

Runnymede Borough Council

Draft Local Plan Engagement Strategy

Summary Document

October 2025

Classification: Official

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1. Introduction

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act introduces reforms to streamline the local plan-making process. A key requirement is the preparation of a **Project Initiation Document (PID)**.

The PID must, amongst other things, set out a strategy for community and stakeholder engagement, with a focus on hard-to-reach and under-represented groups.

Runnymede Borough Council recognises that traditional consultation methods have not effectively reached all communities. A demographic baseline has therefore been established to identify gaps in participation and inform a more inclusive engagement strategy to support the production of the next Local Plan for the Runnymede area.

2. Demographic Profile of Runnymede and Key Highlights

Using 2021 Census data, Runnymede Borough Council analysed 21 indicators to understand the borough's population. Key findings include:

Age

- The largest age groups in Runnymede are: 35–49 (19.7%), 50–64 (18.7%), and 25–34 (12.1%).
- Young people (under 34) make up 44.3% of the population.
- Older adults (65+) represent 17.2% of the population.

Sex and Gender

- The composition of Runnymede is 51.7% female and 48.3% male at birth.
- 0.5% now identify as a different gender from birth; 6.3% did not answer.

Ethnicity

- 83.5% of the Runnymede population are white.
- 9.2% of Runnymede population are Asian, 1.8% are Black, 3.5% are mixed race. 1.9% of the Runnymede population selected 'Other'.

Religion

- The largest religious group in Runnymede is the Christian faith at 50.4%. 34.8% of the local population identified as being non-religious.
- Notable other religious groups in the borough are as follows: Muslim (2.9%), Hindu (2.3%), and Sikh (1.4%) communities.

Language

- 10.2% of households in Runnymede may lack English proficiency.

- Common non-English primary languages (at least 400 residents for each) are: Polish, Romanian, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian.

Disability

- 14.6% of residents report having a disability that limits daily activities.

Economic Activity

- 58.3% of residents are economically active; 38% are economically inactive (including retirees and students).
- 2.2% of residents are long-term sick or disabled.

Students

- 24.3% of residents are in some form of formal education.

Deprivation

- There are four measures of deprivation - education, employment, health, housing
- 53.4% of households in Runnymede are not deprived in anyway.
- 32.45% are deprived in one domain.
- 14.15% of households experience multiple forms of deprivation.

3. Analysis of Previous Consultations

Two recent consultations conducted by the Planning Policy Team collected equalities data:

Open Space Consultation (2023)

- 1,294 responses were received.
- 533 provided their age for analysis and 542 provided gender data.
- 34.67% of respondents were male and 65.33% were female.
- Over-representation was found in the 50–74 age group (58.91% of respondents vs 27.3% of the resident population).
- Under-representation was found in the 16–34 age group (6.37% of respondents vs. 26.9% in population).

Climate Change Action Plan (2023)

- 818 responses were received to the consultation.
- 209 respondents provided age and ethnicity data for analysis.
- Over-representation was found in the 50–74 age group (63.97% of respondents vs 27.3% of the resident population).
- Under-representation was found in the 16–34 age group (5.39% of respondents vs 26.9% of the resident population).
- Over-representation was also found in the area of ethnicity with 91.9% of responses being from White respondents vs. 83.5% of the resident population.

- Asian and mixed-race groups were underrepresented.
- No responses were from the black communities;

Combined Findings

- Strong engagement from older adults (35–74).
- Underrepresentation identified in the following groups:
 - Young adults (16–34)
 - Black and Minority Ethnic groups

These findings reinforce the need for more inclusive and targeted engagement strategies.

4. Consulting Hard-to-Reach Groups

The Planning Policy Team identifies the following as hard-to-reach groups. This is based on a review of the responses to the two previous consultations described above, groups previously identified as hard to reach in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement¹ and a review of other Surrey local authorities. Below are some justifications and recommended possible additional engagement activities for further consideration :

Minority Ethnic Groups (including Gypsy and Traveller communities)

- Over-representation of White respondents in past consultations.
- Language barriers are potentially significant: 3,545 households lack an English-speaking adult.
- Possible additional engagement activities:
 - Translate consultation materials into alternative language formats.
 - Engage with cultural and community groups.
 - Use local data to target areas with high ethnic diversity.
 - Build on existing relationships with traveller advocacy groups.

Disabled People

- 14.6% of residents report limiting disabilities.
- No disability data collected in recent consultations.
- Previously identified as an under-represented group.
- Possible additional engagement activities :
 - Partner with disability advocacy groups.
 - Offer accessible formats (e.g. large print).
 - Consider focus groups to understand barriers.

¹ [Statement of Community Involvement Adopted 5 March 2021](#)

Young People (up to 34 years of age) including School Children

- Underrepresented in consultations.
- Previously identified as an under-represented group.
- Possible additional engagement activities :
 - School visits using interactive tools (e.g. LEGO, Minecraft).
 - Youth panels or civic centre visits.
 - Pop-up events at Royal Holloway University.
 - Engage youth organisations and sports clubs.

Older People

- Representation was proportionate in recent consultations, but continued focus is advised.
- Previously identified as an under-represented group.
- Possible additional engagement activities:
 - Events at day centres and community hubs.
 - Engage with advocacy groups for older residents.

Low-Income Groups

- Often time-constrained and digitally excluded.
- Possible additional engagement activities :
 - Roadshow events in deprived areas.
 - Engage with organisations which support deprived groups
 - Offer flexible consultation formats (e.g. drop-ins, paper surveys).

5. Proposed Consultation Methods

The Council is proposing to utilise a range of engagement methods when it prepares its Local Plan. A lot of these will be used for every consultation, but some are proposed to be used less frequently. These will be deployed when it is believed they are most relevant. The range of techniques to be utilised are set out below:

- Information to be posted on the Council's website including FAQs.
- Targeted digital media advertising to promote consultations.
- Advertise consultation on the Nextdoor community website.
- Tweets related to development of a new Local Plan, and promoting the public consultation. Link back to Runnymede's website and Facebook pages.
- Community Planning Panel-online MS Teams Meeting/forum.
- Possible use of Citizen's Engagement Panel for focus group style events.

- Sending letters to statutory bodies and all registered on the Council's Planning Policy database.
- Targeted consultation with hard-to-reach groups (and/or the bodies representing them).
- Road show style events where interested parties can drop in without an appointment to be held across the borough. Events to be held on different days, at different times and in different settlements.
- Make documents available for public inspection at the council offices and local libraries during periods of consultation.
- Contact faith groups within the Borough asking them to raise awareness of the consultations and/or whether they will allow materials to be placed in their venues.
- Display posters about the consultations in various locations across the Borough where residents are likely to see them.
- Placing of articles within the Runnymede E-News & Business Newsletter
- Online questionnaires
- Animated PowerPoint film: Overview of what a Local Plan is and the process of creating it. To be advertised on social media.
- Magazine style publication – The aim is for an all Borough (all households) mail out at the start of the Local Plan preparation process.
- Holding bespoke events with local school children. These would be tailored to be appropriate for the different age groups and could include group activities such as asking the children to build their own Lego town, Minecraft world or Junk model world, expressing how they wish to see development of buildings and spaces in the future.
- FAQs developed to help answer core questions that have arisen. FAQ accessed through the Council website and Facebook pages.
- Holding of events with businesses.

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