



# ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

Moving towards a new local plan

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# INTRODUCTION

The Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) has a record of pursuing a well-integrated environment that allows people to thrive. The borough, known for its naval and architectural heritage, is also well known for being the home of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), now an adopted world standard<sup>1</sup>.

The Maritime area of Greenwich is also famous for landmarks such as the Cutty Sark, the Royal Observatory, Blackwall Underwater Tunnel and the O2. The Maritime area of Greenwich was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, and has remained a constantly growing London Borough<sup>2</sup>.

This briefing note provides an overview of the Royal Borough, the scale of its current efforts, the challenges faced so far, and what the future holds for this staple of London, including the development of a new Local Plan.

# WHAT DOES GREENWICH DO?

## Vision

The RBG Local Plan<sup>3</sup> envisages its town centres in 2028 as vibrant places of culture, retail, employment, living and business that are accessible to residents and contribute to develop a strong sense of community.

By 2028, Royal Greenwich will have a prosperous and sustainable economy that will play a leading role in the economic regeneration of the Thames Gateway.

## Strategic objectives

The main themes of the objectives defined by the current Local Plan are:

### Growing Royal Greenwich:

- Encouraging, enabling and managing major changes in the physical environment.
- Developing major infrastructure to benefit all residents and visitors.
- Improving public transport links in the waterfront area, new open spaces and community facilities.

### Enhancing Royal Greenwich

- Protecting the elements that make Royal Greenwich a great place to live, work, learn and visit.
- Conserving the unique heritage and green spaces.
- Delivering high quality sustainable development, improving deprived communities and increasing access to jobs and key services.

# OBJECTIVES

		Growing Royal Greenwich	Enhancing Royal Greenwich
A	High level of good quality, mixed housing (meeting London Plan targets). Primary focus on the waterfront area.	●	●
B	Ensuring an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes and tenure types in Royal Greenwich to foster sustainable and cohesive communities.	●	●
C	Improving the accessibility, capacity and quality of the public transport network. Promoting sustainable travel in Royal Greenwich, including the delivery of Crossrail (now Elizabeth Line), enhancing north/south orbital links, public transport in the waterfront area, new river crossings and increasing the use of the river.	●	●
D	Reduce water and energy consumption within the Borough.	●	●
E	Promote low and zero carbon developments throughout Royal Greenwich to reduce carbon emissions and air pollution.	●	●
F	To support Royal Greenwich's network of town centres, particularly Woolwich and Eltham, and a mix of uses within them.	●	●
G	To protect and enhance Royal Greenwich's rich natural and historic environment and respect its riverside setting, so that it continues to contribute to sustainable growth.	●	●
H	To ensure that the legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games is to enhance Royal Greenwich's role as a sporting and tourism destination throughout the plan period.		●
I	To promote high quality architecture and urban design in all developments in Royal Greenwich, which contributes to people feeling safe and reduces opportunities for crime.	●	●
J	To ensure that the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure is provided or existing infrastructure is enhanced to support the planned growth and development in Royal Greenwich throughout the plan period.	●	●
K	To reduce levels of worklessness, improve skills, encourage a prosperous economy and create sustainable jobs within Royal Greenwich, making the most efficient use of land.	●	●
L	To reduce deprivation and health inequalities within Royal Greenwich.		●
M	To encourage and support the delivery of major sustainable regeneration projects within Royal Greenwich.	●	
N	To encourage diversity.	●	●





# THE CURRENT RBG LOCAL PLAN

## Parameters

### Within the London Plan:

- Providing a minimum of **25,950 homes** in Royal Greenwich between 2011-2021 (a monitoring target of 2,595 dwellings per annum) and a further 2,595 each year thereafter, contributing to the London-wide target of at least **13,200** more affordable homes per year
- Protecting Metropolitan Open Land
- Reducing carbon emissions to ensure all new homes are zero carbon by 2016 and non-domestic buildings are zero carbon by 2019
- Protecting safeguarded wharves and waterway support infrastructure
- Managing as much of London's waste as possible within the city and meeting the Royal Borough's waste appointment target, working towards zero waste to landfill by 2031
- Protecting strategic views

### Within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

- Locating major shopping developments and other uses that attract a lot of people in town centres
- Supporting the expansion of electronic communications networks
- Protecting Green Belt land
- Proactively meeting the development needs of business
- Protecting and enhancing historic assets
- Protecting World Heritage Sites

## Opportunity areas

RBG is London's major reservoir of brownfield land with significant potential to accommodate new housing, commercial and other development, typically built-up areas with good existing or potential public transport accessibility which can support redevelopment at higher densities.



Source: Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies 30 July 2014. Page 20.

### The identified areas are:

- Greenwich Peninsula
- Charlton Riverside
- Woolwich
- Deptford Creek/Greenwich Riverside (partly in Lewisham)
- Thamesmead and Abbey Wood
- The Kidbrooke area has been identified as an Area for Intensification

## Spatial strategy

The spatial strategy assumes a high level of continuous growth over the plan period and includes the delivery of **38,925 homes** over the 15-year plan period.

The strategy provides for substantial release of under-used industrial land and intensification of employment for the future of the borough at Charlton Riverside for mixed use development, including up to **5,000 new homes**, and release of industrial land at Greenwich Peninsula West for new homes and employment uses.

## Housing strategy

The housing growth targets will primarily be met by providing housing within the Opportunity and Intensification Areas identified. Royal Greenwich's opportunity areas are focused in the waterfront area and therefore much of the future housing will occur along the riverside.

In line with the requirements of the NPPF (paragraph 47), the Royal Borough will identify a five-year supply of deliverable housing based on these targets with an additional buffer of **5-20%** depending on the record of delivery.

The average number of dwellings that Greenwich has set as a target is **38,925**, with an average yearly monitoring target of **2,595**. This monitoring target is based on the London Plan 2011.

## Economic activity and employment

**21,000 new jobs** that meet the needs and skills of local people will be created in Royal Greenwich by 2028 (on average **1,400 new jobs each year**)\*.

The largest sectors of the economy – public services, retail, business services and the caring and personal services sectors – will continue to provide the majority of jobs.

Leisure, hospitality and tourism and the digital and creative sectors will grow, and new job opportunities will develop in the low carbon sector, advanced manufacturing and life sciences.

In addition to the town centres, Greenwich Peninsula will continue to grow as a leisure destination, building on the O2 Arena's standing as the most popular indoor entertainment venue in the world and will see increasing leisure, retail and entertainment uses.





A new District Centre (North Greenwich) will be established at Greenwich Peninsula as the area around the O2 Arena continues to develop. A major new business and creative industries precinct will also be developed on the Peninsula.

An estimated **4,700m<sup>2</sup>** of convenience floor space and between **20,700m<sup>2</sup>** and **41,700m<sup>2</sup>** of comparison floor space will be accommodated within existing and planned town centres between 2013 and 2028. The estimated higher level of comparison floorspace is based on a high level of growth in Woolwich Town Centre, reflecting the Centre's increasing transport connections and its potential as a Metropolitan Centre<sup>5</sup>.

**Design and Heritage**

Royal Greenwich's unique heritage will be protected and enhanced, including the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, which is one of only four World Heritage Sites in London. Heritage assets including the conservation areas, registered parks and gardens, archaeology such as scheduled monuments and nearly **1,000 listed buildings** will be protected as well as other locally significant assets, creating an important link to the rich history of Royal Greenwich.

**Environmental and climate change**

Climate change will be addressed through mitigation and adaptation. New developments will be required to mitigate against climate change by incorporating renewable energy generation and reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Some areas within Royal Greenwich are at risk of either tidal or fluvial flooding. Tidal flood defences to a high standard are in place.

Flood defences will be maintained and other appropriate measures sought to ensure the ongoing protection of Royal Greenwich's assets from flooding.

**Cohesive and healthy communities**

Considerations for cohesive and healthy communities include safety, provision of community facilities and access to parks and open spaces.

The Royal Borough will work with Government, the NHS and other partner groups on a variety of initiatives aimed at creating a healthy urban environment and improving the physical and mental health of Royal Greenwich's residents and reducing inequalities between neighbourhoods.

With regard to education, consideration will be given to the growing demand for school places within Royal Greenwich, and the Royal Borough will work with partners to ensure that these are delivered in the right locations.

Walking and cycling will be encouraged as healthy travel options through a variety of programmes throughout Royal Greenwich. Access within the built environment will be improved through high quality design of new infrastructure, housing and public facilities.

**Infrastructure**

New transport infrastructure will include a completed Thames Path, improved links along the riverside, improved north-south links, a package of new river crossings and platform lengthening at stations within Royal Greenwich.

**Supplementary planning documents**

To date, the Borough has produced the following supplementary planning documents to support the existing and emerging development plans:

- Urban Design Guide
- Spray Street
- Greener Greenwich
- Thamesmead and Abbey Wood (Opportunity Area Planning Framework)
- Kidbrooke Area
- Greenwich town centre
- Woolwich town centre masterplan
- Eltham town centre masterplan
- Charlton Riverside masterplan
- Greenwich Peninsula West masterplan
- Planning obligations

Additionally, the Greenwich Planning Brief<sup>6</sup> has been developed and published in 2017. This brief sets out the framework for the future development of what is defined as Site GP3. This is a response to the identified key growth areas in the Borough.

Additionally, as of March 2024, the Borough has published numerous documents which provide a further insight into the future of the borough. Two of which, of significant importance to the planning of the borough, are summarised below:

- Housing our Greenwich – A review of residential assets and development of a programme of estate regeneration
- 10-year regeneration Plan (2024 to 2034) – Designed to support the priorities and direction for the borough

**Borough's progress (2022)**

A review of the Core Strategy with Detailed Policies and the emerging Site Allocations Local Plan determined that a comprehensive overhaul of the planning policy framework in the Royal Borough was needed, with both elements to be integrated into a new Local Plan.

**Duty to cooperate**

The Royal Borough cooperates with a number of other local planning authorities, including adjoining boroughs, and prescribed bodies, on a variety of issues. The Royal Borough regularly engages with neighbouring authorities both individually and as part of South East London groups as well as on a London-wide basis. Additionally, the borough works in partnership with the Mayor of London, Greater London Authority and Transport for London.

The Royal Borough also works closely with other public bodies, particularly with public bodies that are required to cooperate with local planning authorities, including the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England, and other organisations such as the Port of London Authority.

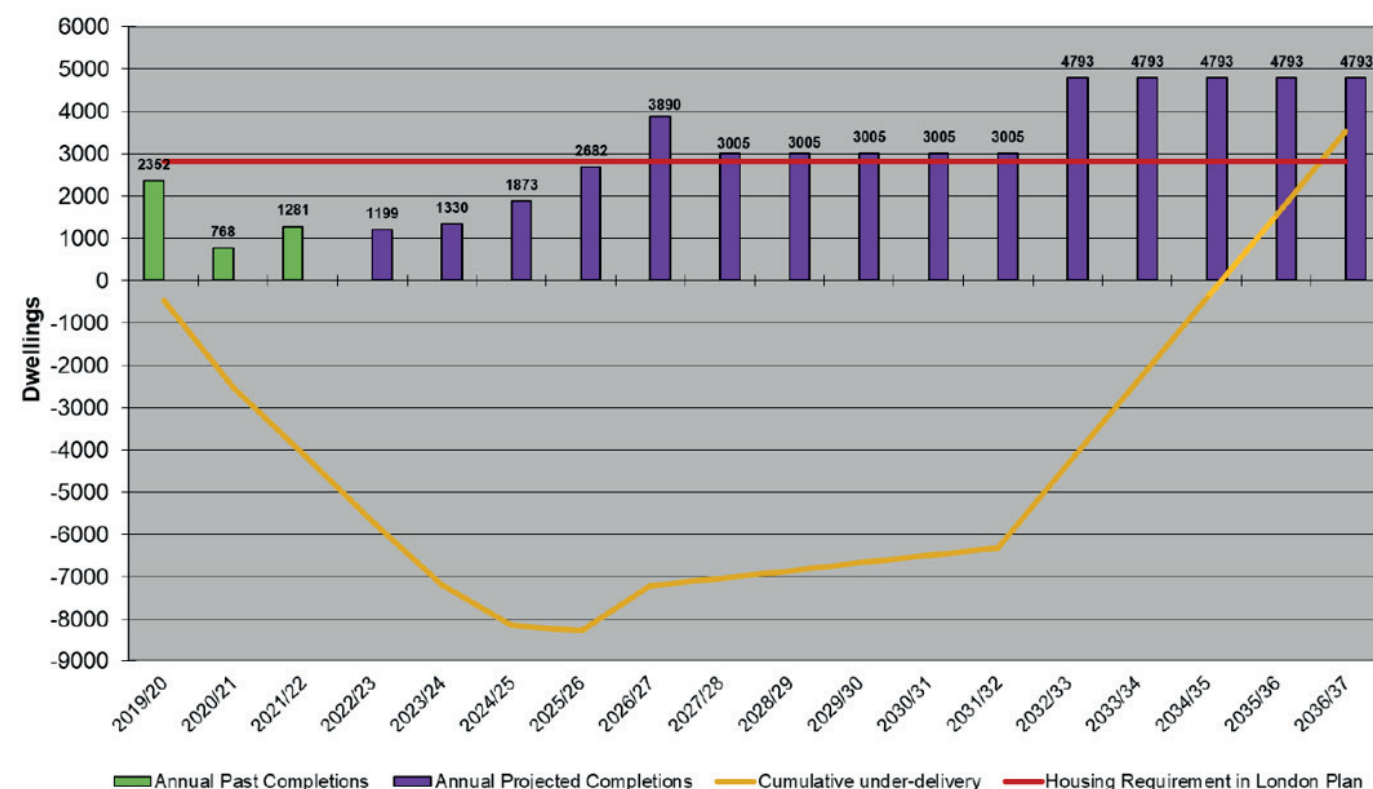
**Housing supply**

The London Plan 2021 sets a housing target for Greenwich of **28,240 net** additional dwellings for the 10 year period 2019/20 – 2028/29 (2,824 per annum) and for the next 15 years (until 2037).

Source: Royal Borough of Greenwich, Online:

<https://committees.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2808/Committee/72/Default.aspx>





The Core Strategy contains a target that at least **99% of development** will be on brownfield sites. This target was not met in 2019/20, when **59 units** were completed on a greenfield site at the former Gaelic Athletic Association Sports Ground, Eltham, which was granted permission on appeal (14/3551/F).

The Core Strategy contains a target that at least **35% of new housing is affordable**. 50% of permissions were for affordable units in 19/20, but the target was not met the following two years. Completion rates are significantly lower but the majority of these are not within the control of the Council.

### Design and Heritage

A Local Heritage List Procedure Note was adopted in March 2021; this sets out the process and requirements of applications to locally list a building within Royal Greenwich.

### Environment and climate change

The Council set a target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and adopted a Carbon Neutral Plan in November 2021 which sets out the actions necessary to reach this target.

Air Quality data is taken from the RBG Air Quality Annual Status Reports, which provide a detailed overview of air quality in the borough during each calendar year. Royal Greenwich has the largest real-time air quality monitoring network in London with ten automatic monitoring station sites.

## THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

The new Local Plan sets out the vision for future development in the borough for the next 5, 10 and 15 years. It includes the planning policies that will help achieve this<sup>7</sup>.

The production of the new Royal Greenwich Local Plan will be undertaken in line with national policy and the London Plan 2021 and will be informed by community and stakeholder engagement.

The Consultation period for the new Local Plan was carried out from 11 July 2023 – 5 September 2023. The project is currently at the stage of receiving suggestions from residents, businesses, community groups and developers to suggest development sites for consideration in the new Local Plan<sup>8</sup>.

### Further stages of the development of the plan include<sup>9</sup>:

- Consultation on the draft Local Plan, between Spring – Summer 2024 (to be confirmed)
- Further consultation on draft Local Plan, during Winter 2024/2025 (to be confirmed)
- Examination in public, on the Summer of 2025 (to be confirmed)
- Adoption of the new Local Plan, Winter 2025 (to be confirmed)

### To date, 6 topics have been taken to community engagement, a summary of the topics and the responses received is below:

- Transport and Movement  
98 responses
- Design and Heritage  
60 responses

- Town centres and high streets  
83 responses
- Climate change and environment  
87 responses
- Housing and communities  
100 responses
- About the new local plan  
219 responses

From the responses received, setting aside the general introduction of the new local plan, it can be interpreted that **Transport and Movement and Housing** seem to generate the most engagement. This suggests that this is what the community is most interested in.

The Borough has announced a group of leading architects, urban designers and sustainability experts appointed to provide independent advice on the design of future development in Royal Greenwich<sup>10</sup>.

The panel features 24 members with a broad range of expertise and experience in architecture, design, landscape and ecology, conservation, transport and climate change. A selection of the members will meet regularly to preview proposed major developments in the Borough. These reviews will be managed by an external third party (Frame Projects) to ensure the panel's independence.



# AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

## Housing

The Royal Borough of Greenwich acknowledges that, whilst there is a continued need to deliver new housing, policies in the Borough’s Local Plan will need to set out the type, size and tenure of this housing so that it meets local needs. The Housing and Planning Act (2016) was introduced to expand home ownership, reform housing management and the planning process, and boost levels of housebuilding.

The Council has published its Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2021-26. The Strategy reiterates the London Plan’s policies on securing **35% affordable housing** (or 50% on sites on public land) and reiterates the current approach in terms of tenure split, with 70% of affordable homes to be available at London Affordable Rent levels, and 30% as intermediate homes.

Since 2014, the average price paid for a home in Royal Greenwich has risen from **£282,000** to **£440,000** (March 2022), an increase of 56%. The average price of a home in the borough is now over 13 times the median household income, which in 2021 was £34,461, the 6th lowest in London.

The number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) have also increased in response to the unaffordable housing options. There are **871 houses in multiple occupation** in the borough and 14% of these are in the most deprived areas. With a total housing stock of **112,884** in 2018, HMOs make up **0.8% of total housing stock**.

Home ownership in Royal Greenwich has stayed fairly static over the last 10 years and remains the largest tenure group in the borough. The proportion of people in social rented accommodation has fallen by **10%**.

The cost for people renting privately has grown slightly in this period, from an average of **£875 in 2011** (£219 a week) to £1,325 in 2019 (£331 a week), an increase of **51%**. For a household with below-average income to rent an average property privately in Greenwich, it would cost them **76% of their income**. These market rent figures exclude deposit or service charges.

It is widely accepted that no more than **40%** of a household’s net income should cover housing costs – if housing costs exceed **40%** the housing is considered unaffordable. Currently both home ownership and private rented housing are unaffordable for those on average incomes in Royal Greenwich.

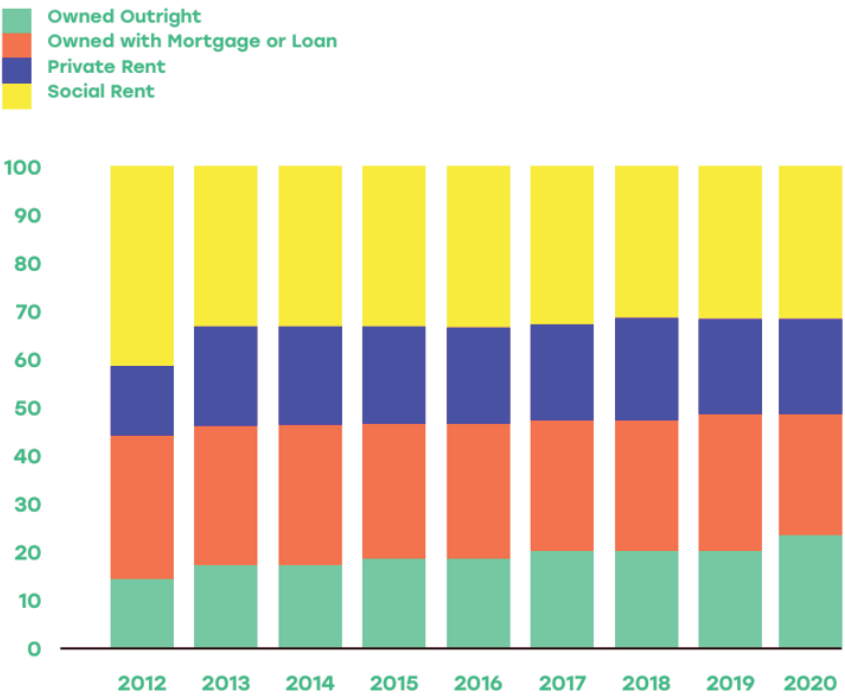
Demand for social housing has increased considerably and continues to exceed demand. There are currently **19,730 applications** on the Royal Borough’s waiting list and less than **6%** of the waiting list was rehoused in 2018/19.

The borough has plans to address the housing challenges<sup>11</sup> which include ensuring the land in the borough is optimised to ensure the housing target is met whilst balancing against other needs such as the quality of the built environment and placemaking, employment, green space and social infrastructure.

To align with the London plan and ensure housing costs are no more than **40% of net income** (or 30% of gross income), the Borough acknowledges the need to increase genuinely affordable housing. A viability appraisal will be undertaken to establish whether **35% affordable housing** is still a reasonable amount or if there is a need to increase this.

The new Local Plan will also have to consider the housing needs of specific groups such as students, service families, people with disabilities, travellers, and those wishing to self-build. As the composition of the Borough continues to evolve with people living longer and having fewer children, there will also be a need to provide homes for the aging population.

Figure 2: Tenures in Royal Greenwich 2012-20



## Climate change and environment

Since the adoption of the current Local Plan, the Council has declared a climate emergency and published its Carbon Neutral Plan, committing to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Policies in the new Local Plan will also need to address the related issues of:

- Improving air quality
- Reducing flood risk
- Maximising the use of renewable energy
- Improving energy and water efficiency
- Reducing waste

The Council is committed to enhancing biodiversity, particularly in our open spaces and also in new developments.

The Local Plan will also consider how development can support the circular economy by encouraging retrofitting over demolition and the reusing, repairing and recycling of valuable materials.

The Local Plan could prioritise the conversion of designated open spaces that are currently private or have restricted access into publicly accessible spaces.

The Community Open Space (COS) designation could be amended to acknowledge the wide variety of different uses and characters of the spaces. A more detailed hierarchy could give more weight to the protection of the COSs that have the greatest value while acknowledging the needs of others such as accessibility and biodiversity.

Policies could place a greater emphasis on the provision of green infrastructure within new developments; effectively responding to the Urban Greening Factor in the London Plan and enabling the prioritisation of different types of green infrastructure where there is a specific need. This includes an emphasis on food growing and the protection of local gardens in the Borough.

The Borough may also need to develop their own Urban Greening Factor based on the London Plan to respond to their specific environmental needs.



# REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200228/local\\_history\\_and\\_heritage/146/history\\_of\\_the\\_local\\_areas#:~:text=The%20modern%20history%20of%20Royal,favoured%20the%20area%20for%20centuries.](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200228/local_history_and_heritage/146/history_of_the_local_areas#:~:text=The%20modern%20history%20of%20Royal,favoured%20the%20area%20for%20centuries.)

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200228/local\\_history\\_and\\_heritage/146/history\\_of\\_the\\_local\\_areas](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200228/local_history_and_heritage/146/history_of_the_local_areas)

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200191/planning\\_policy\\_and\\_strategy/869/local\\_development\\_framework/2](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200191/planning_policy_and_strategy/869/local_development_framework/2)

<sup>4</sup><https://royalgreenwichnewlocalplan.commonplace.is/timeline>

<sup>5</sup>Royal Borough of Greenwich Authority Monitoring Report 2019-2022. Source: [https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/site/scripts/download\\_info.php?downloadID=296](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=296)

<sup>6</sup>Greenwich Peninsula Site GP3 – Planning Brief. October 2017. Source: [https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/downloads/download/853/greenwich\\_peninsula\\_site\\_gp3](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/downloads/download/853/greenwich_peninsula_site_gp3)

<sup>7</sup>Greener Greenwich Supplementary Planning Document. September 2014. Source: [https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/downloads/download/651/greener\\_greenwich\\_supplementary\\_planning\\_document](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/downloads/download/651/greener_greenwich_supplementary_planning_document)

<sup>8</sup><https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/drp-announced>

<sup>9</sup>Local Plan Topic Paper: Housing. July 2023. Source: <https://royalgreenwichnewlocalplan.commonplace.is/proposals/housing-and-communities/step1>

<sup>10</sup>Local Plan Topic Paper: Climate Change and Carbon Reduction. July 2023. Source: <https://royalgreenwichnewlocalplan.commonplace.is/proposals/climate-change-and-environment/step1>

<sup>11</sup>Local Plan Topic Paper: Green Infrastructure and Open Space. July 2023. Source: <https://royalgreenwichnewlocalplan.commonplace.is/proposals/climate-change-and-environment/step1>

## ABOUT RPS

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