

02 September 2026



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Essex CM9 5DL

www.maldon.gov.uk



APOLOGIES: Committee Services
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Doug Wilkinson

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend the meeting of the;

COUNCIL

on **THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2026 at 7.30 pm**

in the **Council Chamber, Maldon District Council Offices, Princes Road, Maldon.**

Please Note: All meetings will continue to be live streamed on the [Council's YouTube channel](#) for those wishing to observe remotely. Public participants wishing to speak remotely at a meeting can continue to do so via Microsoft Teams.

To submit a question in writing or attend in person please complete a [Public Access form](#) (to be received no later than 12noon two clear working days before the Council meeting). All requests will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.

A copy of the agenda is attached.

Yours faithfully

Chief Executive



AGENDA COUNCIL

THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2026

1. **Chairperson's notices**

2. **Apologies for Absence**

3. **Minutes - 2 July 2026** (Pages 5 - 18)

To confirm the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 2 July 2026 (copy enclosed).

4. **Declaration of Interest**

To disclose the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registrable interests and Non-Registrable Interests relating to items of business on the agenda having regard to paragraph 9 and Appendix B of the Code of Conduct for Members.

(Members are reminded that they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting).

5. **Public Questions**

To receive questions from members of the public, of which prior notification in writing has been received (no later than noon two clear working days before the day of the Council meeting).

Should you wish to submit a question please complete the online form at www.maldon.gov.uk/publicparticipation.

6. **Chairperson's Announcements**

7. **Minute Book**

To consider the recommendations coming forward from the Committees detailed below. Please note that the Minutes of these meetings are not enclosed as they have not been approved at Committee level.

- a) **Performance, Governance and Audit Committee - 15 July 2026** (Pages 19 - 84)

Review of Financial Regulations

- (i) That the recommended changes to the Financial Regulations, set out in **APPENDIX 1**, be considered and approved;
- (ii) That, subject to (i) above, the Financial Regulations be revised and published on the Council's website.

8. **Meetings of the Council**

To note that since the last Council, up until Wednesday 2 September 2026 (Council agenda dispatch) the following Committees have met, and to receive any questions in accordance with Council and Committee Procedure Rule 6 (2).

South Eastern Area Planning Committee	24 June 2026
District Planning Committee (special)	25 June
District Planning Committee (continuation meeting)	8 July
District Planning Committee (special)	14 July
North Western Area Planning Committee	15 July
Performance, Governance and Audit Committee	16 July
South Eastern Area Planning Committee	22 July
Strategy and Resources Committee	23 July
Central Area Planning Committee	29 July
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (special)	30 July
District planning Committee (special)	5 August
North Western Area Planning Committee	12 August
Central Area Planning Committee	26 August

9. **Notice of Motion**

To consider the following Motion that has been received:

a) **Motion from Councillor K Jennings (Motion 01/2026)**

In accordance with notice duly given under Procedure Rule 4, Councillor K Jennings to move the following Motion, duly seconded by Councillor R H Siddall:

Motion:

“To create a retail working group, that works with partners to deliver support and create retail business opportunities across the district. This should be a similar model to One Maldon District, with representatives from the retail sector, other partners and other local authorities, to ensure our high streets across the district (not just Maldon) to ensure that our high streets and retail businesses continue to grow and thrive.”

10. **Questions in accordance with Procedure Rule 6(3) of which notice has been given**

11. **New Local Plan for Maldon District** (Pages 85 - 206)

To consider the report of the Director of Place, Planning and Growth, (copy enclosed).

12. **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation** (Verbal Report)

To receive an update from the Chief Executive.

13. **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

To resolve that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

14. **Purchase of Land at Langford** (Pages 207 - 208)

To provide Members with confidential information necessary to inform the public report at Agenda Item 16.

This information must be considered in private as it includes commercially sensitive information.

15. **Resumption of Business in Open Session**

To continue in open session with the business of the Council.

Members of the press and public will be readmitted at this point.

16. **Purchase of Land at Langford** (Pages 209 - 214)

To consider the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities (copy enclosed).

Please Note: Appendix 1 contains exempt information and will be considered in private session at Agenda Item 14 pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A.

17. **Questions to the Leader of the Council in accordance with Procedure Rule 1 (3)(m)**

18. **Business by reason of special circumstances considered by the Chairperson to be urgent**

NOTICES

Recording of Meeting

Please note that the Council will be recording and publishing on the Council's website any part of this meeting held in open session.

Fire

We do not have any fire alarm testing scheduled for this meeting. In the event of a fire, a siren will sound. Please use either of the two marked fire escape routes. Once out of the building please proceed to the designated muster point located on the grass verge by the police station entrance. Please gather there and await further instruction. If you feel you may need assistance to evacuate the building, please make a member of Maldon District Council staff aware.

Health and Safety

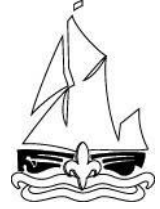
Please be advised of the different levels of flooring within the Council Chamber.

Closed-Circuit Televisions (CCTV)

Meetings held in the Council Chamber are being monitored and recorded by CCTV.

Lift

Please be aware, there is not currently lift access to the Council Chamber.



**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
2 JULY 2026**

PRESENT

Chairperson Councillor R G Pratt

Vice-Chairperson Councillor J C Stilts

Councillors M G Bassenger, V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, S J Burwood,
S Dodsley, J Driver, M F L Durham, A Fittock, A S Fluker,
L J Haywood, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan, C P Morley,
M G Neall, R H Siddall, U G C Siddall-Norman,
N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, W Stamp, CC, E L Stephens
and M E Thompson

122. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some general housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

123. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D O Bown, J C Hughes, K Jennings, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, N J Swindle, S White and L L Wiffen.

124. MINUTES OF THE STATUTORY ANNUAL COUNCIL - 14 MAY 2026

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Minutes of the Statutory Annual meeting of the Council held on 14 May 2026 be received.

Minute No. 16 – Appointment of Membership of Committees of the Council

Councillor U G C Siddall-Norman highlighted that the bullet points in this Minute regarding the Investigating and Disciplinary (I&D) Committee and I&D Panel contained incorrect references to the Joint Standards Committee. It was further noted that reference to Councillor V J Bell under the I&D Panel bullet should refer to Councillor U G C Siddall-Norman.

RESOLVED

- (ii) that subject to the above amendments the Minutes of the Statutory Annual meeting of the Council held on 14 May 2026 be confirmed.

125. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor J R Burrell-Cook declared a registrable interest in Agenda Item 17 - Outline Business Case for Maldon Arts and Culture Centre Project as he sat on the Visit Essex Advisory Board, was Chairperson of the Maldon District Tourism Group and the Saltmarsh Coast Tourism CIC.

Councillor M F L Durham declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 17 - Outline Business Case for Maldon Arts and Culture Centre Project as a Member of the Arts Council South East Board.

126. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

127. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairperson referred to the following events he had attended, thanking the Vice-Chairperson for her support and attending some events with him:

- Civic Service at Chelmsford Cathedral, invited by the Mayor of Chelmsford
- Garden Party held by the newly appointed High Sheriff
- Armed Forces Service
- Launch of the new health initiative Street Tag

128. PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 4 JUNE 2026

The Council considered the following recommendation coming forward from the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee for consideration. This recommendation was presented to the Council by Councillor W Stamp, Chairperson of the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee.

Council Constitution - Scheme of Delegation to Officers - Environmental Health Powers and Duties – Update

Councillor Stamp put the recommendation which was duly seconded and agreed.

RESOLVED that the Renters' Rights Act 2026 be included within the list of legislation and statutory provisions in the Scheme of Delegation and delegated to the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities together with the ability of the Director to authorise appropriate Officers to undertake the new powers and duties on behalf of the Council.

Councillor M G Bassenger joined the meeting at this point.

129. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 11 JUNE 2026

The Council considered the following recommendations coming forward from the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration. These recommendations were presented to the Council by Councillor A Fittock, Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy Review

Councillor Fittock put the recommendations which were was duly seconded and agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the revised and updated Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) 2026 and tariff (attached at Appendix 1 to the Council agenda) be approved, superseding the current RAMS 2018-2038;
- (ii) that the new RAMS tariff of £500 per new dwelling or qualifying unit (index linked and inclusive of a 5% admin fee) be applied to new development from 1 August 2026;

Note: the current fee is £175.55 and benchmarks as low compared to tariffs nationally, while the new fee is mid-range. The new fee includes increased expectations of eligible housing units, and is considered not just for the implementation period, but also for the maintenance period.

- (iii) that the adopted Essex Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be revoked, noting that its content is no longer aligned with the updated RAMS;
- (iv) that Members agree in principle to replace the Essex Coast RAMS SPD with an Essex Coast RAMS Technical Advice Note (TAN), recognising that this will provide a consistent mechanism to guide decision-making for local authorities within the RAMS partnership area;
- (v) that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place, Planning and Growth, in consultation with Planning Policy Working Group to agree and publish the TAN once drafting is complete.

Pay Policy Statement 2026 / 27

Councillor Fittock put the recommendation which was duly seconded and agreed.

RESOLVED that the 2026 / 27 Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 2 to the Council agenda be approved.

130. MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council noted the list of Committees that had met before and since the last meeting of the Council, up until Wednesday 24 June 2026 for which Minutes had been published.

131. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor S J N Morgan. Leader of the Council (the Leader) made a statement (attached at **APPENDIX 1** to these Minutes) setting out the Council's priorities and programme for the remainder of the municipal year. The statement referred to a number of areas, including:

- leadership through Local Government Reorganisation;

- collaborative working across the Council;
- financial responsibility and careful use of reserves;
- health and wellbeing initiatives;
- planning, infrastructure and the Local Plan;
- regaining the five-year housing land supply;
- supporting business, tourism and economic growth;
- protecting the District's environment and natural assets; and
- customer-focused services, performance and accountability.

In summary, the Leader emphasised the need for strong leadership, responsible financial management, support for communities, sustainable growth, environmental protection and ensuring local voices were heard during Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor J Driver, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, thanked the Leader of the Council for his speech and stated that the change in administration represented a significant shift in the political direction of Maldon District Council. He expressed concern that the new political arrangements risked returning the Council to short-term decision-making, particularly in relation to Council Tax, use of reserves, investment in services and assets, and local government reorganisation. He referred to the progress made over the previous three years in rebuilding financial resilience, strengthening governance and restoring confidence in the organisation, and argued that the Council should continue to protect services, invest in communities and pursue a positive agenda for residents. He concluded that the Liberal Democrats would support proposals that genuinely benefited residents but would oppose decisions which, in their view, threatened the long-term interests of the District or repeated previous mistakes.

The Leader responded to Councillor Driver's comments, clarifying that there was no form of coalition. He stated that he wished to work collaboratively going forward, noted that Council Tax had not been referred to as being frozen in his speech, and indicated that he believed there would be areas of shared support across the Chamber.

132. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 6(3) OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

There were none.

133. APPOINTMENT TO WORKING GROUP

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Governance seeking appointment of a Member to the Strategic Housing Working Group (the Working Group).

Members were advised that following appointment to the Working Group at the Statutory Annual Meeting of the Council one Member had confirmed that they were unable to continue. The Council was therefore required to nominate one Member to the Working Group. Details of the existing Working Group membership were set out in the report.

Councillor P L Spenceley nominated Councillor J Driver. This proposal was duly seconded and there being no other nominations was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor J Driver be appointed to the Strategic Housing Working Group.

134. NOMINATION TO TOLLESBURY COMMUNITY LAND TRUST STEERING GROUP

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Governance seeking appointment of a Member to the Tollesbury Community Land Trust Steering Group.

Members were advised that the Tollesbury Community Land Trust had invited a member of the Council to sit on its steering group. The draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor R H Siddall nominated Councillor E L Stephens. This proposal was duly seconded and there being no other nominations was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Councillor E L Stephens be appointed to Tollesbury Community Land Trust Steering Group;
- (ii) That as the Council's representative to the Tollesbury Community Land Trust Steering Group the Member appointed be responsible for sharing minutes of any meetings attended; to be stored centrally on the Modern.Gov library as per the details in section 3.4 of the report.

135. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Director of Strategy and Improvement provided an update on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) advising that:

- the Government had confirmed that Greater Essex had passed the legal tests for devolution and that work towards a Mayoral Combined County Authority could proceed. The decision followed the consultation held between February and April 2025.
- the Secretary of State had confirmed the government's decision to establish the five new unitary authorities, with secondary legislation expected to be considered by Parliament later in the autumn.
- Officers were developing a programme of delivery to ensure safe and legal councils were established by April 2028.
- Leaders and officers from Chelmsford, Maldon and Brentwood Councils had met to discuss LGR and working together.
- Key programme Officers had met to establish the Mid Essex project management office and identify activities.
- An Essex-wide programme delivery approach had also been agreed by Chief Executives. Detailed work was being undertaken, including working with services to identify how areas were amalgamated.

- It was noted that Essex County Council's new administration was challenging the Government's decision, but work was continuing to the agreed timelines to maintain momentum.

In response to a comment, the Chief Executive advised that Officers were only able to work with the information currently available but acknowledged there was a lot of related political complexity. He confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government officials regarding the Structural Change Order, which was being drafted along with the accompanying explanatory notes. Members were advised that Officers would continue to progress work on the basis of the current information, monitor the outcome of any judicial review, and update Members as matters developed.

136. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Councillor W Stamp referred to the Leaders 'speech and, in the interests of openness and transparency, stated that she felt the information being considered in private session could have been presented differently, allowing it to be discussed in open session. She requested that it be recorded that she did not support the following item of business being discussed in closed session. This was duly noted.

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

137. OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE FOR MALDON NEW ARTS AND CULTURE CENTRE PROJECT

At this point, the Capital Projects Officer introduced the documents presented. The Council considered commercially sensitive information which related to Agenda Item 17 – Outline Business Case for Maldon New Arts and Culture Centre Project.

138. RESUMPTION OF BUSINESS IN OPEN SESSION

RESOLVED that the meeting of the Council resume at 8:22pm in open session.

139. OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE FOR MALDON NEW ARTS AND CULTURE CENTRE PROJECT

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive presenting the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the design, construction and operation of a New Arts and Culture Centre (NACC) Project and seeking Members' approval to progress to a Full Business Case (FBC).

Members were reminded of the Promenade Park Management Plan (PPMP) adopted in June 2025 and the work done by Officers since then to progress the concept for the Promenade Park NACC to OBC, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. Key milestone dates were set out in the report.

It was noted that the OBC set out the project against a standardised business case model of strategic, economic, management, socio-economic and financial cases.

These were summarised in the report. Appendix 2 to the report provided a number of detailed background papers relating to the OBC for the NACC Project.

The Capital Projects Director gave a detailed presentation which set out:

- the key outcomes of the public engagement;
- details of the NACC project and what it could achieve;
- further benefits of the project;
- a summary of the June 2026 engagement survey results;
- references from the Maldon District Culture and Heritage Strategy Survey (August 2025);
- proposed questions discussed at recent target group meetings and the feedback received.

In conclusion, the Director highlighted that the consultation showed strong support for safeguarding the Maldon Museum and investing in its future, but there was no clear consensus on the scale or form of development. Further community engagement was required to define the project's scope and objectives.

In response to concerns raised regarding the proposed development and its timing, the Director advised that the Strategic Asset Working Group (SAWG) had considered the options and decided to take forward the largest option.

Councillor R H Siddall thanked the Capital Projects Director for the work he had done on this project and provided the Council with details of the proposals presented to SAWG. He noted that when this option was agreed the funding was estimated as £1m and he agreed that the £3m now requested could not be justified at this time.

Councillor J R Burrell-Cook commented on the report and felt that the ambition of an Arts and Culture Centre in Maldon should not be rejected but further work was required, highlighting the benefit of having such a Centre. He then proposed that should Members be minded to accept recommendations (vii) and (viii) that a further recommendation be added, that Members support a new feasibility study and proposal seeking an alternative place for an arts and cultural centre with funding being sought externally through Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage funds, and partnership working. This proposal was duly seconded.

During the lengthy debate that followed a number of Members expressed concerns regarding the proposed scheme, including the extent of the consultation carried out, the burden on the authority of borrowing £2.7m, whilst acknowledging that the Council wanted a legacy for the Maldon District. In response to questions raised the Capital Projects Director advised that:

- accessibility of the current building was an issue, particularly above the ground floor and how it was not practical to install a lift without extending the existing building.
- the biggest risk, especially in construction, was uncertainty along with the details of the project and who the NACC would serve. However, costs were at a very early stage and therefore contained significant contingency values, these figures would be refined at each design stage and the Director advised that he would expect them to reduce over time.

Councillor A S Fluker declared at this point that he had been involved in some projects which Stace had also been involved in.

Councillor Burrell-Cook declared that he was Chairperson of the Maldon Festival which put on music, arts and cultural events over Maldon town. He then clarified his earlier proposal to add a further recommendation to support a new feasibility study to seek an alternative place for an arts and cultural centre with funding being sought from external sources such as Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage and partnership working to reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

The Chairperson then moved recommendation (i) as set out in the report. Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously agreed that this not be approved. The Chairperson declared that as recommendation (i) was lost recommendations (ii) – (vi) also failed.

The Chairperson then moved recommendation (vii) and upon a vote being taken this was agreed.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed an amendment to recommendation (viii) that the Outline Business Case is brought to the September meeting of the Council. This proposal was duly seconded. The Director of Legal and Governance advised that the September Council agenda was already quite large and was unable to comment if Officers would be able to meet the September deadline. Councillor Fluker withdrew his proposal at this point.

The Chairperson then moved recommendation (viii) and upon a vote being taken this was agreed.

Members were then reminded of the proposal in the name of Councillor Burrell-Cook and upon a vote being taken this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Council does not approve taking the Maldon New Arts and Culture Centre project forward and that officers undertake no further work on this;
- (ii) that officers bring an Outline Business Case for the renovation of the Maldon Museum back to the Council for consideration;
- (iii) that the Council supports a new feasibility study and proposal seeking an alternative location for an arts and cultural centre, with funding being sought externally through Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage funds, and partnership working.

140. BUSINESS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED BY THE CHAIRPERSON TO BE URGENT

The Chairperson announced that in accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act he had agreed to allow the Director of Legal and Governance to raise an urgent item of business.

141. URGENT BUSINESS - APPOINTMENT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Council considered the urgent report of the Director of Legal and Governance seeking appointment of a non-aligned Member to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S) for the remainder of the municipal year following the resignation of Councillor V J Bell.

It was noted that this matter was brought forward for consideration as the O&S was next to meet on 30 July 2026 and it was necessary to appoint this vacancy prior to that meeting.

Following an introduction of the report by the Leader of the Council, Councillor J R Burrell-Cook nominated Councillor A M Lay as the non-aligned Member to the O&S for the remainder of the municipal year. This proposal was duly seconded. The Chairperson advised that should Members be mindful to agree this proposal it would be subject to Councillor Lay being in agreement as he was not in attendance. This was duly noted and there being no other nominations the proposal was agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to him accepting the position, Councillor A M Lay be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2026 / 27 municipal year.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.37 pm.

R G PRATT
CHAIRPERSON

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Speech by Leader Cllr Simon Morgan, to Council on 2 July 2026

Good evening, Chairman, Members and Residents of Maldon District.

Tonight I wish to set out before you my priorities for the year ahead. My starting point in identifying what these priorities are, what matters most to our residents, communities, businesses and the environment, has been the Council's Corporate Plan. So they are not just my priorities, but our priorities. We should all own them

Those of you who are familiar with the phrase: may you live in interesting times will, I am sure, also be aware that far from being a benign exhortation it is in reality meant to be a curse. Interesting times are likely to be times of trouble and turmoil.

The Local Government Reorganisation process has begun which on present plans will see this District Council pass into history in April 2028. However, this is being challenged by the Reform led Essex County Council and we have yet to learn what view the next occupant of Number 10 Downing Street will have on the process.

Whatever subsequently transpires there can be no doubt that this coming year will therefore be one of change, but I believe that it can also be one of opportunity. I see it as my responsibility to lead a council that will provide steady, visible and practical governance, that will protect and enhance the identity of the Maldon District, and continue to deliver outcomes that will seek to preserve and enhance our residents' quality of life.

Put simply I will look to provide strong leadership through this time of change, to stand up for our District, and to deliver for residents. To achieve these aims I fully commit myself to working collaboratively across all political groups and non aligned members of the council.

This is a Conservative led administration, but our rosettes have been put away and we all believe that collaboration between members is fundamental to delivering the best outcomes for our residents.

By working together across the political spectrum with respect and a shared focus on local priorities, I believe that we can deliver improvements for the communities we all serve.

The Government has approved the Five Unitary Authority model for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Essex, which this Council supported, and we will continue to provide strong leadership to deliver this. We will also work constructively with partners across Mid Essex, and champion the needs, strengths and identity of our District.

We will maintain our excellent relationships with Town and Parish Councils, support community empowerment, and help local people and organisations build resilience. Change should not mean losing local connection. It should mean finding better ways to work together.

Residents rightly expect us to balance the budget, use public money carefully, and be transparent about the decisions we make. I wish to work closely with the Finance Members Working Group, the Chairs of Strategy and Resources and Performance Governance and Audit to adopt a prudent approach to our finances and, whilst maintaining our high level of service to residents, will do what I can to minimise the burden on council tax and business rate payers as well as reviewing car park charges.

Because the immediate future is uncertain, I believe we should be careful about our use of the reserves and not fritter them away, or, worse still, go into debt pursuing implausible projects

We look to support our communities by seeking to deliver health initiatives that promote good physical and mental wellbeing, central to a good quality of life. We will continue to work with the NHS and our partners to support prevention, early intervention, strengthen volunteering and community networks, and help communities support one another. We will also lobby for government funding to create a possible neighbourhood health centre in the heart of the District at St Peters

Planning plays a vital role in investing in our district, helping us to deliver sustainable growth, protect the qualities that make our communities unique and provide the homes, jobs and infrastructure that residents need.

As regards infrastructure, we must focus on lobbying partners to improve the it within the District, making it more sustainable and accessible

I am pleased to report that we have now received draft work from our consultants which will place the Council in a strong position to consider commencing work on a new Local Plan later this year.

Members will, of course, have the opportunity to make a formal decision on this matter at full Council in September but the preparatory work undertaken to date means that we are well placed to move forward should that decision be taken.

We are awaiting the publication of an updated national planning policy, expected later this year, which will help shape the framework in which we prepare our Local Plan and make planning decisions. Progressing the evidence base and preparatory work for a new Local Plan ensures that valuable local knowledge, community priorities and technical evidence ensures that local communities have a strong voice in shaping the places where they live, work and invest.

However, we need to be honest with each other and with our residents. If we are not to be at the mercy of speculative developments or, worse still, lose our planning rights altogether, we must regain our 5 Year Housing Land Supply as soon as possible and that can only be achieved by granting planning permissions.

Of course, I do not want to see our beautiful District disappear beneath concrete and asphalt but the best way to avoid this is with a 5 Year Housing Land Supply rather than without one.

As well as planning and infrastructure we will look to grow our economy by supporting businesses, town centres and the visitor economy, which are vital to the life of the District.

Maldon District is a fantastic a place to visit, invest and do business, but we must ensure that tourism is sustainable and brings benefits to local communities.

We have a unique story, shaped by the coast, countryside, towns, villages, heritage and people. We must celebrate and protect this identity.

Our natural assets are part of what makes this District special. By protecting our environment, we will care for our coastline, countryside and open spaces, while promoting sustainable approaches that safeguard them for future generations.

Finally, we will focus on ensuring our Residents are able to access efficient, responsive and customer-focused services. We will strengthen performance and accountability, and work in partnership across Essex where that helps deliver better outcomes.

Together, these priorities provide a clear framework for decision-making and investment. They are driven by our Corporate Plan, support a shared narrative for engagement with residents and partners, and they keep our focus firmly on delivery, outcomes and accountability.

Conservatism at its best is about stewardship: leaving things stronger than we found them, protecting what is valuable, and making careful improvements where they are needed.

That is the approach I intend to take as Leader.

We will stand up for Maldon District. We will be responsible custodians of public money. We will support our communities, protect our environment, encourage enterprise and economic growth, and ensure that local voices continue to be heard throughout the reorganisation process.

Above all, we will remain focused on the people we serve.

Maldon District is a remarkable place, rich in history, character and community spirit. It is worth fighting for, worth preserving and worth improving for future generations.

That is my commitment, and I look forward to working with the officers and all Members of this Council to deliver it.

Thank you.

Cllr Simon Morgan Leader of the Council

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PART 4 – RULES OF PROCEDURE
FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES



MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures

PART 4 – RULES OF PROCEDURE

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

Changes log

Committee version	Change
C 2.1 changed to reflect audit committee responsibility as opposed to finance and corporate services.	June 2018
Throughout – Amend the references to Chief Executive and Directors titles in line with new structure.	October 2018
Appendix I reference to Deputy for Section 151 removed as this isn't a position.	January 2019
Amended wording relating to cheques as pre-signed cheques are now removed.	January 2019
Appendix G.9. Amended wording on BACS to reflect new BACS system of electronic signatures and gave delegation of authorisations of BACS to Director of Resources.	February 2019.
Combined B.1.3 and B.1.4 as no required distinctions.	February 2019
Updating to reflect new Committee Structure (SPJ)	February 2020
Updating to reflect new Senior Management Structure	October 2025
Updating to: • reflect the Phase 2 and Phase 2 organisational structure changes as well as providing clarity on a number of key points • remove some areas of confusion without changing the fundamental internal controls operated within the Council by its staff • improve the efficacy of the regulations • clarify of budget management order or priority • use of 'best estimates' • tolerance in capital schemes	June 2026

PART 4 – RULES OF PROCEDURE
FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

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1 STATUS OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

- 1.1 Financial regulations provide the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs. They apply to every member and officer of the Council and anyone acting on its behalf.
- 1.2 The regulations identify the financial responsibilities of the Council, the Committees, the Directors, and the Monitoring Officer. Directors should maintain a written record where decision making has been delegated to members of their staff, including seconded staff. Where decisions have been delegated or devolved to other responsible officers, references to the Director in the regulations should be read as referring to them. Actions may also be delegated, and again delegation should be documented, however the responsibility to ensure that these actions are happening remains with the person specified in these regulations. **(Appendix I)**
- 1.3 **All Council Members and staff have a general responsibility for taking reasonable action to provide for the security of the assets under their control, and for ensuring that the use of these resources is legal, properly authorised, provides value for money and achieves best value.**
- 1.4 The Director of Finance is responsible for maintaining a continuous review of the financial regulations and submitting any additions or changes necessary to the Council for approval. The Director of Finance is also responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the financial regulations to the Strategy and Resources Committee. Any non-compliance with the Regulations must be reported to the Director of Finance. Anyone wishing to act outside the provisions of these regulations, in a specific instance, must seek the prior written approval of the Director of Resources.
- 1.5 The Council's detailed financial procedures, setting out how the regulations will be implemented, are contained in the appendices to the financial regulations.
- 1.6 The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of the existence and content of the Council's financial regulations and other internal regulatory documents and that they comply with them.
- 1.7 The Director of Finance is responsible for issuing advice and guidance to underpin the financial regulations that Members, Officers and others acting on behalf of the Council are required to follow. Notes and guidance may expand upon but not contradict the Regulations. Any consultation required under these Regulations must allow sufficient time for a proper consideration of any issues.
- 1.8 All financial and accounting procedures must be carried out in accordance with the Regulations.

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2 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

a) Financial Management

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Financial management covers all financial accountabilities in relation to the running of the Council, including the policy framework and budget.

2. THE COUNCIL

- 2.1 The Council is responsible for adopting the corporate governance arrangements (Standing orders and Terms of Reference), for approving the annual budget and the policy framework within which the Committees operate. It is also responsible for approving and monitoring compliance with the Council's overall framework of accountability and control. The framework is set out in its corporate governance arrangements. The Council is also responsible for monitoring compliance with the agreed policy and related Committee decisions.

- 2.2 The Council is responsible for approving procedures for recording and reporting decisions taken. This includes those key decisions delegated by and decisions taken by the Council and its Committees.

3. THE COMMITTEES

- 3.1 The Strategy and Resources Committee is responsible for proposing the annual budget to the Council, and for discharging its own functions in accordance with that budget and framework.

- 3.2 Once approved, the Strategy and Resources ~~Services~~ Committee is responsible for the administration of the budget for the services set out in its Terms of Reference.

- 3.23.3 The Strategy and Resources Committee will ensure maintenance of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) with periodic updates during the year.

- 3.33.4 Committee decisions can be delegated to an officer or a sub-committee.

- 3.43.5 The Committees are responsible for establishing protocols to ensure that decisions take account of legal and financial liabilities and risk management issues that may arise from the decision.

- 3.6 The Performance, Governance and Audit Committee to seek assurance from the Director of Finance, Internal and External Auditors regarding the accuracy of the financial statements.

- 3.53.7 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee along with its major role in reviewing Best Value, has power to scrutinise decisions made, or action taken, in respect of any of the functions of the Council which have financial implications. It also has powers to make recommendations on future financial policy options and for reviewing the general financial policy and service delivery of the Council.

- 3.63.8 The Joint Standards Committee is established by the Council and is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst councillors. In

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particular, it is responsible for advising the Council on the adoption and revision of the Members' code of conduct, and for monitoring the operation of the code.

4. THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

4.1 Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)

4.1.1 He/she is responsible for the corporate and overall strategic management of the Council as a whole. He/she must report to and provide information for the Council, the Programme committees and other Committees. He/she is responsible for establishing a framework for management direction, style and standards and for monitoring the performance of the organisation. The Head of Paid Service is also responsible, together with the Monitoring Officer (see 4.2 below), for the system of record keeping in relation to all the Council's decisions.

4.1.2 The Director of Legal and Governance is responsible for keeping the Council's corporate governance arrangements up to date.

4.2 Monitoring Officer (Director of Legal and Governance)

4.2.1 The Monitoring Officer is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of financial conduct and therefore provides support to the Joint Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for reporting any actual or potential breaches of the law or maladministration to the Council and/or to the Committees, and for ensuring that procedures for recording and reporting key decisions, as defined in the Constitution, are operating effectively.

4.2.2 The Monitoring Officer must ensure that Committees' decisions and the reasons for them are made public. He/she must also ensure that Council Members are aware of decisions made by Committees and of those made by officers who have delegated responsibility.

4.2.3 The Monitoring Officer is responsible for advising all Members and officers about who has authority to take a particular decision.

4.2.4 The Monitoring Officer is responsible for advising the Committees or Council about whether a decision is likely to be considered contrary or not wholly in accordance with the policy framework.

4.2.5 The Monitoring Officer (together with the Section 151 Officer (see below)) is responsible for advising the Committees or Council about whether a decision is likely to be considered contrary or not wholly in accordance with the budget. Actions that may be 'contrary to the budget' include:

- a) initiating a new policy;
- b) committing expenditure in future years to above the current budget level;
- c) incurring expenditure where no estimate or an inadequate estimate exists thereby giving rise to the necessity for supplementary estimates or virements above approved limits;
- d) causing the total expenditure financed from council tax, grants and corporately held reserves to increase, or to increase by more than a specified amount.

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4.3 Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance)

4.3.1 The Director of Finance is the Section 151 Officer and has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the Council. This statutory responsibility cannot be overridden. The statutory duties arise from:

- a) Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- b) The Local Government Finance Act 1988;
- c) The Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
- d) The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015;
- e) The Localism Act 2011.

4.3.2 The Section 151 Officer is responsible for:

- a) the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs;
- b) setting and monitoring compliance with financial management standards;
- c) advising on the corporate financial position and on the key financial controls necessary to secure sound financial management;
- d) providing financial information;
- e) preparing the [revenue budget](#) and [capital programme](#);
- e)f) [the maintenance of appropriate financial records.](#)

Operational responsibility for these matters is assigned to the Director of Resources.

4.3.3 Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the Section 151 Officer to report to the Council, Committees and external auditor if the Council, Committees or one of its officers or members:

- a) has made, or is about to make, a decision which involves incurring unlawful expenditure;
- b) has taken, or is about to take, an unlawful action which has resulted or would result in a loss or deficiency to the Council;
- c) is about to make an unlawful entry in the Council's accounts.

Section 114 of the 1988 Act also requires:

- a) the Section 151 Officer to nominate a properly qualified member of staff to deputise should he/she be unable to perform the duties under section 114 personally;
- b) the Council to provide the Section 151 Officer with sufficient staff, accommodation and other resources, including legal advice where this is necessary, to carry out the duties under section 114.

5. DIRECTORS

5.1 Directors are responsible for ensuring that Committees are advised of the financial implications of all proposals and that the financial implications have been agreed by the Director of Finance;

5.2 The Directors and the Chief Executive are responsible for signing contracts on behalf of the Council.

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- 5.3 It is the responsibility of Directors and Committees to consult with the Director of Finance and seek approval on any matter liable to affect the Council's finances, before any commitments are incurred.
- 5.4 Directors are responsible for ensuring that services managers and Heads of Service appropriately plan and manage their budgets within approved limits (set within the February budget decisions of the Council).
- 5.5 That the Directors work with their service managers and Heads of Service to balance spending pressures across their directorate portfolios.
- 5.6 That Directors are required to pro-actively advise the Director of Finance of any significant financial plans in their areas of responsibility at the earliest opportunity.

6. OTHER FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITIES

6.1 Virement

- 6.1.1 The Council is responsible for agreeing procedures for revenue and capital virements of expenditure or income between budget headings.
- 6.1.2 Directors must consult the Director of Finance on all virements, (see [Appendix F](#))

6.2 Treatment of year-end balances

- 6.2.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for agreeing procedures for carrying forward under- or over-spending on budget headings.

6.3 Accounting policies

- 6.3.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for selecting accounting policies and ensuring that they are applied consistently.

6.4 Accounting records and returns

- 6.4.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for determining the accounting procedures and records for the Council.

6.5 The Annual Statement of Accounts

- 6.5.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that the annual Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and that the annual accounts are published by the deadline set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations each year. The Performance, Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for approving the annual Statement of Accounts.

- 6.5.16.5.2 Accounts are to be prepared in line with published statutory deadlines and/or backstop dates.

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b) Financial Planning

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council is responsible for agreeing the Council's policy framework, in particular the Corporate Plan. It is also responsible for agreeing the budget, the main framework of which will be proposed by the Strategy and Resources Committee. In terms of financial planning, the key elements are:

- a) the revenue budget;
- b) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS);
- c) the capital programme.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 The policy framework comprises a number of statutory plans and strategies, which are set out in the Councils corporate governance arrangements.

2.42.2 The policy framework of the Council includes the Corporate Plan, the Asset Management Plan (AMP) and the Human Resources Strategy.

2.22.3 The Council is also responsible for approving procedures for agreeing variations to approved budgets, plans and strategies forming the policy framework and for determining the circumstances in which a decision will be deemed to be contrary to the budget or policy framework. The Monitoring Officer or the Section 151 Officer, as appropriate, should refer decisions to the Council.

2.32.4 The Committees are responsible for taking in-year decisions on resources and priorities in order to deliver the budget policy framework within the financial limits set by the Council.

2.42.5 Preparation of the Corporate Plan

2.4.12.5.1 The Director of Strategy and Improvement is responsible for proposing the Corporate Plan to the Council for approval.

3. BUDGETING

3.1 Budget format

3.1.1 The general format of the budget will be approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Council on the advice of the Director of Finance. The draft budget should include current approvals updated for inflation and volume changes, proposals for growth and savings, together with the proposed taxation level.

3.2 Budget preparation

3.2.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that a revenue budget and MTFS is prepared on an annual basis ~~and a MTFS at least on a three-yearly basis~~ for consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee, before submission to the Council. The Council may amend the budget before approving it.

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3.3 Budget monitoring and control

3.3.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for providing appropriate financial information to enable budgets to be monitored effectively. He/she must monitor and control expenditure against budget allocations and report to the Strategy and Resources Committee on the overall position on a quarterly basis.

3.3.2 It is the responsibility of Directors to control income and expenditure within their area and to monitor performance, taking account of financial information provided by the Director of Finance. They should also take any action necessary to avoid exceeding their budget allocation and alert the Director of Finance to any problems.

3.3.3 Actions to be taken by Directors are expected to follow the following escalation route in managing budget pressures:

- 1) within a cost centre
- 2) between across cost centres
- 3) between services
- 4) escalation to Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- 5) escalation to Director of Finance

3.4 Resource allocation

3.4.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for developing and maintaining a resource allocation process that ensures due consideration of the Council's strategic and financial planning process.

3.5 Preparation of the Capital Strategy

3.5.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme are prepared on an annual basis for consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee before submission to the Council.

3.6 Guidelines

3.6.1 Guidelines on budget policies are issued to Directors by the Director of Finance following approval of the Strategy and Resources Committee. The guidelines will take account of:

- a) legal requirements;
- b) medium-term financial strategy;
- c) the Corporate Plan;
- d) available resources;
- e) spending pressures;
- f) other relevant guidelines issued by government or external audit;
- g) other internal policy documents;
- h) cross-cutting issues (where relevant);
- i) external partnerships.

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4. MAINTENANCE OF RESERVES

4.1 It is the responsibility of the Director of Finance to advise the Strategy and Resources Committee on prudent levels of reserves for the Council.

4.2 Earmarked reserves and the prudent minimum level of general reserves should have clearly identified commitments or estimated use to justify them.

4.3 Reserves greater than the prudent minimum level of reserves which are not so committed can be applied to operational objectives.

4.4 Where uncommitted reserves exceed the Core Spending Power for the year, they may be regarded as 'excess' and possible application of them should be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

4.5 Forecast levels of reserves must be reported quarterly to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

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c) Risk Management and Control of Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is essential that robust, integrated systems are developed and maintained for identifying and evaluating all significant operational risks to the Council. This should include the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.

2. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 2.1 The Performance, Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for approving the Council's Risk Management Policy and for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management. The Strategy and Resources Committee is responsible for ensuring that proper insurance exists where appropriate.
- 2.2 The Director of Finance is responsible for preparing the Council's Risk Management Policy and for promoting it throughout the Council and is responsible for advising the Committees on proper insurance cover where appropriate.

3. INTERNAL CONTROL

- 3.1 Internal control refers to the systems of control devised by management to help ensure the Council's objectives are achieved in a manner that promotes economical, efficient and effective use of resources and that the Council's assets and interests are safeguarded.
- 3.2 The Director of Finance is responsible for advising on effective systems of internal control. These arrangements need to ensure compliance with all applicable statutes and regulations, and other relevant statements of best practice. They should ensure that public funds are properly safeguarded and used economically, efficiently, effectively and in accordance with the statutory and other authorities that govern their use.
- 3.3 It is the responsibility of Directors to establish sound arrangements for planning, appraising, authorising and controlling their operations in order to achieve continuous improvement, economy, efficiency and effectiveness and for achieving their financial performance targets.

- 3.4 The Internal Audit function exists to provide Officers and Members assurance regarding the adequacy of the risk management environment of the Council and the effectiveness of the controls and policies implemented in different service areas.

4. AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations require every local Council to maintain an adequate and effective internal audit.
- 4.2 The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, via the Local Government Association has delegated the appointment of external auditors to each local authority to a body called Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA). The basic duties of the external auditor are governed by section 15 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, as amended by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

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- 4.3 The Council may, from time to time, be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies such as HM Revenues and Customs, which have statutory rights of access.

5. PREVENTING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

- 5.1 The Director of Legal and Governance is responsible for the development and maintenance of an Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy.

6. ASSETS

- 6.1 Directors should ensure that records of the Council's assets in excess of the limit set out in section 1.7 of **Appendix F** are properly maintained and securely held. They should also ensure that contingency plans for the security of assets and continuity of service in the event of disaster or system failure are in place. The Director of Finance should ensure that all assets above the specified value are properly recorded in the asset register.

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The Council has adopted CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.
- 7.2 The Strategy and Resources Committee is responsible for approving the treasury management policy and Treasury Management Practices (TMP's) setting out the matters detailed in CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities. The Director of Finance has delegated responsibility for implementing and monitoring the TMP's.
- 7.3 All money in the hands of the Council is controlled by the officer designated for the purposes of section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, referred to in the Code as the Director of Finance.
- 7.4 Subject to the Council setting the overall borrowing limits in accordance with the Prudential Code, the day-to-day decisions on borrowing, investment or financing shall be delegated to the Director of Finance, who is required to act in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.

8. STAFFING

- 8.1 The Chief Executive is responsible for providing overall management to staff. He/she is also responsible for ensuring that there is proper use of evaluation or other agreed systems for determining the remuneration of a job.
- 8.2 The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance, are responsible for controlling total staff numbers by:
- a) advising the Council on the budget necessary in any given year to cover estimated staffing levels;
 - b) adjusting the staffing to a level that can be funded within approved budget provision, varying the provision as necessary within that constraint in order to meet changing operational needs;
 - c) the proper use of appointment procedures.

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d) Systems and Procedures

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Sound systems and procedures are essential to an effective framework of accountability and control.

2. GENERAL

- 2.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for the operation of the Council's accounting systems, the form of accounts and the supporting financial records. The Director of Finance must determine any changes proposed by Directors to the existing financial systems or the establishment of new systems. However, Directors are responsible for the proper operation of financial processes in their own services.
- 2.2 Any changes to agreed procedures by Directors to meet their own specific service needs should be agreed with the Director of Finance.
- 2.3 The Director of Finance should ensure that all staff receive relevant financial training.
- 2.4 Directors must ensure that, where appropriate, computer and other systems are registered in accordance with Data Protection legislation. Directors must ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities under freedom of information legislation.

3. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of Directors to ensure that a proper scheme of internal authorisation has been established within their area and that it is operating effectively. The scheme of delegation should identify in writing staff authorised to act on the Directors' behalf, or on behalf of the Council, in respect of payments, income collection and placing orders, together with the limits of their authority. The Strategy and Resources Committee is responsible for approving procedures for writing off debts as part of the overall control framework of accountability and control.

3.13.2 The scheme of delegation originates from Council decision making. The approval of budget proposals in February delegates responsibility for delivery of services to Directors in line with the corporate plan and local service plans to Directors, within the constraints of the approved net budget limits. It is expected that Directors delegate routine budget decisions to service managers and Heads of Service.

4. PAYMENTS TO EMPLOYEES AND MEMBERS

- 4.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for all payments of salaries and allowances to all staff, including payments for overtime, and for payment of allowances to Members.

5. TAXATION

- 5.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for advising Directors, in the light of guidance issued by appropriate bodies and relevant legislation as it applies, on all taxation issues that affect the Council.
- 5.2 The Director of Finance is responsible for maintaining the Council's tax records, making all tax payments, receiving tax credits and submitting tax returns by their due date as appropriate.

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6. TRADING ACCOUNTS

- 6.1 It is the responsibility of the Director of Finance to advise on the establishment and operation of trading accounts.

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e) External Arrangements

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council provides a distinctive leadership role for the community and brings together the contributions of the various stakeholders. It must also act to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area.

2. PARTNERSHIPS

- 2.1 The Committees are responsible for approving delegations, including frameworks for partnerships. The Committees are the focus for forming partnerships with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to address local needs.
- 2.2 The Committees can delegate functions, including those relating to partnerships, to officers. These are set out in the scheme of delegation that forms part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements. Where functions are delegated, the Committees remain accountable for them to the Council.
- 2.3 The Director of Finance is responsible for promoting and maintaining the same high standards of conduct with regard to financial administration in partnerships that apply throughout the Council.
- 2.4 The Director of Finance, in consultation with the Council's designated legal advisor, must ensure that the accounting arrangements to be adopted relating to partnerships and joint ventures are robust and comply with best practices. He/she must also consider the overall corporate governance arrangements and in consultation with the designated legal advisor, legal issues when arranging contracts with external bodies. He/she must ensure that the risks have been fully appraised before agreements are entered into with external bodies.
- 2.5 Committees are responsible for ensuring that appropriate approvals are obtained before any negotiations are concluded in relation to work with external bodies.

3. EXTERNAL FUNDING

- 3.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Council's accounts.

PART 4 – RULES OF PROCEDURE
FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

Appendix A

A. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES**A.1. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STANDARDS****1.1 Why is this important?**

- 1.1.1 All staff and Members have a duty to abide by the highest standards of probity in dealing with financial issues. This is facilitated by ensuring everyone is clear about the standards to which they are working and the controls that are in place to ensure that these standards are met.

A.1.2 Key controls

- 1.2.1 The key controls and control objectives for financial management standards are
- (a) their promotion throughout the Council;
 - (b) a monitoring system to review compliance with financial standards, and regular comparisons of performance indicators and benchmark standards that are reported to the Strategy and Resources and/or Performance, Governance and Audit Committees.

A.1.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 1.3.1 To ensure the proper administration of the financial affairs of the Council.
- 1.3.2 To set the financial management standards and to monitor compliance with them.
- 1.3.3 To ensure proper professional practices are adhered to and to act as head of profession in relation to the standards, performance and development of finance staff throughout the Council.
- 1.3.4 To advise on the key strategic controls necessary to secure sound financial management.
- 1.3.5 To ensure that financial information is available to enable accurate and timely monitoring and reporting of comparisons of national and local financial performance indicators.

A.1.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 1.4.1 To promote the financial management standards set by the Director of Finance in their service and to monitor adherence to the standards and practices.
- 1.4.2 To promote sound financial practices in relation to the standards, performance and development of staff in their departments.

PART 4 – RULES OF PROCEDURE

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

Appendix A

A.2. MANAGING EXPENDITURE**2.1 Scheme of Virement****2.1.1 Why is this important?**

- 2.1.1.1 The scheme of virement is intended to enable the Strategy and Resources Committee, Directors and their staff to manage budgets with a degree of flexibility within the overall policy framework determined by the Council, and therefore to optimise the use of resources.

A.2.2 Key controls**2.2.1 Key controls for the scheme of virement are:**

- (a) it is administered by the Director of Finance within guidelines set by the Council. Any variation from this scheme requires the approval of the Council;
- (b) the overall budget is proposed by the Strategy and Resources Committee and approved by the Council. Directors and budget holders are therefore authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the estimates that make up the budget. The rules below cover virement (i.e. switching resources between approved budget headings of expenditure or income). For the purposes of this scheme, a budget heading is considered to be a line in the Budget Summary of the Budget Book;
- (c) virement does not create additional overall budget liability. Directors are expected to exercise their discretion in managing their budgets responsibly and prudently. For example, they should aim to avoid supporting recurring expenditure from one-off sources of savings or additional income, or creating future commitments, including full-year effects of decisions made part way through a year, for which they have not identified future resources. Directors must plan to fund such commitments from within their own budgets.

A.2.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 2.3.1 To prepare jointly with the Directors, a report to the Strategy and Resources Committee where revenue and capital virements, between different directorates, in excess of specified financial limits, are proposed (see **Appendix F**).

A.2.4 Responsibilities of Directors

- 2.4.1 A Director, in consultation with the Director of Resources may exercise virement within the same directorate under his/her control for any amount. Virements between different directorates must be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee. The authorisation limits are set out in **Appendix F**.
- 2.4.2 Amounts that require the approval of the Strategy and Resources Committee must specify the proposed expenditure and the source of funding and must explain the implications in the current and future financial years.
- 2.4.3 Virement that is likely to impact on the level of service activity of another Director should be implemented only after agreement with the relevant Director.
- 2.4.4 No virement relating to a specific financial year should be made after 31 March in that year.

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Appendix A

2.4.5 Where an approved budget is a lump-sum budget or contingency intended for allocation during the year, its allocation will not be treated as a virement, provided that:

- a) the amount is used in accordance with the purposes for which it has been established;
- b) the Strategy and Resources Committee has approved the basis and the terms, including financial limits, on which it will be allocated. Individual allocations in excess of the financial limits should be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

2.4.6 Virements are not permitted in relation to asset charges or other budget headings which are outside the control of the Directors or where a proposal would adversely affect long term revenue commitments.

A.3. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

A.3.1 Why is this important?

3.1.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Council's Statement of Accounts, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the format required by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom for each financial year ending 31 March.

A.3.2 Key controls

3.2.1 The key controls for accounting policies are:

- a) systems of internal control are in place which ensure that financial transactions are lawful;
- b) suitable accounting policies are selected and applied consistently;
- c) proper accounting records are maintained to support the financial statements and internal reporting;
- d) financial statements are prepared which present fairly the financial position of the Council and its expenditure and income.

A.3.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

3.3.1 To select suitable accounting policies and to ensure that they are applied consistently. The accounting policies are informed by the CIPFA 'Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting', and they are defined locally set-out in the Statement of Accounts. The accounts are prepared, which is prepared as at 31 March each year and published in May or June. The accounts, and covers such items as:

- a) income and expenditure;
- b) fixed assets;
- c) treatment of leasing;
- d) depreciation;
- e) charges to revenue;
- f) capital receipts;
- g) debtors and creditors;
- h) support services;
- i) pensions;
- j) government grants;

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- k) investments;
- l) reserves.
- m) Stocks
- n) Payments to local businesses, staff, and elected members of the council.
- o) Receipts and payments made in respect of the Council's role in collecting council tax and business rates in the Maldon District area.

A.3.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 3.4.1 To adhere to the accounting policies and guidelines approved by the Director of Finance.

A.4. ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND RETURNS

A.4.1 Why is this important?

- 4.1.1 Maintaining proper accounting records is one of the ways in which the Council discharges its responsibility for stewardship of public resources. The Council has a statutory responsibility to prepare its annual accounts to present fairly its operations during the year. These are subject to external audit. This audit provides assurance that the accounts are prepared properly, that proper accounting practices have been followed and that quality arrangements have been made for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the Council's resources.

A.4.2 Key controls

- 4.2.1 The key controls for accounting records and returns are:
 - a) all Committees, finance staff and budget managers operate within the required accounting standards and timetables;
 - b) all the Council's transactions, material commitments and contracts and other essential accounting information are recorded completely, accurately and on a timely basis;
 - c) procedures are in place to enable accounting records to be reconstituted in the event of systems failure;
 - d) reconciliation procedures are carried out to ensure transactions are correctly recorded;
 - e) prime documents are retained in accordance with legislative and other requirements.

A.4.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 4.3.1 To determine the accounting procedures and records for the Council. Where these are maintained outside his/her department, the Director of Finance should consult the Director concerned.
- 4.3.2 To arrange for the compilation of all accounts and accounting records under his/her direction.
- 4.3.3 To comply with the following principles when allocating accounting duties:
 - a) separating the duties of providing information about sums due to or from the Council and calculating, checking and recording these sums from the duty of collecting or disbursing them;

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- b) employees with the duty of examining or checking the accounts of cash transactions must not themselves be engaged in these transactions.
- 4.3.4 To make proper arrangements for the audit of the Council's accounts in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 4.3.5 To ensure that all claims for funds including grants are made by the due date.
- 4.3.6 To prepare and publish the audited accounts of the Council for each financial year, in accordance with the statutory timetable and with the requirement for the Audit Committee to approve the Statement of Accounts.
- 4.3.7 To administer arrangements for under-spending to be carried forward to the following financial year.
- 4.3.8 To ensure the proper retention of financial documents in accordance with the requirements set out in the Council's document retention guidelines.

A.4.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 4.4.1 To consult and obtain the approval of the Director of Finance before making any changes to accounting records and procedures.
- 4.4.2 To maintain adequate records to provide a management trail leading from the source of income/expenditure through to the accounting statements.
- 4.4.3 To supply information required to enable the Statement of Accounts to be completed in accordance with guidelines issued by the Director of Finance.

A.5. THE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

A.5.1 Why is this important?

- 5.1.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to prepare its own accounts to present fairly its operations during the year. The Audit Committee is responsible for approving the statutory annual Statement of Accounts.

A.5.2 Key controls

- 5.2.1 The key controls for the annual Statement of Accounts are:
 - a) the Council is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of these affairs. In this Council, that officer is the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer);
 - b) the Council's Statement of Accounts must be prepared in accordance with proper practices as set out in the latest CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

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Appendix A**A.5.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance**

- 5.3.1 To sign and date the Statement of Accounts, stating that it presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March.
- 5.3.2 To select suitable accounting policies and to apply them consistently.
- 5.3.3 To make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- 5.3.4 To comply with the latest accounting Code of Practice.
- 5.3.5 To draw up the timetable for final accounts preparation and to advise staff and external auditors accordingly.

A.5.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 5.4.1 To comply with accounting guidance provided by the Director of Finance and to supply him/her with information when required.

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B. FINANCIAL PLANNING**B.1. PERFORMANCE PLANS****B.1.1 Why is this important?**

- 1.1.1 The purpose of performance plans is to explain overall priorities and objectives, current performance, and proposals for further improvement.

B.1.2 Key controls

- 1.2.1 The key controls for performance plans are:

- (a) to meet the timetables set;
- (b) to ensure that all performance information is accurate, complete and up to date;
- (c) to provide improvement targets which are meaningful, realistic and challenging.

B.1.3 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 1.4.1 To contribute to the development of performance plans in line with statutory requirements.
- 1.4.2 To contribute to the development of corporate and service targets and objectives and performance information.
- 1.4.3 To ensure that systems are in place to measure activity and collect accurate information for use as performance indicators.
- 1.4.4 To ensure that performance information is collected and monitored sufficiently frequently to allow corrective action to be taken if targets are not likely to be met.

B.2. BUDGETING**B.2.1 Format of the budget****2.1.1 Why is this important?**

- 2.1.1.1 The structure of the budget determines the level of detail to which financial control and management will be exercised. The structure shapes how the rules around virement operate, the operation of financial limits and sets the level at which funds may be reallocated within budgets.

B.2.2 Key controls

- 2.2.1 The key controls for the budget structure are:

- a) the structure complies with all legal requirements;
- b) the structure reflects the accountabilities of service delivery.

B.2.3 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 2.3.1 To comply with accounting guidance provided by the Director of Finance.

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B.2.4 Revenue budget preparation, monitoring and control**2.4.1 Why is this important?**

2.4.1.1 Budget management ensures that once the budget has been approved by the Council, resources allocated are used for their intended purposes and are properly accounted for. Budgetary control is a continuous process, enabling the Council to review and adjust its budget targets during the financial year. It also provides the mechanism that calls to account, managers responsible for defined elements of the budget.

2.4.1.2 By continuously identifying and explaining variances against budgetary targets, the Council can identify changes in trends and resource requirements at the earliest opportunity. The Council itself operates within an annual financial limit, approved when setting the overall budget. To ensure that the Council in total does not overspend, each service is required to manage its own expenditure within the budget allocated to it.

2.4.1.3 For the purposes of budgetary control by managers, a budget will normally be the planned income and expenditure for a service or policy area. However, budgetary control may take place at a more detailed level if this is required by the Directors scheme of delegation or by the Council.

B.2.5 Key controls

2.5.1 The key controls for managing and controlling the revenue budget are:

- a) budget managers should be responsible only for income and expenditure that they can influence;
- b) there is only one nominated budget manager for each budget area;
- c) budget managers accept accountability for their budgets and the level of service to be delivered and understand their financial responsibilities;
- d) budget managers follow an approved certification process for all expenditure;
- e) income and expenditure are properly recorded and accounted for;
- f) performance levels/levels of service are monitored in conjunction with the budget and necessary action is taken to align service outputs and budget;
- g) Managers should supervise the financial management of those reporting to them.

2.5.2 The monthly forecast of budget performance to the end of the year (for Officers) and the publication of quarterly reports of expected budget performance to year end (for Members) is based upon estimates of expected income and expenditure. All such estimates are to be based upon latest information and are to reflect a 'best estimate'. The 'best estimate' is defined as being the 'most likely' outcome.

2.5.3 A 'best' estimate is therefore not a preferred, feared, best-case or worst-case estimate, but the estimate 'from which the least change is expected'. This is consistent with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code definitions, which recommend use of 'best estimates' in preparing accounts where actual values are not available.

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Appendix B**B.2.6 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance**

- 2.6.1 To establish an appropriate framework of budgetary management and control that ensures that:
- a) budget management is exercised within annual financial limits unless the Council agrees otherwise;
 - b) each Manager has available timely information on receipts and payments on each budget which is sufficiently detailed to enable managers to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities;
 - c) all officers responsible for committing expenditure comply with relevant guidance, and the financial regulations;
 - d) each directly controllable cost centre has a single named manager, determined by the relevant Director. As a general principle, budget responsibility should be aligned as closely as possible to the decision-making process that commits expenditure;
 - e) significant variances from approved budgets are investigated and reported by budget managers regularly using best estimates (as described above).
- 2.6.2 To administer the Council's scheme of virement.
- 2.6.3 To submit reports to the Strategy and Resources Committee and to the Council, in consultation with the relevant Director, where a Director is unable to balance expenditure and resources within existing approved budgets under his/her control.
- 2.6.4 To prepare and submit reports on the Council's projected income and expenditure compared with the budget on a quarterly basis.
- 2.6.5 To approve fees and charges where the budgeted income is less than or equal to £2,000.

B.2.7 Responsibilities of Directors

- 2.7.1 To maintain budgetary control within their services, in adherence to the principles in 2.6.1, and to ensure that all income and expenditure is properly recorded and accounted for.
- 2.7.2 To ensure that an accountable budget manager is identified for each item of income and expenditure under the control of the Director. As a general principle, budget responsibility should be aligned as closely as possible to the decision-making that commits expenditure.
- 2.7.3 To ensure that spending remains within the service's overall financial limit, and that individual budget headings are not overspent, by monitoring the budget and taking appropriate corrective action where significant variations from the approved budget are forecast.
- 2.7.4 To ensure that a monitoring process is in place to review performance levels/levels of service in conjunction with the budget and that it is operating effectively.

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2.7.5 To ensure prior approval by the Council or Committees (as appropriate) for new proposals, of whatever amount, that:

- a) create financial commitments in the current or future years;
- b) change existing policies, initiate new policies or cease existing policies;
- c) materially extend or reduce the Council's services.

2.7.6 To ensure compliance with the scheme of virement.

2.7.7 To agree with the relevant Director where it appears that a budget proposal, including a virement proposal, may impact materially on another service area or another Director's level of service activity.

B.2.8 Budgets and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

2.8.1 Why is this important?

2.8.1.1 The Council is a complex organisation responsible for delivering a wide variety of services. It needs to plan effectively and to develop systems to enable ~~scarce-limited~~ resources to be allocated in accordance with ~~carefully weighed political~~ priorities and legal requirements. The budget is the financial expression of the Council's plans and policies.

2.8.1.2 A report on new proposals should explain the full financial implications, following consultation with the Director of Finance. Unless the Council or Strategy and Resources Committee has agreed otherwise, Directors must plan to contain the financial implications of such proposals within the relevant financial limit.

2.8.1.3 The revenue budget must be constructed so as to ensure that resource allocation properly reflects the business plans and priorities of the Council. Budgets (spending plans) are needed so that the Council can plan, authorise, monitor and control the way money is allocated and spent. It is illegal for a Council to budget for a deficit.

2.8.1.4 The annual strategic ~~and~~ financial planning process involves a cycle in which Directors develop their own plans for submission to the relevant Committee. ~~As each year passes, another future year will be added to the MTFS. Forward planning is therefore a key element of the council approach to risk management. This ensures that the Council is always preparing for events in advance.~~

B.2.9 Key controls

2.9.1 The key controls for budgets and the MTFS are:

- a) specific budget approval for all expenditure;
- b) budget managers are consulted in the preparation of the budgets for which they will be held responsible and accept accountability within delegations set by the Council for their budgets and the level of service to be delivered;
- c) a monitoring process is in place to review regularly the effectiveness and operation of budget preparation and to ensure that any corrective action is taken.

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B.2.10 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 2.10.1 To prepare and submit reports on ~~budget prospects to~~ estimated future resource levels to the Strategy and Resources Committee including resource constraints set by the Government. Reports should take account of medium-term ~~prospects~~ variations, where appropriate.
- 2.10.2 To determine the detailed form of revenue estimates and the methods for their preparation.
- 2.10.3 To advise on the medium-term implications of spending decisions.
- 2.10.4 To encourage the best use of resources and value for money by working with Directors to identify opportunities to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and by encouraging good practice in conducting financial appraisals of development or savings options, and in developing financial aspects of service planning.
- 2.10.5 To advise the Council on proposals in accordance with his/her responsibilities under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

B.2.11 Responsibilities of Directors

- 2.11.1 To prepare estimates of income and expenditure, in consultation with the Director of Finance.
- 2.11.2 To prepare budgets that are consistent with any relevant financial limits, with the Council's annual budget cycle and with guidelines issued by the Director of Finance.
- 2.11.3 To integrate financial and budget plans into business planning, so that budget plans can be supported by financial and non-financial performance measures.
- 2.11.4 In consultation with the Director of Finance and in accordance with the laid-down guidance and timetable, to prepare detailed draft revenue and capital budgets for consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee.
- 2.11.5 When drawing up draft budget requirements, to have regard to:
 - a) spending patterns and pressures revealed through the budget monitoring process;
 - b) legal requirements;
 - c) requirements as defined by the Council in the Strategic and Financial Policy Process;
 - d) initiatives already under way and any new service requirements that are likely to require funding within the financial year in question.

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B.2.12 Resource allocation**2.12.1 Why is this important?**

2.12.1.1 ~~In the short term, a~~ mismatch often exists between available resources and ~~desirable required~~ resources. ~~By planning for more than one year (medium term planning) costs and investments can be planned across a longer period of time, spreading costs where otherwise they may become concentrated. A common scenario is that available resources are not adequate to fulfil need/desire.~~ It is therefore imperative that ~~needs/desires~~ objectives are carefully prioritised, taking account of the Council's legal responsibilities and that resources are allocated to meet the urgent priorities. Resources may include staff, money, equipment, goods and materials.

B.2.13 Key controls

2.13.1 The key controls for resource allocation are:

- a) resources are acquired in accordance with the law and allocated using an approved authorisation process;
- b) resources are used only for the purpose intended, to achieve the approved policies and objectives, and are properly accounted for;
- c) resources are securely held for use when required;
- d) resources are used in the most efficient manner.

B.2.14 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

2.14.1 To coordinate the Strategic and Financial Planning process to ensure that resources are devoted to the Council's stated priorities.

2.14.2 To advise on methods available for the funding of expenditure plans.

B.2.15 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

2.15.1 To deliver the Council's key objectives within budget limits and to utilise resources allocated, and further allocate resources, in the most efficient, effective and economic way.

2.15.2 To identify opportunities to minimise or eliminate resource requirements or consumption without having a detrimental effect on service delivery.

B.2.16 Capital programmes**2.16.1 Why is this important?**

2.16.1.1 Capital expenditure involves acquiring or enhancing fixed assets with a long-term value to the Council, such as land, buildings, and major items of plant, equipment or vehicles. Capital assets shape the way services are delivered in the long term and create financial commitments for the future in the form of financing costs and revenue running costs.

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2.16.1.2 The Government controls the financing capacity of the Council through the CIPFA Prudential Code. This means that capital expenditure should be integrated into the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and should be carefully prioritised in order to maximise the benefit of scarce resources.

B.2.17 Key controls

2.17.1 The key controls for capital programmes are:

- a) the development and implementation of asset management plans;
- b) specific approval by the Council for the programme of capital expenditure;
- c) a scheme and estimate, including project plan, progress targets and associated revenue expenditure is prepared for each capital project, for approval by the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- d) proposals for improvements and alterations to buildings must be approved by the relevant Director;
- e) accountability for each capital project is accepted by a named manager;
- f) monitoring of progress in conjunction with expenditure and comparison with approved budget;
- g) capital spending plans are to be in line with the approved Capital Strategy.

B.2.18 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 2.18.1 To prepare the capital programme and estimates jointly with Directors and to report them to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval. The Strategy and Resources Committee will make recommendations on the capital programme and on any associated financing requirements to the Council.
- 2.18.2 To prepare and submit reports jointly with the officers defined as accountable for capital projects to the Strategy and Resources Committee on the progress of the capital programme compared with the approved estimates.
- 2.18.3 Having regard to regulations determine the definition of 'capital'.

B.2.19 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 2.19.1 To comply with guidance concerning capital schemes and controls issued by the Director of Finance.
- 2.19.2 To prepare and submit quarterly reports jointly with the Director of Resources to the Strategy and Resources Committee on the the progress of the capital programme compared with the approved estimates.
- 2.19.3 To prepare regular reports reviewing the capital programme provisions for their services. In consultation with the Director of Resources, to obtain authorisation from the Strategy and Resources Committee and/or the Council for individual schemes where the estimated expenditure exceeds the capital programme provision by more than a specified amount (see **Appendix F**).
- 2.19.4 To ensure that all capital proposals have undergone a project appraisal in accordance with guidance issued by the Director of Finance.

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- 2.19.5 To ensure that adequate records are maintained for all capital contracts.
- 2.19.6 To proceed with projects only when there is adequate provision in the capital programme.
- 2.19.7 To prepare and submit reports, jointly with the Director of Finance, to the Strategy and Resources committees, of any increase in contract costs in excess of the approved scheme and estimate, unless the excess can be met by virement from elsewhere within the capital programme. The authorisation limits for capital virements are set out in **Appendix F**.
- 2.19.8 To prepare and submit reports, jointly with the Director of Finance, to the Strategy and Resources Committee, where it appears that the final cost of a revenue or capital contract will exceed the approved contract sum by more than a specified financial limit (see **Appendix F**).
- 2.19.9 No leasing arrangements as defined by the Director of Finance shall be entered into without prior approval.

B.3. MAINTENANCE OF RESERVES

B.3.1 Why is this important?

- 3.1.1 The Council must decide the level of general reserves it wishes to maintain before it can decide the level of council tax. Reserves are maintained as a matter of prudence. They enable the Council to provide for unexpected events and thereby protect it from overspending, should such events occur. Reserves for specific purposes may also be maintained, such as the purchase or renewal of capital items.

B.3.2 Key controls

- 3.2.1 To maintain reserves in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and agreed accounting policies.
- 3.2.2 For each reserve established, the purpose, usage and basis of transactions should be clearly identified and approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

3.2.3 To report quarterly to the Strategy and Resources Committee the likely level of uncommitted reserves (general and earmarked) expected to be held at the end of the financial year.

B.3.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 3.3.1 To advise the Strategy and Resources Committee and/or the Council on prudent levels of reserves for the Council.

B.3.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 3.4.1 To ensure that resources are used only for the purposes for which they were intended.

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Appendix C

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF RESOURCES**C.1. RISK MANAGEMENT****C.1.1 Why is this important?**

- 1.1.1 All organisations, whether private or public sector, face risks to people, property and continued operations. Risk is the chance or possibility of loss, damage, injury or failure to achieve objectives caused by an unwanted or uncertain action or event. Risk management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risk. Its objectives are to secure the assets of the organisation and to ensure the continued financial and organisational well-being of the organisation. In essence it is, therefore, an integral part of good business practice. Risk management is concerned with evaluating the measures an organisation already has in place to manage identified risks and then recommending the action the organisation needs to take to control these risks effectively.
- 1.1.2 It is the overall responsibility of the Council to approve the Council's risk management strategy, and to promote a culture of risk management awareness throughout the Council.

C.1.2 Key controls

- 1.2.1 The key controls for risk management are:
- a) procedures are in place to identify, assess, prevent or contain material known risks, and these procedures are operating effectively throughout the Council;
 - b) a monitoring process is in place to review regularly the effectiveness of risk reduction strategies and the operation of these controls;
 - c) managers know that they are responsible for managing relevant risks and are provided with relevant information on risk management initiatives;
 - d) provision is made for losses that might result from the risks that remain;
 - e) procedures are in place to investigate claims within required timescales
 - f) acceptable levels of risk are determined and insured against where appropriate;
 - g) the Council has identified business continuity plans for implementation in the event of disaster that results in significant loss or damage to its resources.

C.1.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Strategy and Improvement

- 1.3.1 To prepare and promote the Council's Risk Management Policy.
- 1.3.2 To develop risk management controls in conjunction with Directors.

C.1.4 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 1.4.1 To include all appropriate employees of the Council in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance.
- 1.4.2 To effect corporate insurance cover, through external insurance and internal funding, and to negotiate all claims in consultation with other officers, where necessary.

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C.1.5 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 1.5.1 To notify the Director of Finance immediately of any loss, liability or damage that may lead to a claim against the Council, together with any information or explanation required by the Council's insurers.
- 1.5.2 To take responsibility for risk management, having regard to advice from the Director of Finance and other specialist officers (e.g. fire prevention, health and safety).
- 1.5.3 To ensure that there are regular reviews of risk within their Service.
- 1.5.4 To notify the Director of Finance promptly of all new risks, properties or vehicles that require insurance and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 1.5.5 To consult the Director of Finance and the Council's legal advisors on the terms of any indemnity that the authority is requested to give.
- 1.5.6 To ensure those employees, or anyone covered by the Council's insurances, do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation that may prejudice the assessment of liability in respect of any insurance claim.

C.2. INTERNAL CONTROLS**C.2.1 Why is this important?**

- 2.1.1 The Council is complex and beyond the direct control of a single individual. It therefore requires internal controls to manage and monitor progress towards strategic objectives.
- 2.1.2 The Council has statutory obligations, and, therefore, requires internal controls to identify, meet and monitor compliance with these obligations.
- 2.1.3 The Council faces a wide range of financial, administrative and commercial risks, both from internal and external factors, which threaten the achievement of its objectives. Internal controls are necessary to manage these risks.
- 2.1.4 The system of internal controls is established in order to provide measurable achievement of:
 - a) efficient and effective operations;
 - b) reliable financial information and reporting;
 - c) compliance with laws and regulations;
 - d) risk management.

C.2.2 Key controls

- 2.2.1 The key controls and control objectives for internal control systems are:
 - a) key controls should be reviewed on a regular basis;

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- b) managerial control systems, including defining policies, setting objectives and plans, monitoring financial and other performance and taking appropriate anticipatory and remedial action. The key objective of these systems is to promote ownership of the control environment by defining roles and responsibilities;
- c) financial and operational control systems and procedures, which include physical safeguards for assets, segregation of duties, authorisation and approval procedures and information systems;
- d) an effective internal audit function that is properly resourced. It should operate in accordance with the principles contained in the Auditing Practices Board's auditing guideline Guidance for Internal Auditors, CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom and with any other statutory obligations and regulations.

C.2.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 2.3.1 To assist the Council to put in place an appropriate control environment and effective internal controls which provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, financial stewardship, probity and compliance with laws and regulations.

C.2.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 2.4.1 To manage processes to check that established controls are understood and being adhered to and to evaluate their effectiveness, in order to be confident in the proper use of resources, achievement of objectives and management of risks.
- 2.4.2 To review existing controls in the light of changes affecting the Council and to establish and implement new ones in line with guidance from the Director of Finance. Directors should also be responsible, after consultation with the Director of Finance, for removing controls that are unnecessary or not cost or risk effective – for example, because of duplication.

C.3. AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

C.3.1 Internal audit

3.1.1 Why is this important?

- 3.1.1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (para 5) require that a "relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance".
- 3.1.1.2 Internal Audit must be seen as independent. This is achieved through operating within a framework that allows unrestricted access to senior management, reporting in its own name and segregation as far as practical from line operations. The function reports directly to the Director of Finance (also the officer designated under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 as responsible for ensuring the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs). Internal Audit also reports directly to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee.

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C.3.2 Key controls

3.2.1 The key controls for internal audit are:

- a) that it is independent in its planning and operation;
- b) the Audit Manager has direct access to the Director of Finance, all levels of management and directly to elected Members;
- c) Internal Auditors work towards complying with the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), and effort is made to preserve objectivity by ensuring staff are free from conflicts of interest. Therefore as far as is practical, Internal Audit will not participate in the day to day operation of any systems of internal financial control.

C.3.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

3.3.1 To ensure that internal auditors have the authority to:

- a) access Council premises at reasonable times;
- b) access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems ;
- c) receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration;
- d) require any employee of the Council to account for cash, materials or any other asset under his/her control;
- e) access records belonging to third parties, such as contractors, when required;
- f) obtain direct access to the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee.

3.3.2 To approve the annual audit plans, prepared by the Audit Manager, and present to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee for their approval.

3.3.3 To prepare terms of reference for the internal audit function, for approval by the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee.

3.3.4 To ensure that effective procedures are in place to investigate promptly any fraud or irregularity.

C.3.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

3.4.1 To ensure that internal auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.

3.4.2 To ensure that auditors are provided with any information and explanations that they seek in the course of their work.

3.4.3 To respond to internal and external audit reports in writing, within a timescale agreed by the appropriate Director and the Director of Finance or External Auditor, detailing the action intended to address any recommendations.

3.4.4 To ensure that any agreed actions arising from audit recommendations are carried out in a timely and efficient fashion.

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- 3.4.5 To ensure that their staff report any suspicion of fraud, corruption or other financial irregularity in respect of Council funds, either directly, or via the Directors to the Director of Finance for investigation.
- 3.4.6 The Director of Finance must then arrange for appropriate investigation of the matter. The relevant Director must agree any further investigative action with the Director of Finance before proceeding.
- 3.4.7 The Director of Finance, in consultation with the relevant Director and the Monitoring Officer will advise whether any matter should be referred to the police for further investigation.
- 3.4.8 To ensure that the Director of Finance is given an opportunity, in a timely manner before live operation, to evaluate the adequacy of new systems for maintaining financial records, or records of assets, or changes to such systems.

C.3.5 External audit

3.5.1 Why is this important?

- 3.5.1.1 Under Schedule 1 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 all contracts for audit and related services, previously let by the Audit Commission, were transferred to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd on 1 April 2015. The external auditor has rights of access to all documents and information necessary for audit purposes (para 22 2014 Act).
- 3.5.1.2 The general duties of the external auditor are defined in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (para 20) and the Local Government Act 1999. In particular, Schedule 6 of the 2014 Act sets out that the Comptroller & Auditor General is responsible for preparing a code of audit practice, which external auditors follow when carrying out their duties. Schedule 1 of the code of audit practice sets out the auditor's statutory responsibilities across 3 main headings:
 - a) Audit Scope;
 - b) Reporting;
 - c) Additional powers and duties.
- 3.5.1.3 The Council's accounts are scrutinised by external auditors, who must be satisfied that the Statement of Accounts 'presents a true and fair view' (Para 20 2014 Act) of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year in question and complies with the legal requirements.

C.3.6 Key controls

- 3.6.1 External auditors were initially appointed by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, however subsequent appointments are to be made by the Local Authority for a maximum period of five years. The Comptroller & Auditor General (National Audit Office) prepares the code of audit practice, which external auditors follow when carrying out their audits.

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C.3.7 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 3.7.1 To ensure that external auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the external auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.
- 3.7.2 To work with the external auditor and advise the Council, and Directors on their responsibilities in relation to external audit.
- 3.7.3 To ensure there is effective liaison between external and internal audit.

C.3.8 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 3.8.1 To ensure that external auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets which the external auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.
- 3.8.2 To ensure that all records and systems are up to date and available for inspection.

C.4. PREVENTING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION**C.4.1 Why is it this important?**

- 4.1.1 The Council will not tolerate fraud and corruption in the administration of its responsibilities, whether from inside or outside the Council.
- 4.1.2 The Council's expectation of propriety and accountability is that Members and staff at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.
- 4.1.3 The Council also expects that individuals and organisations (e.g. suppliers, contractors, service providers) with whom it comes into contact will act towards the Council with integrity and without thought of or actions involving fraud and corruption. It must guard against the possibility that these expectations will not be fulfilled in all respects.

C.4.2 Key controls

- 4.2.1 The key controls regarding the prevention of financial irregularities are that:
 - a) the Council has an effective Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy and maintains a culture that will not tolerate fraud or corruption;
 - b) all Members and staff act with integrity and lead by example as per the relevant Code of Conduct;
 - c) Managers are required to deal swiftly and firmly with those who defraud or attempt to defraud the Council or who are corrupt;
 - d) high standards of conduct are promoted amongst Members by the standards committee;
 - e) the maintenance of a register of interests in which any hospitality or gifts accepted must be recorded;
 - f) "whistle blowing" procedures are in place and operate effectively;

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- g) legislation including the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 is adhered to.

C.4.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Legal and Governance.

- 4.3.1 To maintain and review an Anti-Fraud Policy.

C.4.4 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 4.4.1 To maintain adequate and effective internal control arrangements.
- 4.4.3 To ensure that all suspected irregularities are investigated, and all proven irregularities reported to the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer.

C.4.5 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 4.5.1 To ensure that all suspected irregularities are reported to the Director of Finance
- 4.5.2 To instigate the Council's disciplinary procedures where the outcome of an audit investigation indicates improper behaviour.
- 4.5.3 To ensure that where financial impropriety is discovered, the Director of Finance is informed. Where sufficient evidence exists to believe that a criminal offence may have been committed, after consultation with the Director of Finance, the Chief Executive or relevant Director will ensure that the Police are called in.

C.4.6 Responsibility of the Monitoring Officer

- 4.6.1 To maintain a register of interests.

C.5. ASSETS**C.5.1 Security****5.1.1 Why is this important?**

- 5.1.1.1 The Council holds assets in the form of property, vehicles, equipment, furniture and other items worth millions of pounds. It is important that assets are safeguarded and used efficiently in service delivery, and that there are arrangements for the security of both assets and information required for service operations. An up-to-date asset register is a prerequisite for proper fixed asset accounting and sound asset management.

C.5.2 Key controls

- 5.2.1 The key controls for the security of resources such as land, buildings, fixed plant machinery, equipment, software and information are:
- a) resources are used only for the purposes of the Council and are properly accounted for;
 - b) resources are available for use when required;
 - c) resources no longer required are disposed of in accordance with the law and the regulations of the Council so as to maximise benefits;

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- d) an asset register and an asset management plan is maintained for the Council, assets are recorded when they are acquired by the Council and this record is updated as changes occur with respect to the location, value and condition of the asset;
- e) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding the Council's assets and information, including the requirements of the Data Protection Act and software copyright legislation;
- f) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding the security of the Council's Information Communication Technology (ICT) Systems, including maintaining restricted access to the information held on them and compliance with the Council's Information Communication Technology and internet security policies.

C.5.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 5.3.1 To ensure that an asset register is maintained in accordance with good practice for all fixed assets with a value in excess of a specified financial limit (see **Appendix F**). The function of the asset register is to provide the Council with information about fixed assets so that they are:
 - a) safeguarded;
 - b) used efficiently and effectively;
 - c) adequately maintained.
- 5.3.2 To receive the information required for accounting, costing and financial records from each Director.
- 5.3.3 To ensure that assets are valued in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

C.5.4 Responsibilities of Directors

- 5.4.1 A property database shall be maintained by the Director of Finance for all properties, plant and machinery and moveable assets currently owned or used by the Council subject to the minimum values specified in **Appendix F**. Any use of property by a service other than for direct service delivery should be supported by documentation identifying terms, responsibilities and duration of use.
- 5.4.2 To ensure that lessees and other prospective occupiers of council owned land are not allowed to take possession or enter the land until a lease or agreement, in a form approved by the Council's legal advisor, has been established.
- 5.4.3 To ensure the proper security of all buildings and other assets under their control in accordance with laid down guidelines.
- 5.4.4 Where land or buildings are surplus to requirements, a recommendation for sale should be the subject of a joint report by the Director and the Director of Finance (see **Appendix F**).
- 5.4.5 To pass title deeds to the Monitoring Officer who is responsible for maintaining the central repository of all title deeds.

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- 5.4.6 To ensure that no Council asset is subject to personal use by a Member or employee without prior agreement of the relevant Director.
- 5.4.7 To ensure the safe custody of vehicles, equipment, furniture, stock, stores and other property belonging to the Council.
- 5.4.8 To ensure that an inventory is maintained of moveable assets (subject to limits in **Appendix F**) in accordance with arrangements defined by the Senior Leadership Team.
- 5.4.9 To ensure that assets are identified, their location recorded and that they are appropriately marked and insured.
- 5.4.10 To consult the Chief Executive in any case where security is thought to be defective or where it is considered that special security arrangements may be needed.
- 5.4.11 To ensure cash holdings on premises are kept to a minimum.
- 5.4.12 To ensure that keys to safes and similar receptacles are carried on the person of those responsible at all times; loss of any such keys must be reported to the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities as soon as possible.
- 5.4.13 To record all disposals or part exchange of assets that should normally be by competitive tender or public auction in accordance with **Contract Procedure Rules**, unless, the Strategy and Resources Committee agrees otherwise.
- 5.4.14 To ensure that all employees are aware that they have a personal responsibility with regard to the protection and confidentiality of information, whether held in manual or computerised records. Information may be sensitive or privileged, or may possess some intrinsic value, and its disclosure or loss could result in a cost to the Council in some way.
- 5.4.15 To maintain inventories and record an adequate description of furniture, fittings, equipment, plant and machinery above a specified financial limit in value (see **Appendix F**).
- 5.4.16 To carry out an annual check of all items on the inventory in order to verify location and condition and to take action in relation to surpluses or deficiencies, annotating the inventory accordingly. Attractive and portable items such as computers and cameras should be identified with security markings as belonging to the Council.
- 5.4.17 To make sure that property is only used in the course of the Council's business, unless the Director concerned has given permission otherwise.

C.5.5 Asset disposal**5.5.1 Why is this important?**

- 5.5.1.1 It would be uneconomic and inefficient for the cost of assets to outweigh their benefits. Obsolete, non-repairable or unnecessary resources should be disposed of in accordance with the law and the regulations of the Council.

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C.5.6 Key controls

- 5.6.1 Assets for disposal are identified and are disposed of at the most appropriate time, and only when it is in the best interests of the Council, and best price is obtained in accordance with ***Contract Procedure Rules*** and bearing in mind other factors, such as environmental issues.
- 5.6.2 Procedures protect staff involved in the disposal from accusations of personal gain.

C.5.7 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 5.7.1 To issue advice on disposal in accordance with ***Contract Procedure Rules***.
- 5.7.2 To ensure appropriate accounting entries are made to remove the value of disposed assets from the Council's records and to include the sale proceeds if appropriate.

C.6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT**C.6.1 Why is this important?**

- 6.1.1 Millions of pounds pass through the Council's accounts each year. This requires the establishment of codes of practice. These aim to provide assurances that the Council's money is properly managed in a way that balances risk with return, but with the overriding consideration being given to the security of the Council's investment.

C.6.2 Key controls

- 6.2.1 That the Council's borrowings and investments comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and with the Council's treasury management practices (TMP's).
- 6.2.2 That the Strategy and Resources Committee receives reports on Treasury activity at least twice a year in accordance with the code of practice and that the Treasury Management Strategy is subject to annual scrutiny before it is agreed.

C.6.3 Responsibilities of Director of Finance – treasury management and banking

- 6.3.1 To arrange the borrowing and investments of the Council in such a manner as to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the Council's treasury management practices and strategy.
- 6.3.2 To prepare reports for the consideration of the Strategy and Resources Committee and other Committees as required.
- 6.3.3 To operate bank accounts as are considered necessary – opening or closing any bank account shall require the written approval of the Director of Finance in accordance with the Banking Mandate (**Appendix G**).

C.6.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors – treasury management and banking

- 6.4.1 To follow the instructions on banking issued by the Director of Finance.

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C.6.5 Responsibilities of Director of Finance – investments and borrowing

- 6.5.1 To ensure that all investments of money are made in the name of the Council.
- 6.5.2 To ensure that all securities that are the property of the Council and the title deeds of all property in the Council's ownership are held in the custody of the Monitoring Officer or under arrangements approved by the Director of Finance
- 6.5.3 To affect all borrowings in the name of the Council.
- 6.5.4 To maintain records of all borrowing of money by the Council.

C.6.6 Responsibilities of Directors – investments and borrowing

- 6.6.1 To ensure that loans are not made to third parties and that interests are not acquired in companies, joint ventures or other enterprises without the approval of the Council.

C.6.7 Responsibilities of Directors – funds held for third parties

- 6.7.1 To arrange, where funds are held on behalf of third parties, for their secure administration, approved by the Director of Finance, and to maintain written records of all transactions.

C.6.8 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance – imprest accounts

- 6.8.1 To provide employees of the Council with cash imprest accounts to meet minor expenditure on behalf of the Council and to prescribe rules for operating these accounts. Minor items of expenditure should not exceed the prescribed amount.
- 6.8.2 To determine the petty cash limit and to maintain a record of all transactions and petty cash advances made, and periodically to review the arrangements for the safe custody and control of these advances.
- 6.8.3 To reimburse imprest holders, as often as necessary, to restore the imprests.

C.6.9 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors – imprest accounts

- 6.9.1 To ensure that employees operating an imprest account:
 - a) obtain and retain vouchers to support each payment from the imprest account. Where appropriate, an official receipted VAT invoice must be obtained;
 - b) make adequate arrangements for the safe custody of the account;
 - c) produce upon demand by the Director of Finance cash and all vouchers to the total value of the imprest amount;
 - d) record transactions promptly;
 - e) reconcile and balance the account at least monthly; reconciliation sheets to be signed and retained by the imprest holder;
 - f) provide the Director of Finance with a certificate of the value of the account held at 31 March each year;
 - g) ensure that the float is never used to cash personal cheques or to make personal loans and that the only payments into the account are the

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reimbursement of the float and change relating to purchases where an advance has been made.

C.7. STAFFING**C.7.1 Why is this important?**

- 7.1.1 In order to provide the highest level of service, it is crucial that the Council recruits and retains high calibre, knowledgeable staff, qualified to an appropriate level.

C.7.2 Key controls

- 7.2.1 The key controls for staffing are:
- a) procedures are in place for forecasting staffing requirements and cost;
 - b) controls are implemented to ensure that staff time is used efficiently and to the benefit of the Council;
 - c) checks are undertaken prior to employing new staff to ensure that they are appropriately qualified, experienced, lawfully resident and trustworthy.

C.7.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 7.3.1 To act as an advisor to Directors on areas such as Income Tax, National Insurance and pension contributions, as appropriate.
- 7.3.2 To ensure that staff costs are charged accurately to allow Directors to monitor staffing budgets effectively.

C.7.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 7.4.1 To monitor staff activity to ensure adequate control over such costs as sickness, overtime, training and temporary staff.
- 7.4.2 To ensure that the staffing budget is not exceeded without due authority and that it is managed to enable the agreed level of service to be provided.
- 7.4.3 To ensure that the Director of Finance is immediately informed if the staffing budget is likely to be materially over- or under-spent.

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D. FINANCIAL SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES**D.1. GENERAL****D.1.1 Why is this important?**

- 1.1.1 Services have systems and procedures relating to the control of the Council's assets. Services are reliant on computers for their financial management information. The information must therefore be accurate and the systems and procedures sound and well administered. They should contain controls to ensure that transactions are properly processed and errors detected promptly.
- 1.1.2 The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that the authority's financial systems are sound and should therefore be notified of any new developments or changes.

D.1.2 Key controls

- 1.2.1 The key controls for systems and procedures are:
- a) basic data exists to enable the Council's objectives, targets, budgets and plans to be formulated;
 - b) performance is communicated to the appropriate managers on an accurate, complete and timely basis;
 - c) early warning is provided of deviations from target, plans and budgets that require management attention;
 - d) operating systems and procedures are secure.

D.1.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 1.3.1 To make arrangements for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs, including to:
- a) issue advice, guidance and procedures for officers and others acting on the Council's behalf;
 - b) determine the accounting systems, form of accounts and supporting financial records;
 - c) establish arrangements for audit of the Council's financial affairs;
 - d) approve any new financial systems to be introduced;
 - e) approve any changes to be made to existing financial systems.
- 1.3.2 To ensure that effective contingency arrangements, including back-up procedures, exist for computer systems. Wherever possible, back-up information should be securely retained in a fireproof location, preferably off site or at an alternative location within the building.
- 1.3.3 To ensure that, where appropriate, computer systems are registered in accordance with Data Protection legislation and that staff are aware of their responsibilities under the legislation.

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D.1.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 1.4.1 To ensure that accounting records are properly maintained and held securely.
- 1.4.2 To ensure that vouchers and documents with financial implications are not destroyed, except in accordance with arrangements approved by the Director of Finance.
- 1.4.3 To ensure that a complete management trail, allowing financial transactions to be traced from the accounting records to the original document, and vice versa, is maintained.
- 1.4.4 To incorporate appropriate controls to ensure that, where relevant:
 - a) all input is genuine, complete, accurate, timely and not previously processed;
 - b) all processing is carried out in an accurate, complete and timely manner;
 - c) output from the system is complete, accurate and timely.
- 1.4.5 To ensure that the organisational structure provides an appropriate segregation of duties to provide adequate internal controls and to minimise the risk of fraud or other malpractice.
- 1.4.6 To ensure there is a documented and tested disaster recovery plan to allow information system processing to resume quickly in the event of an interruption.
- 1.4.7 To ensure that systems are documented and staff trained in operations.
- 1.4.8 To consult with the Director of Finance before changing any existing system or introducing new systems.
- 1.4.9 In consultation with the Director of Finance to establish a scheme of delegation identifying officers authorised to act upon the Directors behalf in respect of payments, income collection and placing orders, including variations, and showing the limits of their authority.
- 1.4.10 To supply lists of authorised officers, with specimen signatures and delegated limits, to the Director of Finance, together with any subsequent variations.
- 1.4.11 To ensure that relevant standards and guidelines for ICT systems issued by the Director of Finance or Lead Specialist ICT are observed.
- 1.4.12 To ensure that computer equipment and software are protected from loss and damage through theft, vandalism, etc.
- 1.4.13 To comply with the copyright, designs and patents legislation and, in particular, to ensure that:
 - a) only software legally acquired and installed by the Council is used on its computers;
 - b) staff are aware of legislative provisions;
 - c) in developing systems, due regard is given to the issue of intellectual property rights.

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D.2. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**D.2.1 Income****2.1.1 Why is this important?**

- 2.1.1.1 Income can be a vulnerable asset and effective income collection systems are necessary to ensure that all income due is identified, collected, receipted and banked properly. It is preferable to obtain income in advance of supplying goods or services as this improves the Council's cash-flow and also avoids the time and cost of administering debts.

D.2.2 Key controls**2.2.1 The key controls for income are:**

- a) all income due to the Council is identified and charged correctly, in accordance with an approved charging policy, which is regularly reviewed;
- b) all income is collected from the correct person, at the right time, using the correct procedures and the appropriate stationery;
- c) all money received by an employee on behalf of the Council is paid in without delay through the Council's payment facility, as the Director of Finance directs, to the Council's bank account, and properly recorded. The responsibility for cash collection should be separated from that:
 - i. for identifying the amount due
 - ii. for reconciling the amount due to the amount received
- d) effective action is taken to pursue non-payment within defined timescales;
- e) formal approval for debt write-off is obtained;
- f) appropriate write-off action is taken within defined timescales;
- g) appropriate accounting adjustments are made following write-off action;
- h) all appropriate income documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention guidelines;
- i) money collected and deposited is reconciled to the bank account by a person who is not involved in the collection or banking process.

D.2.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 2.3.1 To agree arrangements for the collection of all income due to the Council and to approve the procedures, systems and documentation for its collection.
- 2.3.2 To approve all debts to be written off in consultation with the relevant Director and to keep a record of all sums written off up to the approved limit and to adhere to the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 2.3.3 To obtain the approval of the Strategy and Resources Committee in consultation with the relevant Director for writing off debts in excess of a specified financial limit (see **Appendix F**)
- 2.3.4 To ensure that appropriate accounting adjustments are made following write-off action.

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- 2.3.5 To order and supply to services all receipt forms, books or tickets and similar items and to satisfy himself/herself regarding the arrangements for their control.

D.2.4 Responsibilities of Directors

- 2.4.1 To implement the charging policy for the supply of goods or services, including the appropriate charging of VAT (in consultation with the Director of Finance where appropriate), and to review it regularly, in line with corporate policies.
- 2.4.2 To separate the responsibility for identifying amounts due and the responsibility for collection, as far as is practicable.
- 2.4.3 To establish and initiate appropriate recovery procedures, including legal action where necessary, for debts that are not paid promptly.
- 2.4.4 To issue official receipts or to maintain other documentation for income collection.
- 2.4.5 To ensure that at least two employees are present when post is opened so that money received by post is properly identified and recorded.
- 2.4.6 To hold securely receipts, tickets and other records of income for the appropriate period in accordance with the documentation retention policy.
- 2.4.7 To secure all income to safeguard against loss or theft, and to ensure the security of cash handling.
- 2.4.8 To ensure that income is paid fully and promptly into the appropriate Council bank account in the form in which it is received. Appropriate details should be recorded on paying-in slips to provide an audit trail. Money collected and deposited must be reconciled to the bank account on a regular basis.
- 2.4.9 To ensure personal cheques or other payments are not en-cashed.
- 2.4.10 To supply the Director of Finance with details relating to work done, goods supplied, services rendered or other amounts due, to enable the Director of Finance to record correctly the sums due to the Council and to ensure accounts are sent out promptly. Directors have a responsibility to assist the Director of Finance in collecting debts that they have originated, by providing any further information requested about the debtor, and in pursuing the matter on the Council's behalf.
- 2.4.11 To notify the Director of Finance of outstanding income relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31st March in line with the timetable determined by the Director of Finance and not later than 15th April.

D.3. ORDERING AND PAYING FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES**D.3.1 Why is this important?**

- 3.1.1 Public money should be spent with demonstrable probity and in accordance with the Council's policies. Authorities have a statutory duty to achieve best value in part through economy and efficiency. The Council's procedures should help to ensure that services obtain value for money from their purchasing arrangements. These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Council's ***Contract Procedure Rules***.

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D.3.2 General

- 3.2.1 Every Officer and Member of the Council has a responsibility to declare any links or personal interests that they may have with purchasers, suppliers and/or contractors if they are engaged in contractual or purchasing decisions on behalf of the Council, in accordance with appropriate codes of conduct.
- 3.2.2 Official orders must be in a form approved by the Director of Finance. Official orders must be issued for all work, goods or services to be supplied to the Council, except for supplies of utilities, periodic payments, petty cash purchases or other exceptions specified by the Director of Finance.
- 3.3.3 Each order must conform to the guidelines approved by the Council on procurement Standard terms and conditions and must not be varied without the prior approval of the Director of Finance.
- 3.3.4 Apart from petty cash, the normal method of payment from the Council shall be by BACS drawn on the Council's bank account by the Director of Finance. The use of direct debit shall require the prior agreement of the Director of Finance. The use of Council procurement/business cards by non-card holders shall require the prior agreement of the Director of Finance.
- 3.3.5 Official orders must not be raised for any personal or private purchases, nor must personal or private use be made of Council contracts, except where there is a specific Council policy to the contrary.
- 3.3.6 Detailed regulations relating to Procurement are set out in the Council's ***Contract Procedure Rules***.
- 3.3.7 Where an order is not appropriate as discussed in section 3.2.2, authorisation must be provided on the specified form and attached to the invoice for payment. Authorisation thresholds for Officers are set out in **Appendix H**.

D.3.3 Key controls

- 3.3.1 The key controls for ordering and paying for work, goods and services are:
- a) all goods and services are ordered only by authorised persons and are correctly recorded;
 - b) all goods and services shall be ordered in accordance with the Council's ***Contract Procedures Rules***;
 - c) goods and services received are checked to ensure they are in accordance with the order;
 - d) payments are not made unless goods have been received by the Council to the correct price, quantity and quality standards;
 - e) all payments are made to the correct person, for the correct amount and are properly recorded, regardless of the payment method;
 - f) all appropriate evidence of the transaction and payment documents are retained and stored for the defined period, in accordance with the document retention guidelines;
 - g) all expenditure, including VAT, is accurately recorded against the right budget and any exceptions are corrected by journal;

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- h) in addition, e-commerce requires that processes are in place to maintain the security and integrity of data for transacting business electronically.

D.3.4 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 3.4.1 To ensure that all the Council's financial systems and procedures are sound and properly administered.
- 3.4.2 To approve any changes to existing financial systems and to approve any new systems before they are introduced.
- 3.4.3 To approve the form of official orders and associated terms and conditions in consultation with the Council's legal advisors.
- 3.4.4 To make payments from the Council's funds on the Chief Executive or Director's authorisation that the expenditure has been duly incurred in accordance with financial regulations.
- 3.4.5 To make payments, whether or not provision exists within the estimates, where the payment is specifically required by statute or is made under a court order.
- 3.4.6 To make payments to contractors on the certificate of the appropriate Chief Executive or Director, which must include details of the value of work, retention money, amounts previously certified and amounts now certified.
- 3.4.7 To provide advice and encouragement on making payments by the most economical means, in accordance with the Council's Procurement Strategy and associated guidance.
- 3.4.8 To ensure that payment is not made unless a proper VAT invoice, where appropriate, has been received, checked and coded, confirming:
- (a) that the invoice has not previously been paid;
 - (b) that expenditure has been properly incurred;
 - (c) that prices and arithmetic are correct;
 - (d) correct accounting treatment of tax;
 - (e) that discounts have been taken where available;
 - (f) that appropriate entries will be made in accounting records.
- 3.4.9 To ensure that payments are not made on a photocopied or faxed invoice, statement or other document other than the formal invoice, except where the original invoice has been lost, in which case a check must be made to see if payment has been made and if it has not the copy annotated accordingly prior to payment.

D.3.5 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 3.5.1 To ensure that official orders are issued via the e-procurement system for all goods and services, other than the exceptions as specified in 3.2.2.
- 3.5.2 To ensure that orders are only used for goods and services provided to the service. Individuals must not use official orders to obtain goods or services for their private use (see 3.3.5).

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- 3.5.3 To ensure that only staff authorised to raise orders (Buyers) via the e-procurements system have access to the system. To ensure that only staff authorised to approve orders above the specified limit have access to the system. Buyers and Approvers should be satisfied that the goods and services ordered are appropriate and needed, that there is adequate budgetary provision and that quotations or tenders have been obtained if necessary. Best Value principles should underpin the Council's approach to procurement. Value for money should always be achieved.
- 3.5.4 To ensure that goods and services are checked on receipt to verify that they are in accordance with the order. This check should, where possible, be carried out by a different officer from the person who authorised the order. Appropriate entries should then be made in inventories if necessary.
- 3.5.5 To ensure that the e-payment system is updated to show the receipt of goods, immediately after the goods are received.
- 3.5.6 Wherever possible to ensure that two authorised members of staff are involved in the ordering and receiving process.
- 3.5.7 To encourage suppliers of goods and services to receive payment by the most economical means for the Council. It is essential, however, that payments made by direct debit have the prior approval of the Director of Finance.
- 3.5.8 To ensure that the service obtains best value from purchases by taking appropriate steps to obtain competitive prices for goods and services of the appropriate quality. Due regard to be taken of the Council's procurement strategy and associated procurement guidance.
- 3.5.9 To ensure that employees are aware of the national code of conduct for local government employees specified in personnel policies.
- 3.5.10 To ensure that, loans, leasing or rental arrangements are not entered into without prior agreement from the Director of Finance.
- 3.5.11 To notify the Director of Finance of outstanding expenditure relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31st March in line with the timetable determined by the Director of Resources.
- 3.5.12 With regard to contracts for construction and alterations to buildings and for civil engineering works, to document and agree with the Director of Finance the systems and procedures to be adopted in relation to financial aspects. This includes certification of interim and final payments, checking, recording and authorising payments, the system for monitoring and controlling capital schemes and the procedures for validation of subcontractors' tax status.
- 3.5.13 To notify the Director of Finance immediately of any expenditure to be incurred as a result of statute/court order where there is no budgetary provision.
- 3.5.14 To ensure that all appropriate payment records are retained and stored for the defined period, in accordance with the document retention guidelines.

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D.4. PAYMENTS TO EMPLOYEES AND MEMBERS**D.4.1 Why is this important?**

- 4.1.1 Staff costs are the largest item of expenditure for most Council services. It is therefore important that payments are accurate, timely, made only where they are due for services to the Council and that payments accord with individuals' conditions of employment. It is also important that all payments are accurately and completely recorded and accounted for and that Members' allowances are authorised in accordance with the scheme adopted by the Council.

D.4.2 Key controls

- 4.2.1 The key controls for payments to employees and Members are:

- (a) proper authorisation procedures are in place and that there is adherence to corporate timetables in relation to:
 - i. starters
 - ii. leavers
 - iii. variations
 - iv. enhancements
 - v. and that payments are made on the basis of timesheets or claims;
 - vi. frequent reconciliation of payroll expenditure against approved budget and bank account;
- (b) all appropriate payroll documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention guidelines;
- (c) that HM Revenues and Customs regulations are complied with.

D.4.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 4.3.1 To arrange and control the secure and reliable payment of salaries, compensation or other emoluments to existing and former employees, in accordance with procedures prescribed by him/her, on the due date.
- 4.3.2 To ensure that all appropriate payroll documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention guidelines.
- 4.3.3 To record and make arrangements for the accurate and timely payment of tax, pensions and other deductions.
- 4.3.4 To make arrangements for payment of all travel and subsistence claims.
- 4.3.5 To make arrangements for paying Members travel or other allowances upon receiving the prescribed form, duly completed and authorised.
- 4.3.6 To ensure that adequate and effective systems and procedures are operated, so that:
 - (a) payments are only authorised to bona fide employees;
 - (b) payments are only made where there is a valid entitlement;
 - (c) conditions and contracts of employment are correctly applied, employees' names listed on the payroll are checked at regular intervals to verify accuracy and completeness.

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- 4.3.7 To ensure that the Director of Finance is notified of the details of any employee benefits in kind, to enable full and complete reporting within the income tax self-assessment system (P11d).

D.4.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 4.4.1 To send an up-to-date list of the names of officers authorised to sign records to the Director of Finance, together with specimen signatures.
- 4.4.2 To ensure that payroll transactions are processed only through the payroll system. Directors should give careful consideration to the employment status of individuals employed on a self-employed consultant or subcontract basis. HM Revenues and Customs applies a tight definition for employee status, and in cases of doubt, advice should be sought from the Director of Finance.
- 4.4.3 To certify travel and subsistence claims and other allowances. Certification is taken to mean that journeys were authorised and expenses properly and necessarily incurred, and that allowances are properly payable by the Council, ensuring that cost-effective use of travel arrangements is achieved. Due consideration should be given to tax implications and the Director of Finance is informed where appropriate.
- 4.4.4 To make, having regard to the particular circumstances of each case, ex gratia payments not exceeding a specified financial limit (see **Appendix F**) in any one case, subject to consultation with the Director of Finance. The circumstances of the proposed payment must not have the effect of circumventing other Council pay and allowance policies, tax rules or other legislation.
- 4.4.5 To notify the Director of Finance of all appointments, terminations or variations that may affect the pay or pension of an employee or former employee, in the form and to the timescale required by the Director of Finance.
- 4.4.6 To ensure appointments are made in accordance with the regulations of the Council and approved establishments, grades and scale of pay and that adequate budget provision is available.

D.4.5 Responsibilities of Members and Officers

- 4.5.1 To submit claims for travel and subsistence allowances on a monthly basis and, in any event, within one month of the year end.

D.5. TAXATION**D.5.1 Why is this important?**

- 5.1.1 Like all organisations, the Council is responsible for ensuring its tax affairs are in order. Tax issues are often very complex and the penalties for incorrectly accounting for tax are severe. It is therefore very important for all officers to be aware of their role.

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Appendix D**D.5.2 Key controls**

5.2.1 The key controls for taxation are:

- (a) Finance staff remain abreast of tax legislation, in particular that relating to PAYE, NICs, CIS and VAT.
- (b) budget managers are provided with relevant information and kept up to date on tax issues;
- (c) budget managers are instructed on required record keeping;
- (d) all taxable transactions are identified, properly carried out, accounted for within stipulated timescales and paid through appropriate financial systems;
- (e) records are maintained in accordance with instructions;
- (f) returns are made to the appropriate authorities within the stipulated timescale.

D.5.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 5.3.1 To complete all HM Revenues and Customs returns regarding PAYE and NIC's.
- 5.3.2 To complete a monthly return of VAT inputs and outputs to HM Revenues and Customs.
- 5.3.3 To provide details to HM Revenues and Customs regarding the construction industry tax deduction scheme in accordance with their deadlines.
- 5.3.4 To provide guidance for Council employees on taxation issues (including VAT).

D.5.4 Responsibilities of Directors

- 5.4.1 To ensure that the correct VAT liability is attached to all income due and that all VAT recoverable on purchases complies with HM Revenues and Customs regulations.
- 5.4.2 To ensure that, where construction and maintenance works are undertaken, the contractor fulfils the necessary construction industry tax deduction requirements.
- 5.4.3 To follow any guidance on taxation issued by the Director of Finance.

D.6. TRADING ACCOUNTS AND BUSINESS UNITS**D.6.1 Why is this important?**

- 6.1.1 Trading accounts have become more important as local authorities have developed a more commercial culture.

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D.6.2 General

- 6.2.1 Trading activities must operate within the Council's overall arrangements and rules for financial, personnel and resource management. Exceptionally, where it can be demonstrated that this would lead to a unit being uncompetitive and losing work, special arrangements can be considered. While the Programme committees have an overall responsibility for the operations of trading activities, clearly trading activities need freedom within this framework to operate on a commercial basis. Trading activities must adhere to Financial Regulations, unless alternative arrangements are explicitly identified and agreed in writing with the Director of Finance.

D.6.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 6.3.1 To advise on the establishment and operation of trading accounts.

D.6.4 Responsibilities of Directors

- 6.4.1 To ensure that the control of the trading activity will be to the financial target (the 'bottom line') rather than to individual expenditure and income estimate headings.
- 6.4.2 To ensure that as a minimum, a break even position should be achieved.
- 6.4.3 To report to the Strategy and Resources Committee, where a trading activity plans a significant item of expenditure (e.g. a capital scheme, the purchase of a major item of computer software or the creation of a major ongoing revenue commitment), prior to the expenditure being committed, unless already in an approved capital programme.
- 6.4.4 To make a full report to the Strategy and Resources Committee, as soon as it is known that the trading activity may make a deficit.
- 6.4.5 To make a report to the Strategy and Resources Committee on the outturn of each trading activity compared to the financial plan.
- 6.4.6 To consult with the Director of Finance and the Council's legal advisors where a trading activity wishes to enter into a contract with a third party where the contract expiry date exceeds the remaining life of their main contract with the Council. In general, such contracts should not be entered into unless they can be terminated within the main contract period without penalty.

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Appendix E**E. EXTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS****E.1. PARTNERSHIPS****E.1.1 Why is this important?**

1.1.1 Partnerships are likely to play a key role in delivering community strategies and in helping to promote and improve the well-being of the area. Local authorities are working in partnership with others – public agencies, private companies, community groups and voluntary organisations. Local authorities still deliver some services, but their distinctive leadership role is to bring together the contributions of the various stakeholders. They therefore need to deliver a shared vision of services based on user wishes.

1.1.2 Local authorities usually act as an “enabler” and will mobilise investment, bid for funds, champion the needs of their areas and harness the energies of local people and community organisations. Local authorities will be measured by what they achieve in partnership with others.

E.1.2 General

1.2.1 The main reasons for entering into a partnership are:

- a) the desire to find new ways to share risk;
- b) the ability to access new resources;
- c) to provide new and better ways of delivering services;
- d) to forge new relationships.

1.2.2 A partner is defined as either:

- a) an organisation (private or public) undertaking, part funding or participating as a beneficiary in a project or;
- b) a body whose nature or status give it a right or obligation to support the project.

1.2.3 Partners participate in projects by:

- a) acting as a project deliverer or sponsor, solely or in concert with others;
- b) acting as a project funder or part funder;
- c) being the beneficiary group of the activity undertaken in a project.

1.2.4 Partners have common responsibilities:

- a) to be willing to take on a role in the broader programme appropriate to the skills and resources of the partner organisation;
- b) to act in good faith at all times and in the best interests of the partnership’s aims and objectives;
- c) be open about any conflict of interests that might arise;
- d) to encourage joint working and promote the sharing of information, resources and skills between public, private and community sectors;
- e) to hold confidentially any information received as a result of partnership activities or duties that is of a confidential or commercially sensitive nature;

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- f) to act wherever possible as ambassadors for the project.

E.1.3 Key controls

1.3.1 The key controls for Council partners are:

- a) if appropriate, to be aware of their responsibilities under the Council's financial regulations and procedures together with ***Contract Procedure Rules***;
- b) to ensure that risk management processes are in place to identify and assess all known risks;
- c) to ensure that project appraisal processes are in place to assess the viability of the project in terms of resources, staffing and expertise;
- d) to agree and accept formally the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners involved in the project before the project commences;
- e) to communicate regularly with other partners throughout the project so that problems can be identified and shared to achieve their successful resolution.

E.1.4 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

1.4.1 To advise on effective controls that will ensure that resources are not wasted.

1.4.2 To advise on the key elements of funding a project. They include:

- a) a scheme appraisal for financial viability in both the current and future years;
- b) risk appraisal and management;
- c) resourcing, including taxation issues;
- d) audit, security and control requirements;
- e) carry-forward arrangements.

1.4.3 To ensure that the accounting arrangements are satisfactory.

1.4.4 To maintain a register of all contracts entered into with external bodies.

1.4.5 To ensure that spending has occurred in line with the terms and conditions and any eligibility criteria.

E.1.5 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

1.5.1 To ensure that, before entering into agreements with external bodies the Council's legal advisors are consulted.

1.5.2 To ensure that, before entering into agreements with external bodies, a risk management appraisal has been prepared.

1.5.3 To ensure that such agreements and arrangements do not impact adversely upon the services provided by the Council.

1.5.4 To ensure that all agreements and arrangements are properly documented.

1.5.5 To provide appropriate information to the Director of Finance to enable a note to be entered into the Council's Statement of Accounts concerning material items.

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E.2. EXTERNAL FUNDING**E.2.1 Why is this important?**

- 2.1.1 External funding is potentially a very important source of income, but funding conditions need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are compatible with the aims and objectives of the Council. Local authorities are increasingly encouraged to provide seamless service delivery through working closely with other agencies and private service providers. Funds from external agencies provide additional resources to enable the Council to deliver services to the local community. However, in some instances, although the scope for external funding has increased, such funding is linked to tight specifications and may not be flexible enough to link to the Council's overall plan.

E.2.2 Key controls

- 2.2.1 The key controls for external funding are:
- a) to ensure that key conditions of funding and any statutory requirements are complied with and that the responsibilities of the accountable body are clearly understood;
 - b) to ensure that funds are acquired only to meet the priorities approved in the policy framework by the Council;
 - c) to ensure that any match-funding requirements and future revenue implications are given due consideration prior to entering into long-term agreements and that future revenue budgets reflect these requirements.

E.2.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

- 2.3.1 To ensure that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Council's accounts.
- 2.3.2 To ensure that the match-funding requirements are considered prior to entering into the agreements and that future revenue budgets reflect these requirements.
- 2.3.3 To ensure that audit requirements are met.

E.2.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 2.4.1 To ensure that all claims for funds are made by the due date.
- 2.4.2 To ensure that the project progresses in accordance with the agreed project and that all expenditure is properly incurred and recorded.

E.3. WORK FOR THIRD PARTIES**E.3.1 Why is this important?**

- 3.1.1 Legislation enables the Council to provide a range of services to other bodies. Such work may enable a unit to maintain economies of scale and existing expertise. Arrangements should be in place to ensure that any risk associated with this work is minimised and that such work is intra vires.

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E.3.2 Key controls

- 3.2.1 The key controls for working with third parties are:
- a) to ensure that proposals are costed properly in accordance with guidance provided by the Director of Resources;
 - b) to ensure that contracts are drawn up using guidance provided by the Director of Finance and that the formal approvals process is adhered to;
 - c) to issue guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third party contracts and the maintenance of the contract register.

E.3.3 Responsibilities of Director of Finance

- 3.3.1 To issue guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third party contracts and the maintenance of the contract register.

E.3.4 Responsibilities of Chief Executive and Directors

- 3.4.1 To ensure that the approval of the relevant committee is obtained before any negotiations are concluded to work for third parties.
- 3.4.2 To maintain a register of all contracts entered into with third parties in accordance with procedures specified by the Director of Finance
- 3.4.3 To ensure that appropriate insurance arrangements are made.
- 3.4.4 To ensure that the Council is not put at risk from any bad debts.
- 3.4.5 To ensure that no contract is subsidised by the Council.
- 3.4.6 To ensure that, wherever possible, payment is received in advance of the delivery of the service.
- 3.4.7 To ensure that the service has the appropriate expertise to undertake the contract.
- 3.4.8 To ensure that such contracts do not impact adversely upon the services provided for the Council.
- 3.4.9 To ensure that all contracts are properly documented.
- 3.4.10 To provide appropriate information to the Director of Finance to enable a note to be entered into the Statement of Accounts.

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Appendix F

F. FINANCIAL LIMITS**F.1. General**

F.1.1 Throughout these regulations, there are references to financial limits. These limits will need to be reviewed on a regular basis and, consequently, the latest figures have been consolidated in this appendix in order to facilitate any future changes. The regulations which contain financial limits are listed below:

F.1.2 Virements between Directorates require the approval of the Strategy and Resources Committee subject to the authorisation limits set out below. For the purpose of virements, salaries are to be considered as a Directorate in their own right and are under the control of the Chief Executive.

F.1.3 The use of reserves is to be approved through the same authorisation process as virements where not approved as part of the annual budget or accounts processes or have specific delegation.

F.1.4 The financial limits for approval of revenue virements and revenue supplementary estimates are set out below:

(a) Virements within same Directorate

Relevant Director and Director of Finance

(b) Virements between different Directorates

(i) Up to **£20,000** – Director and Director of Finance and reported quarterly to members via email.

(ii) Over **£20,000** up to **£50,000** - Director, Director of Finance in consultation with relevant Committee Chairperson; and reported to the next Strategy and Resources Committee meeting;

(iii) Over **£50,000** - the Strategy and Resources Committee.

(c) Supplementary Estimates

(i) Up to **£20,000** – Director and Director of Finance in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Leader and reported to the next Strategy and Resources Committee;

(ii) Over **£20,000** – the Strategy and Resources Committee.

NB One of the Council's budget policies is to only agree supplementary estimates in exceptional circumstances.

F.1.5 A capital scheme (an identifiable project) is where expenditure exceeds **£10,000**.

F.1.6 The financial limits for approval of capital virements and capital supplementary estimates are the same as for revenue.

F.1.7 Any excess expenditure over the approved contract sum of more than **510%** or **£10,000** whichever is the greater-lesser must be reported to the relevant committee (Appendix B paragraph 2.19.8).

F.1.8 The asset register shall contain all assets with a value in excess of **£10,000** (Appendix C paragraph 5.3.1).

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- F.1.9** All items with a value in excess of **£500** shall be included in inventories (Appendix C paragraph 5. 4.15). IT assets (laptops, monitors, printers etc but excluding IT peripherals) are an exception to this limit as are more desirable, and are all recorded on the IT inventory.
- F.1.10** Strategy and Resources Committee approval is required to declare land surplus to requirements where the value exceeds **£10,000** (Appendix C paragraph 5.4.4).
- F.1.11** Strategy and Resources Committee approval is required to write-off bad debts in excess of **£10,000** (Appendix D paragraph 2.3.3), in the case of Non-Domestic Rates Debts this is increased to **£20,000**.
- F.1.12** Strategy and Resources Committee approval is required to make ex-gratia payments in excess of **£2,000** (Appendix D paragraph 4.4.4).
- F.1.13** Finance limits relating to contracts are contained in the Council's ***Contract Procedure Rules***.

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Appendix G**G. BANK MANDATE**

- G.1. Cheques are only to be issued in emergencies and will be from the contingency cheque book.
- G.2. Cheques above £10,000 shall be countersigned by the Director of Finance or, in his/her absence, the Chief Executive.
- G.3. Amendments to cheques can be countersigned by the above and additionally the Lead Finance Specialist for cheques up to £10,000.
- G.4. Manual CHAPS payments shall be signed by any of the following:
- a) Director of Finance
 - b) Chief Executive
- G.5. All arrangements with the Council's financial institutions shall be made by the Director of Finance who shall be authorised to operate such banking accounts/investments/financial instruments as he/she may consider necessary.
- G.6. All cheques shall be ordered only on the authority of the Director of Finance or under arrangements made by him/her.
- G.7. All cheques shall be ensured are kept in safe custody by the Director of Resources until issue.
- G.8. All instructions relating to the Council's banking accounts, shall be authorised by the Director of Finance or Officers authorised by him or her.
- G.9. Payments may be made by BACS or CHAPS electronic transmission subject to two electronic signatures; and submission by an authorised card holder authentication. Responsibility for the delegation of authorisation below Director level and limits applicable is set by the Director of Finance.

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Appendix H

H. AUTHORISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Total Value	Category	Authorisation Level
Up to £5,000	Electronic Orders	<i>Authorised buyer</i>
£5,001 to £50,000	Invoice Authorisations, Electronic Order Approvals, Mileage and Expenses Claims	<i>Line Manager</i>
Above £50,001*	Invoice Authorisations and Order/Contract Approvals	<i>Chief Executive or Director</i>

* Note requirement for written contracts above £50,000 – See Section 13.7 of Contract Procedure Rules.

Definitions (as per Contract Procedure Rules)

Approved Buyer.....An Officer designated by a Director who is authorised to generate electronic orders on behalf of the Council.

Line Manager An *Officer* designated by the *Director* to exercise the role reserved to the line manager by the contract procedure rules, this will be a Level 2 Manager.

Director..... *The Chief Executive or one of five Directors*

Authorisation arrangements are as follows:

1. Delegation originates from Council decision making. The approval of budget proposals in February delegates responsibility for delivery of services in line with the Corporate Plan and local service plans to Directors, within the constraints of the approved net budget limits.
2. Officers are not required to seek subsequent authorisation from Members where the revenue budget delegation has already been made.
3. It is expected that Directors delegate routine budget decisions to service managers and heads of service within the framework of the budget decision.
4. Authorisation for expenditure approved within the budget is then progressed based on the following table... delegation matrix
5. Where the Council has not yet approved expenditure, then the virements and supplementary estimate procedures will apply.

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Appendix I

I. DELEGATIONS**I.1.4 Introduction**

- 1.1.1. The Status of financial regulations section (Section one in this document) refer to Directors and Officers delegating their responsibilities per these financial regulations. Delegation should be given in writing, however there are instances where this isn't necessary or not possible due to sickness/leave. These delegations are only applicable where decisions/actions are required urgently, and the relevant officer is not available, and written delegation has not been made as not known required.
- 1.1.2. There are statutory delegations for statutory posts, the Monitoring Officer and Returning Officer, who have a Deputies. Written delegation is not required for these posts to act in the full capacity.

Finance Scheme of Delegation

- 1.1.3. This Finance Scheme of Delegation outlines officer delegation and details the power that council officers have to make decisions on spending and other finance issues across the council. The Scheme sets out approved financial limits within which authorised officers may conduct the council's business.
- 1.1.4. The scheme of delegation is one part of the Councils financial controls. Other key elements of financial controls include
- a) Councillor approval of the annual budget and financial strategy
 - b) regular financial reporting to Council to confirm that actual expenditure and income arising from Officers activities are following the plans set out in the budget approved by Councillors
 - c) the embedding of the authorization thresholds set out below in the Council's digital financial systems which, enable payments to be made, received and recorded
 - d) cyber security protecting the integrity of the Council's financial systems
 - e) separation between those allowed to proposed payments and those able to authorise those payments to be made
 - f) oversight and review of all payments and receipts to identify unusual items and investigate all relevant details of these

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DELEGATION MATRIX

Where procurement is required, relevant advice should be followed.

Where pay costs are affected, Human Resources advice should be followed.

In the absence of the required service Director, the approval of another Director should be obtained. In the absence of the Director of Finance (Chief Finance Officer (CFO)/s151), the approval of the Deputy s151 should be obtained.

1. General Expenditure^o

<u>Financial Limit</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>	<u>Conditions</u>
<u>Up to £50</u>	<u>Requesting Officer</u>	<u>Officers may proceed with expenditures where they are below £50 and within approved budget and procurement rules</u>
<u>£50 to £30,000</u>	<u>Budget Holder</u>	<u>Budget Holders may proceed with expenditures where they are within approved budget availability and within procurement rules.</u>
<u>£30,001 to £50,000</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Directors may proceed with expenditures where they are within approved budget availability and within procurement rules.</u>
<u>Over £50,000 (planned expenditure)</u>	<u>Director plus section 151</u>	<u>Directors may proceed with expenditures over £50,000 where they are within approved budget availability and within procurement rules (e.g. part of a contract approved by Council), after consultation with the Section 151</u>
<u>Over £50,000 (unplanned expenditure)</u>	<u>Full Council (on recommendation of Strategy and Resources Committee)</u>	<u>Where expenditures over £50,000 are not included within approved budgets they require approval of Council.</u>

2. Re-profiling of Capital Scheme Payments Between Financial Years

<u>Financial Limit</u>	<u>Authorisation</u>
<u>Below £500,000</u>	<u>Section 151 with notification to Strategy and Resources Committee</u>
<u>£500,000 and above</u>	<u>Strategy and Resources Committee recommendation to Full Council</u>

3. Capital Programme – New Schemes or Increases (supplementary estimates)

<u>Financial Limit</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>	<u>Conditions</u>
<u>Below £50,000</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Approval of Section 151 Officer; Reported to Strategy and Resources Committee</u>
<u>£50,000 and above</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>Formal Full Council approval</u>
<u>Prudential borrowing increase</u>	<u>Full Council</u>	<u>Council approval required</u>

^o "General expenditure" includes revenue pay and non-pay, capital, Officer and Member travel and expenses, and similar expenditure items routinely incurred by the Council, unless specifically set out in the paragraphs below.

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4. Submission of External Funding Bids

<u>Type</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>	<u>Conditions</u>
<u>Competitive bids</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Must follow governance and grant protocols</u>
<u>Direct grant allocations</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Approval of Section 151 Officer</u>

5. Asset Leasing

- 5.1 All proposed leasing arrangements must be appraised and approved by Corporate Finance prior to approval.

6. Treasury Management

- 6.1 Treasury management is the day-to-day management and forward planning of the council's cashflow. It is governed by the Treasury Management Strategy approved each February by Full Council, including selection of counterparties, maturities, and risk management. The Treasury Management Strategy is prepared with regard to sectoral advice on best practice (CIPFA).
- 6.2 The Section 151 Officer is responsible for treasury management. No other officers may borrow or invest funds unless formally delegated by the S151. There are no separate thresholds for treasury transactions as these are managed within the strategy through the definition of counterparties.
- 6.3 Treasury Management activity is also undertaken with the support of external, independent advisors who are able to support the S151 and provide relevant specialist advice.

7. Disposal of Assets (excluding Land and Property)

<u>Asset Value</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>	<u>Conditions</u>
<u>Up to £5,000</u>	<u>Head of Service</u>	<u>In accordance with disposal guidance and Asset Management Plan</u>
<u>£5,001–£50,000</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Consult as required</u>
<u>Over £50,000</u>	<u>Strategy and Resources Committee</u>	<u>Committee and Section 151 Officer</u>

8. Compensation Payments

<u>Payment Level</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>
<u>Up to £500</u>	<u>Head of Service</u>
<u>£500–£5,000</u>	<u>Director and Monitoring Officer</u>
<u>£5,000–£10,000</u>	<u>Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer</u>

9. Fees and Charges

- 9.1 All new fees and changes to existing fees must be approved through the Budget and Policy Framework. Officers may not vary fees outside this process.
- 9.2 Fees and Charges levels may be varied within the year with the agreement of Strategy and Resources Committee and the approval of full council, subject to provision of a clear rationale for doing so.

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10. Write-off of Income

10.1 Authorisation levels for writing off income are also set out in the Corporate Debt Strategy. All written off debt should be allocated to one of the following categories:

1. Unrecoverable (bad) debt

1.1 The debtor has absconded and despite attempts to locate the debtor, their current address is unknown

1.2 The debtor resides outside the UK and is unlikely to return.

1.3 The debtor has been declared bankrupt/ insolvent and the debt in question forms part of the insolvency proceedings

1.4 A company that has ceased trading

1.5 The debtor has died and there is insufficient equity in the estate to cover the debt

2. Pursuit is not justified (uneconomic, inefficient)

2.1 A small balance outstanding (less than £50).

2.2 A balance outstanding where the expenses of recovery in terms of fees, staff time and other charges, balanced against the likelihood of recovery (including all additional expenses and charges) outweigh the prospect of full or partial success.

2.3 Where enforcement of the debt involves an arguable point of law and for that reason enforcement action could fail, with the imposition of costs or charges upon the Council.

3. Where the debtor is vulnerable or where pursuit of the debt would be seen as contrary to natural justice

<u>Write off Level</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>
<u>Sundry debt (incl. fees and charges)</u>	
<u>Up to £250</u>	<u>Head of Service</u>
<u>£500–£5,000</u>	<u>Director</u>
<u>£5,000–£10,000</u>	<u>Director and s151 and inclusion in the next finance report to Committee</u>
<u>Over £10,000</u>	<u>Strategy and Resources Committee</u>
<u>Council Tax debt</u>	
<u>Up to £10,000</u>	<u>Head of Service with inclusion in the next Committee report</u>
<u>Over £10,000 but below £20,000</u>	<u>CFO/s151 with inclusion in the next finance report to Committee</u>
<u>Over £20,000</u>	<u>Strategy and Resources Committee</u>
<u>Business Rates debt</u>	
<u>Up to £20,000</u>	<u>Head of Service with inclusion in the next Committee report</u>
<u>Over £20,000</u>	<u>Strategy and Resources Committee</u>

PART 4 – RULES OF PROCEDURE
FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

Appendix I

11. Budget Virements

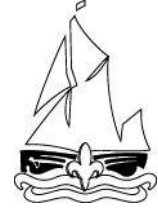
<u>Virement Level</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>
<u>Up to £25,000</u>	<u>Head of Service, notification to s151</u>
<u>£25,001–£50,000</u>	<u>Director, notification to s151</u>
<u>£50,000+</u>	<u>Strategy and Resources Committee</u>

12. Insurance Claims and Related Payments

<u>Claim Amount</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>
<u>Up to £500</u>	<u>Deputy s151</u>
<u>£500–£100,000</u>	<u>S151 + another director; to be reported to next Strategy and Resources Committee</u>

13. Emergency or Unplanned Urgent Payments

<u>Payment Level</u>	<u>Authorised Officer</u>
<u>Individual payments up to £10,000</u>	<u>Emergency planning team ('Bronze')</u>
<u>£10,000 to £50,000</u>	<u>Director ('Gold' command)</u>
<u>Over £50,000 (emergency response phase)</u>	<u>Director with 151 / Deputy 151 visibility (if 'Gold' director is Director of Finance, the visibility is to be with the Chief Executive or Director of Legal and Governance)</u>
<u>Over £50,000 (emergency recovery phase or other unplanned urgent payments)</u>	<u>Strategy and Resources Committee, or Director of Finance / Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee</u>



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF PLACE, PLANNING AND GROWTH**

**to
COUNCIL
10 SEPTEMBER 2026**

NEW LOCAL PLAN FOR MALDON DISTRICT

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For the Council to consider whether to commence work on a new Local Plan for Maldon District under the new 30-month plan-making system.
- 1.2 The draft Council report and appendices were presented to Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG) on Tuesday 11 August 2026, who endorsed the recommendations set out in section 2 of this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

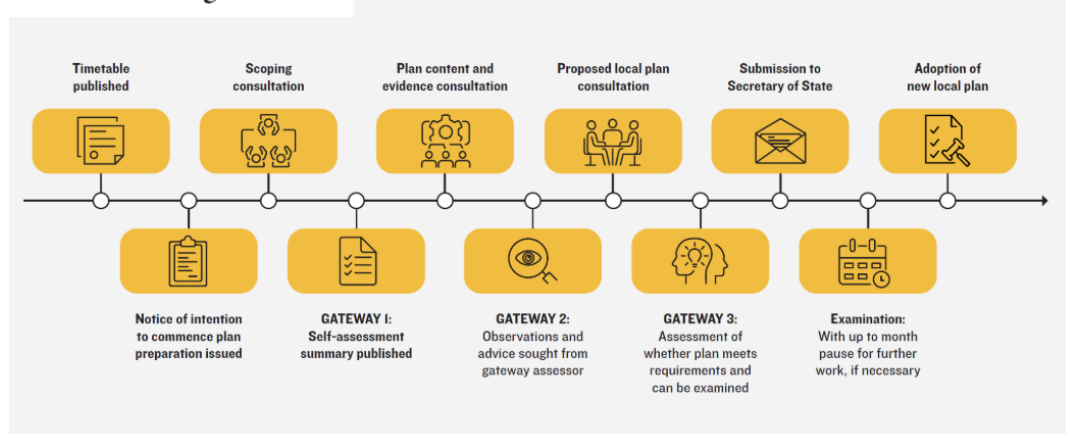
That the Council:

- (i) notes the work undertaken by consultants Arup:
 - Arup Project Initiation Document (**APPENDIX 1**)
 - Arup Budget (**APPENDIX 2**)
 - Arup Risk Register (**APPENDIX 3**)
- (ii) agrees to commence a new Local Plan for Maldon District;
- (iii) approves the Local Plan for Maldon District Project Initiation Document (**APPENDIX 4**);
- (iv) agrees the Local Plan Timetable (**APPENDIX 5**) and revokes the Local Development Scheme (February 2025), as explained in paragraph 3.5.2 below;
- (v) approves the Notice of Intention to Commence (**APPENDIX 6**) for publication;
- (vi) agrees to allocate a reserve of £2,075,000 to spend on the new Local Plan for Maldon District, including an allowance for contingencies and additional staff resources to progress the Local Plan through a new plan-making system;
- (vii) delegates authority to the Director of Place, Planning and Growth to amend and update the Local Plan for Maldon District Project Initiation Document (**APPENDIX 4**) and Local Plan Timetable (**APPENDIX 5**), in consultation with the Planning Policy Working Group.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 Work began on a review of the Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP) in 2021. Significant progress having been made, including public consultation, creation of an evidence base and a call for sites exercise being undertaken.
- 3.2 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act in October 2023 (LURA) introduced a new approach to plan-making, which is based upon a shorter timeframe, more proportionate evidence base and clearer project management steps.
- 3.3 Alongside reforms to the plan-making system, in December 2024 the Government published a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated sections of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and other updates. This introduced a new way to calculate local housing needs, meaning the housing requirement for Maldon district nearly doubled and the Council lost its Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS). This required a fundamental review of the sites which could be allocated in a new Local Plan for Maldon district. If these housing figures had not changed in 2024, it is likely that the Council could have submitted its local plan for examination under the legacy system. The latest housing need figure for the Maldon district is a requirement of 586 homes per annum.
- 3.4 Although the LURA 2023 introduced a new approach to plan-making, the secondary legislation for the new plan-making system was not published until March 2026¹. A diagram summarising the new plan-making system is set out below:

Local Planmaking Timetable



Lichfields' interpretation of the Local Planning Regulations 2026

- 3.5 As part of the national reforms to the plan-making system, the Government set a limited transition period for Local Plans being prepared under the old / legacy system, with a deadline for submitting the plan for examination by 31 December 2026. However, it has become clear that the review of the Maldon District LDP would not be able to meet that deadline due to the work and consultations that still needed to take place. The Government has also set a deadline for Councils that are not able to submit a plan under the legacy system, having to publish their intention to commence plan-making in the new system by 31 December 2026; this will then 'start the clock' on the 30-month timeframe in the new system.
- 3.6 A new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 17 August 2026. The updated framework is structured differently from previous iterations and now includes national policies relating to plan-making and decision-making. Whilst it

¹ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

is not essential to provide a detailed review of the revised NPPF for the purpose of this report, it is important to highlight key points within the plan-making policies, relevant to commencing a new Local Plan.

- 3.7 Policy PM2 (Local Plans) sets out the key matters that local plans should address, including establishing a vision for the area, setting out a spatial strategy, allocating land to meet identified needs for a minimum period of ten years from the plan's adoption, identifying infrastructure requirements and including policies to address local issues. The policy also confirms that local plans should be prepared and adopted within 30 months of publishing a Gateway 1 self-assessment, in accordance with the Local Planning Regulations 2026.
- 3.8 Policy PM7 (Initiating Plan-Making for Local Plans and Minerals and Waste Plans) sets out the approach that plan-makers should take when initiating the preparation of a new plan. It requires plan-makers to establish a clear approach to preparing and adopting a plan within 30 months, in accordance with the Local Planning Regulations 2026 and relevant national guidance. This includes establishing a clear timetable, appropriate governance arrangements, and preparing a Project Initiation Document (PID) to bring together key information and set out how the plan will be resourced, managed and consulted upon throughout its preparation.
- 3.9 PM8 (Evidence for Plan-Making) emphasises the importance of plan-making being underpinned by robust, relevant and proportionate evidence. It encourages plan-makers to make effective use of existing and shared evidence, where appropriate, to avoid unnecessary duplication, and to commission new evidence only where it is necessary to support the preparation of the plan.

4. WORK ON A NEW LOCAL PLAN FOR MALDON DISTRICT

- 4.1 As part of the 5YHLS report considered by the Council on 12 February 2026, it was reported that consultants would be secured to prepare a new Project and Resourcing Plan and PID for a new Local Plan for Maldon District under the new system, detailing how the existing work can be transferred into the new plan, with a project management process, resource plan and clear milestones.
- 4.2 The Council commissioned Arup to undertake this work in March 2025. As part of their work, they reviewed the work undertaken on the Local Plan review since 2021 and advised how this could be transitioned into the new plan-making system. To inform their recommendations, they held a workshop with Members of the PPWG, met with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), various internal and external stakeholders.
- 4.3 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to create a robust plan of how to move forward and this is now being brought to the Council for approval. The work undertaken by Arup is set out within the appendices.
- The Project Initiation Document (PID) (**APPENDIX 1**) sets out a full review of the work undertaken to date and is the project management document that explains how the Council would deliver a new Local Plan, including the work required, timescales, staffing, risks and a proposed budget needed to prepare the plan successfully.
 - The estimated budget (**APPENDIX 2**) sets out the proposed required budget for a new Local Plan, totalling £1,500,000. This budget does not include Officer costs. Further detail on the budget for the new Local Plan is set out in section 6.

- The risk register (**APPENDIX 3**) sets out the key risks to be considered for a new Local Plan and proposed mitigation.
 - They have also produced a Project and Resourcing Plan which is set out within Microsoft Project and shows a detailed project timeline for a new Local Plan. This is not appended to this report; however, it is important to note as this is a project management tool for Officers to use to ensure key milestones are met in order to deliver the Local Plan within agreed timescales.
- 4.4 As part of Arup's work, they considered various options about how to move forward, which is set out in full in section 6.2.3 (page 30) of the Arup PID (**APPENDIX 1**). A summary is provided below.
- 4.5 **Option 1 – Do nothing**
- 4.5.1 This relates to either not starting a new Local Plan or starting but not securing the additional resources required. The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Local Plan and the Government has been clear through guidance that Local Plans should be progressed despite LGR. Transitional arrangements are due to be published in due course to address complexities arising from LGR. To comply with the new plan-making system, the Council must commence plan preparation by 31 December 2026 to meet the first Gateway requirements, publishing the Gateway 1 self-assessment summary by 30 April 2027.
- 4.5.2 As the Local Planning Authority, the Council has a responsibility, to residents and communities, to provide an up-to-date planning framework that supports sustainable growth, plans positively for infrastructure and reduces the risk of speculative development. Progressing a new Local Plan before Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will help ensure that Maldon District's local priorities are clearly established and can be carried forward into the new authority.
- 4.5.3 Experience from other areas that have undergone LGR demonstrates that new unitary authorities often rely on inherited district-level Local Plans for several years while preparing a new plan for the wider geography. Progressing a new Local Plan therefore provides the best opportunity to establish an up-to-date planning framework for Maldon District that the successor authority can take forward to adoption, ensuring development continues to be plan-led until a Mid Essex Local Plan is in place. Failure to progress the Local Plan, or to provide sufficient resources to do so, risks delays, non-compliance with the Gateway processes, increased pressure on staff and business-as-usual services. There is also the risk of increased speculative development, reliance on out-of-date LDP policies which pre-date the updated NPPF and ultimately intervention by the Secretary of State if statutory plan-making requirements are not met.
- 4.5.4 Option 1 was therefore not recommended.
- 4.6 **Option 2 - Redeployment on internal resources**
- 4.6.1 This option considered diverting existing Council resources to prepare the Local Plan. However, the specialist planning expertise required is limited to the Planning Policy and Development Management teams. As both teams are fully committed to delivering statutory functions and do not have sufficient capacity, resources cannot be redirected without adversely affecting business-as-usual services.
- 4.6.2 Option 2 was therefore not recommended.

4.7 Option 3 - Working with a neighbouring authority

4.7.1 This option considered delivering elements of the Local Plan jointly with a neighbouring authority, ranging from shared evidence studies to a joint Local Plan. Given the context of LGR, discussions were held with Brentwood Borough Council and Chelmsford City Council. However, this option was not considered viable. Chelmsford's Local Plan has been submitted under the legacy system, while Brentwood has not yet determined its approach. In addition, Maldon District Council (MDC) has already completed much of its evidence base, with only partial updates required, limiting opportunities for meaningful joint commissioning. There is also currently no confirmed programme for the evidence required to support the emerging Greater Essex Spatial Development Strategy. As a result, there is limited scope for joint working without delaying the preparation of the Local Plan for Maldon District.

4.7.2 Option 3 was therefore not recommended.

4.8 Option 4 – Full consultancy support

4.8.1 This option considered appointing a single multidisciplinary consultancy to deliver the Local Plan, including evidence preparation and plan production. However, this was not considered viable as much of the evidence base has already been completed or is underway. Updating existing studies through the original consultants, alongside in-house work from a team familiar with the district, is expected to be more cost-effective and efficient than appointing a new consultancy that would need to familiarise itself with existing evidence and methodologies. It would also avoid the additional cost of procuring full consultancy support alongside the existing Planning Policy team and better support delivery of the 30-month programme.

4.8.2 Option 4 was therefore not recommended.

4.9 Option 5 – Partial consultancy support

4.9.1 This option provides for targeted consultancy support where specialist expertise or additional capacity is required, including the preparation of selected evidence base studies and short-term support to address resource pressures or recruitment challenges. This forms part of the recommended approach.

4.10 Option 6 – Recruitment

4.10.1 This option would increase capacity by recruiting additional planners to the Planning Policy team. Expanding the team would enable the Plan to be delivered primarily in-house, retaining local knowledge and continuity with work already completed. Recruitment to two roles within the existing team structure is underway. This forms part of the recommended approach.

4.11 Recommended approach

4.11.1 Following consideration of the options above, a hybrid approach is recommended. This would primarily focus on recruiting additional staff to the Planning Policy team, supplemented by consultancy support for specialist evidence base studies and, where necessary, targeted short-term resource to address capacity gaps and support the delivery of the new Local Plan.

4.11.2 An all-Member briefing took place on 4 August 2026 outlining the work completed by Arup to inform the decision to progress a new Local Plan for Maldon District.

- 4.11.3 Using the work Arup have undertaken, a Local Plan for Maldon District Project Initiation Document has been written using the Government's preferred PID template (**APPENDIX 4**). This sets out the management framework and approach to delivering a new Local Plan for Maldon District. It provides clarity on the Plan's scope, governance arrangements, resources and timelines. The PID is designed as a reference tool for the project team, Members and stakeholders, which supports effective decision-making and ensuring everyone involved understands their roles and responsibilities throughout the plan-making process. This is consistent with the approach to plan-making set out within the new NPPF, in particular Policy PM7, as outlined in paragraph 3.8 of this report.
- 4.11.4 It should be viewed as a 'live' document that will evolve during the course of preparing a new Local Plan. A Change Log will be retained in the PID to monitor all amendments. As this is a 'live' document and will need to be updated regularly, it is recommended that authority is delegated to the Director of Place, Planning and Growth to amend and update the PID where necessary, in consultation with the PPWG.

5. LDP REVIEW BUDGET 2021-2026

- 5.1 This section sets out the expenditure for the LDP Review to date, including both staff costs and evidence base costs.
- 5.2 In the table below, staff costs over the period between 2021 and 2026 totalling £871,671 does not include permanent Planners within the Policy Team. However, it does include staff who were originally contracted solely for the purpose of delivering the LDP Review, including two managers, a GIS (Geographic Information System) Officer and a Project Administrator. Two years of the Assistant Director for Planning role were also included in these costs. These roles are now included in the Council's central salary budgets. Three new roles in the Planning Policy Team are proposed as part of the new Local Plan budget; these are outlined in section 6.

LDP Review costs 2021-2026	Total (£)
Staff costs over the five-year period (approximately £175,000 per year)	871,671
Evidence base studies:	-
Employment Land and Premises Study	83,292
Nature Conservation Study	62,000
Indoor & Outdoor Sports and Play Study & Strategy	59,819
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	49,753
Consultation & Engagement Platform	45,570
Integrated Assessment – SA / SEA / HRA / HIA / EqIA ²	12,972
Economic Viability Study	22,809
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment	6,950
Comms, Engagement and Design	4,450

² Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

LDP Review costs 2021-2026	Total (£)
Youth Engagement Project	3,300
Local Housing Needs Assessment	31,583
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Consultancy / Legal / Counsel Fees	6,000
Parking Standards Evidence – Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) / Place Services and Jacobs	3,000
Transport Modelling	53,500
Evidence base costs	444,998
TOTAL LDP REVIEW COSTS 2021-2026	1,316,669

- 5.3 The money spent on the evidence base outlined above has not been wasted. The expenditure incurred to date has enabled the completion of a range of key evidence studies that, whilst commissioned to support the LDP review, will continue to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan. They are also pieces of evidence that are being used to inform current planning applications. As such, the Council is well positioned to build upon this existing evidence rather than commission entirely new studies, where appropriate. Further detail regarding updates to specific existing evidence base and new evidence required can be found in section 6 of the PID in **APPENDIX 4**. Updating existing evidence will be more efficient, which is particularly important in the new plan-making system which has tighter timescales than the legacy system. Using and updating existing evidence, where appropriate, is consistent with new NPPF Policy PM8, as outlined in paragraph 3.9 of this report.
- 5.4 Using existing evidence as a baseline reduces duplication of work and ensures that future expenditure can be focused on updating and supplementing the evidence base where required to reflect changes in national policy and emerging considerations.

6. NEW LOCAL PLAN BUDGET

- 6.1 The work undertaken by Arup to inform the decision to begin a new Local Plan has cost £31,340.
- 6.2 The table below outlines a summary of the estimated budget for the new Local Plan, totalling £2,076,900 (for clarity, this has been rounded to £2,075,000 in the recommendations in section 2). This builds upon the costs estimated by Arup, as set out in **APPENDIX 2**, which do not include existing staff costs or business-as-usual tasks, which would be covered by the existing Planning Policy budget.
- 6.3 The new plan-making system introduces significant changes to the preparation process, including substantially tighter statutory timescales. As this will be the first time that local planning authorities have progressed a plan under the new system, there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding the level of resources, specialist technical support and evidence gathering that may be required to meet key milestones and maintain programme delivery. Whilst the budget estimated by Arup includes a 10% contingency, an additional 5% has been included totalling a 15% contingency to reflect the uncertainty and risks involved in preparing a new Local Plan.
- 6.4 The budget estimated by Arup excludes salary costs. It is proposed to create three new posts to support the preparation and delivery of the Local Plan; a Policy Planner,

a Senior Policy Planner and a Section 106 Officer. An indicative cost of £50,000 per post has been assumed for the duration of the three-year Local Plan programme. This results in an estimated additional staffing cost of £450,000.

- 6.5 It is recommended the Council allocates a reserve of £2,075,000 to provide an additional 5% contingency above the estimated budget from Arup and to cover the costs of three additional officer posts.
- 6.6 Allocating an enhanced budget will provide the flexibility to respond to unforeseen requirements, minimise the risk of delays and ensure that the Council is adequately resourced to produce a robust and legally compliant Local Plan.

Task	Forecast Spend 26/27 (£)	Forecast Spend 27/28 (£)	Forecast Spend 28/29 (£)	Forecast Spend 29/30 (£)	Estimated Total Cost (£)
Evidence / consultancy costs	515,000	565,000	-	-	1,080,000
Consultation	30,000	30,000	30,000	15,000	105,000
Gateway checks	-	2,000	2,000	-	4,000
Examination	-	10,000	110,000	47,000	167,000
Total Local Plan costs	545,000	607,000	142,000	62,000	1,356,000
Additional salary costs	50,000	150,000	150,000	100,000	450,000
Subtotal	595,000	757,000	292,000	162,000	1,806,000
15% Contingency	89,250	113,550	43,800	24,300	270,900
Local Plan costs + contingency	684,250	870,550	335,800	186,300	2,076,900
Total					2,076,900
Recommended Budget					2,075,000

7. NEW LOCAL PLAN TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The timeline for a new Local Plan is set out below (the full timeline is shown within **APPENDIX 5**). This will be reviewed monthly and updated and published as required by the new plan-making system and in accordance with new NPPF Policy PM7. As this is a 'live' document and will need to be updated regularly, it is recommended that authority is delegated to the Director of Place, Planning and Growth to amend and update it where necessary, in consultation with the PPWG, as set out in the recommendations in section 2.
- 7.2 This will replace the current timeline in relation to the LDP Review which began in 2021, set out within the Local Development Scheme (LDS) (February 2025) which will no longer be relevant within the new plan-making system. As this will no longer align with the new Local Plan, it is recommended that it is revoked, as set out in the recommendations in section 2.

Regulation	Stage of Plan Making	Dates	What does this mean?
<i>To be delivered by Maldon District Council</i>			
8	Publish Local Plan Timetable	25/09/2026	This commences the minimum four-month notice period so that stakeholders are aware plan-making is beginning.

Regulation	Stage of Plan Making	Dates	What does this mean?
19(1)	Publish Notice of Intention to commence Local Plan preparation	25/09/2026	This commences the minimum four-month notice period so that stakeholders are aware plan-making is beginning.
Council decision to undertake Scoping Consultation Nov. 2026			
20(1)(b)	Scoping Consultation starts	25/11/2026	We will seek feedback from stakeholders on how to engage with them and what the plan should contain for a four-week period).
20(4)	Scoping Consultation ends	22/12/2026	
22(3)	Publish summary of scoping consultation	16/02/2027	
21(3)	Publish Gateway 1 (self-assessment of readiness)	12/03/2027	Publication of a document setting out details of how we have got ready for plan-making. This marks formal commencement of plan-making for the purposes of Government's 30-month timeframe.
Council decision to consult on proposed plan Aug. 2027			
23(1)(a)	Consultation on proposed Plan Contents and Evidence (PC&E) of new Local Plan starts	27/08/2027	We will seek feedback from stakeholders on proposed local plan content and evidence, including a draft vision for a six-week period. It will also include the proposed spatial strategy and any initial draft policies.
23(4)	Consultation on proposed PC&E ends	07/10/2027	
24(3)	Publish summary of responses from PC&E consultation (Reg.24)	15/11/2027	
26	Gateway 2 advice sought	19/11/2027	We will seek observations and advice from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) to help identify and resolve potential soundness issues at an early stage, and to ensure the plan is progressing towards meeting the statutory and policy requirements set out in legislation and national planning policy.
	Gateway 2 advice published	16/12/2027	

Regulation	Stage of Plan Making	Dates	What does this mean?
Council decision to consult on proposed plan May 2028			
<i>To be delivered by Mid-Essex Unitary Authority</i>			
27(1)(a)	Consultation on new proposed Local Plan starts	26/05/2028	We will seek feedback from stakeholders on the proposed local plan for an eight-week period. This is the version of the final Local Plan that we intend to submit to the Secretary of State for examination
27(4)	Consultation on new proposed Local Plan ends	19/07/2028	
30(3)	Publish summary of consultation and finalise Local Plan	07/09/2028	
31	Gateway 3 advice sought (Prescribed requirements assessment)	14/09/2028	The Council will seek observations and advice from the PINS to test if the proposed Local Plan meets the statutory and policy requirements set out in legislation and national planning policy, that all submission documents have been prepared and that the Local Plan is ready to proceed to examination.
	Gateway 3 advice published	11/10/2028	
34	Submit Local Plan for examination	24/10/2028	
35	Examination recommendations published	29/03/2029	Examination of the Local Plan by an independent Planning Inspector to test whether the plan meets all legal and soundness requirements.
39	Adoption of Local Plan	02/05/2029	Publication of the Local Plan and adoption statement.

- 7.3 It is recommended that the Council decides whether to proceed with the preparation of a new Local Plan and agrees the recommendations within section 2 this report. If agreed, the Council should immediately progress the key early actions needed to meet the statutory programme. These include recruiting additional officers, procuring priority evidence base work and preparing material for the Regulation 20 scoping consultation.

8. GOVERNANCE

- 8.1 The timeline for preparing a new Local Plan is tight. The key touchpoints for Local Plan programme decision-making revolve around the three statutory consultations, as well as the decision to submit and adopt the plan. It is advised that the decisions to consult at each statutory stage are made by the Council rather than going to the

Strategy and Resources Committee, to streamline decision-making and to give all Members the opportunity to fully consider the recommendations and progress on the Local Plan.

- 8.2 Due to LGR, while MDC will continue to progress the Local Plan through the statutory consultation stages, the final decision to submit and adopt the Plan will rest with the Mid-Essex Unitary Authority once it is established. It is acknowledged that formal governance arrangements of the new unitary are unknown at this stage, however this will be monitored as the plan progresses and governance within the PID and Timeline updated as required.
- 8.3 The PPWG is a cross-party Councillor forum for the consideration and discussion of issues relevant to the preparation of the Local Plan and other related planning policy documents. The PPWG does not have decision-making powers but can make recommendations to the Council. The PPWG will receive monthly updates on key actions and progress on the Local Plan, which will also be shared wider with all Members.
- 8.4 The table below summarises the decisions that will be taken by the Council and the preparatory actions and briefings that will take place beforehand.

Decision to consult	Preparatory Actions	Decision
Reg 20 scoping consultation (Nov. 2026)	• PPWG to review documentation • SLT to review documentation • All-Member briefing	Council (MDC)
Reg 23 consultation (Aug. 2027)	• PPWG to review documentation • SLT to review documentation • All-Member briefing	Council (MDC)
Reg 27 consultation (May 2028)	• PPWG to review documentation • SLT to review documentation • All-Member briefing	Council (MDC)
Submission (Oct. 2028)	• Briefings to relevant Members and Senior Officers of Mid-Essex Unitary	Decision to be made by the new Mid Essex Unitary Authority
Adoption of the plan (May 2029)	• Briefings to relevant Members and Senior Officers of Mid-Essex Unitary	Decision to be made by the new Mid Essex Unitary Authority

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND DEVOLUTION

- 9.1 Progression of a new Local Plan would take place against the backdrop of LGR and the transition to the proposed Mid Essex Unitary Authority. Although MDC is expected to become part of a new authority alongside Brentwood Borough Council and Chelmsford City Council from April 2028, Government guidance has been clear that LGR should not delay plan-making and that local authorities should continue to work towards the adoption of up-to-date local plans. A new Local Plan for Maldon District would provide a robust and locally focused policy framework to guide development, infrastructure provision and environmental protection during the early period of Mid-Essex Unitary Authority. It would also help create a strong planning legacy for the district, ensuring that local priorities are established and can continue to inform decision-making until a future Mid Essex Local Plan is prepared and adopted. The preparation of a new Local Plan therefore represents both a response

to immediate planning challenges and an important opportunity to shape the future of the district within the emerging governance landscape.

- 9.2 Engagement has taken place with Brentwood Borough Council and Chelmsford City Council to inform the decision to begin a new Local Plan for Maldon District, as set out in paragraph 4.7.1. Continued engagement will take place with these authorities in relation to progress on our Local Plans and to ensure opportunities for joint working are explored.
- 9.3 Furthermore, a Planning LGR Workstream has been formed between Maldon District Council, Brentwood Borough Council and Chelmsford City Council, which is overseeing the Planning functions to ensure the successful transition into Mid Essex.
- 9.4 The preparation of a new Local Plan is also taking place within an evolving strategic planning context. Devolution will provide Essex with greater powers and responsibilities over areas such as transport, housing, economic development and skills, alongside the preparation of a Greater Essex Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). While the emerging SDS will eventually provide a county-wide strategic framework for growth and infrastructure planning, the new Local Plan for Maldon District is being prepared ahead of this process and will therefore play a critical role in addressing local planning needs in the interim. The new Local Plan will ensure that Maldon District has an up-to-date statutory planning framework which can both support local priorities and position the area to respond positively to future strategic objectives and investment opportunities arising from devolution and the Greater Essex growth agenda.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The preparation of a new Local Plan is necessary to ensure that Maldon District has an up-to-date, robust and locally responsive planning framework which can address increased housing need, support sustainable growth and guide infrastructure delivery. The work undertaken to date, together with the advice and project planning prepared by Arup, provides a clear basis for moving into the new 30-month plan-making system. Commencing work under the new system will allow the Council to make best use of the evidence already undertaken, whilst managing the transition through LGR and the emerging Greater Essex strategic planning context. It is therefore recommended that Council agrees the recommendations set out in section 2 of this report.

11. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

11.1 Supporting our communities

- 11.1.1 The Corporate Plan highlights that the district needs more homes to meet the demand of our growing population and government targets, including affordable homes and temporary housing. Commencing a new local plan will contribute towards these priorities.

11.2 Investing in our District

- 11.2.1 The Corporate Plan identifies that the Council is seeking to provide a better place for residents, businesses and visitors, ensures the right development is in the right places, and delivery of well-designed housing and healthy places. Commencing a new local plan will contribute towards these priorities.

11.3 Growing our economy

11.3.1 The Government links the delivery of new homes to the need to support the economy. The housing sector provides jobs within the district and assists in supporting the local and national economy. A new Local Plan will support the delivery of new homes as well as economic growth opportunities.

11.4 Protecting our environment

11.4.1 A new Local Plan will contain policies to support the protection of our environment and mitigate the environmental impact of new developments.

11.5 Delivering good quality services

11.5.1 Working on a new Local Plan helps to shape future development to create well-connected, sustainable communities with improved local services and amenities.

12. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Working on a new Local Plan benefits customers by shaping future development to create well-connected, sustainable communities with improved local services and amenities.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – There are no direct impact upon equalities arising from the recommendations in this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the new Local Plan.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – There are no direct risks arising from the recommendations in this report. A risk register for the new Local Plan is included at **APPENDIX 3**.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Details are contained within section 6 of this report and **APPENDIX 1**, **APPENDIX 2** and **APPENDIX 4**.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Details are contained within **APPENDIX 1** and **APPENDIX 4**. Additional staffing resources are identified in section 6 of this report.
- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – Details are contained within section 9 of this report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

APPENDIX 1 – Arup PID

APPENDIX 2 – Arup budget

APPENDIX 3 – Arup risk register

APPENDIX 4 – Local Plan for Maldon District PID

APPENDIX 5 – Local Plan Timetable

APPENDIX 6 – Notice of Intention to Commence

Enquiries to: Louise Staplehurst, Planning Policy Manager.

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Maldon District Council

Maldon District Local Plan support

Project Initiation Document

Reference:

03 | 14 July 2026



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This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client. It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

Job number 315644-00

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Executive summary

This Project Initiation Document provides a comprehensive framework for Maldon District Council to start the preparation and management of a Local Plan under the new plan-making system. It is accompanied by a separate risk register, programme and resource plan and budget. The key headlines to note are as follows.

Headlines

- 30-months to produce a new Local Plan for Maldon District under the new plan making system. There is a statutory deadline to commence this process by 31st December 2026.
- Recommended that the new Local Plan should be delivered in-house with targeted support from consultants e.g. for the evidence base.
- Considerable work was undertaken as part of the previous Local Plan review, which can be reused or updated for the new Local Plan.
- Current Planning Policy Team resources (3.4 FTE) are insufficient to produce a new Local Plan and deliver business-as-usual activities; as would current agreed Planning Policy team structure (6 FTE), even if vacant roles are filled.
- A revised Planning Policy team structure (7.4) is suggested to provide a manageable and resilient basis for delivering the new Local Plan within the required 30-month programme and business-as-usual activities.
- In addition to the currently advertised vacancies for a Senior Policy Planner and a Policy Planner, a further Senior Policy Planner and a Section 106 Officer should be recruited.
- Work on the new Local Plan would commence 21 September 2026, subject to a Full Council decision to proceed.
- By vesting day (April 2028), a full draft Local Plan would be prepared ready for Mid Essex Council take the plan forward for consultation, Examination and eventual adoption in May 2029.
- The programme has seven weeks contingency overall to meet the statutory timetable for plan making, reflecting the complexities of plan-making.
- The estimated costs for the new Local Plan is £1.5m including 10% contingency on a zero-based budget. The budget covers the Local Plan preparation only; additional staff identified within the resourcing plan will also need to be funded
- Delivery of the Local Plan to this programme and budget, is dependent on multiple assumptions and requires implementation of robust processes and governance arrangements to mitigate risks.

Legislation and policy context

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) introduced a new plan making system, which will provide the legislative framework for Maldon District's new Local Plan. It will need to follow the new 30-month process, with a single Local Plan replacing the existing suite of development plan documents when adopted.

The publication of the Local Planning Regulations in March 2026 enabled LPAs to formally commence plan making under the new system with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and emerging Create or Update a Local Plan (CULP) guidance shaping the approach to plan-making. However, the policy and guidance context remains dynamic with a new and fundamentally different NPPF, which will include National Development Management Policies (NDMP) due for publication in Autumn 2026 and regular updates being made to the PPG and CULP. This context will require close monitoring moving forward to ensure that Local Plan production is aligned with the latest policy and guidance.

Plan-making context

In developing the Project Initiation Document, consideration has also been given to the wider plan-making context for the new Maldon District Local Plan. It will need to be progressed within a period of significant institutional change, including Local Government Reorganisation and devolution, and the emerging Greater Essex Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). Despite this uncertainty, plan-making should continue at pace, with the new Local Plan providing an important opportunity to establish an up-to-date planning framework for Maldon District before transition to the new Mid Essex unitary authority. The position of neighbouring authorities was considered; however, it was concluded that opportunities for joint working are limited because surrounding authorities are at different stages of plan preparation, with most progressing plans under the legacy system¹ and the extent of Maldon District's existing evidence base.

Maldon's existing Development Plan, wider Council strategies and Essex-wide strategies provide important context for the new Local Plan. These will need to be reviewed to determine what should be incorporated, updated or reflected in future policies.

The practical conditions needed to support delivery were explored, including the Planning Policy team's current capacity, the role of wider Council teams, existing governance arrangements and the communications and engagement framework. These factors will directly influence the project management, resourcing and governance arrangements for the new Local Plan, particularly given the constrained 30-month timetable and the need for efficient decision-making and clear stakeholder engagement.

Review of existing policies, evidence base and documents

The review of the Maldon District Local Development Plan was originally initiated in 2021, however due to the introduction of the new 30-month plan making system it is necessary to start again. However, work to date will provide a strong foundation for the new Local Plan. Considerable evidence base work has been prepared or commissioned, including housing and economic evidence, and other technical studies. This means that, although the new plan-making process must formally start again under the new system, much of the evidence base work already completed can be updated and reused to inform the new Local Plan, helping to maximise value for money and increase momentum.

A review of the existing Maldon District Local Development Plan policies and related guidance has identified several areas that will need to be rationalised, updated or removed as part of the new Local Plan. Some existing policies are now out of date, overlap with other policies, or repeat national policy and guidance, while the new Local Plan will need to make a clearer distinction between strategic and non-strategic policies and address policy gaps that have emerged since adoption. Since Supplementary Planning Documents do not form part of the new plan making system, it will also be necessary to incorporate any required guidance within the new Local Plan. Importantly, it should be noted the introduction of National Development Management Policies will reduce the scope of the new Local Plan, as more policy areas will be covered nationally and local policies should not duplicate national requirements.

¹ Chelmsford Local Plan 2041 submitted for Examination on 5 June 2026

The documents and datasets produced through business-as-usual planning policy work will provide an important foundation for the new Local Plan. Many of these workstreams require regular statutory reporting or ongoing updates and therefore represent a continuing resource commitment for the Planning Policy team alongside Local Plan preparation. This has been reflected in the resourcing assumptions for the Local Plan programme to ensure that statutory monitoring and reporting requirements can continue to be met while plan-making progresses.

New Local Plan

Consideration was given to the scope, objectives and key requirements for the new Maldon District Local Plan. It will need to respond to the new legislative and policy framework, the Council's corporate priorities, wider local and Essex-wide strategies, and the emerging strategic planning context. Once the Greater Essex SDS is adopted for the area, future Local Plans will need to be prepared in general conformity with it, including its strategic objectives, spatial strategy and approach to growth. However, it should be noted that for Maldon District, the preparation of the new Local Plan will be ahead of the preparation of the SDS

The new Local Plan will provide an up-to-date spatial strategy and policy framework for Maldon District, including a positive long-term vision, strategic and site-specific policies, provision for housing and economic growth, and policies to support infrastructure delivery, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the protection and enhancement of the District's distinctive built and natural environment. The plan should cover at least 15 years from adoption, with the proposed programme indicating a minimum plan period from 2029 to 2045.

As part of the preparation of the new Local Plan, it will be necessary to produce a number of key deliverables as required by the new plan making system. These include a formal Project Initiation Document (PID), which will be based on this longer and more detailed PID. A community engagement strategy will be required as part of the PID and will need to guide engagement across the Local Plan production and the formal consultation stages.

Consideration has been given to the additional evidence needed to support a sound Local Plan, balancing the reuse and updating of existing evidence with new studies where required. The PID identifies where work should be undertaken in-house or by consultants to reflect local knowledge, technical requirements, value for money and the capacity constraints of the Planning Policy team.

Project Management

A recommended project management approach for delivering the new Maldon District Local Plan within the constrained 30-month timetable has been suggested, covering resourcing, programme, budget, risks and governance. The overall emphasis is on ensuring the Council has the capacity, structure and decision-making processes needed to progress the Local Plan efficiently and robustly.

Resourcing

At 3.4 FTE within an agreed structure for 6 FTE, the Council's current Planning Policy team does not have sufficient capacity to deliver a Local Plan within the 30-month timetable while also maintaining business-as-usual responsibilities. The latter absorbs around 2FTE, leaving limited capacity for Local Plan preparation. Even if the current vacancies were filled, it is judged that additional resource will be required to deliver the Local Plan and business-as-usual activities.

The Local Plan process will require input from a wide range of Council teams, including Communications, GIS, Development Management, Legal, Finance and others. Engagement with key teams indicates that available support will be limited, with Communications, GIS and Development Management only able to provide constrained input alongside business-as-usual work, and Local Government Reorganisation likely to reduce capacity further. While these teams will provide important support at specific stages, they will not be able to address the wider resourcing gap within the Planning Policy team needed to produce the Local Plan.

A number of resourcing options were considered, including doing nothing, redeploying internal resources, working with neighbouring authorities, full consultancy support, partial consultancy support and recruitment.

- **Do nothing:** This report concludes that Maldon District Council should discount the 'do nothing' option, whether this means not preparing a new Local Plan or commencing one without sufficient Planning

Policy resources. Both scenarios present significant risks, including failure to meet statutory plan-making requirements and key deadlines under the new plan-making system; continued reliance on an out-of-date development plan, resulting in weaker control over growth and infrastructure delivery; pressure on staff capacity and wellbeing; increased risk of MHCLG intervention; and a missed opportunity to secure a legacy Local Plan for Maldon District before a future Mid Essex Local Plan is prepared. On this basis, the Council should progress a properly resourced new Local Plan.

- **Re-deploy internal resource:** Given the specialist planning expertise required, the only realistic source of support within the Council would be the Development Management teams; however, it does not have spare capacity alongside its statutory caseload. As there are no suitable internal resources available to divert to the Local Plan without compromising other statutory functions, this option has been discounted.
- **Full consultancy support:** This option considered appointing a single multi-disciplinary consultancy to deliver most of the Local Plan work, including evidence base studies and plan production through to a full draft Local Plan. However, this approach is not recommended because a substantial amount of evidence base work has already been completed or is underway, and it would be more efficient and cost-effective to use existing consultants to update relevant studies, alongside work undertaken in-house by the Planning Policy team. Appointing a new single consultancy would create additional familiarisation costs, duplicate existing workstreams and increase overall project costs, particularly where residual internal team capacity remains available to support plan preparation. This option has been discounted.
- **Partial consultancy support:** This option proposes targeted consultancy support for selected Local Plan workstreams, including specific evidence base studies, short-term capacity support during intensive stages of the 30-month programme, and potential critical friend input on technical issues or plan management. While recruiting permanent planners remains the most financially attractive approach where possible, consultancy support may be required to fill vacancies, manage peaks in workload and reduce programme risk, particularly around spatial options and consultation processing. On this basis, this option forms part of the recommended way forward for the new Local Plan, with identified consultancy costs reflected in the resource plan and budget, and any additional critical friend support expected to be met from the contingency allowance.
- **Recruitment:** This option would involve recruiting additional planners into the Planning Policy team to increase capacity and support delivery of the new Local Plan, either through general policy roles, specialist posts linked to technical workstreams or business-as-usual responsibilities, or junior roles to address current capacity gaps and release senior officers to focus on plan preparation. Recruitment would enable the Local Plan to remain largely in-house, maintaining continuity with work already undertaken and ensuring it is led by officers embedded within the Council and familiar with the Maldon District context. While recruitment would need to be progressed quickly, the time required is not expected to be significantly greater than other resourcing options and, overall, this forms part of the recommended option for delivery of the Local Plan.

The recommended approach is thus a hybrid model combining additional recruitment into the Planning Policy team with targeted consultancy support for specialist evidence base studies and critical friend input where required. Although consultants will undertake much of the technical evidence work, this will still require officer input to prepare briefs, procure and manage contracts, review outputs, and ensure the evidence is properly integrated into the Local Plan. The resource plan assumes that current Planning Policy vacancies will be filled and that the team will be expanded to provide sufficient capacity to deliver the 30-month Local Plan programme while continuing to meet statutory business-as-usual responsibilities. The revised structure would provide 7.4 FTE across the team, including two additional roles over and above the agreed current structure: a Senior Policy Planner and a dedicated Section 106 Officer to help release senior Planning Policy capacity for Local Plan delivery. Overall, the proposed structure is designed to provide a manageable and resilient basis for delivering the new Local Plan within the required 30-month programme.

Programme

A Local Plan programme has been developed using MS Project to map tasks (including consultation and impact assessment), dependencies, governance requirements, officer workloads and quality assurance processes. It allows for holidays, team management, business-as-usual work, procurement and contract management, and the need to manage peaks in workload, with Local Plan tasks prioritised where resource

constraints arise. The programme assumes a 7.4 FTE Planning Policy team, early preparation of evidence base briefs, defined governance stages, timely procurement and consultant input, prioritisation of Local Plan work over non-statutory business-as-usual activity, early engagement with the shadow authority, and acceptance of the plan for Examination at Gateway 3 at the first attempt. Subject to these assumptions, the programme provides a deliverable route to securing a Maldon District Local Plan before a wider Mid Essex Local Plan is prepared.

The proposed Local Plan programme has been structured to comply with the requirements of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and to meet the statutory 30-month timetable. Existing workstreams from the Local Plan review are assumed to continue from 1 July 2026, with new evidence base workstreams commencing from 21 September 2026, subject to a Full Council decision to proceed. The programme schedules notification of the start of the Local Plan process for September 2026 and Gateway 1 for February 2027, ahead of the statutory deadlines of 31 December 2026 and 30 April 2027 respectively. The programme currently supports submission for Examination two months ahead of the statutory deadline.

By the Mid Essex vesting day, a full draft Local Plan will have been prepared, and Gateway 2 check will have been completed, as will the preparations for Regulation 27 consultation. The Regulation 27 consultation, submission, examination and adoption will then progress under the new Mid Essex authority. The programme includes seven weeks of contingency to manage uncertainty arising from Local Government Reorganisation and wider plan-making risks.

Milestone	Time period
To be delivered by Maldon District Council	
Getting ready to start	July 2026 – September 2026
Preparatory evidence gathering and scoping	September 2026 – January 2027
Notification of the start of the Local Plan process	September 2026
Regulation 20: Scoping consultation	November 2026 – December 2026
Gateway 1 (advisory)	February 2027
Plan vision and strategy development	December 2027 – June 2027
Spatial options identified	June 2027
Regulation 23 consultation	August 2027 – September 2027
Preferred option development and drafting the plan	September 2027 – March 2028
Preferred option identified	November 2027
Gateway 2 (advisory)	November 2027
To be delivered by Mid Essex Council	
Regulation 27 consultation	May 2028 – July 2028
Process consultation and prepare plan for submission	July 2028 – September 2028
Gateway 3 (stop/go)	September 2028 – October 2028
Submission	October 2028
Examination	November 2028 – April 2029
Adoption	May 2029

Budget

A full cost profile has been prepared for 2026/27 to 2029/30 on a zero-based budget for the new Local plan, excluding permanent staff costs and existing service obligations, with a 10% contingency to reflect uncertainty around plan-making. The majority of the costs associated with the production of a new Local Plan will be related to the use of consultants. Other costs to be taken into consideration relate primarily to counsel advice, consultation process and the formal examination process, including PINS. Where possible, costs have been benchmarked against published sources and relevant experience elsewhere. On the basis of

the outlined assumptions, and assumed resource profile, the total cost of a new Local Plan is estimated as £1.5m, including contingency. Further funding will also be required to cover the cost of the additional staff identified in the resource plan.

Risks

Local Plans are large, complex and long projects, which include a range of stakeholders. This creates a range of risks which may affect the quality, cost or programme of the Local Plan. This report is accompanied by a risk register for the Local Plan project and includes associated mitigation measures. The main risks relate to delivery of the statutory 30-month timetable, the need for timely governance and decision-making, Local Government Reorganisation, potential changes to national policy or guidance, competing demands on Planning Policy resources, recruitment and consultancy market pressures, uncertainty over the volume of consultation responses, and the future ownership of transport modelling currently held by Essex County Council. The risk register sets out measures to reduce the likelihood and impact of these risks and will need to be maintained during the lifetime of the project and used as reporting tool.

Governance

The new Local Plan system and constrained timetable mean that there is limited scope for flexibility in Local Plan programmes and that business-as-usual governance cannot remain the same if the 30-month timetable is to be met and for the draft plan to reach an advanced draft stage prior to LGR. It will be important to strike the right balance between providing sufficient Member and senior officer engagement and oversight, whilst also ensuring governance processes can enable the Local Plan to progress at pace to meet the timetable. It is recommended that formal decision-making is reserved to Full Council at the three key statutory stages. The Planning Policy Working Group should continue to play an important cross-party advisory and engagement role. It will be important that the right governance arrangements are put in place to support expedient decision-making, with these arrangements put in place as early as possible and before the new Local Plan process formally commences.

Next steps

It is recommended that the Council decides as soon as possible whether to proceed with the preparation of a new Local Plan and, if it does, immediately progresses the key early actions needed to meet the statutory programme. These include recruiting additional officers, procuring priority evidence base work, agreeing the Local Plan budget, finalising streamlined governance arrangements, completing the Planning Advisory Service Project Initiation Document template, publishing the Local Plan timetable and notice of intention to commence, and preparing material for the Regulation 20 scoping consultation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Project Initiation Document (PID) sets out the proposed project management approach for the new Maldon District Local Plan. This document will form the basis of the formal PID, which will need to be prepared as part of the plan-making process, and to strengthen the internal project management practices for the Local Plan. Although the formal published PID may be shorter and less detailed than this document.

1.2 Structure

The document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the legislative and policy framework which will govern the production of the Local Plan.
- Section 3 explores the wider plan-making context including Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution and the relationship with wider plans and strategies – both within Maldon District and in neighbouring authorities.
- Section 4 gives a high-level review of existing Local Plan policies, evidence base and documents, highlighting what needs updating, replacing or creating for the new Local Plan.
- Section 5 sets out Local Plan objectives, scope, plan period and project deliverables.
- Section 6 presents the proposed approach to project management for the new Local Plan, including programme, resources, budget and risk management, governance, communication and engagement to deliver a sound and robust Local Plan.
- Section 7 sets out a summary of immediate next steps in the new Local Plan process.

The document has three accompanying digital files covering the Local Plan full programme, budget and risk register.

2. Legislation and policy context

2.1 Legislation and policy framework

Plan-making in England is currently governed by two parallel sets of legislation, one for the ‘legacy’ plan-making system and one for the new 30-month plan-making system. The transitional arrangements for moving from the ‘legacy’ local plan system to the new plan making system are:

- LPAs have until 31st December 2026 to submit a plan for examination under the legacy system, after which LPAs must start again under the new system. The Council cannot submit a new Local Plan by this deadline. Therefore, the new Maldon District Local Plan will be governed by the new 30-month plan-making system.
- Local Plans submitted for examination on or before 12 March 2025 and where the housing requirement meets less than 80% of the authority’s local housing need figure were required to commence preparation of a plan under the new Local Plan system on or before 30 June 2026, complying with regulation 21 (Gateway 1) by 31 October 2026. This does not apply to Maldon District as it has not submitted a plan for examination.
- Local Authorities that have a Local Plan which is over four years and 8 months old after 31 December 2026 (which is the case for Maldon District) are required to publish their Regulation 21 self-assessment summary (Gateway 1) by 30 April 2027 – which would require the Notice to Commence plan making to be published by 31 December 2026 (see section 2.2.4.1). This deadline will apply to Maldon District.
- All other local authorities who have up-to-date adopted plans have more flexibility to commence plan-making in the new system, complying with Regulation 21 within 5 years of the date of their adopted plan. This does not apply to Maldon District.

The main legislation that prescribes the processes and duties for making Local Plans for the new 30-month plan-making system includes:

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended by the LURA 2023
- Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023
- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

However, most of the main plan-making requirements are contained in national policy. Distinct from legislation this can be updated by government without the need for Statutory Instruments.

In England, the main policy framework applicable to plan-making is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is complemented by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The PPG is as important as the NPPF for plan-making going forward, as the Court of Appeal² stated last year that the PPG has the same status as the NPPF. Government has centralised guidance and resources on plan-making for the new Local Plan system into a collection called ‘Create or Update a Local Plan’³ (CULP), which is where the government intends to publish information about the new plan-making system as it becomes available.

² Mead Realisations Limited v Secretary of State (Court of Appeal, 30 January 2025) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66012fd165ca2fc1fa7da734/9_Mead_Realisations_Limited_v_Secretary_of_State_for_Levelling_Up_Housing_and_Communities_2024_EWHC_279_Admin_.pdf

³ GOV.UK. 2026. ‘Create or Update a Local Plan Using the New System’. March 26. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/create-or-update-a-local-plan-using-the-new-system>.

2.2 Legislation

2.2.1 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004

The sections of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) which are relevant for plan-making have now been amended by Schedule 7 to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. In particular, sections 15-39 of PCPA 2004 have been superseded.

2.2.2 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023

The LURA was enacted in October 2023 but secondary legislation bringing into force the relevant sections for plan making was not published until March 2026⁴. Section 97 and Schedule 7 contain provisions for joint Spatial Development Strategies, Local Plans, Minerals and Waste Plans and Supplementary Plans. This summary focuses on the provisions related to Local Plans only.

2.2.2.1 Scope of Local Plans

Each Local Planning Authority (LPA) should have a single Local Plan in force at any point in time⁵. When an LPA adopts a new Local Plan under the new system introduced by the LURA, it will overwrite the existing suite of legacy Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The LURA specifically amends Part 2 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) to require LPAs to prepare a single document to be known as their "Local Plan". Section 15C, states: *"Each local planning authority must prepare one document, to be known as their local plan..."*.

The Local Plan must set out policies in relation to the amount, type and location of, and timetable for, development in the LPA area. The Local Plan must be designed to secure mitigation and adaption to climate change for the area and should take account of any Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the area. The Local Plan may also include:

- policies related to the use or development of land in the LPA's area designed to achieve objectives related to the special characteristics of the area
- details of any infrastructure and affordable housing requirements

In doing so, the Local Plan must take into account its evidence base assessment of the amount, and type of housing that is needed in the LPA's area, including the amount of affordable housing that is needed. The Local Plan must not be inconsistent with or repeat any National Development Management Policies (NDMP).⁶

The LPA need to ensure that their development plan includes design requirements for development, which will need to be met for planning permission to be granted. The design requirements do not need to cover every part of the LPA area, every type of development, nor be in relation to every aspect of design⁷.

2.2.2.2 Local Plan preparation and timetable

LPAs will be required to prepare and maintain a Local Plan timetable which must specify who with, where, when and how the LPA is proposing to prepare a Local Plan, including how they are proposing to meet the design code requirement⁸. Local Plan Timetables replace Local Development Schemes (LDS), which set out timetables for Local Plan production under 'legacy' plan making system.

⁴ The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026

⁵ LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15C

⁶ LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15C(9)(b)

⁷ LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15F

⁸ LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15B

The Local Plan must be prepared in accordance with its timetable and be in general conformity with the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), if one is operative for the area.⁹ It should be noted that for Maldon district, the preparation of the Local Plan will be ahead of the preparation of the SDS.

The LPA may seek observations and advice from PINS on the Local Plan at any time, for a fee.

2.2.2.3 *Examination*¹⁰

LPAs will be required to submit their Local Plans for independent examination by a person appointed by the Secretary of State to determine whether the plan can be considered sound. The LURA details the process and requirements for Examination, including how and when an examination can be paused to allow for further work to be done¹¹.

2.2.2.4 *Withdrawal and adoption of plans*

An LPA can withdraw a plan before it is submitted for examination¹². However, once the Local Plan has been submitted for examination, the LPA will not be able to withdraw the plan unless recommended to do so by the Inspector or by the Secretary of State. Once a Local Plan has been found sound by the examiner, the LPA may adopt the plan.

2.2.2.5 *Requirement to assist with plan-making*

Where an LPA notifies specific public sector organisations) to assist in relation to the preparation of the Local Plan, the organisation ‘must do everything that the plan-making authority reasonably requires of the body to assist’ in relation to the preparation or revision of the relevant plan¹³. This requirement replaces the Duty to Cooperate which was repealed on 25 March 2026¹⁴. The phrase ‘reasonably requires’ is not defined in the legislation, nor in the guidance¹⁵, and will be a matter tested through Examinations, which over time will likely set precedents for these requirements.

2.2.3 *Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025*

The Planning and Infrastructure Act¹⁶ was adopted in December 2025 and introduced a wide range of changes to the planning system from Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to planning fees and planning committees. However, the most significant change for plan-making was the reintroduction of a tier of strategic planning in England, through Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs). Local Plans will need to be in general conformity with the SDS for their area. This is further explored in section 3.

The SDS will form part of a Local Authority’s Development Plan when adopted. There is currently no timescale for preparing an SDS in legislation. However, the government have previously suggested they expect them to be adopted in 2028 for front-runner authorities and 2029 for those that are less advanced in terms of their governance structures which is the case within Greater Essex. The introduction of SDS will have several effects for Local Plan production, including:

- The Local Plan will need to be in general conformity with the SDS and its strategic objectives and overall growth strategy.

⁹ LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15CA

¹⁰ LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15D

¹¹ LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15DA

¹² LURA 2023, Schedule 7 Section 15E and 15EA

¹³ LURA 2023, Section 100

¹⁴ The provisions contained in Schedule 7 of the LURA 2023 will repeal the Duty to Cooperate by replacing sections 15 to 37 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, including section 33A which contains the Duty to Cooperate.

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/issue-a-requirement-to-assist-notice>

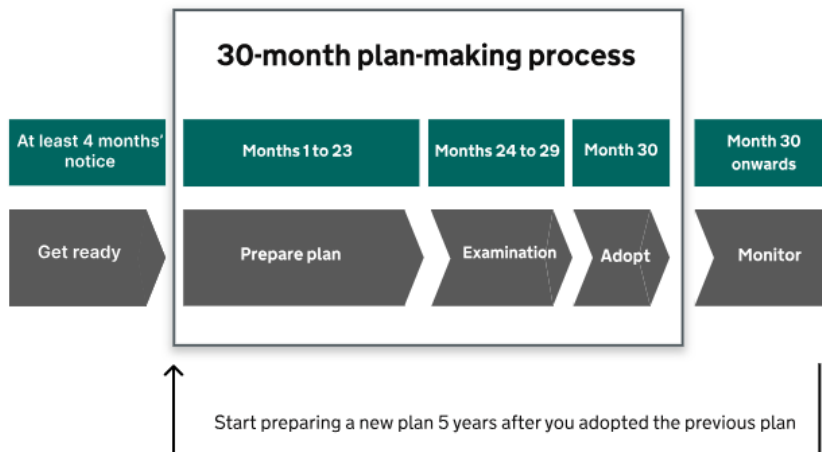
¹⁶ ‘Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025’. Statute Law Database. Accessed 17 April 2026. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/34/section/58>.

- Maldon District Council, including the Planning Policy team, will need to engage with the preparation, review and monitoring of the SDS, adding to existing workloads and potentially diverting resources from Local Plan production. The extent and timing of this involvement is unknown at the moment.

2.2.4 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026¹⁷

The regulations came into force on 25 March 2026 and formally enabled LPAs to start preparing Local Plans under the new plan making system. The regulations specify the processes and timeline that an LPA should follow to prepare a Local Plan under the new system, which should take a total of 30-months from Gateway 1 to adoption (Figure 1).

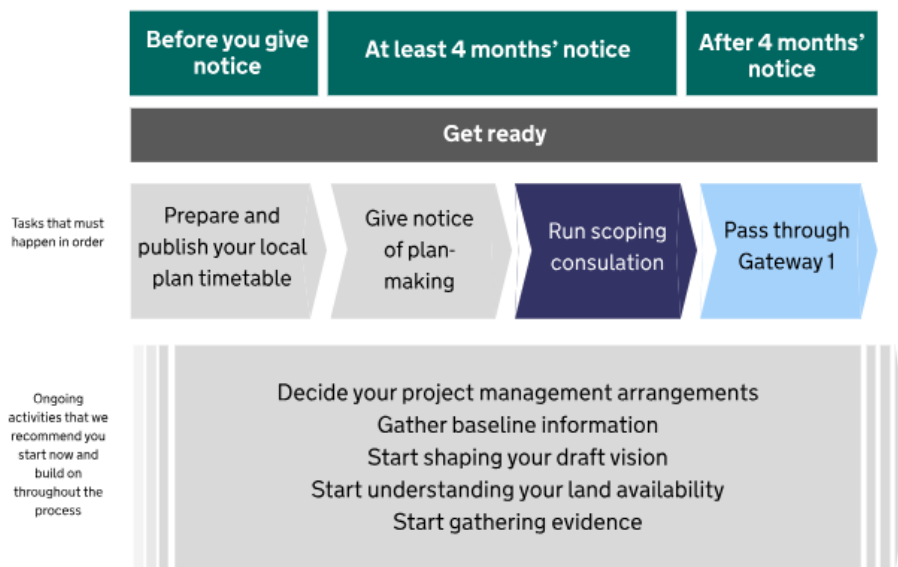
Figure 1 Illustration of the 30-month plan-making process¹⁸



2.2.4.1 Months -4 to 0: Getting ready for plan-making

This stage of plan-making should last at least four months (Figure 2). These four months are not counted as part of the 30-month plan-making period. The main requirements for this stage are summarised in Table 1.

Figure 2 Illustration of the activities to be undertaken before the 30-month process starts¹⁹



¹⁷ The regulations amend the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and replace the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 for any Local Plan submitted for Examination after 31 December 2026 (unless specified by the Secretary of State).

¹⁸ Source: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/30-month-local-plan-process-an-overview>

¹⁹ Source: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/30-month-local-plan-process-an-overview>

Table 1 Summary of requirements for getting ready for plan-making

Regulation	Purpose of the regulation
Regulation 4: Form and content of timetable.	Requires LPA to set out a timetable, including the main consultation stages, gateway stages, submission and adoption.
Regulation 19: Notice of intention to commence	Requires LPAs to prepare and make available a notice confirming that Local Plan preparation is starting.
Regulation 20: Scoping consultation	The consultation should invite views on what the plan should contain and how stakeholders should be engaged.

2.2.4.2 Months 1 to 23: Prepare the plan

Once the LPA has passed through Gateway 1, the official 30-month timeframe for Local Plan production begins. The main plan preparation and drafting should happen within the first 23 months of the process, as illustrated on Figure 3. The main requirements for this stage are set out in Table 2.

Figure 3 Illustration of the activities to be undertaken within months 1 to 23 of the new plan-making process**Table 2 Summary of requirements for preparing the plan**

Regulation	Purpose of the regulation
Regulation 21: Gateway 1	Gateway 1 marks the official start of the plan-making process. To pass gateway 1, LPAs need to publish a self-assessment summary of readiness for Local Plan preparation. This should not be done less than 4 months after the notice of intention to commence has expired.
Regulation 22: Summary of scoping consultation	Requires LPAs to publish a summary of the scoping consultation undertaken under Regulation 20.
Regulation 23: Consultation on proposed content and evidence	The LPA should consult on proposed content of the plan and its supporting evidence. Regulation 23 sets out the specific notification and requirements for the consultation.
Regulation 24: Summary of consultation	The LPA should publish a summary of consultation responses from Regulation 23.
Regulation 25: Map of proposed policies	The LPA should prepare a map showing the geographical application of proposed Local Plan policies.
Regulation 26: Gateway 2	Under Gateway 2, the LPA should seek observations and advice on progress towards a plan from an appointed person which is likely to be a Planning Inspector. The advice received from the appointed person must be published.
Regulation 27: Consultation on the proposed Local Plan	The LPA must publish and consult on the proposal Local Plan and associated documents, including a statement summarising the main issues raised in earlier consultations.
Regulation 28: Conformity with spatial development strategy (SDS)	Where there is a spatial development strategy (SDS) and as part of regulation 27, the LPA should invite representations from the authority who published the SDS on whether the plan it is in 'general conformity' with the SDS.

Regulation	Purpose of the regulation
Regulation 30: Publication of summary of consultation	The LPA should prepare a summary of the consultation under Regulation 27 and make the summary available.
Regulations 31-33: Gateway 3	The LPA must seek observations and advice on whether plan-making requirements are met and make available the advice received. If necessary, the LPA must repeat Gateway 3.

2.2.4.3 Months 24 – 30: Submission, examination and adoption

Following submission of the plan for Examination, the new system anticipates the examination process to last six months and the adoption process to last one month, if no additional work or main modifications are required. Should it be determined during the Examination that additional work is required, the Examination may be paused for a maximum of six months. If the Inspector recommends that main modifications required for the Local plan to be found, it may be necessary to consult interested parties. This will also likely extend the six-month timeframe for the examination.

The main requirements for this stage are set out in Table 3.

Table 3 Summary of requirements for months 24-30

Regulation	Purpose of the regulation
Regulation 34: Submission	The LPA must submit the Local Plan documents for examination, make these available and notify stakeholders of the submission.
Regulation 35: Independent examination	The LPA must publicise the examination and hearings.
Regulation 37: Publication of the recommendations	The LPA must publicise the examiner's recommendations, make these available and notify stakeholders.
Regulation 39: Adoption	The LPA must make the adopted plan and adoption statement available and notify stakeholders

2.3 Policy and guidance

2.3.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF (December 2024 with minor updates in February 2025) provides the overarching policy framework for planning in England. Chapter 3 of the NPPF sets out the government's expectations for the plan-making process. It emphasises the importance of having an up-to-date and positively prepared development plan that provides a clear vision for the future development of an area. The chapter outlines the principles for plan preparation, the need for strategic and non-strategic policies, and the importance of effective cooperation between local planning authorities and other bodies. It also sets out the tests of soundness that plans must meet to be considered robust and effective.

2.3.2 Consultation Draft NPPF

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published a draft NPPF for consultation in December 2025. Consultation closed in March 2026 and a new version of the NPPF is expected in Autumn 2026. The consultation proposed a significant change in approach, with two distinct sections of the NPPF: one focused on plan-making and one focused on development management. This reflects the government's agenda to bring forward a set of National Development Management Policies (NDMP), which have effectively been incorporated into the NPPF.

The final 2026 NPPF may differ from the consultation version. However, below is a summary of the main changes between the current NPPF and the December 2025 consultation version, which may be carried forward into the final 2026 version:

- Creation of non-statutory NDMP which will significantly reduce the scope of Local Plans as they should not repeat national policy.
- The revision of the tilted balance to a permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development with more locational specificity.
- General support across the document for comprehensive development around railway stations.

- Introduction of new policies on residential densities promoting higher density development, setting minimum densities in town centres and for locations with a high level of connectivity.
- While not within the proposed text, the accompanying consultation proposes the introduction of a ‘medium development’ category, i.e. 10-49 homes on land up to 2.5ha (to complete the current minor and major development categories). The consultation NPPF explicitly supports SME developers to bring forward medium sized sites.
- Further support for vision-led transport planning.
- Strengthened natural environment considerations with better alignment to other environmental and natural environment documents such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- Support for a more diverse mix of homes including in rural areas.

2.3.3 Planning Practice Guidance²⁰

The Plan-Making²¹ section of the PPG provides detailed guidance on the preparation and development of Local Plans. It outlines the statutory duties of LPAs, emphasising the importance of creating up-to-date and effective development plans that address strategic priorities such as the delivery of new homes, economic / employment floorspace, and infrastructure. Further to this, the PPG offers practical advice on the plan-making process, including evidence gathering, public consultation, and cooperation with neighbouring authorities and relevant bodies.

2.3.4 Create or update a Local Plan using the new system²²

Government has created a new collection of guidance and resources which regroups existing, updated and new guidance on how to Create or Update a Local Plan (CULP). The collection is aimed at LPAs looking to adopt a Local Plan under the new plan-making system. The collection is still in development but already contains significant guidance on the early stages of plan-making, including getting ready to start a Local Plan, giving notice of plan-making and preparing a Local Plan vision.

2.3.5 Procedural guide for Examinations and Gateways²³

The Planning Inspectorate has published a procedural guide for Examinations and Gateways under the new plan making system. This sets out the roles of Inspectors and the expected involvement of LPAs, including a step-by-step guide to what LPAs must do and when LPAs must action a task.

2.3.6 Plan-making and Local Government Reorganisation²⁴

In July 2026, Central Government published guidance on the interaction between plan making and LGR. The guidance states that Local Plan should be progressed, despite the uncertainties created by LGR and that this is the case, even where the Council will not be able to progress the Local Plan to adoption before the new unitary authority is operational. Transitional regulations will be published in due course to address the complexities arising from LGR.

²⁰ GOV.UK. ‘Planning Practice Guidance’. 22 July 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>.

²¹ GOV.UK. ‘Plan-Making’. 27 November 2025. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>.

²² GOV.UK. 2026. ‘Create or Update a Local plan Using the New System’. March 26. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/create-or-update-a-local-plan-using-the-new-system>.

²³ GOV.UK June 2026 [Procedural guide for Examinations and Gateways under the Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#) - GOV.UK

²⁴ GOV.UK. n.d. ‘Plan-Making and Local Government Reorganisation’. Accessed 9 July 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making-and-local-government-reorganisation>.

3. Plan making context

3.1 Wider context

The wider context of Local Plan production is important to consider. As well as responding to the legal and policy framework, it will be necessary to consider the implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution; relationship with wider plans and strategies; plan making activities of neighbouring authorities; governance; and skills and capacity.

At the local level, the Local Plan sits alongside other plan, policies and strategies prepared by the Council. The operational model of the Council, such as the governance of decision-making, the Planning Policy team skills and capacity, as well as the capacity of the wider teams within the Council to support plan making will all impact the Local Plan making process.

LGR and Devolution represent significant changes for plan making. LGR will impact on the governance of the Local Plan in the later stages of its production. In this context, the plan making progress of neighbouring authorities is also relevant context for the Local Plan. While devolution will see a new tier of strategic planning introduced with the production of a Greater Essex Spatial Development Strategy.

3.2 Local Government Reorganisation and devolution

In December 2024, central government announced changes to the way local government is organised across the country. The changes can be categorised into two different programmes: Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution.

- Under LGR, all areas of England will be covered by unitary authorities. England is currently divided between areas which are already unitary and areas which have two tiers of local government. In two-tier areas, local government functions are split between an upper-tier county council and a lower tier district or borough council. The reorganisation will end the two-tier system.
- Some regions of England already have a strategic tier of government. It is the government's ambition that all areas in England should have this tier of government, called Strategic Authorities. As detailed in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026, Strategic Authorities can be:
 - Foundation Strategic Authorities (which includes single council devolution deals and all non-mayoral Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities)
 - Mayoral Strategic Authorities including all Mayoral Combined Authorities and Mayoral Combined County Authorities
 - Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities including the Greater London Authority

3.2.1 Local Government Reorganisation

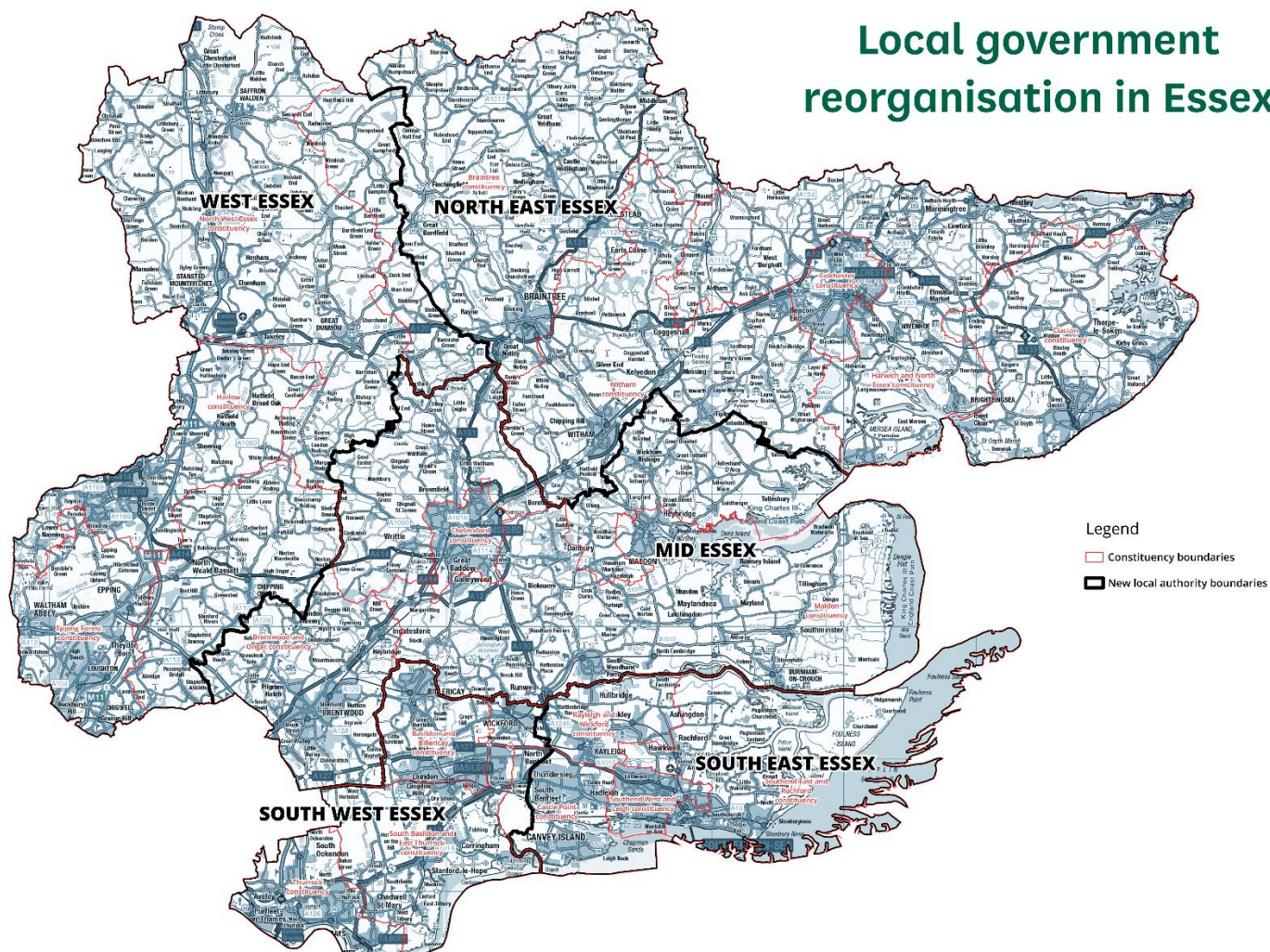
The upper tier authorities of Essex County Council, along with Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock were invited to set out their milestones for reorganisation to central government by 26 September 2025. Following a statutory consultation on the proposed options for reorganisation, the Secretary of State announced their intention to implement the proposal for five unitary councils via a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 25 March 2026.²⁵

Under the new structure, Maldon District Council will cease to exist, and its geographical extent will be part of the new Mid Essex Council, alongside Brentwood Borough Council and Chelmsford City Council and the relevant services currently delivered by Essex County Council. This is illustrated on Figure 4.

²⁵ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2026-03-25/hcws1455>;
https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/20061/your_council/10198/local_government_reorganisation_lgr_and_devolution

Figure 4 Map of the Local Government Reorganisation in Essex

Local government reorganisation in Essex



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights (2026) OS (AC0000813358).

Source: [Proposed unitary authorities 2026: Maps - House of Commons Library](#), accessed May 2026

Secondary legislation, subject to Parliamentary approval, is required to implement these changes and has not yet been made. The Secretary of State wrote to Chief Executives and Leaders of the concerned Councils on 25 March 2026, setting out the decision, as well as the additional information required from Councils, transitional arrangements and the timeline for implementation of the Structural Changes Order, required to implement LGR in Essex.

Maldon District Council, alongside the other Councils identified, will cease to exist on 1 April 2028. Transitional arrangements will be organised, with the creation of ‘shadow’ Councils with preparatory functions, budgets and plans to ensure a smooth transition to the new Councils’ structure.

On 3 June 2025, government reiterated through a ministerial statement²⁶ that they expect local plans to continue being produced while LGR is on-going:

‘Accordingly, as stated in my invitation letters, I continue to expect local planning authorities to work towards the adoption of an up-to-date local plan as soon as possible. Local Government Reorganisation should not hinder this essential work; and neither should the introduction of the new legal framework for local plan-making later this year, or our strategic planning reforms.’

It thus should remain a priority of the Council to work towards a new Local Plan and consideration has been given to joint working with neighbouring authorities to ensure value for money and future-proof the evidence base work and plan itself. This is considered further in Section 3.3.

3.2.2 Devolution

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024, Local Authorities were asked to set out plans to create a Strategic Authority in their area. Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend-on-Sea City Council expressed their interest in becoming a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Greater Essex. Following consultation, government confirmed in July 2025 that the proposal would be taken forward.

The Greater Essex Mayoral election is planned for May 2028. In the interim, work will take place to establish the Combined Authority, which will be responsible for the creation of an SDS as of 1 April 2028. Regulations setting out the requirements for producing SDSs are anticipated later in 2026. There will be a requirement to produce an SDS timetable. Given the production of the Greater Essex SDS will not be able to formally commence until later this year at the earliest and no programme for its production is currently in place, a new Maldon District Local Plan would likely to run ahead of the SDS.

3.3 Neighbouring authorities

Maldon District Council adjoins four other LPAs: Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Colchester City Council, and Rochford District Council (see Figure 5). It is good practice to consider the possibility of joint working with regards to plan making. Where authorities are within a similar timeline for the production of their Local Plan, joint working could be considered to ensure efficiency of scale and joined-up, collaborative working across boundaries. With LGR imminent, this imperative is even more important. Given the confirmed makeup of the Mid Essex Council, joint working with Brentwood Council was also considered.

The status of Local Plan preparation for these five Councils is presented in Table 4. Four out of the five LPAs are preparing a Local Plan under the legacy system and have, or will be, submitting a draft plan for Examination this year, therefore joint working is ruled out as they are not an appropriately equivalent point in the Local Plan review cycle.

Brentwood’s current Local Development Scheme is based on the legacy system; however, it misses the transitional arrangements deadline for submission by December 2026. Therefore, like Maldon district, it will be necessary for a plan to be progressed under the new system, however no formal decision or timetable has been set out for this. Therefore, joint working with Brentwood in the short-term is likely to be limited. In addition, there is limited scope for joint evidence at this stage given the large amount of evidence that has

²⁶ Local Government Reorganisation, Jim McMahon, Statement made on 3 June 2025, Statement UIN HCWS676, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-06-03/hcws676>

been produced in Maldon and given Brentwood is not directly adjacent, making the geographies for joint evidence base production more limited.

Figure 5 Map of Maldon District and neighbouring authorities

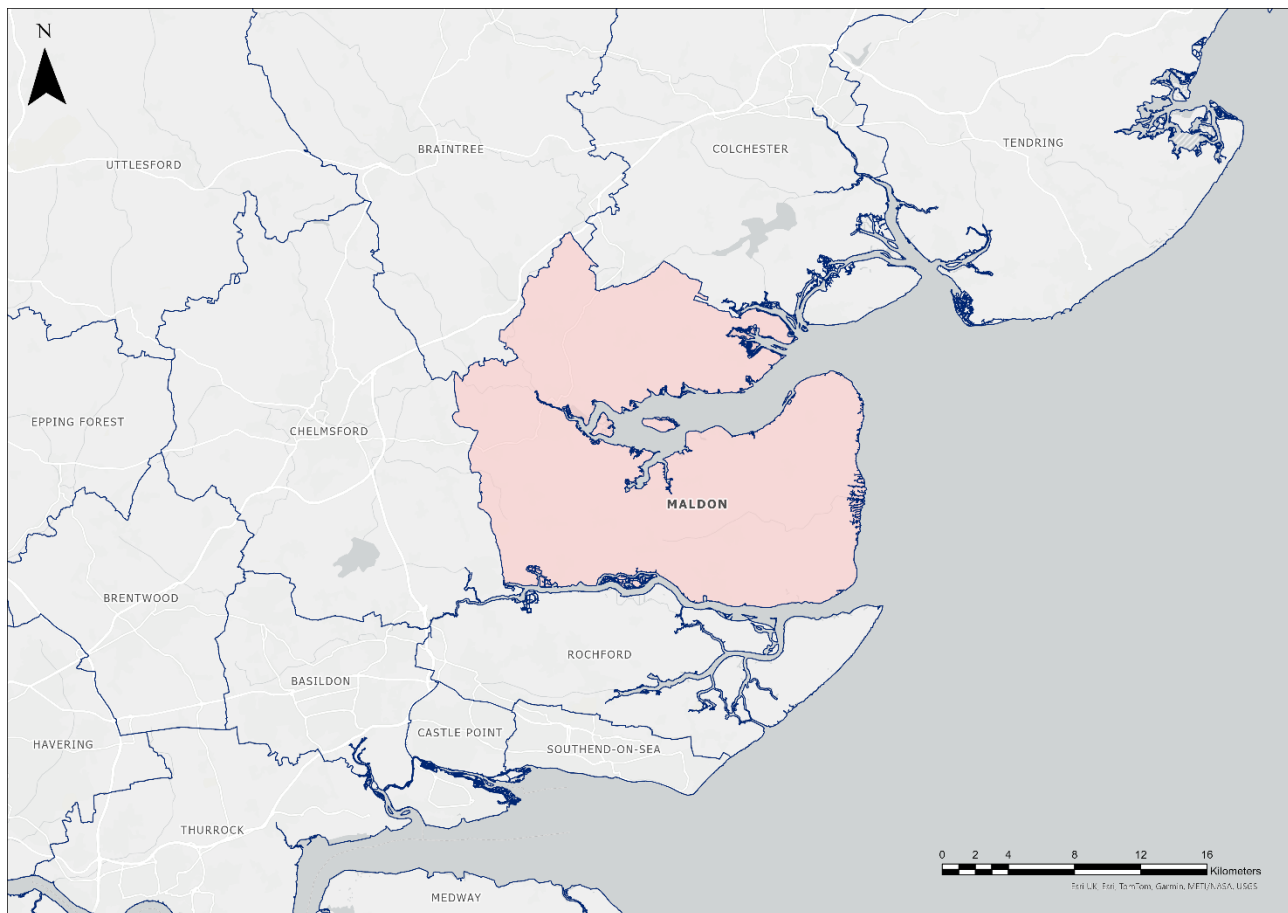


Table 4 Neighbouring authorities Local Plan status

Neighbouring authority	Local Plan status
Braintree District Council	Braintree District Council (BDC) started their Local Plan Review in Early 2024, aiming to adopt in June 2027. BDC completed a Preferred Options Consultation (Regulation 18) on 17 April 2026, will be publishing Regulation 19 in Summer of 2026 and aiming to submit the Local Plan in November 2026 under the legacy system.
Brentwood Borough Council	Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) started their Local Plan Review in quarter two of 2025. Their current Local Development Scheme identifies a Regulation 18 consultation in quarter two of 2026, Regulation 19 quarter two of 2027 and submission in early 2028. This would not meet the December 2026 deadline for the legacy system. Thus, a plan under the new Local Plan system will be required however no timescales have been set out for this at the time of drafting this report.
Chelmsford City Council	Chelmsford City Council began their Local Plan review in 2022. A final Regulation 19 consultation on additional sites finished in January 2026. The plan was submitted for on 5 June 2026 under the legacy system.
Colchester City Council	Colchester City Council completed a Regulation 18 consultation on the Preferred Options Local Plan, which closed on the 14 January 2026. A Regulation 19 consultation is planned for summer 2026, with a view to submitting the plan under the legacy system before December 2026.
Rochford District Council	Rochford District Council completed a Regulation 18 consultation on the Preferred Options Local Plan, which closed on 24 March 2026. In Autumn of 2026 Rochford District Council plan to publish a Regulation 19 Plan with a view to submitting a plan under the legacy system by the end of 2026.

3.4 Maldon plans and strategies

3.4.1 Maldon District Development Plan

The approved Development Plan for Maldon District comprises the following documents:

- Maldon District Local Development Plan 2014-2029 (approved July 2017)
- Policies Map
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan 2017
- Essex Minerals Local Plan 2014

The Maldon District Local Development Plan was adopted in July 2017 and covers the period 2014-2029. The Local Plan set a vision of sustainable development for the district, based on the protection of what makes the District unique, including its heritage, coastline and countryside. The spatial vision emphasises the need to maintain the quality of life of the community and ensure the delivery of local service and of new affordable homes for the District.

There are four made Neighbourhood Plans in Maldon district:

- Burnham-on-Crouch (2017)
- Wickham Bishops (2021)
- Great Totham (2022)
- Langford and Ulting (2022)
- Mayland (2025)

In addition, there are five more designated neighbourhood areas, three of which have plans in progress:

- Tollesbury Parish Council – designated 27 February 2014
- Latchingdon Parish Council – designated 25 April 2014
- Althorne Parish Council - designated 3 December 2014
- Heybridge Parish Council - designated 14 January 2016
- Woodham Walter Parish Council – designated 10 December 2024
- Maldon Town Council – designated 11 July 2025

All existing Development Plan Documents and saved policies will remain in force until the LPA brings into force a new-style Local Plan.

3.4.2 Supplementary Planning Documents

The Council have a number of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) in place (Table 5). These will remain in force until the LPA adopts a new style Local Plan.

SPDs can only be adopted under the legacy system until the end of June 2026; after this date SPDs will no longer be able to be produced under the new Local Plan system. Instead, provision is made for Supplementary Plans which will go through independent examination and have the same weight as Local Plans. Supplementary Plans are intended to be used in a more limited way than SPDs, to address specific issues not already covered in the Local Plan or NPPF. The draft NPPF, for example, identifies their use for specific design standards, or to create policy for a specific site or group of sites close to each other.

In scoping the new Maldon District Local Plan, it will be necessary to consider whether the advice and guidance contained in the existing SPDs is still relevant and if so, whether it should be revised and re-published as guidance or integrated into the new style local plan.

Table 5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Document	Date	Purpose
Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Master Plan (CAMP)	2017	The Masterplan and Action Plan set out the vision and ambition for economic growth, through regeneration, environmental enhancements and redevelopment of sites.
Maldon District Design Guide	2017	Guidance to deliver high quality design in all development.
Affordable Housing and Viability	2018	Provides guidance on the approach to affordable housing provision and details about the council's approach to viability assessments.
Maldon District Specialist Needs Housing	2018	Guidance about the approach to delivering specialist needs housing, such as for older people and those with disabilities.
Renewable and Low Carbon Technologies	2018	Provides guidance for considering proposals for renewable and low carbon technology development and for the use of sustainable building standards in residential and non-residential developments.
Vehicle Parking Standards 2018	2018	Guidance on the approach to vehicle parking provision within new development.
Green Infrastructure Strategy	2019	Provides further guidance on the approach to green infrastructure provision in the District.
North Quay Regeneration Development Brief	2020	The North Quay is the most significant employment allocation within the adopted Local Plan. The North Quay Development Brief SPD sets out a framework to enable employment-led regeneration of the area.

3.4.3 Other planning guidance

There are also masterplans and design codes that have been endorsed by the Council for use in the consideration of planning applications as set out below (Table 6).

Table 6 Other planning guidance

Document	Date	Purpose
North Heybridge Garden Suburb Strategic Masterplan Framework	2014	Strategic masterplan framework for the garden suburb.
North Heybridge Garden Suburb Strategic Design Code	2017	Strategic design code prepared to ensure design quality throughout the garden suburb.
South Maldon Garden Suburb Strategic Design Code	2016	Strategic design code prepared to ensure design quality throughout the garden suburb.
South Maldon Garden Suburb Masterplan	2018	Strategic masterplan framework for the garden suburb.
Technical Advice Note (TAN) on Housing Mix	2025	To provide technical advice to developers and decision-makers explain the guidelines that will be used to assess the ratio of housing mix for different development proposals.

3.4.4 Other plans and strategies

The Local Plan will need to respond to wider plans and strategies produced by the Council, including the Corporate Strategy, Climate Action Strategy and Housing Strategy, as well as those of key stakeholders, such as Essex County Council. The key documents are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7 Other plans and strategies

Stakeholder	Strategy/plan	Key messages
Maldon District Council	Corporate Plan 2025-2028	The Corporate Plan sets the Council's vision and priorities for the three years to 2028. The corporate plan supports a vision to <i>'be a sustainable council, promoting the district and all that it has to offer. To support our communities through excellent partnership working and to maintain and improve quality of life.'</i> ²⁷ The emphasis on the quality of life of residents echoes the spatial vision of the 2017

²⁷ Council, Maldon District. n.d. 'Corporate Plan 2025 - 2028'. Accessed 7 May 2026.
https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/20066/policies_and_strategies/10197/corporate_plan_2025_-_2028.

Stakeholder	Strategy/plan	Key messages
		Maldon District Local Development Plan. The council has articulated five priorities to support this vision: 1. Supporting our communities 2. Investing in our district 3. Growing our economy 4. Protecting our environment 5. Delivering good quality services. Key principles will guide how the Council seeks to deliver this vision and priorities. Of particular relevance to the new local plan, the corporate plan seeks to <i>'Deliver commercial projects that benefit the district'</i> and <i>'As a smaller local authority in the county, we will lobby for infrastructure and investment'</i>.
Maldon District Council	Homelessness & Rough Sleepers & Housing Strategy 2018-2025	Provides a review of the need for housing and incorporates the Homelessness Strategy and Older People's Housing strategy. In seeking to meet the need for housing, it is recognised there is now a stronger emphasis on prevention this as part of the Homelessness Strategy, as well as the need to plan for the growing need for housing related support to help older people retain their independence. Of relevance to the new Local Plan is the recognition of improving supply, improving the use of existing housing stock, the delivery of new affordable homes as well as looking at how housing can be delivered which meets a range of needs including those of older people.
Maldon District Council	Our Home, Our Future - Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2028	Seeks to identify ways to reduce carbon emissions and increase climate resilience across the Maldon District. Four key pathways have been identified: 1. Mitigation – to reduce green housing gas emission in line with the Council's target to reach net zero by 2050. 2. Adaptation – to increase resilience to the local impacts of climate change. 3. Community engagement – to encourage and support climate positive behaviour 4. Sustainable development - Develop a new Local Plan with policies and standards to address climate change, meeting future development needs in a planned and managed way, including policies covering sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), flood risk, renewable energy, biodiversity and geodiversity, transport and climate change. The strategy and action plan therefore provides the framework for some specific elements that local plan is tasked with addressed in relation to sustainable development combined with the role it can play in climate mitigation and adaptation.
Essex Highways & Maldon District Council	Maldon District Future Transport Strategy, October 2024	Identifies the transport challenges and opportunities faced and sets out a vision and objectives to help guide the future approach. It is identified that Maldon has a high reliance of car use that is contributing to increased levels of delay and congestion on the road network. Of relevance to the Local Plan will be how future development can provide transport infrastructure to be well-connected for people of all ages, with an accessible and sustainable transport network, and how sustainable travel options and be delivered to help support growth and make other options to driving viable.
Essex County Council	Sector development strategy	Highlights five future growth sectors - life sciences, construction and retrofit, clean energy, digi-tech and advanced manufacturing and engineering. It identifies Maldon is strong in construction and advanced manufacturing and identifies key assets including higher education centres and proposed NSIPs. This provides a wider regional context for future Local Plan economic development policies.
Essex County Council	Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy	A statutory requirement under the Environment Act – the Greater Essex LNRS provides a county wide solution for nature recovery, identifying locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. It identifies locations where actions can create, expand and connect spaces for nature. The LNRS and map-based opportunities will be

Stakeholder	Strategy/plan	Key messages
Essex County Council	Our Water Strategy for Essex, 2024	relevant for future natural environment and biodiversity policies in the Local plan. Identifies 30 actions to contribute to addressing the water issues Essex faces related to reduce demand, land use and developing alternative supply.
Essex County Council	Local Cycling and Walking Action Plan (LCWIP)	Develops network plans for both walking and cycling across Essex with LCWIPs for all major towns/cities including Maldon.
North Essex Economic Board	North Essex Economic Strategy and Action Plan	Long term strategy providing an overarching vision for the North Essex Economic, with four strategic priorities including innovative businesses and skilled residents'; a greener high growth economy; a dynamic and connected region; and prosperous and inclusive communities. It provides jobs growth forecasts for clean energy by area as well as identifying challenges and opportunities.
Multiple stakeholders including Maldon and Essex County Council	Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)	SPD focuses on the mitigation necessary to protect the wildlife of the Essex coast from the increased visitor pressure associated with new residential development, and how this mitigation will be funded. (This has been reviewed with an updated strategy which, when approved, will revoke the SPD). Key updates include an updated mitigation package, an updated tariff fee and amended development types eligible to pay the tariff.

3.4.5 Scoping the New Local Plan

As part of the scoping of the new Local Plan it will be important to consider the implications of existing Neighbourhood Plans and Areas, the range of different SPDs and the extent to which they should be incorporated into the new Local Plan (this is also addressed in section 4), as well as the context of wider strategies within Maldon district and Essex for specific policy areas.

3.5 Maldon District Council's resources and capacity

The corporately agreed structure for Maldon District Council's Planning Policy team is as follows:

- 1 x Planning Policy Manager
- 2 x Principal Policy Planners
- 1 x Senior Policy Planner
- 1 x Policy Planner and
- 1 x Project Support Officer

All the roles are full time roles within the establishment. If the Planning Policy team was fully resourced, it would provide 6.0 FTEs.

Currently four of these roles are filled. One Principal Policy Planner works 0.8 FTE, and the Project Support Officer works 0.6 FTE. The Senior Policy Planner and Policy Planner roles are currently vacant and being advertised. The current team therefore has a resourcing capacity of 3.4 FTEs. Within this time, the team currently undertakes the following tasks:

- Monitoring duties as summarised in Table 8.
- Support for planning applications, including Section 106 agreement support. A CIL schedule is also in the early stages of development.
- Engagement with wider environmental workstreams that are the responsibility of wider Council teams or external public sector bodies, for example recently the team has supported the production of an updated Recreational disturbance avoidance and mitigation strategy for the Essex Coast Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites.

- Supporting Neighbourhood Plan bodies with the production of Neighbourhood Plans, including designation of neighbourhood areas, responding to Neighbourhood Plan drafts and facilitation of Neighbourhood Plan referendum and Examination.
- Development of evidence base for the new Local Plan, with 12 evidence base studies currently finalised or underway. This has included a Call for Sites and HELAA undertaken in-house.
- Engagement with infrastructure providers, neighbouring authorities and Essex County Council on strategic planning matters.
- Engagement with Members, including the Planning Policy Working Group.

Table 8 Planning policy team monitoring duties

Title	Description	Updates required
Brownfield Land Register	A brownfield land register identifies previously developed sites considered to be appropriate for residential development. It is not a complete list of all brownfield land in the district; however it can support the Local Plan with wider evidence in relation to housing sites, capacity and the status of sites. The register was last updated in 2020.	On-going updates required
Self and custom build register	Details people/associations who are seeking plots of land for self-build/custom-build housing. It helps track demand for these types of homes. The last monitoring update was published in December 2025.	On-going updates required plus annual reporting to MHCLG required
Five-year housing land supply	Under the NPPF (2024), LPAs are required to demonstrate at least five years' worth of housing supply against their housing requirement. The absence of a 5-year supply triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The latest housing supply paper published February 2026 demonstrates a housing land supply of 4.1 years.	On-going updates required
Authority Monitoring Report	The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) monitors the delivery of the Local Plan, delivery of relevant national targets and progress against the Local Development Scheme. The last AMR produced was in 2022/23 and provides series of topic-based Fact Sheets.	Planning authorities are required to publish an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) each year
Housing Delivery Test	Housing delivery data must be submitted to MHCLG each year. The housing delivery test is a percentage measurement of the number of net homes delivered against the number of homes required over a rolling three-year period. MHCLG last published HDT results in 2023. The delivery test measurement for Maldon for 2023 was 1,162 homes delivered against a requirement of 819, (or 142%).	Annual reporting to MHCLG required
Infrastructure Funding Statement	The Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) sets the yearly S106 funding that has been submitted, spent and is still to be collected in the district. The last statement produced was for 2024/25.	Annual update required
P2 Quarterly Housebuilding Return	New build dwelling data to be submitted for statutory data returns to central government.	Ongoing updates required and quarterly reporting to MHCLG
Traveller Count	Biannual counts (January and July) of caravans on both authorised and non-authorised sites	Biannual reporting to MHCLG

3.6 Governance

3.6.1 Existing governance arrangements

Under the Local Government Act 2000, Councils are required to prepare, keep up to date and publicise a constitution. Maldon District Council's latest Constitution document was adopted in March 2026. The constitution explains the governance arrangements of the Council, who makes decisions and how by allocating powers and responsibilities and regulating the behaviour of individuals and groups through codes of conduct, terms of reference and rule of procedure.

The Council is composed of elected members and paid officers. There are 31 elected members representing district residents within the Council. All Councillors are elected every four years. All councillors sit at Full Council, which has to be held at least annually. The Leader of the Council is the head of the largest political group represented amongst the 31 elected Councillors. The Leader of the Council does not have executive or delegated powers but has a position of influence and works closely with the Chief Executive and the rest of the Senior Leadership Team, Councillors also elect a deputy-Leader of the Council.

3.6.2 Full Council

The Council is headed by an elected Chairperson and vice-Chairperson. The remit of Full Council Meetings is to make appointments to committees (see section 3.6.3), to determine the budget, the amount of Council tax to be levied, to approve or adopt plans, policies, schemes and strategies, including the Local Plan and associated guidance. Decisions on the Local Plan have to be made by Full Council.

3.6.3 Committees

The Council's governance is organised as a committee system. Under this governance arrangement, councillors are divided into politically balanced thematic committees which make decisions within the remit afforded to them by the constitution. Maldon has 15 committees, including Strategy and Resources Committee and Planning Committees (District wide and three Area Committees). The latter deal purely planning applications. The upcoming reform of planning committees will require an update to the Planning Committee's structures and processes by 31st October 2026.²⁸

Each committee is headed by a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, who are elected for each committee by Full Council every year. Their role is to make sure committees are run in accordance with the constitution and to maintain good communication with other Chairpersons and officers, ensuring the co-ordination and efficient management of all committee activity. Full council and committees meet on a regular basis according to the schedule of meetings published on the Council's website. Extraordinary meetings can be scheduled if required.

The Strategy and Resources Committee exercises the Council's power in relation to its budget, to the regulation and control of the Council's finances, including investment and borrowing, and ensure the compliance of the Council's budget with its revenue and capital budgets. The Strategy and Resources Committee is also responsible for reviewing the Council's policy framework and can approve or adopt any plan, policies or strategies which do not have a significant corporate impact on the Council or on its resources. Where plans, policies or strategies do not fall under this category and are likely to have a significant corporate impact or impact on the Council's resources, the Committee reviews the proposal and makes recommendations on it to Full Council for approval or adoption. The Local Plan is identified as a key document for the Council which requires Full Council approval.

3.6.4 Planning Policy Working Group

In addition to the committees, the Council also has a series of working groups, including the Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG). The group does not have delegated powers and is therefore not a decision-making body. PPWG meets monthly providing an opportunity for Members and Officers to delve into a level of detail that would not be possible at a formal committee and can make recommendations to Strategy & Resources and / or full Council.

3.7 Communication

3.7.1 Maldon District Communications, Marketing and Engagement Plan

The Communications, Marketing and Engagement Plan, published in 2023, sets out how the Council will communicate, engage with communities, and promote its work and services. It aims to ensure clear public

²⁸ GOV.UK. n.d. 'Planning Committee Reform: Statutory Consultation on Draft Regulations and Guidance'. Accessed 22 June 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-committee-reform-draft-regulations-and-guidance/planning-committee-reform-statutory-consultation-on-draft-regulations-and-guidance>; GOV.UK 'Consultation outcome – Reform of planning committees: technical consultation – government response', <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-planning-committees-technical-consultation/outcome/reform-of-planning-committees-technical-consultation-government-response>. Accessed 22 June 2026

messaging, effective use of resources, and strong stakeholder engagement while supporting the Council's six Corporate Plan priorities.

The approach focuses on collaboration with communities and partners, delivering targeted marketing campaigns, using technology and data to maximise impact, and maintaining high ethical and inclusive communication standards.

The plan does not specifically reference planning or the Local Plan but two of the plan principles are of particular relevance to the PID, namely '*All Council projects have a communications workstream identified to receive communications support and resources (and at inception)*' and '*Digital first approach is a priority, when social and electronic channels are the most effective method to use.*'. The community and engagement strategy that will need to be developed for the Local Plan will need to be based on the key principles set out in the Communication, Marketing and Engagement Plan.

3.7.2 Maldon District Statement of Community Involvement

The legacy system required LPAs to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), detailing how the Council was going to engage with stakeholders and communities throughout the process. Under this legacy system, LPAs were required to update their SCI every five years²⁹.

The Maldon District Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in September 2021³⁰. The SCI sets out what consultation will take place when the Council develops planning policy documents or determines planning applications. The purpose of the SCI is to translate the objectives and priorities of the Corporate Plan into a focus strategy which communities can use to understand how to get involved in the planning system. The SCI is built around seven consultations principles:

- Open and fair
- Appropriate, Meaningful and Relevant
- Honesty and Integrity
- Equality and Diversity
- Responsibility and Accountability
- New Technology and e-consultation
- Climate Change Emergency

The SCI explains at which stage of the Local Plan process the community can get involved and how.

Under the new plan-making system, the requirement for an SCI is replaced by the requirement to include a community engagement strategy within the formal Project Initiation Document, which will be submitted for Gateway 1. The principles contained in the current SCI will need to be reviewed but could form the basis of the new community engagement strategy.

3.7.3 Engagement platform

The Council currently uses an online engagement platform to ensure that consultation of planning policy documents reach a wide audience. The use of online tools for Local Plan engagement is encouraged by Government, and it is understood that a review of how best to utilise these tools is currently underway by the Planning Policy team, including consideration of whether to replace the current engagement platform for one with increased functionality.

²⁹ GOV.UK. 2025. 'Plan-Making'. November 27. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>. Paragraph: 071 Reference ID: 61-071-20190315

³⁰ https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/7050/planning_policy/9727/maldon_district_statement_of_community_involvement

4. Review of existing policies, evidence base and documents

4.1 Local Plan review

The Maldon District Local Development Plan 2014-2029 was approved by the Secretary of State on 21 July 2017. In 2021, the Council started a review of the Maldon District Local Development Plan 2014-2029. Several key milestones were reached in the review, alongside the introduction of major changes at a national level:

- In early 2022, the Council carried out an Issues and Options Consultation which set out seven high level options for growth in the district.
- In September 2023, the Council agreed to explore further three of these potential growth options.
- In October 2023 the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) received Royal Assent. This introduced the new approach to plan making which is based upon a shorter timeframe, more proportional evidence base, and clearer project management steps. However, it required secondary legislation to implement it, which was only published March 2026. In the interim period (2023-2026), Government was clear that LPAs should continue plan making at pace under the legacy system.
- In December 2024, the Government published a new standard methodology for calculating housing need. The housing requirement for Maldon district nearly doubled. This required a fundamental review of the sites which could be allocated in a new local plan for Maldon district.
- In February 2025, the Council published a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) reflecting the need to amend the programme to undertake an additional review of sites. The updated LDS includes a timetable which showed that the Local Development Plan would be submitted for examination in August 2027.
- In June 2025, the Council agreed as part of the Local Development Plan review that two potential growth options be approved to enable modelling and further testing.
- The Government has set a limited transition period for local plans being prepared under the legacy system, with a deadline for submitting the plan for examination by December 2026. Given the work necessary to take forward a sound local plan review with a near doubling of the housing requirement it became evident that the local plan review could not be accelerated to meet the December deadline. This was formally reported to Members at full Council in February 2026 as part of the report on the Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply.

There is now insufficient time to for this Local Plan review to complete given the December 2026 submission deadline. Given the new Local Plan system is a parallel system created under separate legislation, there is no ability to pivot to an equivalent point in that system, rather the process must be commenced from the beginning.

Since 2021 significant work was undertaken through the Local Plan review, including the preparation of a number of evidence base studies. Thus, as part of the preparation of this PID, consideration was given to which elements could be used or updated to inform the new Local Plan to maximise value for money.

4.2 Existing policies and guidance

A review of existing policies in the Maldon District Local Development Plan was undertaken through engagement with Members and with the Development Management team. The following themes emerged from the review, which were used to inform the scope of the new Local Plan and of the evidence base.

- Updated national policy: due to the passage of time, some of the Local Plan policies have become outdated, either due to the age of the evidence underpinning them or due to changes in national policies.

- Strategic policies: the Maldon District Local Development Plan did not specifically split policies between strategic policies and non-strategic policies. The new Local Plan will need to make a clear distinction between strategic and non-strategic policies.
- Compliance with national policy: the Maldon District Local Development Plan contains policies which repeat requirements contained in national policy or guidance, such as flood risk or climate change. It is not appropriate nor necessary for a Local Plan to repeat national policy. Such policies should be removed from the new Local Plan. The introduction of non-statutory National Development Management Policies (NDMP) through the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will further reduce the scope of the new Local Plan, with a larger number of policy areas being covered, at least in part, at the national level.
- Split of policy topics: a few policy topics are covered across different policies, which create unnecessary overlaps. The policies in the new Local Plan should seek to be more focused.
- Infrastructure: the policies in the existing Maldon District Local Development Plan are difficult to interpret in relation to the need for infrastructure provision. The new Local Plan should focus and clarify the need for infrastructure provision in relation to the different allocations.
- Gaps: national guidance and policy requirements have evolved since the Maldon District Local Development Plan was adopted and there are policy requirements that are currently not addressed in the plan. For instance, this is the case for requirements on housing delivery on small sites and self-build and custom housebuilding³¹.

The Council have already undertaken a review of policies against the 2021 NPPF. A further review of policies following publication of the new NPPF, likely in Autumn 2026, should be undertaken as part of the scoping of the new Local Plan policies as the new NPPF is likely to supersede a number of development management policies in the Maldon District Local Development Plan.

The scope of the new Local Plan will also need to take into account the existing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Maldon District's SPDs will be revoked upon adoption of the new Local Plan. The content of these SPDs was discussed with the Development Management team to understand which aspects of the SPDs may need to be part of the new Local Plan for Maldon District.³² Any part of an SPD which would be taken forward into the new Local Plan would have to be drafted as policy and would need to be supported by evidence. This discussion suggested that the majority of the SPDs will not be required moving forward due to the passage of time (e.g. major development sites are largely built out, national policy has moved on etc.), however there was an identified need for further design guidance within the new Local Plan. This would need to be underpinned by appropriate design evidence.

4.3 Existing Evidence base

Various evidence base studies have been progressed since 2021 as part of the Local Development Plan review under the 'Legacy system'. Some of these have been completed and some are in the process of being produced. Table 9 sets out a list of existing evidence base studies, if they will require an update and the extent of the update required with a view to being able to repurpose and re-use existing evidence within the new plan making system. Further analysis of additional evidence to be produced is set out in section 5.4.

³¹ GOV.UK. 2025. 'National Planning Policy Framework'. February 7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>, paragraph 73.a and 73.b

³² GOV.UK. n.d. 'Plan-Making Regulations Explainer'. Accessed 30 April 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-making-regulations-explainer/plan-making-regulations-explainer>. See section on Commencement, saving and transitional arrangements.

Table 9 Local Plan evidence base studies - work to date

Topic	Title	Status	Description	Author	Update required?
Housing and economy evidence	Maldon District Economy Study	Completed (January 2021)	Identifies economic growth opportunities in the district up to 2040. Growth prospects were identified as modest. The proposed Bradwell B nuclear power station was identified as potentially transformative, with the ability to generate substantial construction, supply-chain and operational employment, alongside significant local spending effects. Overall, the study emphasised that economic growth is achievable, but only if it is actively planned, infrastructure-led and carefully managed alongside housing and workforce growth.	Consultants	Partial update required The context within which the report was written means that the economic evaluation of the district may have shifted significantly since 2020, with an update required to take into account current economic circumstances post Covid-19 and more recent economic events.
	Employment Land & Premises Study	Completed (February 2024)	The study established the economic market area, evidence to inform employment growth, future requirements for sites and supply of land to support economic growth. It identifies Maldon District as a small but distinctive local economy Whilst there is enough employment land to meet forecast needs to 2040, the supply is poorly located, constrained or not suitable for full range of business needs. The study concluded that Maldon should prioritise additional and better-located employment land around Maldon-Heybridge, support rural diversification and site modernisation, and plan positively for SME-focused growth.	Consultants	Partial update required This is a relatively recent piece of evidence but would likely need to be reviewed and updated as part of the new Local Plan to take into account the updated national policy context, and employment land position within the context of the updated position on housing and to ensure that it is considered up-to-date at the point of submission.
	Economic Viability Assessment	In progress	This will assess the current viability of housing development sites across the District of Maldon in terms of the provision of affordable housing and viability of introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy.	Consultants	Partial update required. Suggested that this study is updated and wrapped into a wider whole plan viability study.
	Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment	Completed (October 2023)	An assessment of land availability from 2020 – 2040. For housing land the study sites were suitable and available for development with an indicative capacity of 13,480 dwellings. When combined with existing allocations, permissions, windfall assumptions and brownfield sites available, the total potential housing supply identified was 16,051 homes for the period 2022-2042. The study also confirms the supply of employment land - with 94.21 hectares of employment land already allocated in the current Local Plan, the HELAA identified a further 119.22 hectares as suitable.	MDC	Partial update required The update will be required to assess the changes in potential housing supply since 2023, in relation to the new plan period and to take into account any updated evidence (e.g. viability), as well as reflecting changes in national policy and guidance (e.g. updates to the standard method). For employment land see also Employment Land and Premises Study.
	Local Housing Needs Assessment	Completed (September 2025, amended February 2026)	Considers housing need up to 2044. The study identifies an annual housing need of 583 dwellings per year and a net affordable housing need of 284 homes per year, with around 71% of need unable to afford buying or private rent. The assessment concludes that future housing strategy must focus on delivering a	Consultants	Partial update may be required. The evidence is based on the latest standard method for housing needs which was published in December 2024. A partial update will be required to demonstrate it is up to date at the point of submission in

Topic	Title	Status	Description	Author	Update required?
Natural environment evidence			diverse mix of tenures if housing need, affordability pressures and demographic change are to be addressed.		terms of the latest dwelling stock figures and in case of any changes to the Standard Method prior to that.
	Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment Update	Completed (September 2024)	The Maldon District Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment identified a clear and significant shortfall in provision over the period 2022–2043, concluding that 55 additional pitches are required for Gypsy and Traveller households who meet the 2023 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites definition, with the majority of this need arising in the first five years. A further 31 pitches are need for those who do not meet the definition (as well as 9 undetermined) with an overall need of 95 pitches.	Consultants	Partial update required. The PPTS definition changed in 2024, therefore an update is required. This could take the form of an update to the report or a supplemental topic paper setting out the implications of the changes.
	Nature Conservation Study	Completed (February 2023)	Reviewing 102 local wildlife sites to inform the Local Plan, the study found a west–east divide in ecological value and connectivity. It concludes that reversing ongoing declines will require not only site-level protection but landscape-scale action to improve ecological connectivity, enhance habitat creation and embed biodiversity gains through development, land management and coastal realignment initiatives.	Consultants	Partial update required. Given the timing and nature of the study it is unlikely an update will be required if there has not been a significant change in circumstances on wildlife sites. Any mapping and/or boundary changes could be dealt with through a topic paper or addendum.
	Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Completed (February 2024)	Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to inform planning policies and decisions. The most significant risks were identified as coming from fluvial flooding along the rivers and estuaries, and surface water flooding linked to flat topography, high groundwater levels and constrained urban drainage.	Consultants	Partial update to reflect EA mapping changes which occurred after the Level 1 SFRA publication. Will need to be supplemented by Level 2 SFRA
Built environment evidence	Landscape Character Assessment	Completed (September 2006)	A joint Landscape Character Assessment with Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Uttlesford, this report provides detailed assessments of different character areas in Maldon making recommendations on objectives to conserve and enhance them, as well as suggested landscape planning and land management guidelines.	Consultants	No update required. Will need to be supplemented by site level assessments of landscape sensitivity.
	Rural Facilities Survey and Settlement Pattern	Completed (May 2023)	The Maldon District Rural Facilities Survey and Settlement Pattern (May 2023) identified how rural settlements function in terms of services, facilities and connectivity, and how this varies across the District. Building on this evidence, the study established a five-tier settlement hierarchy—towns, large villages, medium villages, small villages and hamlets/open countryside—using a points-based scoring system that weighted the presence and accessibility of services, employment, education, healthcare and public transport.	In-house	Full update required This study should be replaced and broadened out to a full settlement hierarchy study.

Topic	Title	Status	Description	Author	Update required?
Whole plan assessments	Integrated Assessment (SEA/HRA/HIA/EQIA)	Ongoing	Iterative assessment of the social, environmental, economic, health, equalities and habitats impacts of the Local Plan as it is produced.	Consultants	Full update required. The impacts of the new Local Plan will need to be assessed as it is produced in line with relevant legislation and guidance.
Infrastructure	Highways Modelling	In progress	Modelling of highways impacts	Consultants	Full updated required. Highways modelling will need to take into account and assess the impacts of future site allocations and spatial strategy.
	Indoor and Outdoor Sports Strategy	In progress	Assessment of indoor and outdoor sports provision.	Consultants	Updates required to the document to reflect changes to the leisure contract and the changes to the facilities in the Blackwater Leisure Centre.

5. New Local plan

5.1 Project objectives

The new Maldon District Local Plan will need to respond to:

- The new legislative, policy and guidance framework for plan making (as discussed in sections 2).
- The Corporate Priorities of the Council around supporting communities, growing the economy, investing in the district, protecting the environment and delivering good quality services.
- Wider plans and strategies, including the emerging Strategic Development Strategy (as discussed in section 3).

5.2 Scope

Maldon District Council has a statutory duty to prepare and adopt a Local Plan³³. The new Local Plan will set out an up-to-date policy framework for the area, including a spatial strategy, strategic and site-specific policies that are clear about the amount, type and location of development, and timescales for this to come forward. The Local Plan must include policies which contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and take into account the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. It must also take account of an assessment of the amount, and type of new homes that is needed, including the amount and type of affordable homes.

The scope of the plan will need to set out a positive vision and spatial strategy, and specific proposals to accommodate development needs, including a spatial strategy and policies for the minimum amount of development to be provided. The vision should be supported by measurable outcomes to monitor progress. Policies will need to be reviewed against the NPPF to ensure they are not inconsistent with or (in substance) repeat national decision-making policies³⁴.

The new Local Plan will need to:

- Provide a positive long-term vision for the future of Maldon District, focused on place-making, and creating communities.
- Set out a spatial strategy that supports strategic and sustainable patterns of development. This will identify where future economic and housing growth will go and how this can be accommodated in a strategic and sustainable way that puts businesses and homes in the right locations.
- Review and update site allocations within the context of an updated spatial strategy to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply and provide a housing trajectory for the plan period which meets local housing needs.
- Plan for economic growth to support the local economy, including tourism, providing high quality jobs.
- Set out how key infrastructure will be delivered, including social infrastructure, transport, and green infrastructure. It will set out contributions or provisions expected from development towards affordable housing and infrastructure necessary to support development and the delivery of the plan.
- Include policies which help to manage future growth in a way that responds to the unique identity and built and natural environment of Maldon District, creating places that people want to live and providing for key infrastructure to support communities.

³³ Under both the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and amendments made by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

³⁴ As set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

5.3 Plan period

National policy states that strategic policies ‘should’ look ahead over a minimum of 15 years ahead, from adoption (NPPF, 2024, paragraph 22). The new draft NPPF also states that a Local Plan ‘should’ set out the strategy and policies for a period of no less than 15 years from the point of adoption.

The 15-year period was also confirmed through a recent update to national guidance which states that, in relation to housing requirements “The plan must last a minimum of 15 years from the date of adoption, even if the start year is before the adoption year.”³⁵ However, government sought views during the 2025 NPPF consultation on whether a 10-year plan period would be more appropriate under the new plan-making system. Further details on whether this proposal will be taken forward should be provided upon publication of the revised NPPF.

Based on the proposed programme in Section 6, if there is an anticipated adoption of the Local Plan in May 2029, the Local Plan would need to cover the period 2029 until 2045, as a minimum. Given the clear steer in national policy and guidance, any deviation from the suggested minimum would need to be robustly justified.

To date, no policy or guidance has been published covering the start date for a Local Plan under the new plan making system. Under the legacy system, LPAs had discretion and took a variety of approaches, including the starting date of evidence base collation, the date of the latest update to Local Housing Need and the date of adoption. This will thus be a matter for the Council to determine, reflecting local factors such as housing requirements and delivery. The key point to note is that irrespective of the start date for the plan period, the end date for the period should be 15 years post adoption. Therefore, if a start date of 2026 was chosen, the plan period would be 2026 – 2045 based on the proposed programme for the new Maldon District Local Plan.

5.4 Project deliverables

Under the new regulations and guidance, there are a number of deliverables for the Local Plan project at each stage as set out in section 2. The ultimate deliverables for the project for submission to the Secretary of State and for examination will be³⁶:

- The proposed Local Plan (the draft NPPF also requires plans to be published in a searchable digital format).
- A map of proposed Local Plan policies.
- A document which sets out the details of the evidence which the local planning authority has gathered.
- A Gateway 3 completion statement, along with a statement of compliance and soundness.
- A statement setting out a summary of the consultation and engagement activities carried out and a summary of consultation on the proposed Local Plan.
- Relevant environmental reports and other evidence to support the soundness of the plan.

5.5 Engagement and consultation

Under the new plan making system, a community engagement strategy is required which should clearly be set out in the Project Initiation Document, including the purpose, target audience and objective of the strategy. This engagement strategy should be drafted during the ‘Scoping and early participation’ stage of the process, prior to Gateway 1. It should be informed by the scoping consultation.

The community engagement strategy should clearly outline its purpose, target audience and objectives. Government guidance recommends the use of mixed methods of engagement to gather a broad range of

³⁵ [Publishing your local plan housing requirement - GOV.UK](#)

³⁶ As set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, regulation 34.

insights. Further guidance has been published on engagement as part of the Create or Update a Local Plan (CULP)³⁷. The Council is working with a specialised consultancy to ensure youth engagement with the Local Plan. This will be combined with the use of an online engagement platform which will ensure Local Plan consultations reach a wider audience.

The community engagement strategy will underpin future engagement and consultation on the Local Plan. The three main consultation stages are:

- Scoping consultation (Regulation 20): inviting views on what the plan should contain and how stakeholders should be engaged. A summary of the consultation will need to be prepared and published (under Regulation 22).
- Consultation on proposed Local Plan content (Regulation 23), with a summary of the consultation responses prepared and published (under Regulation 24).
- Consultation on the proposed Local Plan (Regulation 27) with a summary of the consultation prepared and published (under Regulation 30).

5.6 New Evidence base

The production of evidence in a timely manner will be essential to support the creation of policies and meet the 30-month timetable. The Government has emphasised the importance of proportionate evidence in the new system, this is also reflected in the draft NPPF, however at this stage it is unclear what this means in practice. Alongside the production of formal evidence, the Create or Update a Local Plan guidance recommends carrying out baseline evidence before passing through Gateway 1³⁸. Additional guidance has also now been produced on the site identification and assessment process.

The list of existing evidence and updates required to that are set out in section 4.3. Table 10 sets out additional new evidence to be produced based on discussions with stakeholders as well as a review of evidence base requirements. Some elements of optional additional evidence have been identified for the Council to consider depending on the policy approaches they would like to take. The full list of evidence to be created or updated is considered to represent a proportionate and pragmatic approach to covering of main topics required for a sound Local Plan.

For each of the evidence base studies, a recommended resourcing option has been identified. This recommendation seeks to achieve a balance between:

- Value for money / efficiency in terms of work already carried out to date on evidence base studies.
- Ensuring the Planning Policy team members have a varied balance of Local Plan and business-as-usual work. This is considered important to encourage recruitment and retention of team members, since Local Plan production is usually considered to be the most interesting type of policy work.
- Capitalising on the Team's local knowledge in terms of geography, characteristics, data, issues and politics, as well as stakeholder relationships, much of which is generated through business-as-usual activities. Then, identifying those studies where local knowledge is likely to add greatest value or offer greatest efficiencies in production.
- Identifying when technical skills or access to specialist datasets will mean that external consultants are likely to be required to carry out work.
- Recognising the capacity limits of a relatively small team to carry out a significant volume of work in time limited period.

³⁷ [Engaging the public when preparing a local plan - GOV.UK](#)

³⁸ [Gathering baselining information to inform a local plan - GOV.UK](#)

Table 10 Evidence base – existing studies and additional requirements

Title	Description	Author	Requirement
Existing evidence			
Maldon District Economy Study	Identifies economic growth opportunities in the district up to 2040.	Consultants	Partial update required
Employment Land & Premises Study	Evidence to inform employment growth, future requirements for sites and supply of land to support economic growth.	Consultants	Partial update required
Economic Viability Assessment	Assesses the viability of housing development sites. (To be incorporated in the Whole Plan Viability Assessment).	Consultants	Partial update required.
Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment	Assessment of housing and employment land.	MDC	Partial update required
Local Housing Needs Assessment	Considers housing need up to 2044.	Consultants	Partial update required
Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment Update	Identifies Gypsy and Traveller needs over the Local Plan period.	Consultants	Partial update required
Nature Conservation Study	Review of local wildlife sites.	Consultants	Partial update required
Landscape Character Assessment	Provides a detailed assessments of different landscape character areas within Maldon.	Consultants	No update required.
Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).	Consultants	Partial update required
Rural Facilities Survey and Settlement Pattern	Existing review of rural facilities and settlement pattern to be replaced by a full Settlement Hierarchy Study.	In-house	Update required
Integrated Assessment (SEA/HRA/HIA/EQIA)	Assessment of the social, environmental, economic, health, equalities and habitats impacts of the Local Plan as it produced.	Consultants	Full update required
Transport and Highways Modelling	Modelling of highways impacts.	Consultants	Full update required
Indoor and Outdoor Sports Strategy	Assessment of indoor and outdoor sports provision.	Consultants	Partial update required
New and additional evidence			
Heritage Impact Assessment	Evidence to support site allocations and other strategic heritage policies where appropriate.	In-house	Required
Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Delivery Assessment	Evidence to support the delivery of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.	Consultants	Required
Water Cycle Study	To help identify water infrastructure capacity and water and flood management infrastructure required to support growth.	Consultants	Required
Infrastructure Delivery Plan	To identify the infrastructure baseline in the area, planned provision and infrastructure required to support future growth. This will include blue and green infrastructure.	Consultants	Required
Whole Plan Viability Assessment	To assess development viability within the area and implications of proposed policies. This will incorporate the updated economic viability assessment work.	Consultants	Required
Retail Study	To assess retail needs.	Consultants	Required
Renewable Energy Study	To assess areas for delivering local carbon and renewable energy.	Consultants	Required
Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.	Consultants	Required
Character and Design	Focused on reviewing character of existing settlements and providing wider design evidence to inform policies, this could also include evidence on density.	Consultants	Required
Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment	Focused on wider review of landscape value to help inform policies for specific sites.	Consultants	Required
Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation	Evidence to support climate resilience and sustainable design principles.	Consultants	Optional

6. Local Plan Project Management

6.1 Approach to project management

This section explains the proposed and recommended project management approach for the Local Plan. It explains the potential resourcing options which were considered for the project, the preferred option as well as a programme, resourcing schedule and budget for the recommended option. The underlying assumptions for these are detailed in each relevant sub-section. The final sub-section details the governance arrangements which are necessary to ensure that the Local Plan can be produced within the new 30-month timetable.

6.2 Resourcing

6.2.1 Existing Planning Policy team resources

As detailed in section 3.5, the Planning Policy team currently has an agreed structure providing 6.0 FTE. However, presently the team has a combined capacity of 3.4 FTE. The two vacant posts are currently being advertised.

Based on conversation with officers and on a full assessment of all the tasks undertaken by the Planning Policy Team, it is estimated that 2 FTE are currently dedicated to business-as-usual tasks, leaving the equivalent of 1.4 FTE for the preparation of the Local Plan.

Based on best practice and experience elsewhere, it is judged that the current team capacity (3.4 FTE) is not sufficient to undertake a 30-month Local Plan project as well as business-as-usual tasks for the Planning Policy team. Furthermore, even if the team's capacity was expanded to provide 6 FTE, this would not be sufficient to cover the full resource needs.

6.2.2 Wider Council resourcing

The production of the Local Plan will draw in other teams across the Council that will need to provide support at specific stages of the Local Plan making process. The production of the Local Plan will generate work for / require inputs from a wide range of teams / officers, including Communication, GIS, Development Manage, Customer Service, Committee Services, Legal, Economic Development, Tourism, Heritage, Urban Design and Finance.

Engagement was undertaken with selected council teams, who will or could be directly involved in plan making to understand the resources available to support the Planning Policy team:

- Maldon District Council Communications team: the Council has a small Communications and Engagement team with limited capacity to offer support beyond Business as Usual. The team will be able to approve and publish the communications content created by the Planning Policy team but will not be able to offer wider resources to generate communications content, or support engagement and consultations, i.e. the production of consultation material, including digital content, facilitation / attendance at engagement or consultation events or analysis / responses to stakeholder and public responses.
- Maldon District Council GIS officer: the GIS officer has indicated that they would be able to offer limited resources for the Local Plan process, within the remit of geospatial analysis and data.
- Maldon District Council Development Management team: the Development Management team would have limited capacity to support Local Plan workstreams.

All these teams highlighted that LGR is likely to further reduce any resource which they could dedicate to the Local Plan. However, the full extent of the work required from each team to conduct LGR is still unknown.

Although all these teams will provide critical support, they will not fill the resource gap in the Planning Policy team to produce the Local Plan.

6.2.3 Resourcing options

As set out in section 6.2.1, the Planning Policy team does not currently have the capacity to undertake a Local Plan within 30 months. The following sub-sections present the resourcing options which were considered to deliver the Local Plan. The assessment of the different options is based on engagement with the Planning Policy team, wider teams within the Council and neighbouring authorities, as well as best practice and financial implications of the resourcing options.

6.2.3.1 Resourcing option 1: do nothing

The first option considered was ‘do nothing’. This was considered from two perspectives:

- Maldon District Council does not prepare a new Local Plan.
- Maldon District Council begins preparation of a new Local Plan but does not secure additional resources for the Planning Policy team.

The Council has a statutory duty to produce a Local Plan as set out in Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004, as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023. Central Government has made it clear through guidance that Local Plan should be progressed despite LGR. This is the case, even where the Council will not be able to progress the Local Plan all the way to adoption before the new unitary authority is operational. Transitional regulations will be published in due course to address the complexities arising from Local Government Reorganisation.

As set out in section 2, to comply with the Local Planning Regulations (2026) Maldon Council must publish their Regulation 21 self-assessment summary (Gateway 1) by 30 April 2027, which means the latest date the Council may publish its Notice to Commence plan making is 31 December 2026.

Experience from elsewhere around the Country where unitarization has already occurred has highlighted that there is often a significant gap between the establishment of the new authority and the ability to produce a new Local Plan for the new geography. This is often for multiple reasons but not least that it takes time for the new authority to establish new teams and processes and consolidate / unify different systems and data sets, for the full range of services previously provided across multiple authorities and two tiers of local government. As a result, the new unitary authority is likely to rely on the previous individual district level Local Plans for some time until a new Local Plan can be produced for the whole geography. Experience elsewhere also suggests that if a district level Local Plan has completed the majority of the plan making process, the new unitary authority will likely take this forward to adoption.

The production of a new Local Plan therefore offers the best opportunity to create a legacy plan to guide future development in Maldon District until a Mid Essex Local Plan is produced and adopted. If not, decisions for the Maldon District will continue to be based on the existing Maldon District Local Development Plan for a significant period of time. This will have multiple consequences, including, for example, continued engagement of the presumption in favour of sustainable development (otherwise known as the ‘tilted balance’) for decision making since the development plan policies will be considered out of date; and an inability to coordinate infrastructure investment to accompany growth since all applications will be considered on an individual basis and the cumulative impacts will not be fully considered.

If the Council decides to commence a new Local Plan but does not secure additional resources; this could have a number of potential consequences. This could include negative impact on staff well-being and retention; reduced ability of the team to deliver business-as-usual activities and slow plan making. The latter brings the risk that when Mid Essex Council assumes plan making responsibility, they will abandon the new Local Plan as it will not be sufficiently progressed to warrant taking it forward to adoption rather than focusing on producing a new Local Plan for the whole Mid Essex geography.

As set out in section 2, the new plan making system includes a number of Gateway checks. The first of which includes a demonstration that the appropriate project plan has been produced for the Local Plan, including sufficient resources. If this cannot be demonstrated, the Council risks being asked to repeat this plan making stage, putting the 30-month programme at risk.

Ultimately, if the Council decides to do nothing, or the production of the new Local Plan is too slow, the Council faces the risk of intervention by MHCLG. Under the PCPA (2004), as amended by the LURA (2023), the Secretary of State (SoS) may intervene in plan making by directing the LPA, or assuming plan-

making responsibilities themselves. The SoS may invoke these powers if it judges that the statutory test (i.e. that the authority is failing to do anything necessary related to plan-making, or its plan being considered unsatisfactory) or the policy test (plan progress vs. local development needs) are met.

This option was discounted for multiple reasons, including failing to meet Central Government directive to continue plan making at pace; prescribed dates for commencing plan making under the new plan making system; potential threat of Local Plan intervention; and missed opportunity to create a legacy plan for Maldon District to guide future development and secure appropriate infrastructure investment until a new Local Plan can be produced for Mid Essex.

6.2.3.2 Resourcing option 2: re-deployment of internal resources

This option to resource the Local Plan considered diverting resources from other teams across the Council for the duration of the project. The creation of a Local Plan requires planning expertise and knowledge which can only be found within the Planning Policy team or the Development Management team. However, most of the business-as-usual tasks currently undertaken by the Planning Policy team are statutory requirements and resources cannot be diverted from these workstreams. Similarly, the Development Management team does not have sufficient resources to be able to divert resources towards the new Local Plan while meeting their statutory caseload.

This option was discounted due to the lack of resources which could be diverted.

6.2.3.3 Resourcing option 3: working with a neighbouring authority

This option considered whether there was a possibility to resource some of the Local Plan work in tandem with a neighbouring authority, ranging from joint evidence base to a full joint Local Plan. Due to the context of LGR, it was judged that only joint working with either Brentwood Borough Council or Chelmsford City Council should be considered to future proof the Local Plan.

Following engagement with Brentwood Borough Council and Chelmsford City Council, it was judged that this option was not viable for the following reasons:

- Chelmsford City Council's new Local Plan is at an advanced stage under the legacy system and was submitted for Examination on 5 June 2026. The misalignment of the stage of plan making make the option of joint Local Plan working non-viable.
- Brentwood Borough Council has started a review of their Local Plan; however, their current Local Development Scheme is based on the legacy system but would not meet the December 2026 deadline. There is currently no final decision on what route the is going to be followed - either continuing a review under the legacy system or starting under the new Local Plan system.
- Maldon District has already undertaken a wide range of studies, some of which may need updating, but which mostly remain relevant for the new Local Plan. For evidence that needs updating there is likely to be limited scope for joint commissioning given the bespoke and focused nature of this. Whilst there could be scope for work to jointly commission new evidence this is unlikely to work in practical terms given where Brentwood and Chelmsford currently are and in terms of the programme.
- Essex County Council are currently in the early stages of thinking about evidence to support the new Greater Essex Spatial Development Strategy however at this stage there is no confirmed programme for the evidence to support it and the new Maldon District Local Plan would be ahead of a future SDS meaning opportunities for joint evidence base production as limited at this stage.

This option was discounted due to the misalignment of local plan programmes and existing evidence base for Maldon District.

6.2.3.4 Resourcing option 4: full consultancy support

This option considered whether it would be viable for the Council to tender most of the Local Plan work to a multi-disciplinary single consultancy which could deliver the project from start to end, including evidence base studies and the full Local Plan programme until a full draft Local Plan is produced. This option was not considered appropriate due to the range of existing evidence base studies which have already been completed or are in progress. It was considered that using the same consultants to create updates to existing evidence

base studies and producing some updates in house would be a more financially attractive option compared to handing the work to a single consultancy which would have to familiarise itself with the different methodologies and context for each study. Using the same consultants to update the existing studies is also likely to be more efficient in meeting the 30-month programme. This option also creates the additional costs for paying for full consultancy support for plan production in addition to the existing Planning Policy team.

This option was discounted due to the higher financial cost, existing residual capacity within the team and extent of work already undertaken.

6.2.3.5 *Resourcing option 5: partial consultancy support*

This option would include consultancy support for some of the Local plan workstreams, to produce some of the evidence base or fill vacancies within the team. Table 5.6 sets out a recommendation for each evidence base study, as to whether they should be produced in house or by consultants. These have been reflected in the accompanying resource plan and costed as part of the budget.

In terms of filling vacancies, it is typically more financially attractive to recruit new planners within the team rather than to rely on external consultancy support for the duration of the local plan programme. However, the 30-month timeframe may require short but intensive periods of work, particularly around the definition of spatial options or the processing of consultation responses, which may create the need for additional support to boost the team's capacity in the short term or to fill vacancies should permanent recruiting not be successful. This option was therefore retained as part of the mitigation measures presented in the risk register, as a means to reduce the risk associated with the tight 30-month timeframe.

The Council may also wish to consider critical friend support at key points, or to help deal with particular technical issues, be it with evidence being produced in house or local plan management or production. If required, it is assumed that these costs would be met through the contingency element of the new Local Plan budget.

This option forms part of the recommended way forward for the new Local Plan

6.2.3.6 *Resourcing option 6: recruitment*

This option would involve the recruitment of new planners within the Planning Policy team to increase capacity and enable the delivery of the new Local Plan.

Additional recruitment, could be focussed on hiring general policy planners to support plan making in the round, or specialist policy planners to oversee production of particular technical specialities or to take on business-as-usual activities, currently the preserve of the existing team to free up their time for Local Plan work, for example a S106 Officer who would take ownership of the S106 and CIL workstreams.

Recruitment at junior grades would help address the current gap in junior resources in the team, and free up some of the principal planners' time to focus on delivery of the Local Plan.

Recruiting to bolster the existing team would allow for the delivery of the Local Plan to remain mostly in-house, ensure continuity with the work already undertaken, and ensure that the Local Plan is work is undertaken by a team embedded within the Council and who fully understand the context of Maldon District.

Recruitment would need to be conducted quickly to ensure that resources are able to start as soon as possible. However, it is not considered that the time required for new resources to be recruited would be significantly longer than any of the other options considered for boosting resources.

Overall, this option is considered a potential option for the delivery of the Local Plan.

6.2.3.7 *Recommendation*

Following exploration of the above a hybrid option is recommended primarily focussing on additional recruitment to the existing Planning Policy team and partial consultancy support for specialist evidence base studies, to provide targeted additional support for plan making and to help fill any resource gaps, where recruitment is not possible or warranted.

Overall, the recommended option is a combination of additional recruitment and partial consultancy support.

6.3 Proposed resource plan

A resourcing schedule and programme have been prepared on the basis that the Planning Policy team will undertake all Local Plan work but will rely on consultancy support to undertake most of the evidence base studies. This will enable the tight programme to be met and allow for specialist technical input into the Local Plan. However, the preparation of the evidence base studies by consultants will still require involvement from officers who will need to prepare briefs, appoint consultants, manage contracts, feed into and review consultant work. The team may draw on further targeted consultancy support to provide critical friend input, however, the need for this will only become apparent during the production of the Local Plan, with its costs met through the contingency allowance for the Local Plan.

The proposed resource plan is based on the assumption that the current vacancies in the Planning Policy team will be filled, and the team structure will be further expanded to cover the full workload that will be created by the Local Plan project. In addition, a further dedicated officer will be hired to deal with Section 106 agreements and the development / administration of a Community Infrastructure Levy. This latter role is considered essential to ensure senior members of the Planning Policy team have sufficient capacity to manage and deliver a new Local Plan.

The proposed revised Planning Policy team structure, taking into account the contracted hours of existing staff, would provide an overall capacity of 7.4 FTE, as follows:

- 1 x Planning Policy Manager (1 FTE)
- 2 x Principal Policy Planners, (1.8 FTE)
- 2 x Senior Policy Planners, (2 FTE)
- 1 x Policy Planner, (1 FTE)
- 1 x Section 106 Officer, (1 FTE)
- 1 x Project Support Officer, (0.6 FTE).

This structure includes two new roles compared to the existing agreed team structure – a Senior Policy Planner and a Section 106 Officer.

The resource plan was derived to enable the team to meet the new Local Plan 30-month programme. The use of MS Project allowed for the different Local Plan tasks to be mapped in terms of duration, work required, interdependency with other tasks and workload of each team member. Interactions between different Local Plan workstreams and the parallel impact studies (i.e. viability assessments, HRA and IIA) and consultation events have been built in to the programme.

In addition to the above team structure, the resource plan built in the following considerations:

- Requirement to deliver business-as-usual tasks, which were mapped and officer time allocated to each of them. This includes all the items identified in sections 3.5 and **Error! Reference source not found..**
- Allowances were made for holidays, governance processes and team management.
- Time for Local Plan project and programme management.
- Each officer has been allocated evidence base workstreams based on skills and seniority. This includes direct delivery and oversight of consultant led evidence base studies. Officers will be responsible for managing consultants and ensure the integration of the evidence base with the rest of the Local Plan work. Time has been built in for procurement and contract management associated with the delivery of evidence base studies.
- All officers will be working jointly on the development of spatial options, writing of the Local Plan policies and consultations.
- All officers will be working on several workstreams at once and will have to balance competing demand on their time. The Local Plan workload will be uneven across the programme and where resource

constraints were identified, business-as-usual tasks were de-prioritised and scheduled to ensure that the Local Plan work was given priority.

- The programme and task allocation within the resourcing plan were derived to ensure a manageable workload on a week-by-week basis for the team.
- Officers are generally resourced at 100%, or less, throughout the programme to build in the contingency required due to the length of the Local Plan programme and to take into account the risks presented section 6.6. For instance, transport and highways modelling is likely to create additional work for the team due to the uncertainty around the ownership of the transport modelling following LGR. For any officer, only a few weeks within the overall programme contain a workload over 100%, representing the need to meet a specific statutory deadline at some key points in the programme. This has been capped at a modest level of 110% during a few ‘sprint weeks’, equivalent to an extra half hour per day and is balanced out by periods where officers are at less than 100%.
- Time was factored for quality assurance processes within the team, ensuring that sufficient time and resource was allocated to review documents and address comments.

6.4 Programme

The main milestones of the proposed Local Plan programme are presented in Table 11. These are aligned with the programme requirements as set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (see Section 2.2.4), which prescribe the time periods between key milestones, for example, the duration between commencement notification and Gateway 1, and the duration of the Examination period.

Table 11 Local Plan programme milestones

Milestone	Time period
To be delivered by Maldon District Council	
Getting ready to start	July – September 2026
Preparatory evidence gathering and scoping	September 2026 – January 2027
Notification of the start of the Local Plan process	September 2026
Regulation 20: Scoping consultation	November – December 2026
Gateway 1 (advisory)	February 2027
Plan vision and strategy development	December 2026 – June 2027
Spatial options identified	June 2027
Regulation 23 consultation	August – September 2027
Preferred option development and drafting the plan	September 2027 – March 2028
Preferred option identified	November 2027
Gateway 2 (advisory)	November 2027
To be delivered by Mid Essex Council	
Regulation 27 consultation	May – July 2028
Process consultation and prepare plan for submission	July – September 2028
Gateway 3 (stop/go)	September - October 2028
Submission	October 2028
Examination	November 2028 – April 2029
Adoption	May 2029

To ensure best use of resources and to help meet the 30-month programme, the workstreams which were started as part of the Local Plan review have been mapped as continuing from the start of the programme on 1st July 2026 (Figure 6). Any new workstreams are assumed to start at the earliest on 21st September 2026, based on the assumption that any decision to proceed with the new Local Plan will be made at the September 2026 Full Council.

The programme takes into account the wider context into which the Local Plan will be developed. The new Local Plan system transitional arrangements prescribe that authorities with a Local Plan which is more than 5 years old, such as Maldon, will need to publish their notification of the start of the Local Plan process before 31 December 2026 and through Gateway 1 by 30 April 2027. The programme schedules these milestones for Maldon District respectively for September 2026 and February 2027, creating some contingency and ensuring the Local Plan complies with statutory deadlines.

Gateway 1 marks the official start of the 30-month period for the Local Plan preparation, however, it is a self-assessment and no Local Plan workstreams are contingent on Gateway 1 finishing to be able to start. As such, Gateway 1 has not been scheduled as early as possible to ensure that the statutory deadline for submission of the Local Plan for Examination can be comfortably met. Work will be progressing alongside the Gateway 1 process, and the programme intends for the Local Plan to be submitted 2 months before the statutory deadline.

Based on this programme, Maldon District Council will have produced a full draft Local Plan, passed through Gateway 2 and prepared for the Regulation 27 council by the time Mid Essex vesting day arrives. The latter task will need to be undertaken in close consultation with the shadow authority to ensure smooth transition and that the 30-month programme stays on track. The programme currently contains seven weeks of contingency, which provides a degree of flex to account for the uncertainty surrounding the LGR process and its potential impact on the Local Plan programme. This is in line with latest government guidance which requires Local Plans to be progressed, even where the Local Plan will not be progressed to adoption before the new authority is operational.³⁹

Regulation 27 consultation will not begin until the end of May 2028 to account for the impact of LGR and the pre-election period prior to the Greater Essex mayoral elections. The final steps of running the Regulation 27 consultation on the final draft plan, the submission, examination and adoption of the plan will be under the responsibility of the new Mid Essex authority. Based on experiences from authorities that have already transitioned into unitary authorities in recent years, it is assumed likely that the new unitary will continue the preparation of the Local Plan and will adopt it as the Local Plan document for the Maldon District geography, until such time that new Local Plan for the whole Mid Essex Geography can be prepared and adopted.

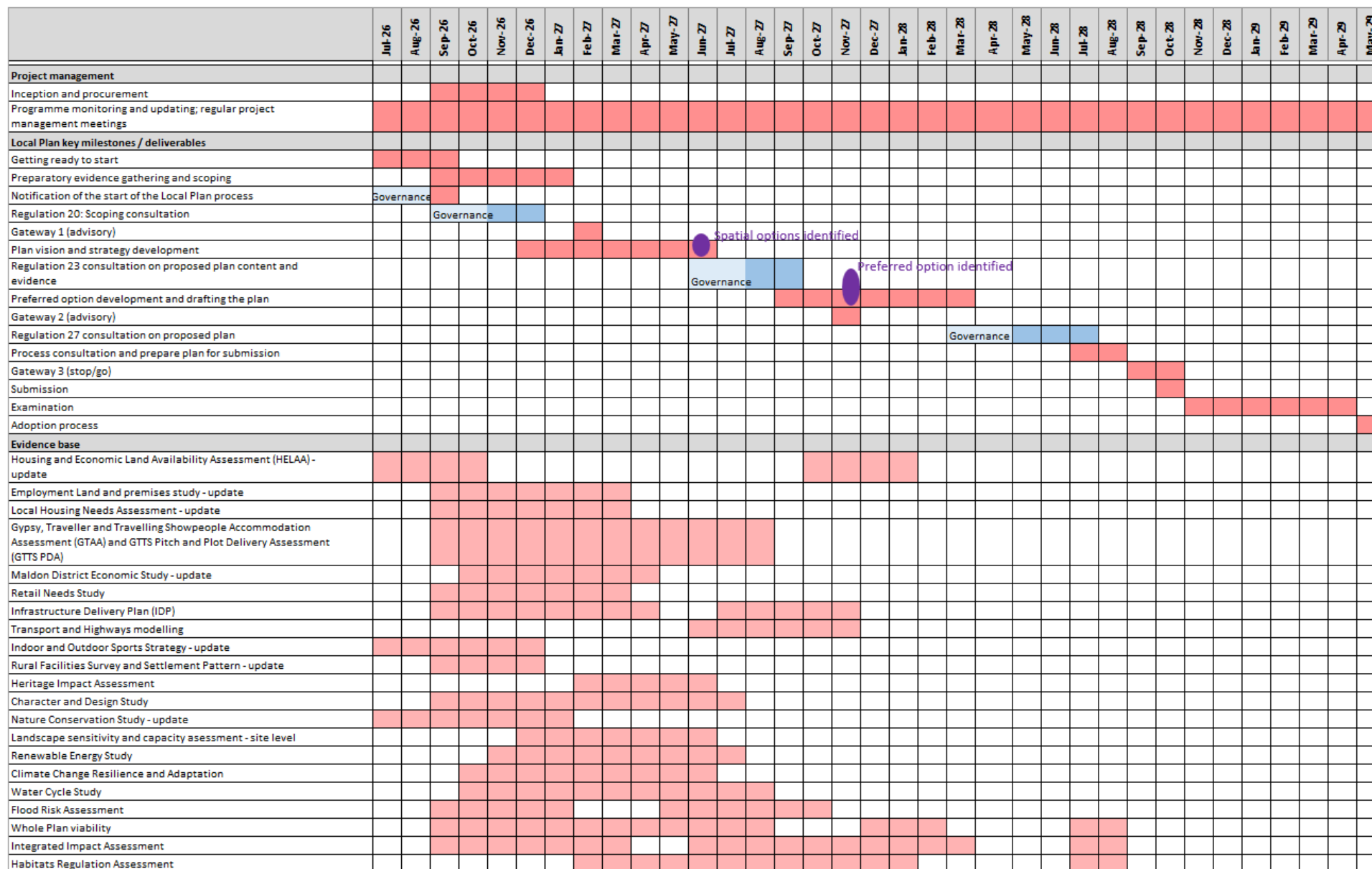
The programme is based on the following assumptions:

- The team will be composed of 7.4 FTE equivalent, with the structure presented in section 6.3.
- Preparatory work on new evidence base briefs starts on 1st July 2026.
- A decision to proceed with the preparation of the Local Plan and decision to issue a notification of the start of the Local Plan process will be taken jointly at full Council in September 2026.
- Each evidence base study report is issued as draft by consultants, reviewed once by officers and a final report issued following implementation of the comments. The same approach has been assumed for internal reports and evidence base, with one round of review from the Planning Policy Manager.
- There are three main decision-making points that will go through full governance: Regulation 20 scoping consultation, Regulation 23 consultation, and Regulation 27 consultation (which will be conducted by the new unitary authority).

³⁹ Plan-making and local government reorganisation guidance, July 2026, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making-and-local-government-reorganisation>

- Full governance for the Local Plan includes Senior Leadership Team meeting, an all-Member briefing, and Full Council. This full governance process is assumed to take 10 weeks.
- Two engagement periods with Councillors: the first one on the Local Plan vision and outcomes and the second one on the preferred option following the Regulation 23 consultation on proposed plan content and evidence base.

Figure 6 New local plan programme overview



- Updates to the monthly Planning Policy Working Group will report on the work in progress on the Local Plan at the time and are not linked to specific activities within the programme as the PPWG is not a decision-making body (see section 6.7 on governance).
- Local Plan tasks are prioritised over business-as-usual tasks that do not have a statutory deadline.
- Extraordinary Full Council sessions will be scheduled to suit the Local Plan programme.
- A consistent timeframe of five weeks for tendering the procurement of evidence base studies, not including brief writing and appointment processes.
- The Local Plan is accepted for Examination at Gateway 3 at the first attempt.
- There will be early discussions around governance arrangements with the shadow authority for the new Mid Essex Council, with legal advice sought to put in place appropriate flexibility for Submission within the Regulation 27 Full Council report. It is also assumed nearly action will be taken to secure any additional decisions needed to submit the plan for Examination following Regulation 27 within the new Mid Essex Council.
- The approval of the local plan for consultation will be one of the last decisions of Maldon District Council prior to the formation of the Mid Essex unitary authority.
- Transitional arrangements will be made in advance to ensure that officers can launch the Regulation 27 consultation once the new unitary is formed.
- The Examination has been scheduled to last six months as prescribed by the 30-month timetable. The examination timetable will be driven by the Planning Inspectorate, and it is not possible at this time to predict the timings of hearing sessions. A Main Modifications consultation or six-month stop period during the Examination to allow for further work to be undertaken have not been factored into the programme as it is unknown at this stage whether they will be necessary.

6.5 Budget and costs

The existing Planning Policy team budget covers staff time and any associated costs for business-as-usual tasks. The majority of the additional costs associated with the production of a new Local Plan will be related to the use of consultants for the evidence base/specialist advice. Other costs to be taken into consideration relate primarily to consultation processes (e.g. specialist software, printing, hiring of premises for consultation events, Comms support) and for the formal examination process (e.g. employing a programme officer, planning inspector fees, legal support, venue hire, specialist advice).

A full profile of the anticipated costs for Local Plan production for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30 has been developed. In developing the indicative costs, the following assumptions have been made:

- Zero based budget, as per the direction of the S151 Officer, i.e. it does not cover staff costs or business-as-usual activities covered by the existing planning policy budget.
- No allowance made for business-as-usual activities and associated costs, e.g. permanent staff salaries, existing service level agreements, costs accrued through meeting regulatory duties such as neighbourhood planning etc. This will be met through the existing planning policy budget.
- The budget covers the Local Plan preparation only. The additional staff identified within the resourcing plan will also need to be funded.
- A contingency of 10% built into the budget, reflecting of the risks associated with the projects, which are particularly high given the large number of uncertainties regarding the on the new plan making framework and National Development Management Policies. This will also cover anticipated additional costs including the need to update evidence base studies following the release of new data, or the need to undertake further work that only becomes apparent as Local Plan production progresses.

It should be noted that the costs are necessarily broad brush given the unknowns around, for example:

- Full extent of plan making reform. Depending on when, or if changes, are brought forward, this may result in additional work either revisiting tasks or undertaking new ones, and equally the introduction of NDMP may lead to some reduction in workload.
- Exact scope of evidence base studies.
- Number of sites that will need to be assessed.
- Scale of engagement required with stakeholders around key issues (e.g. highways) or cross border strategic issues.
- Future transport modelling capabilities.
- Number of responses that will be received and require processing for each consultation event.
- Need for legal advice during plan production depending on what issues arise.
- Length of the Examination, and therefore the associated costs of the Inspector(s), Programme Officer, venue etc.

Where possible data has been benchmarked using published sources (e.g. Government's contract finder, PINS published day rates) and / or experience elsewhere, commissioning and delivering evidence base studies and local plans.

On the basis of the outlined assumptions, and assumed resource profile, the total cost of a new Local Plan is estimated as £1.5m, including 10% contingency and excluding permanent staff costs (Table 12).

Table 12 Estimated Local Plan Costs

Item	Costs per financial year, £000s			
	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Local Plan	£545	£607	£142	£62
Contingency	£54	£61	£14	£6
Total	£600	£668	£156	£68

Note: may not sum due to rounding

6.6 Risks and mitigations

Local Plans are long projects which involve a wide range of stakeholders. This creates a range of risks which may affect the quality, cost or programme of the Local Plan. This report is accompanied by a risk register for the Local Plan project. The risk register currently contains 23 unmitigated risks, their unmitigated risk score and the recommended associated mitigation measures and mitigated score if the mitigations are put in place. The main risks identified are:

- The 30-month timetable is not met due to lengthy governance processes or decisions not being made in a timely fashion. The statutory 30-month timetable only allocates 23 months for LPAs to produce their local plan, including the need to engage stakeholders and communities through two statutory consultations within those 23 months. This creates significant time pressure to deliver the Local Plan and a need for efficient governance processes. An additional risk will be ensuring sufficient governance and decision-making once the new Mid Essex Unitary Authority is in place to ensure the Local Plan can continue to be progressed through to submission.
- Revisions to policy and guidance during preparation of the Local Plan bring significant changes and create additional work on the Local Plan. For example, a requirement to refresh evidence base studies or redraft policies. Competing demands for the planning policy resources, including Local Government Reorganisation, Spatial Development Strategy or other workstreams, which could divert resources away from the Local Plan and create potential programme slippage.
- The need for all LPAs in England to update their Local Plan could lead to difficulties in recruiting new policy planners and to secure the right type of consultancy input due to competing demand from other LPAs.

- It is not possible to forecast the number of consultation responses which are likely to be received as part of the three statutory consultations. Should the number of consultation responses be high, this would require a longer period to process responses, creating potential for programme slippage.
- Transport modelling is currently owned by Essex County Council, an entity which will cease to exist in May 2028, while plan making will still be in progress. The lack of clarity over the ownership of the transport model creates uncertainty for the plan, programme and budget.

The risk register presents mitigation measures to reduce the probability and impact of those risks. The risk register is intended to be a live document which will require updating throughout the lifecycle of the project.

6.7 Governance

Governance of plan making should be clear from the start of the project to ensure there is clarity about who will take key decisions, when and how. The existing governance arrangements are set out in section 3.5.

The new Local Plan system and constrained timetable mean that there is limited scope for flexibility in Local Plan programmes and that business-as-usual governance cannot remain the same if the 30-month timetable is to be met and for the draft plan to reach an advanced draft stage prior to Local Government Reorganisation.

It will be important to strike the right balance between providing sufficient Member and senior officer engagement and oversight, whilst also ensuring governance processes can enable the Local Plan to progress at pace to meet the timetable.

Under the constitution there is currently no delegation of plan making decisions to committees nor delegation of plan making decisions to the Director of Place, Planning & Growth. The current approach to governance involves the following steps:



Currently Local Plan matters that will require a decision as well as updates on the Local Plan and associated evidence go to the Planning Policy Working Group (a Member advisory group), before going to Strategy and Resources Committee (who do not make formal decisions on the Local Plan) then going to Full Council. The internal process before going to Full Council also involves briefings with the Senior Leadership Team and All Member briefings as appropriate which need to be factored in.

The timescales and officer resources required to meet the current arrangements will need to be streamlined to meet a 30-month timetable under the new system due to the lead in times and sequencing. In order to help achieve the 30-month programme as set out above, it is recommended that:

- Formal decision making will be the sole preserve of the Full Council and will be focused on three main points in the process – approving the early scoping consultation (Regulation 20), the consultation on an early draft (Regulation 23) and consultation on a final draft plan (Regulation 27), with the decision on the final draft plan to also include the decision to submit the Local Plan (assuming there are major no changes) or providing flexibility for delegation to do this under the new Unitary Authority should this be required.
- Formal decision making will go straight to Full Council and will no longer go via the Strategy and Resources Committee. Prior to Full Council, Member briefings can be undertaken via the PPWG and ad-hoc All Member briefings, as well as meetings with the Senior Leadership Team as required.

- Regular briefings on progress, (including programme, budget and consultations) will be provided to PPWG via the normal cycle of meetings. Workshops with Members have been assumed in the development of the Local Plan vision and plan content given the importance of these stages.
- Given the tight timescales for evidence base production with over 20 pieces of evidence being updated or produced in the first 12 months of the programme there will need to be a streamlined approach for briefing Members on this via the PPWG. There will not be time for significant delays in producing evidence once the 30-month timetable has commenced. Members can be updated on and note evidence as it is produced – but there will not be time for individual pieces of evidence to be approved.
- The PPWG provides a valuable role in briefing and engaging Members of different political parties and advising the production of the Local Plan. It will continue to play an important role in shaping the Local Plan and helping with wider member engagement to reduce governance risks at key decision points. The PPWG currently takes a significant amount of officer time each month. Given the 30-month timeframe and pace required, it is recommended that current arrangements for the PPWG are reviewed, splitting out where information is being provided for the PPWG to note, and where more collaborative discussions are needed on key strategic issues in advance of key governance milestones. This can be supported by clear, timed agendas and a forward plan of items which identify what is being brought to the PPWG and for what purpose. This can be supplemented by a regular reporting framework with a one-page summary provided each month of progress on the Local Plan which can be reviewed at each meeting.

It will be important that the right governance arrangements are put in place to support expedient decision-making on the Local Plan process as early as possible.

7. Next steps

This Project Initiation Document presents a recommended approach for the production of a new Local Plan for Maldon District Council. The following steps are required to be made as soon as possible to ensure that Local Plan preparation is underway and the programme can be met.

A **decision** should be reached on whether to proceed with a new Local Plan based on the considerations presented in this report. Should the Council decide to proceed with the production of a Local Plan, the following **actions** should be taken as priorities:

- Recruitment of 2 x senior planners, 1 x policy planners and a S106 officer;
- Start procuring key evidence base as identified in the programme;
- Agree the Local Plan budget;
- Update and finalise governance arrangements to support the new Local Plan process
- Complete the Planning Advisory Service Project Initiation Document template⁴⁰.
- Publish a Local Plan timetable (see section 7.2);
- Publish a notice of intention to commence Local Plan preparation (see section 7.3); and
- Prepare material for Regulation 20 scoping consultation.

7.1 Key Early Tasks

Further detail to support the key early tasks of producing a Local Plan timetable, publishing a notice to commence and producing a PID are set out below.

7.1.1 Publishing a Local Plan timetable

The new Local Plan timetable should include:

- the matters the plan will deal with
- the geographical area that the plan will cover
- any supplementary plans that will be prepared (including the subject matter, geographical area and sites they relate to)
- dates for the following milestones:
 - Notice of intention to commence
 - Regulation 20 scoping consultation
 - Gateway 1
 - Regulation 23 consultation on proposed plan content and evidence
 - Gateway 2
 - Regulation 2 consultation on the proposed plan
 - Gateway 3
 - Submission
 - Adoption

The plan timetable should also be completed using the template for the approved data standard⁴¹. The timetable should be published no later than the day on which the ‘notice to commence’ is published. A

⁴⁰ [Local Plan Project Initiation Document \(PID\) Template and Guidance | Local Government Association](#)

⁴¹ [Plan and plan timetable template - GOV.UK](#)

further statement is required to bring the timetable into effect. This should appear alongside the timetable on the LPA's website. Once the timetable is published, the LPA must comply with it and update it as prescribed by legislation.

7.1.2 Publish a 'notice to commence'

Summary of the recommendation contained in the programme on the official commencement of the Local Plan production.

The Council will need to publish a notice of intention to commence local preparation⁴². The notice will need to include:

- the name of the local planning authority who have prepared the notice,
- the geographical area to which the Local Plan is to relate,
- the title, if any, by which the local planning authority will refer to the Local Plan,
- details of where the local planning authority's Local Plan timetable is published, and
- the date on which the notice is made available.

The notice needs to be 'made available' in accordance with section 88 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

7.1.3 Producing and updating a PID

A Project Initiation Document should be prepared by the Council using the Planning Advisory Service Template⁴³, drawing on the detail in this document as required. The Project Initiation Document is a live document which should be kept up to date. It is recommended that each update should be accompanied by a version log to ensure clarity over the publication date and context of each update.

⁴² Regulation 19 of the 'The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/186/regulation/19/made>.

⁴³ [Local Plan Project Initiation Document \(PID\) Template and Guidance | Local Government Association](#)

Date updated: 14/07/2026

Theme	Task	Budget for consultants	Estimated Total Cost	Forecast Spend 26/27	Forecast Spend 27/28	Forecast Spend 28/29	Forecast Spend 29/30	Notes
Local Plan management	Maldon District Council (MDC)	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as internal activity; assumed to be undertaken by existing team, using available capacity. Covers Local plan project management and coordination, quality review of all evidence base studies and contributions to technical inputs.
Plan initiation procedural requirements	Local Plan Timetable	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Will require review and updated following each Gateway check (or every six months if not progressing at pace)
	Gateway 1 Formal Project Initiation Document	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Will build on informal Project Initiation Document (PID) prepared for this commission.
Housing and employment evidence	Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC produced study
	Local Housing Needs Assessment	Yes	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£0	£0	Partial update to ensure up to date at point of submission and to reflect any changes to the Standard Method
	Employment Land and Premises Study	Yes	£15,000	£15,000	£0	£0	£0	Recently completed - partial update to ensure current at point of submission.
	Gypsy, Traveller & Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment Update (GTAA)	Yes	£20,000	£20,000	£0	£0	£0	Partial update to reflect new PPTS definition
	Gypsy Traveller & Travelling Showpeople Pitch Delivery Assessment (PDA)	Yes	£20,000	£0	£20,000	£0	£0	Cost may vary depending on the number of sites that need to be assessed.
	Retail study	Yes	£35,000	£35,000	£0	£0	£0	New study
	Maldon District Economy Study	Yes	£15,000	£10,000	£5,000	£0	£0	Partial update to reflect recent economic data
	Economic Viability assessment	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Already in progress
Infrastructure evidence	Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Baseline & Schedule) (IDP)	Yes	£110,000	£55,000	£55,000	£0	£0	New study
	Transport and Highways baseline & modelling	No	£250,000	£100,000	£150,000	£0	£0	Modelling and initial interpretation of modelling only. High likelihood of additional transport work e.g. in relation to need for further county model runs, or in response to particular identified transport issues, or need for extensive engagement with National Highways. This would need to be covered by the contingency budget.
	Renewable energy study	Yes	£35,000	£15,000	£20,000	£0	£0	New study
	Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation	Yes	£35,000	£15,000	£20,000	£0	£0	Optional new study
	Indoor and Outdoor Sports Strategy	Yes	£5,000	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	Minor amends only - study already in progress
Built environment evidence	Rural Facilities Survey and Settlement Pattern	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC produced study
	Character and Design	Yes	£100,000	£50,000	£50,000	£0	£0	New study
	Heritage Impact Assessment (site level & policies)	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs, as MDC produced study
Environment	Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (site level)	Yes	£60,000	£0	£60,000	£0	£0	Assumes up to 20 sites are assessed.
	Nature Conservation Study	Yes	£5,000	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	
	Ecological Assessment (site level)	Yes	£55,000	£0	£55,000	£0	£0	Assumes up to 20 sites are assessed.
	Water Cycle Study	No	£40,000	£40,000	£0	£0	£0	New study
	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1	Yes	£10,000	£10,000	£0	£0	£0	Partial update to reflect EA mapping changes which occurred after the SFRA publication
	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 2	Yes	£60,000	£30,000	£30,000	£0	£0	Assumes up to 40 sites.
Whole plan assessments	Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), incorporating Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment & Health Impact Assessment	Yes	£120,000	£60,000	£60,000	£0	£0	New study
	Whole Plan Viability Assessment	Yes	£80,000	£40,000	£40,000	£0	£0	New study including updated to economic viability assessment
Plan production	Vision development	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Development of spatial options and preferred growth strategy	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Site Selection	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Housing Delivery Statement	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Strategic site work - could include masterplanning, infrastructure planning, viability, delivery models etc.	Yes	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Final costs will depend on number and scale of strategic site allocations. Suggest costs met through contingency. Costs may also be met by developers for strategic sites.
	Plan drafting	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Plan monitoring framework	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Statement of Compliance	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Topic papers	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Collate and finalise documents for submission	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work

Theme	Task	Budget for consultants	Estimated Total Cost	Forecast Spend 26/27	Forecast Spend 27/28	Forecast Spend 28/29	Forecast Spend 29/30	Notes
	Policies Map	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
Consultation	Regulation 20 Consultation: Desktop publishing, printing, publicity, in-person events, venues	No	£15,000	£15,000	£0	£0	£0	Externals costs related to venue hire and printing. Assume new consultation software allows desktop publishing.
	Regulation Consultation: analysis, responses and reporting	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	On-going engagement with statutory consultees, developers, community groups etc.	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Regulation Consultation 23: Desktop publishing, printing, publicity	No	£15,000	£0	£15,000	£0	£0	Externals costs related to venue hire and printing. Assume new consultation software allows desktop publishing.
	Regulation Consultation 23: analysis, responses and reporting	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Consultation 27: Desktop publishing, printing, publicity	No	£15,000	£0	£0	£15,000	£0	Externals costs related to venue hire and printing. Assume new consultation software allows desktop publishing.
	Consultation 27: analysis, responses and reporting	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work using the newly procured consultation software
	Consultation Statement	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Consultation and engagement software	Yes	£60,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	
Flexible Alignment Test	Meetings with partners	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Required evidence for test	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
	Statements of Common Ground	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work
Gateway checks	Gateway 1	No	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work; assumed to be self assessment only
	Gateway 2	No	£2,000	£0	£2,000	£0	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work; assumed 2 days of one inspector @£1,000 per day
	Gateway 3	No	£2,000	£0	£0	£2,000	£0	Only staff costs as MDC officers will carry out this work; assumed 2 days of one inspector @£1,000 per day
Examination	Counsel advice	Yes	£50,000	£0	£10,000	£30,000	£10,000	Assumes a limited amount of counsel advice sought during plan production period; and more extensive support required during Examination.
	Printing examination library	No	£5,000	£0	£0	£5,000	£0	
	Planning Inspectors (2no.)	Yes	£72,000	£0	£0	£50,000	£22,000	Planning Inspectorate (PINS) guidance suggests 9-12 sitting days. Have assumed 12 days. Day rate for inspectors is £1000 (sitting and reporting days). Most plans now have two Inspectors. Estimate 12 sitting days, 24 reporting days - total 36 days.
	Programme Officer (PO)	Yes	£40,000	£0	£0	£25,000	£15,000	Assumes hourly rate of up to £40; 20 hours per week over 12 months PO needs to be in place at Submission. Workload will be split from Submission through to Examination but with longer hours required towards/during Examination hence split skewed towards later years.
Local Plan costs	Local Plan costs		£1,356,000	£545,000	£607,000	£142,000	£62,000	Contingency to cover additional work on evidence, including potential refresh. 10% assumed
	Contingency		£135,600	£54,500	£60,700	£14,200	£6,200	
	Local Plan + contingency		£1,491,600	£599,500	£667,700	£156,200	£68,200	

Maldon Local Plan Risk Register
Last updated: 14/07/2026

Number	Title	Risk Description	Impact type (Delay, Cost, Quality)	Unmitigated Probability	Unmitigated Impact	Unmitigated Risk Score	Mitigation	Mitigated Probability	Mitigated Impact	Mitigated Risk Score
1	Publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is delayed	The final NPPF is delayed and not published until the local plan is well underway. A new version of the NPPF is due to be published this summer (2026) by central government, following consultation on a draft proposal in winter 2025-26. To be deemed sound, the Local Plan must be consistent with national policy. If national policy changes during Local Plan preparation, revisions may need to be made, potentially delaying the programme.	Delay	3	3	9	Engage with the relevant authorities to get early insights into the NPPF updates. This can help in anticipating changes and preparing for them in advance. Identify early key issues likely to come forward in the new NPPF based on the consultation proposal and future-proof the plan as much as possible.	3	2	6
2	Content in the new National Planning Policy Framework is not as expected.	The content of the NPPF is not as expected/unclear and leads to a need for significant re-work. If unexpected changes are required, there will be a delay to the programme, as well as unexpected costs in remediating the issue. The content of the new NPPF does not cover all local issues and additional work is required to develop locally specific development management policies.	Delay; Cost	2	4	8	By the end of summer 2026, assess the likelihood of needing significant rewrite and factor in contingency in the programme. Regularly review and update the plan to align with any new announcements or changes in the system.	2	3	6
3	Changes to policy and guidance during preparation of Local Plan	Government keeps publishing further local plan policy or guidance well into the preparation of the Local Plan which has costs and programme impact due to rework required.	All	4	3	12	Any new update in guidance will have to be reviewed to ensure that it does not impact the quality of the evidence base.	4	2	8
4	Local Government Reorganisation leads to abortive work	The Local Plan does not reach an advanced enough state by April 2028 and the work completed is not taken forward by the new Mid-Essex Authority.	Delay; Cost	3	3	9	Engagement with the other Mid-Essex Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) throughout the process to ensure wider political buy-in.	3	2	6
5	Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) diverts resource	Officers are diverted from Local Plan due to the need to work on projects related to Local Government Reorganisation.	Delay; Cost	4	3	12	Senior leadership to monitor allocation of LGR tasks closely and prior to diverting any Local Plan resource, ensure that an alternative resource to backfill the Local Plan requirement is secured first.	2	2	4
6	Publication of the new Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) leads to re-work	The Local Plan will need to be in conformity with an as yet unformed Combined Authority's Spatial Development Strategy, of which little is known about its contents or how and when it will be produced. If published late in the Local Plan making process, it may lead to significant re-work, particularly if the SDS apportions a Local Housing Need for Maldon which differs from the current Local Housing Need as calculated through the Standard Method.	Delay; Cost	2	5	10	The preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy will have to be done jointly with the unitary authorities which it will cover and who will have an opportunity to shape the SDS.	2	4	8
7	Devolution	There is a risk that Maldon officers are asked to be involved in the preparation of the new Spatial Development Strategy for the new Combined Authority, which would divert them from work on the Local Plan.	Delay	2	5	10	Additional resources would have to be considered to ensure that an SDS workstream would not impact work on the Local Plan. This risk is unlikely to be restricted to Maldon and a coordinated approach and sharing of resources with neighbouring authorities should be considered.	2	4	8
8	The 30-month local plan timetable is not met due to lengthy governance processes which do not provide the flexibility required to make decisions at the right time	The 30-month local plan timetable is not met due to the length of the governance processes internally to the Council, which create delays in decision-making and delays to the overall Local Plan programme.	All	4	5	20	The programme was built with sufficient leading time to Full Council meetings at the required decision-making points. Any further governance requirements would delay the local plan programme. New proposed Governance arrangements should help create certainty. Regular updates to the Local Plan programme will help plan any extraordinary Council sessions.	3	5	15
9	Full Council cycle does not fit with the requirements of the Local Plan programme and extraordinary meetings cannot be arranged.	The programme was based on the assumption that extraordinary meetings would be scheduled for Full Council to enable timely decision-making for the local plan. If extraordinary Full Council meetings cannot be scheduled, this will delay the local plan programme.	Delay	4	4	16	Proactive local plan management and programme updates should inform continuous dialogue with the Council's democratic services to ensure that extraordinary Full council sessions can be scheduled in good time.	2	3	6

Number	Title	Risk Description	Impact type (Delay, Cost, Quality)	Unmitigated Probability	Unmitigated Impact	Unmitigated Risk Score	Mitigation	Mitigated Probability	Mitigated Impact	Mitigated Risk Score
10	Inability to recruit suitable candidates into planning policy team	The market for planning policy planners is currently difficult and recruitment for the two additional resources required in the team to deliver the local plan is likely to be challenging.	Delay, cost	4	4	16	In the short term, contractors and consultants can be utilised to balance resourcing of the project to ensure that the evidence base studies are started in time to meet the programme.	4	2	8
11	Officers focusing on other priorities	The Local Plan programme proposed is ambitious and is based on officers assuming responsibility for a set list of business-as-usual tasks. Any changes to this resourcing e.g. to deal with a new service tasks or due to an increase in BAU work (e.g. neighbourhood plans) would risk delays to the overall Local Plan programme. This is especially relevant in the current context of the Council, where a lack of SYHLS is likely to lead to an increase in the number of applications, appeals and large sites coming forward.	Delay	4	4	16	Ensure buy-in into the Local Plan at the corporate level to ensure that priorities are clearly understood and that agreement to outsource ad-hoc tasks is in place. Recruitment of a s106 officer should be undertaken as soon as possible to free up the required resources within the planning policy team.	3	2	6
12	Requisite technical expertise is not available in the market at the right time	Government's plan making reforms and emphasis on all LPAs having a plan in place asap means there is increased demand for consultancy services. This may lead to delays in the production of evidence base studies or Local Plan deliverables if the requisite expertise cannot be sourced at the relevant time.	Delay	3	4	12	Start of the selected key evidence base as soon as possible. Appoint legal counsel on a call-off basis so advice can be quickly sought across the lifetime of Local Plan production	2	2	4
13	Evidence base studies or Local Plan deliverables take longer to complete than anticipated or there are unforeseen delays	Delays to the delivery of evidence base studies or Local Plan deliverables delay overall Local Plan programme.	Delay	3	4	12	A significant number of the evidence base studies have already been commissioned and are either in progress or completed. Effective programme management to constantly monitor project progress and arrange additional support where necessary.	2	3	6
14	Not enough sites submitted through Call for Sites to meet Local Housing Need (LHN)	If an insufficient number of sites are submitted, this will undermined the Local Plan's ability to demonstrate a deliverable and developable land supply to meet its Local Housing Need and risk the Local Plan not being deemed sound.	Quality; Delay	3	3	9	Proactively engage with landowners, developers, and agents to encourage site submissions as well as reopening/extending the Call for Sites if needed. Consider engagement with neighbouring authorities to see whether they could accommodate some of the need.	2	3	6
15	Unclear ownership of transport modelling	Lack of clarity over the ownership of the County Transport Model following local government reorganisation (LGR) and the end of Essex County Council (ECC) as an entity increases uncertainty in the plan and programme. Even if the Model is transferred to the successor body, reorganisation of teams may lead to loss of skills and / or knowledge and may also lead to a delay in service delivery whilst a new team beds into new roles.	Delay, Cost	5	4	20	Establish interim agreements or memoranda of understanding to secure access to existing modelling tools and data. Document all assumptions and limitations in the evidence base to ensure transparency during examination.	4	4	16
16	High response rates to public consultations	Longer period required to consider and process response that might impact overall Local Plan programme.	Delay, Cost	2	4	8	Purchase of consultation software will offer efficiency gains that will help offset high response rates. Tailor consultation material to ensure that respondents clearly understand the purpose of the Local Plan. Combine this with minimising the number of open questions to reduce the volume of responses that need to be analysed. Encourage respondents to make digital submissions via consultation software to reduce processing time.	2	3	6
17	Consultation and engagement identify a need for further work, including new evidence base studies	Delay to overall Local Plan programme and potential additional costs	Delay, cost	3	3	9	Local Plan budget includes contingency fund to account for potential extra work .	3	2	6
18	Key stakeholders lack capacity to respond within required timeframe	Delay to overall Local Plan programme depending on how essential a response is considered to Local Plan drafting.		3	4	12	As part of the preparation of the Regulation 20 scoping consultation, engage with key stakeholders to ensure they are clear on timescales and required inputs. Ensure that data and other inputs required by stakeholders is provided in a timely fashion, so that the Council does not hold up stakeholder's work.	2	4	8

Number	Title	Risk Description	Impact type (Delay, Cost, Quality)	Unmitigated Probability	Unmitigated Impact	Unmitigated Risk Score	Mitigation	Mitigated Probability	Mitigated Impact	Mitigated Risk Score
19	Lack of buy-in from and participation by community and wider stakeholders	There is a risk that the plan is found unsound at examination if stakeholder input is not conducted effectively. More broadly, if adopted without sufficient buy-in, the Local Plan will not adequately reflect the people and residents of Maldon.	Quality	2	4	8	The programme allows for community and stakeholder engagement in the early phase of the plan making process, ensuring a sense of ownership of the new plan. The Project Initiation Document will include a community engagement strategy to maximise participation. Work with a consultancy specialised in youth engagement will minimise risks for this group.	1	3	3
20	Financial resources are insufficient	Unable to complete Local Plan or additional resource has to be identified from alternative source	Delay; Cost	2	4	8	Detailed consideration given to the budget requirements for the Local Plan. Only those workstreams considered essential have been included within the resource plan and budget. A contingency fund has been included within the budget to offset unknowns, including the need for further site level evidence base studies. Regular review of Local Plan budget by Strategic and Resources Committee to ensure that sufficient budget remains. Early proactive engagement with the new unitary authority to ensure the local plan budget remains ringfenced to fund the local plan examination.	1	3	3
21	Programme slippage	Due to a very ambitious programme to submit the plan by October 2028, limited contingency was built into the programme. Delays to any part of the programme will have a knock on effect and risk creating programme slippage. This will in turn cause disruption to the quality and or cost of later parts of the programme. If delays push the programme too far back, it will risk further impacts on meeting the 30-month local plan programme, potentially jeopardising submission of a sound plan.	All	4	5	20	A programme has been prepared to reflect the interdependencies of different workstreams, with contingency where possible. The Council will also engage early and proactively with local stakeholders, and on other parts of the programme where external input is required and where risk of programme delays is greatest.	3	4	12
22	Local Plan not deemed sound	There is a risk that following the final submission of the plan the Local Plan is deemed unsound at Examination.	Delay; Cost	2	5	10	The Local Plan programme seeks to ensure that the right processes are in place to make the plan sound. A review of this risk and associated mitigation will be undertaken following the first two gateway reviews to ensure the right level of mitigation is put in place. Gateway checks, which form part of the new Local Plan making system, should help identify potential soundness issues, allowing them to be addressed prior to Examination.	1	4	4
23	Legal fees	The costs of counsel advice at Examination will be highly dependent on the type of issues which arise through the Local Plan preparation and cannot be very accurately forecasted at this stage. It is possible that legal costs may be higher than currently forecasted.	Cost	4	2	8	Some legal advice has been forecasted in the programme and this will be kept under review as the plan preparation progresses and the main issues are identified, ensuring the final legal costs can be updated as accurately as possible as early as possible.	2	2	4

		Risk Score					
Impact	5	5	10	15	20	25	
	4	4	8	12	16	20	
	3	3	6	9	12	15	
	2	2	4	6	8	10	
	1	1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	Likelihood

Key		
1	3	Low risk
4	6	Moderate risk
8	12	High risk
15	25	Extremely high risk



MALDON

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Local Plan for Maldon District Project Initiation Document

July 2026

Version 1

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1. Overview

1.1. Project details

Project Title	Maldon District Local Plan
Project Initiation Document Version	1
Project Initiation Document Date of Publication	Draft – July 2026

1.2 Purpose of this Project Initiation Document

- 1.2.1 This Project Initiation Document (PID) sets out the management framework and approach to delivering a new Local Plan for Maldon District. It provides clarity on the Plan's scope, governance arrangements, resources and timelines.
- 1.2.2 The PID is designed as a reference tool for the project team, Members and stakeholders, which supports effective decision-making and ensuring everyone involved understands their roles and responsibilities throughout the plan-making process.
- 1.2.3 This PID has been prepared utilising the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) template and the information within this PID has been informed by work undertaken by consultants, Arup, who were commissioned by Maldon District Council (MDC) to assist with project and resourcing planning a new Local Plan.

2. Plan Scope

2.1 Role of the Local Plan

- 2.1.1 Our Local Plan is important in providing the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the long-term sustainable development of Maldon District.
- 2.1.2 As a Local Planning Authority (LPA) covering Maldon District, we have a statutory duty to prepare and adopt a Local Plan. Our Local Plan establishes how land within our area will be used and developed, setting out priorities for housing, employment, infrastructure, design and the environment. In planning for new homes, the government's Standard Method provides the initial benchmark for determining local housing need. Importantly, our policies must contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, avoid inconsistency with national development management policies and align generally with any operative Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) relevant to our area. Once adopted, our Local Plan will serve as the principal basis for making planning decisions, directly shaping the future growth, development, and sustainability of our communities.

2.2 Current Local Plan

- 2.2.1 The [Maldon District Local Development Plan](#) 2014-2029 (MDLDP) was approved in 2017 by the Secretary of State. The approved MDLDP forms the development plan for the Maldon District, alongside 'made' Neighbourhood Plans, the Essex Minerals Local Plan and the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan. It is the principal basis for making planning decisions and shaping future growth within our district.
- 2.2.2 A review of the MDLDP began in 2021. Significant progress has been made since then, including public consultation, updating the evidence base and undertaking a Call for Sites exercise.
- 2.2.3 However, in December 2024 the Government published a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated sections of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and other updates. This introduced a new way to calculate local housing need. The housing requirement for Maldon district nearly doubled, this required a fundamental review of the sites which could be allocated in a new local plan. The latest housing need figure for the Maldon district is a requirement of 586 homes per annum.

- 2.2.4 In October 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) introduced a new approach to plan-making; the secondary legislation to implement this was published in March 2026¹.
- 2.2.5 As part of the national reforms to the plan-making system, the Government set a limited transition period for Local Plans being prepared under the old/legacy system, with a deadline for submitting the plan for examination by 31 December 2026. However, we have not been able to meet the transitional arrangements to submit before December 2026 in the legacy system due to the need to consider additional new housing sites.
- 2.2.6 To inform the decision to progress a new Local Plan, consultants, Arup, were commissioned in March 2026 to produce a PID, Project and Resourcing Plan, Risk Register and Budget. The final documents were received in July 2026 and have been used to inform this PID.
- 2.2.7 As such, MDC is commencing preparation of a new Local Plan for Maldon District under the new plan-making system.

2.3 Local Government Reorganisation

- 2.3.1 Under Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), Essex will be reorganised on 1st April 2028, with all 15 Councils across Greater Essex ceasing to exist and replaced by 5 new Unitary Councils. Maldon District will form part of Mid-Essex Council, along with the areas of Brentwood Borough and Chelmsford City.
- 2.3.2 Government have confirmed that all local authorities should get up-to-date local plans in place as soon as possible and that LGR is not a reason to delay plan-making, even if an authority is unable to progress the plan to adoption before the new unitary is operational².
- 2.3.3 Government have also confirmed their intention that adopted plans can remain in force for the part of the new unitary area to which they relate until they are superseded by a new unitary-wide plan. Government are intending to publish transitional arrangements to address plan-making complexities arising as part of LGR.

2.4 Devolution

- 2.4.1 The Government has confirmed that Greater Essex will proceed with devolution and the establishment of a Combined County Authority, including a mayoral election in 2028.

¹ The Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2026/186/contents/made>

² [Plan-making and local government reorganisation - GOV.UK](#)

- 2.4.2 Essex County Council and the two Unitary Councils (Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock) have commenced preparatory work on a Greater Essex Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). MDC will continue to engage in relation to the SDS to ensure the new Local Plan can respond to and inform the evolving strategic and political landscape across Greater Essex.

2.5 Relationship to other Strategies and Documents

- 2.5.1 The new Local Plan for Maldon District will positively respond to and support the delivery of a range of wider Council and regional strategies and documents, including:

- Maldon District Corporate Plan 2025-2028
- Maldon District Council Our Homes, Our Future – Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2028
- Maldon District Future Transport Strategy 2024
- Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Water Strategy for Essex 2024
- Essex Local Cycling and Walking Action Plan
- North Essex Economic Strategy and Action Plan
- Essex County Council Sector Development Strategy
- Greater Essex Economic and Place Framework (in progress)
- Maldon District Council Housing Strategy (in progress)

3 Plan Timeline

3.1 Plan Stage

3.1.1 The key stages in the preparation of the Local Plan and progress at time of publication are as follows:

- **Before notice to commence plan-making**
- Notice of intention to commence plan-making
- Scoping Consultation – content and evidence
- Gateway 1 – self assessment
- Consultation on proposed plan contents and evidence
- Gateway 2 – independent review
- Consultation – proposed Local Plan
- Gateway 3 – stop or go
- Examination to confirm soundness
- Adoption

3.1.2 Maldon District Council have produced a plan-making timetable detailing the intended programme for the preparation and adoption of the new Local Plan for Maldon District.

3.1.3 This timetable is available on the Council website via: *[insert link when available]*

3.2 Local Plan Timeline Summary and Action Log

3.2.1 The intended programme for the preparation of the new Local Plan for Maldon District, including timescales for key milestones is provided within the plan-making timetable outlined above. A summary of this intended programme is provided below along with a key action log. A full project and resourcing plan is managed and maintained by the Planning Policy team.

Ref	Milestone	Actions	Timescale	Status
<i>To be delivered by Maldon District Council</i>				
1	Getting ready to start	Review work completed to date, produce a project and resourcing plan and PID. Initial engagement with relevant internal and external stakeholders.	July-Sept 26	Complete
2	Preparatory evidence gathering and scoping	Preparing and commissioning key evidence, further developing engagement strategy	Sept 26-Jan 27	To do
3	Notification of the start of the LP process	Publish notice to commence plan-making	Sept 26	To do
4	Regulation 20: scoping consultation*	Invite representations on what the contents of the Local Plan should be and how further engagement should be carried out (4 weeks)	Nov 26-Dec 26	To do
5	Gateway 1 – self assessment summary	Set out our readiness to begin plan preparation, this marks the start of the 30-month process	Feb 27	To do
6	Plan vision and strategy development		Dec 26-June 27	To do
7	Spatial options identified		June 27	To do
8	Regulation 23 consultation*	Consult on the plan content and evidence including the draft vision (6 weeks)	Aug 27-Sept 27	To do
9	Preferred option development and drafting the plan		Sept 27-March 28	To do
10	Preferred option identified		Nov 27	To do
11	Gateway 2 – advice	Assessor provides observations and advice on progress towards preparing a sound plan, Gateway 3 prescribed requirements and any further work required	Nov 27	To do
<i>To be delivered by Mid Essex Council</i>				
12	Regulation 27 consultation*	Consult on the proposed Local Plan (8 weeks)	May 28-July 28	To do
13	Process consultation and prepare		July 28-Sept 28	To do

Ref	Milestone	Actions	Timescale	Status
	plan for submission			
14	Gateway 3 – stop/go	Inspector assesses whether the prescribed requirements of the proposed local plan are met, and that the authority is ready to proceed to examination	Sept 28-Oct 28	To do
15	Submission	Submit the Local Plan	Oct 28	To do
16	Examination	Examination of the Local Plan	Nov 28-April 29	To do
17	Adoption	Adopt the Local Plan	May 29	To do

*These are statutory consultations. It is at these stages that the decisions to consult will be formally made by Members at Full Council.

4 Governance and Decision-Making

4.1 Summary of Governance

4.1.1 *The decision to begin a new Local Plan was made at Council on 10th September 2026.*

4.1.2 Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG) is a cross-party Councillor forum for the consideration and discussion of issues relevant to the preparation of the Local Plan and other related planning policy documents. The group does not have decision-making powers but can make recommendations to full Council.

4.1.3 PPWG will receive monthly updates on key actions and progress on the Local Plan. This will also be shared wider with all Members.

4.1.4 The timeline for preparing a new Local Plan is tight. The key touchpoints for Local Plan programme decision making revolve around the three statutory consultations, as well as the final decision to submit and adopt the plan.

4.1.5 Due to LGR, while MDC will continue to progress the Local Plan through the statutory consultation stages, the final decision to submit and adopt the Plan will rest with the Mid-Essex Unitary Authority once it is established. It is acknowledged that formal governance arrangements of the new unitary are unknown at this stage, however this will be monitored as the plan progresses and governance within the PID and Timeline updated as required.

Consultation	Preparatory Actions	Decision
Reg 20 scoping consultation (Nov 2026)	- PPWG to review documentation - Senior Leadership Team to review documentation - All-Member briefing	Full Council (Maldon District Council)
Reg 23 consultation (Aug 2027)	- PPWG to review documentation - Senior Leadership Team to review documentation - All-Member briefing	Full Council (Maldon District Council)
Reg 27 consultation (May 2028)	- PPWG to review documentation - Senior Leadership Team to review documentation - All-Member briefing	Full Council (Maldon District Council)
Submission (Oct 2028)	Briefings to relevant Member and Senior Officer of Mid Essex Unitary	Decision to be made by the new Mid Essex Unitary Authority
Adoption of the plan	Briefings to relevant Member and Senior Officer of Mid Essex Unitary	Decision to be made by the

Consultation	Preparatory Actions	Decision
(May 2029)		new Mid Essex Unitary Authority

4.2 Lead Officers

4.2.1 **Mark Jaggard** is the Director of Place, Planning & Growth. This directorate contains the Housing and Planning Service including the Planning Policy Team responsible for undertaking the work necessary to produce the Local Plan.

4.2.2 **Louise Staplehurst** is the Planning Policy Manager, responsible for the Planning Policy Team which undertakes the work necessary to produce the new Local Plan for Maldon District.

4.3 Lead Member

4.3.1 Maldon District Council does not operate a Cabinet system and therefore there is not a Portfolio Holder responsible for the Local Plan.

4.3.2 The Leader of the Council is Councillor Simon Morgan.

4.3.3 The Chair of the Planning Policy Working Group is Councillor Tony Fittock.

5 Staff Resource and Management

5.1 Overall Management of the Local Plan Process

Name	Job Title	FTE
Louise Staplehurst	Planning Policy Manager	1

5.2 Project Managers

Job Title	Dedicated PM?	Internal or External
Project Support Officer	No	Internal
PMO support	TBC	TBC

5.3 Core Local Plan Team

Job Title	Post status	FTE	Estimated % time preparing the Local Plan
Principal Policy Planner	Occupied	1	
Principal Policy Planner	Occupied	0.8	
Principal Policy Planner	Vacant	0.2	
Senior Policy Planner	Vacant	1	
Senior Policy Planner	Vacant	1	
Policy Planner	Vacant	1	
Policy Planner	Vacant	1	
Project Support Officer	Occupied	0.6	
Project Support Officer	Vacant	0.4	

5.4 Wider Support

5.4.1 It is expected that wider support will be required at various times throughout the plan-making process from internal colleagues.

Who	Why and when
Development Management Planners	Input throughout the process
Principal Heritage and Conservation Officer	To complete the Heritage Impact Assessment for the LP
S106 Officer	Input into the IDP and CIL and relevant policies and evidence as part of the new LP
Strategic Housing Enabling Development Officer	Input into Housing policies and other evidence base where necessary
Health Integration and Wellbeing team	Input into policies and other evidence base where necessary
Economic Development and Tourism team	Input into policies and other evidence base where necessary

Who	Why and when
Environment and Sustainability Manager	Input into policies and other evidence base where necessary
GIS Officer	To assist with GIS mapping where needed throughout the process
Communications Team	To assist with consultations and publicity where resources allow
Legal Team	To assist with legal compliance where necessary
Other	Other support such as finance, procurement, elections and performance/data where necessary.

5.5 External Support

- 5.5.1 Consultants will be required to prepare key components of the evidence base and provide necessary support during Examination. Further details are set out in section 6.
- 5.5.2 We will also require specialist Legal Support from a Barrister or Counsel, as well as a Programme Officer for the Examination Stage of the Local Plan.

6 Evidence

6.1 Existing and New Evidence

6.1.1 To ensure the efficient use of our resources, the evidence base prepared to inform the Local Plan review under the legacy system has been assessed to inform additional evidence requirements for the new Local Plan. This is not an exhaustive list; further evidence base requirements may become apparent as preparation of the Local Plan progresses and public consultation is undertaken. We will also work with other teams within the Council to build upon or commission joint evidence where appropriate.

6.1.2 The tables below set out a summary of the existing evidence base, where it needs to be updated and where new evidence may be required.

Existing Evidence					
Evidence Title	Description	Key Internal Stakeholders	Key External Stakeholders	Author	Requirement
Maldon District Economy Study	Identifies economic growth opportunities in the district up to 2040.	Economic Development	Business community Developers	Consultants	Partial update required
Employment Land & Premises Study	Evidence to inform employment growth, future requirements for sites and supply of land to support economic growth.	Economic Development	Business community Developers	Consultants	Partial update required
Economic Viability Assessment	Assesses the viability of housing development sites. (To be incorporated in the Whole Plan Viability Assessment).	To be incorporated in the Whole Plan Viability Assessment	To be incorporated in the Whole Plan Viability Assessment	Consultants	Partial update required
Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment	Assessment of housing and employment land.	Development Management Housing	Developers Parish/Town Councils ECC – education	In-house	Partial update required

Evidence Title	Description	Key Internal Stakeholders	Key External Stakeholders	Author	Requirement
			planning etc		
Local Housing Needs Assessment	Considers housing need up to 2044.	Housing Development Management	Developers Parish/Town Councils ECC – education planning etc Registered providers Integrated Care Board	Consultants	Partial update required
Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment Update	Identifies Gypsy and Traveller needs over the Local Plan period.	Housing Development management	Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople community Adjacent LPAs	Consultants	Partial update required
Nature Conservation Study	Review of local wildlife sites and mapping.	Development Management	Developers / Landowners Natural England Wildlife organisations/ special interest groups Parish/Town Councils Essex Local Nature Partnership	Consultants / in-house	Partial update required
Landscape Character Assessment	Provides a detailed assessments of different landscape character areas within Maldon.	Development Management	Developers Parish/Town Councils Relevant special interest groups	Consultants	No update required.
Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk	Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).	Emergency Planner Development	Environment Agency Lead Local Flood	Consultants	Partial update

Evidence Title	Description	Key Internal Stakeholders	Key External Stakeholders	Author	Requirement
Assessment		Management Health & wellbeing	Authority Developers/ landowners Parish/Town Councils Infrastructure providers Business community Health/Emergency Services		required
Rural Facilities Survey and Settlement Pattern	Existing review of rural facilities and settlement pattern to be replaced by a full Settlement Hierarchy Study	Members Development Management	Parish/Town Councils	In-house	Update required
Integrated Assessment (SEA/HRA/HIA/E QIA)	Assessment of the social, environmental, economic, health, equalities and habitats impact of the Local Plan as it is produced	Relevant internal teams	PINS Developers Statutory consultees – Environment Agency; Natural England; Marine Management Organisation Relevant special interest groups	Consultants	Full update required
Transport and Highways Modelling	Modelling of highways impacts	Development Management	ECC Highways Developers Parish/Town Councils Adjacent LPAs Emergency Services Active Travel England	Consultants	Full update required

Evidence Title	Description	Key Internal Stakeholders	Key External Stakeholders	Author	Requirement
Indoor and Outdoor Sports and Play Strategy	Assessment of indoor and outdoor sports and play provision.	Health and Wellbeing Development Management	Sport England Governing Bodies for each relevant sport Parish/Town Councils Local sports clubs/operators Local community groups	Consultants	Partial update required

New and Additional Evidence					
Evidence Title	Description	Key Internal Stakeholders	Key External Stakeholders	Author	Requirement
Heritage Impact Assessment	Evidence to support site allocations and other strategic heritage policies where appropriate	Conservation and Heritage	Historic England Parish/Town Councils Relevant special interest groups Developers	In-house	Required
Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Delivery Assessment	Evidence to support the delivery of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation	Housing Development Management	Gypsy & Traveller communities	Consultants	Required
Water Cycle Study	To help identify water infrastructure capacity and water and flood management infrastructure required to support growth.	Sustainability and Environment Development Management Health & wellbeing	Water/sewerage companies Developers Environment Agency Integrated Care Board	Consultants	Required

Evidence Title	Description	Key Internal Stakeholders	Key External Stakeholders	Author	Requirement
Infrastructure Delivery Plan	To identify the infrastructure baseline in the area, planned provision and infrastructure required to support future growth. This will include blue and green infrastructure.	Development Management Members Health & wellbeing	Infrastructure providers Developers Parish/Town Councils ECC – education etc Integrated Care Board	Consultants	Required
Whole Plan Viability Assessment	To assess development viability within the area and implications of proposed policies. This will incorporate the updated economic viability assessment work.	Relevant internal teams including housing, development management etc.	Developers / landowners Parish/Town Councils	Consultants	Required
Retail Study	To assess retail needs.	Economic Development Development Management	Business community Developers	Consultants	Required
Renewable Energy Study	To assess areas for delivering low carbon and renewable energy.	Sustainability and Environment Development Management	Business Community Developers/ Landowners Operators National Grid	Consultants	Required
Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.	Emergency Planner Development Management Health & wellbeing	Environment Agency Lead Local Flood Authority Developers Parish/Town Councils Health/Emergency Services	Consultants	Required

Evidence Title	Description	Key Internal Stakeholders	Key External Stakeholders	Author	Requirement
Character and Design	Focused on reviewing character of existing settlements and providing wider design evidence to inform policies, this could also include evidence on density.	Development Management Housing Conservation and Heritage	Developers Parish/Town Council Relevant special interest groups Historic England	Consultants	Required
Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment	Focused on wider review of landscape value to help inform policies for specific sites.	Development Management	Developers Parish/Town Councils	Consultants	Required
Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation	Evidence to support climate resilience and sustainable design principles.	Sustainability & Environment Development Management Emergency Planner Health & Wellbeing	Community groups Business Community Water / sewerage Companies Environment Agency Infrastructure providers Developers Parish/Town Councils National Grid Health/Emergency Services Relevant special interest groups	Consultants	Optional

7 Stakeholder Engagement

7.1 Purpose

- 7.1.1 The purpose of the stakeholder engagement strategy is to ensure that the preparation of the new Local Plan is informed by meaningful, inclusive and proportionate engagement with stakeholders throughout the plan-making process. Effective engagement will help build trust, improve the evidence base, identify local priorities and support the delivery of a sound Local Plan that meets statutory requirements and reflects the aspirations of communities, businesses and partner organisations.

7.2 Stages of Engagement

- 7.2.1 Consistent with the regulations and guidance, preparation of the Local Plan will be informed primarily by engagement with stakeholders through three stages of formal public consultation.
1. Regulation 20 scoping consultation – invite representations on what the contents of the Local Plan should be and how further engagement should be carried out (4 weeks)
 2. Regulation 23 consultation – consult on the plan content and evidence including the draft vision (6 weeks)
 3. Regulation 27 consultation – consult on the proposed Local Plan (8 weeks)
- 7.2.2 A summary of responses will be prepared and published for each of these stages.

7.3 Methods of Engagement

- 7.3.1 A range of engagement methods will be used to maximise participation, including:
- Email notification of consultation to statutory and general consultees on the Local Plan Consultation Database, including neighbouring authorities and Town and Parish Councils.
 - Press release issued at start of formal consultations. Opportunities for a further press release during the consultation.
 - Use of the Council's social media channels for publicity.
 - Consultation documents available on Council's website.
 - Hard copy of consultation documents available at the MDC Offices.
 - Access to consultation documents via computer facilities in reception at the MDC Offices.
 - Public and Town and Parish Council consultation events, including the Parish Forums, as appropriate.

- Use of an online engagement platform to ensure responding to consultations is as clear and efficient as possible.

7.3.2 Planning can be technical and this can sometimes lead to uncertainty. As such, consultations should be as clear as possible, through the use plain-English and including a glossary of terms and acronyms where necessary. Consultations will also be clear on how to respond and in which time frame.

7.3.3 All consultation documentation will comply with [WCAG 2.2 accessibility standards](#).

7.4 Stakeholder Groups

7.4.1 The following stakeholder groups will be engaged with throughout the plan-making process:

- Council Members
- Essex County Council
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Statutory consultees
- Infrastructure providers
- Developers, landowners and Planning Agents
- Local businesses
- Parish and Town Councils
- Residents

7.4.2 There are also some harder to reach groups who do not normally engage as much with plan-making consultations. Consultants have been commissioned to create a specific engagement approach for younger people, whose voices are vital in shaping the future of our district.

7.4.3 The engagement strategy will be further informed and updated through the 'scoping and early participation' stage of the plan-making process and Scoping Consultation, to ensure a robust and effective approach.

8 Budget Overview

8.1 Cost Estimates

8.1.1 The table below outlines a summary of the estimated budget for the new Local Plan, totalling £2,076,900 (for clarity, this has been rounded to £2,075,000).

8.1.2 These costs include Local Plan costs as well as recruitment of a further Policy Planner, Senior Policy Planner and S106 Officer, in addition to the existing staff establishment.

Task	Forecast Spend 26/27 (£)	Forecast Spend 27/28 (£)	Forecast Spend 28/29 (£)	Forecast Spend 29/30 (£)	Estimated Total Cost (£)
Evidence / consultancy costs	515,000	565,000	-	-	1,080,000
Consultation	30,000	30,000	30,000	15,000	105,000
Gateway checks	-	2,000	2,000	-	4,000
Examination	-	10,000	110,000	47,000	167,000
Total Local Plan costs	545,000	607,000	142,000	62,000	1,356,000
Additional salary costs	50,000	150,000	150,000	100,000	450,000
Subtotal	595,000	757,000	292,000	162,000	1,806,000
15% Contingency	89,250	113,550	43,800	24,300	270,900
Local Plan costs + contingency	684,250	870,550	335,800	186,300	2,076,900
Total					2,076,900
Recommended Budget					2,075,000

8.2 Budget Review

8.2.1 The budget will be reviewed monthly working with the Finance Business Partner.

9 Risks and Mitigation

- 9.1 The table below sets out a summary of the key risks identified as part of the Local Plan preparation.
- 9.2 As detailed within the Risk Register, the Council have identified a number of significant risks that could impact upon the delivery of the Local Plan. Where possible, opportunities to eliminate or minimise risks have been identified.
- 9.3 Whilst proposed responses or mitigation measures have been set out, seeking where possible to manage these risks, some areas of risk are outside the Council's control, which could limit many of the proposed mitigation measures.
- 9.4 In conclusion, the risk assessment suggests that the programme for preparation of the Local Plan remains realistic but challenging. Therefore, if production milestones are missed it could be difficult to 'get back on track' without impacting on other elements of the overall programme.
- 9.5 The most fundamental overall mitigation measure that can be made is to ensure sufficient resources are available throughout preparation of the Local Plan and to build-in realistic document production timescales from the outset.

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
1	Publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework is delayed	The final NPPF is delayed and not published until the local plan is well underway. A new version of the NPPF is due to be published around summer (2026) by central government, following consultation on a draft proposal in winter 2025-26. To be deemed sound, the Local Plan must be consistent with national policy. If national policy changes during Local Plan preparation, revisions may need to be made, potentially delaying the programme.	Delay	9	Engage with the relevant authorities to get early insights into the NPPF updates. This can help in anticipating changes and preparing for them in advance. Identify early key issues likely to come forward in the new NPPF based on the consultation proposal and future-proof the plan as much as possible.	6
2	Content in the new National Planning Policy Framework is not as expected.	The content of the NPPF is not as expected/unclear and leads to a need for significant re-work. If unexpected changes are required, there will be a delay to the programme, as well as unexpected costs in remediating the issue. The content of the new NPPF does not cover all local issues and additional work is required to develop locally specific development management policies.	Delay, cost	8	By the end of summer 2026, assess the likelihood of needing significant rewrite and factor in contingency in the programme. Regularly review and update the plan to align with any new announcements or changes in the system.	6

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
3	Changes to policy and guidance during preparation of Local Plan	Government keeps publishing further local plan policy or guidance well into the preparation of the Local Plan which has costs and programme impact due to rework required.	All	12	Any new update in guidance will have to be reviewed to ensure that it does not impact the quality of the evidence base.	8
	Local Government Reorganisation leads to abortive work	The Local Plan does not reach an advanced enough state by April 2028 and the work completed is not taken forward by the new Mid-Essex Authority.	Delay; Cost	9	Engagement with the other Mid-Essex LPAs throughout the process to ensure wider political buy-in.	6

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
5	Local Government Reorganisation diverts resource	Officers are diverted from Local Plan due to the need to work on projects related to Local Government Reorganisation.	Delay; Cost	12	Senior leadership to monitor allocation of LGR tasks closely and prior to diverting any Local Plan resource, ensure that an alternative resource to backfill the Local Plan requirement is secured first.	4
	Publication of the new Spatial Development Strategy leads to re-work	The Local Plan will need to be in conformity with an as yet unformed Combined Authority's Spatial Development Strategy, of which little is known about its contents or how and when it will be produced. If published late in the Local Plan making process, it may lead to significant re-work, particularly if the SDS apportions a Local Housing Need for Maldon which differs from the current Local Housing Need as calculated through the Standard Method.	Delay; Cost	10	The preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy will have to be done jointly with the unitary authorities which it will cover and who will have an opportunity to shape the SDS.	8

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
7	Devolution	There is a risk that Maldon officers are asked to be involved in the preparation of the new Spatial Development Strategy for the new Combined Authority, which would divert them from work on the Local Plan.	Delay	10	Additional resources would have to be considered to ensure that an SDS workstream would not impact work on the Local Plan. This risk is unlikely to be restricted to Maldon and a coordinated approach and sharing of resources with neighbouring authorities should be considered.	8
	The 30-month local plan timetable is not met due to lengthy governance processes which do not provide the flexibility required to make decisions at the right time	The 30-month local plan timetable is not met due to the length of the governance processes internally to the Council, which create delays in decision-making and delays to the overall Local Plan programme.	All	20	The programme was built with sufficient leading time to Full Council meetings at the required decision-making points. Any further governance requirements would delay the local plan programme. New proposed Governance arrangements should help create certainty. Regular updates to the Local Plan programme will help plan any extraordinary Council sessions.	15

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
9	Full Council cycle does not fit with the requirements of the Local Plan programme and extraordinary meetings cannot be arranged.	The programme was based on the assumption that extraordinary meetings would be scheduled for Full Council to enable timely decision-making for the local plan. If extraordinary Full Council meetings cannot be scheduled, this will delay the local plan programme.	Delay	16	Proactive local plan management and programme updates should inform continuous dialogue with the Council's democratic services to ensure that extraordinary Full council sessions can be scheduled in good time.	6
10	Inability to recruit suitable candidates into planning policy team	The market for planning policy planners is currently difficult and recruitment for the two additional resources required in the team to deliver the local plan is likely to be challenging.	Delay, cost	16	In the short term, contractors and consultants can be utilised to balance resourcing of the project to ensure that the evidence base studies are started in time to meet the programme.	8

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
11	Officers focusing on other priorities	The Local Plan programme proposed is ambitious and is based on officers assuming responsibility for a set list of business-as-usual tasks. Any changes to this resourcing e.g. to deal with a new service tasks or due to an increase in BAU work (e.g. neighbourhood plans) would risk delays to the overall Local Plan programme. This is especially relevant in the current context of the Council, where a lack of 5YHLS is likely to lead to an increase in the number of applications, appeals and large sites coming forward.	Delay	16	Ensure buy-in into the Local Plan at the corporate level to ensure that priorities are clearly understood and that agreement to outsource ad-hoc tasks is in place. Recruitment of a s106 officer should be undertaken as soon as possible to free up the required resources within the planning policy team.	6
12	Requisite technical expertise is not available in the market at the right time	Government's plan making reforms and emphasis on all LPAs having a plan in place asap means there is increased demand for consultancy services. This may lead to delays in the production of evidence base studies or Local Plan deliverables if the requisite expertise cannot be sourced at the relevant time.	Delay	12	Start of the selected key evidence base as soon as possible. Appoint legal counsel on a call-off basis so advice can be quickly sought across the lifetime of Local Plan production	4

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
13	Evidence base studies or Local Plan deliverables take longer to complete than anticipated or there are unforeseen delays	Delays to the delivery of evidence base studies or Local Plan deliverables delay overall Local Plan programme.	Delay	12	A significant number of the evidence base studies have already been commissioned and are either in progress or completed. Effective programme management to constantly monitor project progress and arrange additional support where necessary.	6
14	Not enough sites submitted through Call for Sites to meet Local Housing Need (LHN)	If an insufficient number of sites are submitted, this will undermine the Local Plan's ability to demonstrate a deliverable and developable land supply to meet its Local Housing Need and risk the Local Plan not being deemed sound.	Quality; Delay	9	Proactively engage with landowners, developers, and agents to encourage site submissions as well as reopening/extending the Call for Sites if needed. Consider engagement with neighbouring authorities to see whether they could accommodate some of the need.	6

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
15	Unclear ownership of transport modelling	Lack of clarity over the ownership of the County Transport Model following local government reorganisation (LGR) and the end of ECC as an entity increases uncertainty in the plan and programme. Even if the Model is transferred to the successor body, reorganisation of teams may lead to loss of skills and / or knowledge and may also lead to a delay in service delivery whilst a new team beds into new roles.	Delay, Cost	20	Establish interim agreements or memoranda of understanding to secure access to existing modelling tools and data. Document all assumptions and limitations in the evidence base to ensure transparency during examination.	16
	High response rates to public consultations	Longer period required to consider and process response that might impact overall Local Plan programme.	Delay, Cost	8	Purchase of consultation software will offer efficiency gains that will help offset high response rates. Tailor consultation material to ensure that respondents clearly understand the purpose of the Local Plan. Combine this with minimising the number of open questions to reduce the volume of responses that need to be analysed. Encourage respondents to make digital submissions via consultation software to reduce processing time.	6

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
17	Consultation and engagement identify a need for further work, including new evidence base studies	Delay to overall Local Plan programme and potential additional costs	Delay, cost	9	Local Plan budget includes contingency fund to account for potential extra work.	6
18	Key stakeholders lack capacity to respond within required timeframe	Delay to overall Local Plan programme depending on how essential a response is considered to Local Plan drafting.	Delay	12	As part of the preparation of the Regulation 20 scoping consultation, engage with key stakeholders to ensure they are clear on timescales and required inputs. Ensure that data and other inputs required by stakeholders is provided in a timely fashion, so that the Council does not hold up stakeholder's work.	8

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
19	Lack of buy-in from and participation by community and wider stakeholders	There is a risk that the plan is found unsound at examination if stakeholder input is not conducted effectively. More broadly, if adopted without sufficient buy-in, the Local Plan will not adequately reflect the people and residents of Maldon.	Quality	8	The programme allows for community and stakeholder engagement in the early phase of the plan making process, ensuring a sense of ownership of the new plan. The Project Initiation Document will include a community engagement strategy to maximise participation. Work with a consultancy specialised in youth engagement will minimise risks for this group.	3
	Financial resources are insufficient	Unable to complete Local Plan or additional resource has to be identified from alternative source	Delay; Cost	8	Detailed consideration given to the budget requirements for the Local Plan. Only those workstreams considered essential have been included within the resource plan and budget. A contingency fund has been included within the budget to offset unknowns, including the need for further site level evidence base studies. Regular review of Local Plan budget by Strategic and Resources Committee to ensure that sufficient budget remains. Early proactive engagement with the new unitary authority to ensure the local plan budget remains ringfenced to fund the local plan examination.	3

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
21	Programme slippage	Due to a very ambitious programme to submit the plan by October 2028, limited contingency was built into the programme. Delays to any part of the programme will have a knock-on effect and risk creating programme slippage. This will in turn cause disruption to the quality and or cost of later parts of the programme. If delays push the programme too far back, it will risk further impacts on meeting the 30-month local plan programme, potentially jeopardising submission of a sound plan.	All	20	A programme has been prepared to reflect the interdependencies of different workstreams, with contingency where possible. The Council will also engage early and proactively with local stakeholders, and on other parts of the programme where external input is required and where risk of programme delays is greatest.	12
22	Local Plan not deemed sound	There is a risk that following the final submission of the plan the Local Plan is deemed unsound at Examination.	Delay; Cost	10	The Local Plan programme seeks to ensure that the right processes are in place to make the plan sound. A review of this risk and associated mitigation will be undertaken following the first two gateway reviews to ensure the right level of mitigation is put in place. Gateway checks, which form part of the new Local Plan making system, should help identify potential soundness issues, allowing them to be addressed prior to Examination.	4

Risk number and title		Description	Impact type (delay, cost, quality)	Unmitigated risk score	Mitigation	Mitigated risk score
23	Legal fees	The costs of counsel advice at Examination will be highly dependent on the type of issues which arise through the Local Plan preparation and cannot be very accurately forecasted at this stage. It is possible that legal costs may be higher than currently forecasted.	Cost	8	Some legal advice has been forecasted in the programme and this will be kept under review as the plan preparation progresses and the main issues are identified, ensuring the final legal costs can be updated as accurately as possible as early as possible.	4

Risk Matrix						
Risk Impact	5	5	10	15	20	25
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	1	1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

Risk Likelihood

Risk Score	
15 - 25	Extremely high
8 - 12	High
4 - 6	Moderate
1 - 3	Low

10 Approval of this PID

Author

Name:	Title	Date Approved
Louise Staplehurst	Planning Policy Manager	31 July 2026

Lead Officers and Members

Name:	Title	Date Approved
Mark Jaggard	Director of Place, Planning & Growth	4 August 2026
Planning Policy Working Group	Planning Policy Working Group	11 August 2026

Full Council

Date of Meeting	Decision
10 September 2026	Approved <i>Authority has been delegated to the Director of Place, Planning & Growth to amend and update this PID, in consultation with the Planning Policy Working Group.</i>

11 Change Log

Date of change (Specifying version)	Author	Reason	Updated Version Title

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(Draft text for MDC website)

Timetable for the new Local Plan for Maldon District

Local Plan Timetable

1. Introduction

This document sets out the timetable for the preparation of the new Local Plan for Maldon District. It has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 which prescribe the statutory process for preparing a 'new-style' Local Plan, as established by Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA), as amended by Schedule 7 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA).

2. Background

The Maldon District Local Development Plan 2014-2029 was approved in July 2017.

The Government has since introduced a new plan-making system, and the new Local Plan for Maldon District will need to be prepared in line with detailed procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA) as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA).

3. The new Local Plan for Maldon District

Once adopted the new Local Plan for Maldon District will replace the current Maldon District Local Development Plan 2014-2029.

The Local Plan for Maldon District will apply to the geographical area of Maldon District.

It will provide a long-term planning framework for Maldon District, including a vision and strategic priorities, setting out the overall amount and distribution of new development, site allocations and other policies for the determination of planning applications. A Policies Map will accompany the Plan and illustrate geographically where its policies apply.

Whilst preparation of the early stages of the new Local Plan are being carried out under Maldon District Council, later stages will occur after the new unitary authority

of Mid Essex has been created. Vesting day, which is the date that the new unitary authority will formally assume all powers, is 1 April 2028.

The current position is that work on preparing the Local Plan for Maldon District, which covers the existing Maldon District Council administrative geography, will continue to occur. This is consistent with Government expectations that Local Government Reorganisation should not hinder plan preparation.

4. Timetable dates

This Local Plan Timetable takes effect from 25 September 2026 and replaces the Local Development Scheme (LDS) dated February 2025.

5. The Local Plan Timetable

The Local Plan Timetable needs to contain specific information as required by the relevant legislation and regulations. Section 15B of the PCPA 2004 (as amended by the LURA 2023) sets out certain matters that the Local Plan Timetable needs to specify. These details are set out in Appendix 1. Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 provides further detail regarding the form and content of the Local Plan Timetable.

The timetable must specify the date upon which all the necessary steps that are required by law in producing a new Local Plan are envisaged to be undertaken. These dates are included in Appendix 2.

This is the first Local Plan Timetable produced for the new Local Plan. To comply with Regulation 8, it is being published, with an accompanying statement that it is to have effect, on the same date as the Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation. These were made available on *[insert date]*.

The timetable and statement that it is to have effect is available to view on the Council's website at *[insert link]*.

The Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation is available to view on the Council's website at *[insert link]*.

The new plan-making system includes a series of 'Gateways'. The dates specified for the stages after Gateway 1 reflect the Government's preferred 30-month timescale (including 6 months for examination and 1 month for adoption).

The PCPA 2004 (amended by the LURA 2023) and associated regulations also require that the Local Plan timetable indicates whether the Council intends to prepare a Supplementary Plan and whether either the Local Plan or any Supplementary Plan(s) are intended to be prepared jointly with another Local Planning Authority.

At this stage, the Council has not taken a final position on whether a Supplementary Plan will be prepared. Should this position change, it will be reflected in future revisions of this timetable. There is no current intention to prepare a joint Local Plan.

6. Revisions to the Local Plan Timetable

In accordance with Regulation 6, the Council is required to ensure that the Local Plan Timetable is kept up to date and must be reviewed, and if necessary updated, on at least a monthly basis.

The dates specified in the timetable will be kept under review and updated accordingly including:

- when either a relevant plan preparation stage or a relevant event occurs, or
- a decision is made to carry out an additional consultation stage.

The Council's latest Local Plan Timetable is available to view online at *[insert link]*.

Maldon District Council will maintain and publish a schedule of any amendments made to this timetable.

Published: *[insert date]*

Last updated: *[insert date]*

7. Local Plan Timetable CSV download

To meet data requirements the timetable is also available as a CSV file.

The CSV file will contain the information above and will be updated when changes have been made to the timetable and when milestones have been met. The data within this file is being provided to the Government under the Open Government Licence.

Appendix 1: Local Plan scope and content

Matters which the local plan for the area is to deal with:	The Local Plan for Maldon District will: • Define the strategic spatial strategy for the area, including how housing, employment and other needs will be met and supported by the appropriate level of infrastructure. • Allocate sites for development, including sites for housing, employment, travellers and other uses. • Set locally specific development management policies where these are not already sufficiently addressed by any national decision-making policies that exist at the time. • Identify area-based growth strategies or policies for particular settlements, growth areas, or regeneration locations. • Include a policies map showing all policy designations.
The geographical area to which the authority's local plan is to relate:	The Local Plan for Maldon District will cover the whole of the administrative boundary of Maldon District (ONS code E07000074).
Any supplementary plans which the authority are to prepare:	To be confirmed
The subject matter and geographical area, site or sites to which each of those supplementary plans is to relate:	N/A
How the authority proposes to comply with the requirement in section 15F(1) (requirement in relation to design code):	To be confirmed. Government indicated in their response to the NPPF 2024 consultation that they will keep under review the provisions contained in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 on authority wide design codes. As part of the NPPF 2025 consultation it further stated that proposed policy reflects the move away from a legal requirement for authority-wide design codes. This matter will be kept under review and confirmed as part of future revisions to the Local Plan Timetable.

Whether the authority is to prepare a joint local plan or supplementary plan, and whether to form a joint committee for that purpose:	No
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Appendix 2 - Timetable

Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

Regulation	Stage of Plan Making	Dates	What does this mean?
8	Publish Local Plan Timetable	25/09/2026	This commences the minimum 4-month notice period so that stakeholders are aware plan-making is beginning.
19(1)	Publish Notice of Intention to commence Local Plan preparation	25/09/2026	-
20(1)(b)	Scoping Consultation starts	25/11/2026	We will seek feedback from stakeholders on how to engage with them and what the plan should contain.
20(4)	Scoping Consultation ends	22/12/2026	-
22(3)	Publish summary of scoping consultation	16/02/2027	-
21(3)	Publish Gateway 1 (self-assessment of readiness)	12/03/2027	Publication of a document setting out details of how we have got ready for plan-making. This marks formal commencement of plan-making for the purposes of Government's 30-month timeframe
23(1)(a)	Consultation on proposed plan contents and Evidence (PC&E) of new Local Plan starts	27/08/2027	We will seek feedback from stakeholders on proposed local plan content and evidence, including a draft vision for a 6-week period. It will also include the proposed spatial strategy and any initial draft policies.
23(4)	Consultation on proposed PC&E ends	07/10/2027	-
24(3)	Publish summary of responses from PC&E consultation (Reg.24)	15/11/2027	-
26	Gateway 2 advice sought	19/11/2027	We will seek observations and advice from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) to help identify and resolve potential soundness issues at an early stage, and to ensure the plan is progressing towards

Regulation	Stage of Plan Making	Dates	What does this mean?
			meeting the statutory and policy requirements set out in legislation and national planning policy.
	Gateway 2 advice published	16/12/2027	-
27(1)(a)	Consultation on new proposed Local Plan starts	26/05/2028	We will seek feedback from stakeholders on the proposed local plan for an 8-week period. This is the version of the final Local Plan that we intend to submit to the Secretary of State for examination
27(4)	Consultation on new proposed Local Plan ends	19/07/2028	-
30(3)	Publish summary of consultation and finalise Local Plan	07/09/2028	-
31	Gateway 3 advice sought (Prescribed requirements assessment)	14/09/2028	We will seek observations and advice from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) to test if the proposed Local Plan meets the statutory and policy requirements set out in legislation and national planning policy, that all submission documents have been prepared and that the Local Plan is ready to proceed to examination.
	Gateway 3 advice published	11/10/2028	-
34	Submit Local Plan for examination	24/10/2028	-
35	Examination recommendations published	29/03/2029	Examination of the Local Plan by an independent Planning Inspector to test whether the plan meets all legal and soundness requirements.
39	Adoption of Local Plan	02/05/2029	Publication of the Local Plan and adoption statement.

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(Draft text for MDC website)

DRAFT Notice of Intention to commence Local Plan preparation

This notice marks the start of the formal Local Plan preparation process.

Maldon District Council hereby gives notice of its intention to commence preparation of a new Local Plan for Maldon District.

This provides communities and other stakeholders with advance notice of plan-making so they understand when and how they can get involved in preparing the Local Plan.

This notice is published in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, which marks the start of the formal Local Plan preparation process.

Name of the Local Planning Authority

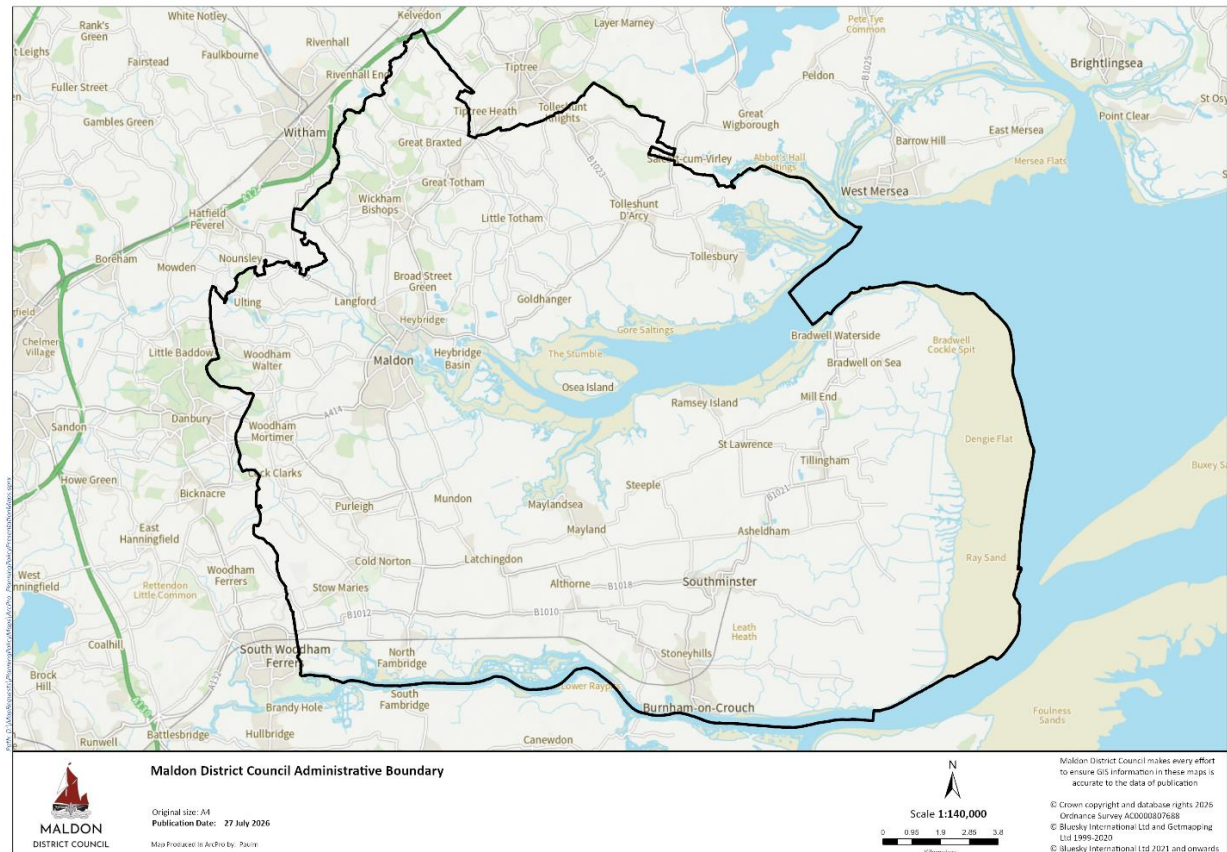
Maldon District Council

Title of the Local Plan

Local Plan for Maldon District

Geographical area the Local Plan will cover

The Local Plan for Maldon District will cover the administrative area of Maldon District as shown in the map below (ONS code E07000074).



Local Plan Timetable

A Local Plan Timetable has been prepared and sets out the key stages and timescales for preparing the Local Plan for Maldon District.

The Local Plan Timetable can be viewed online on the Maldon District Council's website at [\[insert hyper link\]](#) and at Maldon District Council Offices, Princes Road, Maldon CM9 5DL: Opening hours are Monday to Friday 10:00am to 4:00pm.

Maldon District Council expects to formally begin the preparation of the Local Plan for Maldon District under the new plan-making system after it has passed through its self-assessment (Gateway 1) in February 2027.

For further information please email localplan@maldon.gov.uk

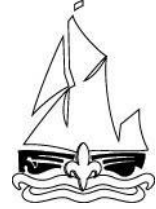
Date of Notice Publication

[\[Insert date\]](#) September 2026

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITIES**

**to
COUNCIL
10 SEPTEMBER 2026**

PURCHASE OF LAND AT LANGFORD

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to purchase two parcels of land at Langford in order to protect the existing natural habitat and reduce the risk of inappropriate future use.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council considers the report and agrees to:

- (i) the purchase of Plot 1, subject to:
 - (a) satisfactory completion of legal due diligence and title investigation;
 - (b) confirmation of the planning status of the land and any relevant constraints, covenants or easements;
 - (c) receipt of an independent valuation demonstrating value for money; and
 - (d) agreement of final heads of terms, including price, conditions, timescales and the apportionment of fees.
- (ii) the purchase of Plot 2, subject to:
 - (a) satisfactory completion of legal due diligence and title investigation;
 - (b) confirmation of the planning status of the land and any relevant constraints, covenants or easements;
 - (c) receipt of an independent valuation demonstrating value for money; and
 - (d) agreement of final heads of terms, including price, conditions, timescales and the apportionment of fees.
- (iii) delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities in consultation with the Chairperson of Strategy and Resources Committee to agree a purchase price of up to 5% above the independent valuation, where necessary to secure completion of the transaction and where this is considered justified and represents value for money;
- (iv) delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities to enter into an agreement with Vistry for the installation or improvement of the footpaths across Plot 2.

OR

That having considered the report, the Council agrees not to proceed with the purchase of Plot 1 and Plot 2 as acquisition is not considered necessary or represents the best use of public resources, and instead manages any risks associated with the land through its existing statutory powers, regulatory functions and enforcement mechanisms.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Heybridge Parish Council has raised concerns regarding two parcels of land located to the north of Elm Farm Park, between the former railway embankment and Heybridge Approach, on the basis that the land could be vulnerable to inappropriate use in the future.
- 3.2 The plots were previously owned by the developer, Vistry, but were considered surplus to requirements and were sold at auction in 2025. Plot 1 sold for £36,000 and Plot 2 sold for £40,000. These sums would also have been subject to auction fees and the purchaser's legal costs, although the Council has not been provided with details of those additional amounts.
- 3.3 Following approaches to officers, discussions took place with Councillors, Vistry and the current landowner to establish whether the landowner would be willing to sell the plots to the Council.
- 3.4 The landowner has advised that the plots were acquired as an investment and that any disposal would need to reflect both acquisition costs and an appropriate return. Whilst no formal offer has been made or agreed, officers have held discussions with the landowner to understand the likely price expectations should the Council wish to pursue an acquisition. Details of these discussions are provided in the confidential **APPENDIX 1**.
- 3.5 **Plot Information**
 - 3.5.1 As shown on the plan at **APPENDIX 2**, the two plots are separated by an adjacent residential property. Both plots lie to the east of the former railway embankment and are connected to the wider Elm Farm Park area by the Blackwater Rail Trail, which follows the route of the former Witham to Maldon railway line. Plot 2 also adjoins the small section of Elm Farm Park situated on the eastern side of the embankment.
 - 3.5.2 Both plots are currently accessible on foot, but neither benefit from vehicular access. The only potentially viable road access would be from either the B1018 (Heybridge Approach) or the B1019 (Langford Road). As both are busy B roads, any proposal for a new junction would be likely to raise highway concerns and may attract objection from Essex County Council Highways. At present, the land comprises open grassland with some trees and shrubs.
- 3.6 **Future Use**
 - 3.6.1 Given the access constraints described above, the scope for alternative future use of the land is limited. The plots would, however, be well suited to a naturalised use, such as a wildlife reserve. Initial discussions have taken place with Essex Wildlife Trust, which has indicated that it would be willing to explore the possibility of leasing the land for this purpose. If approval is granted to proceed with the purchase, officers will submit a further report to the Committee setting out proposals for the future use and management of the site.
 - 3.6.2 During discussions with Vistry they confirmed that they would be willing to install/improve the footpath across the land (believed to be Public Right Of Way (PROW) 13) at their expense and as a goodwill gesture for the community.

3.7 Purchase of Plots

- 3.7.1 The current landowner has confirmed a willingness to discuss the sale of Plot 1 and has indicated that a sale of Plot 2 may also be possible if the offer is sufficient.
- 3.7.2 No legal due diligence has yet been undertaken in relation to the plots. Such due diligence, including title investigation and confirmation of relevant constraints, would be required before any acquisition could proceed. If significant issues are identified through that process, the purchase would not be progressed.
- 3.7.3 The Council is required to secure value for money in any acquisition. An independent valuation would therefore be obtained to inform any offer. Although the current landowner has indicated that he would wish to recover his costs and achieve a return on his investment, the plots were acquired only in 2025 and there may therefore have been limited uplift in value since that time. Officers consider that a limited discretion to agree a price of up to 5% above the independent valuation may be necessary to secure the acquisition, where this can be properly justified.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The plots appear to be available for acquisition, subject to successful negotiation with the landowner and satisfactory completion of due diligence.
- 4.2 Given the physical constraints of the site, the most appropriate long-term use of the land is likely to be environmental or naturalised use, complementing the existing public amenity provided by Elm Farm Park.
- 4.3 The acquisition is not expected to generate any meaningful financial return. If Essex Wildlife Trust were to lease the land from the Council for environmental purposes, any rent would likely be nominal.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 Supporting our communities

- 5.1.1 Providing additional natural space for residents and visitors to enjoy, with associated health and wellbeing benefits.
- 5.1.2 Supporting the improvement of Public Right of Way 13 across the site.
- 5.1.3 Creating additional stopping points for users of the Blackwater Rail Trail where the natural habitat can be appreciated

5.2 Investing in our District

- 5.2.1 Safeguarding green space within the District for the benefit of current and future generations.

5.3 Protecting our environment

- 5.3.1 In an area undergoing significant development, the retention of these green spaces would help secure natural habitat for wildlife and support wider environmental objectives.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The proposal would provide additional natural amenity space for public use and enjoyment.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None identified.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – The principal risks relate to acquisition at a price that does not represent value for money and to any adverse issues arising from legal due diligence. These risks would be mitigated through independent valuation, negotiation and title investigation prior to any purchase.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – There would be a capital cost associated with the purchase of the land, together with any legal, valuation and associated transaction costs. Additional funding may also be required for future maintenance and site management.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Officer time would be required to progress the acquisition and undertake legal and valuation work and develop proposals for the future management or leasing of the site if the purchase proceeds.
- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** - None currently envisaged. If acquired, the land would form part of the Council's asset portfolio and would transfer to any successor authority in due course.

Background Papers:

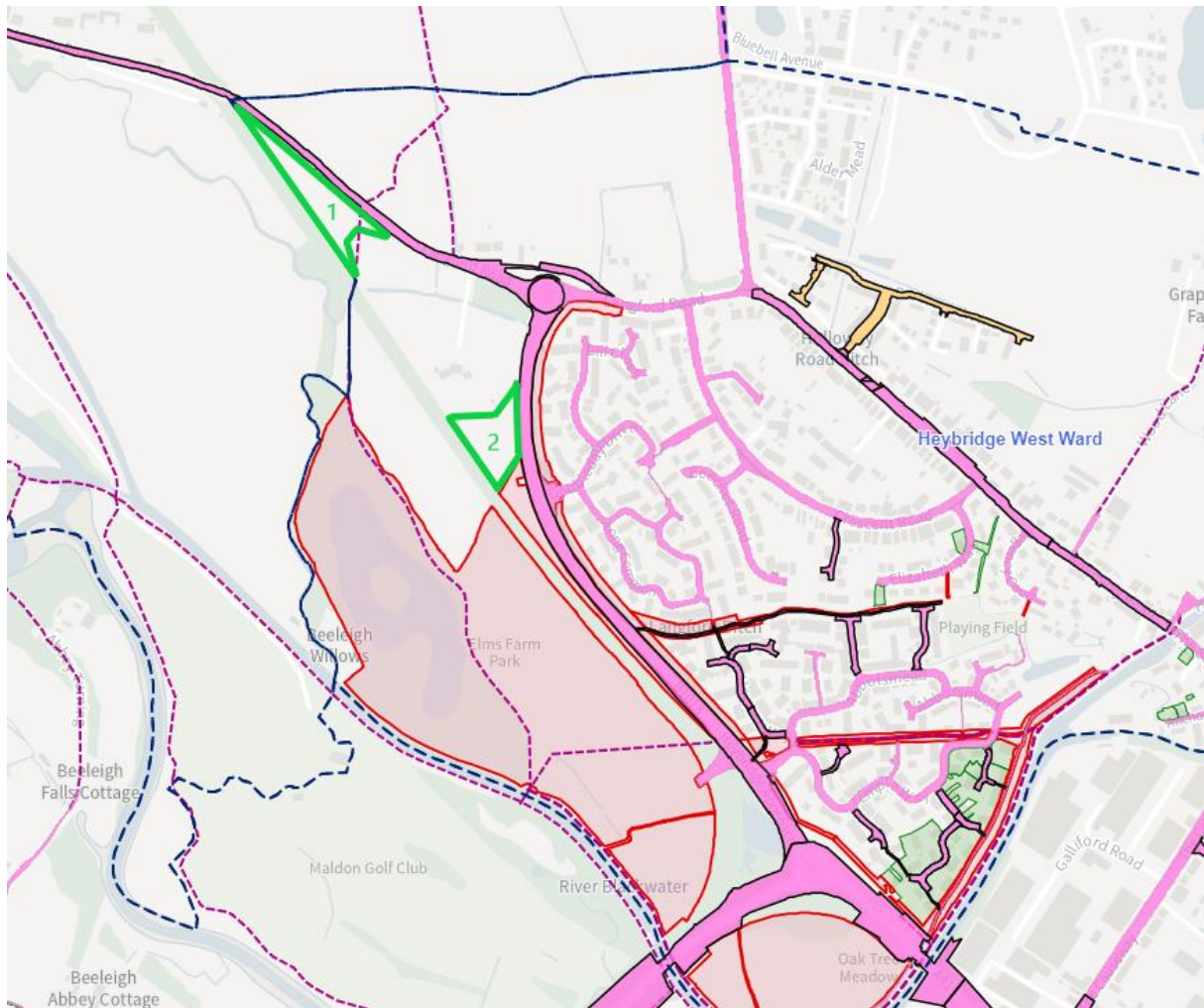
APPENDIX 1 –Information on Purchase of Land at Langford Valuation and Acquisition Considerations – Private and Confidential by Virtue of Section 100 (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1.

APPENDIX 2 - Site plan and confirmation of purchase at auction.

Enquiries to: Frank Britt, Principal Assets Manager.

PURCHASE OF LAND AT LANGFORD – Site plan and confirmation of purchase at Auction

Land at Langford shown edged in green on the below plan. Current adjacent MDC asset of Elm Farm Park is shaded in light pink and edged in red.



Details and links to the sale of the two plots below showing they sold for £36k and £40k in 2025

[Plot 1 Land at Langford Road, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4SR | Auction House London](#)

Approx 2.5 Acres (1 Hectare)

[Livestream Auction](#)
[Timed Auction](#)
[Buy Property](#)
[Sell Property](#)
[Instant Cash Offer](#)
[About](#)

Lot 165 | **Plot 1 Land at Langford Road**
Land | Maldon, Essex, CM9 4SR

Sold for £36,000.

← All →

Download Legal Pack

Enquire

Finance Available

Free 7-Days Insurance

Stamp Duty Calculator

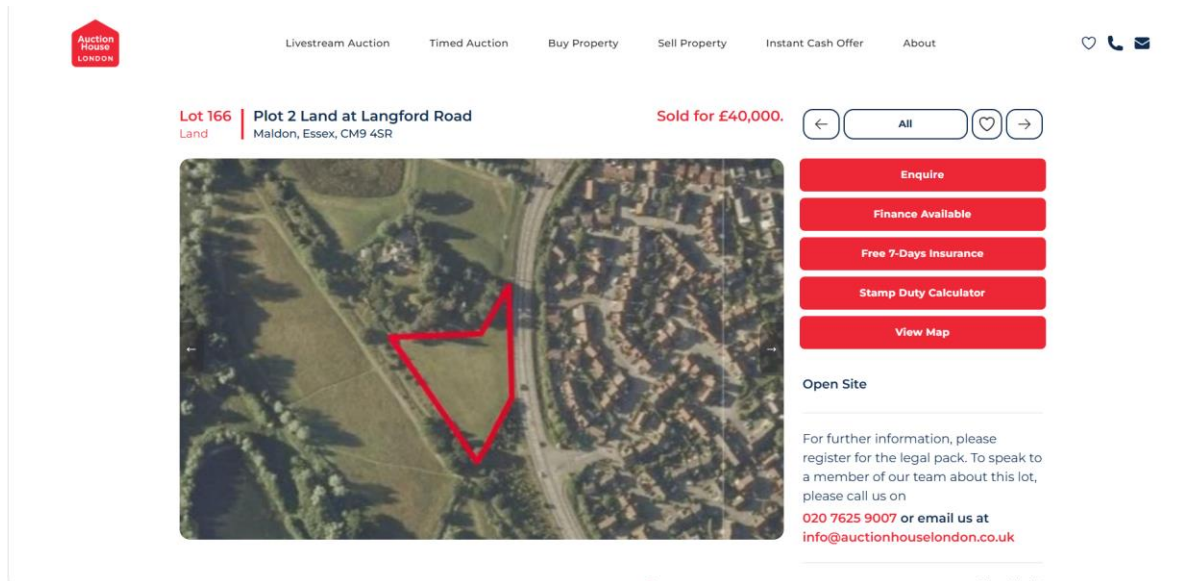
View Map

Open Site

For further information, please register for the legal pack. To speak to a member of our team about this lot, please call us on **020 7625 9007** or email us at info@auctionhouselondon.co.uk

[Plot 2 Land at Langford Road, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4SR | Auction House London](#)

Approx 1.3 Acres (0.52 Hectares)



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Land Registry shows both of the plots are on one Title at present EX358522 (in green below) which includes some of the local roads also. The LR site does show that there are applications to re-register pending from December 2025 for two plots within this Title that have been made by TAYLOR HALDANE BARLEX LLP that are probably for the two plots above.

