 homes, all of which are required to make onsite contributions to affordable housing.
- A policy setting out specific and different housing mixes for private, affordable rent and affordable home ownership dwellings is included to help ensure as many of right size and type of homes are built as possible.
- Where homes are needed in more rural areas, we want these to be addressing local affordable needs as much as possible and such sites can come forward as Rural or First Homes exception sites.

Section 8: Economy



This section includes policies to help support and grow the island's economy through improving workforce skills, supporting the rural economy, town centres and the tourism sector.

- Two areas (The Bay and Ryde) are allocated as tourism opportunity areas recognising their significance to the tourism sector on the island.
- 30 hectares of land is allocated across six different sites for employment use to enable more jobs to be provided for local people.
- Reinvigorating our High Streets – working alongside the ongoing success of Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) projects in Newport and Ryde, policies will enable our town centres to be flexible, respond to changing retail and commercial markets and provide locations that people want to visit.

Section 9: Transport



This section of the draft IPS supports sustainable transport and will be closely linked to the council's local transport plan. Policies set out requirements for sustainable transport (including cross Solent transport), improving rail services, supporting electric charging points for vehicles and making sure enough parking is provided.

- Over eight miles of new cycle track are proposed, including proposals to complete the West Wight to Newport pedestrian and cycle greenway

Section 10: Delivering, monitoring and reviewing

This section sets out how the council will review the policies in the plan and assess how successful they are in delivering the type of development the island needs. If the right type and number of houses are not being delivered, the plan includes triggers to review the relevant housing policies so they can be changed.

Where can I see the Draft IPS?

To view the draft IPS and see how to make comments, please visit www.iow.gov.uk/planthewight

All comments need to be made by 5pm on Friday 1 October 2021.

What are the next steps for the draft IPS?

Following the close of the public consultation, all comments will be reviewed and considered, and where appropriate, further changes will be made to the plan. The evidence base will continue to be updated throughout and a final draft (known as a Regulation 19 submission version) of the plan will then be produced. This will be subject to a further public consultation in early 2022, before the plan is submitted to the government for examination in Spring 2022.

The plan will then be examined by an independent planning inspector who will report on whether the document meets with legal requirements. There will be an opportunity to make modifications to the plan at this stage if they are deemed necessary. If the plan is found to be legally compliant and sound, the council will then formally adopt it, and it will then become the statutory development plan for the Isle of Wight for the period to 2038.