Part 1 – Release to Press

Agenda item: ##

Meeting Cabinet

Portfolio Area Environment, Transport and Planning

Date 19 November 2026

STEVENAGE BOROUGH NEW LOCAL PLAN

KEY DECISION

Author	Lewis Claridge | 2158
Lead Officer	Alex Robinson | 2257
Contact Officer	Lewis Claridge | 2158

1 PURPOSE

1.1 This report seeks Cabinet's agreement to formally begin preparing a new Local Plan for Stevenage under the reformed plan-making system introduced by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 ('the 2025 Act') and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 ('the Regulations').

1.2 The Local Plan is one of the Council's most important strategic tools for delivering its priorities. It will provide a long-term framework for homes, jobs, infrastructure, public services, regeneration and environmental improvement, translating the Council's ambitions into coordinated decisions about land, investment and development. Government expects local authorities to support increased housing delivery and economic growth. Preparing the plan gives the Council, working with communities and partners, the opportunity to shape where and how growth takes place over the next 20 years, so that it delivers the facilities, infrastructure, jobs and range of homes that local people need.

1.3 Housing markets and functional economic areas extend beyond local authority boundaries, although Government currently allocates housing numbers to individual authorities. The evidence base will explore these relationships as the plan is prepared. Stevenage's urban character and tightly drawn boundaries reinforce the need to work with neighbouring authorities, consistent with Government's support for collaborative plan-making. Our neighbouring authorities have both commenced their new Local Plans under the new regulations but at early stages. This creates opportunities to coordinate evidence and explore synergies across wider geographies. Local

Government Reorganisation (LGR) also provides further impetus for cross-boundary plan-making.

1.4 Collaboration is also essential to the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) which will help drive growth for the new authority and will be prepared by Hertfordshire County Council. Moreover, Government has announced its intention to establish a Hertfordshire Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) further cementing the need for Stevenage to plug into a wider geography during plan making to ensure the plan maximises the benefits for the town, its economy and its people.

1.5 This report:

- explains the national planning reforms of the past year – the 2025 Act, the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published on 17 August 2026 and the new plan-making regulations – and what they mean for Stevenage;

- sets out why the Council needs to start a new Local Plan now, given that the current plan period ends in 2031 and Government has set deadlines for councils to enter the new system;

- seeks approval of a new Local Plan Timetable, which replaces the Local Development Scheme, and of a Notice of Intention to commence plan-making, both to be published on 26 November 2026;

- seeks delegated authority to prepare and publish a Scoping Consultation (4 January – 15 February 2027) and the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment (31 March 2027), which formally starts the 30-month plan-making process, with adoption targeted for September 2029;

- seeks delegated authority to establish governance arrangements with neighbouring authorities to coordinate evidence and support cross-boundary Local Plan preparation;

- seeks delegated authority to work with Hertfordshire County Council on the Spatial Development Strategy and explore opportunities arising from the proposed Mayoral Strategic Authority, to maximise benefits for Stevenage's economy and communities; and

- reports the feedback received during workshop events.

1.6 Cabinet is not being asked at this stage to agree the vision, content or policies of the new Local Plan. These will be reported to Cabinet in June 2027, before public consultation on the proposed Local Plan content and evidence.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

2.1 Notes the new Local Plan system introduced by Government, approves the new Local Plan Timetable (Appendix A) to replace the Local Development Scheme, approves the Notice of Intention to commence work on a new Local Plan for Stevenage (Appendix B) and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Planning, to amend the Local Plan Timetable if required to align with any timetable changes and to ensure legal compliance.

2.2 Delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Planning, to prepare and publish a Scoping Consultation and the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment , formally commencing the new Local Plan process on 31 March 2027.

2.3 Delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Planning, put in place the necessary governance arrangements with adjacent authorities to support the development of the Local Plan.

2.4 Delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Planning, to continue to work with Hertfordshire County Council as it progresses the Spatial Development Strategy, and as proposals for a new Mayoral Strategic Authority emerge, to explore opportunities as the Local Plan develops.

2.5 Notes the feedback from Members on the content of this report.

3 BACKGROUND

The current Local Plan

3.1 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan was adopted on 22 May 2019 and has since been updated through a Partial Update adopted by Full Council on 22 July 2026 [BD1]. It sets out a spatial vision for the town to 2031 and contains detailed land use policies for the borough.

3.2 The Local Plan supports the Council's Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024–2027 [BD2]. Under the priority Transforming our Town, its policies support the regeneration of the Town Centre and other strategic growth areas, delivering new homes, better public services and local amenities, more jobs, improved transport connections and greater access to green space. Under More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes, it promotes both the delivery of new, sustainable homes and the maintenance of good quality existing housing.

Local Plan Review: a two-stage approach

3.3 A review of the 2019 Local Plan was required in May 2024, five years after adoption, with just under seven years of the plan period remaining. The review identified a number of policies that needed updating. The Council considered three options:

a) an entirely new Local Plan, with strategic policies looking ahead over the next 20 years;
b) a full update of the existing plan, with the plan period unchanged; or

c) a partial update, limited to the changes most urgently needed to keep the plan up to date, with the plan period unchanged.

3.4 Following legal advice, the Council chose option (c) as the first of a two-stage process:

- Stage 1 – Partial Update. Limited to the most pressing changes since 2019, focused mainly on tackling climate change, as set out in reports to Cabinet in June 2024 [BD3] and November 2024 [BD4]. This was adopted on 22 July 2026.

- Stage 2 – New Local Plan. A comprehensive new plan, prepared under the new plan-making system and the August 2026 NPPF. This Cabinet report seeks approval to start Stage 2.

Changes to national planning policy

3.5 The 2025 Act [BD5] received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025. It reforms the planning system with the aim of speeding up decision-making and streamlining the delivery of new homes and major infrastructure. Among other things, it introduces a new plan-making system (Section 4) and a framework for strategic planning through Spatial Development Strategies.

3.6 On 17 August 2026, Government published a new NPPF [BD6], replacing the December 2024 version [BD7], which itself replaced the December 2023 version [BD8]. The new NPPF marks a significant shift towards a growth-focused, plan-led system. Its key changes are:

- a stronger presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- the introduction of National Development Management Policies (NDMPs), which standardise decision-making on common issues, carry greater weight and provide more certainty for applicants;
- stronger support for housing, strategic urban extensions and industrial and logistics development, and for making more efficient use of land in well-connected locations; and
- retained safeguards for communities and the environment, including enhanced protection for community facilities, stronger support for digital connectivity and continued restrictions on major development in protected landscapes.

3.7 The success of the reforms will depend on complementary measures to improve viability and accelerate delivery. Taken together, these changes mean the planning policy context for Stevenage is changing rapidly, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: How the planning policy context for Stevenage is changing

	Adopted Local Plan (2019)	Local Plan Partial Update (2026)	New Local Plan (2026 onwards)
Relevant NPPF	March 2012	December 2023 (under transitional arrangements, rather than December 2024 NPPF)	August 2026
Plan period	2011–2031	2011–2031	Beyond 2031; Vision document to set time horizons
Housing requirement	7,600 homes, 2011–2031	7,600 homes, 2011–2031	New requirement to be calculated, beyond 2031
Employment space requirement	At least 140,000 sq m employment floorspace, 2011–2031	At least 140,000 sq m employment floorspace, 2011–2031	New requirement to be calculated, beyond 2031
Spatial Development Strategy	None	Early work on an emerging Spatial Development Strategy following the 2025 Act	New Local Plan to be in general conformity with the Spatial Development Strategy

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

New Local Plan System

4.1 The Regulations as referenced in paragraph 1.1 [BD9] came into force on 25 March 2026, replacing the 2012 Regulations. Together with Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by Schedule 7 of the 2025 Act) and supporting Government guidance, they set out how new-style Local Plans must be prepared. The key features are summarised below.

Process and timescales

- Local Plans must be prepared within 30 months ending with an examination. Councils must meet specific requirements at each of the three Gateways before progressing to the next stage.
- Publication of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary marks the formal start of plan-making.
- The Local Development Scheme is replaced by a standardised Local Plan Timetable, reported against mandatory national milestones.
- The old and new systems run in parallel during 2026. The final date for submitting old-system plans is 31 December 2026, and no new Supplementary Planning Documents could be adopted after 30 June 2026.
- Government has said it will use its intervention powers where plans are not progressed in line with the new timescales.

Engagement

- Councils must consult three times (previously twice), with defined documents published for comment at each stage. The Council is committed to engaging communities and key stakeholders throughout preparation of the Local Plan, consistent with the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan's commitment to priorities "shaped around what you have told us matters to you" [BD2]. Engagement will be proactive, inclusive and accessible, reaching across all our communities so that everyone who wishes to participate has a meaningful opportunity to be heard.
- Councils must not assume residents know where to find information and must actively reach out, in addition to the bodies listed in the Statement of Community Involvement [BD10].
- The Council will seek to work with neighbouring authorities to coordinate evidence and address housing, economic and infrastructure matters that extend beyond borough boundaries. The Council will also work with Hertfordshire County Council to help shape the emerging Spatial Development Strategy and align Local Plan preparation with strategic planning across Hertfordshire. As proposals for a Mayoral Strategic Authority develop, we will engage with the emerging arrangements to ensure Stevenage's priorities inform strategic decisions and to maximise benefits for the town, its economy and communities.

Plan content and format

- A Local Plan must contain a vision for the area and no more than ten measurable outcomes. It may also include aims and objectives setting out how the vision will be achieved.
- Plans must be published online in a searchable, machine-readable format, with greater transparency around housing requirements.

- Where a new policy supersedes an existing development plan policy (for example, in a Neighbourhood Plan or Minerals and Waste Plan), the Local Plan must say so and identify the superseded policy, so it is clear which takes precedence.

Cooperation and strategic planning

- Although the legal Duty to Cooperate is abolished under the new system, cross-boundary working remains essential. The Council will work proactively with neighbouring authorities to coordinate evidence and address shared housing, economic and infrastructure issues. It will also engage with Hertfordshire County Council to ensure Stevenage's priorities inform the emerging Spatial Development Strategy and that the Local Plan aligns with strategic planning across Hertfordshire.

4.2 The diagram below illustrates the sequence of the key local plan-making steps which will be required under Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (once amended by Schedule 7 to The Act) and the new regulations.



Why the Council needs to start now

4.3 Government guidance on the rollout of the new plan-making system requires most local planning authorities to have started plan-making (Gateway 1) by 31 October 2026, and all others by 30 April 2027. For authorities such as Stevenage whose plans were progressed under the transitional arrangements, the guidance states that the Council must:

- give notice of intention to commence plan-making by 31 December 2026, or by the time the adopted plan is 4 years and 8 months old, whichever is later; and
- publish its Gateway 1 Self-Assessment by 30 April 2027, or by the time the plan is 5 years old, whichever is later.

4.4 Beyond meeting Government deadlines, starting now will enable the Council to shape growth proactively rather than respond to development pressures as they arise. The new Local Plan will identify opportunities for the right homes in the right places, make effective use of limited land within Stevenage's tightly drawn boundaries, and coordinate growth with the infrastructure, services and facilities needed by existing and new communities. This supports the Corporate Plan's ambition to "provide every opportunity to residents to directly benefit from local investment, now and in the future."

4.5 Regardless of these deadlines, the current plan period ends in 2031, just five years away. As the plan approaches and passes its end date, its policies will carry less weight in planning decisions. A new plan with a longer time horizon is needed to avoid this. Even on a 30-month timetable, adoption is not expected until September 2029, leaving a very limited margin.

4.6 The proposed timetable meets the Government deadlines, with the Notice of Intention published on 26 November 2026 and the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment on 31 March 2027.

Cross-boundary governance and strategic planning

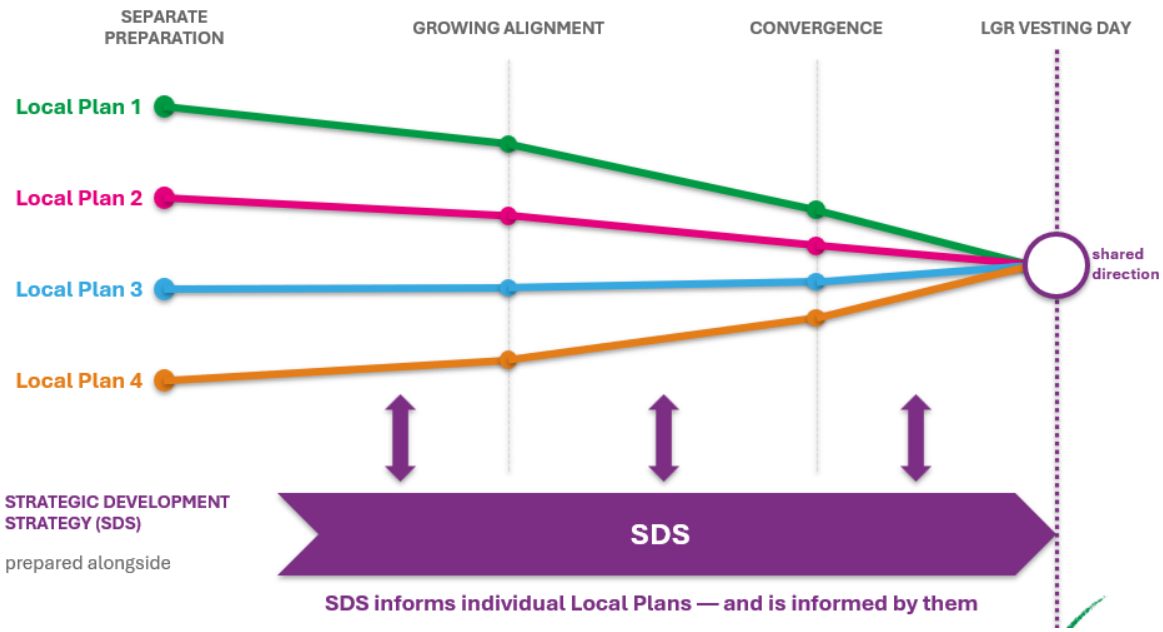
4.7 Stevenage's tightly drawn boundaries mean that its housing, economic and infrastructure needs cannot be considered in isolation. Close working with neighbouring councils is therefore essential to coordinate evidence, address shared challenges and identify opportunities for growth that benefit Stevenage and the wider area. The Council will explore proportionate governance arrangements with neighbouring authorities to support this joint working and align plan preparation.

4.8 This collaboration will also extend to Hertfordshire County Council as it prepares the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), and to the emerging arrangements for a Hertfordshire Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). Early and sustained engagement will help align the Local Plan with wider strategic planning and ensure that Stevenage's priorities for growth, infrastructure, its economy and communities inform decisions across Hertfordshire.

4.9 North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire have both commenced new Local Plans under the new regulations and remain at an early stage. This provides an opportunity to coordinate work now and build closer alignment as each plan progresses. Understanding the stage each council has reached will help identify where evidence, engagement and key milestones can be coordinated.

Stage	Stevenage	*NHDC*	*EHDC*
Notice of Intention	November 2026	*April 2026*	*June 2026*
Timetable	November 2026	*April 2026*	*June 2026*
Scoping Consultation	January – February 2027	*May – June 2026*	*June – July 2026*
Gateway 1: Self-Assessment	March 2027	*October 2026*	*October 2026*
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan Contents and Evidence	16 June – 28 July 2027	*October – November 2026*	*February 2027*
Gateway 2: PINS Advice	6 December 2027	*April 2027*	*November 2027*
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan	26 June – 18 September 2028	*October 2027 – January 2028*	*February – April 2028*
Gateway 3: PINS Advice	11 December 2028	*March 2028*	*July 2028*
Submission to Secretary of State	12 February 2029	*May 2028*	*October 2028*
Examination in Public	Spring / Summer 2029	*June – November 2028*	*October 2028 – Early 2029*
Adoption	30 September 2029	*January 2029*	*April 2029*

4.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) adds further importance to working together from the outset. Individual Local Plans will commence separately, but joint evidence gathering, coordinated engagement and alignment of strategic priorities is recommended to support increasing convergence as the plans develop towards vesting day. This approach would help provide a coherent foundation for planning across the successor authority's area, while ensuring that Stevenage's needs remain clearly represented.



Local Plan Timetable

4.11 The 2025 Act replaces the Local Development Scheme with a requirement to prepare and maintain a Local Plan Timetable. The timetable must:

- report against the plan-making milestones prescribed in the regulations;
- be revised when the regulations require, which may be as often as monthly;
- be published alongside the Notice of Intention; and
- be written in plain English, in line with planning data regulations and technical specifications.

4.12 The Council proposes to publish its Local Plan Timetable (Appendix A) on 26 November 2026, replacing the Local Development Scheme [BD11] last updated in June 2025. The key milestones are set out in Table 2. The timetable will be kept under regular review and is likely to change as the plan progresses.

Table 2: Proposed new Local Plan timetable

Stage	Date	Comments
Notice of Intention	26 November 2026	Formal notice that the Council intends to commence a new Local Plan.
Timetable	26 November 2026	Will be published alongside Notice of Intention.
Scoping Consultation	4 January – 15 February 2027	First consultation that covers detail on early plan content, community engagement and environmental assessment.
Gateway 1: Self-Assessment	31 March 2027	Formal commencement of 30-month process for Stevenage Borough Council.
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan Contents and Evidence	16 June – 28 July 2027	Will follow a further Cabinet approval. Will include Visioning document to focus the direction of the new Plan and maximise engagement in the Plan.
Gateway 2: PINS Advice	6 December 2027	The first time we meet the Planning Inspectorate to check in on progress and ensure the direction we are taking is in accordance with the soundness tests of the NPPF.
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan	26 June – 18 September 2028	Will follow a further Cabinet approval. This will allow the public and stakeholders to comment on the new version of the Local Plan.
Gateway 3: PINS Advice	11 December 2028	The second time we meet the Planning Inspectorate; at this time, the Plan will be scrutinised to ensure it meets the tests of soundness, iron out any outstanding issues and can be duly submitted for Examination.
Submission to Secretary of State	12 February 2029	Will follow a further Cabinet approval. Formal commencement of the Examination in Public process.
Examination in Public	Spring / Summer 2029	Dependent on availability of Planning Inspectors and the scope of issues to be examined, though Gateways 2 and 3 will have provided opportunity to work through this in advance.
Adoption	30 September 2029	Completion of 30-month process. Followed by mandatory 6-week legal challenge.

4.13 In accordance with the new regulations, the Council will keep this timetable under regular review.

Notice of Intention

4.14 The Notice of Intention gives stakeholders and the public advance warning of when and how they can get involved. It must be published at least four months before the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and must state:

- which local planning authority has prepared it and the area the Local Plan will cover;
- where the Local Plan Timetable is published; and
- if the plan is a joint plan, which other authorities are taking part.

4.15 The Council proposes to publish the Notice of Intention (Appendix B) on 26 November 2026, just over four months before Gateway 1.

Scoping Consultation

4.16 The Scoping Consultation forms the first formal engagement stage. It invites views on what the plan should contain and how future engagement should be carried out. Representations must be invited from the general and specific consultation bodies, and anyone, including local residents, may respond. It must take place after or alongside the Notice of Intention and must close before the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment is published. No minimum consultation period is prescribed.

4.17 The Council proposes to run the Scoping Consultation for six weeks, from 4 January to 15 February 2027. It will draw on the importance of cross boundary working and the need to work together to explore governance arrangements and intent to achieve cross boundary growth.

4.18 Delegated authority is sought so that any minor adjustments can be made to the draft Scoping Consultation document, prior to publishing for public consultation on 4 January 2027.

Gateway 1 Self-Assessment

4.19 The Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary sets out the Council's readiness to prepare the plan, covering:

- project management and governance arrangements;
- the timetable for preparing the plan;
- consultation and engagement;
- anticipated Local Plan content;
- sustainability appraisal and screening; and
- environmental assessments.

4.20 It must be published no earlier than four months after the Notice of Intention and after the Scoping Consultation has closed. The Council proposes to publish it on 31 March 2027, formally starting the 30-month process.

4.21 Delegated authority is sought so that the Scoping Consultation and Gateway 1 Self-Assessment can be published without a further Cabinet decision, given the short period between the two. This early-stage engagement seeks views from

statutory consultees, stakeholders and local communities on the key issues, opportunities and priorities that the Plan should address. The purpose is to help shape the evidence base and strategic direction of the Local Plan before detailed policies and site allocations are developed. Authorities must publish a summary of responses received and explain how consultation feedback has informed the subsequent stages of plan preparation.

Next steps

4.22 Between the Scoping Consultation and Gateway 2, the Council must consult for at least six weeks on its proposed Local Plan content and evidence, including:

- the proposed vision and measurable outcomes;
- proposed aims and objectives;
- a summary of the proposed approach to planning policies;
- a summary of the evidence intended to support the plan; and
- any other supporting information considered appropriate.

4.23 Officers will report to Cabinet in June 2027 seeking agreement to the proposed vision, content and evidence base, including an overarching Visioning document, for public consultation, and to progress to Gateway 2. The consultation on the vision, content and evidence document is proposed to run from 16 June to 28 July 2027.

4.24 Officers will ensure that a wide range of consultation measures will be delivered to maximise feedback on the new Local Plan, from all parts of our community, at an early stage. Measures will include engagement with community centres, an interactive online platform, drop-in sessions, workshops, involving the youth community and advisory board as outreach. This list is not exhaustive.

4.25 A policies map showing where proposed policies apply must be published with the consultation on the proposed Local Plan and submitted for Gateway 3 and Examination in Public.

4.26 Since the adoption of the Partial Update, the Council has undertaken a series of internal briefings and workshops on the Local Plan. A summary of the comments raised is set out below:

Date	Session	Comments
21 September 2026	Initial Workshop	<u>Key Themes</u>: • Cross Boundary Working and Strategic Growth • Infrastructure Delivery • Vision and Ambition for Stevenage <u>Other Issues Raised</u>: • Managing future growth pressures, particularly housing and strategic sites with neighbours • GSK and impact of relocation as well as physical links between key destinations • The need to retain Stevenage's employment base. • Education challenges in all categories • Heritage protection e.g. High Street businesses • Ageing population, healthcare provision/ and capacity • Congestion management around the A1(M) <u>Overall Takeaway</u>: • Future growth must be supported by: ➢ *Early partnership working* ➢ *Infrastructure planning* ➢ *Employment protection and a clear strategy for housing growth and needs* ➢ *Clear long-term, shared vision for Stevenage* • A comprehensive engagement strategy is needed to ensure all key stakeholders are consulted early on

12 October 2026	All Member Workshop	• Why do the Local Plan now? • Engagement as wide as possible, not just digital – a variety of methods and groups to reach. • Station Gateway… how will this impact current policies? • Better information at the outset on Local Plan and relevant material to engage effectively. • Making the Local Plan attractive to the public! • Needs to engage more with a younger audience – the generation of the future. • Need for an Engagement Strategy to replace the SCI?

2 November 2026	Follow up Member Workshop	• **Communications and Engagement**: Work with the Communications Team to develop a strong engagement strategy that clearly explains the role of the Local Plan and how it helps deliver community aspirations. • **Corporate Priorities**: Ensure the Local Plan reflects key corporate priorities, particularly in relation to housing delivery, regeneration, neighbourhood improvement, and meeting the needs of an ageing population. • **GSK Site**: Explore the potential for a Local Development Order (LDO) to support future development and investment at the GSK site. • **HMOs**: Make clear how the planning changes regarding HMOs can be reflected in planning policy. • **Lister Hospital**: Consider future growth requirements and expansion opportunities for Lister Hospital to support the needs of a growing town. • **Wider Community Engagement**: Consider how residents in areas such as Hazel Park and Great Ashby, which fall outside the Borough boundary but have strong links to Stevenage, can be engaged in the plan-making process. • **Member Support**: Prepare a Local Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document for Members.

4.27 Members' views are of significant value in shaping the direction of the new Local Plan, as future Planning Committee decisions will be based on its policies. As part of plan preparation, we will continue to engage all members in each stage of plan making to enable them to play a full role in shaping the local plan and engaging their community in the process. The following principles will guide our engagement throughout.

4.28 Preparation of the Local Plan will be guided by the following working principles:

Early Participation	Engagement will begin before key decisions are made and continue throughout the plan-making process. Engage stakeholders, communities, elected Members and partner organisations as early as possible to help shape options before decisions are made.
Providing accessible, transparent opportunities for all communities to participate throughout the process	We will be clear about evidence, assumptions, constraints and choices, making information accessible and understandable wherever possible.
Community shaping	Involving residents, businesses and local organisations early so their knowledge and priorities inform the Local Plan, and explaining how their feedback has influenced the plan
Cross boundary, strategic partnership working	Collaboration with all, working with Members, neighbouring authorities, infrastructure providers and other partners to coordinate evidence and address shared housing, employment, transport and infrastructure issues across boundaries; and strategic alignment, bringing together the Council's priorities and wider strategic planning work so that growth, investment and infrastructure are planned coherently, while ensuring Stevenage's needs and aspirations inform decisions at the wider geographical level.

Other options considered

4.29 **Delay starting the new Local Plan.** Not recommended. The Council would miss the Government deadlines in paragraph 4.3, risking intervention, and would increase the likelihood of the current plan expiring in 2031 without a replacement.

4.30 **Pause until Local Government Reorganisation is complete.** Not recommended. Government is funding councils to progress plans under the new system, and the evidence and engagement completed will remain valuable to any successor authority. The associated risks are set out in Section 5. In addition to this, MHCLG have made it clear that local planning authorities need to continue preparing Local Plans for their existing geographical areas, as they are legally required to do so before LGR changes take effect. MHCLG have stated that LGR cannot be a reason to stall preparing new Local Plans.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

5.1 In March 2026 the Council secured Local Plan Implementation Funding from MHCLG to support preparation of a new Local Plan under the new system.

5.2 The remaining cost of preparing the plan over 2027/28 to 2029/30 will be met from the General Fund, as per the Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by Cabinet in September 2026 [BD12].

5.3 Any schemes referenced in the Local Plan and subsequently developed would be subject to their own business case and may require developer or Council funding.

Legal Implications

5.4 The new Local Plan will be prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. Failure to progress the plan in line with the prescribed timescales could lead to Government intervention.

Risk Implications

5.5 **Plan expiry** – If a new Local Plan is not progressed, the plan period will expire in 2031 and its policies will carry less weight in planning decisions. Even with a 30-month process, there is limited margin before 2031.

5.6 **Local Government Reorganisation –** Government is reviewing the decision and timetable for local government reorganisation, which is likely to push back the original LGR timetable by one year. In the meantime, local planning authorities are expected to continue progressing plan-making. Adoption is currently scheduled for September 2029 and may therefore fall to a successor authority. There remains a risk that the emerging plan could be revised or aligned with neighbouring plans as new arrangements develop. This applies equally to the SDS where a major variance in growth strategy could impact timings for the Local Plan. This risk is minimised by continuing the work to ensure that evidence and policy development are as aligned as far as possible; ket to this is ongoing engagement between parties.

5.7 **Housing delivery** – As many of the Local Plan sites have been delivered or are in the process of being built out, there is a risk that the Council will not have enough sites to demonstrate a 5-year land supply. Through the development of the Plan the Council has the opportunity to rebase its five-year housing supply requirement based on a new adopted housing figure that is deliverable.

Planning and Policy Implications

5.8 The new Local Plan will replace the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (as partially updated in 2026) and become the development plan for Stevenage, against which planning applications will be determined.

5.9 It will align with other Council strategies, including the Climate Change Strategy, Action Plan and Charter, and the Future Town Future Transport Strategy. Officers will work with the Corporate Policy team to ensure it reflects the priorities of Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan.

5.10 The new Local Plan will support the aims of the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020) [BD13] and the Corporate Plan priority “Tackling Climate Change”, building on the climate change policies introduced through the Partial Update.

Environmental Implications

5.11 A Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment screening will support the early stages of the new Local Plan.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.12 There are no significant equalities and diversity implications arising from starting the new Local Plan. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as policies are developed.

Community Safety Implications

5.13 There are no significant community safety implications arising from this report. However, the new Local Plan will set out key policies relating to crime prevention, tackling anti-social behaviour, infrastructure and facility protection and inclusive public engagement, including women and girls as defined in the NPPF (2026).

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1	Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031: Partial Update (consolidated with alterations since 2019) (July 2026)
BD2	Making Stevenage Even Better: Corporate Plan 2024–2027 (April 2024)
BD3	Cabinet, Item 4: Local Plan Review and Revised Local Development Scheme (5 June 2024)
BD4	Cabinet, Item 4: Local Plan Partial Review and Update: Regulation 18 Consultation Feedback and Regulation 19 Consultation (13 November 2024)
BD5	Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025
BD6	National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)
BD7	National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
BD8	National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)
BD9	The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026
BD10	Stevenage Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (June 2025)
BD11	Stevenage Borough Council Local Development Scheme (June 2025)
BD12	Cabinet, Item 3: General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy Update (2026/27–2030/31)
BD13	Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020)

APPENDICES

A	New Local Plan: Timetable (November 2026)
B	New Local Plan: Notice of Intention (November 2026)