

Draft Housing Strategy

2025-2034

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Introduction

Housing is a crucial factor of wellbeing. Good quality housing, which meets an individual's or family's needs, provides a sound platform to build a good quality of life. We are committed to ensuring there are homes available that our residents can afford.

This strategy has been developed to support the goals in the council's Corporate Strategy, we aim to deliver decent and affordable homes. This, along with our other priorities, will help us become a more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive borough. Together, these efforts will make Guildford borough a thriving place to live, work, and do business.

The role of the housing strategy is to:

- Promote a coordinated approach between the council and key partners to housing in Guildford borough.
- Create a framework to deliver key priorities across the council. Support resource allocation to make this happen.
- Highlight how housing contributes to wider goals, such as better health, tackling homelessness, and promoting sustainable economic growth.
- Ensure that the council meets its obligations under relevant legislation.

We want to be more transparent and encourage open dialogue with our residents. We invite your input on the future development of our housing strategy action plan. To learn how to get involved, please visit the housing pages on the council website:

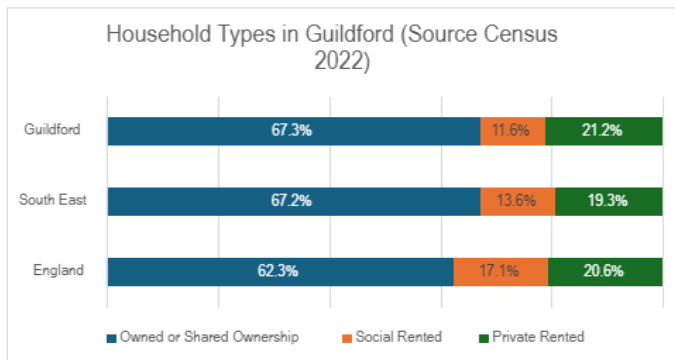
<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/housing>. If you are a tenant or leaseholder of the council, you can join our tenant engagement group by emailing: Tenants.Group@guildford.gov.uk

Facts about housing in Guildford

Households

The 2022 Census shows that Guildford has 55,760 households, an increase of 1,787 since 2011.

Housing Types



- 67.3% of households in Guildford are owner-occupied or shared ownership. There are affordability barriers for new buyers as the average house price for first-time buyers in Guildford was £391,000 in December 2024, up 4.3% from the previous year (source ONS)
- 11.6% of households live in social rented housing, below the national average.
- 21.2% of households rent privately and affordability remains a challenge, with average monthly rents reaching £1,617 as of December 2024

New Homes

In the 2023/24 there were 593 new homes built, 121 of these were Affordable Homes.

Affordable Housing

- There are over 6,500 social rented homes in the Guildford Borough Council area, and of those 5,000 are Council homes
- As of October 2024, 2,365 people were on the housing register, waiting for affordable housing.
- Around 150 socially rented homes become available a year for letting
- In 2023/24, 121 new affordable homes were built:
 - 73 for rent
 - 48 for affordable home ownership

Homelessness

- In 2023/24, 324 homeless applicants were helped into secure accommodation.
- 134 households needed emergency bed & breakfast (B&B) placements.
- The average B&B placement cost was £2,813 per stay.

Our vision & Key Priorities

Everyone has a safe, high quality, sustainable home that meets their needs and that they can afford as part of a thriving and inclusive community.

We have set clear goals and priorities to achieve our vision for housing in the borough. This will help us meet the current and future housing needs of residents. We will tackle key challenges like affordability, homelessness, housing supply, and the need for that different types of homes to meet the varied needs of residents This will help everyone in our community.

Key priorities of this housing strategy:

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|---|--|
| Deliver homes people need and can afford | Ensuring that all residents of the borough have access to housing that is affordable and meets their needs. Working closely with planning to secure the infrastructure to support new homes and Surrey County Council to deliver specialist housing. |
| Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services | Ensuring the homes we provide are of good quality, well maintained and safe for our tenants with effective and efficient planned improvements. |
| Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping | Implementing targeted programmes to reduce homelessness through prevention, support services and temporary accommodation. |
| Improve housing options, opportunities, and choice | We will centrally coordinate local services to ensure those seeking help have access to a range of housing options |

Together, we can ensure that housing is a cornerstone of economic opportunity, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

Strategic Context

The Council has a number of statutory and key roles in relation to Housing, including:

- Strategic housing authority with responsibilities for homelessness and housing allocations
- Landlord to Council tenants and leaseholders
- Builder of new Council homes
- Local planning authority, with responsibility for setting planning policy and determining planning applications in the borough
- Licensing and Environmental Health authority, with regulatory and enforcement roles in the private sector

National Policy Context

- **The National Planning Policy Framework** A new National Planning Policy Framework was published on 12 December 2024 which includes reforms by the Government which aim to increase the delivery of new homes.
- **Affordable Homes Programme:** Launched in 2020 to deliver 180,000 affordable homes by 2026, with a revised focus on social rent.
- **First Homes Scheme:** Introduced in 2021, offers first-time buyers a 30% discount on new-build homes.
- **Building Safety Act:** Enacted in 2021 to ensure the safety of high-rise buildings through a new regulator and stringent safety standards.
- **Fire Safety:** Following the Grenfell tragedy (2017), new safety regulations were introduced, including the Fire Safety Act (2021), Fire Safety (England) Regulations (2022), and Building Safety Act (2022). These place greater responsibilities on landlords and property owners, particularly for high-rise buildings.
- **Homelessness:** The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) expanded our legal duty to prevent homelessness, leading to a review of services and the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2020-2025).
- **Allocation of Social Housing** The Armed Forces Act (2021) requires local authorities to prioritise social housing for serving and former armed forces personnel and their families.
- **The Domestic Abuse Act (2021)** mandates councils to provide safe accommodation and support for victims of domestic abuse.
- **The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act (2023)** aims to improve housing quality for vulnerable adults who need specialist accommodation and support
- **Social Housing (Regulation) Act:** Passed in 2023, enhances tenant protections by holding landlords accountable, addressing hazards, and improving standards.
- **Zero-Carbon Housing by 2050:** Supported by funding for energy-efficient technologies, reducing energy bills, and promoting green jobs.
- **Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023:** changes to planning systems, environmental outcomes, infrastructure, and market reform.

- **Renters' Reform Bill:** Aims to strengthen tenant rights by ending fixed-term tenancies, regulating rent increases, and removing Section 21 evictions

Local Context

- **Guildford Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2024-2034 :** A Greener, Fairer, Thriving Guildford sets out our priorities as a council for the next ten years, and how we plan to make Guildford borough a thriving place to live, work and do business. A key priority within the corporate strategy is decent and affordable homes.
- **The Local Plan:** The foundation for all planning decisions, this plan plays a crucial role in shaping the future development of local communities. This is currently comprised of the Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2019 and the Local Plan: Development Management Policies 2023. A Local Plan update is currently underway. Affordable housing is secured through S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- **Economic Development Strategy:** This strategy shapes a new vision for the local economy with a priority that includes meeting business and worker needs.
- **Economic Regeneration Programme:** The Economic Regeneration Programme includes a specific work programme on housing delivery.
- **Shaping Guildford's Future:** The council's ambition to breathe new life into the town including making the centre a more attractive place to live, work and visit
- In December 2024, the council published its latest **Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)** update. This update reflects the council's dedication to aligning its budget and financial planning with priorities such as providing decent and affordable homes.
- The **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** focuses on supporting those in need and preventing homelessness.
- The **Asset Management Strategy and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan** guide investment in maintaining and improving council housing.
- **Housing Improvement Plan** On 3 January 2024, the council commissioned the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) to conduct an Independent Governance Review of Guildford Borough Council (GBC), with a specific focus on the housing landlord function. The review feeds into the refreshed Housing Improvement Plan which drives service enhancements and ensures that all council-managed homes meet high standards of safety, quality, and accessibility.

Together, these policies, strategies and plans provide a structured, long-term approach to delivering safe, high-quality, and affordable housing for Guildford residents.

Managing Council-Owned and Affordable Housing

The Council directly manages over 5,000 homes and is responsible for ensuring they are well-maintained, safe, and fit for purpose.

- **Planned Investment:** Through the Asset Management Strategy, we are investing in modernisation, repairs, and sustainability improvements to maintain high standards.
- **Decent Homes Standard:** We are delivering a programme of improvements to ensure all council homes meet or exceed the Decent Homes Standard as soon as possible.
- **Service Delivery Improvements:** The Housing Improvement Plan is streamlining voids, repairs, tenancy management, and resident engagement.
- **Affordable Housing Expansion:** We continue to build and acquire new affordable homes, seeking funding through Homes England's Affordable Homes Programme and other sources.

Understanding Housing Needs: Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) informs planning policy by identifying the types of housing needed across the borough. It highlights the demand for different housing sizes and tenures:

Affordable Housing Needs:

- 40.9% should be one-bedroom homes.
- 31.7% should be two-bedroom homes.
- 23.9% should be three-bedroom homes.

Market (Private) Housing Needs:

- 40.4% should be three-bedroom homes.
- 28.6% should be two-bedroom homes.

This data is currently being updated to help shape the new Local Plan.

The Council's Role in Private Sector Housing

The Council has a legal duty to monitor housing conditions in the private sector, ensuring safe and healthy homes.

- **Inspections:** Conducted in response to tenant concerns, with proactive checks on high-risk properties.
- **Enforcement:** The Private Sector Housing Team enforces housing standards and investigates statutory nuisance cases, harassment, and illegal evictions under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Key Areas of Focus:

- Regulating Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Addressing empty homes and overcrowding.
- Investigating complaints from owner-occupiers, landlords, and tenants.

Our partners and stakeholders

This strategy has been developed with the input and support of a wide range of partners and will be delivered through continued partnership working.

As well as our Parish Councils, we work with a number of local organisations, community groups and private companies. Some of our key partners are shown below.



This strategy also sits within the priorities outlined in the [Housing Strategy For Surrey](#) a county-wide housing strategy, the key priorities are:

1. Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit
2. Tackling health inequalities
3. Enabling a greener future
4. Empowered and thriving communities

Other important strategies that we will consider include:

1. The [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#), an assessment of the current and future health and social care needs of the population of Surrey
2. The Surrey-wide [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

How we will deliver this housing strategy

1. Clearly communicate our vision and priorities

Ensure that all stakeholders understand the core objectives of the strategy

2. Engage the community

Ensure that people affected by the strategy are actively involved in the process

3. Partnerships and collaboration

Engage key stakeholders to effectively collaborate and support each other to deliver the strategy's goals

4. Develop a housing strategy action plan.

Break the strategy into smaller, measurable tasks and outline a detailed action plan that has clear goals, timelines, and identifies responsible parties

5. Monitor and evaluate our progress.

Establish Key Performance Indicators to measure the success of the strategy and establish regular reporting on progress, and an annual review. Progress on delivering the Action Plan will be reported annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and within our published Annual Strategic Review (ASR).

What we have achieved since the last strategy

The council has continued to take an ambitious approach to housing delivery and service improvement. We take a lead role on a number of large strategic sites, investing in our own new building programme and working closely with Waverley Borough Council on joint senior leadership.

1. We partnered with the **Wates Group at Guildford Park Car Park**. Together, we will build 248 new homes. Of these, 40% will be affordable housing. We're putting £39.7m from our housing revenue account into affordable homes. The new neighbourhood will have a mix of council homes for rent and affordable homes to buy. There is a focus to create a high quality, sustainable development where people are proud to live.

Weyside Urban Village is a major regeneration project bringing new homes, facilities and opportunities to Guildford. It will provide around 1,500 new high-quality homes to help meet our borough's housing needs, including affordable housing. Recognising our approach to free up previously developed land for new homes, the scheme won the 'Best use of publicly owned land and, or property placemaking' in the Planning Awards 2023. Major infrastructure investment is already underway and new healthcare provision, employment and community spaces will enhance the new neighbourhood.

These developments are part of a programme for housing-led regeneration of sites that we own

2. We have worked with developers to deliver new affordable housing. This includes capped rent levels and limited rents on Shared Ownership homes to match local affordability.
3. Building our own homes through making most effective use of our assets to deliver new council homes.
4. Working with partners to deliver new extra care housing for our most vulnerable residents with additional care needs.
5. We are enhancing our housing services with the Housing Improvement Plan. This plan aims to boost performance management, improve communication, foster a professional culture, and support staff health and wellbeing.

Our Priorities

Priority 1: Deliver decent, sustainable homes people need and can afford

Outcome: Increase the supply of quality affordable housing by working in partnership with a range of providers and making the best use of the Council's land assets and resources.

The supply of new homes is central to the economic and social prosperity of any area. It is crucial to offer a variety of housing options. These should meet quality standards, be affordable, and be in locations that serve residents' needs now and in the future. We will encourage the delivery of homes that are more sustainable with cheaper running costs for residents.

How we will do this:

- Secure affordable housing on all qualifying sites seeking planning permission. This includes a mix of home types and tenures. Explore options for social rent and promote discount market sale as the preferred way to achieve home ownership.
- We need sustainable designs for new homes. These houses should be easy to adapt and use technology to lower running costs for residents. This includes features such as air source heat pumps and electric vehicle car charging points.
- Increase grant funding for sites in the borough. This will help with delivery and find new ways to enable it.
- Build new council homes to make best use of our assets.

- Work to deliver a range of housing to enable independence for people in need of care and support.
- Work with Parish Councils and community groups to deliver rural affordable schemes and community led homes for residents.
- Support efforts to bring empty homes back into use to make best use of available homes in the area.

Challenges we face

- High local land values, house prices and market rents.
- Increasing cost of living pressures reducing ability to afford housing costs.
- Impact of legislation changes on the private rented sector impacting availability for affordable accommodation.
- Restrictions on suitable development land through Green Belt/Surrey Hills National Landscape and other planning designations.
- The current Homes England funding structure impacts the delivery of affordable homes being secured through S106 due to providers prioritising non S106 delivery.

How we will measure success

- Monitor the delivery of new affordable homes.

Priority 2: Improve the quality, standard, safety and accessibility of our homes and housing services

Outcome: Ensure all social and privately rented homes meet regulatory standards, providing safe, high-quality, and accessible housing for all residents.

We are committed to high-quality housing services that give residents a voice in their community. With local partners, we will push for better standards in the private sector. As landlords, we will care for and invest in our properties. We will also work together to keep homes safe, well-managed, and sustainable for all residents. How we will do this:

- Follow our policy to fairly allocate social housing and ensure equal access.
- Work closely with housing providers to solve issues quickly and support residents.
- Invest in our council homes to keep them safe and well-managed.
- Make sure all homes meet Decent Homes Standards as soon as possible.
- Hire reliable maintenance partners to keep our council homes in good condition.
- Speed up void turnaround times in council owned properties to get homes ready faster for new tenants.

- Provide effective adaptations to help residents live independently in their homes for as long as possible.

Challenges we face

- An ageing population.
- Performance issues identified within our council housing repairs and maintenance services that we are working to resolve and improve.
- A back log of repairs and improvements.
- Working with a limited and interim workforce.

How we will measure success

- Percentage of homes that do not meet the Decent Home Standard.
- Repairs completed within target timescale.
- Tenant satisfaction measures.
- Complaint monitoring.
- Compliance with safety requirements.

Priority 3: Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

Outcome: Anyone facing homelessness or at risk of it gets the advice, help, and support they need.

Homelessness is an issue which is high on the national agenda. The “Everyone In” initiative, launched during COVID-19, provided emergency accommodation for rough sleepers, proving that a coordinated approach can make a real impact. We will build on this progress, working with community partners to ensure everyone has a safe and stable place to call home.

How we will do this:

- Processing applications for housing in accordance with housing legislation and the Local Authorities statutory obligations.
- Commissioning temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Providing outreach services for rough sleepers.
- Working with partners to support people with complex needs, mental health issues or substance abuse.

Challenges we face

- A rise in the number of single people with complex needs.

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- We need to refurbish current facilities. This will help us offer quality accommodation and meet the changing housing needs of those seeking our assistance.
- Pressures on social and health care systems affect the support people can access. This limits our goal of a holistic and person-centred approach.

How we will measure success

- Number of successful homelessness outcomes (prevention and relief)
- Number of rough sleepers

Priority 4: Improving housing options and opportunities

Outcome: Offer a complete service that supports sustainable housing solutions. Provide clear advice and practical help to those in need.

Our service focuses on the individual. It offers high-quality, personalised, and practical advice and support. We follow local pathways to ensure the best fit for each person. We will help people make informed choices about their individual housing needs. This way, they can keep their homes and get support early to avoid crises and homelessness.

How we will do this:

- Focussing on early intervention and prevention.
- Maximising options for accommodation and support to cater for a wide range of needs.
- Providing holistic trauma and psychologically informed approaches.
- Using a multi-agency approach for people with multiple disadvantages.
- Working collectively with our partners to secure positive and sustained outcomes.

Challenges we face

- Expectations on the availability of social housing and rights to access social housing.
- The political landscape is changing, and there's uncertainty about funding for future services. This affects long-term delivery and security.
- We are adapting to changes within the council and with our partners. We will keep aligning our priorities and resources. This way, we can work together to deliver as a unified system.

How we will measure success

- Time taken to assess new applications on the housing register.
- Number of households living in temporary accommodation.

Next Steps

Once in place the strategy will guide everything we do next.

We will consult and involve you in the detailed planning after we adopt this strategy. We will create a housing strategy action plan based on our talks with residents. We'll also share our progress on this plan according to our corporate approach.

More information about this strategy, and the opportunities to get involved are on our website: www.guildford.gov.uk/housingstrategy

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Housing Strategy Action Plan

The Housing Services Team will review the action plan each year. This ensures it stays relevant and effective in meeting the goals set out. During the review, we will assess our progress. Updates will be made where required, feedback added, and new challenges identified. Then, we will create or update plans to tackle these issues.

Priority 1: Deliver Decent, Sustainable Homes People Need and Can Afford

| Priority | Action | Target Date | Lead Officer | Measure of Success |
|------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Priority 1 | Secure affordable housing on all qualifying development sites | Ongoing – Annual Review | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Number of new affordable homes delivered annually |
| | Work with housing providers and developers to increase affordable home delivery | Annual Review | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Percentage of homes meeting sustainability standards |
| | Develop a Rural Housing Plan to support rural and community-led housing | September 2025 | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Plan adopted and homes delivered |
| | Explore feasibility of a 'Guildford Rent' model for affordability | Local Plan timelines | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Feasibility study completed |
| | Promote sustainable home designs with energy-efficient features | Ongoing – Annual Review | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Number of homes with sustainable features |
| | Increase grant funding and explore new financial models for housing development | Annual Review | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Additional funding secured |
| | Build new council homes to make best use of council assets | Annual Review | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Number of new council homes built |
| | Bring empty homes back into use | Ongoing – Annual Review | Strategy and Enabling Manager | Number of empty homes brought back into use |
| | | | | |

Priority 2: Improve the Quality, Standard, Safety, and Accessibility of Homes

| Priority | Action | Target Date | Lead Officer | Measure of Success |
|------------|--|-----------------------|---|---|
| Priority 2 | Ensure all council homes meet Decent Homes Standard | Annual Reporting | Interim Head of Repairs & Property Services | Percentage of homes meeting Decent Homes Standard |
| | Improve void turnaround times for council properties | Review March 2026 | Interim Head of Repairs & Property Services | Average void turnaround time |
| | Invest in council homes to enhance quality and safety | Annual Review | Interim Head of Neighbourhood Services | Tenant satisfaction measures |
| | Review maintenance services for council properties to improve efficiency | Review September 2025 | Interim Head of Repairs & Property Services | Compliance with service standards |
| | Complete repairs in council properties within target timescales and reduce backlog | Quarterly Reporting | Interim Head of Repairs & Property Services | Percentage of repairs completed on time |
| | Strengthen compliance with all safety regulations in our council homes | Annual Reporting | Interim Head of Repairs & Property Services | Compliance with safety requirements |
| | Provide effective adaptations for independent living | Quarterly Reporting | Interim Head of Repairs & Property Services | Number of adaptations completed |

Priority 3: Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

| Priority | Action | Target Date | Lead Officer | Measure of Success |
|----------|--------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|
|----------|--------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|

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| Priority 3 | Process housing applications in line with statutory requirements | Annual Reporting | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Time taken to process housing applications |
| | Review and update Housing Allocations Policy | March 2026 | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Updated policy adopted |
| | Minimise use of emergency accommodation through prevention efforts | Ongoing – Quarterly Reporting | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Reduction in emergency accommodation placements |
| | Expand outreach services for rough sleepers | Annual Reporting | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Number of rough sleepers supported |
| | Strengthen multi-agency partnerships for individuals with complex needs | Annual Reporting | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Improved support coordination |
| | Secure additional self-contained temporary accommodation for families | Annual Reporting | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Increase in available temporary accommodation |

Priority 4: Improving Housing Options and Opportunities

| Priority | Action | Target Date | Lead Officer | Measure of Success |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Priority 4 | Increase access to private rented accommodation for those in need | Ongoing – Quarterly Reporting | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Number of private sector tenancies secured |
| | Provide tailored housing advice to residents | Ongoing – Quarterly Reporting | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Customer satisfaction with advice services |

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|---|---------------|---|--|
| Use trauma-informed and psychologically-informed support approaches | Annual Review | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Number of residents receiving tailored support |
| Strengthen collaboration with partners for sustained housing outcomes | Annual Review | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Improved long-term housing stability |
| Reduce number of households in temporary accommodation | Annual Review | Homelessness, Advice & Allocations Lead | Reduction in households in temporary housing |

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