



Guildford Cathedral Development FAQs from public webinar September 2021

Who is putting forward the proposals?

The proposed development is being delivered by us, VIVID, and Guildford Cathedral.

VIVID is one of the largest providers of affordable homes in the South. Our vision is “more homes, bright futures” and at the heart of this is helping customers improve their wellbeing and life chances. We provide services and support to 72,000 customers and have 31,000 homes across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex.

Guildford Cathedral is one of the town’s iconic landmarks and a unique twentieth century Grade II* listed building. It seeks to serve the people of Guildford, the county of Surrey and region and is open to all, for free, 365 days a year.

What are you building?

Our proposals will deliver much-needed new homes, including affordable homes, on the land adjacent to Guildford Cathedral, to the east and south of the Cathedral itself. We aim to create an attractive new neighbourhood with plenty of green space for the whole community to use and enjoy, while improving connections from the site and the Cathedral to the town centre.

Why are you building here?

There’s significant need for more good quality affordable homes in and around Guildford. The land surrounding the Cathedral is allocated for housing in Guildford’s adopted Local Plan as it provides a great opportunity to deliver these much-needed homes as well as to improve the connectivity of the site to the town.

The funds that these new homes generate will be invested to secure the future of the Grade II* listed Cathedral. Delivering new homes here will raise vital income for the future upkeep of the Cathedral – protecting the endangered heritage of the town’s landmark. The Cathedral is proud of its community links and believes very strongly that it should play a part in contributing to new homes in Guildford.

Can you share more details on how funding will be used by the Cathedral? What improvements need to be made?

Guildford Cathedral doesn’t benefit from a large income in the same way as many English cathedrals; because it is relatively new, it doesn’t have any historic endowments. The sale of land to VIVID for new homes will safeguard the long-term future of the building. The income generated will be used to create an annual endowment that will provide for the long-term repair, maintenance, and improvement of the Cathedral.

How many homes are you building and how many will be affordable?

Following extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, we’re proposing 124 new homes. Guildford Cathedral will own 13 of these homes for its staff, replacing existing homes on the site which are currently used for this purpose.

The remaining 111 homes will be for affordable housing and market sale. Affordable homes will make up 40% of the new homes built, which is in line with Guildford Borough Council's policy. These homes will be managed by us and will comprise of:

- Affordable rent (31 homes)
- Shared ownership (13 homes)

How can you ensure that these homes won't be used for student housing but will provide homes for families in Guildford who need them?

We're building a range of homes to meet the identified needs of a range of people in Guildford, from affordable rent and shared ownership through to apartments and family houses for market sale. We're not building bespoke properties for students. We'll retain long term management and ownership of the site, and any change of use will require our consent regardless of tenure.

Are you in touch with the Royal Surrey Hospital trust to discuss provision of housing for hospital workers?

We will not be providing allocated key worker housing for the hospital as part of the development.

Why are you building 124 homes when only 100 are allocated in the Local Plan?

The Local Plan allocates around 100 homes to this site as an approximate guide. It doesn't consider the size of homes that might be suitable, or what type of homes would be best in this location. We need to consider things like the sloping landscape, the existing trees, the surrounding homes and the Grade II* Listed Cathedral when planning the number of homes.

We're proposed 124 homes. This number means we can provide a good mix of apartments and houses to meet local need and deliver new buildings that are appropriate for their surroundings. We're proposed one, two, three and four-bedroom homes however the majority are two and three-bedroom which is most appropriate for this location close to the town centre.

How will the wider community benefit?

We're proposing a range of biodiverse green spaces for everyone to enjoy. This includes play space for children, wildflower meadows (which is great for bees), ornamental planting and even a community orchard. There'll be places to sit and relax, and places to exercise, and new signage to help visitors.

New wildlife corridors will create a habitat network across the site and bird and bat boxes will also enhance biodiversity in this location. The sustainable drainage systems will also attract wildlife as well as mitigating water run-off, to help avoid local flooding which has been a problem for the community in the past.

We've also consulted with Guildford Borough Council to make sure our scheme is part of wider proposals to better connect this side of Guildford with the town centre – creating a direct, safe route for pedestrians and for cyclists.

What will the buildings look like?

Our proposed homes have been designed to complement the neighbourhood, so the development fits in with its surroundings. We'll ensure plenty of landscaping and green space to make it an attractive place to live. You can see artist impressions of how the buildings will look on our website.

Will internal designs make provision for working from home?

We're still working on the details for the specifications and interiors of the homes however, designs will be contemporary that allow for flexible use and good levels of natural daylight. We know access

to green space is crucial for health and wellbeing, so there will be easy access to outside space for all residents – whether a balcony, terrace, garden or open green area. High-speed broadband will also be provided across the development.

What parking is being provided?

Parking provision is in line with Council requirements. There will be one space provided per apartment, and two spaces per house. There will also be visitor parking provided.

How will new residents access the development?

We understand that a number of local residents are concerned by the proposed access and so we have carefully considered and tested our options.

Most residents of the new homes will access the development via Alresford Road and Ridgemount, with five of the new homes accessed instead via the Cathedral's main entrance route. This follows extensive consultation with a number of consultees and key stakeholders who have confirmed that they would have significant concerns about the planning application if all access was provided via the Cathedral's main entrance route.

The Highways Authority has agreed that the access points we're proposing are the safest way to reach most of the homes and minimise the impact to the Cathedral itself. Our transport planning team have concluded that the increase in peak hour traffic resulting from this development - in this location, so close to the town centre - will be modest. This assessment will be independently reviewed by Surrey County Council, for both safety and capacity.

Are you making changes to mitigate the traffic impact on Ridgemount and Alresford Road?

We'll not make any changes to the roads outside of our site. Details on how the development might impact traffic will be set out in the Transport Assessment as part of the planning application and will be subject to independent scrutiny by Surrey County Council.

We understand traffic is a concern for many existing residents and while we understand that new residents will own cars here, our development has been designed to encourage use of other forms of transport. For example, to encourage cycling and walking, especially into the town centre, we will work with the Council and University to provide the opportunity to link pleasant and safe footpath and cycle route to Yorkies Bridge – improving wellbeing and reducing environmental impacts.

Will there be a pathway through to the University?

Yes. We're committing to provide a pedestrian and cycle access route from the Cathedral site through to the University to the east. We're working with Guildford Borough Council to ensure our route aligns fully with their plans for this pathway beyond our site boundary.

Does the scheme tie in with Guildford's sustainable movement corridor?

Yes. We've worked closely with Guildford Borough Council to make sure our scheme ties in with the sustainable movement corridor. We've proposed significant improvements to the limited pedestrian and cycle connections currently on the site. These improvements will enhance east-to-west connections between the hospital and Yorkies Bridge, and north-to-south connections via the improved processional route on the southern slope.

Will there be a regular bus service going up Cathedral Hill?

We've not suggested any changes to the existing bus services to Guildford Borough Council, who are responsible for setting the bus routes around the town.

Which trees are being removed and planted? Will there be a net gain of trees?

The trees on site have been assessed and categorised to ensure all high-quality trees of value are retained. We'll have to remove some low-quality trees and vegetation but will only do this where necessary. To counteract this, we'll plant more trees than we remove across the site in the park and woodland areas, along the streets and in the newly created orchard. Details will be available in the planning application drawings and documents.

Are you planting mature trees and if not, how long do you expect it to take for the trees to mature?

Any trees we plant will be semi mature circa 5-6m in height on planting. We'd expect the majority of trees to take 5-10 years to mature. As part of our planning application, we're submitting a series of visuals that show a range of viewpoints towards the Cathedral after one year, five years and ten years – this will enable people to see how the tree growth will change over time.

Are there plans for formal gardens?

Yes, our landscape proposals include a new formal Cathedral Garden to the south of the Cathedral.

Are there plans for play areas for children?

Yes, we'll include designated woodland play space to the east of the Cathedral building for children.

Are you maintaining the hedge at the proposed access from Ridgemount?

The hedgerow along Ridgemount will be maintained however, the access points on Ridgemount will have to provide sufficient visibility to make sure emerging cars can see, and be seen, by oncoming traffic in good time. Therefore, some vegetation will likely need to be cut back. The Highway Authority will be responsible for maintaining visibility.

How can you ensure future residents don't alter the proposed green/brown roofs?

Residents will not have access to their apartment building roof areas. Instead, we'll be responsible for managing and maintaining the green/brown rooftops of the apartment buildings in line with the biodiversity management plan.

Why do you believe that developing a large amount of existing open space is an improvement?

There is an urgent need for more homes in Guildford and development opportunities are limited. The land adjacent to the Cathedral is currently unmanaged, so with careful planning and design the land can provide much needed housing for people in need of a home today and for future generations as well attractive open space that encourages biodiversity and public use. This combination is more sustainable in the long term.

What energy efficiency standards are you meeting and do your plans go above and beyond minimum requirements for new homes?

We hope that the carbon emissions from our buildings will be approximately 31% lower than the minimum standards required for new homes by the Building Regulations. This reduction would exceed Guildford Borough Council's requirement to reduce carbon emissions by 20%. To achieve this, we'll be adopting a fabric first approach. This means we plan to provide the highest levels of building insulation to minimise heat loss, energy use and running costs.

Currently, we plan to include 330 photovoltaic panels across the buildings to generate electricity and help reduce residents' utility bills.

Is the Cathedral slope stable enough to build on?

Yes, it is but the development will require significant retaining structures. These structures will be designed in consultation with geotechnical specialists to ensure that the hillside remains stable during and after construction. We've already commissioned a comprehensive soil investigation and once the development levels are finalised, a slope stability assessment of the critical areas will be carried out.

Are you developing on consecrated ground?

There will be no development on or near the consecrated ground where all ashes are interred. There are no plans to redevelop in this area in the future.

The local roads have experienced flooding. What are you doing to mitigate the impact of development on flooding?

The development will reduce surface water flooding risk for homes on Alresford Road and Ridgemount, as well as Scholars Walk. Our proposed drainage system is designed to intercept the surface flows which run off the steeply sloping site. This water will be stored in tanks and released at much lower flow rates into the public sewer system, significantly reducing the risk of any surface water flooding. Brown and green roofs on some of the apartment buildings will also help to slow the release of water.

The design of the SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) will also increase biodiversity at the same time.

Where will building traffic be directed and will time restraints be placed on construction hours and days?

Any building work will be subject to planning permission conditions that restrict construction hours and times. Usually, these conditions mean that work only takes place on weekdays during working hours and occasional Saturdays. The Cathedral has also requested restrictions on construction to avoid disruption to key events and public services such as Easter, Christmas and wedding ceremonies.

We'll be doing everything we can to minimise construction vehicle movement on and off the site and will be preparing a detailed plan as our application progresses to show how we'll prioritise this.

How long will building take?

We expect construction to take around two and a half years to three years from the time when work on site begins.

Who will manage the development and the public areas after completion?

We will be responsible for the maintenance and management of this new community indefinitely. The Cathedral will continue to manage the land they retain as they do now.

How have you consulted with the public?

We first met with the public in November 2019 during a workshop session which we hosted with Guildford Cathedral and architects JTP. We also met with community stakeholder groups including The Guildford Vision Group, The Guildford Society and Guildford Residents Association, as well as with local neighbours. We hosted a 'report back' event in January 2020 to report on the feedback and comments we'd received in our first sessions. We met virtually with the same community stakeholder groups in early Summer 2020, and separately to discuss the plans as they evolved. We shared our proposals with Councillors and the public in September 2021 before submitting our planning application. Details of the main consultation events can be found on our website.

Will your plans be input into the Guildford Borough Council VU-City model?

Yes. As part of our planning application, the Council has requested that we input our planned development into their VU-City model.

Will a range of viewpoints and scaling be made available as part of the application?

Yes. As part of our planning application, people will be able to see a range of visuals that illustrate the impact that the proposed new buildings will have on views to and from the Cathedral. The planning application will be available on Guildford Borough Council's website when it has been submitted.

When will you submit a planning application?

We're submitting a planning application to Guildford Borough Council in Autumn 2021. After the application is submitted, the full plans will be available to view, and submit comment, on Guildford Borough Council's website.