



Guildford Borough Council Local Plan Workshops

Workshop Report

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FOR DIRECT ENQUIRIES ABOUT THIS REPORT:

Emma Jones, Partner, CAG Consultants

Email: ej@cagconsult.co.uk

CAG CONSULTANTS:

71-75 Shelton Street, London, WC2H 9JQ

Tel: 020 8555 6126, hq@cagconsult.co.uk , www.cagconsultants.co.uk

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Executive summary

Guildford Borough Council is at an early stage in preparing a new Local Plan to guide future development across the borough. To support this process, CAG Consultants designed and facilitated four in-person stakeholder workshops in early 2026. The workshops brought together borough councillors, parish councillors and representatives from a wide range of local interest groups to explore priorities, concerns and aspirations for Guildford's future.

What people value about Guildford

Across all workshops there was strong consensus about the borough's core strengths. The countryside setting and access to green space emerged as the single most valued attribute. Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of the Green Belt, surrounding hills, river corridors and the ability to move easily between town and countryside. Guildford's historic character is also central to local identity. The High Street, heritage assets and distinctive town and village environments were widely seen as fundamental to the borough's sense of place. Participants spoke positively about the borough's strong community spirit, village identity and small town feel, alongside good rail connectivity and access to London. Core services including schools, the university and cultural amenities, were also recognised as important assets.

Key concerns and priorities for change

Despite its strengths, participants highlighted several pressures affecting quality of life and sustainability. Traffic and congestion were the dominant concern, alongside inadequate public transport and cycling provision, prompting calls to reduce car dependency. Housing was a key tension, with strong support for more genuinely affordable homes but concern about overdevelopment and poor design quality. Participants also pointed to the perceived decline of the town centre and stressed that infrastructure, particularly health, education and transport, must be delivered ahead of growth with stronger oversight.

Strategic issues by theme

Society: Housing affordability and availability of social rent homes emerged as critical borough-wide concerns. Participants highlighted a mismatch between housing types and local needs, with too many large homes, insufficient downsizing options and concerns about poor-quality small units. Health inequalities, pressures on GP services and the needs of an ageing population were also key issues. Geographically, participants repeatedly identified North Guildford as experiencing higher deprivation and poorer connectivity, while eastern and western villages raised concerns about infrastructure gaps, service access and protection of local character.

Environment: Flood risk, drainage and water management were among the most urgent environmental issues raised. Participants reported increasing surface water flooding and called for stronger Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) implementation, permeable surfaces and climate-resilient design standards. There was strong support for more ambitious net zero policies, renewable energy deployment and biodiversity enhancement. Protection of the Green Belt, countryside setting and village separation was a consistent priority, alongside concerns about air quality linked to traffic growth.

Economy: Participants expressed concern about the loss of employment space and the need for modern, flexible workspace to support emerging sectors. Guildford town centre was widely seen as underperforming economically, with high rents and vacancy levels undermining vitality.

There was support for mixed-use development, stronger links with the University of Surrey, and nurturing innovation clusters (particularly in gaming and digital industries). Rural areas emphasised the importance of protecting village services and supporting local economies.

Infrastructure: Transport capacity and congestion dominated discussion. The A3, gyratory and key junctions were seen as major constraints, with calls for a coherent borough-wide transport strategy. Public transport shortcomings, especially rural bus provision, were repeatedly highlighted. Participants also stressed the need for safer walking and cycling networks, improved health and education provision, and earlier engagement with utilities providers. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness and transparency of developer contributions.

Emerging vision for the future

Participants were invited to develop a draft vision for the Local Plan, by writing a ‘postcard from the future’ to themselves. Overall, the shared ambition is for Guildford to accommodate growth while protecting the qualities that make the borough distinctive and liveable.

- For **Guildford town**, participants envisaged a river-centred, highly walkable place with a largely traffic-free and cycle-friendly core supported by integrated, high-quality public transport. They called for a revitalised and commercially balanced town centre that both protects and celebrates Guildford’s heritage while strengthening its role as a high-tech and creative hub. The vision also emphasises inclusive neighbourhoods delivering genuinely affordable housing alongside climate-resilient, energy-efficient development.
- For the **wider borough**, participants envisaged villages retaining their distinct identity and separation, supported by flourishing biodiversity and expanded green infrastructure. They highlighted the need for low-car, well-connected communities and housing that meets local needs across tenures, alongside community infrastructure that keeps pace with growth. The vision also includes mainstreamed renewable energy and climate resilience, strong local employment opportunities, and a continued close relationship between the town and surrounding countryside.

Participant feedback

Participants welcomed the opportunity to contribute at an early stage and valued the interactive format. Participants described the workshops as well organised, engaging and worthwhile, with particular appreciation for the small-group format and opportunity for dialogue. The main area of concern was not the quality of the sessions but confidence that the views expressed would meaningfully influence the Local Plan. Suggestions for improvement included clearer pre-event information and greater transparency about next steps.

Implications for the emerging Local Plan

The workshops found considerable consensus around key priorities. Participants would like to see the emerging Local Plan demonstrate how more affordable housing will be provided while maintaining high design quality and protecting local character. It should show how infrastructure - particularly transport, health and education - will support growth, and how car dependency will be reduced through improved and integrated public transport and active travel opportunities. The Plan should also set out a clear approach to revitalising Guildford town centre, safeguarding and providing necessary employment space, strengthening climate resilience and flood management, protecting and increasing biodiversity, protecting the Green Belt and village identity, and building trust through transparent delivery mechanisms. Ensuring that the Local Plan visibly responds to these priorities will be critical to maintaining stakeholder confidence as the plan progresses to the next stage.

1 Introduction

Guildford Borough Council is at an early stage in preparing a new Local Plan. This is an important document that will shape the future of the borough. CAG Consultants were commissioned to design and facilitate four in-person engagement workshops to involve key stakeholders in the Local Plan preparation.

Each workshop included a presentation from the Council outlining recent government changes to the plan-making system, with an opportunity for participants to explore local issues that the plan may help to address and begin to shape a draft vision for the Local Plan.

This report pulls together the findings from all four workshops. A separate appendix presents the council's full presentations plus the findings by workshop and by breakout group.



Figure 1 - Participants at one of the workshops

2 Participants

The workshops were attended by:

- 9 Borough Councillors
- 16 Parish Councillors
- 17 Representatives from the following local interest groups:
 - Burpham Community Association
 - Burpham Neighbourhood Forum
 - Fairlands Liddington Hall/Gravetts Community Association
 - Guildford Bike User Group (GBUG)
 - Guildford Residents Association
 - Guildford Society
 - Guildford Vision Group
 - Holy Trinity Amenity Group (HTAG)
 - St Catherines Village Association
 - Zero Carbon Guildford
 - ZERO Guildford

The following map shows where participants came from, split by workshop:

- Green – workshop 1 (borough councillors)
- Blue – workshops 2 and 3 (primarily parish councillors plus a few interest groups and 1 borough councillor)
- Red – workshop 4 (local interest groups)

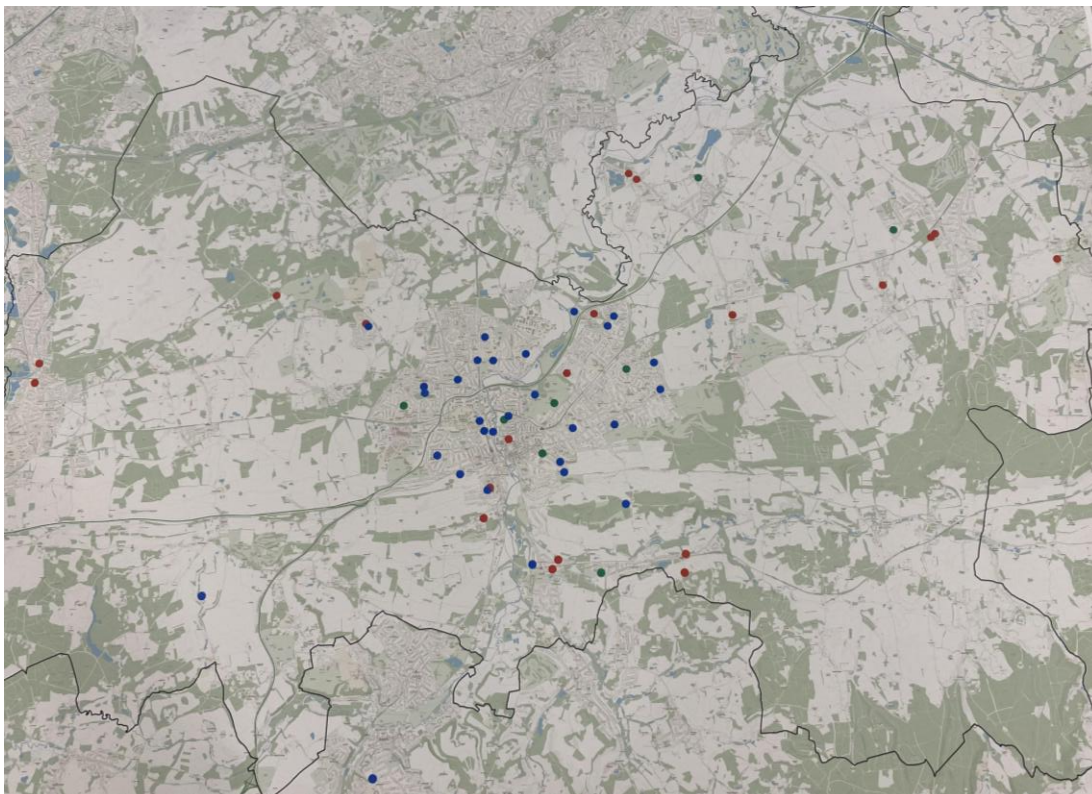


Figure 2 - Map showing the areas represented by participants

3 What people like, and would like to change, about the borough

As part of an introductory ‘ice-breaker’ exercise, people were asked to specify what they like and what they would like to change about the borough and their area.

3.1 What people like

Countryside and green space

This was the strongest theme across all the workshops. Residents deeply value the borough’s green setting and the ability to live close to nature while remaining connected to a town centre:

- Access to countryside, Green Belt and protected landscapes
- Open spaces, commons and parks (e.g. Stoke Park, Pirbright Ranges)
- Surrey Hills National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) and surrounding green hills
- River Wey, canal and river walks
- Easy access from town to countryside
- Semi-rural and village atmosphere
- Views, trees and leafy character



Figure 3 - Flipchart from the Icebreaker session in one workshop group

Heritage and historic character

The historic identity of Guildford and its villages is central to local pride and sense of place.

- Lovely old buildings and historic High Street
- Castle, Chilworth Gunpowder Mills and heritage assets
- Strong sense of history and cultural vibrancy
- Distinctive town and village character
- Human scale and slow visual change

Community and identity

Residents value the borough’s social cohesion and local character.

- Strong sense of community and village spirit
- Friendly atmosphere
- Community volunteering and local activity
- ‘Small town’ feel
- Clear local identity

Location and connectivity

The borough’s strategic location and manageable scale are seen as key strengths.

- Good rail links and access to London and the South Coast
- Walkable scale - amenities within walking distance
- Proximity to countryside and town centre
- Convenience of location
- Some appreciation of public transport – primarily train links

Services and amenities

Core services and cultural assets contribute positively to quality of life.

- Good schools and education opportunities
- University presence
- Hospital and NHS facilities
- Some GP services that work well
- Culture, theatres and places to eat

3.2 What people would like to change

Traffic and congestion

Traffic and its environmental impacts were the strongest concern across all workshops.

- Congested roads in towns and villages
- Too many vehicles, rat running and speeding
- Heavy goods vehicles on rural roads
- Road infrastructure not coping
- Road gyratory cutting off the river
- Roadworks and degrading roads
- Pollution

Public transport and active travel

Participants would like a major improvement in sustainable transport and better connectivity.

- Not enough buses / limited bus services
- Better bus and rail services needed
- Poor cycling network
- Lack of safe walking and cycling routes
- Poor station access and connectivity
- Need for integrated active travel

Housing and development

There is tension between needing more affordable housing and concern about scale, quality and location of development.

- Lack of affordable and social housing
- Need housing for young people
- Overdevelopment / too many houses in some areas
- Infill development concerns and suburban sprawl
- Too dense / too crammed
- Climate-resilient and higher quality new developments
- Warmer, healthier, more efficient homes
- Concern about speculative planning applications

Guildford town centre vitality and regeneration

There is a strong desire to revitalise the town centre and improve its vibrancy and commercial balance.

- 'Death of the town centre'
- Need for regeneration and holistic approach
- High Street commercial mix needs to thrive
- More retail, food and beverage offer
- Failure to repurpose large vacant units (e.g. House of Fraser)
- Poor public realm outside historic core

Infrastructure and public services

Infrastructure is perceived as not keeping pace with growth

- Lack of doctors / poor GP networks
- Insufficient wider infrastructure (schools, health)
- Lagging social infrastructure linked to development
- No school in some villages
- Lack of access to supermarket in some rural areas
- Flood risk management
- Level crossing replacement (Ash)

Environmental protection & sustainability

Participants want stronger environmental safeguards alongside development.

- Integrated environmental protection
- Investment in wildlife and river health
- Climate resilient planning standards
- Reduction of pollution
- Protecting Green Belt and landscape
- Managing light pollution

Equality and local identity

Concerns about affordability, fairness and protecting local distinctiveness.

- Perceived inequality between wards
- Too expensive to live locally
- Too many care homes in specific areas
- More community engagement needed
- Loss of identity – ‘could be anywhere’

4 Q&A

Each workshop included a Q&A session following the Council's presentation about the plan making process. These are summarised below, with the full set of Q&As provided in the appendix.

4.1 Examination and soundness

- Who examines the Local Plan and what tests must it pass?
- Why do Local Plans fail at examination?
- Is cross-boundary cooperation still required?
- Can councils depart from the national timetable?

The Local Plan will be examined by an independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate once submitted to the Secretary of State. The Inspector will assess whether the Plan is legally compliant and 'sound' (positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy).

Plans most commonly fail due to:

- Failure to meet identified housing needs without clear justification
- Weak or insufficient evidence
- Legal compliance shortcomings

Although the legal Duty to Cooperate has been removed, there remains a clear expectation of effective cross-boundary engagement to ensure that plans are 'sound'. Councils are required to meet Government backstop dates under the new plan-making system. The Secretary of State has powers of intervention where insufficient progress is made toward producing a Local Plan. The emphasis throughout is on producing a robust, evidence-led Plan capable of passing examination.

4.2 Housing requirement

- How is the local housing need/Local Plan requirement calculated?
- When is the housing number fixed, and can it be reduced?
- How has the revised method affected Guildford's local housing need?
- How is the five-year housing land supply demonstrated?
- How are windfall sites treated?
- How much affordable housing will be delivered?

Guildford's local housing need is derived from the Government's revised standard method set out in national policy. The new calculation applies a percentage uplift to existing housing stock and a further affordability adjustment. This has significantly increased the annual local housing need (from 562 dwelling per annum which was the housing requirement in the adopted Local Plan 2019 to circa 1,200 dwellings per annum).

The standard method figure is the starting point and Local Plans are expected to meet this figure unless it can be demonstrated why it would be unsustainable to do so. The Council must test whether the local housing need can be met in full, including consideration of brownfield and (if necessary) grey belt/Green Belt land.

Only sites that are deliverable within five years, supported by robust evidence, can be counted towards the five-year housing land supply. Buffers are applied to provide flexibility. Windfall allowances can be included where supported by compelling evidence of past delivery trends. Current adopted policy requires 40% affordable housing on qualifying sites, subject to viability. This will be reviewed as part of the new evidence base, particularly in light of national policy's increased emphasis on social rented housing, which the current Local Plan does not require.

4.3 Green/grey belt

- What is grey belt?
- How will it be assessed?
- What happens before the updated study is complete?
- Is urban capacity being assessed before Green Belt release?

Grey belt is defined in national policy as previously developed land and other Green Belt land that does not strongly contribute to three of the five Green Belt purposes¹. The Council has commissioned a comprehensive Green Belt Study to evaluate assessment areas against Green Belt purposes and to establish what is grey belt.

The capacity of Guildford town centre and surrounds is being assessed in parallel. In line with national policy, the potential of urban areas must be fully examined before considering Green Belt release.

Until the updated assessment is published, planning applications are determined on a case-by-case basis against national policy and guidance.

4.4 Deliverability

- Why have the allocated strategic sites been slow to deliver?
- Will this Plan rely less on large strategic sites?
- Can developers be required to build faster?
- How are stalled sites being addressed?

It was acknowledged that large strategic sites typically take longer to deliver and often do not contribute significantly to early five-year supply. This is a national pattern. Lessons from past delivery will inform the new Plan.

The new plan will need to include a balance between larger strategic allocations (supporting long-term growth), and smaller and medium-sized sites (which are more likely to deliver within five years).

Local authorities have limited powers to compel faster build-out once permission is granted, as delivery is strongly influenced by market conditions. Officers continue to engage with developers to address site-specific barriers.

4.5 Evidence base

- What studies are being prepared?
- Can stakeholders comment on evidence documents?
- When will evidence be published?
- Are leisure, recreation, heritage and landscape needs being assessed?

¹ Purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework

A range of evidence studies have been commissioned and are underway, including:

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Employment Land Assessment
- Traveller Accommodation Assessment
- Guildford urban capacity study
- Green Belt/grey belt study

Further topic-specific evidence (such as open space and recreation assessments, transport, flooding, and infrastructure studies) will also be required.

Evidence documents are generally not subject to separate formal consultation but will be made available as part of the Local Plan process including during formal consultation stages. The evidence informs policies and site allocations in the Local Plan. All main issues raised within consultation responses must be recorded and responded to, and this is submitted to the Inspector. Evidence publication is likely to be phased.

The Council's approach prioritises producing proportionate and robust evidence to withstand examination scrutiny.

4.6 Plan-making process including consultation

- What are the new Gateways?
- Will there be opportunities to comment on the plan?
- When does the 30-month preparation period start?
- Has the Plan formally commenced?
- Is the timetable too compressed?
- How will consultation be undertaken?
- Has formal notice of the intent to begin plan-making already been issued?
- How are responses treated?

The new plan-making system introduces three 'gateways' which are intended to improve the production of sound and legally compliant plans. The Planning Inspectorate would get involved in the second and third of these gateways.

The new system introduces a minimum of three formal consultations:

- Scoping consultation invites feedback on how to engage stakeholders throughout the plan-making process and what the plan should contain.
- Proposed plan content and evidence includes consultation on draft vision, aims and objectives, proposed spatial strategy, summary of evidence and any initial draft policies.
- Proposed Local Plan includes consultation on the proposed Local Plan, maps of proposed Local Plan policies, site allocations and designations and details of the evidence.

The statutory 30-month period runs from formal commencement linked to Gateway 1. The first formal consultation cannot begin until updated regulations are in force. Gateway 1 must be completed by the Government's specified deadline (April 2027).

While the compressed timetable presents challenges, structured stages are intended to improve clarity and the gateways are intended to ensure plans stay on the right path. Preparatory work is already underway to ensure readiness once regulations are enacted.

Formal consultation will include events, contacting stakeholders on the mailing lists, website updates and press communications.

Formal consultation cannot commence until updated regulations are in force at which point the Council will prepare and then publish a new timetable which will set out when it intends to carry out the three formal consultations on the new plan. All main issues raised by the representations must be captured, responded to and will be submitted to the Inspector.

4.7 Local Government Reorganisation

- Will reorganisation delay the Plan?
- Is the Plan being prepared for the borough or the future unitary authority?
- Could a new authority discard the emerging Plan?

Government has made clear that Local Government Reorganisation must not delay plan-making. The new Plan will cover the area within the existing borough boundary and the intent is to continue through to adoption, even though governance structures will change before that point.

It is not anticipated that the process would be restarted to prepare a new unitary plan straight away.

4.8 Neighbourhood Plans

- Do Neighbourhood Plans still carry weight?
- Should neighbourhood groups pause updates?

Neighbourhood Plans remain part of the statutory development plan and retain full weight in line with National Planning Policy. Groups may wish to consider timing carefully in light of the increased local housing need that the Local Plan will need to be prepared against and evolving national policy. Officers are open to discussions to support neighbourhood groups in determining the appropriate timing and scope of updates.

5 Key issues

Working in small groups, participants were asked to identify key issues in relation to four themes: Society, Economy, Environment and Infrastructure. They were invited to identify area-specific and borough-wide issues. The findings across all 4 workshops are presented below, with findings by workshop and table presented in the appendix.

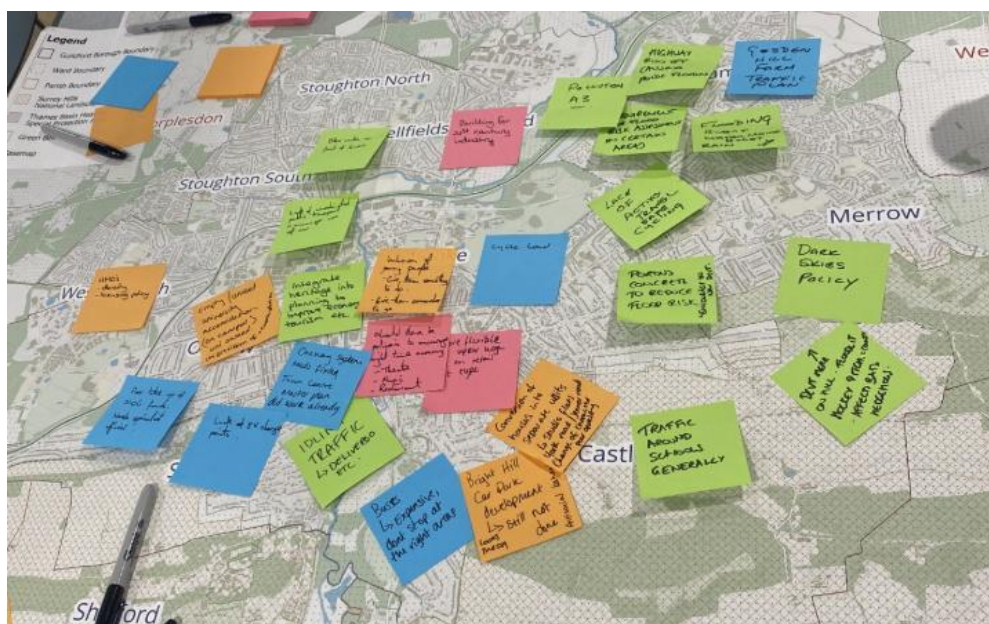


Figure 4 - A map with post-its from one of the workshop breakout groups

5.1 Society

5.1.1 Borough-wide findings

Housing affordability and mix

There was consistent concern across all workshops about:

- A housing affordability crisis, particularly for young people and first-time buyers.
- A shortage of genuinely affordable housing, with confusion and dissatisfaction around the current definition of affordable.
- Insufficient social housing and high numbers of people in temporary accommodation.
- A mismatch between housing types and demographic need:
 - Too many large homes occupied by older residents.
 - Too few suitable downsizing options.
 - Too few medium-sized family homes.
 - Too many small studio flats of poor quality.
- Concerns about viability arguments being used to reduce affordable housing delivery.
- A call for stronger Local Plan policies to secure housing mix and ensure delivery commitments are honoured.

There was also debate about tenure mix, with some calling for more affordable home ownership rather than rental products.

Housing quality and standards

There were calls for the Local Plan to be braver in setting clear standards and holding developers to account. Participants raised concerns about:

- Substandard studio conversions and small units.

- Poor quality high-density housing, including inadequate light and air quality.
- Concentrations of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and high-capacity housing creating poor living conditions.
- The need for minimum space and quality standards.
- Empty homes and opportunities to retrofit and bring them back into use.

Infrastructure and services

A recurring theme was the lack of infrastructure keeping pace with development, particularly:

- GP surgeries and health facilities.
- School provision (especially secondary).
- Community facilities and shared spaces.
- Delivery of Section 106 obligations and concerns about how funds are allocated.
- Calls to prevent occupation of homes before infrastructure is delivered.

Participants also raised concerns about poor coordination with clinical commissioning bodies and insufficient planning for elderly care needs.

Health inequality and access

Across the borough there were concerns about:

- Shortage of GP provision and pressure on the Royal Surrey.
- Need for larger, better distributed health facilities, including provision within the village/local/town centre.
- Health inequalities linked to deprivation.
- Social isolation due to lack of services and poor connectivity.

Community cohesion and provision for young people

There were calls to design in social interaction, shared spaces and community hubs.

Participants identified:

- Lack of housing options for young people.
- Insufficient recreational and community facilities.
- A need to actively incorporate young people's views into planning.
- Risk of antisocial behaviour linked to lack of youth provision.
- Underperformance of children from lower socio-economic groups.

Demographic change and ageing population

Across the borough:

- Increasing ageing population.
- Shortage of suitable downsizing accommodation.
- Over-provision of care homes in some areas
- Need for assisted living and better 'stepping stone' housing.

Participants emphasised the need to plan proactively for demographic shifts.

Strategic planning challenges

There were wider strategic concerns including:

- Impacts of the Standard Method not aligning with perceived local need.
- Potential housing overspill from neighbouring authorities.
- The need to use brownfield and higher density sites in town centres to reduce pressure on villages and Green Belt.
- Limited control over windfall development.
- Engagement challenges with major landowners and institutions (e.g. University of Surrey).

5.1.2 Area-specific findings

Guildford Town (including North Guildford)

Overall, participants identified town issues relating to inequality, HMO concentration, poor quality housing, infrastructure strain, and loss of employment space.

- North Guildford deprivation and inequality:
 - Significant Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) concerns.
 - Eight-year life expectancy gap north vs south.
 - Poor housing stock and design.
 - Poor employment access and transport links.
 - Crime and age-related economic deprivation.
- Physical and social disconnects:
 - A3, railway and river acting as barriers.
 - Northwest Guildford disconnected from town centre.
- High concentrations of HMOs in areas such as Stoughton, Onslow and Westborough.
- Substandard flat conversions affecting character (e.g. York Road/Jenner Road).
- Poor quality high-density development and parking pressures.
- Underused or stalled sites:
 - Bright Hill car park.
 - Town centre landholdings.
 - University accommodation not fully utilised.
- Loss of office/employment uses and risk of Guildford becoming a dormitory town.
- Need for height limits in town centre.
- Need to bring services (including health) into central locations.

East of the Borough (e.g. Send, Horsleys, Clandon, Effingham, Burpham, Merrow)

Overall, eastern issues focused on infrastructure gaps, housing mismatch, and village character pressure.

- Spread-out communities and long travel distances to services.
- Lack of secondary school provision and pressure on primary places.
- Insufficient GP provision (Burpham, Merrow).
- Major sites (e.g. Wisley) perceived as lacking adequate infrastructure.
- Merging of villages (e.g. Send and Send Marsh).
- Piecemeal windfall and garden development not triggering infrastructure contributions.
- Housing mismatch:
 - Smaller units not selling.
 - Large houses dominating plots.
 - Insufficient downsizing options.
 - Affordable housing clustered and not cohesive.
- Care home over-concentration in some locations.
- Design concerns about new development character.

West of the Borough (e.g. Worplesdon, Normandy, Ash)

Western concerns included housing quality, deprivation pockets, HMO concentration and service access.

- Poor quality mobile homes in Normandy.
- Social isolation due to lack of facilities.
- Multiple care homes without clear local need.
- Deprivation in parts of Ash and far west.
- Concentrations of HMOs in Worplesdon.
- Preference in Ash for higher density homes on smaller plots rather than large-scale sprawl.

- Housing affordability driving commuting and car dependence.

5.2 Environment



Figure 5 - A breakout session at one of the workshops

5.2.1 Borough-wide findings

Flood risk, drainage and water management

Flooding and drainage were among the most consistent and urgent themes raised across all workshops, including:

- Increasing surface water flooding across the borough.
- Development taking place in areas of known flood risk.
- Insufficient consideration of flood risk in new developments.
- Weak implementation and maintenance of SuDS.
- Lack of clarity over responsibility for managing ditches and riparian corridors.
- Concerns about the cumulative impact of hard surfacing, with approximately 40% of recent housing development described as tarmac.

There were calls for:

- Stronger requirements for permeable surfaces and porous concrete.
- Adoption and delivery of the Guildford Flood Alleviation Scheme.
- Retention and protection of flood plains.
- Futureproofing homes against both flooding and overheating.
- Embedding climate resilience standards within the Local Plan.
- Better enforcement to ensure planning conditions are delivered in practice.

Water scarcity was also raised as a growing concern, with calls for:

- Grey water systems in new development.
- Higher standards for water recycling.
- Greater emphasis on long-term water resource management when allocating sites.

Climate change, energy and net zero standards

Participants called for the Local Plan to be more ambitious in addressing climate change:

- Making the borough more energy self-sufficient.
- Supporting community energy schemes.
- Setting higher standards for new homes to exceed national minimums.
- Mandatory environmental and climate assessments.
- Introducing a climate change questionnaire for extensions and small schemes.
- Giving positive weight to net zero and low-energy designs.
- Requiring passive design standards to address heat extremes.
- Setting meaningful photovoltaic (PV) requirements (e.g. whole-roof provision, minimum kWp per bedroom).

There was support for renewable energy, with suggestions that:

- Solar panels should be prioritised on car parks and buildings.
- Agricultural land should be protected where possible.
- Vertical farming and local food production should be supported.

Participants emphasised the need to integrate resilience to flooding, overheating and wildfire risk into design from the outset, rather than relying on retrofit.

Biodiversity, green infrastructure and protected landscapes

Habitat interconnectivity and rewilding were seen as priorities, alongside stronger enforcement and greater weight being given to environmental policies in decision-making. Concerns included:

- Insufficient tree planting in new developments.
- Loss of green infrastructure.
- Weak protection of wildlife corridors.
- Biodiversity off-site credits being used rather than on-site solutions.
- Outdated landscape character assessments and policies.

There were also calls to:

- Embed biodiversity infrastructure into development design from the outset.
- Strengthen protection for designated landscapes and environmentally protected areas.
- Protect the rural landscape and prevent erosion of village character.
- Join wider initiatives (e.g. hedgerow connectivity programmes).
- Improve and make better use of SANGs, which some felt function primarily as dog-walking space rather than true natural land.

Air quality, pollution and transport impacts

The link between development growth and air quality impacts was a concern, with participants stating that air quality was identified as worsening, largely due to traffic growth:

- Idling traffic near schools.
- Poor air quality in Guildford town centre.
- Strategic routes (e.g. A247) experiencing increased pollution.
- Rat-running on unsuitable roads.
- Increased pollution associated with new development.

There were calls for:

- Strategic, borough-wide air quality solutions.
- Improved and coordinated public transport.

- Better cycling infrastructure.
- Bike provision on buses.
- Creation of liveable streets with lower pollution and preserved views.
- More EV charging infrastructure.

Heritage, landscape and views

Participants emphasised that heritage and landscape are central to the borough's identity and economy and called for improved resources and stronger enforcement to protect the historic environment. Concerns included:

- Integrating heritage into planning rather than treating it as an afterthought.
- Better protection for listed buildings and conservation areas.
- Stronger protection for non-designated heritage assets.
- Protecting important views - both in the town centre and in villages.
- Concern about tall buildings affecting valley and cross-town views.
- Preserving roofscapes and townscape character.

Heritage was described as extending beyond buildings to include:

- Historic landscapes.
- Green corridors.
- The River Wey.
- Cultural assets such as museums and historic open spaces.

Green Belt, countryside and village identity

Protecting village identity and preventing settlement coalescence was a strong and repeated theme cross the workshops, with concerns raised about:

- Erosion of Green Belt protections.
- The grey belt concept failing to recognise village merging.
- Cumulative impacts of development on countryside character.
- Loss of openness and rural feel.

There was support for:

- Focusing growth in the town centre to protect rural areas.
- Protecting key views in villages as well as in Guildford town centre.
- Avoiding sprawl into the Surrey Hills and other sensitive landscapes.
- Retaining agricultural land and supporting viable farming.

5.2.2 Area-specific findings

Guildford Town (including North Guildford)

Overall, town issues centred on flooding, air quality, views, heritage protection and better use of the River Wey.

Flooding concerns included:

- Highway runoff causing property flooding.
- Specific flooding issues in Burpham and Merrow.
- Surface water and drainage pressures.
- Calls to adopt and implement the EA Guildford Flood Alleviation Scheme.
- Concerns about impacts of flood alleviation works on the historic core.

Air quality and congestion were major issues:

- Traffic congestion and rat-running.
- Idling outside schools.

- Need for pedestrianisation and improved park-and-ride arrangements.

Landscape and views:

- Strong desire to protect cross-valley views.
- Concern about building heights in the town centre.
- Need to preserve surrounding green views into and out of Guildford.

River and public realm:

- Calls to open-up and improve access to the River Wey.
- Support for riverside walks and enhanced public access.

Heritage and culture:

- Need to modernise and improve the museum.
- Greater integration of heritage into planning.
- Protection of listed buildings and conservation areas.
- Concern about loss of character through poor quality conversions.

Some participants also suggested excluding the town centre from SANG requirements to reduce costs and improve affordable housing delivery.

East of the Borough

Eastern issues focus on Green Belt pressure, biodiversity protection, air quality and village character.

- Protecting the Surrey Hills and Green Belt.
- Avoiding village merging (e.g. Send and Send Marsh).
- Protecting biodiversity opportunity areas and wildlife corridors.
- Concern about development constraints linked to SPA designations.

Air quality concerns were raised in:

- Send (A247).
- Shalford (AQMA impacts linked to growth elsewhere).

Landscape and identity issues:

- Dark skies valued in rural eastern areas.
- Protecting village identity and rural character.
- Concern about outdated character assessments.

There were also suggestions for:

- Potential wind energy on the North Downs.
- Safeguarding public open spaces such as Chilworth Gunpowder Mills.

West of the Borough

Western concerns centre on flood risk, biodiversity impacts and landscape character with participants stressing the importance of retaining the rural feel and distinct character of western villages:

- Surface water flooding in Ash.
- Flooding in Normandy and Pirbright linked to runoff from the Hogs Back.
- Threats to openness and green spaces.
- Protection of views into the town centre from the wider valley.
- Concerns about tall buildings affecting long-distance views.
- Protection of listed buildings and their settings (e.g. Ash Manor).

- Concern about impacts of infrastructure projects on heritage.

5.3 Economy

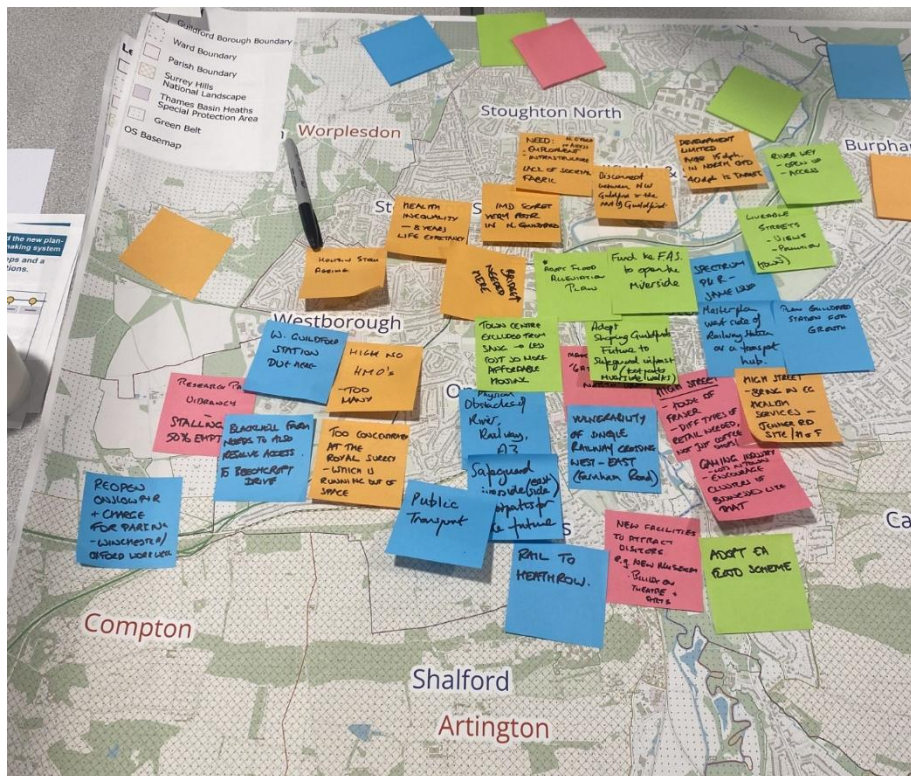


Figure 6 - A map with post-its from one of the workshop breakout groups

5.3.1 Borough-wide findings

Employment land and workspace provision

Participants expressed concern about:

- A shortage of employment sites across the borough, particularly modern, flexible premises suitable for 21st century businesses.
- Loss of office and commercial floorspace to residential use, including approximately 8,000sqm of office space in the past year.
- Employment land still being geared toward historic industries rather than emerging sectors.
- The need to build new offices that meet modern requirements, including flexible layouts and energy efficiency.
- The importance of protecting business parks and key employment sites, including support for incubator space and start-ups.
- Calls for positive allocation of land for business use rather than defaulting to residential development.
- The need to prevent land banking and ensure strategic sites come forward.
- Participants also raised concerns about the impact of AI and home working on future office demand, and the need for planning policies to respond flexibly.

Town centre vitality and retail change

Participants referenced:

- The decline of Guildford town centre.

- High rents, business rates and trading costs making the centre unattractive to independent businesses.
- Empty retail premises on the High Street and prominent vacant sites.
- Retail increasingly dominated by food and beverage uses, with calls for a better mix.
- The long-term impact of online shopping on traditional retail models.
- The need for flexible use classes to enable quicker adaptation of vacant units.
- Participants emphasised that contemporary town centres should include co-working space, community facilities, childcare and health provision, alongside retail and leisure uses.

Flexible and mixed-use development

Participants suggested the need for:

- More mixed-use development across the borough.
- Greater flexibility in commercial space, including smaller, affordable units.
- Co-working hubs and shared workspaces, particularly to support hybrid workers commuting to London part-time.
- Flexible economic activity space secured through Section 106 agreements.
- A review of zoning policies to better reflect modern economic realities.
- The Local Plan to enable adaptability and support small and local businesses.

Local employment and sustainable patterns

Participants identified:

- The need to provide local employment opportunities within 10–15 minute neighbourhoods.
- Concerns that high levels of commuting are turning Guildford into a dormitory borough.
- The importance of good rail connectivity to London, but also reducing car dependency.
- Traffic congestion as a barrier to economic growth and business retention.
- The need for employment provision to accompany new housing sites, particularly village extensions.
- There were repeated references to infrastructure (roads, water, river crossings) failing to keep pace with economic needs.

Rural and village economies

Across workshops there was recognition of:

- A strong rural economy, including enterprise networks and tourism.
- The importance of retaining local shops, pubs and services as anchors of village economies.
- Concerns that piecemeal development could undermine rural character and economic viability.
- A need for local commercial provision within villages to reduce travel and support community resilience.

Sector development and economic identity

Participants highlighted opportunities to:

- Encourage industry clusters, including gaming and space-related sectors.
- Strengthen links with the University of Surrey and training hospital proposals.
- Develop Guildford as a gateway to the North Downs, enhancing visitor economy potential.
- Provide modern large-format logistics in appropriate locations, linked to infrastructure.

- There was recognition that Guildford has lost commercial traction to Reading, particularly following infrastructure improvements elsewhere.

5.3.2 Area-specific findings

Guildford Town (including North Guildford)

Overall, town centre discussions focused on decline, loss of employment space, high costs, infrastructure constraints and the need for revitalisation.

Town centre economy and retail

Participants identified:

- The need to revitalise the town centre shopping offer.
- High retail rents and business rates deterring independent businesses.
- Too many coffee shops and limited retail diversity.
- Calls for greater flexibility in use classes, including in the upper High Street.
- A need to encourage a stronger night-time economy, with a more proactive role for the Council.
- Vacant and underused sites (e.g. former department store and cinema sites) that could accommodate mixed-use redevelopment.
- Some suggested relocating unnecessary commercial uses out of the core to create space for housing and public realm improvements.

Employment space and sector growth

Issues raised included:

- Loss of corporate offices to competing centres such as Reading.
- Stalling vibrancy at the Research Park, with high vacancy levels.
- The need to support small businesses rather than focusing primarily on large chains.
- Support for industry clusters (e.g. gaming, space sector).
- The need to masterplan the area west of Guildford Station.
- The importance of bringing services such as childcare and health provision into central locations to support economic vitality.

Infrastructure and connectivity

Participants noted:

- Traffic congestion as a barrier to business growth.
- Infrastructure constraints limiting employment growth.
- High levels of in-commuting alongside a large resident population commuting out.
- North Guildford experiencing deprivation, weaker employment access and poorer connectivity.

East of the Borough

Overall, eastern issues focused on rural economy pressures, infrastructure limitations, village service decline and Green Belt tensions.

Village services and retail decline:

- Significant decline in local shops in places such as Send.
- Compton being relatively cut off, with limited shops and infrastructure.
- The need for larger supermarket provision in the East Horsley area to reduce car travel.
- Elderly residents travelling long distances due to loss of local services.
- Strong contrast between more prosperous centres such as Ripley and villages with limited amenities.

Concerns that development could undermine the rural economy.

- Strong opposition to development on farmland.
- Tensions around new commercial buildings in the Green Belt and interpretation of 'sustainable location'.
- Proposed industrial development (e.g. at Nuthill Farm) raising traffic concerns.
- Recognition that Guildford is a strong employment centre but that this places pressure on infrastructure.
- Participants emphasised that the East has limited capacity for further large-scale development.

West of the Borough (e.g. Worplesdon, Normandy, Fairlands, Wood Street Village, Ash, Ash Green)

Overall, western discussions centred on service gaps, local employment protection and deprivation pockets.

Local services and retail provision issues included:

- A lack of supermarket provision serving Fairlands, Normandy and Wood Street Village.
- Residents in Ash Green travelling significant distances for services.
- The importance of retaining pubs as part of the local economy and community cohesion.

Employment sites and local opportunity issues included:

- The importance of protecting Henley Business Park and other local employment sites.
- Business parks such as Artington playing a key local employment role.
- Areas of deprivation in Ash and parts of the far west, and whether the Local Plan can address economic disadvantages.
- Concerns about housing affordability driving commuting and car dependence.
- There was support for strengthening local employment provision to reduce travel and improve sustainability.

5.4 Infrastructure



Figure 7 - Participants working in breakout groups at one of the workshops

5.4.1 Borough-wide findings

Transport capacity, congestion and strategic connectivity

Across all workshops there was consistent concern about the capacity and performance of the borough's transport network. Participants emphasised that infrastructure must be delivered before or alongside development, rather than lagging behind it, and highlighted:

- Severe congestion on the A3, particularly where breakdowns or incidents cause borough-wide gridlock.
- National Highways not progressing long-discussed A3 capacity improvements.
- Traffic funnelling through Guildford town centre due to lack of strategic perimeter routes.
- Rat-running through residential areas and villages.
- The vulnerability of key junctions and crossings, including the gyratory system and railway crossings.
- The need for stronger strategic planning beyond county boundaries, particularly in relation to major road corridors and cross-boundary housing growth.

There were calls for:

- A coherent borough-wide transport strategy.
- Delivery of major junction improvements (including at Gosden Hill).
- Exploration of alternative strategic transport solutions, including rail, trams and potentially future technologies.
- Greater integration between transport and land use planning, particularly on strategic sites.

Public transport, park and ride and rail

Public transport was a dominant borough-wide theme. Concerns included:

- Poor bus frequency, particularly evenings and weekends.
- Expensive and unreliable services.
- Routes not aligned with working patterns or school travel.

- Lack of integration between bus, rail and demand-responsive services.
- Rural bus services described as unviable or inadequate.
- Over-reliance on the private car, especially in affordable housing locations.

There were calls for:

- An integrated public transport system.
- Cheaper, more reliable buses.
- Better rail connectivity, including improved connections to Heathrow and Gatwick.
- Delivery of planned additional rail stations (Guildford East and Guildford West).
- A rethinking of park and ride, including charging for parking but providing free bus travel.
- Protection and expansion of park and ride facilities to reduce through-traffic in the town centre.

Participants also stressed that strategic sites should be genuinely self-contained, with promised transport infrastructure delivered in practice.

Active travel and public realm

Reducing car ownership and making active travel safe and attractive was seen as central to long-term infrastructure planning. There was widespread agreement that cycling and walking infrastructure is currently inadequate. Participants identified:

- Unsafe cycling conditions, particularly at the gyratory and along A roads.
- Narrow pavements and poor pedestrian connectivity.
- Poor road surfaces and potholes deterring cycling.
- A lack of secure cycle parking.
- Disconnected pedestrian networks, especially across physical barriers such as the A3, railway and river.

There were also calls to:

- Deliver segregated cycle lanes on A roads.
- Introduce 20mph speed limits in built-up areas.
- Improve safe, independent travel routes for children.
- Deliver the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), particularly beyond the town centre.
- Safeguard and enhance riverside footpaths.
- Consider pedestrianisation of Guildford town centre.
- Design new development to prioritise terraces, shared space and reduced car dominance.

Health and education infrastructure

Participants reported that health and education infrastructure is not keeping pace with development. Key issues included:

- GP surgeries operating at or beyond capacity.
- Lack of clarity on future secondary school provision.
- Education planning not aligning with projected pupil numbers.
- School expansions generating additional traffic and congestion.
- Health and education facilities promised through planning permissions not being delivered.
- Pressure on the Royal Surrey and difficulties accessing hospital services, especially by public transport.

There were calls for:

- Better coordination between planning authorities, education providers and health bodies.
- Clearer long-term forecasting of need.
- Ensuring schools and GP surgeries are in place before homes are occupied.
- Stronger enforcement of infrastructure delivery commitments.

Utilities, water, sewage and environmental capacity

Participants raised concerns about:

- Insufficient sewage treatment capacity.
- Combined surface water and foul systems overloading infrastructure.
- Untreated discharge into rivers.
- Delays in planned upgrades to sewage treatment works.
- Water supply and electricity constraints.
- Surface water flooding linked to urbanisation.

There were calls for:

- Earlier and firmer engagement with utility providers.
- Infrastructure upgrades in advance of development.
- Stronger scrutiny of water companies.
- Greater integration of heat networks and renewable energy infrastructure in new development.

Developer contributions, funding and delivery mechanisms

Participants highlighted:

- Section 106 funds not being spent or monitored effectively.
- Smaller schemes not contributing meaningfully to infrastructure.
- Delays in introducing or implementing CIL.
- Perceived failure to enforce policies requiring infrastructure first.
- Infrastructure promises on strategic sites falling away at later stages.

Participants would like:

- A specialist officer to oversee Section 106 delivery.
- Clearer governance and transparency on infrastructure funding.
- Infrastructure provision as a firm pre-condition of development.
- A plan-led rather than speculative approach.

Community facilities and local services

Ensuring that development supports social cohesion and accessible local services was viewed as integral to infrastructure planning. Across the borough there was concern about the availability and safeguarding of community infrastructure. Participants identified:

- A need for independent, flexible community halls.
- Loss or vulnerability of cultural and community assets.
- Insufficient allotment provision.
- Need to safeguard wharfs, moorings and riverside infrastructure.
- Demand for integrated delivery hubs to reduce last-mile vehicle trips.

5.4.2 Area-specific findings

Guildford Town (including North Guildford)

Overall, town issues centre on congestion, major transport barriers, strategic junctions, and connectivity across the railway and A3. Participants highlighted:

- Severe congestion at the gyratory and A3.

- Need for safer east–west and north–south connectivity across the railway and river.
- Calls for bridges over the railway (including near Stag Hill).
- Physical barriers created by the river, railway and A3.
- The need to masterplan the west side of Guildford station as a transport hub.
- Delivery of Guildford East and Guildford West rail stations.
- Safeguarding riverside footpaths.
- Strict residential parking controls.
- Heat networks for town centre development.
- Widening of the A3 Hogs Back to Midleton Junction.
- A north Guildford bypass (Fairlands to Burpham).
- Traffic congestion entering Guildford from the south and at Artington.
- Need for a four-way junction at Gosden Hill.

There were also requests to:

- Pedestrianise parts or all of the town centre.
- Improve safe cycling across the gyratory.
- Introduce 20mph limits throughout built-up areas.
- Create perimeter routes to reduce through-traffic.

East of the Borough

Eastern issues focused heavily on school capacity, GP provision, bus services and vulnerability to strategic road incidents. Participants reported:

- Overcrowded schools and long-distance school travel (5–10 miles common).
- Lack of clarity over secondary school planning and changing forecasts.
- Limited GP provision (particularly in Burpham and Merrow).
- Villages overwhelmed when incidents occur on the A3 or M25.
- Through-traffic and rat-runs in villages.
- Pressure from major sites (e.g. Wisley and Gosden Hill).
- Limited or infrequent bus services (often two-hourly).
- Lack of evening and weekend bus services.
- Poor coordination between bus and rail (e.g. St Martha’s area).
- Reduced school bus routes and limited access from Compton.
- Need for additional rail stations in east Guildford and Merrow.

There were calls for:

- Park and ride facilities serving eastern communities.
- Better strategic thinking on bus routes and stops.
- Traffic calming in villages.
- Greater clarity and transparency in education planning.
- Ensuring infrastructure is in place before further development proceeds.

West of the Borough

Western concerns centre on rural isolation, public transport viability, sewage capacity and local connectivity. Participants identified:

- Surface water flooding and sewage capacity constraints (including at Hockford Sewage Treatment Works).
- Car dependence due to sparse public transport.
- Limited bus viability beyond the Guildford/Aldershot Road corridor.
- Demand-responsive transport not functioning effectively.
- On-street parking pressures due to low standards.
- Disconnected pedestrian networks (e.g. Ash Green to Ash).

- Lack of bus connectivity within Ash.
- Rural residents struggling to access healthcare and services.
- Concern that speculative applications do not provide infrastructure.

Participants would like to see:

- Improved rural transport links.
- Safer active travel routes.
- Infrastructure planning to precede development.
- Better understanding of doctor-to-patient ratios in rural communities.
- Delivery of LCWIP proposals in Ash.

6 Postcards from the future – a vision for Guildford Borough



Figure 8 - Participants at one of the workshops presenting their Postcard from the Future

As a final exercise, working in small groups, participants were invited to write themselves a postcard, from 20 years in the future, describing the borough and how it had changed for the better.

Overall, participants imagined a borough that has embraced sustainable growth, reduced car dependency, strengthened its communities, protected its heritage and landscape, and ensured that prosperity and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

We have summarised the findings below, splitting them by the town and the wider borough. The full findings, set out by workshop and by group, are included in the appendix.

6.1 Guildford Town

- **A river-centred town:** The River Wey fully opened up, accessible north–south, with walkable and cycleable routes, riverside parks, homes, cafés and leisure activity integrated into town life.

- **A pedestrian- and cycle-prioritised centre:** A largely traffic-free, low-stress town centre where walking and cycling are safe and attractive, with through-traffic removed and strong park-and-ride/public transport provision.
- **Integrated and high-quality public transport:** Joined-up bus and rail hubs, improved station connectivity, and potentially tram-style links connecting neighbourhoods and surrounding areas.
- **A thriving and balanced town centre:** A compact, lively and commercially successful centre, with a strong evening economy not solely focused on alcohol, high-quality cultural and leisure facilities, and North Street successfully regenerated.
- **Heritage protected and celebrated:** Guildford’s historic assets (including the Castle and Guildhall) are well maintained, views retained, and new development reflecting local character and high design standards.
- **A high-tech and creative economic hub:** Guildford is recognised as a centre for innovation, particularly in games, digital and advanced industries, providing strong local employment opportunities.
- **Sustainable and climate-resilient design:** Ultra energy-efficient homes (new and retrofitted), renewable energy as the norm, flooding addressed, and public spaces designed to respond to climate change.
- **Inclusive and mixed neighbourhoods:** Social and affordable housing integrated into urban areas, no homelessness, balanced riverside communities, and homes meeting a full range of local needs.
- **Green, attractive and well-maintained public realm:** More trees and green infrastructure in the town centre, clean streets, high-quality paving, and spaces that are sociable and safe.
- **Strong community life:** A town where people feel proud to be Guildfordians, where generations mix, and where young people have spaces and facilities to thrive.

The box below presents a summary of these findings written up in the style of a postcard.

Greetings from Guildford Town, 2046

Dear Friend,

You wouldn't believe Guildford now! The River Wey is the heart of the town — you can walk or cycle along it from north to south, stopping for coffee by the water, passing parks, homes and lively public spaces. The town centre is largely traffic-free and full of people walking and cycling. It feels green, sociable and safe, with trees lining the streets and beautiful public spaces linking the High Street, North Street and the station.

North Street has come into its own and sits proudly alongside the High Street. The Castle and Guildhall are beautifully maintained, and new buildings respect the town's heritage while embracing high environmental standards. In the evenings there's so much to do — cinemas, cultural venues, restaurants and community events — and it's vibrant without being overwhelming.

Guildford is known as a hub for innovation and creativity, especially in digital and high-tech industries. People live in well-designed, energy-efficient homes, including genuinely affordable housing integrated into mixed neighbourhoods. Flooding has been tackled, renewable energy is the norm, and the whole town feels resilient and forward-looking.

It's easy to get around, easy to enjoy, and still unmistakably Guildford — just better.

6.2 The wider borough:

- **Villages retain character and separation:** Rural settlements remain distinct, surrounded by countryside, with views protected and development respecting local character and scale.
- **Thriving nature and biodiversity:** Protected and enhanced green spaces, increased tree cover, flourishing wildlife, and expanded allotments and opportunities for community food growing.
- **Connected, low-car communities:** Safe cycling and walking routes linking town and villages, integrated public transport networks, and reduced car dominance across the borough.
- **Housing that meets local needs:** High-quality, well-designed affordable and social housing, provision for key workers, warm homes for all, and no homelessness.
- **Strong community infrastructure:** Community hubs in towns and villages, enhanced family facilities and youth spaces, and social infrastructure (healthcare, services) keeping pace with growth.
- **Climate resilience embedded borough-wide:** Renewable energy mainstreamed, resilient urban design, flood mitigation infrastructure, and environmentally responsible development.
- **Balanced economic growth:** Strong local employment opportunities across sectors, including manufacturing and innovation, enabling people to live and work locally.
- **Preserved relationship between town and countryside:** Guildford town maintaining a strong visual and physical connection to surrounding hills and landscapes.
- **Integrated generations and social cohesion:** Communities where young and old live side by side, support one another, and feel a shared sense of belonging.
- **A borough left better than it was found:** A long-term vision of stewardship — enhancing heritage, environment and opportunity for future generations.

The box below presents a summary of these findings written up in the style of a postcard.

Greetings from the Borough of Guildford, 2046

Dear Friend,

The whole borough feels balanced and thriving. Guildford town is lively and well connected, but the villages remain villages — distinct, characterful and surrounded by countryside. You can still see the hills and open landscapes that make this place special, and wildlife is flourishing. There are more trees, protected green spaces and allotments where communities grow their own food.

Getting around is simple. Safe cycle routes and reliable public transport link the town and villages, so people don't depend on cars in the way they once did. New development has respected local character and strengthened rather than eroded community identity.

Everyone has access to a warm, affordable home, including key workers and young families. Social housing is well designed and integrated, and homelessness is a thing of the past. Community hubs, playgrounds and youth spaces are well used, and healthcare and other services have grown alongside the population. Renewable energy powers homes and businesses, and development is designed to cope with a changing climate. People feel proud to live here — generations mix easily, neighbours know each other, and there's a shared sense that we have protected what matters while embracing change.

It feels like a borough that has grown wisely and left things better for the future.

7 Participant feedback

Overall, participants felt the workshop was well organised, engaging, and worthwhile. Many commented positively on the interactive format, small group discussions, clear structure, and the opportunity to be heard. One attendee noted that they had initially expected a 'tick-box' exercise but were pleasantly surprised by the depth and quality of discussion.

A recurring theme was appreciation for the chance to contribute ideas, alongside cautious scepticism about whether the feedback would genuinely influence the Local Plan. Some participants raised concerns about specific planning impacts (such as the grey belt) and questioned how aspirations would translate into real policy outcomes.

Suggestions for improvement were relatively minor and practical, including clearer pre-event information, more background on what a Local Plan is and what is in scope, better visibility of materials (e.g. slides in advance), clearer logistics on the day, and small environmental or accessibility improvements. A few participants also wanted greater transparency about next steps, the evidence base and how feedback would be used.

Overall, the workshop was viewed as effective and well run with the main concern relating to confidence in their eventual impact rather than in the quality of delivery.