Winchester City Council

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Your Ref:
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[redacted]

28 October 2025

Dear David,

Subject: Response to Havant Borough Council's Letter Regarding Unmet Housing and Employment Need

Thank you for your letter dated 27 August 2025 and for the continued constructive engagement between our authorities under the Duty to Cooperate. I apologise for the delay. We are currently working to complete our current draft plan so that it can be adopted as soon as possible (which follows the transitional arrangements in the NPPF). We are also commencing work on next plan (to take us to 2044) under the new plan making arrangements. We are also engaged on a number of important Public Inquiries.

We do appreciate the comprehensive overview that you have provided in your letter regarding Havant Borough Council's position on unmet housing and employment need, and the extensive work that you have undertaken to explore all available options for accommodating development within your borough. Thank you for providing the clarification on the points that we raised in our Local Plan representations which will no doubt come under close scrutiny at your Local Plan examination.

Winchester City Council's emerging Local Plan

Our primary focus is to move the emerging Local Plan forward to the 6 week public consultation on the Main Modifications and then onto subsequent adoption as soon as possible next Year.

Next Local Plan

Alongside progressing work on moving the emerging Local Plan towards adoption, Winchester City Council is also committed to undertake work on the next Local Plan.

This work has involved commissioning AECOM to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment and going out to tender to update the Employment and Retail Assessment. We are also in the very early process of reviewing briefs for various commissions such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, Water Cycle Study and a Local Plan Viability Assessment. We have also commenced a new 'Call for Sites' which closes on the 21st November 2025.

Whilst we have been working on our new housing Standard Method figure and we have briefed Cabinet Members on the unmet housing need we are not yet in a position to start detailed work on the Settlement Hierarchy and the approach towards site selection process. We have not undertaken detailed work on the process on how we are going to meet the increase in the Standard Method figure and ultimately, what contribution we might be able to make to unmet needs from neighbouring authorities.

We understand from our recent meeting at Portsmouth City Council Offices on 9th October 2025 that the unmet housing need for Havant, Portsmouth and Gosport now stands at 18,347 homes and 19,973m^2 of employment floorspace. We have also recently had a Duty to-cooperate meeting with New Forest District Council who have indicated that they will be shortly contacting us as they have an unmet housing need of around 7,500 homes.

A fundamental point that Winchester City Council wish to continue to make is that given the scale of the unmet housing need it is not just Winchester there are other Local Planning Authorities in Hampshire that all have a role to play in helping to meet the unmet housing need. You will know that around 40% of the City Councils geography is covered by the South Downs National Park Authority and they are also likely to have an unmet housing need. As there is a growing wider unmet housing need across Hampshire, we strongly feel that all Hampshire councils have a role to play and we all need to work collaboratively to plan strategically for this unmet housing need. Winchester City Council will continue to make this point in our Local Plan representations that we will be making in the coming months on other Local Plan consultations in Hampshire and we would continue to encourage you to do the same.

As we are prioritising work on ensuring that the emerging Local Plan moves towards swiftly towards adoption, as I have indicated above, we are in the very early process of identifying and scoping the key issues for us and we will need to prepare a project plan. As this work has not been undertaken it is not possible at this time to provide you with any further information.

We do acknowledge the importance of planning for unmet needs across Hampshire and remain committed to working collaboratively with Havant Borough Council and other neighbouring authorities. However, given the early stage of our Local Plan Review, it would be premature to make any firm commitments regarding the accommodation of unmet housing or employment need at this time as we have not yet mapped out the process that we intend to follow.

We will ensure that Havant Borough Council is kept informed as our Local Plan Review progresses, and we would be happy to meet again in due course to discuss the timetable, evidence base development, and opportunities for cooperation, including the preparation of an updated Statement of Common Ground.

Thank you again for your letter and for your continued cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Fox

Strategic Planning Manager
Winchester City Council