

Project Initiation Document

Version 1, June 2026

OVERVIEW

Purpose of this Document

This Project Initiation Document (PID) sets out the management framework and approach for delivering the Local Plan. It provides clarity on the plan's overall scope, governance arrangements, resources, and timelines. The PID is designed as a reference tool for the team, stakeholders, and council leaders, supporting effective and timely decision-making and ensuring everyone involved understands their roles and responsibilities throughout the plan-making process. The PID will be kept under review as needed, in the light of any further Government guidance and progress on the plan. The PID is based on the template provided by the Planning Advisory Service.

1. PLAN SCOPE

1.1 Role of Plan

As a local planning authority (LPA), we have a statutory duty under both the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and amendments made by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to prepare and adopt a Local Plan. Our Local Plan establishes how land within our area will be used – which areas will be developed, which will be protected, and how development should occur. It will set out priorities for housing, employment, infrastructure, design, environmental standards, the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and the protection of the countryside.

In planning for housing, the government's 'standard method' provides the initial benchmark for determining the local housing need to be considered. Our policies must contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and generally avoid inconsistency with national decision making policies. In due course, as a spatial development strategy for the area is approved, the local plan must align generally with it. The Act empowers the Secretary of State to specify matters our plan must or may address. Once adopted, our Local Plan will serve as the principal basis for making planning decisions, directly shaping the future growth, development, and sustainability of our communities.

1.2 Summary of Plan Scope

Once the Local Plan Review to 2044 is adopted, it will replace the current Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016 – 2036) adopted on 25 April 2022.

It is anticipated that some of the key challenges the plan review will address are:

- The high need for housing;
- The need for employment;
- The infrastructure needed to support this development, including: sustainable transport, education, health, community and green infrastructure;
- The potential for new communities (or strategic development options – SDOs) to accommodate these needs;
- The importance of delivering these needs whilst:
 - Contributing to climate change mitigation and adaption;
 - Protecting and enhancing international, national and local biodiversity assets;
 - Protecting the countryside, including settlement gaps to protect the distinct and separate identity of settlements;
 - Protecting other important assets in and near the Borough (e.g. the South Downs National Park, heritage designations, flood zones, etc).

The above is a general guide for the purposes of the PID, and will be considered and refined as needed through the plan as it progresses.

1.3 Relationship to other relevant plans and programmes

A wide range of legislation, national, regional and local policy is relevant to the local plan, or aspects of the plan, and will be taken into account in the preparation of the plan. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping document will provide a comprehensive list of all relevant plans and programmes.

Some of the key plans and programmes in relation to the Local Plan at present are the:

- National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance;
- Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (2013, with a review of this plan at an advanced stage of preparation);

- Partnership for South Hampshire's Spatial Position Statement and Statement of Common Ground (2023);
- Local Transport Plans of the relevant transport authorities (e.g. Hampshire and Southampton);
- Strategic environmental mitigation strategies or guidance to address the habitat regulations (i.e. Bird Aware Solent, the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy, the Council's interim mitigation strategy for New Forest recreational disturbance [under review], guidance to achieve nutrient neutrality);
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire;
- Eastleigh Borough Council Corporate Plan 2023 – 2026.

2. PLAN TIMETABLE

2.1 Introduction

The Inspector who examined the now adopted Local Plan (2016 – 2036) recommended the Council commenced a review of this plan within 1 year of its adoption. Accordingly the Council commenced a review of the plan in April 2023.

A new system for preparing local plans was introduced by the Government in March 2026 with the commencement of the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. This sets out various statutory stages and requirements which will all be undertaken for the local plan review under this new system.

However, the work which has been undertaken between April 2023 and March 2026, including the evidence gathering and public consultation, will still help to inform the local plan review.

2.2 Plan Tasks

The key overall tasks to inform the preparation of the plan are:

- A review of national and other relevant policies and legislation;
- Preparation of evidence (see section 5);
- Engagement with interested parties (see section 6), including the preparation of 'Consultation Summaries' which will identify the main issues raised and how the Council has had regard to them;

- Drafting of the plan itself, including:
 - Vision and measurable outcomes;
 - Aims and objectives;
 - Spatial strategy – to identify the scale and location of development and infrastructure provision, and the areas to be protected and enhanced, supported by specific:
 - Development site allocations;
 - Designations for protection and/or enhancement (e.g. for the countryside, open spaces, biodiversity, heritage, etc);
 - Local policies to guide how development occurs (e.g. design, infrastructure provision, etc)*.

*Without duplicating national decision making policies (as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework).

These tasks are undertaken across the key stages of preparing the local plan, as set out below.

2.3 Plan Stages and Timetable

Council approval at key stages will be sought as set out in section 3.

For the latest specific dates anticipated for each stage, see the Local Plan Timetable.

A. TOWARDS ‘NOTICE TO COMMENCE’
March – June 2026
Tasks:
Identify project management, governance, risks, and resources
Continue:
Evidence gathering
Ongoing technical engagement

Commence:
SEA Scoping
Baseline information
Draft Engagement Strategy
Evidence gathering
B. NOTICE TO COMMENCE
25 June 2026
Publish:
The Notice to Commence
Project Initiation Document (PID)
Local Plan Timetable
C. TOWARDS ‘SCOPING CONSULTATION’
March – mid August 2026
Tasks:
Prepare for Scoping Consultation:
Continue:
Tasks commenced or ongoing at stage A.
Commence:
Early consideration of vision and measurable outcomes
Preparation of material for Scoping Consultation (see below)
D. SCOPING CONSULTATION

Public Consultation: 20th August – 24th September 2026
Publish:
Scoping Consultation material (to seek views on issues, priorities, vision, scope of plan, and how to engage)
Draft Engagement Strategy
‘Call for sites’
Draft SEA Scoping for Gateway 1
E. TOWARDS GATEWAY 1
October 2026
Tasks:
Identify overall scope of plan (including site options)
Complete:
Engagement Strategy
SEA Scoping required for Gateway 1
Baseline information
Scope of evidence required
Continue:
Preparation of Vision and measurable outcomes
Ongoing tasks from stages above.
F. GATEWAY 1
29th October 2026
Publish:

Gateway 1 Self Assessment
G. PREPARING FOR PROPOSED LOCAL PLAN CONTENT AND EVIDENCE CONSULTATION
November 2026 – May 2027
Tasks:
To inform and prepare for the Local Plan Content and Evidence consultation:
Prepare Summary of Scoping Consultation
Gather relevant evidence (see section 5)
Undertake ongoing (technical) engagement (see section 6)
Prepare consultation documents
Seek Council approval for consultation documents
Publish:
Summary of Scoping Consultation
H. CONSULTATION ON LOCAL PLAN CONTENT AND EVIDENCE
Public consultation: 3rd June – 15th July 2027
Publish:
'Local Plan Content and Evidence' consultation documents. This will include: -Proposed vision and measurable outcomes -Any proposed aims and objectives -Proposed spatial strategy including the initial approach to: -The selection of preferred development site allocations and -Any other changes to designations from the adopted plan -The initial overall approach to key local policy topic areas (particularly where these are strategic topic areas which relate to the overall spatial strategy / sites / designations and are a change from the adopted plan)

-Map of Proposed Local Plan Policies
Evidence used to inform Local Plan Content
Summary of further evidence to be collected
I. TOWARDS GATEWAY 2
Mid July 2027 – mid November 2027
Tasks:
Prepare summary of consultation (see below)
Publish:
Summary of consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence
J. GATEWAY 2
18th November 2027
Task:
To seek advice from a Planning Inspector on the proposed local plan content, and need for further work, in relation to the plan being 'sound' and meeting the Gateway 3 requirements.
Publish:
The advice once received (and the documents sent when the advice was sought)
K. TOWARDS PROPOSED LOCAL PLAN AND EVIDENCE
Mid July 2027 - May 2028
Tasks:
To inform and prepare for the Proposed Local Plan and Evidence Consultation:
Prepare Summary of Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation

Gather relevant evidence (see section 5)
Undertake ongoing (technical) engagement (see section 6)
Prepare Proposed Local Plan
Seek Council approval for the Local Plan
Publish:
Summary of Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation
L. CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED LOCAL PLAN AND EVIDENCE
Public Consultation: 1st June 2028 – 27th July 2028
Publish:
Proposed Local Plan
Map of Proposed Local Plan Policies
The Evidence to support the plan
Consultation Statement
M. TOWARDS GATEWAY 3
August 2028 – End of September 2028
Tasks:
Prepare consultation summary (see below)
Publish:
Summary of Proposed Local Plan and Evidence consultation
N. GATEWAY 3
28th September 2028

Task:
To seek advice from a Planning Inspector on whether the 'Gateway 3' documents meet the 'prescribed requirements'. The 'Gateway 3' documents are similar to the 'submission documents' (see below). The prescribed requirements identify what the plan should set out, for example: a vision / measurable outcomes; the amount / type / location / timing of development; how it will address climate change and local nature recovery, and a local plan policies map.
Publish:
The advice once received (and the documents sent when the advice was sought)
O. SUBMISSION
26th October 2028
Task / Publish
At the same time as the Gateway 3 advice is received, if that advises that the prescribed requirements are met, the local plan should be submitted, along with various documents including a map of the proposed local plan policies; gateway advice; statements of compliance and soundness; a consultation summary; strategic environmental assessment and supporting documents to demonstrate soundness.
P. EXAMINATION
November 2028 – April 2029
An independent Planning Inspector will conduct a public examination into whether the submitted local plan is legally compliant and sound.
Q. ADOPTION
26th April 2029
If the Local Plan is found by the Planning Inspector to be legally compliant and sound, and the Inspectors modifications are incorporated, the Council can adopt the Plan.

3. GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING

3.1 Summary of Governance

The Council intends to approve the stages of the Local Plan as follows:

Stage		Approval by:
B	Notice to Commence	Council Lead
D	Scoping Consultation	Cabinet
H	Local Plan Content and Evidence	Cabinet and Council
L	Proposed Local Plan and Evidence	
Q	Local Plan Adoption	

3.2 Council Lead (Portfolio Holder)

The Leader of the Council

3.3 Local Plan sponsor and senior management engagement

The Local Plan sponsors are the:

- Service Director for Planning and Environment;
- Planning Policy Manager.

A Local Plan Steering Group has been established to ensure engagement with senior managers and other key staff. This includes representatives from the Council's Corporate Management Board and lead staff for key service areas.

4. STAFF RESOURCE AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 Local Plan Manager

The Planning Policy Manager provides overall management of the team and project management for preparing the Local Plan. The Manager is assisted by 5 team members.

4.2 Local Plan Team

Job Title	FTE	Estimated % of time on Local Plan
Planning Policy Manager	1	75%
Principal Planning Policy Officers	2	75%
Senior – Principal Planning Policy Officer	1	75%
Planning Policy Officer	1	75%
Technical Design Specialist	0.6	75%

4.3 Corporate Support Needs

What is required	When will it be delivered	Who will deliver it
Alignment of Local Plan and Corporate Strategy	Ongoing	Local Plan Steering Group
Technical advice on:		
Planning implementation	Ongoing	Development Management
Transport	Ongoing	Sustainable Transport Planner
Ecology	Ongoing	Ecology team
Landscape	Ongoing	Landscape and design team
Design	Ongoing	
Air quality	Ongoing	Environmental health
Delivery	Ongoing	Property and development teams
Other specific issues	Ongoing	Various as needed
Communications support	Approach to and through public consultation stages and other key stages	Communications team

4.4 Identification of additional skills requirements

Specialist consultants will be used to prepare a range of key evidence.

5. EVIDENCE

5.1 Key Evidence

A range of key evidence is required to inform the preparation of the plan. The following list is not necessarily exhaustive, and will be kept under review as the plan is prepared. The evidence will be available to all interested parties during the relevant public consultation stages, with further engagement with interested parties as the plan is prepared. Only the key statutory stakeholders are listed below.

Statutory Requirements

This evidence is required by legislation.

The SEA will assess the environmental effects of the plan. It will assess the preferred approach to policies and sites and all reasonable alternatives. It will therefore inform the local plan's policies and the scale and location of development.

The HRA will assess the potential for effects on international biodiversity designations. The HRA screening will assess all site options to identify whether there is a 'likely significant effect' (before mitigation). The HRA appropriate assessment will identify whether or not the plan will cause an adverse effect (either before or after mitigation). The HRA will therefore inform the plan's policies, the scale and location of development, and the ability to deliver the proposed plan and sites (consistent with the habitat regulations).

Key Evidence	In house or externally commissioned	Key statutory stakeholders
Strategic Environmental Assessment / Environmental Outcomes Report (SEA / EOR)	External	Environment Agency ; Natural England ; Historic England
Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and supporting studies	External	Environment Agency ; Natural England

Need for Development

The assessments of need will inform the overall scale of development to be considered through the preparation of the plan.

Key Evidence	In house or externally commissioned	Key statutory stakeholders
Overall number of homes needed (the Government's standard method')	External	
Housing Needs Assessment (mix and type of homes)	External	
Employment Needs Assessment	External	
Retail Needs Assessment	External	
Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment	External	
Unmet needs from the wider area	In house / External	Relevant planning authorities

Supply of Development

This evidence will identify the supply of development from existing permitted and allocated sites, and from within the urban areas. This enables the need for additional greenfield sites to be considered.

Key Evidence	In house or externally commissioned	Key statutory stakeholders
Housing land supply / trajectory (including 5 year supply)	In house; (external)	
Urban delivery	In house / external	
Employment and other land supply	In house	

Scale and Location of Development

This evidence will assess site options for new development, particularly greenfield sites. This will enable the location and overall scale of development to be determined through the 'Overall Approach to Site Selection'. This in turn is informed by the following evidence:

- SEA / HRA
- Need for and supply of development

- The individual studies listed below.

Key Evidence	In house or externally commissioned	Key statutory stakeholders
Overall Approach to Site Selection	In house	See below and SEA / HRA
Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)	In house	
Site Development Capacity	In house	
Transport Assessment and Transport Modelling	External	Relevant transport authorities: Hampshire County Council; National Highways; Southampton City Council. Also the South Downs National Park Authority.
Air Quality Assessment	External	Natural England
Biodiversity Assessment	In house	Natural England; the Environment Agency
Landscape Assessment	External	South Downs National Park Authority
Settlement Gap Assessment	In house / external	
Heritage Assessment	External	Historic England
Strategic flood risk assessment	External	Environment Agency
Various (agricultural land, minerals, open spaces, previously developed land, etc)	In house	

Infrastructure and Delivery

This evidence assesses:

- the infrastructure needed to support the overall scale and location of development (e.g. transport, education, health, green and utilities infrastructure);
- the deliverability of the development and infrastructure.

Key Evidence	In house or externally commissioned	Key statutory stakeholders
New Forest Mitigation Strategy	In house / External	Natural England
Open Space / Playing Pitches Assessment	External	Sport England
Infrastructure Delivery Plan	In house	Various
Viability Assessment	External	

6. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Engagement Approach

Engagement will take place in accordance with statutory requirements and the Council's Engagement Strategy. This will include engagement with:

- Statutory bodies (e.g. transport authorities, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England, relevant planning authorities, etc);
- Communities (e.g. local communities / groups, Parish Councils, etc);
- Other interested parties (e.g. with other infrastructure / service providers, developers, other interested groups).

Engagement will include:

- On going (technical) engagement – emails, meetings, etc. with relevant organisations, often technical in nature. (This will also include ongoing internal discussions within the Council);
- Public consultation – where everyone has the opportunity to comment.

7. BUDGET OVERVIEW

7.1 Cost Estimates

The staffing requirements and the estimates of other spend (e.g. on evidence, public engagement and the examination) for 2026/27 - 2028/29 are incorporated within the Council's medium term financial plan approved as part of the 2026/27 budget approval.

8. RISKS AND MITIGATION

8.1 Summary of Key Risks Identified

Risk	Planning Policy or other staff leave
Likelihood	Unknown
Impact	Depends on whether staff can be replaced at right level of skills / experience; in any case there is likely to be a period where a post is vacant.
Mitigation	Supportive organisation / management, realistic workload / timelines.

Risk	Financial resources reduce
Likelihood	Low. The local government sector is under financial pressure. However, the Local Plan has a high priority within the Council, and the financial estimates for the Local Plan are fully incorporated into the financial plan to 2028/29.
Impact	If resources were reduced, this would lead to a significant impact on the ability to prepare the local plan and supporting evidence.
Mitigation	Ongoing internal liaison on the plan will maintain awareness of the importance of the Local Plan. Ongoing financial monitoring of local plan needs will identify any issues at an early stage.

Risk	Tasks take longer than anticipated
Likelihood	Medium
Impact	If tasks were rushed to make up time, this may risk an unsound plan. If tasks take a little longer the Government's guidance on preparing local plans within 30 months may be exceeded slightly. The timetable in this PID is based on positive but reasonable assumptions (e.g. assuming no unanticipated delay) through to consultation on the proposed local plan (June 2028). This provides a good framework for progressing / monitoring the project over the next 2 years. Beyond June 2028 the timetable is very positive, and designed to meet the Government's guidance that plans should be submitted / adopted within 24 / 30 months of Gateway 1 (i.e. October 2028 / April 2029). This timeline will be kept under review as we approach June 2028. If the plan is ahead of schedule at this stage, the 24 / 30 month timetable may be fully achieved. In any case the project will be managed to ensure any extension is minimal.

Mitigation	The Planning Policy Manager will project manage the preparation of the Local Plan to ensure the key tasks are initiated / progressed at or before the point by which they need to occur to support subsequent stages of the plan preparation.
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Risk	Local Government Reform
Likelihood	High. The Government has announced that Eastleigh Borough Council will merge with Southampton City Council and parts of New Forest District Council and Test Valley Borough Council in April 2028.
Impact	Medium. The intention is to continue to prepare a Local Plan for the geographical area of the current Eastleigh Borough, and for this plan to be submitted and adopted by the new Council (as these stages will occur after April 2028).
Mitigation	A shadow authority will be in place for the new Council from April 2027. Through 2027/28 the shadow authority will be kept fully briefed on the emerging plan to enable the new Council to take timely decisions after April 2028.

Risk	Emerging guidance / regulations relevant to local plans
Likelihood	High
Impact	The local plan regulations and guidance on the overall process, and detailed guidance to Gateway 1 have been published and reflected in this PID. It is understood that the Environmental Outcome Report (EOR) Regulations and further local plan guidance (e.g. on the detail of the later stages of plan preparation) will be published at a later date. The local plan regulations clearly cover the overall process. It is understood the EOR will take a similar approach to the existing SEA, and will include a transition mechanism. If this is the case, and the transition is effective / flexible, this will minimise impacts.
Mitigation	The Planning Policy team will maintain awareness of likely / actual changes (e.g. via the Planning Advisory Service, professional press / networks, etc).

9. APPROVAL OF THIS PID

			Date Approved
Author	Graham Tuck	Planning Policy Manager	N/A
Approved by:	Councillor Keith House	Leader of Council, Cabinet Portfolio Lead for Planning Policy	22.05.2026
	Andy Grandfield	Service Director for Planning and Environment	23.06.2026