

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 12 October 2026

Report Title

Local Plan

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

Yes

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

Andrew Bramidge, Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected.

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Government planning reforms introduced through the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 came into force on 25 March 2026. The Regulations require local planning authorities to prepare a new style Local Plan through a prescribed process including gateway assessments, statutory consultation stages and adoption within a 30-month plan-making period, following an initial four-month commencement phase.

Government guidance and the Regulations state that the Local Planning Authority is required to submit and publish a 'Notice of Intention to Commence' (Regulation 19), submit and publish a Local Plan Timetable (Regulation 4 and 5) that will replace the Council's current Local Development Scheme, and undertake a scoping consultation (Regulation 20). These tasks must be completed prior to the submission of a Gateway 1 self-assessment to the Planning Inspectorate. Subject to successful outcome of the Gateway 1, the Council can proceed to the prescribed 30-month plan-making process.

The Council must now commence preparation of a new Rotherham Local Plan and establish suitable governance arrangements to ensure delivery within the required timescales.

This report seeks approval of the Local Plan Timetable, establishment of a Local Plan Steering Group as well as delegated authority arrangements for procedural matters

required throughout the Local Plan process to ensure that the Council can respond as necessary to the new streamlined plan making system.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the contents of this report and approve the commencement of preparation of a new Rotherham Local Plan in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
2. Approve the publication of the Local Plan Timetable attached at Appendix 1 and note that it supersedes the current Local Development Scheme timetable for the preparation of the new Local Plan.
3. Approve the publication of the formal 'Notice of Intention to Commence' by 30 October 2026, at the latest, in line with Regulation 19.
4. Approve the establishment of a Local Plan Steering Group in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 2.
5. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy:
 - to approve updates to the Local Plan Timetable during plan preparation;
 - to approve, publish and submit all documents required for the statutory Scoping Stage (Regulation 20);
 - to approve publication and submission of documents required for Gateway 1 (Regulation 21); and
 - to approve the content and commencement of consultation on proposed plan content, draft vision and supporting evidence (Regulation 23).
6. Agree that Planning Board and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be updated and consulted at appropriate stages throughout plan preparation.
7. Agree to receive a further report as the Local Plan progresses towards plan content and evidence consultation (Regulation 23(1)(a)) and seeking approvals for subsequent stages - Gateways 2 (Regulation 26) and Gateway 3 (Regulation 31).

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Rotherham Local Plan Timetable
- Appendix 2 Local Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference
- Appendix 3 Equality Impact Assessment Part A
- Appendix 4 Equality Impact Assessment Part B
- Appendix 5 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Legislations

[Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#)

[Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)

Government Local Plan Guidance

[30-month local plan process: an overview](#)

[Engaging the public when preparing a local plan](#)
[Creating a plan timetable](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework \(August 2026\)](#)

Local Plan Documents

[Rotherham Local Plan 2013 - 2028](#)

[Rotherham Local Development Scheme \(September 2025\)](#)

[Rotherham Call for Sites](#)

[Local Plan Funding \(Officer Decision - 03/07/2026\)](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Local Plan

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government has introduced a new plan-making system through the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. The Regulations require local planning authorities to prepare Local Plans through a prescribed process consisting of a four-month commencement period followed by a statutory 30-month plan-making process. This includes three Gateway assessments, statutory consultation stages, examination and adoption.
- 1.2 The Council's existing Local Plan was adopted under the former planning system. To maintain an up-to-date development plan and ensure that the Council has continued local control over future development, a new Local Plan must now be prepared, commencing in 2026 and with an anticipated adoption in 2029, and covering the period up to the 2040s (i.e. a 10–15-year period upon adoption).
- 1.3 The Local Development Scheme was adopted in September 2025 (Cabinet 15/09/2025, Item 53 refer). The LDS sets out a broad timetable for preparing a new Local Plan in response to changes to national planning policy and revised housing requirements for Rotherham.
- 1.4 The Planning and Infrastructure Bill published in March 2025 introduces Spatial Development Strategies (SDS), to be prepared by Combined Authorities. The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) will be responsible for preparing the SDS for South Yorkshire, in conjunction with the constituent local authorities. The Rotherham Local Plan will need to align with the emerging South Yorkshire Spatial Development Strategy.
- 1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduces significant changes to the planning policy framework. Matters that are currently contained within Local Plans may in future be addressed either through National Development Management Policies (NDMPs), which will provide nationally consistent development management policies, or through Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs), which will establish strategic planning priorities across wider geographic areas. The Local Plan will therefore sit within a broader planning framework and will focus more directly on local priorities, site allocations and locally distinctive policies. Consequently, the emerging Local Plan is expected to differ considerably from the adopted Local Plan in both its content and structure.
- 1.6 Under the new plan making system, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required to begin the preparation of a new Local Plan to replace an existing Local Plan within five years of the adoption of the Local Plan. The intention is that Local Plans are kept up to date and, whilst content will be able to be carried forward, this marks a shift to five-year plan making cycles moving forward. Under these changes, assuming a new Local Plan is adopted by 2029, the Council would be required to start a new Local Plan by 2034.

2. Key Issues

Government Expectations

- 2.1 The NPPF and associated plan-making reforms place a strong emphasis on the timely preparation of up-to-date local plans. National guidance encourages local planning authorities to commence preparation of new local plans under the new plan-making system as soon as possible and establishes statutory milestones for doing so.
- 2.2 LPAs are also bound by the new legislation to prepare new Local Plans. The Regulations provide powers for Government intervention where local planning authorities fail to make satisfactory progress in preparing a Local Plan. This is to ensure LPAs adhere to the expectations that the Government are setting out, and that the level of growth that the Government aspires to is being planned for and delivered.
- 2.3 Without clear Government guidance on transitional arrangements, authorities preparing a new Local Plan cannot be assured of any protection from higher housing requirements until its adoption. Consequently, the Council remains vulnerable to speculative development and development proposals on unallocated sites across the Borough.
- 2.4 Although site allocations have been one of the critical parts of the plan-making process, the role of the new Local Plan is now very focused on spatial strategy and the delivery of new development. The Government is also putting increased emphasis on delivering supporting infrastructure alongside new development. Local infrastructure provision and the impact of new development on such infrastructure is increasingly a national focus from communities, including concerns that improvements (especially in social infrastructure) are not being delivered in step with new development. The Local Plan must be supported by a new Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which will assess current service provision and, in due course, the impact of proposed development on infrastructure.
- 2.5 The NPPF clearly supports more of a role for inclusion of local design policy, guidance, and high-level coding into new style local plans which brings opportunities to continue to raise the bar for high-quality design and place-making to the benefit of everyone.
- 2.6 The Government is also keen to introduce more standardised, digital Local Plans which intend to reduce inconsistency between the approaches of different LPAs as well as speeding up their preparation.

Local Plan Timetable

- 2.7 As part of the preparatory work for the new Local Plan, the Council launched a 'Call for Sites' exercise in June 2026 to identify land with potential for development. The exercise invites submissions from landowners, developers, stakeholders and the wider public to establish the availability of sites across the Borough through the plan-making process.
- 2.8 In addition to the ongoing Call for Sites exercise which commenced in June 2026, there will be three further public consultation stages which must be carried out: a scoping consultation during the four-month lead in; a consultation

on the proposed plan content and evidence between Gateways 1 and 2; and a consultation on the draft Local Plan before Gateway 3 and Submission. The Government will publish more guidance on undertaking consultations in due course, with a drive to more digital engagement and a focus on reaching as wide and diverse a range of consultees as possible.

- 2.9 There are three key checks, or ‘gateways’, which need to be passed to progress the plan, as shown in Figure 1. Passing Gateway 1 (self-assessment) marks the end of the 4-month lead in period and signals the start of the formal 30-month plan making period. Passing Gateway 3 means the plan is ready to be submitted for Examination. In between these two milestones is Gateway 2 where a Planning Inspectorate (PINS) assessor will provide observations and advice on the Local Plan and the progress towards a ‘sound’ plan being delivered.



Figure 1 – Local Plan Process (Extract from Government Guidance)

- 2.10 The proposed indicative Local Plan Timetable is shown in Figure 2. The formal timetable for the new Local Plan, for which approval to publish is sought under Recommendation 2, is presented in Appendix 1.

Regulations	Stages	Date
	Call for Sites	June 2026
Reg.19	Notice of Intention to Commence	30 October 2026
Reg.20	Scoping Consultation	January 2027
Reg.21	Gateway 1 Self-assessment	26 February 2027
Reg.23	Plan Content & Evidence Consultation	July - September 2027
Reg.26	Gateway 2	January 2028
Reg.27	Draft Plan Consultation	June - August 2028
Reg.31-32	Gateway 3	October 2028
Reg.34	Submission for Examination	January 2029
Reg.35	Examination	January - June 2029
Reg.39	Adoption	July 2029

Figure 2 – Rotherham Local Plan Timetable

Local Plan Steering Group

- 2.11 The new plan making system places greater emphasis on front-loaded engagement, project management, and governance. Numerous procedural decisions will be required between Cabinet and Full Council decision points, including consultation material, evidence publication, timetable revisions, and Gateway submissions. Delays in governance processes could adversely affect the Council's ability to meet statutory deadlines.
- 2.12 A Local Plan Steering Group has therefore been proposed to provide strategic oversight, cross-party engagement and programme management. The principal function of the Steering Group is to promote the timely and efficient preparation of the Local Plan. Informal discussion and debate within the Steering Group is intended to prepare the ground for key decisions to be made within the normal publicly accountable reporting structures of the Council.
- 2.13 The Steering Group, comprising relevant members and officers, is intended to:
- Enable early political and corporate understanding and buy in to the preparation and review of the Local Plan.
 - Encourage informal discussion to guide ongoing technical work and formulate options, often on potentially controversial subjects (e.g. housing development sites).
 - Facilitate improved efficiency in corporate and key stakeholder contributions to Local Plan preparation and consultations (e.g. the Rotherham Partnership).
 - Help mitigate identified risks associated with delivering the Local Plan to quality, budget and timescale requirements.
 - Advise on reporting arrangements for key issues to be addressed within the Council's publicly accountable formal decision-making process.
- 2.14 Support will be required from wider Council services, particularly in relation to infrastructure planning. These will include, but are not limited to, Highways and Drainage, Education, Green Spaces, Public Health, Assets, Strategic Housing, Regeneration and Economic Development (RiDO), Pollution Control, Policy, Strategy & Engagement, Finance and Legal Services. Certain teams such as Highways will be represented in the internal Local Plan Project Team meetings to ensure consistent input throughout the process and reporting to the Steering Group.

- 2.15 The Local Plan Steering Group will operate in a non-executive advisory capacity and will not exercise any executive or policy-making powers. All key decisions will remain subject to the Council's established decision-making framework. The Terms of Reference (Appendix 2) establish governance arrangements and identify matters suitable for delegated decision making whilst reserving policy decisions to Cabinet and Full Council. The Planning Board and Overview & Scrutiny Management Board will also be updated and consulted at appropriate stages throughout the process.

Authority Delegations

- 2.16 The preparation and adoption of the Core Strategy and Sites and Policies Documents of the current plan took approximately nine years. With the fundamental changes to the plan-making system, as set out in paragraphs 2.1 – 2.5, the statutory requirement now is for Local Plans to be prepared, examined and adopted within a 2.5 year timeframe. Therefore, the timings for each stage and the governance mechanism to achieve this accelerated programme are crucial.
- 2.17 The proposed delegations relate to the procedural and administrative matters of Local Plan preparation and are necessary to support delivery of the Government's statutory 30-month plan-making process. Recommendations 5 and 6 would enable the Council to fulfil the requirements of the Regulations up to, but not including, Gateway 2 (Regulation 26), with approvals delegated to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy.
- 2.18 The arrangements are necessary to comply with a prescribed national timetable. Under the new system, the Council is required to maintain and regularly update a statutory Plan Timetable, publish documents at key milestones, and progress through a series of gateway stages within prescribed timescales. Delegating authority for Scoping Stage (Regulation 20), Gateway 1 (Regulation 21) and consultation on proposed plan content, draft vision and supporting evidence (Regulation 23) will allow the Council to respond promptly to emerging evidence, meet statutory deadlines and maintain momentum in accordance with the approved Plan Timetable.
- 2.19 The proposed arrangements provide appropriate democratic oversight and are intended to facilitate the effective management of the plan-making process. They do not extend to the determination of substantive planning policy matters which remain the responsibility of Cabinet and Full Council.
- 2.20 Gateway 2 represents the first formal stage at which observations and advice on the emerging Local Plan are sought from the Planning Inspectorate. It is therefore considered an appropriate point for Cabinet to receive a progress update and, if necessary, consider further delegations for subsequent stages of the process through to Gateway 3 and beyond. Key policy decisions, including the preferred spatial strategy, site allocations, submission of the Local Plan for examination and adoption of the Plan, will continue to be subject to the Council's formal decision-making procedures.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

Option 1 (Recommended)

- 3.1 Approve the commencement of preparation of a new Rotherham Local Plan, the publication of the Local Plan Timetable and Notice of Intention to Commence, the establishment of a Local Plan Steering Group, and the proposed delegated authority arrangements to support plan preparation.

This option provides a clear and proportionate governance framework, ensures effective member oversight and engagement throughout the plan-making process, enables statutory requirements and milestones to be met efficiently, and supports the timely preparation and delivery of the Local Plan in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

Option 2

- 3.2 Retain existing governance arrangements and require Cabinet approval for all procedural matters.

This option is not recommended because it would cause unnecessary delays and increase the risk of failing to meet statutory milestones. While the Constitution provides a mechanism for calling additional Cabinet meetings to deal with urgent or emergency matters, and for the call-in process to be suspended where appropriate, reliance on these provisions would not provide an efficient or proportionate approach for routine procedural decisions and could still create practical difficulties in meeting required timescales as set out by Government.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The proposed governance arrangements have been developed through discussions with Planning Policy officers, Governance, Legal Services and senior officers. Subject to approval, the Local Plan Steering Group will include representation from Cabinet Members, opposition members and relevant officers.
- 4.2 The Local Plan itself will be subject to statutory consultation at the Scoping Stage, Plan Content and Evidence Stage and Proposed Plan Consultation Stage, together with engagement throughout the examination process.
- 4.3 Public engagement in Local Plan preparation will be established in line with Regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and Government guidance (see background paper). The methodology and media will be set down in the bespoke Local Plan Community Engagement Strategy.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Government has established a backstop date of 31 December 2026 by which local planning authorities must publish a Notice of Intention to Commence and submit Gateway 1 documentation by 30 April 2027. From the initial Notification to Commence date, all LPAs are essentially now following the same prescribed

statutory timetable for plan-making with the 4-month lead-in time to get ready followed by Gateway 1 and the 30-month process.

- 5.2 The proposed timetable (set out above in paragraph 2.10) includes commencement of plan preparation by 30 October 2026, Gateway 1 in February 2027, Gateway 2 in early 2028, Gateway 3 in late 2028, submission in January 2029 and adoption during summer 2029.
- 5.3 Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment and the Cabinet Member supported by the Local Plan Steering Group and Planning Policy Team, will be responsible for implementation of the Local Plan Timetable and governance arrangements.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The preparation of the Local Plan requires officer resources, statutory consultation, evidence studies, legal advice and potential challenge, costs charged by Planning Inspectorates (PINS) for examination, the need for an independent Programme Officer, and so forth.
- 6.2 On 4 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 the officer decision dated 3rd July 2026. 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.
- 6.3 This report also sets out the timeline for the next Local Plan for which work will need to commence in 2034. This cost needs to be built into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 6.4 Where there is a need to procure specialist evidence for certain technical evidence base documents, these must be undertaken in compliance with relevant procurement legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023 dependent on the route to market) and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Local Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework. Submission and adoption of the Local Plan remain matters reserved to Full Council.
- 7.2 The recommended delegation arrangements are limited to procedural and administrative matters required to support Local Plan commencement and preparation and are consistent with the Council's Constitution and the legal requirements for the commencement and the preparation of the Local Plan set out in the Regulations pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) regulations 2026.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 The Local Plan will be led by the Planning Policy Team with support from officers across the Council.
- 8.2 No direct Human Resources implications arise from this report. Any future staffing requirements will be considered through normal Council processes.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The Local Plan will help shape future housing, education, health and community infrastructure provision across the Borough.
- 9.2 No direct implications arise from the governance proposals contained within this report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Screening Assessment is included in Appendix 3 of the report, and an Equality Analysis is included in Appendix 4 of the report.
- 10.2 The Local Plan process includes extensive consultation and engagement opportunities and must have due regard to Equality Act duties throughout its preparation.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment is included in Appendix 5 of the report. A Climate Change Officer has reviewed the assessment (Tracking Reference: CIA 693).
- 11.2 The decision to commence preparation of a new Local Plan is expected to have an overall positive effect on climate change mitigation and adaptation. At this stage, the climate impacts are largely indirect, as the decision initiates the plan-making process rather than adopting specific planning policies. However, the new Local Plan will play a key role in addressing climate change through the development of future land use, infrastructure and planning policies, and will have a significant influence on carbon emissions, environmental sustainability and climate resilience across the Borough.
- 11.3 While the decision itself will not directly result in significant greenhouse gas emissions, the new Local Plan will establish the framework for future growth and development. This presents an opportunity to embed policies that support the transition to a low-carbon economy by reducing emissions from buildings, transport and energy use, while promoting renewable and low-carbon energy generation, sustainable travel, green infrastructure and measures to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change. Although development facilitated by the Plan may give rise to construction and operational emissions, these impacts can be managed and mitigated through the planning policy framework and development management processes. The climate implications of the emerging Local Plan will be assessed and monitored through the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and supporting evidence base, with ongoing monitoring reported through the Authority Monitoring Report.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 Preparation of the Local Plan will involve close working with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, neighbouring authorities, statutory consultees and infrastructure providers.
- 12.2 Partners will be engaged through statutory consultation stages and ongoing joint evidence work.
- 12.3 Local Plan Infrastructure Stakeholder Group and Officer Group will be established.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The principal risk is failure to meet the statutory timetable, leading to programme delays and potential intervention. There is no provision within the Regulations for a longer plan-making timetable. Failure to make satisfactory progress may result in Government intervention. The proposed governance and delegation arrangements are intended to mitigate this risk by enabling timely decision-making throughout the process.
- 13.2 Further risks include changes to national policy, delays in evidence preparation and dependencies on the emerging Spatial Development Strategy. These will be managed through programme governance and the Local Plan Steering Group.

14. Accountable Officers

Simon Moss, Service Director of Regeneration and Environment

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	22/09/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	14/09/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	18/09/26

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