

Public Report with Exempt Appendices
Delegated Officer Decision

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Delegated Officer Decision – 03 July 2026

Report Title

Local Plan Funding

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Service Director Approving Submission of the Report

Simon Moss, Service Director, Planning, Regeneration & Transport

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report seeks approval for the use and management of the Local Plan reserve to support the preparation of a new Local Plan within the Government's required 30-month timetable. The new Local Plan is necessary in response to changes to national planning policy and significantly increased housing targets.

The report sets out the proposed approach to funding the evidence base, staffing, and associated work required to deliver the Local Plan. It reflects the resource plan previously developed and the establishment of a dedicated reserve approved by Cabinet.

The report also confirms the governance arrangements for use of the reserve, including delegated authority to approve detailed allocations and to commission work, alongside appropriate consultation with Finance, Planning, and the relevant Cabinet Member.

Ongoing financial monitoring and control will be delivered through established Council processes, including quarterly reporting to Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and the management of any variations through standard budget management arrangements.

Recommendations

1. That the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport in consultation with the Service Director of Financial Services and Cabinet member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, be authorised to approve the specific detailed allocations of the Local Plan reserve in accordance with the overall resource plan and delegated authority set out in the Cabinet report.
2. That use of the Local Plan reserve be reported quarterly to R&E's Finance DLT and annually to Cabinet through the Financial Outturn Report

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Local Plan resource plan EXEMPT

Appendix 2 Equality Part A – Screening

Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

National Planning Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2026/186/contents/made>

Rotherham Local Plan 2013 – 2028

<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/planning-development/guide-local-plan/1>

Local Development Scheme (Council Meeting 5 November 2025, minute 88 refers)

<https://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=102951>

Approval of Local Plan reserve (Cabinet 9 February 2026, minute 122 refers)

<https://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=103508>

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

*An exemption is sought for **Appendix 1** under Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 is requested, as this report contains **estimated costs for consultancy work.***

*It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption would outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information because **publication of the estimated costs could prejudice the procurement process.***

Local Plan Funding

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new “standard method” to calculate the mandatory housing target for local authority areas in December 2024. The housing target for Rotherham more than doubled from 544 to 1,111 new homes a year.
- 1.2 Considering this new national policy position, the Planning Inspectorate advised the Council to prepare a complete new Local Plan under the new plan-making system. Continuing with the Core Strategy Partial Update presented a significant risk of failing at examination stage, resulting in abortive work, wasted time and considerable expense.
- 1.3 A timetable to prepare the new Local Plan (the Local Development Scheme) was approved in November 2025 (Council Meeting 5/11/26, minute 88 refers).

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The new Local Plan will require significant supporting evidence base to enable it to pass independent examination. This evidence base will need to be commissioned promptly and flexibly, as the new plan-making system requires plans to be adopted within 30 months.
- 2.2 Officers have prepared a Local Plan resource plan setting out the estimated evidence base and staffing costs required to financial year 2029/30 to achieve an adopted Local Plan.

- 2.3 A Local Plan reserve of £2.2m was approved by Council (4th March 2026). The spend can be broadly categorised in the following:

Category	£000s
Staffing	879
Software/Systems	137
Evidence Base	675
Sustainability Appraisal	115
Consultation	48
Gateway Tests	10
Examination	295
Adoption	7
Total	2,166

- 2.4 The Local Plan reserve will be accessed to fund the evidence base required at appropriate stages. Any work to be commissioned and the use of the reserve will be in line with overarching plans agreed to by the Service Directors with the delegated authority per the Council report.

- 2.5 This approach reflects the update provided to Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), where it was noted that the Local Plan reserve and associated budget

provision are intended to cover the additional costs required to deliver the new Local Plan within the accelerated timetable. SLT recognised that, whilst the resource plan identifies the core requirements for evidence base commissioning and staffing, there remains a risk that further costs may emerge as the programme develops. These may include, but are not limited to, requirements relating to IT systems, communications and engagement activity, and other corporate support functions necessary to enable effective plan delivery.

- 2.6 SLT also emphasised the importance of maintaining appropriate financial oversight and flexibility to respond to any such emerging pressures, ensuring that the Council can continue to progress the Local Plan in line with national requirements.
- 2.7 Any procurement will be carried out in line with legislative requirements and the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules in consultation with the Council's Procurement Service.
- 2.8 The use of the Local Plan reserve will be reported quarterly to R&E Directorate Leadership Team Finance Meeting. The use of this reserve will also be reported through Financial Outturn Report which goes to Cabinet each July.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1: Approve delegated authority to use the Local Plan reserve**
This option will allow the prompt and flexible commissioning of the supporting evidence base required to achieve adoption of the new Local Plan.

- 3.2 **Option 2: Do not approve delegated authority to use the Local Plan reserve**

This option would require separate reports and approvals for each proposed evidence base commission that used the Local Plan reserve. This would be inflexible and cumbersome and would not enable the Council to meet the Government's 30 month timetable to adopt a new Local Plan.

- 3.3 Option 1 is the recommended option to enable prompt and flexible procurement of the required evidence base, to secure an adopted Local Plan within the Government's 30 month timetable.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Any work to be commissioned and the use of the reserve will be in consultation with the Head of Planning and Building Control and the Head of Finance Regeneration and Environment.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy will be regularly briefed on progress with the new Local Plan and use of the reserve.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Subject to approval, the Planning Policy Manager in consultation with the Head of Planning and Building Control will begin procurement of the first studies required as a priority for the new Local Plan. This will be in consultation with the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport in consultation with the Service Director of Financial Services and Cabinet member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 On 4th March 2026, Council approved the creation of a £2.2m reserve to fund preparation of the Local Plan, as part of the 2026/27 Budget and Council Tax Report. Expenditure will be incurred in line with the resource plan set out in Appendix 1, with a summary provided at 2.3. It is noted that £2.2m is an estimate and there is risk that costs are higher than this. The drawdown of the reserve each year will reflect the costs incurred in that financial year. Both expenditure and the remaining balance of the reserve will be monitored through the Council's established financial monitoring arrangements and a specific update will be provided to Cabinet through the Financial Outturn Report annually in July.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 A timetable to prepare the new local plan (the local development scheme) was approved in November 2025. To take this forward it is necessary to provide authorisation to officers to fund the commissioning of work. This is necessary to ensure that the work is completed in relation to the local plan within the timeline set down by planning legislation and the revised NPPF. Having an updated local plan in place will provide the most appropriate safeguards for the council in relation to the future allocation of land supply.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report. Any future staffing changes or recruitment required for the new Local Plan would require appropriate approvals through normal HR processes at that time.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 There are no implications for children and young people and vulnerable adults arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An equalities screening has been completed and is attached as an appendix. A full equalities analysis is not required at this stage.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no direct implications on CO₂ emissions or climate change.
- 11.2 The Carbon Impact Assessment attached as an appendix has been reviewed by the Climate Change Officer.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 There are no implications for partners arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Costs have been estimated based on current information. There is a risk that additional budget may be required should the results of public consultation, technical work or legislative changes highlight the need for further work.
- 13.2 Furthermore, the final cost of examination will be determined by the timetable established by the independent planning Inspector, which is beyond the Council's control. This includes potential additional corporate and enabling costs (e.g. IT, communications and programme support), which will be monitored and managed through established financial controls.
- 13.2 Risks will be mitigated via regular monitoring and reporting to DLT.

14. Accountable Officers

Simon Moss, Service Director Planning, Regeneration and Transport
Rob Mahon, Service Director - Financial Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	Click here to enter a date.
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	Click here to enter a date.
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	Click here to enter a date.

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