



# **VIRGINIA WATER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

## **BASIC CONDITIONS STATEMENT**

**July 2025**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Virginia Water Neighbourhood Forum (VWNF) to accompany the Virginia Water Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2035 (Submission Version May 2025) on submission to Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) under regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended (“the Regulations”).
- 1.2. In April 2019, members of Runnymede Borough Council Planning Committee resolved to designate The Virginia Water Village Neighbourhood Forum and Virginia Water Neighbourhood Area. Both were redesignated in March 2024.
- 1.3. A steering group was formed comprising members of the Forum. The group has been delegated authority by the Forum to make day-to-day decisions on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Area is shown in Figure 1.

## 2. The Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for the Neighbourhood Area. The policies described in the Neighbourhood Plan relate to the development and use of land in the designated Neighbourhood Area and do not relate to any other designated Neighbourhood Area. The plan period is from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2035.
- 2.2. The Neighbourhood Plan does not contain policies relating to excluded development in accordance with the Regulations. The document also contains a number of non-statutory proposals that relate to Aspirations which do not form part of the examined ‘neighbourhood development plan’ but provides a ‘wish list’ that has emerged during consultation that the Forum has considered during the preparation of the document.
- 2.3. This Statement addresses each of the four ‘basic conditions’ required of the Regulations and explains how the submitted Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 2.4. The Regulations state that a Neighbourhood Plan will be considered to have met the basic conditions if:
  - Having regard to National Policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood development plan
  - The making of the neighbourhood development plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
  - The making of the neighbourhood development plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area)
  - The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations

**Figure 1: Map showing extent of Neighbourhood Planning Area**



### 3. Background

- 3.1. The plan preparation has been led by Virginia Water Neighbourhood Forum. It has comprised three main stages:
  - Evidence gathering and community engagement which has been incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan
  - Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan (November 2023), the draft plan and accompanying background documents were published for more than 6 weeks from December 2023 to March 2024 in accordance with regulation 14 of the Regulations. Full details are set out in the separate Consultation Report.
  - Submission Neighbourhood Plan (May 2025) which takes into account representations received on the earlier version and has been modified for submission to RBC; it is accompanied by the Basic Conditions Statement, the Consultation Statement, Virginia Water Design Codes, Local Gap Study (Briarwood Landscape Architecture), Local Centre and Wider Connections Study (PJA), Cycling and Walking Review (PJA), Transport Strategy (PJA), Community Infrastructure.
- 3.2. The Neighbourhood Forum has consulted the local community extensively throughout the process.
- 3.3. The website [VIRGINIA WATER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - Home](#) has been used throughout the process to disseminate information, act as a depository for documentation and to publicise consultations.

- 3.4. A number of methods to raise awareness have been used, including banners, flyers and notices on noticeboards around the Area.
- 3.5. It has also worked closely with officers of RBC since the start of the project to collate and examine the evidence base, to design and iterate policy proposals and to define the proper relationship between the NP and the Local Plan.
- 3.6. The Plan has not duplicated Local Plan policies which will be used in determining planning applications. This has allowed the Neighbourhood Plan to focus on a smaller number of locally relevant and important policies.

#### 4. Conformity with National Planning Policy

- 4.1. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with regard to national policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) and the revised Framework of February 2025 and is mindful of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) in respect of formulating neighbourhood plans.
- 4.2. There are several NPPF paragraphs that provide general guidance on neighbourhood planning, to which the Neighbourhood Plan has directly responded:
- 4.3. In relation to the presumption in favour of sustainable development:
  - Paragraph 12: the development plan is the starting point for decision making and this includes any neighbourhood plan.
  - Paragraph 13: neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.
  - Paragraph 14: reminds us of the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to be significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits provided, four criteria apply.
- 4.4. The Neighbourhood Forum believes that the Neighbourhood Plan is planning positively for future development in the Area and supports the delivery of the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plan as advised in the above paragraphs of the NPPF.
- 4.5. Paragraphs 18 and 21 advise that policies to address non-strategic matters and detailed matters should be included within neighbourhood plans, and the Neighbourhood Plan contains such policies.
- 4.6. Advice on non-strategic policies and the role of neighbourhood plans is identified in paragraphs 29 and 30. The Neighbourhood Plan establishes a shared vision for the area and its policies shape, direct and help deliver sustainable development. It has sought to translate aims into a number of meaningful planning policies to complement other development plan policies for managing development.
- 4.7. The Neighbourhood Plan strikes a positive balance between the policy constraints of the Area and the need to support the general requirements of the development plan as set out in section 5 below.
- 4.8. The Neighbourhood Plan avoids duplicating development plan policies by focusing on policies that translate the general requirements of the development plan into a local context. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan should be easily considered alongside the development plan and any other material considerations in determining planning applications.
- 4.9. Set out below is a brief summary of how each policy conforms to the NPPF. The particular paragraphs referred to in the table are those considered the most relevant to each policy but are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all possible relevant paragraphs.

**Table 1: NPPF Conformity**

Policy	Policy Title	NPPF Para no.	Commentary
VW1	High Quality Design	92, 126, 127, 130, 134	This policy seeks high quality sustainable design for new development which respects the character of the Area.
VW2	Local Gap	142, 143, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 153, 155	This policy seeks to ensure that the principles of the Green Belt, particularly a to c (Paragraph 143) are upheld in this gap and that the gap is not considered suitable for development under a future review of the Local Plan, nor ad hoc development which could be approved under ‘very special circumstances’ without demonstrating that any such development would not undermine the gap between Virginia Water and Englefield Green and Egham.
VW3	Virginia Water Village Centre and Railway Station	85, 86, 87, 96, 135	Appropriate business uses will be supported and retained, including Class E premises. Supporting such businesses will improve social cohesion where local people are encouraged to interact.
VW4	Trumps Green Shopping Parade	85, 86, 87, 96, 135	Appropriate business uses will be supported and retained, including Class E premises. Supporting such businesses will improve social cohesion where local people are encouraged to interact.
VW5	Active Travel	109, 112, 115, 117, 118	This policy seeks to ensure that travel is planned at an early stage, including provision for active travel opportunities
VW6	Highways Environment	109, 112, 115, 117, 118	This policy supports developments which deliver improvements to highways and the public realm.
VW7	Green and Blue Infrastructure	162, 187, 192, 193	Green and Blue infrastructure including existing networks will be protected and enhanced. New development is expected to maintain the important green and blue infrastructure, natural features, and enhance them, increasing connectivity between areas important for wildlife, climate resilient planting and water management are encouraged
VW8	Sustainable Building Design	162, 164, 167	Ensuring that new development is built sustainably and is energy and water efficient.
VW9	Community Infrastructure	92, 93,	Promotes protection of existing community facilities which are locally valued and increase community cohesion.

## 5. Contribution to Sustainable Development

- 5.1. The basic condition of “contributing to the achievement of sustainable development” requires a broad scope of assessment to embrace social and economic as well as environmental objectives.
- 5.2. The vision and aims of the Neighbourhood Plan comprise a balance of social, economic and environmental goals. The social goals are to retain and encourage the local facilities including green and blue infrastructure. Economic goals are relatively limited in scale in the Area, but the provision of local businesses including RHUL and shops is recognised. Environmental goals include the protection and enhancement of the area’s natural and historic environment.

- 5.3. However, the aims make clear that there are environmental parameters within which the social and economic goals must be kept by ensuring development is in scale with the character of the existing village and Area.
- 5.4. The chosen policies therefore translate the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan into viable and effective development management policies which will deliver strong social, economic and environmental impacts.
- 5.5. The sustainability attributes of each policy are summarised in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Sustainability Attributes**

Key: \*positive    - neutral    x negative

Policy	Policy Title	Soc	Econ	Env	Commentary
VW1	High Quality Design	*	*	*	In economic terms, this policy is only slightly positive because well designed places and buildings can ensure value is retained/increased, but it is positive in environmental and social terms. It seeks to ensure that important design and biodiversity features are retained and enhanced
VW2	Local Gap	-	x	*	In environmental terms this policy scores highly, retaining the openness of land, most of which is currently undeveloped. However, this has economic implications, although the land is not available for development currently because of its Green Belt Designation. Socially this policy is neutral as it provides no advantage socially, but equally, no disadvantage.
VW3	Virginia Water Village Centre and Railway Station	*	*	-	This policy is positive as it encourages social interaction locally, supports economic/commercial enterprises and environmentally it is neutral
VW4	Trumps Green Shopping Parade	*	*	-	This policy is positive as it encourages social interaction locally, supports economic/commercial enterprises and environmentally it is neutral
VW5	Active Travel	*	-	*	The provision of active travel, i.e. footpaths and cycleways improve the health of residents and also is a positive benefit for the environment, reducing pollution.
VW6	Highways Environment	*	*	-	Improvements to highways and the public realm will have a positive impact on residents' well being as well as the economy. In terms of



Policy	Policy Title	Soc	Econ	Env	Commentary
					the environment, it is neutral as it may encourage extra traffic due to increased development.
VW7	Green and Blue Infrastructure	*	-	*	Provides a positive impact for the natural environment and for the sense of place which can enhance the wellbeing of residents.
VW8	Sustainable Building Design	-	*	*	Ensuring that new development is built sustainably and is energy and water efficient will bring economic and environmental benefits.
VW9	Community Infrastructure	*	*	*	The retention and encouragement of community facilities will clearly be positive in terms of wellbeing and social aspects of village life as well as retaining local businesses.

## 6. General Conformity with Strategic Local Policy

- 6.1. Virginia Water Neighbourhood Area lies within the local planning authority of the Runnymede Borough Council. The Development Plan currently consists of the following:
  - Runnymede Local Plan 2030 which was adopted in July 2020. This Local Plan includes policies for development management as well as allocating sites for new housing and employment development.
  - Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan, Englefield Green Neighbourhood Plan
  - Policy NRM6: THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA of the South East Plan
  - Adopted Surrey County Council's Minerals and Waste Development Framework (various dates)
- 6.2. There is a requirement for neighbourhood plans to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with this in mind.
- 6.3. **Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan & Englefield Green Neighbourhood Plan:** both are beyond the boundaries of the Virginia Water Neighbourhood Area.
- 6.4. **South East Plan:** Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan relates to the Thames Basin Heath SPA and the 5-7km Buffer Zone runs through the Area. However, there are no allocations proposed in the NP which would necessitate an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations Assessment. Accordingly the NP is in conformity with this policy.
- 6.5. **Minerals and Waste Development Framework** (Surrey County Council): There is a mineral safeguarding area (MSA) to the west of Englefield Green. Minerals and Waste Planning Authority seeks to safeguard MSAs from other development that would sterilise the underlying mineral resource as per Policy MC6 of the Surrey Minerals Plan. The Minerals and Waste Planning Authority is concerned not only with non-minerals development within MSAs but also development proposed adjacent or within proximity to a MSA or an existing mineral working. There are no designations for



development or Local Green Space within the MSA and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with this Policy.

- 6.6. **Runnymede Local Plan 2030:** Paragraph 5.14 of the Local Plan states that policies within the Local Plan are considered strategic policies where they set out an overarching strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for development (including housing etc), infrastructure, community facilities and the conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment. The policies which are considered to be non-strategic are set out.
- 6.7. The Local Plan contains proposals in the Area for the provision of 424 net additional dwellings (at 'Virginia Water North' and 'Virginia Water South') and 2 traveller pitches as well as the Longcross site allocation of 1,779 homes and 7,350 sq.m. of employment floorspace just outside the southwestern edge of the Area (policies SD1, SD2, SD9, SL9 and SL10).
- 6.8. The following table sets out the comparison of Neighbourhood Plan policies with policies from the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with all relevant policies in the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been designed to add local context to the existing development plan policies of the area.

**Table 3: Conformity with RBC Local Plan**

Policy	Policy Title	Local Plan Policy	Assessment
VW1	High Quality Design	EE1	The NP policy seeks to ensure that development is of high quality, reflecting the detailed context of Virginia Water as set out in the Design Codes which is a background document to the NP. This complements the LP policy.
VW2	Local Gaps	EE1	There is no landscape policy on valued landscapes in the Local Plan but its Objective No.10 aims to 'protect and enhance the Borough's most valued landscapes' and Policy EE1 is intended to apply in the Green Belt. All of the land to which the policy applies lies within the Green Belt and it is intended to ensure that development that is consistent with policies EE14-19 respects the landscape and visual character of the Gap, as well as openness of the land.
VW3	Virginia Water Village Centre	IE5, IE13	The policy is consistent with the definition of the Village Centre as a 'local centre' in Policy IE5 and therefore with the provisions of Policy IE13 (of which it updates the Use Class Order changes of 2020)
VW4	Trumps Green Shopping Parade	IE14	The policy engages Policy IE14 by defining the parade as one that meets the tests and warrants the provisions of that policy.
VW5	Active Travel	SD3	The policy refines the active and sustainable travel provisions of Policy SD3.
VW6	Highways Environment	SD3, SD4, EE2	The policy refines policies SD3, SD4 and EE2 in seeking to manage the harmful effects of traffic generated by

Policy	Policy Title	Local Plan Policy	Assessment
			development schemes in the Area, acknowledging their cumulative effects with traffic generated by new developments close by the Area, notably (but not only) at Longcross.
VW7	Green and Blue Infrastructure	SL1, EE11, EE12	The LP has detailed policies regarding Green and Blue Infrastructure as well as an SPD. The NP policy signposts this document and generally supports the retention and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure in line with the LP policies.
VW8	Provision of Sustainable Buildings	SD7, SD8,	The provision of sustainable and efficient buildings, design and construction is of critical importance to the future. This NP policy complements the LP policies and signposts the Design Codes and other relevant background information.
VW9	Community facilities	SD6, SL1	The LP puts great importance on retaining community facilities and the NP policy identifies those of most value in the Area, seeking to retain them and encouraging new facilities to be provided.

## 7. Compatibility with EU Legislation

- 7.1. **Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment.** RBC have issued a screening assessment, determination and statement of reasons for the determination of the need to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the emerging Virginia Water Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with EU Directives, as incorporated into English law. The screening report, dated July 2025, concluded that:  
A full Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required, as the policies and proposals within the Virginia Water Neighbourhood Plan are not likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the criteria set out in the SEA Regulations.  
Similarly, an HRA is not required, as the Plan is unlikely to significantly affect any designated European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.  
The statutory consultation undertaken with the Environmental Agency, Natural England and Historic England confirmed agreement with this conclusion.  
Accordingly, the Plan complies with relevant legal requirements and does not breach EU obligations in relation to environmental and habitat protection.
- 7.2. **Human Rights.** The Neighbourhood Plan has regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act. The overall purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to improve the quality of life for people living and working now and in the future in the Area from an environmental, social and economic point of view. The aims and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have been formulated in response to local people's views and in the light of evidence gathered for the Area, in order to meet the needs expressed and address the issues identified. In order to confirm that the NP does not have any unintended consequences for particular groups, the strategic aims and the policies in the Plan have been systematically scrutinised to ensure that they do not disadvantage any potentially vulnerable

groups. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not. “Protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

- 7.3. An assessment has been made on whether the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics.
- 7.4. Certain protected characteristics are not affected by the Neighbourhood Plan, namely gender reassignment, race, religion, or sexual orientation. For persons with these characteristics, the Plan has a neutral effect. Where policies in the Plan would adversely affect persons with these protected characteristics, they would not be differently affected than persons without these characteristics. For example, if a person with these protected characteristics were disadvantaged by a policy, it would have the same consequence for a person without the protected characteristic who wished to do the same thing. Similarly, if a person with one of these protected characteristics were to benefit from a policy, it would have the same benefit for a person without the protected characteristic in the same way.

**Table 4: Human Rights**

7.1. Policy	Policy Title	Outcomes for persons with certain protected characteristics
VW1	High Quality Design	Broadly positive impact
VW2	Local Gap	Neutral Impact
VW3	Virginia Water Village Centre	Broadly positive impact
VW4	Trumps Green Shopping Parade	Broadly positive impact
VW5	Active Travel	Neutral Impact
VW6	Highways Environment	Neutral Impact
VW7	Green and Blue Infrastructure	Broadly positive impact
VW8	Provision of Sustainable Buildings	Neutral Impact
VW9	Community facilities	Broadly positive impact

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1. Virginia Water Neighbourhood Plan has been carefully prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations and satisfies the Basic Conditions as set out in Paragraph 2.4 thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.