

New Runnymede Local Plan



Topic Area 3: Meeting Housing Needs

Background

- 4.1 The Runnymede Place Portrait¹ and other emerging evidence suggests that housing is a key issue facing the area. House prices in the area are generally high (around 10 times local earnings), with some areas such as parts of Virginia Water and Englefield Green being particularly expensive. Although household incomes are generally above Surrey and South East averages, many new homes are unaffordable to a lot of people, particularly first-time buyers and single-income families.
- 4.2 Local authorities are required to undertake a Housing Development Needs Assessment to establish the overall number of homes needed in an area as a minimum over the Local Plan period, using a calculation known as the 'standard method'. In the Runnymede area, this currently equates to 640 dwellings a year.
- 4.3 However, building the new homes we need in Runnymede is not just about overall numbers. The Housing Development Needs Assessment also predicts the type, tenure, and size of homes that we need to plan for, to meet a wide range of needs which will change over time. A Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment looks specifically at the pitch and plot needs of the Traveller community.

What has changed since the 2030 Local Plan?

- 4.4 The 2030 Local Plan identifies a need for affordable housing and aims to deliver 30% of all new housing in the area as affordable over the plan period, mainly for affordable/social rent (i.e. rents which are lower than the private rented sector), but also for some other types of affordable housing such as affordable and shared home ownership.
- 4.5 National planning policy now places a greater emphasis on provision of social rented housing, with local plans expected to set out the minimum proportion of social rented homes required. Other types of affordable housing are also still expected to come forward. The relevant affordable housing definitions are provided in the box below.

Affordable housing definitions:

First homes – a specific kind of discounted market sale housing aimed at first-time buyers. Specifically, these homes are discounted market sale units which must have a minimum discount of 30% against the market value; the first sale (after the discount has been applied) must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (outside London).

Shared ownership – when you buy a home through shared ownership, you buy a share of between 10-75% of the home's full market value and, if you choose to do so, gradually increase your owned share over time through a process called staircasing. The occupiers pay rent to the landlord for the share the landlord owns.

¹ Available here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/runnymede-digital-place-portrait

Low-cost home ownership / affordable home ownership is housing sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value, for example First Homes. It is designed to offer support for people wishing to buy their own homes.

Affordable rent - generally refers to housing offered at below market rates, specifically designed to be accessible to individuals and families who may not be able to afford private rentals. These are often provided by 'registered providers' like Housing Associations, and the rent is typically set at 80% or less of local market rates.

Social rent - designed to be significantly cheaper than market-rate rent, making it more accessible to those who might struggle to afford private rentals. These homes remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or can be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

- 4.6 Since the 2030 Local Plan was adopted, we have updated our Housing Development Needs Assessment². It now identifies a need for 3,710 affordable housing units in the period 2028-2043, which is around 39% of total housing needed in the Runnymede area for that period (this is higher than the current Local Plan target of 30%). The assessment also shows that for market housing, the main need is for 3- and 4-bed properties; but for affordable rented and affordable home ownership, the main need is for 1- and 2-bed properties.
- 4.7 Our latest Local Plan monitoring records show that mainly 1- and 2-bed market homes have been delivered in the area, and whilst the majority of affordable units are 1- and 2-bed units, less 3- and 4-bed affordable units have been delivered than expected. It can be challenging to deliver Local Plan targets – many factors are at play which affect delivery, such as viability of development proposals and site constraints.
- 4.8 There continues to be a need for specialist forms of accommodation which we need to plan for, including (but not limited to) housing for older people, purpose-built student accommodation, and traveller pitches and plots. There is also a need for more accessible and adaptable housing for those with a disability or long-term illness and also to support an aging population.
- 4.9 New national planning policy now requires Local Plans to allocate land to accommodate at least 10% of the overall housing requirement on sites less than 1 hectare in area, and a further 10% on sites on land between 1 and 2.5 hectares in area. This could have implications for meeting housing needs.

What we think is in scope

- 4.10 In order to plan for Runnymede's housing needs, we believe that the new Local Plan can still incorporate the following:
- Policies which ensure that existing residential uses are retained i.e. preventing loss of residential uses/units in a development.
 - Policies which set targets for the provision of affordable housing, including social rented homes, to reflect the findings of the latest Housing Development Needs Assessment, which identifies an ongoing, notable need for affordable housing in the area, as described above. The Local Plan will need to account for new national planning policy where, if major development proposals (more than 10 dwellings)

² Available here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/2030-local-plan-review-evidence-base-documents/7

come forward on Green or Grey Belt land, or land released from the Green Belt as part of a Local Plan, a higher affordable housing contribution may be required.

- Policies which set out the type and size of homes that need to be provided based on the people we need to plan for. It is essential that we look to enable and facilitate a broad mix of different property types and sizes so that we can meet a variety of needs. In larger developments, a mix of different property types and sizes can also help improve design and layout, and encourage social interaction. The new Local Plan will need to consider how to maximise housing provision of the types the area needs; and could consider taking a similar approach to some London borough plans, which include policies to try and retain family housing (3-beds or more) where existing houses are redeveloped or subdivided³.
- Allocating housing sites of different sizes, across different areas, should also support and enhance the vitality of communities situated outside our urban areas, by enabling these areas to grow and thrive.
- Policies which accommodate the needs of different groups, such as (but not limited to) those with disabilities and/or accessibility needs; specialist housing for older people; purpose-built accommodation for students; plots for self and custom-build housing; and sites suitable for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The needs of this latter group are likely to be higher than was previously the case, as a result of a change in the definition of what constitutes a Gypsy and Traveller for planning purposes at a national level, meaning that additional allocations for this type of accommodation are likely to be required.
- Policies to help determine applications for smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (those with not more than six residents). The Runnymede area has seen an increase in the number of smaller HMOs coming forward in recent years. Whilst HMOs form an important part of the overall housing mix, an over-proliferation of HMOs can lead to issues for local communities including amenity and parking impacts, loss of family housing and noise. However, it is not currently within the power of the Council to determine whether this type of development is acceptable, because they are often captured by 'permitted development' rules. If evidence justifies it, a new Local Plan policy could set out how applications for such development should be considered, alongside an 'Article 4 Direction' which would remove these 'permitted development rights' so the Council is able to determine these types of planning application itself.
- Policies setting out the proportion of housing that should be delivered to prescribed 'optional' Building Regulations standards - these include accessible and adaptable dwellings, wheelchair adaptable and wheelchair accessible dwellings.

What we think is out of scope

4.11 The NDMPs cover a range of policies for housing which should not be repeated in the Local Plan. Whilst the majority of housing issues set out in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan are still considered relevant for the new Local Plan in some form, one area considered out of scope (due to these issues being addressed by NDMPs) is:

- Policies which prescribe when the Council will accept either off-site or cash payments in lieu of affordable housing.

³ Such as Policy HO2 in [Lewisham Local Plan](#) (July 2025)

The following questions are set out in the response form⁴:

Q9. Do you agree that delivering a range of homes to meet needs, including increasing the number and range of affordable homes, is a key issue that the Local Plan should seek to address? If not, please explain why.

Q10. Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope to address this matter and which a new Local Plan should address? If not, please explain why.

Q11. Do you agree with what the Council believes is out of scope for this matter? If not, please explain why.

Q12. Are there any further locally specific approaches or measures that should be considered to increase the number and range of affordable homes, and ensure that new homes remain affordable in the longer-term?

Q13. Do you think the Council should consider introducing an Article 4 Direction to ensure that proposals for smaller HMOs (i.e. 3-6 people living separately within the same house) require planning permission, so that potential impacts can be fully assessed and considered?

Q14. Are there any further locally specific approaches or measures that could be considered to better support the provision of self and custom-build homes?

⁴ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping