



Guildford Local Plan: Scoping Consultation

September 2026



Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Guildford Local Plan process	1
1.2 Purpose of our Scoping Consultation.....	1
1.3 Format of this document	1
1.4 Consultation questions.....	2
1.5 Our spatial context	5
1.6 Local Government Reorganisation and the Guildford Local Plan	5
2. What evidence have we gathered so far?.....	7
3. Understanding a Local Plan Spatial Strategy.....	8
3.1 What is a Local Plan spatial strategy?	8
3.2 Why are we introducing thinking about a spatial strategy to you now?	8
3.3 What level of growth will we need to plan for?.....	8
a. How many homes do we need to plan for?	9
b. How much land do we need to accommodate economic growth?	9
3.4 What factors do we need to consider when developing a spatial strategy?	9
a. Understanding land availability - what sites are available	10
b. Considering environmental constraints in Guildford	10
c. Understanding which settlements are more sustainable than others.....	10
d. Understanding which sites are, or can be made, more sustainable than others ...	11
e. The approach to Green Belt	11
f. Phasing of delivery	12
g. Strategic Environmental Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal process	12
3.5 How is a preferred spatial strategy option determined?	13
3.6 Spatial strategy: consultation question.....	14
4. Help inform the potential scope of locally specific policies for the Guildford area.....	15
4.1 Our starting point.....	15
4.2 Homes and healthy communities	16
a. Our area today.....	16
b. Key issues and challenges facing our area	19
c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics	20
4.3 Homes and healthy communities: consultation questions.....	20
4.4 Prosperity and economic resilience	20
a. Our area today.....	21
b. Key issues and challenges facing our area	23
c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics	24
4.5 Prosperity and economic resilience: consultation questions	24
4.6 Natural environment and heritage assets.....	24
a. Our area today.....	24
b. Key issues and challenges facing our area	28
c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics	28
4.7 Natural environment and heritage assets: consultation questions	29

4.8 Settlements and infrastructure	30
a. Our area today.....	30
b. Key issues and challenges facing our area	32
c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics.....	33
4.9 Settlements and infrastructure: consultation questions	33
5. Defining key Local Plan priorities for our area	35
5.1 Our starting point.....	35
5.2 Our area’s SWOT	35
5.3 Initial identification of key Local Plan priorities	37
5.4 Key Local Plan priorities: consultation questions.....	38
6. Help inform how we engage on the new Guildford Local Plan with the public, statutory bodies and other stakeholders.....	39
6.1 How should we approach local plan engagement?	39
6.2 The Guildford Local Plan draft community engagement strategy	39
6.3 The consultation stages when preparing local plans	40
6.4 How you can be involved in the Local Plan process.....	42
6.5 What happens to your comments	44
6.6 How we will engage on the Local Plan: consultation questions	45
7. Any other comments.....	46
8. How to respond to the consultation	47
9. Next steps and timetable.....	48

Alternative formats

If you would like to read this document in a different format such as large print or a different language, please contact Planning Policy:

Telephone: 01483 505 050

Email: Planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk

1. Introduction

1.1 Guildford Local Plan process

- 1.1.1 Our new Guildford Local Plan (GLP) is being prepared in line with Government's new plan-making process, set out in regulations which commenced in March 2026 and related national planning guidance. This comprises both a 'getting ready' phase (which we are currently still within) and an intended 30-month 'plan-making phase' which we will start in October 2026.
- 1.1.2 We published our first timetable setting out the key stages in our plan preparation process on 5 June 2026¹. This occurred alongside our formal notice of intention to commence plan preparation. We are conducting this formal 'scoping consultation' as the first of at least three consultations during the process.
- 1.1.3 Once adopted the Local Plan will replace our current adopted Local Plan: Strategy and Sites, 2019 (LPSS) and Local Plan: Development Management Policies, 2023 (LPDMP).
- 1.1.4 In preparing this scoping consultation document we have had close regard to the draft National Planning Policy Framework, 2025 (NPPF), which was consulted upon earlier this year. The final version was published on 17 August 2026 and factual updates were made to this document to reflect this change in position. We will consider further changes in content, including any consequential implications on the scope of potential policy topics, as part of drafting the Local Plan. The NPPF sets the context for plan-making, reflecting what is expected of a Local Plan. The plan will be examined by an independent Government appointed planning inspector and one of the tests they will consider is whether it is consistent with national policy.

1.2 Purpose of our Scoping Consultation

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this consultation is to provide an early opportunity to inform the Local Plan and how it is prepared.
- 1.2.2 We need to prepare our Local Plan in accordance with relevant national policy and legislation. This sets out certain requirements including what feedback we should be seeking on the Scoping Consultation². A statutory Notice of Scoping Consultation accompanies this Scoping consultation document.
- 1.2.3 The main objective of the Scoping Consultation is twofold; first it should indicate what the plan will contain and second it should set out how we intend to engage with stakeholders as part of producing the plan.

1.3 Format of this document

- 1.3.1 This Scoping Consultation covers a number of different aspects which we are seeking your views on. The first section which we would welcome your views on is Section 3 where we

¹ Available at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplantimetable>

² Legal requirements relating to the scoping consultation include those set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 at regulation 20.

set out how we intend to go about developing our spatial strategy. The spatial strategy is essentially our blueprint for growth and will set out how much development will go where, what sort of development it will be and when it will be developed over the plan period to 2045.

- 1.3.2 At Section 4 we go on to explore in more detail four overarching themes: homes and healthy communities, prosperity and economic resilience, natural environment and heritage, and settlements and infrastructure. Drawing on a number of sources, we provide a brief descriptor which outlines some of the baseline data, performance and trends for each theme. We then identify some of the key issues and challenges facing the borough which the GLP could help address. Finally, we identify our initial thoughts on the proposed scope of the policy topics that the GLP may contain. We are interested in getting your views on whether we have identified the right issues and policy areas or whether you think we have missed anything.
- 1.3.3 Section 5 explores the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the borough and identifies an initial set of key priorities for the Local Plan. We would like to hear if you agree with these as the key priorities will form the foundation for developing our Local Plan vision.
- 1.3.4 Finally, Section 6 outlines our draft community engagement strategy. This sets out when we will consult with you and how we propose to do so. It is important that everyone is able to contribute towards the GLP and in particular we would welcome views on how to better engage with those people and groups who we rarely hear from.

1.4 Consultation questions

- 1.4.1 We are asking a series of questions as part of this scoping consultation. They are listed below for convenience alongside a reference/link to the section where you can get more information. They are also embedded within the relevant sections of the scoping consultation document. You can complete the answers to these questions in an online or Word version of the questionnaire. The online and word questionnaires are available here <https://guildford.inconsult.uk/GLPS26/consultationHome>. Alternatively, you can email us at: planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk.

Spatial strategy

1. Do you agree with our approach to developing a Local Plan spatial strategy (see [section 3.3](#) and [section 3.4](#))? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us if anything should be changed, and if there are there any other factors beyond those identified in sections 3.3 and 3.4 that you think we should be considering in developing our Local Plan spatial strategy.

Key issues and challenges and potential policies / policy topics

Homes and healthy communities

2. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the 'homes and healthy communities' theme in [section 4.2b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.

3. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.2b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
4. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.2c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.
5. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.2c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

Prosperity and economic resilience

6. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the 'Prosperity and economic resilience' theme in [section 4.4b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.
7. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.4b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
8. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.4c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.
9. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.4c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

Natural environment and heritage

10. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the 'natural environment and heritage' theme in [section 4.6b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.
11. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.6b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
12. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.6c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.

13. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.6c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

Settlements and infrastructure

14. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the ‘settlements and infrastructure’ theme in [section 4.8b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.
15. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.8b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
16. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.8c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.
17. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.8c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

Key Local Plan priorities

18. Do you agree with the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing our area (see [section 5.2](#))? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us if anything should be added, removed or changed.
19. Do you agree with our identified key Local Plan priorities (see [section 5.3](#))? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us if anything should be added, removed or changed.

Guildford Local Plan engagement

20. Do you agree with the methods of engagement outlined in [Section 6](#) and shown for each plan-making stage shown in Table 3? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us what should be removed or changed, and whether there any other ways you would like to be engaged.

Any other comments

21. Is there anything else you would like to tell us that is not covered by the questions above?

1.5 Our spatial context

- 1.5.1 The borough of Guildford is located within the West of Surrey and bordering Hampshire, with approximately half of our residents residing in the Guildford urban area. Much of the borough is rural in character, with a number of villages and smaller settlements dispersed throughout the countryside. A significant portion of the southern part of the borough lies within the Surrey Hills National Landscape.
- 1.5.2 Our area is characterised by a rich historic environment containing a number of designated heritage assets, including a conservation areas, listed buildings and scheduled monuments.
- 1.5.3 The River Wey and its tributaries run through Guildford and contribute to areas of flood risk, particularly within parts of Guildford town and surrounding settlements.

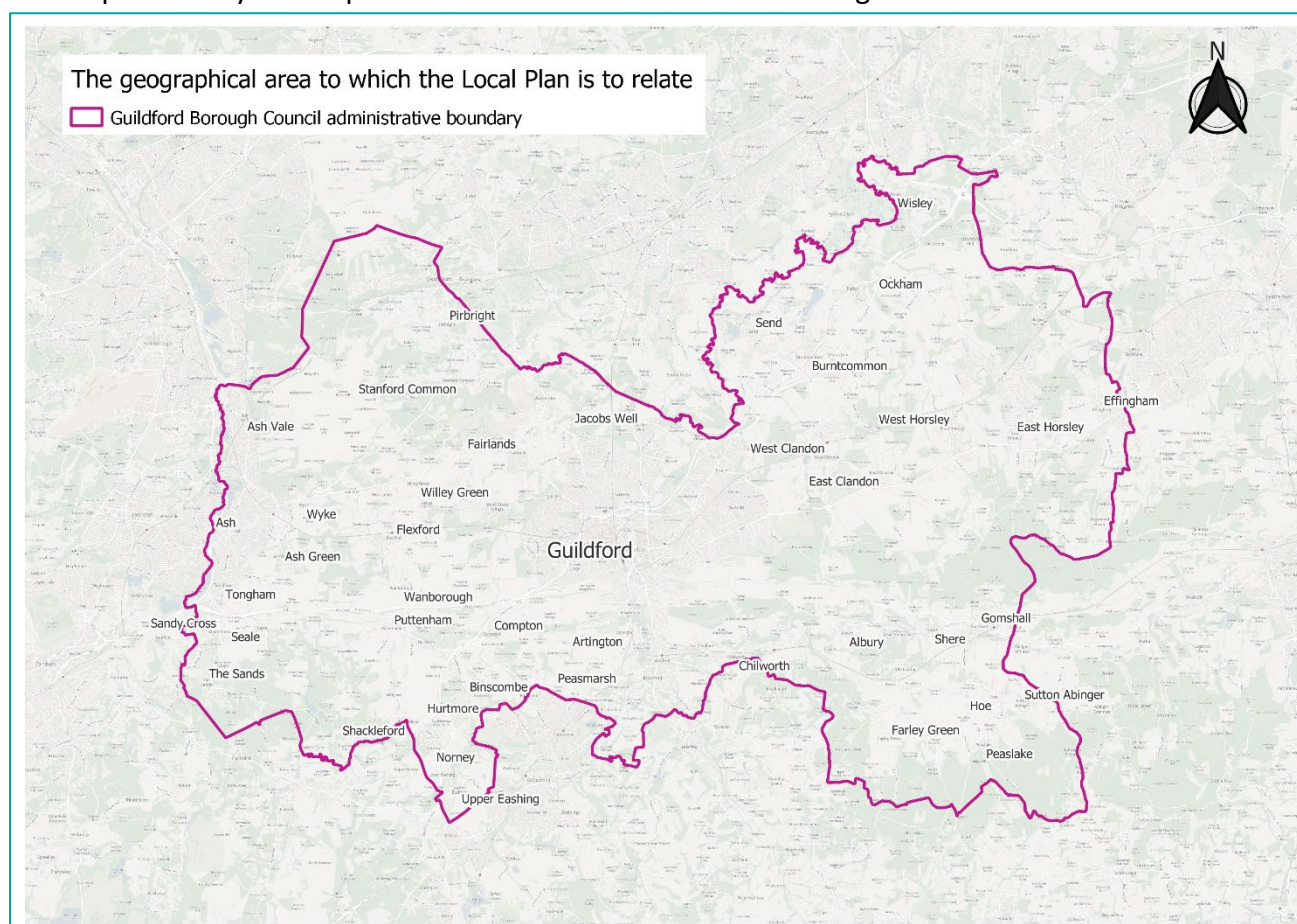


Figure 1: Map of Guildford Borough Council administrative area

1.6 Local Government Reorganisation and the Guildford Local Plan

- 1.6.1 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) means that on 1 April 2027 a new West Surrey unitary council will replace the territory currently covered by Guildford, Waverley, Woking, Surrey Heath, Runnymede and Spelthorne, as seen in Figure 2 (below).
- 1.6.2 Whilst preparation of the GLP has formally commenced under Guildford Borough Council as the local planning authority, this will shift to the new West Surrey unitary authority from 1 April 2027. Despite this, Government has stated that they expect councils to progress

promptly with preparing new Local Plans and that LGR should not be used as a reason to delay this.

- 1.6.3 We also want to ensure that our area is in the best possible position to ensure a plan-led approach to development as soon as possible and view this scoping consultation as a key step in progressing plan-preparation.

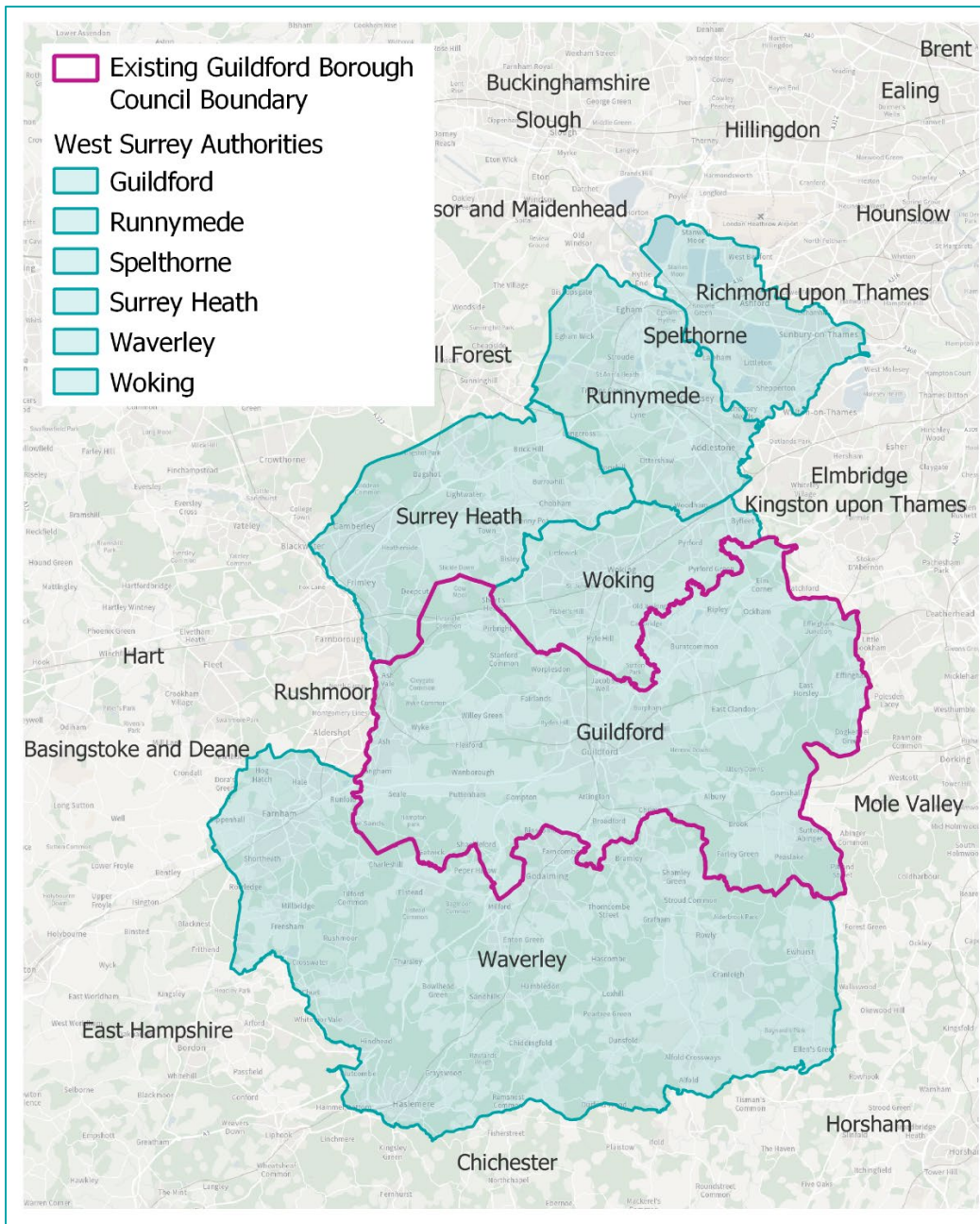


Figure 2: Guildford Borough Council within the West Surrey area

2. What evidence have we gathered so far?

2.1.1 We have undertaken several activities to help understand up-to-date facts about our area and begin to inform preparation of the GLP. These include:

- Preparing baseline information on the area as part of our Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) / Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report
http://www.guildford.gov.uk/Strategic_Environmental_Assessment_2026
- Considering how the current Local Plan has performed since adoption (including reflecting on monitoring data from our annually published authority monitoring reports)
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/monitoring>
- Preparing and commissioning several evidence-based studies. These have included work which has helped us:
 - understand up-to-date housing
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25486/Housing-Needs-Assessment-2026> and employment needs in the area
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25490/Employment-Needs-Assessment-2026>
 - assess our supply of sites suitable and available for development
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25375/Land-Availability-Assessment> and as part of this a focussed urban capacity study focussing on the Guildford Town Centre and environs <http://www.guildford.gov.uk/Guildford-Urban-Capacity-Study-2026>
 - review our settlement hierarchy
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25510/Settlement-Hierarchy-Study-2026> alongside reflecting on new measures of accessibility of different locations using the Government's 'connectivity tool'
 - assess the performance of our Green Belt in line with the Government's guidance
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/greenbeltassessment>
 - establish initial baseline data on existing infrastructure
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25509/Infrastructure-Delivery-Plan-2026>.

2.1.2 We will continue working on our evidence base as we progress with plan-making – some further work is underway but not yet complete, and other work is planned to commence at a later point.

2.1.3 In several of following sections we provide a snapshot of key factual baseline information we have collected. You can find more detail in the published supporting documents at the links provided above.

3. Understanding a Local Plan Spatial Strategy

3.1 What is a Local Plan spatial strategy?

- 3.1.1 A Local Plan spatial strategy sets the overall framework for growth. It sets out where development will be located, and of what sort, whilst also setting out the areas that will be protected or enhanced for specific purposes.
- 3.1.2 The adopted Local Plan includes a spatial strategy which sought to meet development needs in full. It did so by directing development towards the urban areas. Given the scale of development needed this could not all be accommodated in the existing urban areas, necessitating strategic urban extensions at Guildford, and the Ash and Tongham urban areas. In order to ensure sufficient early delivery, it also allocated medium sized sites around some of the larger and more sustainable villages and finally it allocated a new settlement at the former Wisley Airfield. The sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan are at various stages of implementation. Most of the Ash and Tongham urban extension and the village allocations are at or nearing completion, Weyside Urban Village on the edge of Guildford and the new settlement at Wisley Airfield have both commenced, and the two strategic sites on the edge of Guildford are still at the planning stage.

3.2 Why are we introducing thinking about a spatial strategy to you now?

- 3.2.1 As part of preparing a new Local Plan we will need to reconsider our spatial strategy in light of our revised development needs to decide how best to accommodate this in the new Local Plan.
- 3.2.2 It will be a challenging and complex process with many interdependencies. It is important that our spatial strategy approach is robust as this will be central as to whether the Local Plan will be found 'sound'. To be found sound at examination, the Local Plan will need to meet the tests of soundness set out in the NPPF³. How these relate to the spatial strategy is set out in more detail below.
- 3.2.3 Whilst we have not yet drafted a spatial strategy nor identified potential site allocations for the new GLP, we want to engage you now on the process that we will be undertaking in developing it and selecting potential sites. Some of the evidence base that will be used to inform our spatial strategy has been published as part of this consultation. In the sections below we have outlined the factors we will consider and how we propose to use the evidence base. We would welcome your feedback on this.

3.3 What level of growth will we need to plan for?

- 3.3.1 The NPPF requires that Local Plans seek to meet the area's objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses. One of the tests of soundness that we will need to demonstrate at examination is that the GLP is 'positive'. This means that the plan sets out a positive approach to delivering growth to meet the development needs of their area, as a minimum, and that it is based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters.⁴ The bar

³ NPPF 2026, PM15(1)

⁴ NPPF 2026, PM15(1a) and S1(1a)

is therefore extremely high and in order to produce a Local Plan that will be found sound and be capable of being adopted, we will need to ensure that we have maximised all potential opportunities for meeting needs.

a. How many homes do we need to plan for?

- 3.3.2 The local housing need figure for Guildford is calculated using the Government's 'Standard Method'. The Standard Method is a national formula used to calculate the minimum annual local housing need for each local authority. This is calculated by first setting a baseline which is 0.8% of the existing housing stock for the local authority area. An uplift is then applied based on the affordability ratio over the most recent 5-year period. The affordability ratio measures how expensive housing is compared to local earnings. In doing so the Standard Method results in greater housing need in areas that are less affordable. The rationale being that the provision of more homes in these areas will help to address the identified affordability issue.
- 3.3.3 For Guildford, the Standard Method identifies an annual local housing need of 1,151 which the new Local Plan will need to seek to meet. Local Plans need to be prepared with a 15-year horizon from the date of adoption. The supply identified to meet the overall requirement will also need to include a buffer to ensure that there is some flexibility and the overall housing requirement can still be met if some sites don't deliver as planned. The process of developing a spatial development strategy, which sets out where and how development needs will be delivered, is a complex and iterative process that requires the balancing of a number of different considerations.

b. How much land do we need to accommodate economic growth?

- 3.3.4 We also need to consider how we meet need for employment land/floorspace. In this regard, our employment land assessment (2026) provides a forecast of these needs to 2045 (excluding consideration of the future pipeline of supply) as:
- 58,400 sqm of net additional office floorspace, and
 - 20,800 sqm (equivalent to circa 4,6ha) of net additional industrial floorspace.
- 3.3.5 We will need to consider these figures alongside monitoring delivery/loss of office and industrial floorspace to determine what provision we may need to make for these uses in the new GLP.

3.4 What factors do we need to consider when developing a spatial strategy?

- 3.4.1 Whilst the spatial strategy will need to reflect how we will need for all uses (housing, commercial, etc), housing is by far the most challenging and complex given the number of homes needed.
- 3.4.2 In doing so we will need to demonstrate that the strategy we are proposing delivers a sustainable pattern of development. This means that we need to direct development towards locations that are already sustainable, such as within our urban areas and other main settlements, or can be made sustainable, through for instance the provision of additional services and facilities, improved connectivity and/or choice of sustainable transport modes.

a. Understanding land availability - what sites are available

- 3.4.3 The first consideration is an understanding of what sites are available to meet the need. We have an open-ended 'Call for Sites' process whereby developers and landowners can submit sites that they wish to put forward for development at any time. In addition to this, we undertook two formal Call for Sites exercises during early 2025 and 2026 whereby we actively contacted all stakeholders on our consultation database as well as publicised the events through various communications channels. We are also exploring other pro-active means to identify potentially available sites, including the Guildford Urban Capacity Study (see paragraph 3.4.11 below).
- 3.4.4 The objective is to have a sufficient range of suitable sites (or sites that can be made suitable through appropriate mitigation), that are available for different uses, and that can be developed over the timeframe of the Local Plan, that we can then assess as part of the Local Plan process.

b. Considering environmental constraints in Guildford

- 3.4.5 Not all sites that are submitted will be suitable for housing. The borough is rich in natural and heritage assets that constrain where and what type of development is appropriate. Some constraints are 'showstoppers' and mean that certain types of development cannot be located there, for example the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area or a historic registered park and garden. However, some constraints can be overcome through appropriate mitigation or through careful design, for example land that is contaminated or adjacent to ancient woodland. All sites will need to be assessed to understand whether they are suitable in principle and whether any site-specific constraints can be overcome. All site allocations in the Local Plan will be accompanied by site-specific requirements to ensure that any future proposals for the site include any necessary mitigation or design measures.

c. Understanding which settlements are more sustainable than others

- 3.4.6 The next consideration that we propose to use to help inform where growth should be directed is the Settlement Hierarchy⁵. This study assesses all our settlements and ranks them in order of most sustainable to least sustainable. It considers several different factors in determining how settlements should be grouped and ranked. The detailed methodology is contained within the assessment but, in short, it considers the extent of services and facilities available within the settlement, their overall connectivity score⁶ (which is their relative accessibility by sustainable modes of transport) and their existing population. These factors contribute to the sustainability of a settlement by providing opportunities to reduce car dependence and helping to support the level of services and facilities on offer. The NPPF requires a vision-led approach to transport planning. This means that sustainable transport is considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and is reflected in the vision for the area and its specific proposals. In developing the spatial strategy, we will seek to direct development towards the most sustainable areas.

⁵ Available online here: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25510/Settlement-Hierarchy-Study-2026>

⁶ Available online here: <https://connectivity-tool-lite.dft.gov.uk/index>

d. Understanding which sites are, or can be made, more sustainable than others

- 3.4.7 In addition to the relative existing sustainability of our settlements, we propose to also consider a range of other site-specific factors, including any constraints and the extent to which these are capable of mitigation, and their relative connectivity score compared to other sites.
- 3.4.8 This does not mean that we will necessarily allocate every potential site that is available within a given settlement before considering a settlement lower down the hierarchy. There will be a point at which it is not considered sustainable or desirable to allocate further sites at a given settlement. This could be due to the scale of development already proposed, the cumulative impact of that development, site specific considerations, and/or the ability of those sites to be delivered when needed. The issue of phasing of delivery is covered in more detail below.
- 3.4.9 We also propose to consider whether there are opportunities to improve either a settlement's hierarchy ranking or its connectivity score through allocating sites for development where they can help deliver an enhanced level of services and facilities, improved connectivity and/or choice of sustainable transport modes which would benefit both new and existing residents. In doing so, the Local Plan strategy may seek to move some settlements further up the hierarchy.

e. The approach to Green Belt

- 3.4.10 Green Belt boundaries can only be amended as part of a new Local Plan. The NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should only be amended where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified unless it has been identified as suitable land around well-connected stations for development⁷. In relation to what can constitute exceptional circumstances, it clarifies that this can include situations where a local planning authority is unable to meet its identified need for development in full having examined all other reasonable options for doing so. These include making as much use as possible of suitable previously developed and underutilised land, optimising the density of development and assessing whether sufficient suitable sites can be identified outside the Green Belt.
- 3.4.11 Prior to assessing the extent to which Green Belt land may be needed to meet identified needs, we will therefore need to ensure that we have exhausted all other non-Green Belt options. This includes allocating any suitable and available sites that are capable of being delivered during the plan period within our urban areas and inset villages. To help demonstrate that we have left no stone unturned and exhausted all potentially suitable and available sites, we commissioned a Guildford Urban Capacity Study (UCS)⁸. The UCS assessed Guildford town centre and its immediate surrounds, where the greatest opportunity for redevelopment exists, and identified a number of potentially suitable sites that had redevelopment potential. We contacted the landowners of the 45 short-listed sites in Spring/Summer 2026 to enquire whether there was any interest in making their sites

⁷ NPPF 2026, GB3(1)

⁸ Available online at: <http://www.guildford.gov.uk/Guildford-Urban-Capacity-Study-2026>

available for housing or mixed-use development and which could be viably delivered during the plan period.

- 3.4.12 We will also need to look carefully at the capacity of all our existing LPSS site allocations that have yet to gain planning permission to ensure that we are optimising their density and making the most efficient use of those sites. In doing so we can reduce the pressure for / extent of Green Belt release that may be necessary to meet identified needs.
- 3.4.13 The NPPF goes on to say that when altering Green Belt boundaries, we should give priority to the release of previously developed land within the Green Belt, then to grey belt land which is not previously developed, followed by other Green Belt locations, so long as this promotes a sustainable pattern of development overall. We will use the findings of our Green Belt Assessment⁹ to understand the extent of grey belt across the borough. It should be noted that whilst we are charged with prioritising grey belt over other Green Belt, the primary objective is to deliver a sustainable pattern of development. To the extent that Green Belt release is necessary, this may mean that some non-grey belt Green Belt, which may be in a more sustainable location, could be considered for allocation in preference to less sustainable grey belt sites.

f. Phasing of delivery

- 3.4.14 Whilst it is important that we meet needs overall across the plan period, we also need to ensure that development comes forward when it is needed and that there is sufficient supply early in the plan period. One of the requirements of national policy is that we can demonstrate a rolling five-year supply of housing from the date of adoption of the Local Plan. This means that we need to demonstrate that sufficient housing will be built to meet the requirement over a rolling five-year period. Larger, more complex sites take longer to gain planning permission and deliver homes on site compared to small/medium sites. To maximise both housing delivery overall and have sufficient early delivery sites, the spatial strategy will need to include a variety of locations and types of sites. The NPPF also includes a requirement that we include a certain percentage of our overall supply as small and medium sized sites.

g. Strategic Environmental Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal process

- 3.4.15 Even when considering all these factors in the round, there are still likely to be different ways in which the housing need could be met, and a preferred approach will need to be selected. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) / Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process will help us to assess these different options to understand which one is proposed to be taken forward. The SEA Scoping Report¹⁰ sets out our proposed SEA framework. It consists of a set of objectives that address the full range of social, environmental and economic sustainability issues. We will use these proposed objectives to assess different spatial strategy and site allocation options against one another to understand which ones deliver more positive outcomes (and indicate where these can potentially be enhanced) and which ones deliver negative outcomes (and where these could potentially be mitigated). The SEA process is

⁹ Available online at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/greenbeltassessment>

¹⁰ Available online at: http://www.guildford.gov.uk/Strategic_Environmental_Assessment_2026

iterative and will be used to inform each draft of the Local Plan to demonstrate why preferred policy approach options have been taken forward. This will ensure the Local Plan can be found sound at examination, as one of the tests requires that the local plan is 'appropriate'.¹¹ This means that the plan sets out an appropriate strategy to enable the delivery of sustainable development, taking into account reasonable alternatives, and is based on proportionate evidence.

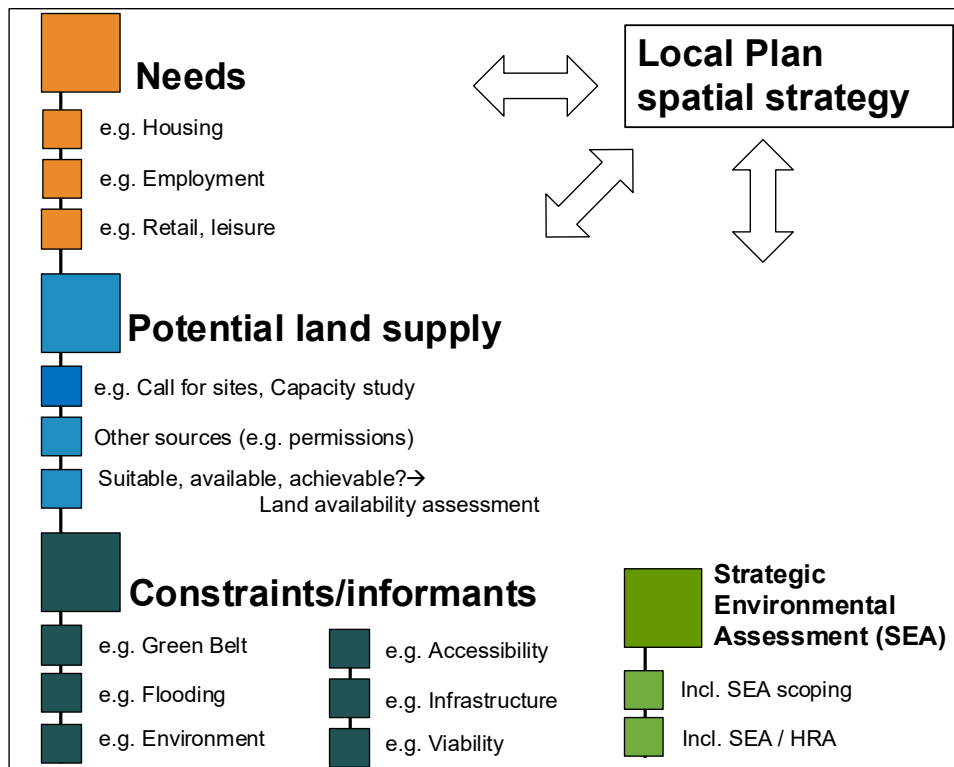


Figure 3: Illustrative factors considered when developing a spatial strategy

3.5 How is a preferred spatial strategy option determined?

- 3.5.1 Once a preferred spatial strategy option has been selected, it will be necessary to understand the cumulative impact of that level and distribution of growth as well as the more localised impact. In particular, it will be necessary to understand what impact the sites would have on the existing infrastructure and what mitigation (either through upgrades or new provision) is necessary to support it.
- 3.5.2 This will include assessing the capacity and associated requirements for transport, education, water, wastewater and other items of infrastructure. The outcome of this process may necessitate amendments to the spatial strategy, for example it may demonstrate that a site cannot be delivered when needed due to a dependency on a piece of infrastructure being delivered first. This may result in the expected phasing of the site being pushed back to later in the plan period or an alternative site being necessary in order to ensure sufficient early delivery. This process is an iterative one and will require engagement with a range of

¹¹ NPPF 2026, PM15(1b)

infrastructure providers. We will also need to actively engage with neighbouring authorities and other statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England to ensure that we understand and appropriately respond to any strategic cross boundary issues.

- 3.5.3 The adopted Local Plan will be accompanied by a detailed Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). This will outline what infrastructure is required, when it will be required and which sites will need to contribute to delivering it. The site allocation policies will also have specific requirements included which will identify the mitigation that must be provided on site as part of delivering the site (e.g. playing pitches or a sustainable drainage system) and any contributions to off-site mitigation (e.g. for transport infrastructure or education). The Local Plan is the vehicle to deliver a coherent strategy for growth and to ensure that the cumulative impact of that development is understood and planned for.
- 3.5.4 We propose to use the Infrastructure Baseline¹² as a starting point to begin to inform the IDP. It provides an audit of the existing physical, community and social infrastructure, which supports the borough's resident and working populations. It examines each type of infrastructure, reviews existing provision/capacity, and notes any current planned provision by the infrastructure providers where this information is available.
- 3.5.5 It is important when setting the level of contributions that will be required from development that this does not jeopardise delivery of development. The NPPF requires contributions to be set at a level that allows for the planned types of development and sites to be deliverable, maximising certainty and reducing the need for viability assessment at the decision-making stage. The Local Plan will need to be accompanied by a Viability Assessment which will ensure that the Local Plan can be found sound at examination as one of the tests is that the plan is 'effective'.¹³ This means the plan sets out effective policies for development, and there is a reasonable prospect that its site allocations are capable of being deliverable at the time envisioned.

3.6 Spatial strategy: consultation question

1. Do you agree with our approach to developing a Local Plan spatial strategy (see [section 3.3](#) and [section 3.4](#))? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us if anything should be changed, and if there are there any other factors beyond those identified in sections 3.3 and 3.4 that you think we should be considering in developing our Local Plan spatial strategy.

¹² Available online at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25509/Infrastructure-Delivery-Plan-2026>

¹³ NPPF 2026, PM15(1c)

4. Help inform the potential scope of locally specific policies for the Guildford area

4.1 Our starting point

- 4.1.1 As part of this scoping consultation, we are seeking feedback on what the Local Plan should contain. We are looking for your views on the scope for locally specific policies – what are the policy areas/topics that we should consider for inclusion in the Local Plan?
- 4.1.2 Feedback from this consultation will help us begin to develop those policies which we will include in later consultations.
- 4.1.3 As a starting point, we have identified an initial scope of potential locally specific policies/policy topics for our area. We did this by:
- reflecting on baseline information on our area – we do not seek to be comprehensive in this section, but aim to summarise some of the data, trends and information that we have already collected¹⁴ and what this means for our new Local Plan.
 - identifying an initial set of the key issues and challenges facing our area that the Local Plan might seek to help address – these include a reflection on the issues raised at a series of early engagement workshops held in January and February 2026¹⁵, alongside those drawn together in our SEA scoping report¹⁶. These are not exhaustive but focus on those main issues that the new Local Plan has the greatest influence in helping to address. There is still scope to refine these issues as we are looking for feedback on the importance of the issues identified and whether we've missed any.
 - reviewing the emerging plan-making policies in the draft NPPF 2025¹⁷ to understand what Government expects local plans to contain - this acknowledges that we do not have an entirely free hand in setting the scope of the Local Plan. The draft NPPF is more explicit in limiting the scope of certain Local Plan policies, for example setting quantitative standards should be limited to infrastructure provision, affordable housing requirements, parking and design and placemaking. It should also not cover matters which are already addressed by Building Regulations.
 - reviewing the existing Local Plan policies against the emerging national decision-making policies (NDMP) in the draft NPPF 2025 to assess whether there is justification for continuing to have a local policy on a particular matter or whether it is adequately addressed by the NDMP¹⁸.
- 4.1.4 The content of the new GLP will be significantly different to that of our previous plans. This change aligns with the new style plan-making system that has been introduced by government. In short, the expectation is that new style local plans will be more focussed and

¹⁴ For a fuller picture of the evidence collected to date, see the links provided at section 2

¹⁵ Early engagement workshops report available online at: www.guildford.gov.uk/newguildfordlocalplan

¹⁶ Available online at: http://www.guildford.gov.uk/Strategic_Environmental_Assessment_2026

¹⁷ We will be reviewing the NPPF 2026 and changes from the draft version, including any consequential implications on the scope of potential policy topics, alongside comments received during the Scoping Consultation as part of the next stages of plan preparation.

¹⁸ Ibid.

concise which will enable them to be prepared quicker and updated more frequently. This is assisted by the fact that all generic development management policies that are applicable to all councils form part of the NDMP as contained in the NPPF 2026. We are instructed not to duplicate, substantively restate or be inconsistent with the content of NDMPs and instead focus on producing plans which contain locally specific policies and site allocations.

- 4.1.5 We have structured this section under a series of themes, however when the Local Plan is prepared, we are likely to arrange policies in a different way. For this scoping consultation the themes include:
- homes and inclusion
 - prosperity and economic resilience
 - natural environment and heritage assets
 - settlements and infrastructure.
- 4.1.6 Towards the end of each section, we have listed potential policy areas/topics and whether they would apply to the whole plan area or to specific areas/sites (see subsections [4.2c](#), [4.4c](#), [4.6c](#), and [4.8c](#)). NPPF Policy PM6(1)b states that we should '*only include policies that extend beyond site or location-specific requirements where these are necessary and where plan-makers consider there is a clear and justified reason for inclusion*'.
- 4.1.7 In this regard, we need your help and would like to hear from you regarding what you think the Local Plan should include. To this effect, we have set out a series of consultation questions relating to potential policies at the end of each of the subsections below (see sections [4.3](#), [4.5](#), [4.7](#), and [4.9](#)).

4.2 Homes and healthy communities

a. Our area today

- 4.2.1 The population of our area has grown steadily with 143,649 residents recorded in Census 2021 (an increase from 137,183 recorded in 2011). Our residents live in different parts of the area, across Guildford and Ash and Tongham urban areas, and in our rural areas with the approximate distribution reflected in Figure below.

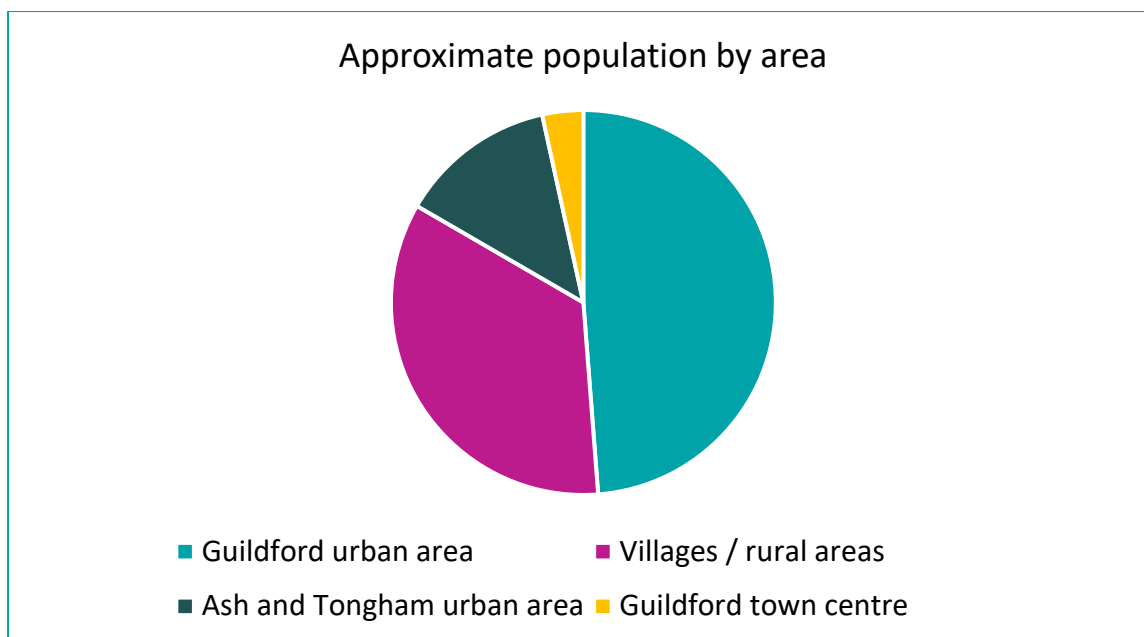


Figure 4: Approximate Population by Area

4.2.2 The average household size has risen in the area from 2.37 (2001) to 2.58 (2021).

4.2.3 To accommodate new households, we have delivered 3,498 new homes over the past 5 years as shown in Figure . This has included a relatively significant component of student and other C3 equivalent accommodation. C3 equivalent accommodation is communal accommodation that we can count as part of our housing supply and is based on the amount of general market housing it releases. Detail on the ratio used to calculate this is available in the Land Availability Assessment¹⁹.

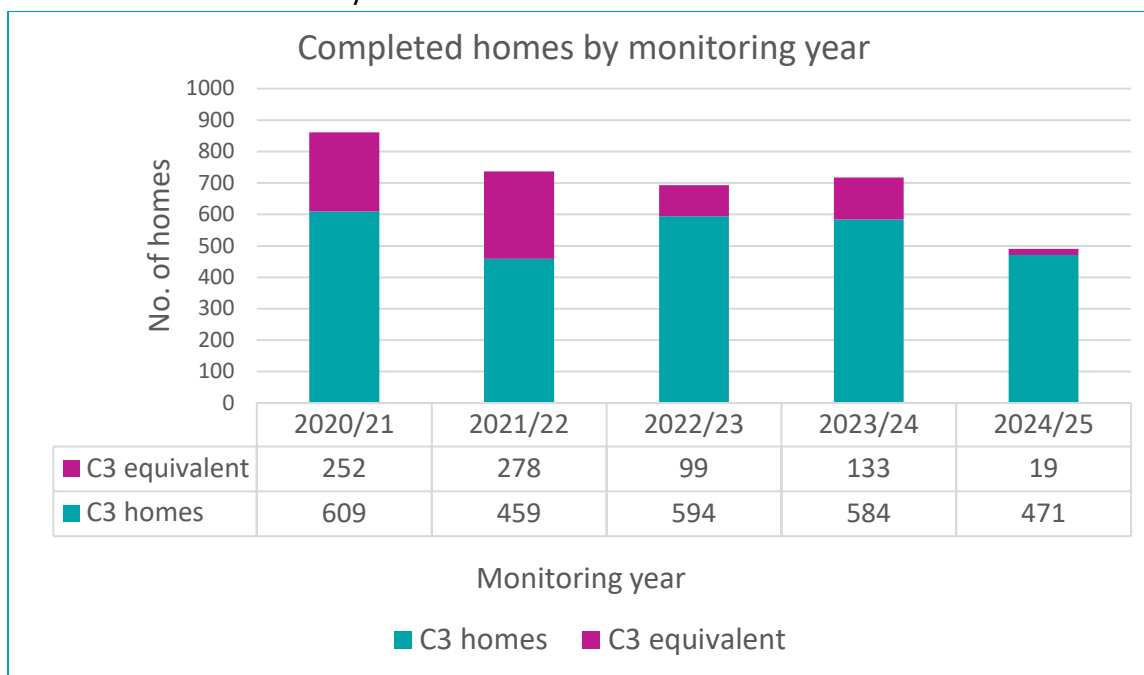


Figure 5: Completed Homes by Monitoring Year

¹⁹ Available online at: www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25375/Land-Availability-Assessment

- 4.2.4 Several strategic sites, including two urban extensions to Guildford, which were initially intended to contribute to delivery of new homes early in the plan period have been delayed. This has meant that the affordable housing and traveller sites they would deliver are not coming forward in the timescales we had initially anticipated. Development has commenced at only three of the sites, and a planning application has been submitted at another. Of the 5 strategic sites we identified, we only expect new homes to be delivered in the next 5 years at North Street, Weyside Urban Village and Wisley Airfield.
- 4.2.5 To help inform our new Local Plan we need to consider the future demographic and housing needs picture.
- 4.2.6 In this regard, the ONS expects the area's population to grow to 154,739 residents by 2032 (an increase of 5.7% from 2022). Whilst ONS have projected population growth, we need to plan for housing need according to Government's standard method. At present this indicates the need for 1,151 dwellings per annum (dpa).
- 4.2.7 We have not yet assessed the extent of new sites we might need to identify to seek to meet this higher figure. However, we know that we have insufficient sites to meet housing needs over the next 5-years, and our housing need figure has more than doubled from what it was in the LPSS.
- 4.2.8 It is important that we plan to meet a full range of different types of housing needs, such as the need for affordable homes – either for rent or to own, for specialist housing for older people, and for accessible homes. To help us understand these local needs, we have commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment (2026) and key findings are as follows:
- continued need for affordable housing – the Guildford area is one of the least affordable areas in England. Even with improved affordability over recent years, median house prices are still at 10.83 times median earnings
 - a clear need for Social Rented housing with recommendations that it could make up 60% of affordable housing provision, subject to viability
 - a recognition that our area is likely to reflect an increasingly ageing population and there is a need to plan for increased provision of certain types of specialist accommodation for older people and suitable provision of new accessible homes
 - a need to provide a mix of dwelling sizes to cater for our varied local needs including for students and younger people starting out, single people, growing families, and older people who may be looking to downsize.



Figure 6: Guildford Plaza (student accommodation) during construction

4.2.9 The health and well-being of our communities is a key concern we need to consider when preparing the GLP. We know that there are many wider factors which impact negatively on our health and well-being, some of which relate to our housing environment. As noted, Guildford reflects poor housing affordability which can result in poor living conditions for our residents, affecting physical and mental health. Some 7% of households with dependent children are overcrowded. Social isolation is also a growing concern with over 38% of GP-registered patients reporting feelings of isolation.

b. Key issues and challenges facing our area

4.2.10 Our baseline analysis contained in the SEA Scoping Report indicates the following key issues for the Local Plan to address:

- a significantly increased level of local housing need and a lack of sufficient supply
- high levels of need for affordable housing
- unaffordability of new homes across all types and tenures
- an ageing population with an increasing number of people with disabilities, and care and support needs, who will require specialist accommodation
- lack of physical activity and active lifestyles, especially among children, and associated challenges regarding maintaining a healthy weight and related negative impacts on health conditions and life expectancy
- health inequalities and higher levels of relative deprivation persist in a small number of areas, particularly within parts of Guildford, and Ash and Tongham urban areas.

4.2.11 In addition, you also highlighted the following issues as part of the early engagement workshops:

- mismatch between housing types and demographic need e.g. downsizing opportunities, housing for young people, need for assisted living
- poor quality housing and high concentrations of Homes in Multiple Occupation in some areas which create poor living conditions.

c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics

Plan-wide policies / policy topics

- spatial strategy including identifying the housing and traveller pitch/plot requirement
- housing mix of affordable and market homes
- housing standards
 - nationally described space standard
 - proportion of new housing delivered to meet M4 (2) M4 (3) standard / accessible homes
- Percentage contribution, type and delivery of affordable homes.

Area / site-specific policies / policy topics

- site allocations / requirements to meet needs of different groups
- affordable housing requirement for:
 - designated rural areas
 - major development involving the provision of housing on land which is proposed to be released from the Green Belt, or which may be approved on land within the Green Belt (Golden Rules)
- Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

4.3 Homes and healthy communities: consultation questions

2. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the 'homes and healthy communities' theme in [section 4.2b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.
3. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.2b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
4. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.2c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.
5. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.2c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

4.4 Prosperity and economic resilience

a. Our area today

- 4.4.1 Our area reflects a significant high value, knowledge driven economy contributing over £6bn per year to the national economy. Our business stock includes 7,135 enterprises (2024) with most (83.6%) classed as micro (defined as companies employing up to nine employees).
- 4.4.2 Employment rates in the area are high (83.1%) and there is nearly 1 job per working age household in the area. Our workforce is also highly skilled.
- 4.4.3 We have a diverse and resilient economy with the most prominent sectors being professional, scientific and technical (14%), health (15%) and retail/wholesale (13%) with a strong presence in education, ICT and financial services. The gaming industry is a particularly important competitive niche located in Guildford.

Employment sites

- 4.4.4 We have a range of 30 designated employment sites accommodating a wide array of local businesses. Some of the most significant in scale include the Surrey Research Park (high value R&D and tech hub with 200+ companies), Guildford Business Park (modern office campus, with a mix of enterprises) and industrial sites such as Slyfield Industrial Estate (the largest industrial/logistics cluster). Added to these are a range of locally significant sites which provide for the needs of a wide spectrum of occupiers.



Figure 7: Cathedral Square (office business park on one of our Strategic Employment Sites)

- 4.4.5 We have completed an assessment of these sites and know that there have been some changes over the past 5 years. These include the loss of some office uses which have been converted to residential use without the need for planning permission due to national changes in permitted development rights.
- 4.4.6 Our adopted Local Plan seeks to protect our existing employment sites against loss to other uses. Our monitoring reflects a loss of office floorspace (approximately 15,800 sqm) in 2024/25.
- 4.4.7 That Plan also set out a range of new employment sites for future development. These include a significant expansion to the Surrey Research Park (as part of the Blackwell Farm site allocation A26), employment floorspace at Gosden Hill Farm (site allocation A25), and Former Wisley Airfield (site allocation A35), and land for industrial uses at the land around Burnt Common warehouse (site allocation A45). Apart from some of the land at Burnt Common, none of the employment floorspace on these sites has yet been delivered.
- 4.4.8 It is important that we consider the future needs of businesses as a robust economy is key to our ability to access local jobs. To help us think about how our Local Plan can support business growth to 2045, our new Employment Land Assessment has indicated several key quantitative and qualitative findings, which include:
- office space demand remains robust, but has shifted with shortages of Grade A space in the most accessible and desirable locations (Guildford town centre)
 - there has been a shift towards hybrid/flexible working which has influenced occupier requirements for offices, with an emphasis on quality, location, and amenity provision and a demand for adaptable, serviced, and collaborative workspace - smaller, higher quality workspaces predominantly in and around the town centre are sought after
 - industrial occupiers are looking for modern, high-quality premises that can accommodate a range of activities, with access to the strategic road network being important
 - for office and industrial uses (excluding consideration of the future pipeline of supply) it is estimated that there will be a need for:
 - 58,400 sqm of net additional office floorspace, and
 - 20,800 sqm (equivalent to circa 4,6ha) of net additional industrial floorspace.

Vitality of town centres

- 4.4.9 We know that there are other considerations regarding our economy that are important. For instance, we need to consider how we respond to changing retail and leisure needs as part of ensuring a vibrant and thriving Guildford town centre which continues to serve a sub-regional role. Whilst the pandemic had impacts particularly in the short term reflected by high street vacancies, we know that changing shopping patterns and the rise of internet shopping have structurally altered the make-up of the high street. People visiting town centres are also increasingly seeking experiences and leisure opportunities rather than traditional retail visits. This can present an opportunity for bringing in a more diverse town centre offer catering for changing choices around how people spend their disposable income.

4.4.10 In addition to Guildford town centre, our area also reflects three district centres at Ash, East Horsley and Ripley with a further 14 urban local centres and seven rural local centres. These centres serve as accessible hubs for our communities to buy everyday necessary goods and access services such as shops, post offices, hairdressers and takeaways, and places such as pubs and restaurants where people can meet up and socialise. The LPSS allocated new local centres at the strategic sites at Blackwell Farm (site allocation A26), Gosden Hill Farm (site allocation A25) and former Wisley Airfield (site allocation A35), which in time are also intended to fulfil these roles.

4.4.11 We are producing an updated Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment which will assess the quantitative and qualitative retail need as well as a review of existing centres. This will include a focus on informing a strategy that would promote the long-term viability, vitality and competitiveness of Guildford Town Centre.

4.4.12 There may also be altered or new centres proposed as part of the Local Plan's spatial strategy to ensure that housing is supported by appropriate facilities, and that we create vibrant and sustainable places.

b. Key issues and challenges facing our area

4.4.13 Our baseline analysis contained in the SEA Scoping Report indicates the following key issues for the Local Plan to address:

- challenges regarding ensuring well-located high quality/grade employment floorspace and appropriately located sites which respond to the needs of modern occupiers
- challenges in relation to access to affordable and well-located premises for small businesses, including micro-businesses and start-ups
- threats to existing employment sites and floorspace from non-employment uses, especially housing, in the context of an increase in permitted development rights and the pressure for more housing delivery
- ensuring that there is sufficient labour supply to sustain the local economy
- dealing with the challenge of maintaining the competitiveness, vitality and vibrancy of Guildford town centre.

4.4.14 In addition, you also highlighted the following issues as part of the early engagement workshops:

- need for more mixed-use schemes to increase employment opportunities across the borough including the rural areas
- need for flexible employment space including shared workspaces
- traffic congestion being a barrier to economic growth and business retention
- need to encourage industry clusters and relationship with the University of Surrey and Royal Surrey Hospital
- empty retail premises on the High Street and prominent vacant sites with not enough of a mix of retail uses.

c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics

Plan-wide policies / policy topics

- spatial strategy identifying the employment and retail requirement and the economic vision for the area.

Area/site-specific policies / policy topics

- site allocations to meet identified needs
- identification of sequentially preferable locations for new employment floorspace and approach to expansion of sites outside these areas
- designation and protection of strategic and locally significant employment sites including provision for ancillary uses
- locally defined floorspace threshold for an impact assessment for new retail and leisure proposals outside of town centres
- define hierarchy of centres.

4.5 Prosperity and economic resilience: consultation questions

6. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the 'Prosperity and economic resilience' theme in [section 4.4b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.
7. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.4b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
8. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.4c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.
9. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.4c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

4.6 Natural environment and heritage assets

a. Our area today

- 4.6.1 Our area benefits from a rich and diverse natural and historic environment, which supports the way we live in many ways and will inform how we think about planning for our future.

Areas of risk, sensitive natural environments, and important resources

- 4.6.2 Firstly, our environment varies in its intrinsic suitability for development based on the presence of a range of spatial constraints.

4.6.3 These constraints reflect areas where development may be unsuitable or requires mitigation and include:

- areas of risk, including areas of flood risk²⁰ both fluvial (such as along the River Wey, Tillingbourne, Cranleigh Water and Blackwater rivers) and surface water / groundwater and/or sewer flood risk (across the Guildford area, Ash and Tongham and villages) alongside some areas of land contamination
- a concentration of important and sensitive natural habitats including grassland, scrub and heathland, woodlands, wetland and rivers which include:
 - internationally protected sites (Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA), with the TBHSPA making up 2,164ha and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC making up 1,736ha)
 - 17 nationally protected sites (Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI))
 - locally protected sites (Local Nature Reserves)
 - other local sites (162 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) making up 3,496ha)
 - 1,690ha of ancient woodland.
- important resources, including areas of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, groundwater source protection zones (SPZs) and drinking water protected areas (DrWPAs), which are areas identified to protect ground and surface water used for public drinking water or food production, and ten Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Sites (RIGS), with the latter holding indirect economic resource benefits.

4.6.4 Whilst data shows that nationally protected sites are generally in a favourable or recovering condition, biodiversity generally has declined. The decline is more pronounced in Surrey than nationally because the county has historically suffered a high degree of habitat loss and fragmentation.

4.6.5 The Local Plan will need to direct development away from these areas of risk and protect (and where possible enhance) sensitive natural habitats and key resources. It will also need to continue to address biodiversity decline by maximising opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain requirements on specific sites and supporting measures identified in the Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant strategies.

Efficient resource use, pollution prevention

4.6.6 Second, the natural environment provides a key 'life support' role, in terms of both extractive and absorptive functions. Ensuring that there is a level of balance in these environmental services is key to conserving and restoring the integrity of our ecological systems, avoiding harmful pollution, supporting and improving human health and driving our economy.

4.6.7 In this regard, our area reflects several baseline concerns including the following:

²⁰ We will be preparing further evidence including a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to help us understand the current nature and extent of flood risk in our area.

- we are in a region of serious water stress and water deficits are projected by water supply companies under certain scenarios,
- water quantity has an impact on quality as water shortage can harm the natural processes that maintain chemical quality. Water quality in the borough is variable and a number of key surface waterbodies including the River Wey do not achieve good status due to issues such as sewage, agricultural and industrial discharge, physical modifications and invasive species. Most surface waterbodies achieve moderate status for ecology with a few achieving poor status,
- air quality is generally good but there are three declared air quality management areas (AQMA) in Compton, Shalford and Guildford town centre. AQMA are declared in areas where there is exceedance, or likely exceedance, of air quality standards. The A3 is also a contributor to poor air quality. Poor air quality can have a significant impact on human health as well as the natural environment.

4.6.8 We will produce a Water Cycle Study as part of our evidence base. This will help in understanding the impact of growth on the water environment in respect of wastewater discharges, water resources, and ensuring water quality. It will inform the Local Plan and ensure that planned growth can occur within environmental constraints and is supported by appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure.

4.6.9 We will also need to consider whether air quality modelling is necessary to understand the impact on internationally protected sites.

Landscape and heritage

4.6.10 Finally, our area has a diversity of locally distinctive places shaped by the interplay between natural features, cultural influences, and settlement patterns over time.

4.6.11 Several landscape assessments have been undertaken providing a typology for our area. They describe:

- a prominent chalk ridge (North Downs / Hogs back), which provides distinctive long-distance views
- wooded north downs leading into open chalk farmland (to the east of our area)
- wooded rolling clayland to the west and east of Guildford town and surrounding Clandon and much of the Horsleys
- settled and wooded sandy farmland, woodland, and sandy heath and common (in the north-west of our area)
- river floodplain / valley floors running through the landscape including, notably, where the River Wey runs through the gap in the north downs towards Guildford
- open and wooded greensand hills and valleys (to the south of our area).

4.6.12 These landscapes contribute to strong transitions between town, villages and countryside.

4.6.13 The distinctive natural beauty of our area is recognised with a significant area in the south of the borough designated as part of the Surrey Hills National Landscape (SHNL). The boundary of the SHNL is currently being reviewed with notable increases proposed north of the Hog's

Back, east of Shalford extending over Chilworth, and extending across East Clandon and Hatchlands Park²¹.



Figure 8: Views over the Surrey Hills National Landscape at Newlands Corner

- 4.6.14 The borough's townscape is varied and ranges from the medieval town of Guildford and many historic villages to 20th century suburban neighbourhoods, industrial sites and retail centres. Guildford town centre is particularly important and, given the topography, offers numerous important views which connect it with the countryside beyond.
- 4.6.15 The borough has a rich historic environment, providing economic and cultural value, cherished local landmarks and a greater sense of place and identity. Many of these are designated heritage assets which are afforded a high level of protection. These include:
- 30 Grade I, 43 Grade II* and 1,016 Grade II Listed Building entries in the borough, with 35 Scheduled Monuments and 10 Registered Parks & Gardens
 - 40 Conservation Areas
 - 39 County Sites of Archaeological Importance (CSAI) and 137 Areas of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP).
- 4.6.16 There are also numerous non-designated heritage assets comprising 300 Locally Listed Buildings and over 50 Locally Listed Parks and Gardens.
- 4.6.17 We will need to carefully consider how the Local Plan can continue to protect these important landscapes and heritage assets particularly in light of the increased development pressure. As part of developing our spatial strategy and considering which sites should be allocated for development, we will supplement our existing evidence base by undertaking additional technical site-level assessments. This will help us guide development to less

²¹ DEFRA (2026). Detailed proposals available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/surrey-hills-area-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-boundary-variation>

sensitive locations and, where sites are allocated, enable the inclusion of more detailed design requirements which reflect the site's context.

Climate change

- 4.6.18 Intertwined in the relationships described above is the fact that we live in a changing climate. Trends reflect a greater likelihood of more intense rainfall events and hotter drier summers. In relation to risks, we need to consider the potential for more intense flood events and an increased prevalence of wildfires. Regarding our resources, water scarcity and more intense dry spells are likely. In recognition of the importance of addressing climate change the Council declared a climate emergency in 2019.
- 4.6.19 Whilst the carbon emissions per capita of Guildford residents decreased by 47% from 2005 to 2023, continuing at this pace will not be sufficient to meet the national target of reaching net zero by 2050. Temperatures are continuing to rise and within our urban areas there is an increased risk of overheating which can cause a range of negative health impacts, particularly for vulnerable members of our community. We therefore need to think about our built form and how we might adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

b. Key issues and challenges facing our area

- 4.6.20 Our baseline analysis contained in the SEA Scoping Report indicates the following key issues for the Local Plan to address:
- competing pressures on land availability to provide for social and economic needs whilst protecting the historic environment and valued landscapes, and achieving nature recovery
 - need to improve water quality of rivers and other waterbodies and minimise water use
 - significant road congestion which contributes to increased levels of air pollution
 - ongoing imperative to transition to a low carbon energy system by reducing overall demand for energy, increasing the use of renewables, and generating energy locally
 - need to adapt to hotter drier summers, warmer and wetter winters, and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events including heat waves, strong winds, droughts, and flooding.
- 4.6.21 In addition, you also highlighted the following issues as part of the early engagement workshops:
- need for greater flood resilience and flood prevention measures
 - need for higher building standards.

c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics

Plan-wide policies / policy topics

- local water efficiency standard and measures to reduce water usage
- energy efficiency and sustainable design (where these are not already addressed by Building Regulations)
- biodiversity and design.

Area/site-specific policies / policy topics

- 20% Biodiversity Net Gain on specific site allocations where justified
- Surrey Hills National Landscape
- identify / designate:
 - international habitats sites (TBHSPA, SAC)
 - TBHSPA mitigation zones and approach
 - national sites (SSSI)
 - local sites (LNR, SNCI, RIGS)
- approach to undesignated habitats/priorities identified in the Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
- opportunities for renewable energy generation and supply from decentralised networks
- urban heat island mitigation
- waterbodies and riparian corridors
- managing development within 'developed' flood zone 3b and where possible safeguard land for flood management²²
- source Protection Zones and Drinking Water Protected Areas
- River Wey and Godalming Navigations corridor
- shopfronts and advertisements
- specific designated heritage assets.

4.7 Natural environment and heritage assets: consultation questions

10. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the 'natural environment and heritage' theme in [section 4.6b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.
11. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.6b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
12. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.6c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.
13. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.6c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

²² This includes in relation to the potential for the Guildford Flood Alleviation Scheme, which the Environment Agency is leading, with local partners, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guildford-flood-alleviation-scheme/guildford-flood-alleviation-scheme>

4.8 Settlements and infrastructure

a. Our area today

Green Belt

- 4.8.1 Approximately 84% of the borough is Green Belt. This is a policy designation which seeks to restrict development and maintain openness, rather than an environmental designation. The Green Belt surrounds Guildford urban area and 14 villages. It also straddles the edge of part of the Ash and Tongham urban area and Ash Green village. The remainder of the villages and rural areas are predominantly washed over by the Green Belt with a small area of countryside that is located south and west of the Ash and Tongham urban area.
- 4.8.2 The NPPF 2024 brought in a significant change to Green Belt policy and introduced the concept of 'grey belt'. The 2024 definition of grey belt was updated by the NPPF 2026 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 the [Green Belt] purposes a, b and d...'*²³
- 4.8.3 A Guildford Green Belt Assessment²⁴ has been published which indicates what land is assessed to be grey belt. This has been produced in line with the methodology set by Government in the planning practice guidance²⁵. Grey belt land can be considered appropriate for development in Green Belt terms, subject to a number of criteria being met²⁶. For housing this includes that there is a lack of a five-year supply, the site is located in a sustainable location and that the proposal meets the 'golden rules', notably 50% affordable housing. Other policies may however also restrict development, even if it is identified as grey belt land.
- 4.8.4 The Council has not been able to demonstrate a five-year supply since the LPSS became older than five years and the local housing need figure increased from 562 dwelling per annum to the standard method figure of 1,151 dwellings per annum. As a result, there has been a significant increase in speculative applications for major housing development on grey belt land. Some planning applications are likely to be permitted whilst the Local Plan is being produced. This presents a challenge for the new Local Plan in ensuring that there is a coherent strategy for growth and that the appropriate level of infrastructure is being planned for and delivered.

Settlement hierarchy and accessibility of services

- 4.8.5 The borough has many settlements ranging from the two main urban areas - Guildford, and Ash and Tongham - through to villages of varying sizes and function. We have published a revised Settlement Hierarchy which ranks the existing villages from most to least sustainable²⁷. Section 3 sets out how we propose to use the findings of this assessment in determining our spatial strategy.

²³ NPPF 2026, Annex B: Glossary, page 106

²⁴ Available at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/greenbeltassessment>

²⁵ Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt>

²⁶ NPPF 2026, GB7(1g)

²⁷ Available at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25510/Settlement-Hierarchy-Study-2026>

- 4.8.6 Government has published a connectivity tool which will assist in helping us understand the connectivity of areas to different destinations and modes of transport. This helps further differentiate areas in terms of their relative connectivity and will help inform the assessment and selection of sites for development alongside other relevant evidence.
- 4.8.7 We will need to carefully consider how planned growth aligns with a vision-led approach to transport planning. We aim to ensure sustainable transport is considered from the earliest stages of plan-making. This includes when drafting a vision for our Local Plan, and ultimately considering options for the location of sites, mix of uses, and how these relate to current or planned transport infrastructure and services.

Design quality

- 4.8.8 Since the LPSS was adopted, the borough has seen a step change in delivery of new development, and this is expected to continue. A significant amount has been on greenfield sites on the edges of Ash and Tongham, and some of the larger villages. A number of significant sites have also been permitted within the town centre, some of which are still being constructed, and which are taller than what was there previously. This has resulted in some concern regarding the impact that this may have on the character and identity of the town centre. To help shape development there is a Town Centre Views SPD and a Tall Building SPD. Together they do not restrict development but seek to manage the development pressure by identifying the important views that we wish to maintain and the key design considerations that are most pertinent when assessing taller buildings.
- 4.8.9 The NPPF 2026 includes a much greater emphasis on making more efficient use of land and being more prescriptive regarding minimum densities within the town centre and other well-connected locations. The GLP will need to ensure it maximises available, suitable and sustainable opportunities within the town centre and makes effective use of these sites (see Section 3 regarding the Guildford Urban Capacity Study). In doing so however it is imperative that we ensure that all new development, including that outside the town centre, is of a high-quality design and that the GLP provides a sufficient place-shaping role, including locally specific design policies to help guide that growth. We will also need to ensure that new development also delivers high quality public realm, green spaces, play spaces and other supporting uses. We will also be undertaking more detailed site-specific design work as part of any allocations within or around the town centre to ensure that we are able to set clear parameters within the allocation regarding the scale of growth and design requirements.

Supporting infrastructure

- 4.8.10 We have started to review the current baseline in terms of infrastructure provision in our area alongside reflect on progress with delivery of planned infrastructure.
- 4.8.11 Whilst some planned infrastructure schemes have been delivered, or remain anticipated for delivery (often alongside sites that have yet to be built out), there have been several changes to planned infrastructure delivery since the adoption of the current Local Plan in 2019.
- 4.8.12 Some infrastructure is not coming forward for delivery as anticipated including the Guildford A3 scheme (National Highways have excluded this from their planning programme), a new

secondary school as part of the Former Wisley Airfield Scheme, and the Burnt Common Slip Roads²⁸. In some cases, this has been due to alternative mitigation or forms of contribution being sought from development.

4.8.13 As we progress with plan-making, we will need to consider the impacts of planned growth on the need for infrastructure, considering key areas such as health, education, transport, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and utilities (e.g. electricity, water and wastewater) capacity and provision. We will be engaging with our infrastructure delivery partners to seek to align plans for growth and delivery of necessary infrastructure to support it. This will help us identify infrastructure requirements and where contributions will be required from development toward its delivery. We will also engage with neighbouring planning authorities to ensure that cross boundary issues are understood and addressed through the plan.



Figure 9: A new sewage treatment works is being developed as part of the Weyside Urban Village project. Source: Thames water

b. Key issues and challenges facing our area

4.8.14 Our baseline analysis contained in the SEA Scoping Report indicates the following key issues for the Local Plan to address:

- maximising brownfield opportunities and minimising the release of Green Belt
- challenges in shifting how people travel by prioritising walking and cycling for shorter journeys, and public transport for longer journeys, to reduce reliance on private vehicles
- challenges regarding the accessibility and capacity of some social, community, recreational and cultural infrastructure.

4.8.15 In addition, you also highlighted the following issues as part of the early engagement workshops:

²⁸ National Highways had it as a 'pipeline' scheme in the previous Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) but it has not been taken forward as a Project in the new Strategy (RIS3 2026-2031).

- shortage of GP and health provision
- challenges retaining or attracting local shops, pubs and services
- need to protect important views
- need to regenerate Guildford town centre
- need to protect the existing identity of settlements.

c. Proposed scope of potential policies / policy topics

Plan-wide policies / policy topics

- infrastructure requirements / schedule
- locally-specific design policies and/or standards e.g. open space
- thresholds for submission of transport statements, assessments, travel plans.

Area/site-specific policies / policy topics

- site allocations with infrastructure and design requirements
- Green Belt
- identifying settlements
- land outside settlements and the Green Belt
- Guildford town centre urban framework/design policy
- set minimum residential density standards for the town centre and other locations that have a high level of connectivity
- locally-specific design policies
- identify where Design Review, masterplans, design codes and other design processes will be required
- identify and protect sites and routes which will widen transport choice (walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport)
- parking standards/guidance
- designate open space and sports/recreation land.

4.9 Settlements and infrastructure: consultation questions

14. Using the listed local issues and challenges under the 'settlements and infrastructure' theme in [section 4.8b](#), please rank the issues and challenges that you consider are the top 3 most pressing. Choose only three and rank 1-3.
15. Have we missed any issues or challenges in [section 4.8b](#) or should any be changed or removed? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what issues or challenges should be added, changed or removed. If you are suggesting adding an issue or challenge, please tell us whether it relates to the **whole plan area** or a **particular area**, and which area they relate to if they are area specific.
16. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **plan-wide** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.8c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what.

17. Reflecting on the list of the proposed scope of **area/site specific** policies/policy topics (see [section 4.8c](#)), should anything be removed, changed or added? [Yes / No / No Answer] If you answered yes, please tell us what. If proposing to add a policy/policy topic, please tell the area it should apply to.

5. Defining key Local Plan priorities for our area

5.1 Our starting point

- 5.1.1 We need to prepare a vision as part of the GLP, which will set out how our area should change over the plan period (to 2045), and can reflect longer term ambitions stretching beyond this period.
- 5.1.2 We have not yet prepared a draft Local Plan vision, however we want to use this consultation to help inform it and will engage on a draft vision at our next consultation stage.
- 5.1.3 As a first step toward developing a vision, we have sought to identify a set of '**key Local Plan priorities**'. These were developed by considering:
- national planning policies relevant to our local context,
 - locally specific issues and challenges (including those raised previously as part of early engagement),
 - our baseline information (reflected in this consultation document and our evidence to date) to identify our area's **strengths** (existing assets and competitive advantages), **weaknesses** (limitations hindering the area's progress), **opportunities** (external factors that could boost the area), and **threats** (external challenges that could inhibit progress) – or a '**SWOT**',
 - our understanding of what our Local Plan can realistically influence over the plan-period to 2045 and having regard to long term aspirations.
- 5.1.4 In addition to your input on the key issues (see section 4), we would like to hear from you regarding our SWOT analysis (see section 5.2) and whether you agree with our early work on key priorities for our Local Plan (see section 5.3).
- 5.1.5 We need your help to build on this starting point so that we can begin to develop a draft a Local Plan vision statement along with aims and objectives which are relevant to our local area.

5.2 Our area's SWOT

- 5.2.1 We have developed a summary of our area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (see Table 1). It is necessarily not comprehensive, and you can tell us if you think we have missed anything.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• spectacular scenery and views reflecting our countryside setting, including the Surrey Hills National Landscape • good access from the town/urban areas and villages to the countryside and green space (commons, parks and riverside walks). • rich and varied heritage assets • distinctive town and village character and identity • highly skilled population • diverse and resilient economic structure • leisure opportunities, especially in the town centre (theatres, restaurants) • good transport connectivity via rail, especially from Guildford railway station • good schools and education opportunities • access to higher order public service infrastructure including the Royal Surrey County Hospital and University	• fragmented natural environments • lack of affordability of housing and affordable housing (especially for social rent) and challenges with delivery to help meet needs. • inequalities in health outcomes (low levels of physical activity in children, high levels of social isolation) • shortage of well-located employment sites (office) that respond to modern needs (smaller, higher quality, close to services). • lack of access to convenience retail offer, especially in some larger villages. • variable quality of the public realm (especially outside historic town centre core) with barriers to riverside access/pedestrian connectivity caused by A3, rail lines and river • traffic congestion and air quality impacts especially affecting the town (gyratory, A3) and other arterial roads in some villages. • limitations with bus services in terms of coverage and frequency (incl. weekends, evenings) in some areas and poor station access. • fragmented local cycling and walking routes. • capacity issues relating to some infrastructure. • Challenges accessing GP/health provision.
Opportunities	Threats
• potential areas identified for nature recovery (Surrey LNRS) • growth in knowledge-based industries, life sciences and creative sectors • potential for regeneration in the town centre, planned Guildford flood alleviation scheme • improved and more connected transport network (Guildford LCWIP) • changed working patterns since COVID-19 that have reduced travel demand	• climate change impacts, including increased risk of flooding, water scarcity, overheating. • ageing population • loss of employment sites to higher value uses (especially office to residential) • reduced vitality - mix and offer of uses (to food and beverage uses) on high street and loss of local services/shops in villages • unplanned/speculative development leading to uncoordinated growth, lacking in mix of uses and supporting infrastructure • poor design quality / loss of identity, and pressure for higher densities impacting on sensitive character • cancelled Guildford A3 Scheme • lack of investment in infrastructure to support growth

5.3 Initial identification of key Local Plan priorities

5.3.1 Our early work has led to us identifying the follow key Local Plan priorities that we think will help inform the development of our GLP vision. These priorities are not final and we want to hear what you think, including if we have missed anything.



1. Prioritise brownfield development and make effective use of land to reduce pressure on the countryside



2. Focus growth on sustainable locations that maximise access to services and facilities by public transport and active travel reducing reliance on the private car



3. Ensure the timely delivery of the necessary infrastructure to support planned growth



4. Meet the needs of different groups in our community by delivering a sufficient supply, mix and type of homes including maximising delivery of affordable homes



5. Create inclusive neighbourhoods that encourage healthy and active lifestyles and support the well-being of our communities



6. Support a strong, resilient and diverse local economy by providing a sufficient range of high quality and well-located employment space to meet the needs of our business community



7. Improve the competitiveness, vitality and vibrancy of Guildford town centre as a key economic, cultural and social hub



8. Protect and enhance the natural and historic built environment, the Surrey Hills National Landscape and support nature recovery



- 9.** Deliver well-designed buildings and places that enhance local identity



- 10.** Reduce carbon emissions and increase resilience to climate change through mitigation and adaptation measures

5.4 Key Local Plan priorities: consultation questions

18. Do you agree with the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing our area (see [section 5.2](#))? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us if anything should be added, removed or changed.
19. Do you agree with our identified key Local Plan priorities (see [section 5.3](#))? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us if anything should be added, removed or changed.

6. Help inform how we engage on the new Guildford Local Plan with the public, statutory bodies and other stakeholders

6.1 How should we approach local plan engagement?

- 6.1.1 Planning shapes the environment that we live in, where we live, work, shop and play. Involving our community and stakeholders in the plan-making process will provide a strong foundation for our Local Plan. We'd like your feedback on how best to do this.
- 6.1.2 We currently have a Statement of Community Involvement (2020) which sets out how we involve the community in plan-making and decision taking. However, Government legislation²⁹ requires all councils to ask for views on how we approach future local plan engagement. In response, we have created a draft community engagement strategy that reflects how we intend to engage with the public, statutory bodies and other stakeholders as part of preparing a new Guildford Local Plan and we'd like to know what you think.



Figure 10: Participants at one of our early engagement workshops

6.2 The Guildford Local Plan draft community engagement strategy

- 6.2.1 The GLP will set out our vision for Guildford up to 2045. The planning policies within the Local Plan will guide the borough's future development and take into account local, regional and national issues. It will help determine and direct where new homes, offices, shops and leisure facilities go whilst protecting and enhancing areas of importance such as the natural environment. It must be prepared in accordance with national policy and guidance.
- 6.2.2 As the GLP takes form, we want to engage with our community and stakeholders. We want to hear ideas and suggestions from people that will be affected by the plan. What you think

²⁹ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 Regulation 20.

matters; we will try to reflect this in the plan we produce and the decisions we make. Whilst there will not always be a consensus of views, we will always listen to what you have to say.

- 6.2.3 However, we do not have an entirely free hand in terms of what the plan needs to contain. We are working within a strict framework and must follow policy and guidance set by others, for example, planning law and Government policy. There are certain things we can't influence or change, and we will let you know when this is the case.
- 6.2.4 We are also required to maintain effective cooperation with other key stakeholders to ensure strategic cross boundary matters are addressed in our plan. These include neighbouring plan-making authorities, infrastructure providers and any other relevant bodies, for example the Natural England, Environment Agency and National Highways. This ensures that Local Plans are aligned where necessary and that the full infrastructure requirements are understood and planned for.
- 6.2.5 One of the tests of soundness is that the plan is 'realistic' and is based on effective joint working. As we begin to prepare the Local Plan and understand where growth will be directed, we will engage with those bodies and ensure that we can demonstrate that cooperation has been ongoing and constructive through the preparation of statements of common ground as appropriate.
- 6.2.6 This engagement strategy sets out in brief the various stages of Local Plan preparation with a focus on when you can get involved and how.

6.3 The consultation stages when preparing local plans

- 6.3.1 There are several stages involved in preparing a local plan. These are shown below in Table 2³⁰. In summary these involve the following, with statutory consultations indicated **in bold**:

Table 2: Summary Local Plan stages

Regulation ³¹	Stage	Progress
8	Publish local plan timetable	✓ Complete
19	Publish notice of intention to commence local plan preparation	✓ Complete
20	The first formal 'Scoping Consultation'	← We are here
21	Gateway 1: Self-assessment of readiness	
23	The second formal consultation on the 'Proposed Plan Content and Evidence'	
26	Gateway 2: Advice from the Planning Inspectorate on any soundness issues and progression in line with statutory and policy requirements	
27	The third formal consultation on the 'Proposed Local Plan'	
31-33	Gateway 3: Advice from the Planning Inspectorate to check the proposed Local Plan meets statutory and policy requirements and that it is ready to proceed to examination	

³⁰ Available online at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplantimetable>

³¹ As per The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

comments, if we feel that we do not need to make any main or significant changes we will submit the Local Plan to the Secretary of State. If significant changes are necessary, then we will need to undertake a further consultation on those changes.

- 6.3.3 The submission Local Plan will then be subject to Public Examination, overseen by an independent planning inspector. Anyone can attend the Examination structured hearing sessions and people that have previously made representations on the GLP have the right to speak and be heard. The planning inspector may request spokespersons for groups with similar views. Further consultation may be needed if the inspector considers additional changes are needed to the plan. At the end of the process, the Inspector will publish a report. If the Plan is found to be sound (with or without changes), we can then move forward to formally adopt it. It will then become part of our 'development plan' and will be used as the basis for any planning decisions.

6.4 How you can be involved in the Local Plan process

- 6.4.1 There are different groups that need to be consulted as part of the plan-making process. These are our residents, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators, and statutory consultees.
- 6.4.2 These groups can be summarised as:
- specific consultation bodies - such as Historic England, Natural England, National Highways, Surrey Police, Town and Parish Councils, power and water companies
 - general consultation bodies - such as local voluntary groups, local businesses, equality groups representing the interests of people in Guildford
 - other consultation bodies – such as residents or people carrying out business in Guildford borough. There are also people who have requested to be notified of Guildford Borough Council consultations
- 6.4.3 We want to engage with those that are most likely to be affected by the GLP and to involve the widest possible cross-section of the community to get a balance of views. This can include people that we rarely hear from, often referred to as 'seldom heard groups'. Such groups can be young people, working people, people with disabilities, travellers, minority ethnic groups, residents of relatively deprived areas and homeless people.
- 6.4.4 We will actively seek to include seldom heard groups when consulting on the local plan. We will look at different ways to engage with different sections of the community to encourage everyone to have their say. If you would like a document available in a different format (e.g. Braille, audiotape, large print, colour of font or page or a different language) please let us know and we will try to help.
- 6.4.5 We have a stakeholder database which has contact details for specific and general consultation bodies. It also includes various other groups, organisations and individuals who have asked to be kept informed of the Local Plan process. This database is continually updated, and we are mindful of our responsibilities in relation to the Data Protection Act 2018. If you wish to be added to our consultation database, please get in touch by emailing planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk.

- 6.4.6 The table below summarises the draft community engagement strategy for the Local Plan. It shows the key points where you can get involved in the plan-making process. It sets out what we must do by law, and what we may choose to do to increase engagement.
- 6.4.7 As a minimum for all public consultation on a draft document we will normally email the relevant consultees on our stakeholder database, issue press releases, and post notices on our website. When appropriate we may sometimes hold workshops or drop-in sessions. The consultation document will be available to view on our website, at the Guildford Borough Council Offices at Millmead during normal office hours, and at local libraries during normal office hours (unless the Council offices and local libraries are closed due to unavoidable circumstances and Government legislation does not require otherwise).

Table 3: Showing the legal requirements and optional engagement at key consultation stages of local plan making.

When	What we must do	What we may do
Stage of plan making	Legal requirements for consultation	Optional community engagement
Scoping Consultation	• Ask for views on what to include in the Local Plan and how to approach future local plan engagements. • Invite representations from general consultation bodies we consider appropriate. • Invite representations from specific consultation bodies that we consider have an interest in the preparation of the local plan. • Run consultation for at least 21 days. • At a later stage: Publish a summary of the consultation including a summary of feedback received and how this has been considered.	• Seek views on any other matters we want to consult on. • Use digital engagement tools such as websites and social media to raise awareness.
Gateway 1		
Consultation on Proposed Local Plan Content and Evidence	• Publish draft vision, proposed measurable outcomes, proposed aims and objectives, proposed spatial strategy approach and evidence. • Invite representations from general consultation bodies we consider appropriate. • Invite representations from specific consultation bodies that we consider have an interest in the preparation of the local plan. • Invite representations from residents or people carrying out business in Guildford borough that we consider appropriate. • Invite representations from anyone who requested to be notified of this consultation. • Run consultation for at least 6 weeks.	• Seek views on any other matters we want to consult on which may include initial draft policies and site allocation policies. • Use digital engagement tools such as websites and social media to raise awareness. • Hold workshops and/or drop-in sessions.

	• At a later stage: Publish a summary of the consultation including a summary of feedback received and how this has been considered.	
Gateway 2		
Consultation on the Proposed Local Plan	• Publish the proposed local plan, a map of proposed policies and details of the evidence base, a summary of the main issues raised at previous statutory consultations and how we addressed them. • Invite representations from general consultation bodies we consider appropriate. • Invite representations from specific consultation bodies that we consider have an interest in the proposed local plan. • Invite representations from residents or people carrying out business in Guildford borough that we consider appropriate. • Invite representations from anyone who requested to be notified of this consultation. • Run consultation for at least 8 weeks. • At a later stage: Publish a summary of the consultation including a summary of feedback received and how this has been considered.	• Use digital engagement tools such as websites and social media to raise awareness. • Hold drop-in sessions
Gateway 3		
Public Examination	• Submit local plan and associated evidence. • Provide details of the examination to anyone who opted in to be notified. • Notify any people we consider appropriate of the date, time and place of the hearing. They will have the right to be heard if they have made representations in relation to the plan. • A further consultation may take place if the planning inspector recommends significant changes are required for the plan to be found sound.	• Livestream hearings.
Adoption	• Publish the adopted local plan and adoption statement. • Notify those who asked to be informed.	• Provide a user-friendly online version of the plan and interactive policies map.

6.5 What happens to your comments

- 6.5.1 Where possible we will keep those who have responded informed of subsequent consultations, provided we have their written consent (in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018).
- 6.5.2 After a formal consultation we will summarise the comments received and our response to them in a consultation statement that will be made available on our website. Following

questionnaires, workshops and other forms of engagement we will make the findings available on our website.

- 6.5.3 Consultation feedback will normally be considered by councillors of the Local Plan Executive Working Group prior to the relevant committee who will make to the decision to either consult, submit or adopt the GLP. There may be the opportunity for members of the public to speak at committee (<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/25082/Speak-at-a-council-or-committee-meeting>). These may be virtual committee meetings, using methods such as video conferencing or live webcasting.
- 6.5.4 When we submit the GLP to the Secretary of State for examination we will include a statement setting out who, how and when we invited bodies and people to make representations on the proposed local plan, a summary of the main issues raised and how they have been taken into account.

6.6 How we will engage on the Local Plan: consultation questions

20. Do you agree with the methods of engagement outlined in [Section 6](#) and shown for each plan-making stage shown in Table 3? [Yes / No / No Answer] Please tell us what should be removed or changed, and whether there any other ways you would like to be engaged.

7. Any other comments

21. Is there anything else you would like to tell us that is not covered by the questions above?

8. How to respond to the consultation

8.1.1 We want to hear your views on what should be included in our new Local Plan and the key issues it should address. We also want your feedback on how we should communicate and engage with you during the plan-making process. The consultation questions have been included at Section 1.4 and repeated within the relevant part of the document. You can respond in the following ways.

- You can access our online form and provide your feedback here:
<https://guildford.inconsult.uk/GLPS26/consultationHome>
- You can email us at: planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk

9. Next steps and timetable

- 9.1.1 Following on from this consultation we will review your feedback. This will ensure that we listen to our communities' views from the start of the plan-making process and that we understand how you want to be involved and engaged.
- 9.1.2 There will be two more consultations for you to help shape the GLP before it is submitted for to the Secretary of State for an examination in public:
- Proposed local plan content and evidence, including a draft vision, proposed spatial strategy and any initial draft policies.
 - Consultation on the proposed draft Plan.
- 9.1.3 All Local Plan information and updates will be available to view on our website at: www.guildford.gov.uk/newguildfordlocalplan.
- 9.1.4 To view the most recent timetable, please visit: www.guildford.gov.uk/localplantimetable.