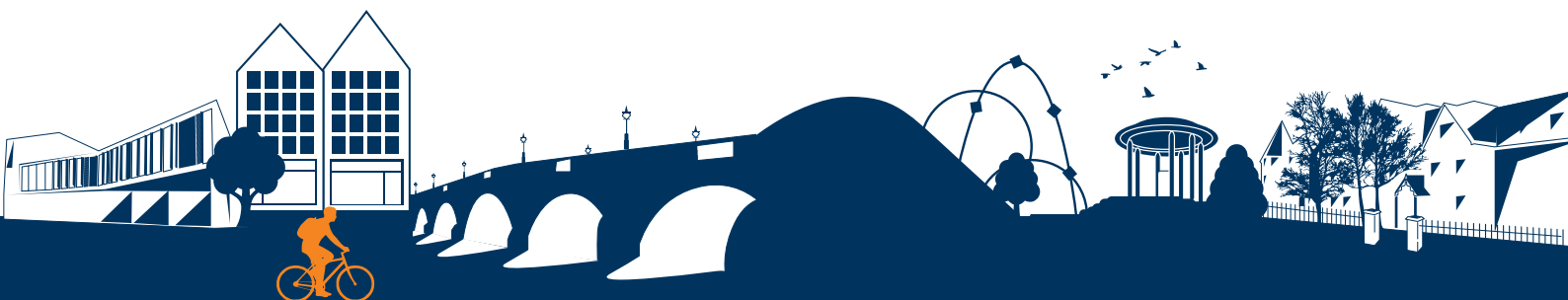


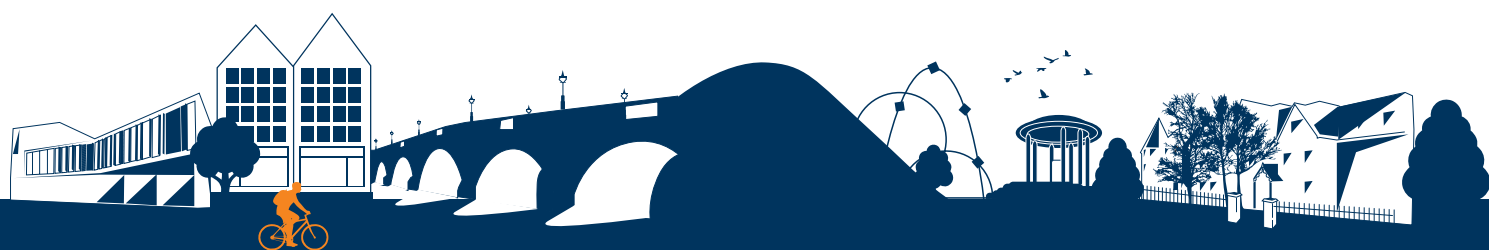
New Runnymede Local Plan

Scoping Consultation Document

September 2026



What should
Runnymede look like
in the **future?**



New Runnymede Local Plan Scoping Consultation

Help shape the future of the Runnymede area through this scoping consultation

Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Council's Local Plan timetable¹, on 29 June 2026, the Council gave formal notice² that it would start plan-making. A 'scoping consultation' is now being carried out in accordance with Regulation 20 of the new Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
- 1.2 At this early stage of plan-making, the scoping consultation provides an opportunity to identify the locally specific subject matters which you consider are important, and that a future Local Plan for the Runnymede area should help address.
- 1.3 It is also an opportunity for residents, groups and organisations to tell us how future engagement on the Local Plan should be carried out.

What is a Local Plan?

- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 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 Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/localplantimetable

² Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/localplannotices

1.8 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.

Purpose of the Scoping Consultation

- 1.9 This scoping consultation is an opportunity for residents and organisations to help shape the new Local Plan at an early stage of its development. At this stage, we are not making decisions about specifics but asking for views on the key issues facing the area, and how a Local Plan could help address them. The feedback from the scoping consultation will help ensure the Local Plan focuses on the right priorities for local communities and other stakeholders.
- 1.10 However, the range of policy issues that a new Plan will be able to address will be significantly reduced compared to the 2030 Local Plan. This is because Local Plans are not allowed to repeat National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs) in the NPPF, so issues addressed by them are, in the main, out of scope for the new Local Plan. Essentially, where the NDMPs are clear on how a decision-maker should react to development proposals, the Local Plan should not repeat these policies.
- 1.11 Examples of matters which are considered to be out of scope – and thus outside the control or scope of the new Local Plan - include:
- Matters being addressed through Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). A NSIP is a major infrastructure development that bypasses normal local planning requirements. Local examples of NSIPs are the expansion of Heathrow Airport and the River Thames Scheme.
 - Matters relating to the regulation of the activities of statutory providers such as water or power companies.
 - Matters which replicate or go beyond requirements of other consenting regimes (such as Building Regulations) unless national planning policy says we can do so.
 - Allocating land or including policies which would be covered by a minerals and waste plan prior to the adoption of a Local Plan.
 - Setting out the circumstances when submission of development viability assessment is necessary other than to set out review mechanisms to reassess viability where developer contributions are reduced below plan requirements.
 - Providing additional advice on control of development outside of urban areas – as described in Topic Area 1 later in this consultation material.
 - Matters relating to pollution control, including ground conditions, air, noise, water or light and the ‘agent of change’ principle (see glossary for definition).
 - Matters relating to the assessment of effects of proposals on heritage assets, unless there are locally specific design issues to be addressed. However, the Local Plan can continue to identify Runnymede’s heritage features - including non-designated heritage assets - and key issues facing them and create a positive strategy for their conservation and enhancement.
- 1.12 The scoping consultation is structured by topic area and supported by a glossary (at Appendix A) to aid your understanding of key terms. For each topic, we have set out the locally specific issues we think are important and why, and where relevant, reflected on whether the issues are already addressed by NDMPs (and are likely to be ‘out of scope’) or whether Local Plans are capable of addressing the issue (thus being

'in scope'). We are seeking views on whether we have correctly identified key matters relevant to the preparation of the new Runnymede Local Plan (and if not, what we have missed) and whether you agree on whether various issues are in or out of scope.

- 1.13 At this early stage, the list of topics is strategic in nature, focussing on the bigger planning issues facing the Runnymede area, but topics or issues may evolve during plan preparation as new evidence emerges, including via responses to consultations like this. Specific policy wording, development requirements and site allocations will be consulted on at a future stage of plan-making called the 'Plan Content and Evidence (PCE) Stage'.
- 1.14 To ensure you don't miss out on important updates relating to the preparation of the new Local Plan, please do sign up to the Council's planning policy consultation platform if you haven't already done so here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/sign-new-database.

How to have your say

- 1.15 The Council wants to hear from as many people as possible and is interested in gaining feedback on a series of questions. Your response to these questions, and any other issues you may wish to raise, should be submitted using the response form, accessed at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping.
- 1.16 The scoping consultation material should take about an hour to read, and responses should be submitted by **11:59pm on Monday 12th October 2026**.
- 1.17 Further details about the consultation (including consultation events being held across the Runnymede area) and how to respond are available in the 'Notice of Scoping Consultation' published on the above website, and also available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/localplannotices.
- 1.18 For further information or support, please contact the Planning Policy team by email at: planningpolicy@runnymede.gov.uk.

Topic Area 1: A Strategy for Growth

The role of a spatial strategy

- 2.1 Runnymede is a popular place to live and work due to the quality of its natural environment, good accessibility to transport networks, and attractive towns and villages. This means many people currently live and work in the area and would like to move to the area in the future.
- 2.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, offices, retail development and supporting infrastructure. A key role of local plans is to ensure that this 'development growth' comes forward in the right places at the right time, and at the right standard, to meet a broad spectrum of future needs, incomes and circumstances. To ensure this growth is delivered sustainably, local plans must balance issues such as Green Belt, nature protection, flood risk and other constraints as well as ensuring accessibility to community facilities and public services.
- 2.3 The new Local Plan spatial strategy will need to achieve this balance. It will respond to key questions about what types of development will be delivered and where, how much development there will be, and when development is expected to come forward. As well as a spatial strategy, the new Local Plan will need to set out policies for the minimum amount of development to be provided, land allocations and broad locations for growth for a period of no less than 10 years from the point of adoption of the Plan.

Some key considerations

- 2.4 The Runnymede area is relatively small – its main town centres are Addlestone, Chertsey, and Egham, containing a mix of housing, commercial development and the main retail and indoor leisure destinations in the area. These areas, along with Longcross Garden Village, are the focus for development in the existing 2030 Local Plan.
- 2.5 The smaller urban areas of Englefield Green, Ottershaw, Virginia Water, Woodham and New Haw are classed as 'local centres' and are less of a focus for growth in the existing Local Plan, along with the village of Thorpe. The existing Local Plan did not recognise Thorpe as a 'centre' given its lack of any discernible commercial core.
- 2.6 These urban areas are surrounded by land designated as Green Belt, which includes the small settled area of Lyne, as well as other pockets of development. The five purposes of the Green Belt are set out below.

Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 2.7 Green Belt land accounts for 74% of Runnymede's total land area. Many types of development in the Green Belt are restricted – which means that available land for development is limited in the Runnymede area unless Green Belt boundaries are altered.
- 2.8 In addition, areas in the east of the Runnymede area are also at a higher risk of flooding from the River Thames and its tributaries, which is likely to restrict how much development can come forward in these areas.
- 2.9 Whilst lying outside of Runnymede, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is designated for its nature conservation value, especially due to its heathlands and ground nesting bird species. Whilst this habitat designation does not restrict development in Runnymede, mitigation in the form of additional land for recreation is required to offset impacts to it, and this additional land will need to be found and in the right places.
- 2.10 These constraints are mapped and further details are provided in the Runnymede Digital Place Portrait³.

What has changed since the 2030 Local Plan?

- 2.11 The latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it clear that all local authorities should meet their housing, economic and other development needs in full through their local plans, unless there are exceptional reasons why this is not possible. This means that difficult choices will have to be made on where development should come forward in the future, whilst continuing to balance this growth against the need to protect and enhance the area's natural environment and heritage in a sustainable way.
- 2.12 The Government is committed to significantly boosting the supply of new homes, with local authorities expected to identify enough land for the short, medium and where possible, long term. Since adoption of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, there has been a significant change in the number of new homes that the government has calculated should be built in Runnymede: from 500 to 640 homes per year. This equates to 6,400 total dwellings for a 10-year plan period, increasing to 9,600 over a 15-year plan period.
- 2.13 In addition to this, evidence on the need for commercial development indicates that around 10.2ha to 11.1ha of land is required to meet the area's needs for offices, industry and warehousing/logistics over a 10-year plan period, increasing to around 15.3ha to 16.7ha over a 15-year plan period.
- 2.14 National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs) also now set out the principle of development within and outside of 'settlements'. Within settlements, development will generally be approved (if certain criteria are met), and in the case of Runnymede, development outside of settlements will be subject to Green Belt policy. Work is underway to understand which settlements in Runnymede will meet the NPPF's new definitions, and what this means for the Green Belt land around both our larger and smaller settlement areas.
- 2.15 In terms of Green Belt policy, the new NPPF sets out how Green Belt boundaries can be altered through Local Plans where alterations would enable development of land around railway stations, or where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. These circumstances include when a local authority is unable to meet its identified

³ Available here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/runnymede-digital-place-portrait

need for development in full, having examined all other reasonable options for doing so, which includes making as much use as possible of brownfield land, optimising the density of development, and considering whether sufficient suitable sites can be identified outside of the Green Belt.

- 2.16 The latest NPPF also includes a new definition of Grey Belt – see the box below – which will have implications for the new Local Plan.

The NPPF defines the “Grey Belt” as:

“For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, “grey belt” is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in policy GB2”.

These purposes include:

- (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

This means that unless land **strongly contributes to one of these three purposes**, it may now be classed as **Grey Belt**, opening it up to possible development.

Policies relating to areas or assets of particular importance, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Green Space, National Parks and heritage assets, would potentially provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development of Grey Belt land.

- 2.17 The emphasis of national planning policy is now very much that authorities should meet their development needs in full through sustainable patterns of development, and if necessary, where urban areas cannot achieve this, release land from the Green Belt where this approach is fully evidenced and justified. Any proposed release should be done in a way which prioritises previously developed land within the Green Belt first, then other Grey Belt land which is not previously developed, and finally other stronger-performing areas of Green Belt. Green Belt boundaries can also be altered where this would enable the sustainable development of land around stations.

What we think is in scope

- 2.18 The main issues we think are likely to frame the approach to the spatial strategy can be summarised as follows:

- Accessibility of potential development locations to day-to-day services and facilities by walking/cycling and public transport and whether less accessible locations can be made accessible by walking/cycling and public transport;
- Whether land around stations is available for development (whether in an urban or Green Belt location);
- The performance of Green Belt and potential identification of Grey Belt;
- How much development can be accommodated within the boundaries of the areas which are defined as settlements.
- Extent and severity of risk of flooding (as well as other environmental constraints);
- Availability and location of land to mitigate impacts to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

- Capacity of local and wider infrastructure to absorb or grow to accommodate development. This includes the local road network, M25, M3 and walking, cycling and public transport.
 - The options available to expand existing settlements in a sustainable way, and/or the ability of the borough to accommodate a new settlement.
- 2.19 In line with national planning policy, we think that our initial approach should be to focus development within our main urban areas and other smaller centres. We will need to consider intensification of our urban areas, to increase density in areas with high levels of connectivity and optimise the use of allocated sites.
- 2.20 We will also need to consider other sustainably located previously developed land that exists outside of our urban areas as well as potential areas of Grey Belt land, and possibly Green Belt including land in the Green Belt around stations.
- 2.21 The overall spatial strategy in the new Local Plan covering the Runnymede area will need to define the role of each settlement within the area, and define settlement boundaries. The identification of settlement areas will also be required to ensure clarity when applying NDMPs on the principle of development within and outside of settlements. The capacity of each to meet identified housing, economic and other development needs will also need to be determined. We will be producing settlement hierarchy evidence to get a better understanding of the role and characteristics of Runnymede's settlements, and to help assess their capacity to accommodate development needs.
- 2.22 At this stage, we don't know how much development will be directed to any area in Runnymede, as further evidence is required to assess the suitability and appropriateness of locations. This is something that will be consulted on in future stages of plan-making.
- 2.23 A first stage of determining land availability is undertaking a search for sites, which is known as a 'Call for Sites'. As part of this consultation, we are inviting developers, landowners and other interested parties to put forward sites which they think might have potential for future development. These sites will feed into the Council's Housing/ Economic Development Land Supply document (known as the Strategic Land Availability Assessment or 'SLAA'). These sites will then be assessed in detail to decide if they could potentially become site allocations in the new local plan. The Call for Sites exercise also enables landowners to propose sites that present opportunities for delivery of biodiversity net gain (BNG), Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), Local Green Space (LGS) or other significant infrastructure such as renewable energy/ flood defences etc. Further information about the SLAA, Call for Sites and LGS can be found at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/call-sites. Greater detail about BNG can be found in Topic Area 2 'Climate Resilience and Nature' below.
- 2.24 It is important to stress that the inclusion of a site and/ or building in the SLAA **does not** mean that it will definitely be included in the Local Plan. As set out above, it only means that its suitability will be assessed in more detail as part of the plan-making process.
- 2.25 Runnymede has previously undertaken two Borough-wide Green Belt reviews which were used to support the 2030 Local Plan. However, given the changes to national planning policy on Green Belt and the introduction of Grey Belt, these reviews are no longer considered up to date and further review(s) are required. Runnymede is currently undertaking a Green Belt review jointly with Elmbridge and Spelthorne

Borough Councils. The review will also be used to identify any potential Grey Belt land.

- 2.26 The results of the Green/Grey Belt Review will help to inform the choices the new Local Plan covering the Runnymede area will need to make in terms of the overall spatial strategy and the role of each settlement area.
- 2.27 We also think that the new Local Plan should cover a period of 10 years from the point of adoption of the Plan. Whilst this reflects the minimum period set out in the new NPPF, we think this shorter period is more appropriate for our area than a 15-year period: identifying deliverable and developable sites over a 10-year period is more realistic given the constraints on Runnymede's land supply, and allows for flexibility and adaptability given the changing nature of our local authority and our locally-specific issues as we merge to become West Surrey Council. National legislation still requires us to review our Local Plan every five years, regardless of the plan period.

What we think is out of scope

- 2.28 The 2030 Local Plan contains a number of detailed policies for determining planning applications within Runnymede's Green Belt. These are now largely superseded by the NDMPs in the NPPF, and as such these matters are considered to be out of scope. This would mean that policies in the existing Local Plan which manage: the development of extensions and alterations to and replacement buildings; re-use of buildings; outdoor sport and recreation; infilling or redevelopment of previously developed land; engineering operations and change of use of land in the Green Belt would not feature in the new Local Plan.

The following questions are set out in the response form⁴:

- Q1.** Do you agree that the new Local Plan should cover a period of 10 years from the point of adoption of the Plan? If not, please explain why a different time period would be more appropriate.
- Q2.** Do you have any views on where development should be directed in the Runnymede area, and how places should evolve to meet our identified development needs in full?
- Q3.** Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope for this matter and which a new Local Plan should address? If not, please explain why.
- Q4.** Do you agree with what the Council believes is out of scope for this matter? If not, please explain why.

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

Topic Area 2: Climate Resilience & Nature

Background

- 3.1 Local planning authorities have a duty under the Climate Change Act to ensure that planning policy contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change; and a duty (introduced by the Environment Act) to conserve and enhance biodiversity, helping to drive nature's recovery.
- 3.2 Runnymede contains several protected habitats within, and adjacent to its boundaries, including those designated internationally, nationally and locally. Not all habitats or areas of refuge for wildlife are protected, with many to be found in our local green spaces, rivers, streams and local watercourses.
- 3.3 The Runnymede Place Portrait⁵ describes the area's natural environment in more detail, how it has changed over time, and how the area may be affected in the future by a changing climate.

What has changed since the 2030 Local Plan

- 3.4 The existing 2030 Local Plan contains several policies aimed at addressing climate change. However, these policies were prepared and adopted before the Council declared a climate emergency, and we now have evidence that suggests that stronger action is needed if we are to meet our net zero targets - particularly in the built environment where some of the Borough's highest emissions are generated (e.g. from transport, heating buildings, and the carbon footprint of the building materials).
- 3.5 However, the new NPPF has also been introduced, which contains several National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs) which aim to support the transition to net zero and increase resilience to climate change. NDMPs also aim to minimise risks to development arising from various sources of flooding; and to influence the design and location of new development to conserve, enhance and safeguard the natural environment and designated habitats. Whilst Local Plans can still contribute to these aims, the scope of what Local Plans can do has been reduced.
- 3.6 The Building Regulations have also been updated (coming into force in March 2027) to implement the Future Homes and Buildings Standards, which aim to ensure that new homes and non-domestic buildings are built with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. Whilst the standards do not achieve 'net zero' buildings, it is anticipated that buildings constructed to these standards will not require retrofitting to become zero carbon as the electricity grid decarbonises.
- 3.7 The Environment Act 2021 has also come into effect which places a duty on local authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The Act also requires preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS - Surrey's strategy can be found [here](#)) and a requirement for development to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Surrey LNRS identifies priorities for nature recovery, maps the most vulnerable areas for nature, and sets out specific proposals for creating and improving habitats.
- 3.8 The NPPF continues to advise that development in the areas at the highest risk of flooding should be avoided. However, there have been other significant changes to national flood risk policy, including a change in the definition as to what constitutes the 'functional floodplain'. This change has resulted in more land being defined as

⁵ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/runnymede-digital-place-portrait

functional floodplain and consequently considered unsuitable for development than was previously the case. In addition, the Environment Agency has updated the way in which they produce flood maps, and their new mapping reflects the expected impacts of climate change.

- 3.9 Finally, since the 2030 Local Plan was adopted, our existing Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANG) – which mitigates the impact of new development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area – has dwindling capacity to accommodate new development.

What we think is in scope

- 3.10 NDMPs set out several requirements which development proposals should take into account in order to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and will help achieve the objectives of the Council's [Climate Change Strategy](#) and national net zero targets. For example, proposals are expected to be located where a choice of sustainable transport modes exists, and to be designed to conserve energy and avoid overheating.
- 3.11 The NPPF is clear on how Local Plans can expand on these, as explained in the box below. Given the cross-cutting nature of climate issues, policies which contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation are likely to feature in various chapters throughout the new Local Plan.

Local planning policies can help contribute towards mitigating and adapting to climate change in Runnymede in the following ways:

- Proposing development patterns through a spatial strategy and site allocations which can help contribute to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions e.g. by considering the distribution and location of development to reduce the need to travel and maximise opportunities to travel by foot, bike or public transport.
- Avoiding increased vulnerability and improving resilience to the effects of extreme weather and long-term climate trends such as heatwaves, wildfires, drought and flood risk e.g. by locating new development to minimise the risk of flooding (taking into account climate change predictions for increased fluvial, groundwater and surface water flood risk).
- Addressing specific risks from climate change in proposed allocations for development, and necessary adaptations, both of which should be considered for the anticipated lifetime of the development.
- Setting stronger energy and water efficiency standards for new development where they have a clear and robustly costed rationale and will not have an adverse impact on the viability and deliverability of development. The existing 2030 Local Plan set the higher water efficiency standard for new dwellings, and it is anticipated that the next Local Plan could do the same, taking into account the significant future shortfall of water resources anticipated in the area (described in the latest [Water Resources Management Plan](#)).
- Identifying opportunities for green infrastructure provision and nature-based solutions which can safeguard and improve carbon storage, support nature recovery and resilience, and which take account of the Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy (see below for more details).

- Support the transition to clean power by making provision for new/enhanced renewable and low carbon energy development and associated infrastructure e.g. water supply and electricity infrastructure and setting out measures to avoid constraints on the operation/future expansion of this infrastructure (although this may be better addressed at a sub-regional scale by Spatial Development Strategies).

3.12 The NPPF also contains a number of NDMPs which set out how proposals should contribute positively to the natural environment and support nature's recovery. Local Plans and accompanying strategies such as the [Surrey LNRS](#) or [Thames River Basin Management Plan](#) can expand on these in various ways, as set out in the box below.

Local planning policies in association with other evidence at the most appropriate level (e.g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies or River Basin Management Plans) can help drive nature's recovery and contribute to wider environmental outcomes in the following ways:

- Set out the hierarchy of sites/areas of importance for their landscape, geological, or biodiversity value in the area.
- Identify opportunities for conservation, enhancing and recovery of landscapes, sensitive waterbodies, habitats and valuable biodiversity e.g. through the use of nature-based solutions, as described in the Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Steer the location of development, including through site allocations, in ways that use land of least environmental value e.g. away from Runnymede's limited amounts of higher quality agricultural land.
- Set out standards for green infrastructure and outdoor recreational provision (including allotments), and potentially site-specific Biodiversity Net Gain standards which exceed national requirements where justified by evidence.

3.13 In Runnymede, additional land will also be required for general recreation to avoid impacts of development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, known as SANG land. This will be an important consideration for any sites the Local Plan may allocate for development, especially sites which, if released from the Green Belt, must provide or improve existing open space as required by national planning policy.

3.14 The risk of flooding remains one of the key constraints to development in the Runnymede area, with areas in the east of the Borough at the highest risk of flooding (see the Runnymede Place Portrait⁶ for more details). Flood risk is likely to increase as the climate changes. Whilst NDMPs will now set out policy requirements for decision-making to ensure development avoids the areas at highest risk of flooding, the 'sequential approach' will need to be applied in selecting suitable sites for allocation (to help ensure that development is steered to the lowest risk areas).

3.15 There is also scope to set out policy requirements for development proposals situated on 'dry islands' – our monitoring records indicate that this can be a key issue for new development in certain areas in the east of Runnymede. During a flood event, a dry island would remain free from flooding itself but would be surrounded entirely by land

⁶ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/runnymede-digital-place-portrait

at a higher risk of flooding, and this would affect the ability of occupiers to safely evacuate in a flood event.

- 3.16 We are currently undertaking a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to inform the next Local Plan, working closely with the Environment Agency and Surrey County Council (the lead local flood authority for the area).

What we think is out of scope

3.17 In summary, we believe the following matters are out of scope:

- For stand-alone development proposals, policies which require applicants to demonstrate a *need* for renewable or low carbon energy, electricity or water infrastructure where they come forward outside areas which have been identified as suitable for them.
- Policies for dealing with flood risk including application of the sequential and exceptions test, site specific flood risk assessments and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), as these policy requirements are now addressed by NDMPs.
- Other than for specific site allocations, policies which require BNG from developments at more than the statutory 10%, or from sites exempt from BNG.
- Other than the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, policies for protecting or enhancing international, national or local sites of nature conservation importance and irreplaceable habitats, as these are now addressed by NDMPs.

The following questions are set out in the response form⁷:

Q5. Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope for this matter and which a new Local Plan should address? If not, please explain why.

Q6. Do you agree with what the Council believes is out of scope for this matter? If not, please explain why.

Q7. Are there any further locally specific approaches or measures that should be considered in the development of the next Local Plan to address the impacts of climate change?

Q8. Are there any further locally specific approaches or measures that should be considered in the development of the next Local Plan to protect and enhance the natural environment, and help drive nature recovery?

⁷ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping

Topic Area 3: Meeting Housing Needs

Background

- 4.1 The Runnymede Place Portrait⁸ 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.

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

⁸ Available here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/runnymede-digital-place-portrait

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 Assessment⁹. 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 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) 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

⁹ Available here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/2030-local-plan-review-evidence-base-documents/7

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 subdivided¹⁰.

- 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 most 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.

¹⁰ Such as Policy HO2 in [Lewisham Local Plan](#) (July 2025)

The following questions are set out in the response form¹¹:

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](#)?

¹¹ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping

Topic Area 4: Contributing to Sustainable Economic Growth

Background

- 5.1 The Runnymede area is generally prosperous and is home to a variety of businesses. Its locational advantages and good connectivity, combined with its skills base and high-quality environment, makes it an attractive location to do business, offering quick access to Heathrow Airport (by car) as well as Central London.
- 5.2 It has a strong presence in the knowledge-based economy and is home to several leading research establishments, including the UK Government's Animal and Health Plant Agency and Royal Holloway, University of London. The Runnymede area is also home to the UK and European headquarters of several world-renowned technology companies that are at the forefront of innovation including Samsung, Toshiba, Gartner, and VMware. In 2021, Netflix committed to a long-term investment in Longcross Studios, which is set to see a major expansion in media production in coming years.
- 5.3 Sectors which show growth in the Runnymede area include human health and social work; information and communications; as well as arts, entertainment and recreation; with the professional, scientific and technical activities and construction sectors the largest sectors by count. The [UK Competitiveness Index for 2023](#) has the Runnymede area ranked ninth out of all local authority areas, the only area outside of London to fall within the top ten.
- 5.4 The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan identifies several Strategic Employment Areas (SEAs), which are areas that are protected by existing Local Plan policies to remain in employment use, and which are the focus for additional employment development, whether this be for offices, industrial or warehousing uses. SEAs can be found at The Causeway and Pine Trees Business Park in Egham, Weybridge and Bourne Business Park/Waterside Trading Estate in Addlestone, Hillswood Business Park in Chertsey, Thorpe Industrial Estate and Longcross Park. These areas, and other relevant baseline information, is presented in the Runnymede Place Portrait¹².
- 5.5 Retail development and main town centre uses include retail, leisure, entertainment facilities, arts, office, culture and tourism development and are concentrated in a network of centres across the Runnymede area – mainly Addlestone, Chertsey and Egham town centres. The existing Local Plan focuses additional retail, leisure and entertainment development in these main town centres. More local facilities are found at Englefield Green, Ottershaw, Virginia Water and Woodham and New Haw centres. Each centre fulfils a different but complementary role.
- 5.6 Leisure uses outside these centres include Thorpe Park, Savill Gardens, Runnymede Meadows, Windsor Great Park and Virginia Water Lake, and various golf courses and other public open spaces. The Runnymede Place Portrait provides more details.

¹² Available here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/runnymede-digital-place-portrait

What has changed since the 2030 Local Plan?

- 5.7 National changes to the Use Classes Order, made in September 2020, allow uses such as offices, shops, cafes and various other uses to be included within an overall 'E' Use Class. This means that these uses can change from one E use class to another, under what is known as 'permitted development', without having to apply for full planning permission. A 'Prior Approval' application for certain classes of permitted development is instead subject to a far less stringent set of decision-making criteria.
- 5.8 Our monitoring records show that Runnymede has been particularly impacted by these new rights, resulting in a loss of office floorspace, including in our SEAs and in close proximity to town centre locations (particularly Egham and Chertsey). Monitoring records also indicate that areas outside our town centres are unlikely to return to being significant office locations in the future.
- 5.9 Evidence shows that the type of employment space that we use, and the way that we use it, has changed post-Brexit and Covid-19. There has been a significant increase in hybrid working with people working far more frequently from home than was previously the case. This change has impacted on our town centres, and this, together with more internet shopping, has resulted in real changes to the way that these centres function and are used. Evidence suggests overall demand for office floorspace continues to fall, and when / where there is still demand, this is for high-quality space.
- 5.10 The new NPPF allows for the location and extent of town centres and primary shopping areas (where retail development should be concentrated) to be set out within a centre hierarchy policy. The new NDMPs place greater emphasis on enabling a wider mix of uses to address the general oversupply of retail floorspace and create opportunities for more residential accommodation.
- 5.11 Since the adoption of the 2030 Local Plan, Addlestone town centre has seen the development of Addlestone One and at Egham town centre the Magna Square development, both of which offer an extended range of retail and leisure facilities with additional housing. The wayfinding infrastructure of all three town centres is also being significantly improved, to help support the development of these areas by improving legibility.

What we think is in scope

- 5.12 In accordance with the NPPF, there is an opportunity for the new Local Plan to set out a clear economic vision and strategy for the Runnymede area, which takes a positive, proactive and realistic approach to encouraging sustainable economic growth, having regard to the [National Industrial Strategy](#) and any other relevant strategies for economic development, including that of the emerging Spatial Development Strategy for the sub-region. This should take account of local business needs and wider opportunities for growth.
- 5.13 The new Local Plan can then allocate employment and mixed-use sites to implement this vision and strategy, and meet identified needs over the plan period, within the context of a modern, green economy.
- 5.14 Our latest Economic Development Needs Assessment¹³ identifies the need to protect existing and deliver additional employment floorspace over the Plan period. Given the Green Belt constraints that exist, our view is that as far as possible we need to seek to protect Runnymede's key employment sites (such as our SEAs) from being lost to

¹³ Available here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/2030-local-plan-review-evidence-base-documents/7

other uses such as housing. It is important that existing employment locations are given the opportunity to attract investment, expand and adapt to meet future needs.

- 5.15 In addition, the loss of key employment premises can lead to fewer long-term jobs and increase out-commuting or relocation, harming the local economy and denying opportunities to regenerate employment areas for commercial activity which could help to facilitate a modern economy.
- 5.16 The Council has agreed to make an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights which allow for the change of use from commercial activity to residential in our Strategic Employment Areas. The Article 4 Direction will come into effect in February 2027.
- 5.17 There may also be opportunities to allocate smaller, less strategic employment sites which make a valuable contribution to Runnymede's economy, and to protect them from being lost to other uses.
- 5.18 Even if our existing employment sites are protected, there is a need for around 19,000 – 24,000sqm of new office space, 1,700-4,200sqm of industrial floorspace and 16,000 – 17,000sqm of warehousing/logistics floorspace over a 10-year period. There may also be demand for additional floorspace to deliver warehouse-like facilities like data centres, which are identified by central government as being essential to support sectors that benefit from data processing and storage services. The NPPF requires local planning authorities to consider the need for this type of development when setting local policies.
- 5.19 The NPPF also sets out how Plans should promote the long-term vitality and viability of town centres. They should be informed by a strategy for town centres to ensure that the full range of potential needs and opportunities for development is considered (and to broaden the mix of uses, including residential uses).
- 5.20 Plans should also define a hierarchy of centres, including the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of 'main town centre uses' needed over the plan period.
- 5.21 Early evidence from our Retail Study¹⁴ indicates that our towns, traditional high streets and shopping centres have been and continue to be challenged by falling market demand, rising occupancy costs and increased competition from online and out-of-centre shopping. These trends were accelerated and compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.22 As a result, over a 10-year plan period, based on projected population growth, there is no need to identify and allocate new sites for retail or leisure development, as growth in these uses are most likely to be accommodated within existing or refurbished units in Runnymede's town centres or near transport nodes. Any development proposals for main town centre uses should continue to be directed to the existing network of centres. Sequentially, we should look to sites within our town centres first, and only if none are available look to sites on the edge of our town centres and lastly out of centre.
- 5.23 In terms of retail and leisure provision in our town centres, the key message from our evidence and national planning policy is that we need to support diversification: we need to plan for alternative uses such as residential provision, education, and health facilities which are positive in terms of drawing footfall and enhancing the vitality of

¹⁴ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/2030-local-plan-review-evidence-base-documents/3

centres. We also need to consider options for redevelopment and continued investment to improve the quality of centres.

What we think is out of scope

5.24 The new Local Plan should not repeat policy requirements set out in NDMPs in the latest NPPF. Therefore, areas considered to be out of scope include:

- Setting policies for a sequential and impact test for main town centre uses proposed outside of designated town centres.
- Policies which control the introduction of new hot food takeaways in locations within walking distance of schools, and where there is evidence that a concentration of such uses is having an adverse impact on health, pollution and anti-social behaviour. These issues are now addressed sufficiently in NDMPs in the NPPF.

The following questions are set out in the response form¹⁵:

Q15. Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope and which a new Local Plan could address to contribute towards a sustainable local economy? If not, please explain why.

Q16. Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope and which a new Local Plan could address to ensure the vitality of Runnymede's town centres? If not, please explain why.

Q17. Do you agree with what the Council believes is out of scope for these matters? If not, please explain why.

Q18. In addition to protecting our Strategic Employment Areas, are there any other employment sites/areas that you think the Council should consider protecting? If so, please provide details, and why you think that they need to be retained.

Q19. Given the changing nature of town centres and the future challenges that they face, do you have any suggestions that could inform a strategy/vision for Runnymede's town centres, which could in turn inform the next Local Plan?

¹⁵ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping

Topic Area 5: Transport & Other Supporting Infrastructure

Background

- 6.1 The Runnymede area is served by a wide range of transport routes, including road, rail and bus routes and some 'active travel' (e.g. cycling and walking) routes. In addition, the area is situated in close proximity to Heathrow Airport, and to some degree Gatwick Airport, although access to the airports from Runnymede by means other than the car is limited. The area also benefits from many community facilities and public service infrastructure such as education and healthcare facilities, and police and library facilities. These are either run by either infrastructure providers or local community groups. Other physical infrastructure such as power and water supply, wastewater, broadband and telecommunications are provided and managed by various utility companies.
- 6.2 Key infrastructure provision in Runnymede is identified in the Runnymede Place Portrait¹⁶.
- 6.3 Evidence supporting the existing 2030 Local Plan (such as in the [Infrastructure Delivery Plan](#)) identified a lack of capacity in some of Runnymede's infrastructure to support planned growth, and also a significant funding gap associated with infrastructure delivery. The existing Local Plan therefore set out the facilities and contributions expected from new development – both through on-site delivery and through the collection of financial contributions such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is a levy charged on new development to help deliver the infrastructure that is needed to support development in the area.
- 6.4 Our monitoring evidence shows how these contributions are now helping to deliver new or improved strategic and neighbourhood infrastructure across the Runnymede area, such as improved play areas, community and healthcare facilities, street improvement measures, walking and cycling infrastructure, and public realm infrastructure. However, developer contributions do not fully meet the funding gap, and so infrastructure delivery often needs to be prioritised based on the criticality of the need for each piece of infrastructure combined with the amount of funding available.

What has changed since the 2030 Local Plan?

- 6.5 The emphasis in the latest NPPF continues to be on managing patterns of growth by focussing significant development in locations that are or can be made sustainable by limiting the need to travel and offering a choice of transport modes. However, in the past, Local Plans were supported by transport evidence which took a 'predict and provide' approach i.e. predicting future demand on the network which would be generated by growth and providing greater capacity for more cars. The latest NPPF embeds a 'vision-led' approach to transport planning. This starts with a collective ambition for how a place should look and feel (e.g. achieving well-designed, sustainable, inclusive and popular places) and then identifying a range of transport solutions to deliver those outcomes.
- 6.6 Combined with an uplift to electric and possibly self-driving vehicles in the future - which will impact the road network - and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and work from home patterns, predicting travel patterns is likely to become increasingly challenging. Of potential benefit, however, is that Local Government Reorganisation

¹⁶ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/runnymede-digital-place-portrait

will see local services merge into one unitary West Surrey Council, which may make assessing transport impacts and planning for appropriate infrastructure more aligned.

- 6.7 During the development of the 2030 Local Plan, a number of transport schemes were identified to support the delivery of its spatial strategy. Of critical importance were the A320 corridor and M25 Junction 11 improvements – the delivery of this scheme is now underway, having secured forward funding through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). However, this funding needs to be reimbursed through the collection of developer contributions from a number of development sites which rely on this improved transport infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of development.
- 6.8 Since the existing Local Plan was adopted, Surrey County Council adopted the [Surrey Local Transport Plan 4](#), which aims to significantly reduce carbon emissions from transport, and focuses on the principle of ‘avoid, shift and improve’ (see box below).

Surrey Local Transport Plan’s approach to transport planning:

- **Avoid** unnecessary travel by reducing the number and length of trips needed. The Plan aims to achieve this through improving planning for homes and employment sites, travel planning and levels of digital connectivity.
- **Shift** travel choices to more sustainable modes of transport, including public transport, walking and cycling, away from car use.
- **Improve** the energy efficiency of vehicles and operational efficiency of roads through technology improvements.

- 6.9 To help achieve the Transport Plan’s aims, we have been working with Surrey County Council to prepare Runnymede’s first ‘[Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)’ (LCWIP), which identifies several priority routes and areas for improvement; and to develop ‘[Local Street Improvement](#)’ (LSI) schemes. Improvements include introducing 20mph zones, re-aligning some of the highways, and creating pop-up green spaces. CIL funds have recently been allocated to help deliver priority LCWIP routes and LSI zones in various parts of the Runnymede area, to support new development.
- 6.10 Heathrow Airport lies to the north of Runnymede. In January 2025, the government confirmed its support for a third runway at Heathrow and invited the airport to develop proposals for further consideration – the project is a ‘pre-application’ stage, with an application expected to be submitted in December 2027. The Council is a member of the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG), which addresses issues such as the potential expansion of the airport and also potential new rail routes to Heathrow, which could have significant implications for the Runnymede area and need to be planned for.

What we think is in scope

- 6.11 In terms of transport infrastructure, the latest NPPF is clear that sustainable transport solutions should be considered from the earliest stage of plan-making. The outcomes of a vision-led approach to planning for transport should be reflected in the vision of the new Local Plan, and its specific proposals. The NPPF sets out how this should be done – in collaboration with local communities and a range of transport stakeholders – as summarised in the box below.

Transport considerations should be taken fully into account in the preparation of the new Local Plan in the following ways:

- Engaging early with transport colleagues within the Council (from 1 April 2027, this will include the highway authority officers currently operating from Surrey County Council), local communities, National Highways, Heathrow Strategic Planning Group and other stakeholders to understand local views on how the Local Plan can prioritise and maximise sustainable movement across the area; and to better understand and address potential impacts of development on transport networks.
- Reflecting outcomes of a vision-led approach to planning for sustainable transport in the vision for the plan area and its specific proposals. This vision can also inform the setting of local parking standards for residential and non-residential development across the plan area, or for specific sites or sub-areas.
- Aligning land use policies and allocations with wider strategies such as the Surrey Local Transport Plan, Runnymede Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans and investments in transport to ensure that the potential impacts of development on Runnymede's transport networks are understood and addressed.
- Allocating land for development where it can support sustainable patterns of movement and make efficient use of existing or proposed transport infrastructure. A new '[Connectivity Tool](#)' will be used to assist with this, which helps us understand how potential development sites are connecting to everyday services by walking, driving, cycling and public transport; and can plot new transport routes to understand how these would affect an area's connectivity.
- Supporting an appropriate mix of uses across the Runnymede area, and within strategic sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.
- Identifying and protecting sites and routes which will widen transport choice and are essential to facilitate sustainable development, including networks for walking, wheeling and cycling, and public transport infrastructure.
- Providing for any transport facilities that need to be in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support them. This could be relevant for transport infrastructure needed to support more sustainable access to Heathrow Airport, for example.
- Setting out thresholds for what constitutes a 'significant amount of movement' arising from new development (based on our local circumstances), to help decision-makers understand whether development proposals should be situated in locations that are or can be made more sustainable; and whether transport statements, transport assessments and/or travel plans should be submitted to support such applications, to help understand transport impacts.

6.12 The latest NPPF is also clear that the new Local Plan should set out the infrastructure and financial contributions expected from development, including as part of site allocations, to support the delivery of the plan and provide certainty at plan-making stage. Aside from affordable housing contributions discussed in the Housing topic area

of this scoping consultation, developers are required to contribute to infrastructure to support new development several ways, including through planning conditions attached to planning permissions; through section 106 agreements and section 278 agreements (legally binding agreements between a local authority and a developer); and by way of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is a fixed charge levied on new development to fund supporting infrastructure.

- 6.13 It is recognised that the identification of both on-site and off-site infrastructure improvements to support the next Local Plan will be critical to its success. Work has begun on an Infrastructure Needs Assessment to identify how much infrastructure will be needed to support growth in the Runnymede area which arises from a new Local Plan – this will look at existing deficits in the availability of community facilities (including recreational land and facilities) and public service infrastructure, and additional requirements expected over the plan period. This will also assess energy supply and network capacity, water supply, drainage and wastewater capacity, which will help address potential constraints to development arising from current or anticipated infrastructure shortfalls.
- 6.14 The Infrastructure Needs Assessment will feed into a new Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which will identify the infrastructure projects required to secure growth, how much this might cost and where potential funding will come from. Requirements will be identified through consultation with various key infrastructure providers, including the NHS, utility providers such as Thames Water and network operators such as UK Power Networks, the Environment Agency, and internal council departments, including those transferred from Surrey County Council. The new IDP will also need to reflect emerging outcomes in the wider Spatial Development Strategy, which can also assess and identify cross-boundary infrastructure needs and requirements to support growth.
- 6.15 At this early stage of plan-making, we cannot say how much new or improved infrastructure we will need or where this might come forward in Runnymede. This will be informed by decisions made later on in the plan-making process on where growth will be directed over the next Plan period. However, based on our conversations with infrastructure providers, it is likely we will need to see additional or enhanced health and education facilities to deal with the anticipated increase in population as well as improved cycle and walking facilities, recreational land and facilities, and other transport options to ensure that development that comes forward is as sustainable as possible.
- 6.16 The CIL charging rates will also need to be reviewed at some point to ensure that the financial contributions we seek from developers are set at the right level for different types of development and remain viable (meaning that the contributions are affordable and will not hamper the delivery of development).

What we think is out of scope

- 6.17 We think the following matters are out of scope, which are now addressed by NDMPs in the latest NPPF:
- Policies setting out criteria for the expansion and upgrading of telecommunications infrastructure; and the development and operation of energy and water infrastructure.
 - Policies which set out highway design measures to be considered in decision-making, including street design and access.

- Policies which require transport statements or assessments and travel plans to be submitted with planning applications (although there is scope to define what 'significant amount of movement' means taking into account local circumstances).
- Policies which seek the retention of community facilities and public service infrastructure, open space/recreational space, playing pitches; and which assess effects of proposals on Local Green Space (although Local and Neighbourhood Plans can continue to designate land as Local Green Space – see the 'Call for Sites' information for more details).

The following questions are set out in the response form¹⁷:

Q20. Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope which regards to transport infrastructure, which a new Local Plan could address? If not, please explain why.

Q21. Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope with regards to other supporting infrastructure, which a new Local Plan could address? If not, please explain why.

Q22. Do you agree with what the Council believes is out of scope for these matters? If not, please explain why.

Q23. What do you consider to be the key transport issues which need to be addressed to help new development come forward?

Q24. What are the types and sizes of development proposal that you think could generate a 'significant amount of movement' in Runnymede?

Q25. Are there any other key infrastructure improvements that you think the next Local Plan covering the Runnymede area should address, or safeguard land to deliver?

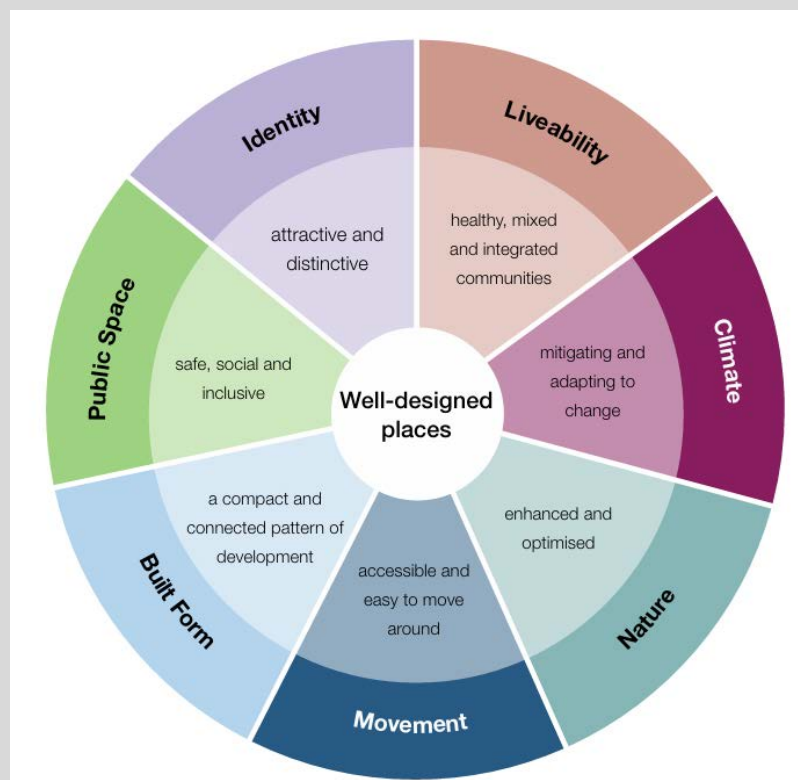
¹⁷ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping

Topic Area 6: Creating well-designed, high-quality places

Background

- 7.1 Creating high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, but delivering this in practice can be challenging given the number of considerations which need to be balanced, such as delivering enough homes and making efficient use of land.
- 7.2 Well-designed places should be able to stand the test of time. They should contribute towards local character, enhance the historic environment and reflect what is unique or special about a place, its architecture, built form or landscape setting. They should be designed in such a way as to give a strong sense of place, promote health and well-being, be inclusive, safe and accessible to all. These components all feature in the 'seven features of well-designed places', as defined by the government in the proposed new [Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance](#).

The seven features of well-designed places can help achieve good design quality – these can inform local policies and guidance and decisions on development proposals.



- 7.3 The existing 2030 Local Plan contains policies which aim to create a high-quality and inclusive built environment, including at Longcross Garden Village, where a site-specific design code is being developed. To be clearer on our design expectations for development sites across the rest of the Runnymede area, we published our own design guidance: the [Runnymede Design Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#) in 2021. The SPD contains a set of design standards and identifies five different character types – and their typical characteristics - across the built-up areas of Runnymede.

What has changed since the 2030 Local Plan

- 7.4 The latest NPPF contains several NDMPs which aim to create high-quality, sustainable places, including by:
- Making effective use of land, particularly in highly connected locations, with the introduction of minimum density standards in these areas.
 - Emphasising how ‘poorly designed’ development should be refused, when assessed against a new policy for decision-makers (referencing eight key design principles reflecting those set out at paragraph 10.2 above) as well as any local design policies, guides, codes and masterplans in the development plan. In the absence of these locally produced design tools, decision-makers can rely on principles set out in the national Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance.
 - Encouraging the delivery of tree-lined streets.
 - Encouraging the use of design review and other design tools and processes to inform decision-making.
- 7.5 The Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance no longer expects every local planning authority to produce an authority-wide design code. These can still be produced, but other tools could be more appropriate to inform decision-making (such as masterplans, localised design codes and design guidance) depending on emerging growth scenarios. New national model design codes are expected to be published later this year, which could also be used as a starting point for locally produced codes, or wholly adopted to be used locally.

What we think is in scope

- 7.6 We want to ensure that design at the authority-wide scale is embedded at an early stage into the plan-making process. To do this effectively, we will need to work with local communities to develop the vision for the next Local Plan in terms of delivering well-designed, high-quality development.
- 7.7 We need a deeper understanding of the key local design challenges experienced in Runnymede, and local design aspirations. We can then set out local design expectations and processes for priority locations or areas for growth or change in the next Local Plan (once these growth scenarios emerge). We can also set out design expectations for certain types of development – such as flats or family homes – in certain areas of the Runnymede area.
- 7.8 We also need to be mindful that design matters can be addressed through Neighbourhood Plans – particularly through design codes – where local communities will be best placed to address the unique character of their areas themselves.

Neighbourhood planning gives a community the opportunity to plan for their local area, to decide what the place they live in should look like and define how their neighbourhood should grow and change in the future.

Neighbourhood Plans have already been adopted in Englefield Green Village, Virginia Water and Thorpe, with a further plan currently being prepared in Ottershaw.

- 7.9 Early feedback from our Development Management team, the local community, and evidence from recently refused planning applications has highlighted a number of design issues which could be addressed by future design tools, including:
- Design of householder development e.g. extensions and alterations, particularly those within the Green Belt.
 - Shopfront design, particularly those in Conservation Areas.
 - Sustainable construction e.g. how development can be designed to reduce emissions and be energy efficient.
 - How new development can respond better to its local context and maintain or enhance a sense of identity.
 - How noise impacts can be minimised, and air quality improved through well-designed development.
 - How new development can create well-connected places through provision of public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and parking requirements.
 - How nature and the historic landscape is woven into the design of new development.
 - How places can be designed to be inclusive and safe.
 - Locally-set parking standards.
- 7.10 These represent just a few of the issues that new design policies and tools could address, either through the new Local Plan, or via a future Supplementary Plan. Whilst several of these issues – such as air and noise pollution, and appropriate development in the Green Belt – may now be sufficiently addressed by NDMPs, the NPPF sets out how there is scope for locally-specific design policies or standards to add further detail to the key design principles in the NPPF.
- 7.11 National planning policy is clear that development should make efficient use of land, and that towns and other areas well served by public transport should use minimum density standards which help secure a significant uplift on existing density. We think that this issue could be addressed by new design tools – such as the use of site or area-wide specific design codes to support the delivery of development in those areas of Runnymede that could achieve a significant uplift in density, including by building upwards where appropriate.
- 7.12 However, we will need to conduct further work to fully understand the character of the site(s) or area(s) that design tools may cover, the wider context, and opportunities to strengthen existing character.

What we think is out of scope

- 7.13 Several design and placemaking matters that are currently addressed in the existing 2030 Local Plan are now considered to be out of scope in the new Local Plan, as these matters are addressed by NDMPs and the supporting Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance. These include:
- Policies which set out key principles for well-designed places in Runnymede (similar to strategic policy EE1 in the existing 2030 Local Plan).

- Environmental protection policies, setting out how development proposals should be designed to control pollution (e.g. to mitigate any air quality, noise, land contamination, and light impacts, as these are now addressed by NDMPs in Chapter 17 of the latest NPPF).
- Policies setting out how proposals should be designed in order to conserve and enhance the historic environment, and heritage assets, as these are addressed by NDMPs in Chapter 20 of the latest NPPF (other than any site-specific site allocation requirements).

The following questions are set out in the response form¹⁸:

Q26. Do you agree with what the Council believes is in scope with regards to achieving well-designed buildings and places, which a new Local Plan could address? If not, please explain why.

Q27. Do you agree with what the Council believes is out of scope for this matter? If not, please explain why.

Q28. Do you agree that the focus of Runnymede design tools (e.g. masterplans or codes) should be on areas that provide the greatest opportunities for growth or change?

Q29. Do you have any views on design codes or other design tools for the different settlement areas in the Runnymede area, and whether these should come through the Local Plan, a Supplementary Plan, or Neighbourhood Plans?

Q30. Do you have any views on where in the Runnymede area density could be significantly uplifted and/or where building upwards could help to help meet identified needs?

¹⁸ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping

Working towards a vision for the new Runnymede Local Plan

Local Plans must include a vision – but what is it?

- 8.1 One of the key features of a Local Plan is a vision for the area. The purpose of the vision is to help set the direction for change for the area over the plan period – it provides the framework which will guide the Local Plan’s spatial strategy and policy development.
- 8.2 The vision should set out key aims and objectives for the Runnymede area over the plan period; but it can also be used to reflect longer-term ambitions stretching beyond the plan period.

Working towards a vision for the new Local Plan

- 8.3 At this early scoping stage of plan-making, the aim is to gain feedback on the key spatial priorities for the area to help draft a vision at the next stage of plan-making. In identifying key spatial priorities, the Council will need to consider national decision-making planning policies (NDMPs), and issues specific to the Runnymede area (informed by baseline information and other local evidence).
- 8.4 To help define the key spatial priorities for the area, the Council has undertaken a SWOT analysis of its baseline information. The draft SWOT analysis is presented at Appendix B.
- 8.5 This exercise has helped us identify a series of key issues facing the Runnymede area, and spatial priorities that a new Local Plan should seek to address. This is presented at Appendix C. This exercise has informed the matters presented in earlier sections of this scoping consultation.
- 8.6 Once we’ve received your feedback and made any amendments to these, they will feed into the visioning exercise at next stage of plan-making. This will be an important opportunity for local communities and other stakeholders to feed into the plan-making process. It will play an important role in establishing the ambition for growth across Runnymede, and in identifying measurable outcomes to help monitor progress towards meeting that ambition.
- 8.7 Before answering the following questions, we recommend you read the detailed information on each topic area presented in earlier chapters of this scoping consultation, which reflect the key issues and spatial priorities that the baseline information and emerging evidence has identified.

The following questions are set out in the response form¹⁹:

Q31: Do you agree that the SWOT analysis has identified all relevant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Runnymede area? If not, please suggest how it should be changed.

Q32: Do you agree with the locally specific issues and spatial priorities identified by the Council that could be reflected in the draft vision? If not, please suggest how they should be changed.

¹⁹ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping

How we plan to engage with you

- 9.1 We want to ensure that residents, businesses and other stakeholders have an opportunity to comment on the Local Plan, and shape what it contains.
- 9.2 The plan-making process includes two further consultations prior to the plan being submitted for examination:
- June 2027: Consultation on 'Proposed Plan Content and Evidence'
 - April 2028: Consultation on 'Proposed Local Plan'.
- 9.3 Anyone can make written representations (responses) at each of these stages and participate in additional engagement activity taking place as part of these consultation stages.
- 9.4 The consultation material will be published on our website and made available in hard copy at the Civic Offices in Addlestone, and in other community facilities such as libraries across the Runnymede area.
- 9.5 Statutory consultees, and other organisations and individuals on our Planning Policy Consultation Database²⁰, will be automatically notified of these consultations.
- 9.6 In addition, we will publicise the consultations using social media (such as Facebook and LinkedIn), on noticeboards, through relevant Council communications and printed materials, and through press releases sent to local media.
- 9.7 The Council has drafted a Local Plan Engagement Strategy which analyses the demographic make-up of the Runnymede area, identifies its 'hard-to-reach' and historically underrepresented groups, and sets out ways of engaging with these groups and other stakeholders throughout the plan-making process. The aim of the strategy is to maximise involvement in the preparation of the new Local Plan. The Strategy can be accessed under the 'How we plan to engage with you' topic area at:
- www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping
- 9.8 The Council has also prepared a Strategic Cross-boundary Scoping Statement, describing how we intend to maintain effective cooperation addressing cross-boundary issues affecting Runnymede. It outlines which bodies we are proposing to engage with, on what topics, and the ways in which we propose to engage with these bodies. The Statement can also be accessed under 'How we plan to engage with you' at:
- www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping
- 9.9 The Government is promoting a 'digital-first' plan-making system to help reduce the time it takes to produce local plans. We would therefore like written comments to be submitted online through our local plan engagement software wherever possible. This allows a much larger number of responses to be analysed more quickly. However, we still plan to hold meetings and correspond with key stakeholders in the usual way throughout the plan-making process. This will help enable cooperation with other plan-making bodies and support the development of a robust evidence base.

²⁰ Sign up here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/sign-new-database

The following questions are set out in the response form²¹:

Q33: Are there other ways we should publicise the Local Plan consultations?

Q34: Is there a group or community you are aware of that find it harder to participate? If so, what steps could we take to help those groups engage?

Q35: Do you agree that our Strategic Cross-boundary Matters Scoping Statement identifies relevant strategic matters and sets out the correct consultees and approach for engagement on these matters? If not, please explain why.

Q36: Are there any other comments you wish to make about how you would like us to engage with you during the preparation of the Local Plan?

Q37: Do you have any other views on what the new Plan should contain, which have not been covered elsewhere in the consultation?

²¹ Available at: www.runnymede.gov.uk/local-plan/scoping

Appendix A: Scoping Consultation Glossary

Accessible/Adaptable buildings: in the context of this scoping consultation, this tends to refer to the categories of Part M of the Buildings Regulations which aim to deliver inclusive design by setting out the minimum requirements for accessibility. Part M applies to new buildings and major alterations to existing buildings. 'Category 2' standards seek to deliver buildings that are accessible to people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids. They can also be adapted over time to meet the needs of people with other disabilities. 'Category 3' buildings are designed specifically for people who use wheelchairs. They have wider doorways, lower counters, and other features that make them easier to use.

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) **Social Rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

b) **Other affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

c) **Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership:** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

e) **Military affordable housing:** meets various conditions including to remain as affordable housing for future eligible households, service personnel and veteran households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Agent of change principle: decisions should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities (such as places of worship, pubs, music venues and sports clubs). Existing businesses and facilities should not

have unreasonable restrictions placed on them because of development permitted after they were established. Where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on new development (including changes of use) in its vicinity, the applicant (or 'agent of change') should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed.

Article 4 Direction: made by the local planning authority to restrict the scope of permitted development rights either in relation to a particular area or site, or a particular type of development anywhere in the local planning authority's area. Permitted development rights allow certain types of development to be carried out without needing to apply for planning permission.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): an approach to development introduced by the Environment Act 2021. Developers must deliver a BNG of 10% in certain circumstances, to ensure that a development will result in more and/or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development.

Climate change adaptation: Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate change mitigation: Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Design code: A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site, or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area. 'Model Design Codes' refer to standard design requirements published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for common development types that can be used and adopted locally.

Design guide: A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice, often produced by a local authority.

Fluvial flooding: occurs when the volume of water in a watercourse exceeds its capacity, causing it to overflow onto low-lying adjacent land.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. It includes parks and gardens, green spaces, green corridors such as rivers and canals, sustainable drainage systems, features for species, street trees and community orchards.

Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 of the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Functional floodplain: A functional floodplain (or Flood Zone 3b) is land that naturally stores or flows with water during flood events, typically having an annual probability of flooding of 5% (1-in-20) or higher. It is safeguarded from development to provide essential flood water storage and reduce risks to downstream areas.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies: A system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under s.104 of the Environment Act 2021. The [Surrey LNRS](#) has been published and will be delivered by a range of stakeholders across Surrey.

Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); banks; professional services; offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

Nature based solutions: Actions which use natural processes to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems that address societal challenges, benefiting both people and nature, such as the creation of woodlands or wetlands.

Sequential test for flood risk: the aim of the sequential test is to steer development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. Where the test applies, development proposals should not be located in areas at risk of flooding where alternative sites, appropriate for the development, are reasonably available in areas with a lower risk of flooding.

Spatial development strategy (SDS): A plan containing policies on the development and use of land on matters of strategic importance to the area prepared by strategic planning authorities and the Mayor of London.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG): an area of land designated for recreational purposes that is designed to offset disturbance and pressures on sites that are protected for their habitat value under Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), such as the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. New housing, with an associated increase in footfall, can put pressure on these valuable habitats. SANGs are designed to absorb the pressures from new residential development by providing a preferred alternative for people to enjoy.

Surface water (pluvial) flooding: occurs when rainfall cannot drain away quickly enough through the ground, drainage systems or nearby watercourses. Instead, water flows across the surface of the ground or collects in low-lying areas.

Appendix B: Draft SWOT Analysis

The baseline information and evidence which the Council has gathered to date has informed the following objective assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/challenges (SWOT) that are relevant to the area which a new Runnymede Local Plan will cover. This has helped identify Runnymede's key spatial priorities, which will, in turn, inform the new Local Plan's vision, objectives and policy requirements.

The SWOT analysis may change and evolve once feedback from the scoping consultation is taken into account.

Strengths

- Overall, Runnymede offers an attractive living environment with a strong identity.
- Relatively affluent area with most neighbourhoods in the least deprived category nationally.
- Relatively resilient local economy, despite a number of market shocks over recent years, with generally high employment, earnings, productivity and economic output.
- Skilled workforce and sustained business investment in some sectors – economically active population likely to outpace Surrey and UK averages.
- Established strength in the information and communications sector, and emerging 'createch'²² sector.
- Strategic location near London, with good road, rail, and Heathrow connectivity in the main.
- Strong education offer, including high-performing schools, colleges and Royal Holloway University of London.
- Wide range of leisure, tourism and recreation assets, such as Thorpe Park, Savill Garden, Virginia Water Lake, Runnymede Meadows and Pleasure Grounds, River Thames.
- Rich and diverse natural environment with locally, nationally and internationally important habitats and ecological connectivity with the wider Thames Valley.
- Rich historic and cultural landscape, including wide range of locally, nationally and internationally significant heritage assets.
- Declining carbon footprint and generally improving air quality (despite localised issues).
- Generally good quality and well-valued parks and open spaces providing a range of play and leisure options, and community facilities meeting the needs of various groups.
- Active and well-organised community groups, including neighbourhood planning forums.
- Runnymede's air quality is generally good and improving (but affected by localised exceedances associated with road traffic and strategic transport infrastructure).

Weaknesses

- Significant development constraints from Green Belt and flood risk.
- Severe housing affordability issues (both house prices and rents) and limited land supply (reflecting wider regional trends).
- Mismatch between housing supply and need leads to issues such as overcrowding and unsuitable housing.
- High unmet demand for diverse housing mix and types, particularly smaller homes and affordable housing to rent.
- Shortfall in accessible/adaptable homes for those with disabilities or whose health deteriorates over time, and ongoing need for specialist accommodation.
- Rising levels of homelessness reflecting wider regional affordability and housing pressures, leading to increased reliance on temporary accommodation.
- Pockets of deprivation with poorer health, education and employment outcomes.

²² 'Createch' is where creativity meets technology – it combines creative sectors like film, with the technology sector, and is an area of growth for the UK (as identified in the [UK Modern Industrial Strategy](#)).

- Uneven economic outcomes across some groups and areas, with strain caused by cost of living and unemployment.
- Weakened office market (accelerated by the pandemic and permitted development rights), has reduced town centre competitiveness.
- Longer-term trends of decline in habitat quality across some sites – particularly floodplain meadows and wetlands (though stabilising in places).
- Heavy reliance on car travel and use of strategic road network, contributing to congestion, localised environmental pollution, and emissions (transport is Runnymede's largest source of emissions).
- Limited public transport connectivity in some areas relative to others, particularly radial links (including to Heathrow airport).
- Some watercourses are below 'good ecological status' - impacted by artificial medication, nutrient enrichment and urbanisation - including the River Thames.
- Moderate increases in crime relative to wider area, concentrated in urban areas and key service locations, has affected perceptions of safety.
- Council housing stock not yet fully meeting national standards – ongoing investment to achieve full compliance and tenant satisfaction.
- Community and public service infrastructure capacity constraints in some parts of Runnymede.
- Features some parks and open spaces of poor/average quality - require ongoing improvement and investment.
- Slowing progress on emissions reduction, with transport and housing dominant sources.

Opportunities

- Respond to demographic change by delivering a more balance housing mix, including specialist, and accessible/adaptable homes.
- Expand and diversify affordable housing delivery, including through Council-led development.
- Modernise housing stock through active investment programme (including decarbonisation) and improve access to sustainable housing solutions.
- Reduce emissions through prioritising sustainable transport and active travel modes; directing growth to accessible locations; and improving energy efficiency of development.
- Support transition to low-carbon and renewable energy and improved energy security through appropriate land-use policies.
- Contributing to nature recovery (including by supporting the Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy), habitat restoration, tree planting, and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), particularly along Thames corridor and through improvements to and expansions of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), which in turn improves climate and flood risk resilience.
- Prioritise regeneration/intensification of brownfield land in urban areas, particularly its centres, to support housing delivery, contribute to centre vitality, and reduce Green Belt pressure.
- Deliver housing and supporting infrastructure through Longcross Garden Village, which has now secured outline planning permission.
- Transition town centres to mixed-use/multi-functional, more resilient destinations, which evolve with changing consumer behaviour.
- Leverage proximity to Heathrow and Thames Valley corridor to achieve sustainable economic growth and skills development.
- Support sector growth - particularly createch and innovation sectors – and strengthen tourism, hospitality and visitor economy (e.g. by building on wayfinding programme).
- Develop and nurture coordination between West Surrey institutions (e.g. RHUL and Surrey University) and sector clusters (e.g. TV studios) to support knowledge transfer, employment and innovation.
- Support a modal shift towards sustainable transport and active travel, as well as electric vehicles, by improving infrastructure and connectivity e.g. through the Runnymede Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Local Street Improvement Programme.
- Work with infrastructure providers to identify capacity issues and secure the necessary funding, including through developer contributions and grant funding, to improve capacity.
- Benefit from the River Thames Scheme (RTS) – through flood mitigation, green and active infrastructure, and leisure and recreation.
- Enhance lower quality open spaces, and outdoor sports and recreation provision, to meet needs.
- Protect employment space via Article 4 Direction (coming into force in 2027).

Threats/challenges

- Predicting demographic change and planning to meet the wide-ranging needs of e.g. an ageing population, diverse groups, and evolving household make-up.
- Demand and need for affordable housing is outstripping supply, coupled with the increasingly limited capacity of housing associations to deliver the affordable homes; and viability pressures facing the sector.
- Worsening affordability, which could lead to further displacement and homelessness.
- Growth in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in some areas of Runnymede can be beneficial, but high concentrations of HMOs can also have negative impacts on residents and visitors in these areas.
- Uncertainty in higher education sector affects ability to project future housing demand.
- Increased propensity to commute amongst university students places pressure on road network.
- Rise of working from home and hybrid working impacts office demand and disperses economic activity away from town centres towards suburbs.
- Accommodating growing demand for logistics/warehousing could place pressure on road network.
- Potential expansion at Heathrow could lead to increased noise pollution, congestion and additional demand for housing/employment floorspace which haven't yet been accounted for.
- Financial pressures on Council services due to funding constraints, servicing demographic change and rising demand (e.g. for temporary accommodation).
- Development and health increasingly impacted by climate change including through flood risk, heat island effect, water availability and quality, increased storm activity and wildfires.
- Constraints from 'dry islands' (areas surrounded by land at high risk of flooding) limiting development in some areas.
- Growing pressure on infrastructure to accommodate growth (including from Grey Belt development).
- Balancing development viability pressures (affected by rising construction costs) and level of developer contributions required to secure supporting infrastructure.
- Limited capacity of existing SANG to avoid development impacts on the Special Protection Area.
- Changing consumer habits impacting vacancy rates in Runnymede's centres and high streets.
- Significant future shortfall in water resources in the South East supply area – pressure from population growth, climate change and increased demand.
- Ongoing pressure on Green Belt land due to shortage of available sites in the urban area, compounded by introduction of grey belt designation.
- Loss of employment floorspace due to expanded permitted development rights, impacting the local economy.
- Plan-making in an uncertain policy and legislation landscape (e.g. due to planning and housing reform), whilst in a period of local government reorganisation, with added complexity in conforming to an emerging Spatial Development Strategy.
- Ongoing car dependence leading to increasing congestion and pollution.
- Challenges in achieving local and national net zero targets without increased pace of change.

Appendix C: Key Issues and Spatial Priorities

Key Issues and Challenges

Through analysing a range of baseline information and emerging evidence on the current and future state of the area, a number of key issues and challenges facing Runnymede have been identified and are summarised below. These have informed the matters being consulted upon in the new Local Plan Scoping Consultation:

1. Housing Choice, Availability & Affordability

Many people are finding it hard to access decent and suitable housing, either to buy or to rent, because prices are so high. The lack of housing that is affordable for residents and workers not only affects people's quality of life, but it also directly impacts Runnymede's economy. The provision of additional affordable housing in Runnymede is a major factor influencing the overall level of additional homes needed, caused by a combination of high market prices (both purchase and rental) and insufficient supply in recent decades.

One of the core issues is therefore how to supply around 34% of the total housing supply needed as affordable to rent dwellings for households unable to afford market housing; and a further 5% as affordable to own dwellings, as evidenced in the latest Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA).

The housing needs of different groups will also need to be planned for. For example, pitches and plots for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, products for custom and self-builders and families with children.

Furthermore, as population projections for Runnymede show a substantial increase in the older population over the Local Plan period, specialist older person housing will be needed, as well as ensuring that an appropriate proportion of new homes are designed to be inclusive e.g. accessible and adaptable for wheelchair users.

Identifying sufficient land to meet these wide-ranging housing needs will be challenging given the constraints present in the area, particularly Green Belt and flood risk constraints.

2. Sustainable Economic Growth and Thriving Centres

Work underpinning the HEDNA shows that Runnymede has a highly skilled resident workforce, and benefits from low unemployment levels and relatively strong productivity. Runnymede is home to some nationally leading and significant businesses and economic sectors.

Forecasts estimate much lower Gross Value Added growth for Runnymede than historic performance, but that growth is expected to outperform the UK and South East during the Plan period.

Runnymede is, however, experiencing a weakening office market. The future focus for office activities will be to retain, refurbish and support incremental growth, rather than identify large-scale development opportunities.

The industrial and logistics sector is performing more strongly – there is potential to accommodate expansion in existing industrial areas where policy and environmental constraints allow, but this will need to be balanced with potential impacts on the local road network.

Creative tech presents an opportunity to build on emerging cluster specialisms, and information and communication presents an opportunity to support an existing strength. If it goes ahead, the Heathrow expansion will bring both opportunities and threats which could have significant implications for the next Local Plan.

The distribution of growth across sectors will have a substantial effect on the sites and premises implications that a Local Plan should address, to help create a prosperous and sustainable local economy supported by, for example, sufficient digital and transport infrastructure. Whilst further redevelopment and intensification of existing employment areas is a possibility, new site allocations are likely to be required to meet future commercial needs, but there are development constraints in the form of Green Belt and flood risk in particular.

The Local Plan should also support the cultural, visitor and tourism economy, including links and access to destinations including Thorpe Park and Windsor Great Park. Finally, the Local Plan can help support green growth, including the low-carbon economy, through supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy technologies and delivering energy-efficient buildings.

The Retail Study indicates that the Council needs to plan for less, not more retail and leisure floorspace, with an emphasis on repurposing and diversifying existing land uses on the high street. The Local Plan has a role to play in ensuring a full range of potential needs and opportunities for development is considered, including the scope to accommodate floorspace which broadens the mix of uses that will draw footfall.

3. Climate Resilience and Nature Recovery

Achieving national and locally set net zero goals will be challenging, but the Climate Change Study indicates that there is scope for a new Local Plan to help mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Evidence shows that for Runnymede; key carbon emitters include transport and domestic heating. A Local Plan can help reduce emissions by locating new development in more accessible locations served by public transport; by promoting new and improved connections by active travel infrastructure; improving EV charging infrastructure; and by supporting energy-efficient buildings served by low and renewable energy technologies, for example.

Action on climate change must also consider planning for resilience to the expected future impacts of climate change. The changing climate will mean the Runnymede area is potentially exposed to increased incidents of flooding, overheating, water shortages, wildfires and extreme weather events. Reducing the impact of these changes on our communities and businesses will be critical, and there are opportunities to achieve this alongside reducing emissions, improving people's health and wellbeing, and supporting nature recovery.

The Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was adopted in March 2026, which plans for the restoration, recovery and enhancement of nature across the whole county. It provides a key source of evidence helping the Council understand locations important for conserving and restoring biodiversity when delivering Local Plans and guides the delivery of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) across the area.

The Runnymede area supports nationally and internationally important heritage assets and valued habitats. It contains many areas of wildlife significance and is within the catchment area of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to mitigate the impacts of new development is an ongoing challenge – without sufficient SANG capacity, new development situated within the catchment area cannot proceed.

4. Residents' Health & Wellbeing

Whilst the health of people in Runnymede is generally better than national trends, residents still have important health and wellbeing needs that the built and natural environment can play a key role in addressing. There are pockets of deprivation present in some areas of Runnymede; growing rates of obesity are being observed; and it is increasingly important to encourage physical activity in both

children and adults. It is also important to plan for Runnymede's ageing population, and the health needs that will generate.

These issues can be addressed through planning policies which seek to deliver additional and improved green spaces and leisure facilities; which improve the built environment through regeneration; and which deliver higher standards and types of housing (e.g. accessible/adaptable dwellings).

5. Transport and Connectivity

Being able to access attractive walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities/ infrastructure, as well as frequent and reliable public transport, are key challenges for residents across much of Runnymede. This is particularly true in less connected areas of the Borough, where improvements are needed to better connect settlements.

Further investment and improvement across the area is needed in public transport and active travel infrastructure to make these modes more reliable, safer and more attractive, thereby enabling greater use. This issue should be taken into account when considering options for site allocations in the new Local Plan, and when designing new development.

6. Delivering Other Supporting Infrastructure

Viability pressures faced by developers may impact the level of developer contributions that can be sought from new development. However, it is increasingly important that new development is supported by adequate infrastructure, so that Runnymede's healthcare, wastewater, education and other community and public infrastructure can continue to meet people's needs.

It will be challenging to ensure the level of growth required – including that delivered on grey belt land – is supported by infrastructure. The Council is aware that this is a pressing issue for local communities across Runnymede.

Proposed Spatial Priorities for the Local Plan

Runnymede's key strategic challenge is balancing significant housing and economic growth pressures with substantial environmental constraints, particularly flood risk and Green Belt. The Local Plan must therefore prioritise sustainable, resilient growth, improved housing affordability, and environmental enhancement to ensure long-term quality of life and resilience.

The following proposed spatial priorities for the Local Plan shape and articulate what it is the Local Plan will seek to achieve. They have been informed by the key issues and challenges facing the area and our communities, as set out above, and are also shaped by the Council's corporate business plan and supporting strategies.

Key Spatial Priorities

1. **Help to deliver genuinely affordable and diverse housing:** maximising the supply of social rented housing should be a priority to address the affordability gap and drivers of homelessness, whilst also addressing the needs of older persons, those seeking shared accommodation, students, minority groups such as Gypsy and Travelling Showpeople, and self-builders.
2. **Adopt a spatial strategy that delivers sustainable patterns of development supported by new or improved infrastructure:** which positively responds to the growth and development needs of the area.
3. **Strengthen climate resilience and flood management:** by integrating sustainable drainage and natural flood management into new development; and avoiding increasing risk downstream; and through a strict application of the sequential and exception tests, and by focusing growth in lower-risk areas, including town centres/brownfield sites where appropriate.
4. **Enhance and connect the Borough's natural environment:** by supporting the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); protecting and enhancing habitats such as the Thames corridor and floodplain habitats; and improving ecological connectivity.

5. **Protect and enhance water and environmental quality:** by addressing pollution and runoff rates and requiring development to improve water quality outcomes.
6. **Regenerate town centres and prioritise brownfield land:** by focusing growth in Runnymede's town centres (subject to flood risk); supporting mixed-use development and the efficient use of land.
7. **Deliver sustainable transport and reduce car dependency:** by linking new development to sustainable transport provision (or enhancing provision); incorporating new/integrate with existing active travel networks; and by focusing growth near to local facilities and services.
8. **Support economic growth while maintaining quality of life:** leverage proximity to Heathrow / Thames Valley corridor, but balance this with environmental and infrastructure capacity to accommodate growth.
9. **Improve the quality and resilience of existing housing stock:** for example, through applying climate-resilient design principles and quality standards as part of regeneration and retrofit proposals (where planning permission is required).
10. **Promote healthier, safer and more inclusive communities:** by addressing homelessness and housing instability; anti-social behaviour through designing-out crime; ensuring access to high-quality green spaces; and integrating new development with community and public service infrastructure.

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