Sefton MBC

New Local Plan: Gateway 1 Self-assessment summary

October 2026

(published 28th October 2026)

How we got ready to prepare a new local plan

1. We started preparing a new local plan for Sefton Council and published a formal Notice to Commence on 22 June 2026.
2. Government policy says we should adopt the new local plan within 30 months of the publication of the Gateway 1 assessment. This is to help ensure we have an up-to-date local plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities.
3. This page explains what we have done to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe. It also has links to further information and where you can get updates.

We published a timetable for preparing the plan

4. The timetable published in April 2026 shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing a plan. The timetable helps us check if and how we can adopt the plan within the 30-month timeframe (that is, by April 2029). We will keep the timetable updated as we make more progress.
5. The timetable allows for collection and evaluation of evidence and public consultation responses in two forthcoming public consultations, as we think that the evidence and the public consultation responses may take some time to process.
6. To make sure that we deliver our local plan within 30 months we:
   - Have proactively engaged and continue to engage with stakeholders, including children and young people, and with everyone living in Sefton as part of our scoping consultation
   - Are collecting and evaluating specialist and technical evidence

- Will promote the use of a digital response forms and processes to help us analyse the responses more efficiently.

7. Engaging in this way has helped generate initial ideas and key criteria within the plan. It also made sure that stakeholders and Sefton residents were aware of the plan-making process and the requirements for the new plan-making system early on. We will continue to work with these groups through our consultation periods.

We established project management and governance arrangements

8. Preparing a local plan is a complex process. It involves many people across the Council and from other organisations. Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us to:

- make sure that stakeholders, other organisations and those across the Council are aware of our key expectations and milestones for their input
- check our progress and keep the work on track
- anticipate and manage any risks to us adopting the plan within 30 months.

9. We have followed Planning Advisory Service best practice (using a 'project initiation document' template, or project plan) to help us to consider the factors that we needed to take account of.

10. We have developed a project plan to help us prepare the plan in line with our local plan timetable. We continue to monitor how this is going and meet regularly with our key decision-maker. When we developed the project plan, we identified some risks to its delivery. We have reflected on these risks and identified things we can do to reduce them.

11. We are reviewing our governance procedures in the light of the need for efficient sign off processes to be in place with key decisions makers. This is what national guidance advises. On 17th September 2026 our Council approved changes to the Council constitution and how decisions are delegated to key members and council officers (known as our scheme of delegation).

View the Report to Full Council on 17th September 2026

View the Minutes of the Council Meeting of 17th September 2026

12. Also, we have agreed to report regularly on local plan progress to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills). Their role is to fulfil all the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to Regeneration and Environment Services – including strategic transport, infrastructure, regeneration, environmental stewardship, housing, planning and building control, transport infrastructure, tourism and refuse functions and

the Coast. Most of these matters are relevant to the new local plan. The need for and format of any specific member or senior officer 'working groups' are still being explored.

We planned how we'll consult on the plan and completed early stage consultation

13. Public consultation is essential for the local plan to represent the needs of our communities. It must be easy for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops within the parameters of the planning process. We thought about this early on to make sure that people have been aware in advance and could get involved from the start.

14. We have undertaken a scoping consultation with stakeholders and everyone living in Sefton. We chose to consult everyone living in Sefton because we wanted to get people's views both on what the plan could contain and how we propose to engage and consult on the plan at key stages. We wanted to extend the opportunity to comment as widely as possible, as early as possible in the plan preparation process. This scoping consultation took place over twelve weeks from 17th July to 18th September 2026.

15. The scoping consultation will also help us to refine our consultation and engagement strategy. This describes how we will consult and communicate with local people and stakeholders as we continue to prepare the local plan. We are expecting significant engagement from our residents at the next public consultation stages and have considered the most effective ways to get this with a range of engagement opportunities.

16. We have planned a mix of consultation and communication approaches to get more people involved. This includes:

- Sending leaflets to every home in Sefton at scoping consultation stage
- Self-delivery consultation packs for local groups and stakeholders
- Targeted consultation of children and young people via Sefton's Eco Centre Education Service (used at scoping stage)
- Virtual and in person meetings (especially with key stakeholders)
- Online forms and/or activities

17. We want to move towards digital engagement and use of new digital software to analyse the responses in a timely manner and publish this on our website.

18. You can find information about upcoming consultation activities on our website and social media channels.

We began scoping the content of the plan

19. Scoping includes considering how well the existing local plan is working,

identifying key themes which our local plan should cover and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions. Starting this early means we can begin preparing the new plan with a clear vision and strategic objectives, making it quicker and easier to consult on the plan and make decisions about it.

20. Our scoping consultation leaflet included information about what a local plan is, why we are preparing one, key information about Sefton, how the vision and strategic objectives will be prepared, and some questions for people to tell us their views. We consulted on the basis of a 15-year plan, from 2029 to 2044.

21. We set out key themes:

- Housing Need and Housing Growth
- Infrastructure: Transport, Utilities, Digital and Social Infrastructure
- Economy, Employment, and Skills
- Town Centres and Retail, Regeneration
- Climate Change, Energy, and Low-Carbon Development
- Natural Environment, Biodiversity, and Green Belt
- Health, Wellbeing, and Social Inclusion
- Design, Placemaking, and Heritage
- Minerals, Waste, and Resource Management
- Coastal Change, Flood Risk, and Water Management.

22. We identified likely cross-boundary matters between us and other local councils, such as housing markets, transport links, shared regeneration opportunities, Port and logistics growth, coastal change, waste and minerals planning and water and utilities infrastructure.

23. We look at how well the existing local plan is working given current circumstances and needs, how it is influencing land-use and development in Sefton, and we publish a monitoring report annually. This helps us to see how the current local plan is working and what may need changing for a new local plan.

View our current and recent annual Authority Monitoring Reports

24. We know that the new local plan must be supported by a comprehensive information (the evidence base), to help us understand the development requirements and issues arising for Sefton. Our monitoring reports and early work we have done on integrated assessment (which includes environmental report and health and equality impact assessments) have provided some evidence. Scoping consultation responses have also helped us.

25. We will commission or prepare, publish and update evidence as the plan progresses. The scoping consultation leaflet set out our early thoughts on what this evidence should include. This relates to the key themes, plus matters such as viability assessments and integrated assessment.

26. Also, we know that the new local plan should take account of a range of other Council, City Region and partner strategies, such as Sefton Council Corporate Plan, Sefton Economic Strategy, Visitor Economy Strategy, Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Housing Strategy, Sefton's Climate Change Emergency Plan, Local Transport Plan and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

27. Using the information we have gathered so far, including early analysis of scoping consultation responses, we have:

- begun to draft a vision for the area
- started to understand the development requirements for our area
- started to update our understanding of the key economic, social and environmental issues affecting the area.

28. Finally, we have started:

- to identify options about where new developments could be located
- looking at what new planning policies we'd need for decision making about new developments
- looking at what additional information we'd need for the new local plan or the decision-making process for new developments.

29. We will share some of our thoughts with the public and on our website in future engagement and consultation activities.

Overview of responses to our scoping consultation

30. We will carefully consider all responses received during the scoping consultation and publish a report summarising the comments submitted, alongside our initial responses. However, headline key messages from the consultation were that the local plan should:

Safeguard the environment by prioritising brownfield development (including vacant sites and buildings), protecting and enhancing the Coast, wildlife, green spaces, farmland and other green infrastructure, rather than Green Belt sites or areas of highest environmental value or risk; tackling flood risk, and supporting climate change adaptation, renewable energy and lower-carbon development.

Plan growth alongside infrastructure and community needs by making sure that transport, healthcare, schools, drainage, utilities, green infrastructure and other community facilities are delivered alongside development, while improving accessibility, health and wellbeing, and reducing the impacts of flooding and congestion.

Support sustainable economic growth and regeneration by investing in town and local centres, bringing vacant buildings and brownfield land back

into use, supporting local businesses, jobs, skills and tourism, improving sustainable transport provision and parking and reducing a range of inequalities. Create more high-quality local jobs by investing in skills, apprenticeships and training, close to where people live.

Provide the right homes in the right places by delivering more affordable, social, accessible and energy-efficient housing that meet local needs, particularly for first-time buyers, families, older people and those with disabilities. Focus development in sustainable locations and make sure that housing growth does not undermine environmental quality or place unacceptable pressure on infrastructure and services.

Use resources more sustainably by reducing waste, improving recycling, encouraging the reuse of land, buildings and materials, and taking a coordinated approach to minerals and waste planning. Promote renewable and low-carbon, energy-efficient and resource-efficient development (notably building mounted solar).

Many comments referred to particular sites or areas, for example Bootle and Southport Town Centres, the Coast. For site-specific reasons a large number of comments about the former Ainsdale Hope School site and Green Lane, Maghull.

Other consultation comments welcomed the opportunity for on-going consultation.

Local Plan Period

31. The Local Plan Scoping was done with the intention that it would cover a 15 period, 2029-2044.

32. During the scoping consultation period, the Government published a new National Planning Policy Framework on 17 August 2026. This introduces the option for local plans to cover a 10-year period rather than the previous 15-year period.

33. We have not yet reached a view on whether a 10-year plan period would be the most appropriate approach for the new Local Plan. However, should we consider this to be the preferred option, there will be opportunities through future stages of public consultation for interested parties to provide their views before any decision is finalised.

We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

34. We are legally required to identify, describe and evaluate likely significant effects on the environment of:

    - implementing the local plan
    - reasonable alternatives, taking into account the plan's objectives and scope.

35. The output of this assessment is an environmental report (the strategic environmental assessment). We have decided to make this an 'integrated assessment', so it also includes a health impact assessment and an equalities assessment too.

36. This process will consider how community, national and international environmental protection objectives, any other environmental challenges, health and equalities are taken into account in the plan. This helps us to predict significant environmental, health and equalities effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and offsetting these.

37. We have identified the scope and information we intend to include in our integrated assessment report. This considers any relevant comments made in the scoping consultation on the new local plan. We will consult the three statutory consultees on our draft early stage report, in line with national requirements for environmental reports. These are the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. We will also make the scoping consultation report available online, so that we are transparent about how we're doing the assessment. Any public comments received will be taken account of as further work progresses on integrated assessment.

How to stay up to date

38. Our webpage for the new local plan will be kept up to date, and this webpage will be the key means for everyone to stay up to date. This webpage includes links to a range of information including the local plan timetable, consultation documents and any current consultation, and will show the stage of plan preparation we have reached.

39. There is a separate webpage for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills), with links to other webpages including those where any future reports to this Committee about local plan progress can be found.

40. Also, we will contact people or organisations those who have asked to be part of our consultation list, at key consultation stages. The webpage for the new local plan sets out how people or organisations can be added to this list.