

Harlow Council Local Plan Timetable – October 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 Harlow Council is required to prepare, maintain and publish a Local Plan Timetable under Part 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2026. The form and content of the timetable must accord with section 4 of the Regulations and include dates in respect of when the council intends to:

- Give notice of their intention to commence Local Plan preparation
- Publish the Local Plan for consultations and when representations must be received by
- Receive advice and observations on the Local Plan through their necessary Gateway Stages
- Submit the Local Plan
- Adopt the Local Plan

1.2 The timetable must be made available publicly and kept up-to-date, along with relevant monitoring, so that the local community and interested parties can keep track of progress. It must also be provided as a dataset to accord with the Planning Data (England) Regulations 2026. This is in the form of a CSV File.

1.3 The new Local Plan will include new and/or amended policies, as required, based on:

- the requirements of the NPPF which includes National Development Management Policies
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- consideration of new or updated technical evidence that has regard to current and future socioeconomic and environmental conditions
- the results of the monitoring of the effectiveness of existing Local Plan policies
- recommendations identified by the Inspector of the 2019-20 Local Plan Examination

2. New Local Plan Making System

2.1 In March 2026, the government published the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations setting out how Plans should be prepared under the new system. This was previously referred to in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The government have [prepared webpages to](#) help guide local authorities preparing plans under the new system.

2.2 The proposed new plan-making system would require a new Local Plan to be produced under various stages, comprising:

- informal plan-making
- scoping and early participation
- plan visioning and strategy development
- evidence gathering and drafting the plan
- engagement, proposing changes, submission
- examination of the plan
- adoption of the plan

2.3 Within these stages are several milestones, including:

- giving notice of the formal start of the plan-making process, including a scoping consultation where consultees are notified and asked about matters that might shape the direction of the Local Plan
- three gateway stages, with the latter two having Planning Inspector involvement
- two mandatory public consultations (in addition to the scoping consultation)

2.4 Once notice of formal plan-making has been given, there will be at least 4 months before the Council passes through Gateway 1 from which time the Council will be required to produce the Local Plan (including consultations, submission, examination and adoption) within a 30-month timeframe.

2.5 Following adoption of the Local Plan, it is expected that monitoring of the policies would take place and notice of intention to review the Plan four years and 8 months after the Plan was adopted.

2.6 The timetable to produce the new Harlow Local Plan, which aligns with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2026, can be found on the following page.

2.7 The timetable is based on the [government requirement](#) for the rollout of the new local plan-making system, that councils must give notice of their intention to commence a new Local Plan under the new system by 31 December 2026 or by the date their adopted Local Plan becomes 4 years and 8 months old, whichever is later. The deadline of 31 December 2026 applies to Harlow Council because of the age of the existing Local Plan which was adopted in December 2020.

Development Plan Document	New Harlow Local Development Plan (“the new Local Plan”)
Subject matter	The new Local Plan will consider which policies may require updating, removing or replacing and whether new policies need to be introduced following a period of monitoring, consideration of national policy changes and technical evidence. As a result, a new spatial vision for the district and a framework for the future development of the area will be produced, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure, as well as a basis for conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and achieving well-designed places.
Geographical area	The administrative area of Harlow District Council.

TIMETABLE

The plan-making stages and milestones activities detailed in the timetable below comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2026.

Plan-making stage and milestones	Activity	Purpose	Date
Notice of Intention	- Publish notice of intention to commence plan making including: - Name of Local authority - Geographical area - Where timetable published - Date of notice	Give at least four months' notice of the start of plan-making	18 Dec 2026
Scoping consultation	<u>Undertake scoping consultation</u>	Provides the local community and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to have their say at the very start of the plan-making process. Views will be sought on: - what to include in the local plan - how to approach future local plan engagement - any other matters	21 Dec – 29 Jan
Gateway 1 (Self-assessment)	- Mandatory review of whether to begin - Publication of self-assessment	- Ensures the Local Plan Authority is ready to begin the 30-month plan making process by considering - Resources and finance - Governance and project management - Scoped evidence needs - Potential risks - Community engagement methods - Anticipated content including draft vision and measurable outcomes - Feedback from scoping consultation - Early identification of any SEA¹ objectives	By 30 April 2027

¹ Strategic Environmental Assessment

START OF 30-MONTH PROCESS			
Ongoing Production: Plan visioning, strategy development and engagement	• Prepare the following for consultation: ○ Vision and measurable outcomes ○ Aims and objectives ○ Approach to achieving vision ○ Summary of approach to policies/locations of development ○ Details of evidence gathered and any further evidence to gather	• Ensures readiness for mandatory public consultation	May – Sept 2027
<u>Local Plan Content and Evidence Public Consultation</u> (6 weeks Min)	• Engagement with communities and stakeholders on Harlow’s proposed content, vision, approach and evidence base	• First formal opportunity for communities and stakeholders to comment on draft	27 Sept – 8 Nov 2027
Ongoing Production: Drafting the plan, and continued evidence gathering	• Reflect and make changes to the Local Plan strategy, policies and spatial options as a result of the consultation. • Continue producing proportionate evidence, directly linked to the tests of soundness	• Ensures readiness for Gateway 2 and further consultation	Nov 2027 – May 2028
Gateway 2 (Advice and observations)	• Submission of relevant documents and material to an Inspector for observations	• Ensures legal and procedural compliance • Monitors and tracks progress • Ensure SDS² compliance	31 May – 30 June 2028
<u>Local Plan Public Consultation</u> (8 weeks Min)	• Engagement with communities and stakeholders on the draft submission-ready Local Plan	• Resolving issues at this stage avoids need to consult again • Preparing Plan for Gateway 3 and submission	03 July – 28 Aug 2028

² Spatial Development Strategy

Ongoing Production: Modifications as a result of consultation	Amend the Local Plan as a result of consultation responses	Ensures Local Plan is ready to pass Gateway 3 and submit	Sept – Nov 2028
Gateway 3 (Stop/Go)	- Submission of relevant documents to Inspector including: - Local Plan - Policies Map - Statements of compliance/soundness - Consultation statements and representations received - Environmental Report - Gateway 3 completion statement	- Validates that key requirements have been met and Plan can be submitted - Gateway 3 may recommend further changes and resubmission of the Gateway check	30 Nov 2028 – 12 Jan 2029
Submission	Submit Local Plan documents for examination	Allows start of examination process	By 31 Jan 2029
Examination (including any modifications)	Inspector produces matters, issues and questions Examination hearing sessions held Main Modifications consultation if required	- Ensures Local Plan is sound and legally compliant - Local Plan may be amended to take account of issues arising at the Examination	March – Sept 2029
Finalisation and adoption of plan	- Inspector publishes report - Council adopts the Local Plan	Enables the Local Plan to come into force and become a material consideration in the determining of planning applications	Adoption by 31 Oct 2029
Monitoring	Monitor how Local Plan is performing	Ensures key objectives are met and policies are effective	Ongoing from date of adoption
Local Plan update	Commences 4 years and 8 months after adoption	Ensures Local Plan remains up-to-date and effective	By 30 Jun 2034