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Contact Cheryl Headon
Email 

FAO Joanne Key
Director General, Regeneration, Housing and Planning
Will Garton
Director General for Local Government at the UK's Ministry of Housing, Communities
and Local Government (MHCLG)

Wednesday 9th September 2026

Dear Joanne and Will,

Commencement of Local Plan in the new plan making process

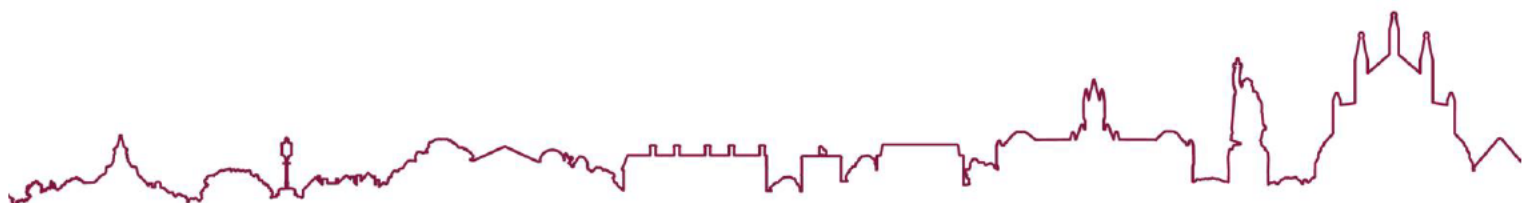
I write further to the Government's announcement on Monday 7 September 2026 that its decision on local government reorganisation (LGR) in Hampshire has been withdrawn while a rapid review takes place.

As you will be aware, Winchester City Council adopted its Local Plan 2020–2040 on 24 March 2026 under the relevant transitional arrangements. We are therefore required to commence plan-making under the new 30-month process, including publishing our Notice of Intention by 30 June 2026 and moving through Gateway 1 by 30 October 2026.

We have been awaiting both the publication of the transitional arrangements for plan-making in areas affected by LGR and responses to the specific questions we have raised with Government. This clarity is essential to enable us to determine the appropriate geography and scope of our next Local Plan and to commence our scoping consultation and a meaningful Gateway 1 self-assessment.

This week's announcement has created further uncertainty. In particular, we do not yet know whether the previously proposed boundaries will remain, be amended or be replaced by a different arrangement following the rapid review.

Until now, we have been planning on the basis that most of the Winchester district would transfer to a Mid-Hampshire authority, with Newlands Parish area transferring to South East Hampshire. This created significant questions about the appropriate



plan geography, particularly as Winchester City Council would cease to exist before the examination and adoption stages of the new 30-month plan-making process. The rapid review means that even these assumptions can no longer be relied upon.

The Council remains committed to positive and timely plan-making. However, it would not be sensible for us to commence our scoping consultation or undertake a Gateway 1 self-assessment based on assumptions that may shortly change, nor to commence work that could be abortive or inconsistent with the future geography of the area.

We are therefore formally requesting an extension to the current 30 October 2026 deadline for Winchester City Council to move through Gateway 1. We ask that the revised deadline allows sufficient time for:

- the Government's rapid review of the Hampshire LGR proposals to conclude;
- the relevant transitional plan-making arrangements to be published;
- our outstanding questions to be answered; and
- the Council to consider that information before we commence our scoping consultation and complete an informed Gateway 1 self-assessment.

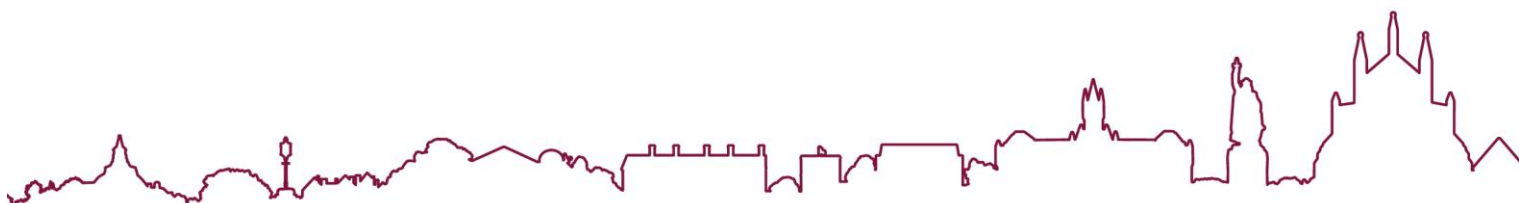
For ease of reference, my three previous letters can be found here: [Letters to Government – Winchester District Local Plan](#).

While today's formal request for an extension is new and has been prompted by this week's announcement, the underlying questions remain the same as those raised in my previous correspondence and for which we are still awaiting answers.

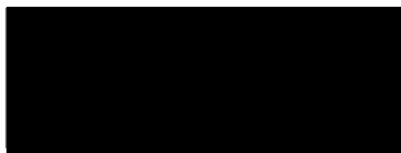
We would welcome early confirmation that an extension will be granted, together with an indication of the revised timetable that will apply. This would help us manage our resources, work programme and Member expectations appropriately while continuing to progress work that will remain relevant under any future arrangements.

In the absence of the information we have been waiting for we have not been able to commence the preparation work to support us progressing to gateway 1 assessment.

Given the proximity of the current deadline, I would be grateful for an urgent response.



Yours sincerely



Cheryl Headon
Strategic Director
Winchester City Council

cc:

[Redacted] Senior Planning Officer
[Redacted] Director General, Regeneration, Housing and
Planning
[Redacted]
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