



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

Cabinet

Monday, 23 June 2026

New Rushcliffe Local Plan

Report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor R Upton

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to prepare a new Rushcliffe Local Plan and to publish a 'Notice of Intention to Commence' a new Local Plan.
- 1.2. The new Rushcliffe Local Plan would replace the local plan documents in force at the time covering the geographical area of Rushcliffe. This will include the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (currently under examination and expected to be adopted in early 2027) and the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2, adopted in 2019. It would contain planning policies and site allocations against which planning application decisions will be made in the future. It would deliver the spatial elements of the Council's corporate priorities.
- 1.3. The new Rushcliffe Local Plan must be prepared in accordance with relevant planning related legislation and Government guidance. The Council has recently been awarded £108,475 of Government funding to support local plan implementation. This funding requires the Council to formally commit to the early preparation of a new local plan under the new system and to meet the relevant procedural deadlines.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- a) approves the preparation of a new Rushcliffe Local Plan, and the publication of the Council's Notice of Intention to Commence the Rushcliffe Local Plan (at Appendix 1), in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026;
- b) approves and publish the Rushcliffe Local Plan timetable (at Appendix 2), and to delegate authority to the Director for Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, to agree any subsequent updates to the Local Plan timetable when necessary; and
- c) delegates authority to the Director for Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, to undertake necessary scoping work and evidence gathering

to support the new Rushcliffe Local Plan, prior to the Gateway 1 Assessment stage.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. It is necessary to commence work on the preparation of a new Rushcliffe Local Plan. National planning policy and proposed reforms reinforce the requirement for all local planning authorities to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan, with consequences for failure, including increased Government intervention in plan making and decision taking. An out-of-date local plan weakens the Council's ability to shape development, exposes planning decisions to appeal risk, and reduces leverage to secure infrastructure and affordable housing. Government has been clear that local government reorganisation does not justify delay in plan preparation.
- 3.2. Early commencement of a new Local Plan is therefore essential both to retain local planning control and to provide the statutory spatial framework needed to enable delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities. It will also ensure the Council's priorities are fully aligned with, and positively contribute to, the preparation of the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) Spatial Development Strategy, safeguarding Rushcliffe's role within the wider regional growth agenda.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new plan-making framework, replacing the former system with a streamlined preparation process structured around defined plan-progression "gateways." Progression to each subsequent stage depends on satisfactory completion of the previous one, and the overall process is expected to be completed within 30 months following completion of the first gateway.
- 4.2. Under the new system, local planning authorities must give notice of their intention to commence plan-making before starting the 30-month process. This statutory requirement is intended to ensure transparency, early engagement, and readiness prior to the first gateway (Gateway 1). Gateway 1 then comprises a self-assessment to confirm that the authority is prepared to begin the 30-month plan-making process.
- 4.3. The Council has recently been awarded £108,475 of Government funding to support local plan implementation. This funding requires the Council to formally commit to the early preparation of a new local plan under the new system and to meet the relevant procedural deadlines.
- 4.4. The new Rushcliffe Local Plan would replace the local plan documents in force at the time covering the geographical area of Rushcliffe. This will include the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (currently under examination and expected to be adopted in early 2027) and the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2, adopted in 2019. The new Local Plan would comprise a single document for the whole of Rushcliffe and would include new site allocations and a range of planning policies to determine future planning applications. It is a statutory requirement

for local plans to be replaced within five years of adoption; the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2 has therefore exceeded the point at which it should be replaced.

- 4.5. Under the terms of the Government funding, the Council must publish a 'notice of intention to commence local plan preparation' by 30 June 2026 and at least four months before Gateway 1 is reached. Failure to issue the required notice in the correct form and within the required timescale would prevent the Council from validly entering the 30-month plan-preparation process. The funding terms also require that the Gateway 1 self-assessment is published by 31 October 2026.
- 4.6. In accordance with national guidance, the notice of intention to commence local plan preparation, which is at Appendix 1, must include the following mandatory elements:
 - The name of the local planning authority that has prepared the notice;
 - The geographical area to which the local plan is to relate;
 - The title 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 published.
- 4.7. In the run up to Gateway 1, there is a requirement to undertake various tasks designed to ensure the Council is prepared to successfully pass Gateway 1 and commence the 30-month period with a clear evidence base and engagement strategy. During summer 2026, officers will undertake the following scoping and preparatory tasks:
 - Establish project management and governance arrangements for preparation of the plan;
 - Identify approach to consulting and engaging on the plan;
 - Early stakeholder engagement with statutory consultees and infrastructure providers;
 - Review of existing plan performance and identification of key strategic issues;
 - Baseline evidence review, covering housing need, economic conditions, environmental constraints and infrastructure capacity;
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment preparatory work; and
 - Preparation for a focused scoping consultation, including engagement materials and consultation approach.
- 4.8. This work will inform future reports to the Local Development Framework Group and Cabinet to determine the scope and contents of the Rushcliffe Local Plan prior to undertaking periods of public consultation.
- 4.9. The plan-making process includes three gateway stages, along with other key milestones, each of which must be successfully completed to progress to the next stage. A proposed timetable for the preparation of the new Rushcliffe Local Plan is at Appendix 2. The main stages of plan preparation are as set out below in Table 1.

Table 1: Plan stages and timetable

Stage	Timetable
Publish notice of intention to commence plan preparation.	30 June 2026
Scoping consultation with key stakeholders (3 weeks)	14 September 2026
Publish Gateway 1 self-assessment (a self-assessment stage of readiness for plan making including details of project management, approach to consultation and proposed local plan scope) and commence 30-month local plan preparation process.	30 October 2026
Consultation on proposed plan content and evidence (6 weeks).	17 May 2027
Gateway 2: an assessor appointed by the Planning Inspectorate will provide observations and advice on the proposed local plan content and evidence in order to support early resolution of potential soundness concerns.	5 September 2027
Start consultation on the proposed plan (8 weeks).	15 May 2028
Gateway 3: an assessor appointed by the Planning Inspectorate will provide observations and advice as to whether the plan is ready to be submitted for examination	4 September 2028
Submit plan for examination.	2 October 2028
Adopt plan.	By 30 April 2029

- 4.10. The local plan timetable will be updated no later than one month from when it is first published, and each month thereafter. It will also be updated on the same day that a relevant plan preparation stage occurs (these include the three Gateway Assessments and other events).
- 4.11. Due to the terms of the local plan funding, the Council must commence work on the new Rushcliffe Local Plan based on the timetable above. However, the Council will have to consider the implications of local government reorganisation once further announcements have been made by the Government.
- 4.12. Notwithstanding the above, the Council will continue to work with authorities within the Greater Nottingham Planning Partnership to ensure that evidence-based documents can be jointly commissioned and to ensure the Local Plans are aligned where appropriate. Broxtowe Borough Council and Nottingham City Council are both producing new local plans following the same timetable as Rushcliffe.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

- 5.1 Cabinet could decide to defer commencement of a new Local Plan until there is greater clarity on local government reorganisation. This option was rejected as national planning policy and proposed reforms make clear that local government reorganisation is not a valid reason to delay plan preparation. Deferral would prolong reliance on an increasingly out-of-date planning policy framework, heighten the risk of appeals of planning decisions and government intervention and also reduce the Council's ability to influence the content and direction of the EMCCA Spatial Development Strategy.
- 5.2 The Council could delay preparation of a new Local Plan and instead rely for longer on existing Local Plan policies supplemented by national policy. This option was rejected because an out-of-date Local Plan significantly weakens and limits the Council's ability to shape growth in line with local priorities and increases exposure to speculative development and Government intervention. National policy alone cannot provide the locally specific spatial framework required to deliver the Council's corporate priorities or to deal with Rushcliffe specific issues which are not covered by national policy.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1. Local planning authorities are statutorily required to put in place a new local plan every five years. Failure to review and put in place a new local plan would eventually result in the Borough not having an up-to-date development plan. This would increase the risk of speculative unplanned development in Rushcliffe and could weaken the Council's ability to effectively deal with all planning applications.
- 6.2. The new Rushcliffe Local Plan is proposed to be completed in May 2029. This is beyond when the new local government structures across Nottinghamshire and Nottingham are due to come into effect in April 2028 as a result of local government reorganisation. However, at present, what form the new authorities will take is not yet known. The Council will have to consider the implications of local government reorganisation once further announcements have been made by the Government.
- 6.3. In accordance with the conditions of the Government's Local Plan funding, the Council is required to commence work on the new Local Plan in line with the timetable set out above, while remaining alert to any implications arising from future Government announcements on Local Government Reform. As a key mitigation to the risk of misalignment or policy inconsistency should administrative boundaries change, the Council will continue to work closely with partners in the Greater Nottingham Planning Partnership to ensure that evidence is jointly commissioned where appropriate and that emerging Local Plans are as aligned and consistent as possible. The fact that Broxtowe Borough Council and Nottingham City Council have both been awarded the same funding and will therefore be progressing new Local Plans to the same timetable, provides a degree of assurance that a coordinated and resilient

planning framework is in existence across the wider area to respond to future governance arrangements.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

At present, the workload required in undertaking preparation of the new Local Plan will be undertaken utilising existing Planning Policy resources. Funding received from Government in earlier years also supports this: £108,475 (in 2025/26) of local plan implementation funding and £70,000 (in 2024/25) Green Belt review funding. Any additional resources that might be required as the local plan preparation process progresses will need to be considered as part of the Council's budget review processes but are considered unlikely.

7.2. Legal Implications

It is a statutory requirement, as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended, including by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023), for the Council to have a local plan in place. Under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (the "2026 Regulations"), local plans must be replaced within five years of their adoption date to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community. It is important to have an up-to-date local plan because the local plan is the main policy document used when making decisions on planning applications.

Issuing the notice of intention to commence local plan preparation is a statutory requirement of Regulation 19 of the 2026 Regulations. Failure to fully comply could invalidate subsequent stages of plan preparation and place the Council at risk of challenge.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no direct equalities implications at this stage. There would be a requirement to prepare Equality Impact Assessments for the new Rushcliffe Local Plan's policies and proposals during plan preparation and to take account of the assessment outcomes.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no direct community safety implications arising from matters covered in this report.

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

The new Rushcliffe Local Plan would be expected to include policies and proposals to assist securing Biodiversity Net Gain.

7.6. Local Government Reorganisation

The new Rushcliffe Local Plan is proposed to be completed in May 2029. This is beyond when the new local government structures across Nottinghamshire and Nottingham are due to come into effect in April 2028 as a result of local government reorganisation. However, at present, what form the new authorities will take is not yet known. The Council will have to consider the implications of local government reorganisation once further announcements have been made by the Government.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The new Rushcliffe Local Plan would establish a strategic framework for ensuring that new development respects and, where possible, enhances Rushcliffe's environment.
Quality of Life	The new Local Plan would be underpinned by policies and proposals that aim to maintain the quality of life for both existing and new Rushcliffe residents.
Efficient Services	The provision of efficient services includes ongoing appraisal and alignment of resources to growth aspirations. The new Local Plan would include policies and proposals to achieve development that is supported by adequate infrastructure.
Sustainable Growth	The Government views the primary purpose of the planning system as contributing to the achievement of development, including the provision of new homes, new commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. The Local Plan will play a vital role in achieving sustainable growth locally.

9. Recommendation

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Background papers available for Inspection:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1: Notice of Intention to Commence the Rushcliffe Local Plan Appendix 2: Rushcliffe Local Plan Timetable