



Chapter 1

Introduction

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The new Royal Greenwich Local Plan sets out the Council's vision for how the borough will grow and change over the next 15 years from 2025 to 2040. It includes the planning policies and site allocations that will support this vision.

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What is the local plan?

- 1.1. All local planning authorities are required to produce a Local Plan that guides how their area will grow and change over the next 15 years. The Local Plan must present a clear vision for future growth, detailing where new homes, jobs, transport links, services, facilities, and infrastructure should be located, as well as how the natural and historic environment will be protected and climate change addressed. It helps shape decisions about what can be built and where, ensuring that changes to the borough are well-planned and meet the needs of local communities. The Local Plan helps shape the future of Royal Greenwich by creating well-designed and adaptable places, promoting inclusion, reducing inequality, enhancing the environment, tackling climate change and creating sustainable neighbourhoods where communities can thrive.
- 1.2. A Local Plan must be prepared by a Local Planning Authority and must be developed in line with legislation and national and regional planning policy requirements as well as in consultation with the local community. The Local Plan, together with the London Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, will form the statutory Development Plan framework for Royal Greenwich and will be used to assess all planning applications. The Royal Borough of Greenwich Local Plan period is 2025-2040.

Legislative Framework

- 1.3. The Local Plan is shaped by national laws that make sure councils follow a fair and consistent process. **The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004** sets out how councils should plan for future development. More detailed rules are provided by **the Town and Country Planning Regulations**, which explain how councils must prepare, consult on, and adopt the Local Plan and related documents. These laws help ensure that plans are based on evidence, involve the community, and support sustainable growth.

National and Regional Policy

- 1.4. Government sets out national planning policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the London Plan sets out the spatial development strategy for London. The policies in the local plan are consistent with the NPPF and in conformity with the London Plan. To keep the Local Plan spatial and succinct, this document does not seek to repeat policies already contained in the NPPF and London Plan except for where it is considered necessary to meet local objectives. This Local Plan should therefore be read in conjunction with the NPPF, the associated national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and the London Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans

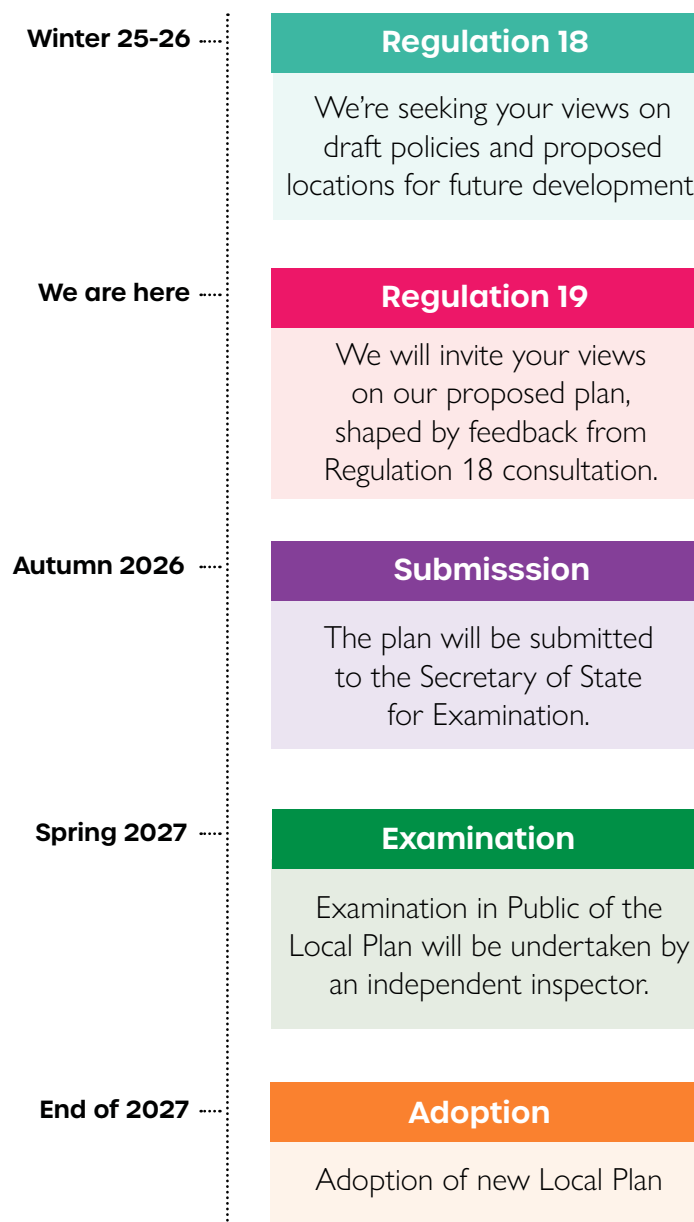
- 1.5. Neighbourhood plans are an opportunity for local communities to develop additional, area-specific policies that are in general conformity with strategic policies. Once made, they form part of Royal Greenwich's development plan. The Lee Neighbourhood Plan is currently the only neighbourhood plan in the borough. It was adopted in April 2024 and the area it covers overlaps with the London Borough of Lewisham.

The process of producing a local plan

- 1.6. Developing a Local Plan is a process which begins with gathering evidence on issues such as housing needs, employment capacity, and environmental constraints to understand what the area requires. Councils then engage with the community and invite suggestions for potential development sites. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines how we will engage with the public throughout the Local Plan review. It ensures that Local Plan consultations are inclusive, transparent, and accessible and engage with residents, businesses, and community groups.
- 1.7. The Council undertook initial engagement with local communities and other stakeholders in 2023, and invited suggestions for potential sites in 2024 which helped to shape the draft site allocations contained in this document.

Figure IN1: The Local Plan process

- 1.8. We then produced a draft plan which was shared for public consultation under Regulation 18; this took place in December 2025-February 2026.
- 1.9. We undertook a mix of traditional and digital consultation methods including public exhibitions in local libraries, our online Commonplace platform, webinars and printed materials. We also held our Big Community Assembly which provided attendees with an overview of the draft Local Plan and allowed residents to engage in more in-depth discussions. The event was organised as two parts: a discussion-based workshop focused on theme policies and an exhibition focused on place policies.
- 1.10. Following a review of the consultation responses, we have now prepared a final draft Plan under Regulation 19 and will hold another consultation to gather views on its soundness and legal compliance.
- 1.11. The plan will then be submitted to the government, and if it meets legal requirements, an independent inspector examines it in public.



Evidence to support the Local Plan

- 1.12. The Local Plan evidence base is the research and information that underpins the Plan and explains why certain choices are made. It covers a wide range of topics, including housing need, jobs and the economy, infrastructure such as transport, schools and health facilities; open spaces, the environment, climate change, and heritage. The evidence draws upon market trends, population forecasts, site assessments, expert advice, statistical data and community insights to provide the most robust and reliable information available. By bringing this information together, the evidence base helps us understand current and future needs, identify local challenges and opportunities, and ensure the policies in the Local Plan are well-informed, realistic, and deliverable. The evidence base documents which support the Local Plan are published on our website.

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

- 1.13. This Local Plan has been the subject of an ongoing Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) during its preparation. The draft IIA incorporates requirements for a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) into one document. This assessment has

considered sustainability objectives, health, equalities and habitats. The integrated approach avoids the need to undertake and report on separate assessments and seeks to reduce any duplication of assessment work. This assessment will be continued through the whole Local Plan process and will be updated in later consultation stages. The IIA is published alongside the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan for consultation.

Co-operation

- 1.14. Historically, under the Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF, local planning authorities were required to work with neighbouring boroughs and prescribed bodies on strategic planning matters that cross administrative boundaries. This statutory Duty to Cooperate has been abolished through subsequent legislative reform. Nevertheless, the Royal Borough of Greenwich will continue to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with neighbouring authorities and relevant public bodies to address strategic cross boundary issues in plan making and implementation, in line with current national policy expectations for effective joint working.

How to use this plan

- 1.15. The policies within the Local Plan are designed to guide and manage development across the borough. They are structured around eight key themes:
- Places
 - Housing
 - Economy
 - Town Centres
 - Design and Heritage
 - Environment
 - Climate Emergency
 - Transport

Types of Policies

- 1.16. The policies can be divided into two categories as set out in Appendix 1:

Strategic Policies: These address the borough's overarching priorities and broader challenges. They provide a clear foundation for delivering the Local Plan's vision and objectives, setting the direction for long-term development.

Development Management Policies: These provide detailed criteria for each specific theme and issue. They may include specific thresholds, requirements, and targets that must be met for development proposals to comply with the Plan.

Site allocations

1.17. Site allocation policies are presented under each relevant spatial area in the Places chapter. Each site allocation outlines the priorities and guiding principles for the development of strategic sites across the borough. There are 54 site allocations in total and each site has undergone a robust testing process to evaluate its suitability and availability for strategic development opportunities.

Other relevant strategies

1.18. In addition to the evidence base documents, The Local Plan brings together a wide range of other plans, policies and strategies prepared by Royal Greenwich which should be read alongside the plan. These include:

- Our Greenwich Plan
- Carbon Neutral Plan
- Children and Young Peoples Plan
- Cultural Strategy
- Cycling Strategy
- Digital Strategy 2020 – 2024
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2021-2026
- Inclusive Economy Strategy
- Parking Strategy
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Transport Strategy
- Waste Strategy

Figure IN2: Location of Royal Borough of Greenwich



Context

- 1.19. The Royal Borough of Greenwich, covering approximately 47.6 square kilometres, is a vibrant and historically rich area of Southeast London.

People

- 1.20. The Royal Borough is home to a diverse and growing population of over 280,000 residents, with demographic trends indicating the borough has experienced a population increase of 13.6% over the past decade, a faster rate of growth than both the London and national averages. This growth reflects Royal Greenwich's appeal as a place to live, work, and visit, but also presents challenges in ensuring that infrastructure, housing, and services keep pace with demand.
- 1.21. Royal Greenwich's population is relatively young, with a median age of 35, though the number of residents aged 50–64 increased by 35% between 2011 and 2021. The borough is ethnically diverse, with 44.3% of residents identifying with non-White ethnic groups. English is the main language for 81.8% of residents, with Nepalese and Romanian being the next most common.
- 1.22. Despite its economic strengths, Royal Greenwich ranks 60th most deprived out of 317 English local authorities. Key challenges include lower resident incomes, high food bank usage, and significant ethnic disparities in

unemployment (8.8% for ethnic minorities vs. 3.8% for White residents). The gender pay gap is also notable, with women earning 17.1% less than men.

Housing

- 1.23. Royal Greenwich also plays a vital role in the strategic regeneration and development of London with one of the highest housing targets in London and a number of designated Opportunity Areas including Greenwich Peninsula, Woolwich, Charlton Riverside, and Thamesmead and Abbey Wood. The London Plan (2021) identifies an indicative capacity of 25,500 new jobs, and 43,500 new homes in Royal Greenwich's opportunity areas reinforcing Greenwich's role in supporting London's wider development goals.
- 1.24. The borough has seen significant increases in property prices and rents over the past decade, while average incomes remain below the London average. Ownership rates have declined to 41.1% in 2021 from 43.3% in 2011 and private renting has risen from 19.8% to 25.5% over the same period. These shifts, alongside a growing housing waiting list, highlight the need for more affordable and varied housing options to meet the needs of both existing and future residents. While overall overcrowding in Royal Greenwich slightly decreased from 10.9% to 10.7%

between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses, pressures remain in the rented sectors, particularly in affordable housing (6.3%) and private renting (4.6%), underscoring the importance of addressing housing quality and suitability across tenures.

Economy and Town Centres

- 1.25. The Royal Borough hosts over 9,800 businesses, the majority of which are small businesses, and contributes over £5 billion annually to the UK economy. Key sectors include real estate, health and social care, construction, education, and public administration. Royal Greenwich has approximately 106,000 jobs, but offers fewer local employment opportunities relative to its workforce than London as a whole. The borough also has a high share of part-time employment (37.5%). Many residents therefore commute out of the borough for work, indicating a need to expand and diversify the local economy and attract higher-value industries.
- 1.26. Town centres play a vital role in the borough's economy and community life. Royal Greenwich has a well-defined town centre hierarchy, including three Major Centres (Woolwich, Eltham and Greenwich), seven District Centres, 9 Local Centres, and 37 Neighbourhood Centres. Town centre vitality is improving, with

footfall in Woolwich and Eltham increasing by over 50% between 2022 and 2024. However, vacancy rates remain high in Woolwich (13.8%) and Greenwich (11.5%) town centres, indicating a need for revitalisation. Retail transaction data shows growth in both spend and volume, particularly in Woolwich, suggesting rising economic activity.

Health, Well-being and Education

- 1.27. Royal Greenwich performs well on several health and wellbeing indicators, with above-average levels of physical activity (66.4% of adults), lower adult obesity rates (23.2% vs. 26.2% nationally), and lower recorded depression rates (10.7% vs. 13.2% in England). The borough also benefits from a highly qualified population, ranking in the 85th percentile nationally, and 94% of schools are rated Good or Outstanding. However, life expectancy for men is among the lowest in London, and child obesity rates are higher than national averages. Educational attainment at GCSE level is slightly below the London average, and health inequalities persist, particularly in deprived areas. These mixed outcomes highlight the need for integrated planning that supports both physical and educational wellbeing across all communities.

Heritage

- 1.28. The Royal Borough's built environment is shaped by its historic assets, including the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Maritime

Greenwich, and its strategic location along the River Thames. Royal Greenwich's rich history is central to its identity, and the borough contains 559 nationally listed buildings, including 28 Grade I and 45 Grade II* assets, alongside 830 locally listed buildings and 23 conservation areas as well as registered parks and gardens such as Grade I listed Greenwich Park, Grade II* Eltham Palace, Grade II listed Repository Woods and Grade II listed Well Hall Pleasaunce. It is home to the Maritime Greenwich UNESCO World Heritage Site, encompassing the Queen's House, Royal Observatory, Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich Park, Cutty Sark, National Maritime Museum and Greenwich Market. These assets contribute to the Royal Borough's cultural richness and tourism economy, which welcomed 19 million visitors in 2025 spending £2.13 billion.

Environment and Open Spaces

- 1.29. Royal Greenwich is rich in green and blue infrastructure and environmental assets and benefits from an extensive network of open spaces, which cover nearly 39% of its land area including Metropolitan Open Land and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Biodiversity hotspots include Greenwich Park. And areas in the south such as Fairy Hill Park and the Tarn Bird Sanctuary. However, 13.8% of the borough is deficient in access to nature. The borough also contains significant waterbodies, including the River Thames,

Deptford Creek, the River Quaggy and Birchmere Lake which offer opportunities for recreation and ecological enhancement.

- 1.30. Environmental challenges include air quality, with 80% of areas in the worst decile for pollution in London. Climate risks such as flooding and heat stress are concentrated in northern areas like Woolwich and Plumstead. While per capita carbon emissions (2.7 tonnes CO₂) are below London and national averages, the domestic and transport sectors account for 72% of emissions. Greenwich has been designated an Air Quality Management Area since 2001 and contains eight Air Quality Focus Areas. Climate adaptation measures include solar energy, heat networks, and transport electrification, though social housing stock lags in energy efficiency.
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