

**Portfolio holder decision – Portfolio holder for Planning and Economy - 9 December 2025**

**Update to Local Plan Local Development Scheme**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report seeks approval to update the current work programme (the 'Local Development Scheme') for preparing the Local Plan to take account of the government's statutory consultation on proposed Local Government Reorganisation.</p> <p>The key proposed change from the previously agreed work programme is that consultation of the Regulation 18 Local Plan Spatial Options and Policy Direction is scheduled to take place in February - March 2026, rather than November 2025 - January 2026.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>That the revised Local Development Scheme for preparing the Local Plan Review is approved and published.</b>
Reasons for recommendation	Having an up-to-date Local Development Scheme is a key requirement of legislation when preparing the Local Plan Review. The updates proposed are needed to reflect the government's statutory consultation on proposed Local Government Reorganisation.
Ward	All wards outside the National Park
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Derek Tipp – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy
Strategic Director	James Carpenter – Strategic Director for Place, Operations and Sustainability
Officer Contact	<p>Tim Guymer Assistant Director for Place Development <a href="mailto:tim.guymer@nfdc.gov.uk">tim.guymer@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Dean Brunton Service Manager - Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Delivery</p>

	<p><a href="mailto:dean.brunton@nfdc.gov.uk">dean.brunton@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p> <p>James Smith Planning Policy Team Leader <a href="mailto:james.smith@nfdc.gov.uk">james.smith@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>
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## **Introduction and background**

1. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the timetable and scope for preparing planning policy documents (like the Local Plan) over a given period. It was most recently updated in August 2025, setting out a planned work programme for the preparation of the Local Plan Review, a key priority for delivery of this council as set out in its Corporate Plan. This set out an intended programme of work to include consultation on emerging Local Plan proposals in November 2025 through to January 2026.
2. Outside of the control of this council, the government has continued to progress work on proposed Local Government Reorganisation, which includes potential radical reform for local authority administration across Hampshire and the Solent. Of particular issue to this council are the differing emerging options for the New Forest.
3. In late October/early November 2025, it became clear that the Government would be proceeding with formal statutory consultation in November on all emerging options affecting New Forest District, including potential boundary changes.
4. The council recognises that this consultation, which contains competing proposals for the future administration in the New Forest, is a vital moment for residents, partners, and neighbouring councils to help shape the future of local government in the Forest.
5. Taking into account the nature and extent of the consultation planned by this council on the Local Plan Review, it was concluded that progressing both consultations simultaneously would not be in the best interests of New Forest communities. The council therefore temporarily paused consultation on the Local Plan Review until there was clarity about the end date for the government's consultation.
6. The government's statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation has now commenced and is due to conclude on 11 January 2026.
7. With this clarity, the LDS is now proposed to be updated to enable consultation on the Local Plan Review to commence as expediently as possible after the end of the government's consultation.

## **Existing Local Development Scheme**

8. The current LDS states that the council would consult on a 'Spatial Options and Policy Direction' document in late 2025/early 2026. This would be in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012.
9. The LDS then states a further round of consultation to take place in Autumn 2026 under Regulation 19 of the Regulations, prior to submission of the Plan for Examination by the Secretary of State in December 2026.
10. It is a requirement under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to have an up-to-date LDS in place, therefore as the current LDS is now out of date it is important that it is updated.

## **Recommended updates to Local Development Scheme**

11. To take account of the pausing of the Local Plan consultation until after the end of the government's statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation, a revised work programme for the preparation of the Local Plan Review is now recommended.
12. This programme reschedules the Spatial Options and Policy Direction consultation to commence in early February 2026 for six weeks, concluding in mid-March. The consultation is expected to set out potential growth options and potential sites which are being explored further for their development potential. The council will not be finalising policies or potential spatial strategies at this stage but rather seeking feedback on the direction they should take.
13. This revised programme still allows for a consultation on the Regulation 19 plan, which is the final draft of the plan that the council intends to submit to the Secretary of State for independent examination, in Autumn 2026 ready for submission by the end of 2026.

## **Corporate plan priorities**

14. The preparation of the Local Plan Review is a key priority of the Corporate Plan.

## **Options appraisal**

15. Given the preparation of the Local Plan Review is a key priority of the Corporate Plan, there are limited alternative options to consider currently. This is particularly the case when taking account of the strong encouragement from government for local planning authorities

to have prepared and submitted local plans for examination to the Secretary of State by December 2026 against the current legal framework for plan-making.

16. The alternative option would be to halt work on this Local Plan and begin preparation of a new Local Plan under the forthcoming new planning system. Whilst some details of this new system have been confirmed in a letter from the Secretary of State received by this council on 27 November, the regulations underpinning this have not yet been laid and are not expected to come into force until early next year.
17. It is officers' advice at this time, and without details of the regulations, that a Local Plan prepared under the new system would result in a timetable for its preparation well beyond April 2028. This would be increasingly impacted by planned local government reorganisation. Given the significant housing need and the Local Plan becoming increasingly out of date, this is not considered a preferred option.
18. Proceeding now under the existing system provides the greatest certainty and aligns with government expectations for timely plan-making.

### **Consultation undertaken**

19. Officers are actively engaging with both the Planning Inspectorate and the Planning Advisory Service to ensure that the revised timetable is achievable and meets the government's expectation for a Local Plan to be submitted before December 2026.
20. Within the council, the Local Plan Member Working group continues to meet and has actively engaged in discussions on the key issues and updates on the evidence base studies. An officer working group also meets to discuss key issues and emerging findings. Externally, there are also regular meetings with adjoining authorities and key partners to discuss planning matters relevant to plan making, including cross boundary issues such as development needs.

### **Financial and resource implications**

21. In February 2025, Cabinet approved an initial budget of £700k for the Local Plan Review which is being used for evidence-based studies. In early 2025, the council were additionally awarded £70k towards undertaking a Green Belt study and £227k towards progressing the Local Plan in the current system by December 2026.
22. The timetable for this submission is tight and the team is likely to rely on external consultants to undertake some of the background

work and policy writing where possible. The need for potential additional resource will therefore need to be kept under review.

### **Legal implications**

23. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and associated regulations, provides the legislative framework which requires that councils should prepare a local plan and keep it up to date.

### **Risk assessment**

24. The proposed updates to the LDS would result in a turnaround between Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 of the plan making process of less than six months, far shorter than the typical 12–18-month period. The scale of the Local Plan Review—including housing need and provision, environmental constraints, Solent Freeport, climate adaptation, and major sites—requires substantial evidence and justification. Proceeding at pace increases the chances of the Plan being found unsound at examination.

### **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

25. An up-to-date Local Plan is essential if the council is to stay in control of the planning of its area and ensure a high-quality environment.

### **Equalities implications**

26. None directly from this report

### **Crime and disorder implications**

27. None directly from this report

### **Data protection/ Information governance/ ICT implications**

28. Consultation on the Local Plan requires the collection and processing of personal information in a manner compliant with GDPR.

### **New Forest National Park/ Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications**

29. The New Forest National Park Authority are required to produce and review their own local plan. The timetable proposed by this council now falls slightly behind that of the National Park Authority, albeit the intention is to submit the Local Plan for examination at approximately the same time.

## **Recommendation**

30. I endorse the recommendation in this report.

Signed: Cllr Derek Tipp

Dated: 9 December 2025

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Revised LDS

### **Background Papers:**

None

Date on which notice given of this decision – 9 December 2025

Last date for call in – 16 December 2025