

CABINET

18 March 2026

Draft Minute Extract

ADOPTION OF THE WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2040 AND THE PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL PLAN 2044 (CL177)

Councillor Porter introduced the report which recommended that full Council approve the Local Plan 2040, emphasising the amount of public consultation that had been undertaken to date and that all contributions received throughout the process has been considered and assessed. The Inspector had concluded that with the main modifications, the local plan was sound and legally compliant. The report also set out proposals to start the preparation of the next Local Plan until 2044. A number of minor amendments to report CL177 were required with an amended version of the report to be prepared for Full Council.

Councillor Porter advised that the report had been considered by Scrutiny Committee on 17 March and the draft minutes of that meeting had been circulated to all members present.

Councillor Tod further advised that the composite Local Plan (appendix 3 to CL177) had been published with the agenda for the Full Council meeting on 24 March 2026. He also drew attention to an amendment to recommendation 2 of the report to note the correct date of Full Council was 24 March (not 21 May as stated).

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee and Horrill addressed Cabinet as summarised below.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee welcomed the Inspector's finding that the Local Plan 2040 was sound, noting it provided a robust framework against speculative development and included strong policies on climate, biodiversity and energy. However, he reiterated concerns raised at the Scrutiny Committee about whether officers had the necessary skills to apply and implement new energy efficiency standards. He also expressed concern that emerging national planning reforms could undermine the council's local ambition by restricting the ability of councils to set high energy standards and whether the council would seek to influence the government on this issue. Finally, noting the short timeframe to prepare the next Local Plan and the impact of local government reorganisation (LGR), he asked how strategic risks would be mitigated.

Councillor Horrill

Councillor Horrill welcomed the proposal to adopt the new Local Plan. Noting that the Inspector had overruled the proposed policy to prioritise brownfield over greenfield sites, she questioned what measures could be taken to

influence developers on this matter. She queried how the valuable knowledge in Village Design Statements and Supplementary Planning Documents could be meaningfully preserved. In respect of points raised at Scrutiny Committee, she raised concerns regarding the potential for developers to be supported to maximising land use beyond the housing numbers originally accepted by local communities. She concluded by emphasising the need to maintain strong resident engagement to ensure the public remains confident in the district's development process.

Councillor Porter, together with the Corporate Head of Planning and Regulatory and Strategic Planning Manager responded to the comments made, including clarification on points raised at Scrutiny Committee regarding ensuring efficient use of allocated land and differences in relation to the development of brownfield and greenfield sites.

The Strategic Planning Manager provided further information regarding the proposals to ensure developers, officers and agents received training on the new energy efficiency standards. Discussions were ongoing with Cornwall Council who have adopted similar energy efficiency standards. The need for training and upskilling of staff, developers and Planning Committee Members has already been raised at the Developers Forum. Specialist consultants (Etude) would be engaged to support the training and upskilling and used in the interim to assist with the assessment of applications.

Councillor Porter stated that Scrutiny Committee had agreed two recommendations for further consideration by Cabinet as follows:

- a) That a clear timetable be provided detailing the transition period for upskilling staff and implementing the new energy efficiency standards (LETI/BREEAM) within the planning application process.
- b) That a briefing be arranged for members detailing how the council planned to meet the compressed 30-month deadline for the Local Plan 2044 while ensuring adequate and robust consultation.

Cabinet agreed that both points should be progressed. In relation to (b), it was requested that the timetable be considered alongside the Spatial Development Strategy for the newly constituted Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority.

Cabinet requested that recommendation 5(b) of the report be amended to delegate authority to approve and publish a revised Local Plan timetable in consultation with the Cabinet Member. This was agreed.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RECOMMENDED (TO COUNCIL):

Part 1 – Winchester District Local Plan 2020–2040 (Adoption)

1. That the Inspector’s conclusions that the Winchester District Local Plan 2020–2040 is legally compliant and sound, subject to the recommended Main Modifications, are accepted.

2. That the Winchester District Local Plan 2020–2040, incorporating the Inspector’s Main Modifications (as amended), Additional Modifications and associated changes to the Policies Map, proceeds to Full Council on 24 March 2026 for adoption in accordance with Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and Section 23(2) and (3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

3. That upon adoption of the Winchester District Local Plan 2020–2040, the existing Development Plan Documents (Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy, Local Plan Part 2 – Development Management and Site Allocations, and the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document) are withdrawn as they will be superseded.

4. That authority is delegated to the Corporate Head of Planning and Regulatory Services to make any non-material corrections to the Winchester District Local Plan 2020–2040, including factual updates, grammatical or formatting amendments, prior to publication in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).