

Service Area Plan for Financial Year 2024/25

Service Area: Planning, Economy & Built Environment

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Version: DRAFT

Mission statement

The Planning, Economy and Built Environment Service Area was formed during the 2023/24 financial year following a merger of the Development Management and Building Control Service Area with the Planning Policy and Economic Development Service Area. The enlarged Service Area now also incorporates the Climate Change Team which has been relocated from the Chief Executive's Office.

The Council's Development Management and Building Control services are currently performing to a high level. This is demonstrated by a high level of performance against national and local targets, strong appeal performance and low level of customer complaints.

Both services have delivered a number of key projects in recent years including process updates, system roll outs and service restructures. In 2024/25 it is intended to build upon this work and deliver service objectives and statutory services from these strong foundations that have been laid in recent years.

For Development Management, the service remains in a key delivery phase; working positively with applicants and stakeholders alike as major applications are brought forward for a number of the allocated sites in the Local Plan. Alongside this, the team continues to determine a high volume of other planning applications across the Borough, as well as deliver a high-quality pre-application service.

This delivery is focused on quality, with the service looking to deliver good infrastructure rich communities where people wish to live and visit as well as good conditions for businesses to deliver and thrive. The service will look to maintain its high level of service and performance even with the continued increase in complex work expected over the coming years. The structure of teams and allocation of resource is regularly reviewed to help meet these challenges and improve the resilience of the service. Following enhancement of the Planning

Enforcement team in previous years the team is currently fully staffed and has made significant progress in decreasing cases on hand and issuing notices.

In relation to the Planning Policy Team, over the last year work on the Local Plan review has largely been paused due to uncertainty regarding future planning reforms associated with the Levelling Up agenda. The decision was made in June 2023 by the Planning Committee to wait for the new national plan making system to come into force in late 2024 before substantive work continues. Whilst work has continued to update parts of the Local Plan evidence base, this pause has allowed planning policy resource to be used to support the Council's climate change response with Planning Policy officers leading on the production of several key strategies. The team has also continued to work with partners to progress strategic projects including the delivery of the A320 improvements and stage 2 (feasibility design/development) of the Runnymede Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Once the reformed Plan Making system is introduced by Government, the Planning Policy team is committed to producing an updated Local Plan for the Borough, in consultation with local stakeholders, and which ensures the continued delivery of high-quality development proposals in the Borough.

Having entered in to shared management arrangements with Surrey Heath in 2022, the Building Control service has continued to deliver a high quality service to its customers and is looking to potentially progress into a full partnership in the 2024/25 financial year. One area of growth was requested in 2023/24 to help facilitate the delivery of such a shared service and meet any resultant set up costs. A full partnership is likely to significantly improve the resilience of the service in both Boroughs, increase market share and provide economies of scale.

The Economic Development Team, commenced delivery of the Economic Development Strategy (including sourcing funding for the Runnymede Youth Hub and capacity building in the Borough's three town centres), signed an MOU with Government over delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, and has worked towards delivery of the shared prosperity projects.

Numbers of staff have increased in the Climate Change Team during the 2023/24 financial year in the form of a full time graduate post (2 year contract) which was funded by the re-use of an existing permanent post. Additional temporary support from the Planning Policy and Recycling teams is also currently boosting the Council's Climate Change response. This enabled significant inroads to be made into the Council's climate change response during the 2023/24 financial year, particularly in relation to strategy development. The team is committed to continuing to drive forward the Council's climate change response, working collaboratively with Service Areas and local communities to achieve vital reductions in carbon emissions to enable achievement of the Council and Borough wide net zero targets.

Key priorities of the Service Area over the 2024/25 financial year will be as follows:

Development Management team

- To deliver a high level of planning applications and appeals performance, determining applications in a timely and professional way.
- To seek to deliver an effective planning enforcement service and make progress on a wide range of cases.
- To participate as LPA on behalf of Runnymede's residents and businesses in existing and future National Strategic Infrastructure Projects, including the River Thames Scheme.

• To have due regard to new material planning considerations in decision-making such as a revised NPPF, Biodiversity net gain rules, or similar local or national changes.

Planning Policy Team

- To fulfil the Council's statutory duties with respect to the development of planning policy to guide decision making within the Borough, in particular:
 - Publication of a new Local Plan timetable to guide the review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan¹;
 - Proceed with the review of the 2030 Local Plan under the new Plan Making arrangements that the Government proposes to introduce from late 2024, in line with the Council's agreed timetable ²;
 - Continuing work to produce a Design Code for the Borough, compliant with the National Model Design Code;
 - Refresh of the Local Plan evidence base, as appropriate:
 - Publication of the Annual Monitoring Report and other required reporting which is necessary to support the Planning Policy function;
 - Provision of support to Neighbourhood Fora on delivery of Neighbourhood Plans:
 - Working collaboratively with the Council's Biodiversity Officer and Development Management Team to ensure preparedness to implement new legislation, for example associated with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act and Environment Act (relating to Biodiversity Net Gain in particular);
 - Continuing to produce the Thorpe Conservation Area appraisal;
 - To support the functions of the Climate Change Team where capacity allows.
- To work with partners to support delivery of improvements to transport infrastructure in the Borough, in particular through the delivery of the A320 works, and working collaboratively with Surrey County Council to complete stage 2 of the Runnymede Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and to support the Egham Hythe Local Streets Improvements project.
- To participate in the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group, and other strategic planning initiatives where appropriate.

Building Control Team

To continue to deliver the statutory and non-statutory elements of the building control service.

• To continue to investigate the potential for a shared service with an adjacent authority.

^{1 2} this is dependent on the new Plan Making arrangements coming into force in late 2024 in line with current Government commitments, and the window that Plan Making can be commenced in Runnymede (which will be dictated by the Government) falling within the 2024/25 financial year.

 Adjust to and implement the new requirements brought forward under the Building Safety Act 2022

Economic Development Team

- To deliver on the six priority areas identified in the Economic Development Strategy, including the outcomes in the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.
- To progress a review of the Runnymede Economic Assessment.
- To participate in the EZ3 Programme Steering Group with the EM3 LEP, Surrey County Council and other partners to support the successful delivery of the Enterprise Zone at Longcross.

Climate Change Team

- To work with other Service Areas and external partners to deliver the commitments within the 2024/25 Climate Change Delivery Plan and 2024/25 Climate Change Communications Plan. This will support the Council's ongoing commitment to use its reasonable endeavours to meet the Council's target of net zero operational emissions by 2030, and to use its sphere of influence to support the Borough and its communities to achieve the 2050 national net zero target.
- Publication of the 2023/24 carbon emissions report and other required reporting which is necessary to support the Climate Change function.
- By the end of the 2024/25 financial year, the Climate Change Team will produce a robust Communications Plan and a Climate Change Delivery Plan for the 2025/26 financial year in consultation with the Climate Change Working Party and have secured adoption through the relevant committee(s).
- There will be new Business as Usual activity to be accommodated by the team following on from the adoption of the Council's Electric Vehicle Strategy in December 2023. This will relate to leading on implementing the following actions from the Strategy:
 - Action Five: Investigate opportunities with partners, in the private sector, to provide additional charge points.
 - Action Six: To look at opportunities to incentivise and promote the use of e bikes within the borough.
 - Action seven: Raise awareness of the location of charging points in the Borough as well as the benefits of EV ownership, such as reduced environmental impacts and improved air quality.
- To support delivery of the climate change aspirations of the Climate Change Strategy, £100,000 revenue growth has been provided to supplement the Council's climate change response. This will be used to support the delivery of initiatives as appropriate during the financial year, in consultation with Members.
- To play a lead role in the delivery of EV charging infrastructure across the Council's estate.

Key challenges/opportunities and drivers for change including:

- Potential legislative changes are on the horizon. In planning, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, and new responsibilities from the Environment Act 2021 have the potential to impact upon the service. Similarly, the new obligations set out in Building Safety Act 2022 are likely to be rolled out in this plan period. The Service Area is however considered to be in a good position to plan for and react to changes as they arise;
- To adopt and respond to increasing requirements to digitalise the Planning System, including future digitalisation and communication of Local Plans;
- To overcome increasing budget constraints, in particular capital funds to deliver infrastructure and urban realm improvements as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation measures by successfully sourcing the most effective grant funding opportunities to aid project delivery;
- Ensuring projects are evidence base driven by the effective use and interrogation of data and utilisation of new technology where appropriate to monitor change;
- Achieving local community buy-in to enable effective project delivery; and
- The need for increasing and effective joint working with other Service Areas and external shareholders, including further cooperation between the five boroughs in NW Surrey on economic development initiatives.

Service Information

Service Area:

Planning, Economy & Built Environment

Service Area 1: Development Management

Service Area 2: Building Control

Service Area 3: Planning Policy Service

Service Area 4: Climate Change

Service Area 5: Economic Development

Description of Service (1) Development Management

Main Purpose: The management of development and the delivery of new homes, through the encouragement and assessment of applications under the Town and Country Planning Act

1990 as amended, to deliver the housing and economic growth specified in the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan including the Longcross Garden Village; the use of enforcement powers under that Act to control harmful and unauthorised development, and the protection of trees that are protected under that Act, and the administration and monitoring of contributions received under that Act.

Development Management decisions are made against the development plan for Runnymede which is the recently adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan; Development Management decisions are to increase housing supply by 7629 net additional dwellings 2015-2030 as well as provide significant employment floor space and other opportunities.

The key functions within the Development Management Team are:

- The provision of planning advice to customers (both external and internal) including pre-application advice.
- The processing and determination of applications for planning permission and associated consents.
- The investigation of breaches of planning control and exercise of the Council's planning enforcement functions.
- The administration and collection of developer contributions and obligations under s106 agreements, the supporting of CMC in accordance with Developer Contribution governance arrangements for the spending of infrastructure moneys.
- The protection of trees which contribute to the quality of the environment and the
 protection of heritage assets which contribute to the historic environment and provision
 of advice to residents, and processing associated consents.
- The defence of Council decisions in these areas in appeal and court, as may be required.
- Partnership working with other service areas, including in relation to National Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and equivalent (as LPA) and policy formulation.

The number of enforcement requests in 2024/25 is estimated to be 280, and expected to remain at a similar level to 2023/2024

The number of planning submissions of all types determined in 2023/2024 is estimated to be 2000 and expected to remain at a similar level in 2024/2025 the applications are likely to continue to be of a complex nature due to the adoption of the Local Plan in 2020.

Description of Service (2) Building Control

Main Purpose: Providing a Building Control Service as required by the Building Act 1984, including a 24/7 dangerous structures callout provision.

The key functions within the Building Control Team are:

- The provision of Building Control advice to customers (both external and internal).
- The determination of applications for building regulation approval and associated consents.
- The setting and collection of application charges ensuring the section breaks even in its fee related account.

- The inspection of works on site to ensure compliance with the building regulations and associated legislation.
- The investigation of potential breaches of the building regulations and exercise of the sections enforcement functions.
- The inspection of unauthorised building works and exercise of the sections enforcement functions.
- The processing of demolition notices and safety inspections of works on site.
- The provision of a 24/7 dangerous structure call-out service including major incidents.
- The defence of council decisions in these areas in court, as may be required.
- The processing of approved inspector applications and maintain a register of their works.
- The processing of competent persons applications and maintain a register of their works.

The key scope of the team's activities during 2024/25 is estimated as shown below.

- To determine circa 450 Building Regulation applications and undertake 3,200 site inspections of building works within 24 hours, or on the same day where notification is received by 10.00am.
- Undertake investigations of approximately 10 reported unauthorised building works.
- Administer 10-15 demolition notices with sites attended during the demolition process.
- Provide a 24/7 dangerous structure callout service, with staff committed to attending site within 2 hours of initial notification; approximately 6 callouts are projected within the period.
- The team also project manage the processing of 250 approved inspector applications and maintain a register of 4,000 approved inspector and competent person notifications.
- In addition, the section is legally obliged to provide free general advice, assistance and up to 1 hours pre submission consultation for proposed works; as such these works are dealt with in the most cost/ time efficient method generally by telephone.

Description of Service (3) Planning Policy

Main Purpose: Key functions of the Planning Policy Team are:

- Gathering evidence to inform plan making;
- Preparation of planning policy including the Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance documents;
- Supporting communities as they prepare Neighbourhood Plans for their areas;
- Review of CIL charges at appropriate intervals or in response to requirements associated with the proposed new replacement Infrastructure Levy;
- Monitoring the implementation of adopted policies to ensure contingencies can be enacted and future policy is evidence based;

- To support partners in preparing and implementing strategy for protection of the Borough's key environmental assets (i.e. SNCIs, SANGs delivery etc.) and to help meet Net Zero targets;
- Assisting with responses to NSIPs/major infrastructure projects as required;
- To work in partnership with Surrey County Council on relevant projects, for example delivery of the A320 mitigation works, the Egham Hythe Local Street Improvements and Runnymede LCWIP;
- To input into the formation of sub-regional/regional/national policy where applicable through public consultations and other forms of engagement such as HSPG;
- The review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan is monitored as a Corporate Project.
- In 2023/24 the following key tasks were completed by the team:
- Updating/producing parts of the Local Plan evidence base including a detailed climate change evidence base and updated Open Spaces Study;
- Designation of a new Conservation Area at Caxton Avenue, Row Town, and re appraisal of the Englefield Green Conservation Area;
- Supporting the Council's climate change response, with officers leading on the production of an Electric Vehicle Strategy, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan;
- Continuing to work with partners to progress strategic projects including the delivery of the A320 improvements and stage 2 (feasibility design/development) of the Runnymede Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP);
- Supporting the Englefield Green Neighbourhood Forum with the relevant activities as they progressed their Neighbourhood Plan through public consultation and referendum;

Ongoing business as usual activities include:

- Support for development of Neighbourhood Plans (Plans are currently being produced for Virginia Water and Ottershaw);
- Annual update of the Council's Brownfield Register and maintenance of the Council's self-build and custom build register;
- Publication of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to monitor the effectiveness of Local Plan policy in accordance with the monitoring framework set out in the Local Plan;
- Policy observations provide observations to planning applications for Development Management as required to support the successful implementation of the adopted Local Plan;
- Working positively with partners during the preparation of planning policy documents and responding to consultations undertaken by neighbouring authorities and other relevant bodies (i.e. the Environment Agency) during the preparation of policy documents;
- Producing/updating relevant parts of the Local Plan evidence base as required;

- Organising and convening the Community Planning Panel;
- Participating in the Surrey Developers Forum, HSPG, SPOA and PWG.

Description of Service (4) Climate Change

Key functions of the Climate Change Team are:

- To coordinate the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, Climate Change Action Plan and other relevant strategies/programmes in coordination with Corporate Heads of Service and Members;
- Work with Corporate Heads of Service and frontline staff to promote and support the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, including relevant supporting initiatives required to meet adopted carbon reduction targets;
- To provide advice and guidance to internal and external project leads in regard to planning, prioritisation, specification, and delivery of projects as far as this relates to climate change policy and the wider delivery the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan;
- To work to continually refine and streamline the Council's processes around emissions
 monitoring and reporting (both internally and to relevant external bodies), and compile
 regular reports to Corporate Management Committee, other relevant committees and
 working parties on various aspects of the Council's response to climate change,
 including progress towards key objectives and projects, and potential new initiatives
 and other developments;
- To develop and deliver a continual rolling programme of training for employees, elected Members and other relevant groups within the wider community (as appropriate) to ensure high levels of carbon literacy;
- To engage with Runnymede's communities (including young people), organisations and other stakeholders in a variety of ways to encourage behavioural change in line with the relevant Council strategies and policies;
- To monitor the progress of internal and external projects which have implications for delivering the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and make recommendations for corrective action where necessary to bring projects back on course with any identified climate change/sustainability objectives;
- To input into applications to external bodies / Government for funding to enable delivery of the Council's climate change objectives;
- To take a lead role in the compilation of responses to Government and other consultations on Climate Change and information requests from external bodies;
- To actively participate in the Surrey Greener Futures Partnership and other relevant groups (including but not limited to the HSPG and Surrey Climate Change Officers Group).

In 2023/24 the following key tasks were completed by the team:

- Completion of a comprehensive 'summer of engagement' with local communities and organisations on climate change which fed into the development of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan;
- Adoption of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan;

- Establishment of robust political and non-political governance arrangements to guide the Council's response to climate change;
- Development of a Green House Gas Inventory to facilitate enhanced monitoring and reporting;
- Establishment of the baseline emissions for the Council's operations and for the Borough, against which future progress can be monitored;
- Adoption of a Communications Plan and Climate Change Delivery Plan for the 2024/25 financial year;
- Production of the 2022/23 Council carbon emissions report;
- Rolling out Carbon Literacy training for councillors and senior managers;
- Coordinating, and running a series of events (alone and with partners) during the 2023
 Great Big Green Week;
- Issuing a Statement of Intent to deliver ECO4 Flex in the Borough (an extension of the ECO 4 scheme which is a grant from energy providers for low income homeowners to install energy efficiency measures).

Ongoing business as usual activities include:

- Responding to FOI and other information requests;
- Building relationships with community organisations in the Borough, understanding their activities in response to climate change, and how the Council could support them;
- Improving the Council's climate change content on its website, and ensuring it is kept up to date;
- Supporting the Council's Service Areas as required as they develop and deliver initiatives to support the Council's and Borough's response to climate change;
- Updating Members regularly on progress in terms of delivery against Climate Change Strategy objectives;
- Working collaboratively with Surrey County Council, other Surrey Boroughs and Districts and other stakeholders to agree and deliver on shared climate change priorities.

Description of Service (5) Economic Development

Main Purpose: The key functions within the Economic Development Team are:

- To deliver the projects in the Economic Development Strategy and produce a review of the Economic Assessment;
- Maintaining the Business Runnymede website and supporting the activities of Business Runnymede.
- Supporting the economic development and management of Addlestone, Chertsey and Egham Town Centres to enhance the urban environment and increase viability and vitality.

- To participate in existing and future National Strategic Infrastructure Project DCO processes.
- To support delivery of improvements to the transport network through partnership working with Surrey County Council Highways Authority, Network Rail, South West Trains, Transport for the South East and other relevant partners.
- To work in partnership with the EM3 LEP (while it is still in place) and Surrey County
 Council to promote delivery of the Enterprise Zone and consider funding proposals for
 investment in the zone.
- To work in partnership with other Council business units to identify, prepare and support funding bids to deliver economic development objectives and priorities.
- To deliver the outcomes in the SPF Investment Plan;
- To administer Business Runnymede and strengthen engagement with and between the business community.

Ongoing business as usual activities include:

- Support the activities of Business Runnymede, organising events, producing the monthly newsletter and maintaining the website.
- Ongoing engagement with the business community, LEP and other relevant stakeholders.
- Engagement with town centre stakeholders to support markets/events and other relevant projects.

Planned Activities

Types of Activities CBP / SAP Activities **CBP** Activities 3 6 Project Type of Activity Title Corporate Theme(s) Plan start date Actual start date Plan due Date Progress 01 April 2024 Develop Business Runnymede/Business Support Economic Development 31 March 2025 Not started Project Shared Prosperity Fund Economic Development 01 January 2023 31 March 2025 In progress Project Progress review of the Local Plan Economic Development 01 January 2021 31 August 2027 In progress Type of Activity Title Corporate Theme(s) Plan start date Actual start date Plan due Date Progress One-off Type of Activity Title Corporate Theme(s) Plan start date Actual start date Plan due Date Progress One Of Development of Design Code for the Borough Climate Change 01 November 2023 27 November 2023 In progress Environmental Sustainability In progress One Off Production of a Sustainable Fleet Strategy 11 October 2023 30 April 2024 22 November 2023 01 June 2023 One Off Develop planning guidance on applying energy hierarchy Climate Change 22 November 2023 03 June 2024 One Off Development of proposals as part of the Egham Hythe Local 01 June 2023 30 June 2024 Economic Development In progress Street Improvements project Production of the Runnymede stage 2 LCWIP report in One Off Climate Change 01 October 2023 04 October 2023 31 March 2025 In progress partnership with SCC New BAU Type of Activity Corporate Theme(s) Plan start date Actual start date Plan due Date Progress New Core Activity To look at opportunities to incentivise and promote the use of Climate Change e bikes within the borough 01 January 2023 01 January 2023 Paused New Core Activity Raise awareness of the location of charging points in the Climate Change 01 January 2024 31 March 2025 Not started Borough as well as the benefits of EV ownership, such as reduced environmental impacts and improved air quality New Core Activity Investigate opportunities with partners, in the private sector to provide additional EV charge points Climate Change 01 January 2024 23 November 2023 31 March 2025 In progress New Core Activity Engage with LEP's and local businesses to support Climate Change innovation and action. Climate Change 31 March 2025 In progress New Core Activity Development of clusters in tech Economic Development Not started New Core Activity Continue to work towards meeting the Council's 2030 01 November 2022 30 June 2024 Climate Change In progress operational net zero target and using our sphere of influence to support 2050 target for Borough National and Local Climate Change target Corporate Business Plan Activities Type of Activity Corporate Theme(s) Plan start date Actual start date Plan due Date Progress New Core Activity Development of clusters in tech Not started One Off Development of Design Code for the Borough Climate Change 01 November 2023 27 November 2023 In progress New Core Activity To look at opportunities to incentivise and promote Climate Change 01 January 2023 01 January 2023 Paused the use of e bikes within the borough 01 November 2022 30 June 2024 New Core Activity Continue to work towards meeting the Council's Climate Change In progress 2030 operational net zero target and using our sphere of influence to support 2050 target for Borough National and Local Climate Change target Development of proposals as part of the Egham Hythe Local Street Improvements project One Off Economic Development 01 June 2023 01 June 2023 30 June 2024 Develop Business Runnymede/Business Support Economic Development 01 April 2024 31 March 2025 Not started 01 November 2023 01 November 2023 New Core Activity Engage with LEP's and local businesses to support Climate Change 31 March 2025 In progress Climate Change innovation and action.

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