

Waverley Borough Local Plan Scoping Consultation (closes 27 July 2026)

The preparation of a new local plan is at an early stage.

This Scoping Consultation invites respondents to say:

- a) What matters are relevant to the preparation of the new local plan including what the local plan should contain
- b) How we should engage with you in the preparation of the new local plan

Questions:

Local Plan

1. What do you consider are the key priorities for the local plan?

Acknowledging that Waverley's 'local housing need' (standard method) is 1,481 homes per annum, every attempt should be made to meet that need within Waverley Borough. However, the planning system is currently undergoing significant change, including the introduction of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), new plan-making regulations and the implementation of Local Government Reorganisation across Surrey. The emerging Local Plan should respond positively to this changing context and ensure that decisions regarding housing distribution and unmet needs are aligned with the emerging strategic planning arrangements for Surrey.

Where unmet needs are identified, these should be considered firstly across the new unitary geography of West Surrey, which is made up of Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley, and Woking. This should also be supported by a robust and proportionate evidence base, before seeking solutions further afield.

Acknowledging that is a significant number, all opportunities should be considered. It is noted that in the scoping consultation reference is made to a new settlement to the west of Farnham (including in neighbouring authority). This is referred to as feedback from previous engagement rather than a concept being put forward by Waverley Borough Council. East Hampshire and Waverley Borough Council have engaged previously about this opportunity, which could be explored as Local Plans progress in the future. There could potentially be greater scope when considering a larger cross

boundary settlement in Waverley and East Hampshire, with greater potential for infrastructure provision, than individual sites within own administrative boundaries.

Ensuring that planned growth is aligned with available environmental and utility infrastructure capacity should be a key priority. This includes water supply, wastewater treatment, flood risk management and the protection of internationally and nationally designated habitats. The Local Plan should be informed by robust evidence demonstrating that development can be accommodated without adverse effects on the water environment or unacceptable impacts on designated sites and protected species.

The Council should also ensure that its evidence base fully reflects the significant changes to national Green Belt policy introduced through the December 2024 NPPF. It would be expected that the Green Belt and Grey Belt assessment comprehensively considers opportunities for sustainable development and Green Belt release where justified. Such work should form a key component of the strategy for addressing housing and employment needs before concluding that development requirements cannot be accommodated within the borough.

2. Do you think that there are any priorities that are more important than others?

East Hampshire remains concerned through its Local Plan preparation about the Government's exceptionally high and often unachievable housing numbers for districts/boroughs.

However, it is important that the emerging Waverley Local Plan responds to the evolving strategic planning landscape. The creation of a new West Surrey unitary authority provides an opportunity to consider development needs and spatial planning issues at a broader geography, making best use of opportunities and constraints across the area. It would therefore be expected that any identified unmet development needs are considered across the future West Surrey authority area in the first instance, informed by a shared evidence base and strategic assessment of suitable locations for growth.

Despite the Government's focus on housing growth, there will always be constraints that restrict development, as set out in planning policy, such as protection of national parks, European designations, and high flood risk areas.

As such there needs to be a careful balance, maximising opportunities for development where possible, whilst protecting what is most important. Alongside this, consideration needs to be given to retaining the vitality of smaller settlements, ensuring they have sufficient development to support local services and facilities.

3. How can the local plan focus on the key priorities for a specific area?

A Local Plan can focus on specific priorities or issues in a local area, recognising that different communities have different needs and opportunities. This can be achieved by working closely with local residents, businesses, community groups, and parish councils to understand local concerns and aspirations.

If evidence based, there could be scope for area-specific policies that reflect local characteristics, such as the Wealden Heaths SPA complex.

4. Is there any planning evidence other than those listed in para 3.5 of this document that the Council needs to gather to support the preparation of the new local plan?

Consideration could be given to the following:

- Open Space Strategy to feed into Infrastructure Plan and assist with policy development
- Community Buildings Assessment to feed into Infrastructure Plan and assist with policy development
- Retail Needs Assessment
- Employment Land Review
- Recognise that Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment will form a mandatory part of the plan-making process. However, consideration should also be given to preparing a clear mitigation and implementation strategy where significant environmental effects or infrastructure constraints are identified.

In turn, the above could help inform a Strategic Housing and Employment Distribution Study across the emerging West Surrey unitary area, assessing how housing and employment needs could be accommodated across the geography having regard to constraints, infrastructure capacity and opportunities for sustainable growth.

Draft Engagement Strategy

1. Do you agree with the potential engagement methods for each stage of the Local Plan preparation as set out in Stages 2,3, 4 and 5 of the Draft Engagement Strategy?

We note that separate legislation, such as with respect to the SEA process, will require consultation as prescribed and that we would expect this to be undertaken alongside local-plan-specific engagement activities.

2. Do you agree that the potential engagement methods are appropriate to meet the needs of our communities and stakeholders as set out in the demographic profile in Appendix C of the Draft Engagement Strategy?

We ask to be notified of consultation through email notification of the start of consultations, and through regular engagement on cross boundary matters. We draw your attention to our Duty to Co-operate Framework 2025 which sets out cross boundary strategic matters, and on which Waverley was consulted.

3. Are there any other engagement activities that should be considered?

In our experience, engaging younger people can be challenging and considering how best to achieve responses from all ages is encouraged.

We would recommend writing to all Traveller sites in your area to inform of the consultation and advise of ways to be involved (including offering meetings to further discuss).

4. How can we focus on ensuring that those groups that are seldom heard are engaged throughout preparation of the new local plan?

We would expect the Waverley Borough Local Plan to look specifically at the needs of the Traveller community, based on up to date evidence. As above, every attempt should be made to meet that need within Waverley Borough. If there is unmet need emerging from Waverley, this should firstly be considered across the new unitary geography of West Surrey, which is made up of Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley, and Woking. This should be supported by an appropriate evidence base and strategic assessment of opportunities across the wider authority area.