

A dark blue silhouette of a landscape. On the left, two windmills stand on a hill. In the center, three simple houses are arranged in a row. On the right, a church with a tall spire and two trees are visible on a hill.

# District Plan

Frequently Asked Questions: May 2026

# Frequently Asked Questions

**What is the District Plan?** The District Plan sets out where new homes, jobs and supporting development should go, which places and landscapes should be protected, and the rules that planning applications must follow. It also sets out what infrastructure will be delivered like schools, health provision, transport, local facilities and green infrastructure.

**What is the examination?** All Local Plans such as the District Plan are submitted to the Government for Examination by an independent Planning Inspector. The Inspector's job is to test whether the plan is legally compliant and "sound", in other words, whether it is justified by evidence, effective and deliverable, consistent with national policy, and prepared in line with the required process.

**Where are we in the process?** We are currently in the examination stage. This includes hearing sessions (these were held in February/March 2026, with more likely to follow later this year) as well as written correspondence between the Inspector, the Council and other parties. If the Inspector identifies changes that are needed to make the plan sound, they can recommend "main modifications". Those proposed main modifications would then be consulted on publicly before the Inspector issues a final report. If the plan is found sound (with or without main modifications), the council can then adopt it, so it carries full weight in planning decisions.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Why is the council looking at additional sites?** The Planning Inspector has asked the council to bring forward a list of potential additional sites for technical assessment as part of the independent examination. This will test whether there is any extra capacity to contribute to housing targets in the wider area, where some neighbouring authorities are unable to meet their targets.

**Does being on the additional sites list mean it has planning permission or that a site will be built on?** No. At this stage, the Council is testing the potential for these sites. The site will only be allocated for development if the technical work supports it and the Inspector is satisfied that it is suitable. After this, a site would need to receive planning permission which is a separate process.

**When can residents comment on the additional sites?** If the Inspector decides to add sites into the Plan residents will have an opportunity to comment as part of the examination process. We will publish information on the sites, explain how to respond, and make sure communities know the deadlines and next steps.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**How are sites assessed?** Sites are tested against planning and environmental constraints and evidence, such as landscape impact, heritage, flooding and drainage, ecology, highways and access, deliverability, and whether necessary infrastructure can be provided. Public feedback is also an important part of the process.

**What happens if we don't get an adopted District Plan in place?** Without an up-to-date plan, the council has less control over where development comes forward and is more exposed to speculative applications and appeals. It can also be harder to secure the right infrastructure, in the right places, alongside growth. The absence of District Plan means you end up with even more development.

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**How will infrastructure be secured and delivered?** The District Plan sets the policy framework for the infrastructure required, and planning applications on sites in the Plan are expected to contribute to or provide supporting infrastructure. Delivery is typically phased alongside development, and we work with partners such as county councils, health bodies, education providers and utility companies. However, some infrastructure depends on other organisations, funding, or delivery programmes outside the Council’s direct control, so it cannot always be guaranteed at the point it is identified or promised. Without a Plan, unplanned speculative development can come forward, making it more difficult to secure the infrastructure needed to support growth.

**What does “30% affordable housing” mean?** Affordable housing is homes provided at below-market cost for people whose needs are not met by the market, such as social rent and shared ownership. The plan’s policies aim for 30% affordable homes on qualifying developments, where viable.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Who puts sites forward?** Sites are generally submitted by landowners, agents, and developers. The council then reviews them against the evidence base and planning policy. A site being promoted does not indicate that it is suitable, and many sites are ruled out during the assessment process.

**How can sites be removed from the list?** At this stage, sites remain on the list for technical assessment only. Inclusion on the list does not mean a site will be allocated in the Plan. After the testing process has finished, any final list of sites will be subject to a six-week public consultation led by the independent Planning Inspector before final decisions are made. If a site is eventually included in the Plan, a developer would still need to make a planning application and it would have to go through the full planning process, at which point residents would again be able to express their views.



**MID SUSSEX**  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL**

