

Guildford Local Plan: Self-assessment summary

How we got ready to prepare a new Local Plan

We started preparing a new Local Plan for the Guildford Local Plan area on 30 October 2026.

Government policy says we should adopt the new plan within 30 months of this date. This is to help ensure we have an up-to-date Local Plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities.

This page explains what we did to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe. It also has links to further information and where you can get updates.

We published a timetable for preparing the plan

The timetable shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing a plan. It helps us check if and how we can adopt the plan within the 30-month timeframe. We'll keep this updated as we make more progress.

The timetable reflects our focus on getting our Local Plan preparation underway at the earliest opportunity¹, alongside our best assumptions about how long it will take to get the plan adopted. It spans the period of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) during which Guildford Borough Council (GBC) will cease to exist, and West Surrey Council will become the new Local Planning Authority (LPA). We will do our best to manage the risks that we have identified regarding meeting the timescales set out.

We updated the timetable alongside the publication of this Gateway 1 self-assessment summary.

The timetable can be viewed here: <http://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplantimetable>

We established project management and governance arrangements

Preparing a Local Plan involves many people across the council and from other organisations. Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us monitor our progress and keep the work on track. It also helps us anticipate and manage any risks to us adopting the plan within 30 months.

As part of our overall project management approach, we have:

- prepared a draft project initiation document setting out the management framework and approach for delivering the new Guildford Local Plan.
- considered the resources necessary to prepare the Local Plan carefully and

¹ This has enabled GBC to benefit from the Government's Local Plan Implementation funding available to LPAs that have committed to bringing a plan forward early in the new plan-making system.

have secured funding to this end;

- an active GBC Local Plan Executive Working Group established to support plan-preparation;
- governance arrangements, including delegations, in place to enable efficient decision-making during the process.

We will need to keep these arrangements under review as plan-preparation and wider LGR progresses².

We planned how we'll consult on the Local Plan

Public consultation is essential for the Local Plan to represent the needs of our communities. It must be easy for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops. By planning this early, we can ensure people are aware in advance and can get involved from the start.

In January and February 2026, ahead of formal commencement of the new plan-making process, we undertook a series of early engagement workshops to:

- share information about Government's new plan-making system;
- seek views on the challenges and opportunities the new Plan should address;
- seek help in beginning to shape a distinctive local vision for the Plan.

A report was produced which pulls together the findings from the workshops which you can find here: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/newguildfordlocalplan>

We undertook a 6-week scoping consultation in September/October 2026 to get people's views on what the plan could contain and how we propose to consult on the plan at key stages. This is the first of a minimum of three formal consultation stages.

We included a draft community engagement strategy within our Scoping Consultation document. This sets out the various stages of Local Plan preparation with a focus on when and how different stakeholders can get involved and ways in which we will try to reach as broad a spectrum of our residents as possible.

We have proposed a mix of consultation and communication approaches to help support greater community awareness and engagement. This includes:

- holding workshops and/or drop-in sessions;
- using digital engagement tools such as websites and social media to raise awareness;

In addition to in-person events, we want to continue to move toward digital engagement and have consultation software to enable easier submission and

² At the time of writing, Government indicated that they intend to publish transitional regulations to deal with the various plan-making complexities which could arise because of local government reorganisation. Transitional arrangements will be required in advance of the reorganisation of Surrey authorities.

analysis of responses.

We will consider all representations made during our scoping consultation in finalising the engagement strategy, which we will publish in due course.

You can find out about past and current consultation activities on our consultation portal here: <https://guildford.inconsult.uk/>

We began scoping the content of the plan

Scoping includes considering how well the existing plan is working and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions. Starting this early means we can begin preparing the new plan with a clear vision, making it quicker and easier to consult on the plan and make decisions about it.

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

- collating baseline information;
- considering how our current Local Plan has performed since adoption;
- preparing and commissioning several evidence-based studies such as on our development needs.

You can find more information on the evidence which supports our new Local Plan here: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/evidencebase>

This work, alongside our early engagement and review of the updated national planning policy framework and associated guidance, has helped us identify the initial scope of potential locally specific policies/policy topics for our area.

These were set out in our scoping consultation document. You can find our Scoping Consultation document here on our consultation portal here: <https://guildford.inconsult.uk/GLPS26/consultationHome>

This document also identified a draft list of key Local Plan priorities. Using these as a starting point we have begun to draft a Local Plan vision for our area. We still need to identify specific measurable outcomes that will help us monitor progress toward achieving the vision.

We will be starting to develop a draft spatial strategy and exploring high level options for our policies. This will form part of the second formal consultation on ‘plan content and evidence’.

We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

We’re legally required to identify, describe and evaluate likely significant effects on the environment of:

- implementing the Local Plan
- reasonable alternatives, taking into account the plan’s objectives and

scope

This process will consider how local, national and international environmental protection objectives and any other environmental challenges are taken into account in the plan. It will also consider how the plan's policies and site allocations perform against social and economic objectives. It will help us to predict likely significant effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and offsetting these.

It is important we start this work early and are transparent about how we're doing the assessment when engaging stakeholders and communities.

We've identified other relevant plans and programmes and collected baseline information as part of our SEA Scoping report. It also includes the SEA framework that will be used to assess the Local Plan policies and site allocations. We consulted with the three statutory bodies, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, and their comments have been reflected in the published SEA Scoping Report. We've started working with independent specialists to identify what our assessment will need to cover and will need to refine the reasonable alternatives that will be appraised.

You can read more about our SEA here:

https://www.guildford.gov.uk/Strategic_Environmental_Assessment_2026

How to stay up to date

For updates about upcoming consultation activities:

- sign up to our consultation database here:
<https://guildford.inconsult.uk/system/register>

or

- email us at: planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk