

## Winchester District Local Plan 2026-2044

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### 1) Why is the planning system changing?

The planning system is being updated by the government to create a more efficient, consistent and transparent approach to plan-making. The changes introduce a *mandatory 30-month timetable* for preparing, examining and adopting Local Plan, helping to reduce delays and ensure plans are kept up to date. They also include greater use of *digital technologies*, earlier engagement with different stakeholders, and three *Gateway stages*:

- Gateway 1 - Readiness and Scoping (Scoping consultation)
- Gateway 2 (Draft Plan and Early Soundness Check)
- Gateway 3 (Examination Readiness Check)

Further information on each stage is available to view [here](#)

#### 2) What is a local plan and why is it important?

A local plan provides a framework for how an area will grow and change over time. It identifies where new homes, jobs, infrastructure and community facilities should be located, while also protecting the natural and built environment.

A local plan plays a vital role in guiding planning decisions and ensuring that development is delivered in a planned, coordinated and sustainable manner.

#### 3) What time period will the new local plan cover?

The Winchester District Local Plan will cover the period from 2026 to 2044. The current adopted Local Plan covers 2020–2040 will continue to guide development until it is replaced by the new plan.

#### 4) What is the timetable for preparing the local plan?

The timetable for Winchester District Local Plan (excluding the South Downs National Park) has been prepared in line with the plan-making process set out in Regulation 4 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. It is a live document that can be found on the [Local Plan website](#) that will be reviewed and updated to ensure stakeholders remain informed about progress.

The process begins with early scoping (the current consultation), which will determine the key issues the plan should address and inform the preparation

of a new community engagement strategy. This will be followed by two further consultations on draft versions of the plan before it is submitted for examination.

#### **5) What is happening with work on a Joint Local Plan?**

Discussions have been taking place with the other Mid Hampshire local planning authorities regarding the potential preparation of a Joint Local Plan ahead of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). However, these discussions have not yet progressed to a stage where a formal commitment to prepare a Joint Local Plan has been agreed, largely because the Government has not yet published the relevant transitional arrangements.

Given the Government's requirement for the City Council to reach Gateway 1 by the end of October 2026, a decision has been made to proceed with consultation on this Scoping Report. Any comments received through the consultation process will remain relevant and can be used to inform either the preparation of the Local Plan 2044 or, should agreement be reached at a later date, the preparation of a Joint Local Plan.

#### **6) Why are we undertaking a Scoping consultation?**

The Scoping Consultation is a new requirement introduced by planning legislation in 2026 and is the first stage in preparing the Local Plan 2044. It provides an opportunity for different stakeholders to identify the key issues the plan should address before detailed policies, a vision, development sites or allocations are prepared. The feedback received will help inform the evidence base, shape future stages of plan-making and ensure the Local Plan focuses on the issues that matter most to the District (excluding the South Downs National Park)

#### **7) What will be excluded from the Scoping consultation?**

The allocations of sites are not part of the Scoping consultation. Allocated sites that are needed to meet the development strategy are considered much later in the plan making process. The purpose of the scoping consultation is to seek views on the content and direction of the Local Plan. It is therefore **not** inviting or seeking submissions of new development sites for allocation. This has already been undertaken through the 2025 Call for Sites exercise. Any site details submitted through the Scoping consultation will not be accepted.

#### **8) What type of questions have been included in the Scoping consultation?**

The Scoping consultation asks for views on how the Council should engage with different stakeholders throughout the preparation of the Local Plan 2044. In addition, it asks questions about the key issues facing the area up to 2044. These include topics such as housing, the economy, climate change,

transport, infrastructure, town centres, health and wellbeing, flooding, the natural environment and the historic environment which are based around the headings in the [Government's National Planning Policy Framework](#).

The consultation is focused on identifying the issues and priorities the Local Plan should address, rather than commenting on specific development sites or detailed planning policies.

#### **9) How can I submit any comments?**

You can submit comments online via the [consultation portal](#) or if you do not have access to a computer by post to:

Winchester City Council  
City Offices  
Colebrook Street  
Winchester  
SO23 9LJ

#### **10) Will my comments be made public?**

Comments submitted on the Local Plan scoping consultation will be published and made available to view after the consultation closes, including the name of the person making the representation. No other personal information, such as addresses and contact details, will be published. Personal data will be handled in accordance with the Council's [Privacy Policy](#).

#### **11) When is the deadline for submitting comments on the Scoping consultation?**

The Scoping consultation starts on **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2026 to 23:59 on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2026**.

#### **12) What happens after the Scoping consultation closes?**

Following the consultation:

- We will review all comments received.
- A summary of responses will be published.
- Any feedback that we receive at this initial stage of the process will help to inform the next stage of plan-making.

If you have not signed up to Local Plan updates, please use this link [here](#) to be notified about future Local Plan consultation and key steps in the Local Plan preparation.