

How to Use the Plan

Plan Period

The Dartford Borough Local Plan Review covers the period from 2001 to 2011. The base date of the Local Plan Review is April 2001, although the Housing Land Supply information (Policy H1) has been updated to December 2003.

Background Documents

The Borough Council published a Main Issues Discussion Paper in February 1997 which marked the start of the Local Plan Review process. Subsequently, the First Deposit Draft of the Dartford Borough Local Plan Review was published in March 2000 for public consultation. The Second Deposit Draft of the Local Plan Review was published in October 2002 and further amendments were made in January and April 2004.

The Development Plan System

Decisions on whether to allow proposals to build on land or to change its use are usually made by local authorities. Development plans set out the authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in their area. The development plan informs and guides day-to-day decisions as to whether or not planning permission should be granted. In order to ensure these decisions are rational and consistent, they must be considered against the development plan adopted by the authority, after public consultation and having regard to other material factors.

In Dartford, the development plan comprises the following:

- Dartford Borough Local Plan, produced by Dartford Borough Council and adopted in April 1995
- Kent Structure Plan, produced by Kent County Council and adopted in December 1996
- Kent Minerals Local Plan: Construction Aggregates, produced by Kent County Council and adopted December 1993
- Kent Minerals Local Plan: Chalk and Clay, produced by Kent County Council and adopted December 1997
- Kent Minerals Local Plan: Oil and Gas, produced by Kent County Council and adopted December 1997
- Kent Waste Local Plan, produced by Kent County Council and adopted March 1998

The Dartford Borough Local Plan Review seeks to identify particular areas as suitable for housing, employment, retail or other uses, and sets out the policies which the Borough Council proposes to apply in deciding whether or not development will be permitted. The Plan also safeguards land for particular uses and protects environmental assets. The preparation of the Local Plan Review has given the community the opportunity to influence detailed policies and specific proposals for the future development and use of land within the Borough.

Policies and Supporting Text

The Local Plan Review comprises two elements:

- A written statement which includes policies and supporting text
- A proposals map which illustrates the site-specific policies on a Ordnance Survey base map

The written statement contains description, explanation, reasoned justification (in normal text) and policy (in **bold text**).

The **policies** in the Plan are essentially concerned with land-use and fall within the scope of town and country planning, that is, the development and other use of land. Policies are the most important statements in the Plan. Each policy is a statement that sets out the Council's position on a significant land-use planning issue and the circumstances in which permission will be granted or refused, often including criteria which must be satisfied.

The policies form part of the hierarchy of the planning policies that apply in the Borough. National Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs), Circulars, Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), the Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG9a), Strategic Planning Guidance for the River Thames (RPG9b) and the policies of the Kent Structure Plan set the broad framework for policies in the Local Plan Review.

The **description, explanation or reasoned justification** supports, illuminates and substantiates the policies of the Plan. It provides a summary of information and reasons which justify the policy stance and the way in which it will be implemented.

A **sustainability appraisal** of the policies and proposals has also been prepared which assesses the policies in the Plan against environmental, economic and social criteria.

Flexibility in Policies and Decision-Making

Planning decisions are made in accordance with the development plan policies unless other convincing reasons outweigh them and justify a different decision. Policies are worded to make clear the circumstances when permission will be permitted or refused. Policies therefore express firm intentions but in making decisions, the Council takes into account all the relevant development plan policies as well as other material considerations.

Reading the Plan as a Whole

The Local Plan Review and, indeed, the individual components of the development plan must be read as a whole. Plans cover a wide range of issues and their policies refer to many planning concerns. Often, several policies are relevant to a proposed development and it is for those involved in decision-making to address those which are relevant. Cross referencing between policies is therefore unnecessary because the plan should be read as a whole.

Capacity of Development Sites

Some policies in the Housing, Employment, Retailing and Major Development Sites chapters include estimated capacities of numbers of dwellings or amount of commercial floorspace that could be accommodated on individual sites. It is important to note that these are indicative figures which are intended to give an indication of the capacities of each site. They take account of the need to achieve higher densities than in the past, particularly where there is good accessibility to public transport and local services. In some cases, the capacity of a site is based upon the landowner's expectations. The capacities should not necessarily be taken to mean that development proposals above or below the given figure for that site will necessarily be refused. Instead, they should be read as the expected capacity that could be achieved.

The Amended Second Deposit Draft

The text of the Plan is a composite version of the Second Deposit Draft and its amendments approved in January and April 2004. It shows the text in its proposed "end-state" ie as amended. (Please note that there may be gaps in the sequence of paragraph and policy numbering.) For the Proposals Map, readers need to consult the original First Deposit map sheets together with the inset maps from the Second Deposit and subsequent amendments. The content of the Plan is operative for all of the Council's planning functions.

Next Steps

This Plan will NOT proceed to either Inquiry or Adoption stage. The Council has resolved to begin work on the preparation of a Local Development Framework for the Borough which will be prepared under the new system set by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

This page is intentionally blank.