

General information on Town and Country Planning including Neighbourhood Planning and the Referendum on the Blackrod Neighbourhood Plan

The Planning System

Most new buildings or major changes to existing buildings or to the local environment need planning permission. Bolton Council is responsible for deciding whether a development, anything from an extension on a house to a new shopping centre, should go ahead within the Borough. The council makes decisions on planning applications in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It must also take into account the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance.

Information about the planning system in Bolton can be found on the council website at [Planning – Bolton Council](#)

The Development Plan in Bolton

Bolton Council is required to prepare a Local Plan which sets out planning policies for the Borough. Local Plans must be prepared with the objective of contributing towards the achievement of sustainable development. They must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with National Policy. The Local Plan forms part of the Development Plan for Bolton.

The Local Plan for Bolton currently consists of four elements:

- The Bolton Core Strategy, adopted in 2011
- The Greater Manchester Waste Plan, adopted in 2012
- The Greater Manchester Minerals Plan, adopted in 2013
- Bolton's Allocations Plan, adopted in 2014

Information about the Local Plan can be found on the council website at [Local plan – Bolton Council](#)

If the referendum on the Blackrod Neighbourhood Plan were in favour of the Plan, then it would become part of the development plan within the designated area, alongside the Local Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

The latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019. It provides guidance to local councils in drawing up Local Plans and on making decisions on planning applications. It includes the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Government gives advice about how the NPPF should be implemented through Planning Practice Guidance.

The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance can be found at [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced in the Localism Act 2011 to give members of the community a more active role in the planning of their neighbourhoods. It introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development in their local area by coming together to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. It enables communities to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need through planning policies relating to the development and use of land. In Blackrod, the Town Council has the power to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.

The local community can decide what to include in a Neighbourhood Plan, but it must meet the following 'Basic Conditions':

- a) Must have regard to National Planning Policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- b) Must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- c) Must be in general conformity with strategic policies in the Development Plan for the local area (i.e. the Local Plan); and
- d) Must be compatible with European Union obligations and human rights requirements.

Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

There is a statutory process that must be followed for the making (adoption) of a Neighbourhood Plan. In Blackrod, the following processes have been followed:

- Bolton Council designated the Blackrod Neighbourhood Plan area in July 2016, at the request of Blackrod Town Council. The designated area is identical to the area covered by Blackrod Town Council
- Blackrod Town Council prepared a draft Neighbourhood Plan and consulted on that from December 2018 to January 2019
- Blackrod Town Council submitted a further draft Plan to Bolton Council in June 2019, taking into account the consultation responses at the previous stage
- Bolton Council publicised the submitted plan from June to July 2019, and received representations
- Bolton Council appointed Nigel McGurk of Erimax Planning in August 2019 to examine the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions
- The examiner submitted his report to Bolton Council in October 2019
- Bolton Council approved the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to a referendum in January 2020
- Due to Covid restrictions the referendum was delayed until 6th May 2021

The referendum considers whether Bolton Council should use the Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the designated area. All those registered to vote in the designated area are entitled to vote in the referendum.

If the majority (more than 50%) of those voting in the referendum have voted in favour of the Plan, then it becomes part of the Development Plan in the designated area. Planning law requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Bolton Council must 'make' the Plan within 8 weeks of the referendum voting in favour of the Plan. This means a formal endorsement of the council to bring the Plan into operation.

Further advice about Neighbourhood Planning can be found at [Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning)