

New Runnymede Local Plan



What is a Local Plan?

- 1.1 A Local Plan is a document prepared by a local planning authority, in consultation with the community, which guides development and land use changes across the whole or part of an authority area over a period of no less than 10 years. It identifies how much housing, employment and commercial development should be built, and indicates where and when this should happen. Its policies are a material consideration for decision-makers when determining planning applications.
- 1.2 A Local Plan can also include planning policies which address other matters such as the design of developments, provision of open space and other supporting infrastructure, and nature conservation and enhancement, where evidence shows a clear and justified reason for their inclusion and they do not duplicate the new national decision-making policies.
- 1.3 The [2030 Local Plan](#) for the Runnymede area was adopted in July 2020 and covers the period 2015-2030 (the '2030 Local Plan'). It forms part of the Development Plan for the area, alongside the [Surrey County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plans](#), and [Neighbourhood Plans](#) prepared by Neighbourhood Fora.
- 1.4 National planning legislation and policy requires local authorities to review and keep their Local Plans up to date in order to meet development needs, and this is why we are preparing a new Local Plan. One of the first steps towards producing a Local Plan is to run a 'scoping consultation', to consider what the new Local Plan should cover.

What has changed since the adoption of the existing Local Plan?

- 1.5 Several significant changes have taken place since 2020, which have implications for the development of a new Local Plan, including:
 - **Significant reforms to the planning system:** new legislation has been introduced designed to streamline and simplify plan-making in England, and thus accelerate the delivery of development. With this, the 'duty to cooperate' (a legal duty ensuring authorities engaged constructively on cross-boundary matters) has been abolished, but new national planning policies ensure strategic issues continue to be addressed constructively.
 - **Introduction of new national planning policy:** a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in August 2026, supported by updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which steer the content and development of new-style Local Plans. The new Framework contains 'National Decision-Making Policies' (NDMPs), which will apply directly to planning decisions. The NDMPs are intended to standardise common policies across England, freeing up Local Plans to focus on

land use allocations and policies covering locally specific issues, where justified by evidence.

- **The Planning and Infrastructure Act has become law:** enabling new strategic planning authorities to produce 'Spatial Development Strategies' (SDSs) – containing policies on the development and use of land on matters of strategic importance to a wider sub-regional area.
- **New approach to housing requirements and Green Belts:** a new 'standard methodology' has been introduced to calculate housing needs, resulting in the Runnymede area's housing need increasing. There are also significant changes in terms of how affordable homes are expected to be delivered (for example, by requiring authorities to set specific requirements for social rented homes, and through strengthened support for mixed tenure development). In addition, a new 'Grey Belt' designation has been introduced, which may enable larger quantities of new development to be delivered on land in the Green Belt which meets certain criteria set out in the NPPF.
- **Local Government Reform:** local government in Surrey is changing from 1 April 2027. Two new authorities – the East and West Surrey unitary authorities – will replace the existing county council and 11 district and borough councils. Services previously delivered by Surrey County Council e.g. highway maintenance, education, social services and waste management, will merge with local services such as planning, community services, waste collection and managing green spaces. The Runnymede area will sit within the West Surrey unitary authority, along with the Guildford, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Woking areas. However, central government has stated that plan-making should still be progressed by existing local planning authorities, despite this changing landscape.
- **The Covid-19 pandemic:** the pandemic resulted in changing trends which a new Local Plan should respond to, such as a shift in work patterns with more people now working from home.