



Alison McGovern MP

Minister for Local Government and Homelessness

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Dear Ministers,

Local Plans and Local Government Reorganisation Boundary Changes

I am writing to ask for clarification about how Winchester City Council can reconcile the new planning process laid out in the 'Roll out of the new plan-making process' guidance updated on March 6 – with the plan for boundary changes – especially the boundary changes for LPAs – outlined for Hampshire and the Solent in Local Government Reorganisation on March 26.

Assuming current timings are held, we are expected to:

1. **Publish a notice of intention to commence plan-making by 30 June 2026 and to publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026.** Under the new 30-month process, we are then expected fix boundaries for the lifetime of the process and then:
 - a. Months 1-23 (October 2026-September 2028): Prepare the plan
 - b. Months 24-29 (October 2028-March 2029): Submit the plan for examination
 - c. Months 30-31 (April 2029-May 2029): Adopt and publish the policies map
2. **Reorganise our authority/LPA on 1st April 2028 – during the plan preparation phase – alongside New Forest district, Test Valley borough and East Hampshire district – into a new Mid Hampshire authority.** A small part of our authority – alongside much larger parts of the other mid-Hampshire authorities/LPAs – will split off and transfer into new South-East Hampshire or South-West Hampshire authorities on the same date.

Changing boundaries half-way through the Local Plan process has the following consequences:

1. **If we start the process using existing Winchester City Council boundaries, preparation of the resulting plan would then need to be separately continued, submitted and adopted separately by the new Mid Hampshire and South East Hampshire authorities – but would not be a comprehensive plan for either area.**
We are also unaware of any power to bind our successors to any plan process or timetable.
2. **There is no mechanism – that we know of – to enable the plan to start on Mid Hampshire authority boundaries – and the other 3 authorities that are the planning authorities for the remainder of the area have not been asked to develop their plans on the same timing as Winchester City Council – nor is there any power to require them to do so.**

What is the Government's plan for regulations or guidance to resolve this issue – and enable a robust plan to be delivered in May 2029? Is it possible for the SCO for Local Government Reorganisation to bring both processes together? We are very keen to move ahead quickly with a positive plan for our area both before and after reorganisation.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Cllr Martin Tod

Leader, Winchester City Council
cc: Laura Taylor, Chief Executive