

Alison McGovern MP*Minister for Local Government and Homelessness***Matthew Pennycook MP***Minister for Housing and Planning*2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DFContact: Martin Tod
Direct Line: [REDACTED]
Email: mtod@winchester.gov.uk
Date: June 30, 2026

Dear Ministers,

Timely delivery of a new Local Plan for Winchester and Mid Hampshire

Winchester City Council has now published a notice of intention to commence plan making on the current boundaries of our LPA – as instructed by the Ministry on March 6, 2026.

As per my letter of June 10, it is questionable what value this step will deliver for the public, the current council or any future councils in ensuring well-planned housing delivery in the Mid Hampshire area.

In 21 months' time, on April 1, 2028, our council will cease to exist, and the plan work we are commencing will end, because no single authority will exist to take over development of the process we are starting – nor would a plan on these boundaries serve any useful purpose for the new authorities that are being created.


The City Council remains keen to proceed with a positive plan – both for the Winchester area – and for the new Mid Hampshire Authority. At the same time as authorising the notice of intention, I and my colleagues also authorised our Strategic Director for Place to engage with other planning authorities in the Mid Hampshire area to explore opportunities for collaborative or joint plan-making and shared evidence gathering for the proposed Mid Hampshire geography.

But even if we succeed in starting a Joint Plan for Mid Hampshire, much remains unknown:

- **Will any work done have any status with or value for the new authorities that are being created?** Will the evidence base have value post-reorganisation? Will the new authority be required to deliver against any 30-month timetable that the current authorities initiate?
- **Will there be adjustments to the 'New Plan Making Process' to reflect LGR?** For example, will there be any changes to the 30-month process to give the Shadow Authority a role in the decision-making process from next year?
- **How will this be brought into effect?** Will it be contained within the Structural Change Order, via new regulations or via guidance?
- **And when will any new process happen?** It will be extremely helpful if clarity is available well in advance of our required 'Gateway 1 self-assessment' on October 31, 2026. The longer these issues remain unresolved, the greater the risk that public time and money is wasted on a process with little or no practical value.

We are very keen to move ahead quickly with a positive plan for our area both before and after reorganisation. I know that you recognise the challenges posed to plan making by local authority reorganisation and are developing transitional arrangements to address them. If we can help refine these, we will be happy to help. The sooner these arrangements are available, the better it will be for residents, developers and the future of our area.

Yours sincerely,


Cllr Martin Tod

Leader, Winchester City Council

cc: Laura Taylor, Chief Executive