

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

20 MAY 2026

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

# Stockton on Tees Local Plan

### Summary

In January 2024, in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, a five-year review of the Local Plan concluded that a full update through a new Local Plan was required. Council agreed that progressing a new Local Plan under the emerging plan-making system was the most robust and cost-effective approach.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 came into force on 25 March 2026, introducing a new regulatory framework for the preparation of Local Plans, Minerals and Waste Plans, and Supplementary Plans.

This report seeks Council's agreement to commence a new Local Plan in accordance with the 2026 Regulations, authorising all required elements to allow for progression through the 'getting ready' stage, including giving a notice of intention to MHCLG by 31 December 2026, and meeting all the necessary requirements to enable the commencement of Gateway 1 by 30 April 2027.

The report also seeks approval to establish a cross-party consultative and advisory steering group to support the Local Plan process.

Cabinet will be considering this report at its meeting on 14 May 2026 and are being asked to make the following recommendations to Council.

### Recommendations

1. That Council approves the commencement of a full update of the Stockton on Tees Local Plan in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) as amended and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
2. That Council delegates the preparation, publication and submission of a 'Notice of intention to commence the Stockton on Tees Local Plan' to the Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing and that this will be made available in accordance with the Local Plan Timetable and no later than September 2026.

3. That Council approves the preparation and submission of an updated Local Plan Timetable in broad accordance with Appendix 1 and authorises its submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and its publication.
4. That Council delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member to update and publish the Local Plan Timetable monthly or as required, to ensure an up-to-date timetable is publicly available in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
5. That Council approves the commencement of a Design Guide Supplementary Plan to comply with the requirement of Section 15B and 15F(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing to produce a draft document for consultation.
6. That Council authorises officers to explore the preparation of a Joint Minerals and Waste Plan with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities and delegate to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, the responsibility for all matters relating to Stockton-on-Tees Borough, including;
  - a. the commissioning of an associated evidence base (as necessary);
  - b. develop a 'Joint Minerals and Waste Plan agreement' under section 15I of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) as amended;
  - c. develop a Minerals and Waste Plan Timetable;
  - d. undertake a 'scoping consultation' on the joint Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Local Plan; and
  - e. produce all associated documentation to allow to progress the joint Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Local Plan to progress through Gateway 1.
7. That Council delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, to agree commencement of the scoping consultation for the Local Plan which will:
  - a. provide an opportunity for residents, community groups, businesses and other interested parties to register to be notified of Local Plan updates, via the Council website;

- b. consultation taking place in accordance with the Local Plan Regulations;
  - c. consultation material being made publicly available; and
  - d. a consultation plan being produced prior to Gateway 1 after having regard to comments made during the statutory scoping consultation.
8. That Council delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, to undertake all necessary steps to inform and prepare the documents for the Gateway 1 self-assessment which may include commissioning evidence, undertaking a call for sites and preparing draft vision, Local Plan content and consultation plan, on the proposed local plan.
  9. That Council approves the formation of a cross-party consultative and advisory Members working group in broad accordance with the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix 2 to support the Local Plan process.

### **A New Plan Making system**

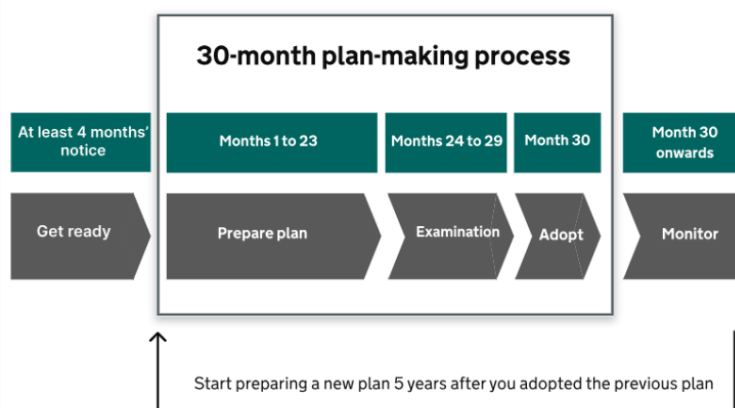
1. In January 2024, in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, a five year review of the Local Plan was undertaken. This review concluded that a full update, in the form of a new Local Plan, was required. Council agreed with this recommendation and confirmed that progressing a new Local Plan under the emerging plan making system represented the most robust and cost-effective way forward.
2. In the interim period, work has progressed on developing internal governance arrangements, preparing conservation area appraisals, and building up elements of the evidence base.
3. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new plan-making framework that fundamentally reshapes the development plan system with a streamlined 30-month process. The Government has since introduced the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 on 25 March 2026 confirming the procedures for this new plan-making framework.
4. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's agreement to commence a new Local Plan in accordance with the 2026 Regulations and to give notice to MHCLG of the Council's intention to commence plan-making. This will ensure compliance with the Government's backstop deadline of 31 December 2026. The associated recommendations will enable progression of the Local Plan through the 'getting ready' stage and support the completion of all necessary preparatory steps required to enter the formal plan-making process, known as Gateway 1.
5. As part of the new Local Plan process, all plans prepared under the new system must publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment by 30 April 2027. Upon entering Gateway 1, there is a statutory 30-month period within which the Local Plan must progress through all stages to adoption.

6. To ensure timely progress and compliance with statutory requirements, appropriate delegations will be required to enable officers to undertake and complete the necessary procedural steps, with Council continuing to make decisions on the substantive elements at the relevant stages of the process.
7. At this stage, authorisation is sought to proceed through the various preparatory steps to enable progression towards Gateway 1. Further reports providing updates and seeking relevant approvals and delegations will be presented at the appropriate stages.
8. For completeness, Members should be aware that the Secretary of State has powers to intervene in the plan-making process where key milestones are not achieved or where satisfactory progress is not being made.

### Process Overview

9. Under the new plan-making system, there are new statutory requirements which the council must adhere to, to ensure a plan process is compliant with legislation. This includes a 30-month timeframe for plan preparation and adoption and involves scoping consultation, two plan consultations and progression through three gateways as the Local Plan progresses through the system.
10. The overall process is outlined within the figures below;

**Figure 1 – 30-month Local Plan process**



11. As part of the new Local Plan process, all plans under the new system must give notice of intention to commence by 31st December 2026 and publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment by 30th April 2027.

### ‘Getting ready’ stage (a minimum of four months prior to Gateway 1)

12. Prior to progressing through ‘Gateway 1’ is the ‘Getting ready stage’ which should occur a minimum of four months before. This stage is about being ready to start plan making and being confident that adoption can be achieved within the 30-month timeframe. The focus is on plan preparation rather than the technical detail.
13. The key requirements of this stage are;

- preparing and publishing a local plan timetable;

- issuing a notice to commence plan making;
- establishing project management and governance arrangements about the preparation of the plan;
- developing an approach to consulting and engaging on the plan;
- developing the anticipated content of the plan, including base line information, vision, land availability and evidence; and
- progressing the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

**Figure 2 – ‘Getting ready’ - before the 30 month process starts**



14. The steps required under the new statutory plan making processes can only be undertaken once a notice of intention to commence and a Local Plan Timetable have been submitted to MHCLG and published.

### Preparing the plan (months 1-23)

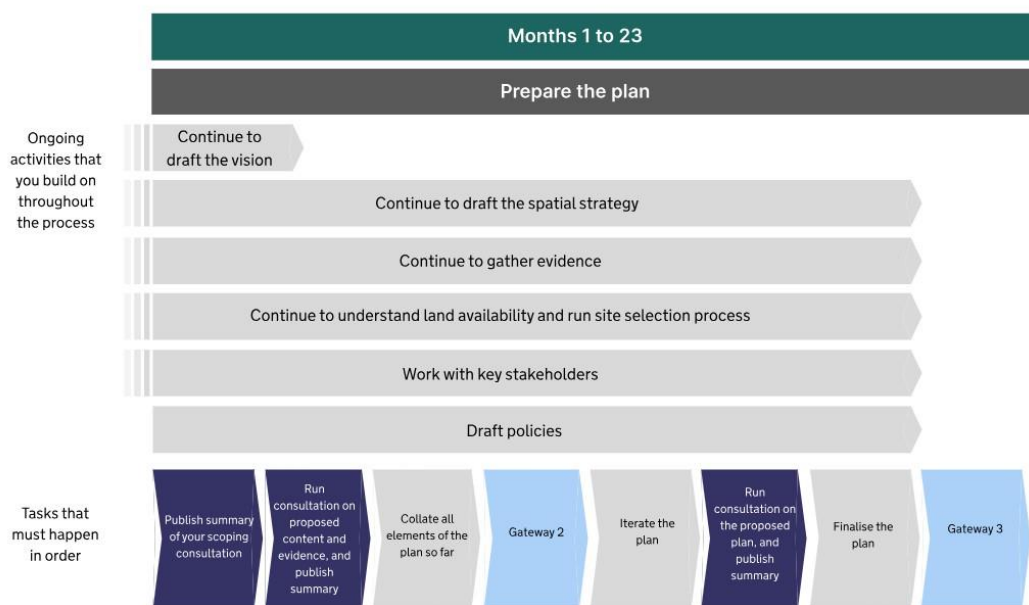
15. Once Gateway 1 is passed, the 30-month period begins and a summary of the scoping consultation must be published. This must explain the key issues raised and how the responses received have been considered.

16. During this phase the authority must also;

- finalise the draft vision, aims and objectives of the Local Plan;
- consider site selection and gather evidence to support key priorities and allocations such as housing, employment land and infrastructure;
- undertake stakeholder engagement and address cross-boundary matters;
- begin drafting planning policies based on the evidence/appropriate justification; and
- undertake public consultation on the proposed plan content and evidence for a minimum of six weeks.

17. A consultation summary must then be published, highlighting those issues raised and how they have been considered. Where appropriate this may influence the overall strategy and policies which would inform a draft version of the Local Plan.

### 1. Figure 3 – Local Plan preparation process



#### Gateway 2

- 18. The next stage is to seek the observations and advice from the Planning Inspectorate on the draft version of the Local Plan, which seeks to achieve an early resolution on its soundness and likely areas of concern ahead of progress towards Gateway 3.
- 19. After consideration by the Planning Inspectorate, the advice received must be published alongside any necessary updates to the Local Plan. An eight week consultation is then undertaken of the proposed Local Plan and associated information including policies map and supporting evidence, again a consultation summary must then be published.

#### Gateway 3

- 20. This stage seeks to establish whether the plan is ready to progress to an examination. The Local Plan to be examined must be submitted alongside other supporting information and a statement of compliance.
- 21. An assessor from the Planning Inspectorate will advise and decide whether the plan is ready to be submitted for examination. If Gateway 3 is passed, then the plan must be submitted for examination. If not, the necessary changes will need to be made and the gateway must be done again.

#### Examination and adoption (Months 24-30)

- 22. At this stage the Local Plan is submitted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate where its overall soundness is tested. Those who have commented on the plan will have the opportunity to present their view at the examination.
- 23. As a result of the examination further modifications may be suggested and these will need to be consulted on and considered prior to any adoption of the Local Plan.

24. In some instances, the Inspector may consider that further work is required and the examination may be paused for up to 6 months to allow for that work out to be carried out.
25. Following a successful examination, the Local Plan can be adopted and the policies map published.

### **Supplementary Plans**

26. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduces Supplementary Plans as a replacement for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which have traditionally been used to provide additional detail to support Local Plan policies and are a material consideration in decision making.
27. Under the reformed system, SPDs will no longer be capable of being adopted after 30 June 2026. Instead, Supplementary Plans will form part of the statutory development plan alongside the Local Plan, although these are subject to formal process, including preparation (including consultation), examination and adoption.
28. During the transition period, existing SPDs will remain in effect until a new Local Plan under the new plan making system is adopted.
29. Consideration will be given to incorporating the key aspects of the current SPD's into future planning policy or whether to produce supplementary plans, at this stage a design guide supplementary plan is considered necessary and recommendation 6 of this report seeks approval to begin work on the pre-commencement stage of a Design Guide Supplementary Plan, and delegates the formal publication of a 'notice of commencement' to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing at the appropriate time.

### **Members Working group**

30. To ensure that the new Local Plan has broad Member support across the political spectrum, from its inception to adoption, it is considered essential to have Member involvement.
31. To facilitate that aim, a cross-party working group acting as a consultative and advisory group is proposed, providing ongoing debate / dialogue as the emerging Local Plan progresses. It would remain that substantive decisions and updates to the Local Plans progress would be reported through to place-making board, CMT, and then through Cabinet/Committee.
32. The group would be politically balanced and based on the current composition of the Council. It would consist of the following;
  - Seven elected members
  - Based on the current political balance, include three Labour members (including chair), three Conservatives members and a representative from the Thornaby Independent Association.

- Representation on the group will be via nominations from group leaders
  - Membership of the group will be reviewed annually through the Council's AGM to maintain political balance
33. The group would be supported at officer level by the Planning Services Manager and Principal Planning Policy Officer with support and input from other officers responsible for producing elements of the evidence base or policies as appropriate. It is envisaged that the group would meet on a quarterly basis, with the potential for more frequent meetings should there be a requirement, depending on the stage of the Local Plan.
34. As the new Local Plan system requires a new plan to be produced every 5 years, it is anticipated that the working group is likely to be required beyond this new Local Plan.

### **Resource Implications**

35. An existing budget for the Local Plan preparation has been agreed and at this stage there are no additional Local Plan costs associated with commencing plan-making under the new system.
36. The Local Plan will continue to be progressed by the current resources of the Planning Services team which will remain under review to confirm that sufficient capacity and resource remain available to ensure delivery is achieved. However, to achieve timely progress in line with statutory requirements, delegations to Officers will be necessary at various stages of the plan making process.
37. Additionally cross service support on the production of the plan and associated evidence base will be provided as necessary.
38. Members should also be aware that the Secretary of State has powers to intervene in the plan making process should the relevant milestones not be achieved and that satisfactory progress is not being made

### **Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment**

39. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken, and due regard will be given to Section 149 of the Equality Act as the Local Plan progresses.

### **Corporate Parenting Implications**

40. The report does not contain any corporate parenting implications.

### **Financial Implications**

41. The production of a new Local Plan, associated evidence base can be met from existing budgets.

### **Legal Implications**

42. The new plan-making system has introduced new legislative requirements which the Stockton on Tees Local Plan will need to be progressed against.

43. In line with the Council's constitution, plan making system is the sole responsibility of full Council

44. The Local Plan is subject to a statutory procedure and is open to legal challenge.

### **Risk Assessment**

45. The development of a new Local Plan is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

### **Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/Councillors**

46. A new Local Plan will introduce a series of planning policies which will apply and inform decision making across all wards in the Borough.

### **Background Papers**

- National Planning Policy Framework
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026
- [New local plan-making system roadmap - GOV.UK](#)
- [30-month local plan process: an overview - GOV.UK](#)

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## APPENDIX 1 – LOCAL PLAN TME TABLE (DRAFT)

Activity	Indicative start date
Notice of intention to commence plan preparation available	June 2026
Start of the 'scoping consultation'	October 2026
End of 'scoping consultation'	November 2026
Publication of Gateway 1 self-assessment	Feb/March 2027
Plan preparation period	March 2027 – Feb 2029
Consultation on 'proposed local plan content and evidence' starts	September 2027
Consultation on "proposed local plan content and evidence" ends	Mid October 2027
Gateway 2 Submission	November 2027
Consultation on "proposed local plan" starts	October 2028
Consultation on "proposed local plan" ends	December 2028
Gateway 3 Submission	February 2029
Submit examination	March 2029
Adoption	September/October 2029

## **APPENDIX 2– STOCKTON ON TEES LOCAL PLAN – MEMEBRS WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE (DRAFT)**

### **Role and Purpose of the Local Plan Working Group**

1. This Local Plan working group is being established to support the development of the Stockton on Tees Local Plan.
2. The Local Plan must be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and be informed by the available evidence gathered.
3. Members will be asked to share their knowledge and insights of Stockton on Tees as a whole and help create an informed local plan, which aims to meet the needs of the Borough and benefits all areas our communities.
4. The Working Group is advisory and has no decision-making powers. Its purpose is to aid greater understanding of issues and policy development.
5. The Local Plan working group will;
  - Consider and comment on documents that relate to the Local Plan including (but not restricted to) policy options, draft policies and evidence studies prepared to support the Plan.
  - Identify potential gaps in the evidence base, assist in helping to develop the outputs of technical work and other information into policy development.
  - To monitor progress on the preparation of the Local Plan

### **Membership of the Local Plan Working Group**

6. The group will comprise of seven elected members and be broadly apportioned in line with the political balance of the Council.
7. Membership will be identified by the group leaders of the respective parties. Group leaders are encouraged to try and ensure there is a balance in the geographic representation
8. The Working Group will be chaired by the party with administrative control of the Council
9. The Chair shall be responsible for the effective conduct of meetings and ensuring clear conclusions are reached.
10. Members appointed to the Working Group are expected to make every effort to attend meetings and where they are unable to do so, appoint a substitute. In addition they will be expected to;

- Promote engagement with the Local Plan process particularly with local community groups, residents and stakeholders
- Engage with their political groups, ensuring that all members are kept informed on the local plan progress
- Be proactive in contacting officers to resolve any points of confusion ahead of the meeting

11. The lead officer for the working group will be the Planning Services Manager and supported by the Principal Planning Policy Officer. Items will be prepared and presented to the Group by Officers from the Planning Policy team and officers from the Council when relevant.

#### **Local Plan Working Group - Process and Principles:**

12. The Members be supported by officers and consultants as appropriate.
13. The Working Group will support the development of a new Local Plan to ensure progress is made in a timely manner and meets the statutory timeframes and associated Gateways.
14. The focus of the Working Group is on key issues for the Local Plan, not all related detailed issues.
15. Meetings to be held on a quarterly basis or as may be otherwise be required
16. Meetings are not open to the public, but outcomes from the Working Group will be made available to all Members as appropriate.
17. Any associated papers (reports, resolutions, minutes etc.. should be treated as confidential unless it is stated / agreed otherwise, or the information is already in the public domain.
18. Confidential information should not be shared with other parties, including other Councillors and outside organisation.

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