

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

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**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**

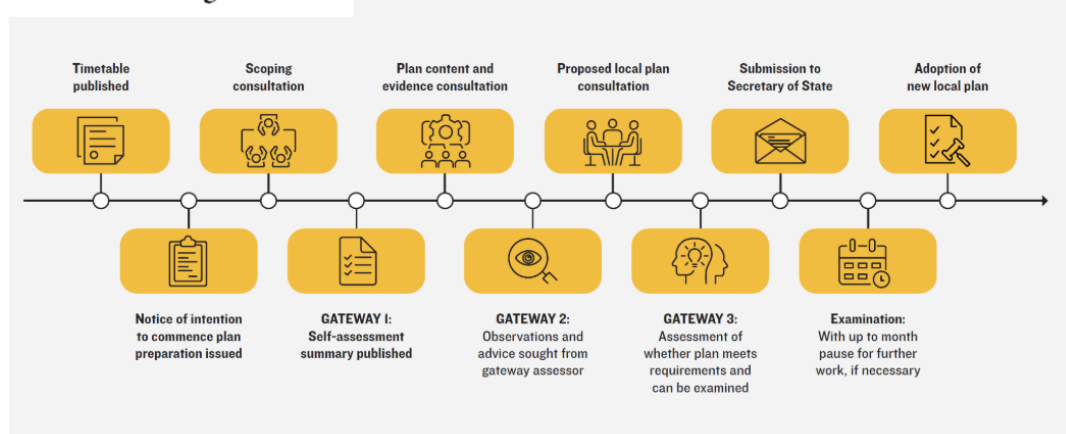
That the Council:

- (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 2026<sup>1</sup>. 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

<sup>1</sup> 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 (£)      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Staff costs over the five-year period</b> (approximately £175,000 per year) | <b>871,671</b> |
| <b>Evidence base studies:</b>                                                  | -              |
| 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 <sup>2</sup>               | 12,972         |
| Economic Viability Study                                                       | 22,809         |
| Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment                                   | 6,950          |
| Comms, Engagement and Design                                                   | 4,450          |

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

| <b>LDP Review costs 2021-2026</b>                                                                   | <b>Total (£)</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 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           |
| <b>Evidence base costs</b>                                                                          | <b>444,998</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL LDP REVIEW COSTS 2021-2026</b>                                                             | <b>1,316,669</b> |

- 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                  |
| <b>Total Local Plan costs</b>         | <b>545,000</b>           | <b>607,000</b>           | <b>142,000</b>           | <b>62,000</b>            | <b>1,356,000</b>         |
| Additional salary costs               | 50,000                   | 150,000                  | 150,000                  | 100,000                  | 450,000                  |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                       | <b>595,000</b>           | <b>757,000</b>           | <b>292,000</b>           | <b>162,000</b>           | <b>1,806,000</b>         |
| 15% Contingency                       | 89,250                   | 113,550                  | 43,800                   | 24,300                   | 270,900                  |
| <b>Local Plan costs + contingency</b> | <b>684,250</b>           | <b>870,550</b>           | <b>335,800</b>           | <b>186,300</b>           | <b>2,076,900</b>         |
| <b>Total</b>                          |                          |                          |                          |                          | <b>2,076,900</b>         |
| <b>Recommended Budget</b>             |                          |                          |                          |                          | <b>2,075,000</b>         |

## 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. |

| <b>Regulation</b>                                                       | <b>Stage of Plan Making</b>                                                         | <b>Dates</b> | <b>What does this mean?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Council decision to undertake Scoping Consultation<br/>Nov. 2026</b> |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 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.                                                                                                             |
| <b>Council decision to consult on proposed plan<br/>Aug. 2027</b>       |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 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?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Council decision to consult on proposed plan<br/>May 2028</b> |                                                              |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <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.

| <b>Decision to consult</b>              | <b>Preparatory Actions</b>                                                                                                                             | <b>Decision</b>                                            |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reg 20 scoping consultation (Nov. 2026) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPWG to review documentation</li> <li>• SLT to review documentation</li> <li>• All-Member briefing</li> </ul> | Council (MDC)                                              |
| Reg 23 consultation (Aug. 2027)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPWG to review documentation</li> <li>• SLT to review documentation</li> <li>• All-Member briefing</li> </ul> | Council (MDC)                                              |
| Reg 27 consultation (May 2028)          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPWG to review documentation</li> <li>• SLT to review documentation</li> <li>• All-Member briefing</li> </ul> | Council (MDC)                                              |
| Submission (Oct. 2028)                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings to relevant Members and Senior Officers of Mid-Essex Unitary</li> </ul>                             | Decision to be made by the new Mid Essex Unitary Authority |
| Adoption of the plan (May 2029)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings to relevant Members and Senior Officers of Mid-Essex Unitary</li> </ul>                             | 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.