

# **Runnymede Borough Council**

## **Service Area Plan 25/26**

### **Planning, Economy & Built Environment**

#### **DRAFT FOR COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

##### **Approvals**

Approved by CLT: 11/12/2024

Approved by Service Cttee: 26/02/2025



# Service Area Plan for Financial Year 2025/26

**Service Area: Planning, Economy & Built Environment**

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**Version:** FINAL

## Mission statement

The Planning, Economy and Built Environment Service Area was formed during the 2023/24 financial year following a merger of the Development Management and Building Control Service Area with the Planning Policy and Economic Development Service Area. The enlarged Service Area now also incorporates the Climate Change Team which has been relocated from the Chief Executive's Office. An Infrastructure and Developer Contributions sub-Team was also formed during the 2024/25 financial year, using existing resource. This team will be vital in determining which infrastructure projects at a Borough and local level will be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy

The Council's Development Management and Building Control services are currently performing to a high level. This is demonstrated by a high level of performance against national and local targets, a very good success rate when decisions have been appealed and a low level of customer complaints.

Both services have delivered a number of key projects in recent years including process updates, system roll outs and service restructures. In 2024/25 it is intended to build upon this work and deliver service objectives and statutory services from these strong foundations that have been laid in recent years.

For Development Management, the service remains in a key delivery phase; working positively with applicants and stakeholders alike as major applications are brought forward for a number of the allocated sites in the Local Plan. Alongside this, the team continues to determine a high volume of other planning applications across the Borough, as well as deliver a high-quality pre-application service.

This delivery is focused on quality, with the service looking to deliver good infrastructure rich communities where people wish to live and visit as well as good conditions for businesses to

deliver and thrive. The service will look to maintain its high level of service and performance even with the continued increase in complex work expected over the coming years. The structure of teams and allocation of resource is regularly reviewed to help meet these challenges and improve the resilience of the service. Following enhancement of the Planning Enforcement team in recent years the team will maintain its full-staffing levels and has already made significant progress in decreasing cases on hand and issuing notices.

In relation to the Planning Policy Team, over the last year, a formal review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan was completed as required under national legislation. A timetable for the update of the Local Plan was also agreed, to commence in the 2025/26 financial year. In readiness for the commencement of plan making, the team has commenced updates to large parts of the Local Plan evidence base and work on the production of a Borough-wide Design Code. The team has also continued to work with partners to progress strategic projects including the delivery of the A320 improvements and stage 2 (feasibility design/development) of the Runnymede Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

The newly formed Infrastructure and Developer Contributions sub-team has focused on designing detailed procedures, application forms and guidance notes to implement the adopted Developer Contributions Governance Arrangements. In July 2024, the Full Council endorsed the creation of the Developer Contributions Advisory Group, in accordance with the Governance Arrangements. Subsequent to the Council's Constitution being amended to give effect to the Group and the Terms of Reference, officers from the Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Team oversaw the creation of the Group and then briefed its new members on the processes and timescales involved in running the first Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funding Programme (CFP). Both internal and external infrastructure providers have also been briefed on the agreed process in readiness for the first CFP being launched in Spring 2025.

Building Control has reverted to an in-house service having departed a shared service arrangement with Surrey Heath. Building Control service has continued to deliver a high-quality service to its customers and its main focus is ensuring compliance with the Building Safety regulator requirements, maintaining market share and work on control and systems.

The Economic Development Team commenced delivery of the Economic Development Strategy and has been delivering the Council's Shared Prosperity Fund project which is reaching its final stages. Economic Development will seek to continue delivering the strategy, increasing employment skills of residents and ensuring prosperity within the Borough.

In relation to the Climate Change Team, the additional temporary support from the Planning Policy and Recycling teams came to an end during the 2024/25 financial year and a restructure within the team has provided permanent resource. During 2024/25, the team has delivered two communications campaigns related to food waste and has worked with other teams on a range of projects related to reducing emissions from transport including introduction of HVO fuel for the Council's 80 vehicle fleet, and to facilitate EV rollout across the Council's estate. Officers also worked with the Human Resources Team to start work on the development of a Green Travel Strategy for staff and worked with the Community Services Team to reinstate and update our partnership with Happy Energy Solutions Ltd as a delivery agent for ECO 4 for the Council.

The team led on the promotion and Council participation in the 2024 Great Big Green Week and attended the Junior Citizen event; these initiatives combined have engaged over 1,300 children. Officers attended three local events over the summer to engage with residents, launch the communications campaigns and promote home energy efficiency grants and schemes available. Several presentations have been given to young people at schools and

RHUL, including green careers talks. The first review of the Climate Change Action Plan was also completed.

Key priorities of the Service Area over the 2025/26 financial year will be as follows:

### **Development Management team**

- To deliver a high level of planning applications and appeals performance, determining applications in a timely and professional way.
- To seek to deliver an effective planning enforcement service and make progress on a wide range of cases.
- To participate as Local Planning Authority on behalf of Runnymede's residents and businesses in existing and future National Strategic Infrastructure Projects, including the River Thames Scheme.
- To have due regard to recent new material planning considerations in decision-making such as a revised NPPF, Biodiversity net gain rules, or similar local or national changes.

### **Planning Policy Team**

- To fulfil the Council's statutory duties with respect to the development of planning policy to guide decision making within the Borough<sup>1</sup>, in particular:
  - Carrying out the required Scoping and Early Participation stage of plan making which will include notifying the public that plan making in Runnymede has commenced and carrying out a 6 week scoping consultation.
  - Commencing the required Plan Visioning and Strategy Development stage of plan making with the expectation that the Council will submit material to a government appointed assessor for advisory Gateway check 1 by the end of the financial year.
  - Continuing work to produce a Design Code for the Borough, compliant with the National Model Design Code;
  - Refresh of the Local Plan evidence base, as appropriate;
  - Publication of the Annual Monitoring Report and other required reporting which is necessary to support the Planning Policy function;
  - Provision of support to Neighbourhood Fora on delivery of Neighbourhood Plans;
  - Introduction of a Local Plan promotion service which would charge site promoters for meetings to discuss promised allocations in the early stages of plan making to cover the cost of officer time.
- To work with partners to support delivery of improvements to transport infrastructure in the Borough, in particular through the delivery of the A320 works, and working

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<sup>1</sup> In relation to the Local Plan, this is dependent on the new Plan Making arrangements coming into force in Summer/Autumn 2025 in line with current Government commitments.

collaboratively with Surrey County Council to complete stage 2 of the Runnymede Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and to continue to support the Egham Hythe and Chertsey Riverside Local Streets Improvements projects.

- To participate in the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group, and other strategic planning initiatives where appropriate.

#### **Infrastructure and Developer Contributions sub-Team**

- To fulfil the Council's statutory duties with respect to the collection and monitoring of developer contributions, in particular establishing the process for monitoring projects to which CIL has been allocated;
- To work with other Service Areas, external infrastructure providers and members of the Developer Contributions Advisory Group to deliver the Council's first CIL Funding Programme in accordance with the Developer Contributions Governance Arrangements;
- To run consultation and engagement activity with a range of stakeholders, including local community groups, on the use of neighbourhood CIL monies in accordance with the Developer Contributions Governance Arrangements and CIL Regulations (ensuring consultation outcomes inform decision-making) and to run the Council's first neighbourhood CIL bidding round.

#### **Building Control Team**

- To continue to deliver the statutory and non-statutory elements of the building control service.
- To continue to investigate the potential long term management options for the service.
- Continue to implement the new requirements brought forward under the Building Safety Act 2022 and ensure compliance with all regulation.

#### **Economic Development Team**

- To deliver on the six priority areas identified in the Economic Development Strategy, including the outcomes in the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.
- To progress a review of the Runnymede Economic Assessment.
- To participate in the enterprise zone Steering Group with the Surrey County Council (successor to the EM3 LEP) and other partners to support the successful delivery of the Enterprise Zone at Longcross.

#### **Climate Change Team**

- To work with other Service Areas and external partners, as appropriate, to deliver the climate change commitments within the 2025/26 Service Area Plans across the organisation.
- Publication of the 2024/25 carbon emissions report and other required reporting which is necessary to support the Climate Change function.
- To roll out the agreed 2025/26 Communications Plan which will focus on building a network of environment champions both within the council and within our communities.
- To implement agreed parts of the RBC Green Travel Strategy.

- To promote and participate in the GBGW 2025 and attend the Junior Citizen event as part of the Council's ongoing outreach with schools.
- Commence the roll out of the agreed carbon literacy training programme for council staff, councillors and community members.
- Taking a lead role in implementing the Council's Electric Vehicle Strategy (Dec 2023), specifically:
  - Action Five: Investigate opportunities with partners, in the private sector, to provide additional charge points.
  - Action Six: To look at opportunities to incentivise and promote the use of e bikes within the borough.
  - Action seven: Raise awareness of the location of charging points in the Borough as well as the benefits of EV ownership, such as reduced environmental impacts and improved air quality.
- To develop a Borough wide Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategy
- To produce a costed action plan to meet 2030 operational target, taking in to account the need to remain within the Council's financial envelope.
- To work with SCC to maximise delivery of the Warm Homes Grant across the borough.

Key challenges/opportunities and drivers for change including:

- Potential legislative changes are on the horizon. In planning, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, and new responsibilities from the Environment Act 2021 have the potential to impact upon the service. Similarly, the new obligations set out in Building Safety Act 2022 are likely to be rolled out in this plan period. The Service Area is however considered to be in a good position to plan for and react to changes as they arise.
- To adopt and respond to increasing requirements to digitalise the Planning System, including future digitalisation and communication of Local Plans.
- To overcome increasing budget constraints, in particular capital funds to deliver infrastructure and urban realm improvements and then identify sufficient funding to maintain them in the longer term, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation measures by successfully sourcing the most effective grant funding opportunities to aid project delivery.
- Ensuring projects are evidence base driven by the effective use and interrogation of data and utilisation of new technology where appropriate to monitor change.
- Achieving local community buy-in to enable effective project delivery and the need for increasing and effective joint working with other Service Areas and shareholders, including further cooperation between the five boroughs in NW Surrey on economic development initiatives and between infrastructure providers on priorities for CIL expenditure.

# Service Information

## Service Area:

### Planning, Economy & Built Environment

Service Area 1:	Development Management
Service Area 2:	Building Control
Service Area 3:	Planning Policy Service
Service Area 4:	Infrastructure and Developer Contributions
Service Area 5:	Climate Change
Service Area 6:	Economic Development

#### Description of Service (1) Development Management

Main Purpose: The management of development and the delivery of new homes, through the encouragement and assessment of applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended, to deliver the housing and economic growth specified in the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan including the Longcross Garden Village; the use of enforcement powers under that Act to control harmful and unauthorised development, and the protection of trees that are protected under that Act, and the administration and monitoring of contributions received under that Act.

Development Management decisions are made against the development plan for Runnymede which is the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan; Development Management decisions are to increase housing supply by 7629 net additional dwellings 2015-2030 as well as provide significant employment floor space and other opportunities.

The key functions within the Development Management Team are:

- The provision of planning advice to customers (both external and internal) including pre-application advice.
- The processing and determination of applications for planning permission and associated consents.
- The investigation of breaches of planning control and exercise of the Council's planning enforcement functions.
- The administration and collection of developer contributions and obligations under s106 agreements, the supporting of CMC in accordance with Developer Contribution governance arrangements for the spending of infrastructure moneys.
- The protection of trees which contribute to the quality of the environment and the protection of heritage assets which contribute to the historic environment and provision of advice to residents and processing associated consents.

- The defence of Council decisions in these areas in appeal and court, as may be required.
- Partnership working with other service areas, including in relation to National Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and equivalent (as LPA) and policy formulation.

The number of enforcement requests in 2025/26 is estimated to be in the region of 250-300, and expected to remain at a similar level to 2024/2025

The number of planning submissions of all types determined in 2023/2024 is estimated to be 2000 and expected to remain at a similar level in 2024/2025 the applications are likely to continue to be of a complex nature due to the adoption of the Local Plan in 2020.

## **Description of Service (2) Building Control**

Main Purpose: Providing a Building Control Service as required by the Building Act 1984, including a 24/7 dangerous structures callout provision.

The key functions within the Building Control Team are:

- The provision of Building Control advice to customers (both external and internal).
- Ensuring compliance with Building Safety Act.
- The determination of applications for building regulation approval and associated consents.
- The setting and collection of application charges ensuring the section breaks even in its fee related account.
- The inspection of works on site to ensure compliance with the building regulations and associated legislation.
- The investigation of potential breaches of the building regulations and exercise of the section's enforcement functions.
- The inspection of unauthorised building works and exercise of the section's enforcement functions.
- The processing of demolition notices and safety inspections of works on site.
- The provision of a 24/7 dangerous structure call-out service including major incidents.
- The defence of council decisions in these areas in court, as may be required.
- The processing of approved inspector applications and maintain a register of their works.
- The processing of competent persons applications and maintain a register of their works.

The key scope of the team's activities during 2025/26 is estimated as shown below.

- To determine circa 450 Building Regulation applications and undertake 3,200 site inspections of building works within 24 hours, or on the same day where notification is received by 10.00am.
- Undertake investigations of approximately 10 reported unauthorised building works.



- Administer 10-15 demolition notices with sites attended during the demolition process.
- Provide a 24/7 dangerous structure callout service, with staff committed to attending site within 2 hours of initial notification; approximately 6 callouts are projected within the period.
- The team also project manage the processing of 250 approved inspector applications and maintain a register of 4,000 approved inspector and competent person notifications.
- In addition, the section is legally obliged to provide free general advice, assistance and up to 1 hours pre submission consultation for proposed works; as such these works are dealt with in the most cost/ time efficient method generally by telephone.

### **Description of Service (3) Planning Policy**

Main Purpose: Key functions of the Planning Policy Team are:

- Gathering evidence to inform plan making.
- Preparation of planning policy including the Local Plan (incorporating a borough wide Design Code), Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance documents;
- Supporting communities as they prepare Neighbourhood Plans for their areas.
- Monitoring the implementation of adopted policies to ensure contingencies can be enacted and future policy is evidence based.
- To support partners in preparing and implementing strategy for protection of the Borough's key environmental assets (i.e. SNCIs, SANGs delivery etc.) and to help meet Net Zero targets.
- Assisting with responses to NSIPs/major infrastructure projects as required.
- To work in partnership with Surrey County Council on relevant projects, for example delivery of the A320 mitigation works, the Egham Hythe Local Street Improvements and Runnymede LCWIP.
- To input into the formation of sub-regional/regional/national policy where applicable through public consultations and other forms of engagement such as HSPG.

Ongoing business as usual activities include:

- Support for development of Neighbourhood Plans (Plans are currently being produced for Virginia Water and Ottershaw).
- Annual update of the Council's Brownfield Register and maintenance of the Council's self-build and custom build register.
- Publication of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to monitor the effectiveness of Local Plan policy in accordance with the monitoring framework set out in the Local Plan.
- Policy observations – provide observations to planning applications for Development Management as required to support the successful implementation of the adopted Local Plan.

- Working positively with partners during the preparation of planning policy documents and responding to consultations undertaken by neighbouring authorities and other relevant bodies (i.e. the Environment Agency) during the preparation of policy documents.
- Producing/updating relevant parts of the Local Plan evidence base as required.
- Organising and convening the Community Planning Panel.
- Participating in the external meetings with partners and stakeholders as appropriate.

### **Description of Service (3) Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Team**

Main purpose: The key functions within the Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Team are:

- The preparation of relevant infrastructure documents and implementing governance arrangements in accordance with the adopted Developer Contributions Governance Arrangements.
- Supporting the Developer Contributions Advisory Group and Corporate Management Committee in accordance with Developer Contribution Governance Arrangements for the spending of infrastructure monies.
- Working positively with internal and external infrastructure providers, local communities and other stakeholders to understand infrastructure needs and priorities to accommodate development growth.
- Understanding how changing national, county, and local infrastructure plans and strategies affect Local Plan-making and related documents such as the CIL Charging Schedule.

Ongoing business as usual activities include:

- To administer the collection, enforcement, management, and monitoring of developer contributions and planning obligations, including CIL and S106 Agreements.
- To produce and provide guidance and advice on infrastructure and developer contributions matters, including keeping the Public Facing Module and other relevant web pages updated.
- To manage the budgets and financial contributions relating to all developer contributions, working with associated Council departments.
- To run engagement activity and prepare documentation for the annual CIL Funding Programme and annual neighbourhood CIL bidding round.
- To organise and convene the Developer Contributions Advisory Group, and provide support, advice and report on options and recommendations for infrastructure spending.
- To provide ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers, local communities and other relevant stakeholders to understand infrastructure needs, to inform their future investment plans and update the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Schedules.
- Review of CIL charges at appropriate intervals, including in association with updated policies in the Local Plan.

- The preparation of infrastructure-related local development plan evidence, policy, supplementary planning documents and other planning guidance as appropriate.

#### **Description of Service (4) Climate Change**

Key functions of the Climate Change Team are:

- To coordinate the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, Climate Change Action Plan and other relevant strategies/programmes in coordination with Corporate Heads of Service and Members.
- Work with Corporate Heads of Service and frontline staff to promote and support the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, including relevant supporting initiatives required to meet adopted carbon reduction targets.
- To provide advice and guidance to internal and external project leads in regard to planning, prioritisation, specification, and delivery of projects as far as this relates to climate change policy and the wider delivery the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- To work to continually refine and streamline the Council's processes around emissions monitoring and reporting (both internally and to relevant external bodies), and compile regular reports to Corporate Management Committee, other relevant committees and working parties on various aspects of the Council's response to climate change, including progress towards key objectives and projects, and potential new initiatives and other developments.
- To develop and deliver a continual rolling programme of training for employees, elected Members and other relevant groups within the wider community (as appropriate) to ensure high levels of carbon literacy.
- To engage with Runnymede's communities (including young people), organisations and other stakeholders in a variety of ways to encourage behavioural change in line with the relevant Council strategies and policies.
- To monitor the progress of internal and external projects which have implications for delivering the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and make recommendations for corrective action where necessary to bring projects back on course with any identified climate change/sustainability objectives.
- To input into applications to external bodies / Government for funding to enable delivery of the Council's climate change objectives.
- To take a lead role in the compilation of responses to Government and other consultations on Climate Change and information requests from external bodies.
- To actively participate in the Surrey Greener Futures Partnership and other relevant groups (including but not limited to the HSPG and Surrey Climate Change Officers Group).

#### **Description of Service (5) Economic Development**

Main Purpose: The key functions within the Economic Development Team are:

- To deliver the projects in the Economic Development Strategy and produce a review of the Economic Assessment;
- Maintaining the Business Runnymede website and supporting the activities of Business Runnymede.
- Supporting the economic development and management of Addlestone, Chertsey and Egham Town Centres to enhance the urban environment and increase viability and vitality.
- To participate in existing and future National Strategic Infrastructure Project DCO processes.
- To support delivery of improvements to the transport network through partnership working with Surrey County Council Highways Authority, Network Rail, South West Trains, Transport for the South East and other relevant partners.
- To work in partnership with the Surrey County Council (as successor to the Local Enterprise Partnership) to promote delivery of the Enterprise Zone and consider funding proposals for investment in the zone.
- To work in partnership with other Council business units to identify, prepare and support funding bids to deliver economic development objectives and priorities.
- To monitor the legacy of the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan;
- To administer Business Runnymede and strengthen engagement with and between the business community.

Ongoing business as usual activities include:

- Support the activities of Business Runnymede, organising events, producing the monthly newsletter and maintaining the website.
- Ongoing engagement with the business community, SCC and other relevant stakeholders.
- Engagement with town centre stakeholders to support markets/events and other relevant projects.

# Planned Activities



## Planning, Economy & Built Environment

Total number of planned activities

12

### Types of Activities

Project

3

Review

0

One-off

5

New Core Activity

4

Project						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
Not Reported	A320 scheme	Economic Development	01 April 2021	01 April 2021	31 March 2026	In progress
Project	EV Charging at the Civic Centre	Climate Change	04 November 2024	04 November 2024	30 September 2025	In progress
Project	Update to the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan	Economic Development	01 September 2025		31 August 2028	Paused

Review						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress

One-off						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
One Off	Chertsey Local Streets Improvements project	Economic Development	23 January 2024	23 January 2024	31 March 2026	In progress
One Off	Development of proposals as part of the Egham Hythe Local Street Improvements project	Economic Development	01 June 2023	01 June 2023	31 December 2025	In progress
One Off	Explore Fast Track Planning Applications	Economic Development	01 April 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
One Off	Development of Design Code for the Borough	Climate Change	01 November 2023	27 November 2023	31 August 2028	In progress
One Off	Production of the Runnymede stage 2 LCWIP report in partnership with SCC	Climate Change	01 October 2023	04 October 2023	31 August 2025	In progress

New Core Activity						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
New Core Activity	Continue to work towards meeting the Council's 2030 operational net zero target and using our sphere of influence to support 2050 target for Borough National and Local Climate Change target	Climate Change	01 November 2022	01 November 2022	31 December 2030	In progress
New Core Activity	Development of clusters in tech	Economic Development	01 April 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
New Core Activity	Investigate opportunities with partners, in the private sector to provide additional EV charge points	Climate Change	01 January 2024	23 November 2023	31 March 2026	In progress
New Core Activity	Raise awareness of the location of charging points in the Borough as well as the benefits of EV ownership, such as reduced environmental impacts and improved air quality	Climate Change	01 May 2024	01 May 2024	31 March 2026	In progress

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