

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 183

Subject: City Plan - formal commencement of plan making

Date of meeting: Thursday, 14 May 2026

Report of: Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration

Lead Officer: Corporate Director- Operations

Contact Officer: Steve Tremlett

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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove's Local Plan (known as the City Plan) is the city's key planning policy document. It sets out a vision for the city's future development and evolution and has clear links to the delivery of Outcome 1 of the Council Plan '*A city to be proud of*', particularly the aim of '*developing Brighton & Hove as a place where people want to live, work and learn*'.
- 1.2 The City Plan will set the direction for how our city will grow and thrive, shaping the places where people live, work and enjoy to create a better Brighton & Hove for all. It will show where new homes and commercial spaces should go, how development should respect the city's unique character and heritage, and how sustainable growth will be matched with the right infrastructure and green spaces.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the work so far to produce a new City Plan, and the steps necessary to transition to and progress a 'new-style' Local Plan as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (henceforth the 2026 Regulations).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to authorise the issuing and publication of the 'Notice of intention to commence local plan preparation' under Regulation 19 of the 2026 Regulations.
- 2.2 Cabinet agrees the Local Plan Timetable as set out in Appendix 1 and delegates authority to the Corporate Director, City Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration to update and

publish the Local Plan Timetable as required to ensure an up-to-date timetable is publicly available as the preparation of the City Plan progresses.

- 2.3 Cabinet approves the approach to the Scoping Consultation as described in paragraph 3.8 of the report in line with Regulation 20 of the 2026 Regulations and delegates authority to agree the consultation text and undertake the consultation to the Corporate Director, City Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration.
- 2.4 Cabinet delegates authority to approve, publish and submit the required information for Gateways 1 and 2 as required by the 2026 Regulations, to the Corporate Director, City Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove's new Local Plan (which will now be known as the 'Brighton & Hove City Plan' rather than 'City Plan 2041' as previously) will, on adoption, be the primary development plan document for the city and will set a clear vision and planning strategy for the city moving forward. It will replace the existing City Plan Part One and Part Two with a single document.
- 3.2 The intention is for the new plan to cover the existing administrative area of Brighton & Hove except that part which falls within the South Downs National Park. This is based on government advice that upcoming local government reorganisation (LGR) is not a reason to delay plan-making, and additional funding of £108k has been provided by government on the understanding that the council formally gives notice of the intention to the begin plan-making by 30 June 2026, a step which includes confirming the area the new plan will cover. However, the outcome of LGR in Sussex is expected soon with the reasonable prospect of the outcome being the enlargement of the Brighton & Hove unitary authority. Further clarity is being sought from government on the specific circumstances facing the council in this regard, including whether the outcome of LGR should be awaited before giving notice so that the plan area can align with a future amended boundary.
- 3.3 Work on a new City Plan has been underway for some time, with a first stage of consultation scoping the Key Issues the new plan should address being undertaken from 4 November 2024 to 20 January 2025. This consultation generated a good response from the public and other consultees, with over 700 responses received and provides a robust evidence base to support the new plan. A number of evidence base studies that will inform the new plan have also been completed, a call-for-sites undertaken and technical work to assess potential development sites is well advanced.
- 3.4 In February 2025, after the completion of the Key Issues consultation, the new government announced it intended to continue a process of planning reform started by the previous government by introducing a new system for

plan-making through implementing relevant provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. Regulations implementing this new system came into effect on 25 March 2026. Key aspects of the new system are:

- Plans to be simpler and shorter
- Plans to be produced within a 30-month timescale
- A more proportionate approach to the required evidence
- A series of three 'Gateway' assessments. Gateway 1 is a self-assessment of an authority's readiness to begin the 30-month plan-making process, including establishing project management and governance arrangements, the approach to consulting and engaging on the plan and the anticipated plan content. The second and third gateways involve assessments by the Planning Inspectorate and are intended to identify issues with plan content and evidence at an early stage to ensure plans only proceed to the final public examination process when they are ready. Further information on each of the Gateways is set out in Appendix 1.

3.5 Transitional arrangements were put in place to enable plans already in production to continue under the existing system if they could be submitted to government for examination by a hard deadline of 31 December 2026. As the City Plan was at a very early stage of preparation, achieving this deadline would have been extremely challenging. Given the risk of significant aborted work if the deadline was missed it was considered prudent to bring the plan forward under the new system. The extent of work already completed means the council has been able to commit to formally starting work on the Plan promptly after the introduction of the new system and has therefore been awarded £108,000 of government funding to assist with its preparation in line with the accelerated timescale. The funding has been awarded after a commitment was made to 'give notice of the intention to commence Local Plan making' by 30 June 2026 and publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment by 30 October 2026 (see table below). As set out in paragraph 3.2 above, clarity is being sought from government as to whether these deadlines remain appropriate in light of the forthcoming LGR decision.

3.6 The table below, produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, shows the sequencing of key stages of the new-plan making process:



- 3.7 The new City Plan must follow these legal requirements from the beginning in sequence and a proposed 'Local Plan Timetable' is included in Appendix 2.
- 3.8 The first step is to publish a 'notice of the intention to commence plan-making', a formal public announcement indicating that the council is starting the process of preparing a new local plan. There then begins a minimum 4-month 'getting ready' period before the Gateway 1 self-assessment which will set out details of the council's readiness for formally beginning the preparation phase of the City Plan.
- 3.9 During this 4-month period a 'scoping consultation' must be undertaken. As described in paragraph 3.3 above, a similar 'Key Issues' consultation was

undertaken in winter 2024/25. To minimise the risk of consultation fatigue and to avoid asking for the same information twice, it is proposed that a streamlined, focused approach will be taken to this consultation stage. A short, simple, document will be produced which succinctly outlines what the City Plan is, and the headline topics that it is proposed to address, framed as building on information provided through the Key Issues consultation and in the new draft National Planning Policy Framework. In line with the legal requirements it will also ask how respondents would like to be involved in shaping the plan once the formal preparation phase begins following Gateway 1, expected to be in October 2026. It will be made clear that a major consultation on the Plan's Content and Evidence will take place in 2027.

- 3.10 By focusing the consultation in this way, the new regulatory requirements will be met whilst minimising confusion and enabling quick progression to the more substantive 'Plan Content and Evidence' consultation in 2027, which will contain more detailed information on potential development sites and policies.
- 3.11 The overall 30-month timescale is ambitious. To achieve it, government guidance advises authorities to "*secure efficient sign offs at key stages of the process... [and] to plan effective delegation and identify necessary changes (for example, to change the council's constitution or standing orders)*"¹. The recommendations to this report therefore seek to confirm that certain stages of the new plan-making system can be undertaken through delegated authority to the Corporate Director, City Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration.
- 3.12 The government grant funding awarded to the council requires the statutory self-assessment Gateway 1 to be completed by 31 October 2026. The scoping consultation therefore needs to be approved and completed in a timely fashion. Later in the process, documents and statements must be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Gateways 2 and 3. Similar delegated authority is sought for Gateway 2 to ensure that the plan can be prepared and adopted within the required 30-month period.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The option of not progressing a Local Plan is not considered a reasonable alternative option because the council has a statutory duty to produce one. As such, the only realistic alternative option relates to the timing of when the Local Plan is commenced. The 2026 Regulations set out that the council must publish a 'notice of intention to commence local plan preparation' on or before 31 December 2026. However, additional funding of £108k has been awarded to the council by the government on the basis that it commits to publishing such a notice by 30 June 2026 and to publish the 'Gateway 1' self-assessment, which formally starts the 30-month plan-making period, by 31 October 2026.

¹ [30-month local plan process: an overview - GOV.UK](#)

4.2 The government has indicated it is committed to taking tough action to ensure local authorities have up-to-date local plans in place, and it is prepared to make full use of available intervention powers, including taking over a local authority’s plan making directly, if local plans are not progressed as required. Delaying the preparation of the Plan is therefore not recommended.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 A Key Issues consultation took place from 4 November 2024 to 20 January 2025 which involved extensive efforts to reach all parts of the local community. Over 700 responses were received, far exceeding the total at the equivalent stage for the existing City Plan Part Two. A summary of the responses has been published on the council’s website. Key headlines include broad support for exploring all means of increasing housing density to meet the city’s high housing need figure, including gentle densification in the suburbs and taller buildings in appropriate areas. The affordability of housing was a key concern, with strong support for the provision of genuinely affordable housing, especially more social housing.

5.2 The 2026 Regulations require a scoping consultation to take place during the ‘getting ready’ phase before plan-making formally commences as part of which representations must be invited on how the authority should engage with those responding in the preparation of the local plan. There are then two further public consultations and an Examination in Public process during the formal 30-month period for plan preparation and adoption.

5.3 Ongoing liaison with members on the process for producing a City Plan takes place through the Planning Policy Member Advisory Working Group.

6. Financial implications

6.1 The City Plan work programme is estimated to cost £1.595m, with £0.545m spent to date. Staffing costs are covered by existing General Fund budgets, with no staffing increase being requested. Consultancy expenses fit within the budget except for an anticipated rise in 2026/27, which will be funded by £0.108m in government funding received for accelerating the City Plan preparation.

6.2 Table 1 below outlines the expected costs and funding for the costs incurred to date up to 2028/29.

Table 1 – indicative costs and funding	Costs to date £'000*	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29	Total
Staff	400	200	200	200	1,000
Consultancy costs	140	100	50	50	340
Transport Modelling		100	50		150
Engagement and consultation	5	5	5	-	15

Table 1 – indicative costs and funding	Costs to date £'000*	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29	Total
Examination and gateway costs	-	-	10	80	90
Total Costs	545	405	315	330	1,595
General Fund Budget	545	297	315	330	1,487
Additional Government funding		108			108
TOTAL	545	405	315	330	1,595

* costs incurred during 2024/25 & 2025/26

- 6.3 The Government funding is conditional on meeting key milestones, including publication of the notice of intention to commence plan-making by 30 June 2026 and completion of Gateway 1 by 31 October 2026. The grant will be applied to eligible plan-making costs and managed in line with the council's financial procedures.
- 6.4 The figures for staff costs include the cost of employing planning policy officers working on the City Plan, adjusted for the estimated proportion of their time spent directly working on the City Plan. It does not include the costs of staff time from officers from the many other teams who will also contribute time in supporting the preparation of the Plan, although this is expected to be funded from the General Fund budgets and not create additional pressures over the MTFs period.
- 6.5 The examination and gateway costs are based on high level estimates and previous costs incurred for similar work. It is expected that these costs will be met from within the current budget envelope for consultancy works, with the 2028/29 costs replacing transport modelling costs projected in 2027/28.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted:
24/04/2026

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to prepare and maintain an up-to-date development plan for its area. This report proposes a way forward for the City Council's new plan under the new Local Planning Regulations 2026 by taking into account the truncated time for progressing the plan through to eventual adoption.
- 7.2 The report requests that the approval and publication of consultation requirements for Gateways 1 and 2 is delegated to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Regeneration. At this stage there are no substantive plan policies being determined; this delegation is therefore appropriate as these are the procedural and technical stages of the plan making as opposed to deciding any new plan policies. The later Gateway and subsequent submissions of

the draft plan itself will require further reports and be subject to separate decisions

Name of lawyer consulted: Katie Kam Date consulted 23/04/26

8. Risk implications

8.1 A detailed risk-log is maintained to support work on the City Plan. This has been updated to reflect the publication of the new plan-making regulations.

9. Equalities implications

9.1 None directly relating to this report.

10. Sustainability implications

10.1 The City Plan has a major role to play in managing the environmental implications of development and growth. However, it is too early to be able to report on specific sustainability implications of the new City Plan, as no specific policy proposals have yet been formulated.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

11.1 Once adopted, the new City Plan is expected to use planning policies to help improve health equity and create and develop healthy places and communities. The plan will seek to improve access to essential health and education services by directing development to areas where housing, jobs, and services are easily reachable through walking and cycling.

Other Implications

12. Procurement implications

12.1 None identified directly relating to this report.

13. Crime & disorder implications:

13.1 None identified directly relating to this report.

14. Conclusion

14.1 The council is required to progress a new Local Plan by the 2026 Regulations. This report seeks approval to initiate the process by issuing a Notice of intention to commence local plan preparation' and setting out a Local Plan Timetable. The 30-month timescale for 'new-style' plans necessitates some additional delegation of early gateway stages of the process and approval is sought for this.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Gateway requirements
2. Proposed Local Plan Timetable

