

### **3. Housing**

## 3. Housing

### Local Plan Aim

To meet current and future housing needs in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable way.

#### Key Objectives

1. To meet the housing requirements set out in the Kent Structure Plan.
2. To facilitate an attractive and efficient pattern of residential development that
  - minimises the need for car-borne travel and promotes walking, cycling and the use of public transport,
  - creates a pleasant environment for residents, and
  - relates well to employment and community facilities.
3. To make optimum use of previously developed and under-used land, and to secure the conversion of vacant or under-used buildings, especially in and around the town centre.
4. To secure a range and mix of house types which reflect the needs of existing and future residents.
5. To help provide dwellings for those with insufficient means to meet their housing requirements on the open market.

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Dartford is set to experience considerable growth. To meet Kent Structure Plan housing requirements this Plan identifies land for approximately 7,000 dwellings in the period to 2011 (excluding completions since 1991). This will result in an anticipated population increase from 86,000 (2001) to some 99,000 by the end of the Plan period – even allowing for falling household size.
- 3.1.2 It is important that this challenge is faced positively. If the resulting development is planned constructively it can be harnessed to create an overall improvement to Dartford's urban built form, and ensure that new developments are properly integrated within the existing environment. This Plan advocates a positive and innovative policy approach to the challenge of growth, by adopting the concept of the 'urban village' on key major sites.
- 3.1.3 To the south of the urban area, the Council's commitment to defending the Green Belt and the openness of the countryside remains as strong as ever. Housing development will be restricted to minor infilling within the confines of villages (further details are contained in the Countryside and Villages chapter).

### 3.2 Policy Context

- 3.2.1 PPG3 ('Housing') contains general guidance on this issue. In particular it urges local authorities to:
  - meet the housing needs of the whole community by providing wider choice and opportunity
  - create more sustainable development patterns, by
    - re-using previously developed urban land in preference to green field sites
    - raising density standards in towns
    - reducing parking standards

- promoting mixed-use developments and mixed communities
- place the needs of people before traffic circulation, and reduce car dependency
- promote good design and environmental quality.

3.2.3 RPG9a (The Thames Gateway Planning Framework) states that Kent Thameside can potentially accommodate 10,000 dwellings from 1991 to 2006 and a further 19,000 dwellings after 2006. The Guidance envisages urban village development which can provide developments of sufficient scale to support a range of amenities, but small enough for homes, jobs and facilities to be within walking distance.

3.2.4 The high quality of the environment envisaged in RPG9a is intended to instil perceptions of Thames Gateway as a pleasant and attractive place in which to live. Local planning policies can help in this regard by, for instance, promoting the creation of attractive open spaces and specifying appropriate densities, with the highest densities at locations most accessible by public transport, on foot and by cycle.

3.2.5 The Guidance points to the major development opportunities close to the River: 'Many benefit from a waterfront location which can provide a highly attractive residential environment' (para 5.3.7).

### **3.3 Housing Requirement**

3.3.1 The table below compares the Kent Structure Plan housing requirement with available housing land in Dartford at 2003. The housing supply figures show a surplus of 1,747 units above Structure Plan requirement. However this is an appropriate level of provision given Dartford's particular circumstances:

- Kent Thameside is a growth area of regional significance. It is essential that land supply is not artificially reduced, adding to development pressures in other more environmentally sensitive parts of the county and the region
- delivery of this strategy is critically dependent on securing the commencement of development on the strategic sites – development that will extend over many years
- achieving sufficient momentum of development in Kent Thameside is vital to sustaining an 'urban renaissance' and for maintaining developer confidence and inward investment in the area
- the scale, complexity and lead times associated with these sites results in a degree of uncertainty about their timing: several of the major development sites have difficult ground conditions. An over-provision of supply may be needed to compensate for any delay in the development of these sites
- the development of Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet and Swanscombe Peninsula East will extend far beyond the Plan period. It is essential that a long term view is taken in planning for the strategic sites, and not one that is arbitrarily limited to the year 2011
- there will be pressure to increase housing completions throughout Kent by 14% to meet the RPG9 requirement of 5700 dwellings per annum.

### **Housing Land Supply (base date: Dec 2003)**

	1991-01	2001-06	2006-11	2011 on	total
Structure Plan Requirement	4700	2500	3300		
Completions	3995	1070			
Residual requirement	705	2135	1579		
<b>Supply Components:</b>					
Sites with planning permission		1907	1090	1530	4527
Previously developed sites		1421	0		1421
Urban capacity study		178	296		474
Strategic sites		350	1900	8150	10400
Other			40		40
<b>Total supply</b>		3856	3326	9680	16862
<b>Surplus/shortfall</b>	-705	1721	<b>1747</b>		

3.3.2 Supply comprises the following elements:

- **planning permissions:** 4527units (2997 in the Plan period)
- **previously developed urban sites:**1421 units (all within the plan period).  
All of these sites score highly in terms of
  - availability
  - location and accessibility
  - infrastructure capacity
  - relationship with existing communities
  - absence of physical and environmental constraints
- **Strategic sites:** 11875 units (3425 in the Plan period) See section 3 below.
- **Urban capacity study ‘windfalls’:** notionally 474 units within the Plan period: The County Council’s Urban Character Assessment categorised all parts of Dartford as having low potential for infill and conversions. The Borough Council’s own urban capacity study confirms this conclusion. The study is summarised in appendix 1c
- **Urban non-strategic site:** one site, at St Marys Road, Stone, although not previously developed, nevertheless meets the criteria for sustainable development set out in PPG3, para 31.

3.3.3 It should be noted that the figures in the policy are indicative estimates only, not maximum numbers. The actual figures will be determined by location, site constraints and other design considerations. The distribution of units between the 2001-06 and 2006-11 periods does not indicate a firm phasing but rather an assumption about when sites will be developed. Developers should demonstrate that optimum use of their site for housing purposes has been made. For completeness, anticipated completions beyond the Plan period are also given: these are for information purposes only.

<b>H1 Housing Provision</b>						
<b>The following sites, shown on the Proposals Map, are allocated for housing and associated development:</b>						
Site Ref.	Sites	2003/6	2003/11	total 2003/11	2011 on	Ward
	<b>Sites with Planning Permission</b>					
37	Watling Street	53	70	123		Brent
45	Greenwood, Darenth Rd	7		7		Brent
31	Waterstone Park (Phase 1)	8		8		Castle
6	33 Bean Rd	18		18		Greenhithe
11	Ingress Park	641		641		Greenhithe

13	34-40 Station Rd, Greenhithe	9		9		Greenhithe
15	Temple Farm Ho, Joyce Green Ln	12		12		Joyce Green
48	St Edmunds Rd	18		18		Joyce Green
20	Dartford Park	550	650	1200	300	Joyce Green/Littlebrook
4	Bexley Hospital	238		238		Joydens Wood
17	Station Road, Longfield	7		7		Longfield, New Barn, Southfleet
19	Betsham service station	5		5		Longfield, New Barn, Southfleet
12	adj Fox & Hounds, Lowfield St	8		8		Princes
16	36-40 Heath St	9		9		Princes
26	Powder Mill Lane	77		77		Princes
41	33-35 Myrtle Road	5		5		Princes
18	Charles Street	24		24		Stone
2	126 Stanhope Road Swanscombe	6		6		Swanscombe
8	Ebbsfleet	0	370	370	1230	Swanscombe
1	115, 116 Priory Road	5		5		Town
5	Gateway Club, Westgate Rd	14		14		Town
24	Orchard St/Kent Road	6		6		Town
39	Westgate Road/Kent Rd	5		5		Town
10	NW Kent College, Miskin Rd	135		135		West Hill
21	West Hill House, West Hill	24		24		West Hill
9	Wilmington Ho, Church Hill, Wil.	23		23		Wilmington
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>1907</b>	<b>1090</b>	<b>2997</b>	<b>1530</b>	
	<b>Previously Developed Sites</b>					
52	Darenth Road	60		60		Brent
53	East Hill ATC	30		30		Brent
30	Station Road Greenhithe	120		120		Greenhithe
56	Maypole School	15		15		Joydens Wood
61	Axton Chase School	75		75		Longfield, New Barn, Southfleet
58	Bow Arrow Lane,north of	69		69		Newtown
36	Tylers House, Dartford	40		40		Newtown
32	Stone House Hospital	130		130		Stone
57	TA, Stone Place Rd	13		13		Stone
14	London Road/Craylands Lane	150		150		Swanscombe
59	Lowfield Street Redevelopment	500		500		Town
51	125-129 Dartford Road	19		19		West Hill
38	West Hill Hospital	200		200		West Hill
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1421</b>		<b>1421</b>		
	<b>Other</b>					
29	Frontage on St Mary's Rd, Stone	0	40	40		Stone
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>		
	<b>Urban Capacity Study</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>474</b>		
	<b>Strategic Sites</b>					
31	Waterstone Park (Phase 2)	350	100	450		Castle
7	Eastern Quarry		1350	1350	5900	Greenhithe
33	Swanscombe Pen.(E)				1000	Swanscombe
34	Swanscombe Pen.(W)		450	450	1250	Swanscombe
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>2250</b>	<b>8150</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3856</b>	<b>3326</b>	<b>7182</b>	<b>9680</b>	

## Strategic Sites

- 3.3.4 North Dartford, Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet, Swanscombe Peninsula (East and West) and Stone Castle are all major development sites of regional significance. The first four are specifically identified in both the Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG9a) and the Structure Plan. Ebbsfleet already has planning permission subject to a section 106 agreement. They are therefore all regarded as 'strategic sites' as described in 'Planning to Deliver' (DTLR, 2001) and as such are to remain unaffected by the assignment of other sites to local plan phases or the emergence of windfall sites.
- 3.3.5 The development of Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet, and Swanscombe Peninsula will extend well beyond the Plan period. It would not therefore be appropriate to consider their timing solely in relation to the arithmetic of the Structure Plan and ignore the need for a steady rate of build in subsequent years. Such a mechanistic approach might also frustrate attempts to create balanced and attractive urban villages.
- 3.3.6 The timely development of these sites is vital to achieving a coherent urban structure in Kent Thameside, and to the wider Thames Gateway vision. Any arbitrary delaying of the development of these sites would not be appropriate. They all require substantial site works and infrastructure provision before development can start, and any attempt at 'rationing' could undermine their viability, and the fulfilment of wider strategic objectives.
- **Eastern Quarry:** Planning permission has now been granted for a replacement cement works and quarry at Holborough in the Medway Valley, enabling the relocation of cement production from Kent Thameside. Given the size of the site it is possible that site preparation and early development could commence before chalk extraction ceases. Early progress is essential if this major element of the urban structure is not to be delayed. In particular, the central part of the Fastrack dedicated bus route, linking Bluewater and Ebbsfleet, is dependent upon the availability of this site.
  - The early development of **North Dartford** is essential for maintaining economic growth in Kent Thameside. The completion of the section of Fastrack between Dartford Town Centre and Greenhithe Station (via North Dartford and Crossways) is also dependent upon this development.
  - **Swanscombe Peninsula (West)** is the next major component of 'riverside' development after Ingress Park. It will be an essential component of the new riverside urban fabric.
  - **Swanscombe Peninsula (East)** is to be phased beyond the Plan period, because it will be subsequent to the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, and remediation of adverse ground conditions.
  - **Stone Castle (phase 2):** Bluewater and the proposed development of Eastern Quarry will effectively enclose the Stone Castle site within the urban area. Phase 1 (housing and open space) is under construction. Phase 2 (also housing and open space) is partly previously developed, partly damaged land (to be restored as public open space) and partly greenfield. This site will become available for development shortly. Phase 3 (employment provision) is a major component of Stone Castle and is essential for meeting Structure Plan guidelines. A delay in the latter phase would prejudice the achievement of a balanced mixed use walkable neighbourhood.
- 3.3.7 Early sustained progress on the development of these strategic sites is essential in order to attain a coherent urban structure for Kent Thameside.

## **H1a Strategic Sites**

**North Dartford, Eastern Quarry, Swanscombe Peninsula (East and West), Ebbsfleet and Stone Castle are identified as strategic sites within the context of PPG3 'Planning to Deliver'. The timing of development on these sites will not be affected by the assignment of other sites to local plan phases or the emergence of windfall sites in the future.**

3.3.8 The six major development sites, which will be expected to include a significant housing element, are dealt with in detail in the Major Development Sites chapter:

- Ingress Park
- Swanscombe Peninsula
- Ebbsfleet
- Eastern Quarry
- Stone Castle
- North Dartford.

3.3.9 There are site-specific policies for the following residential allocations:

- Land at Station Road Greenhithe
- Stone House Hospital
- Bow Arrow Lane
- West Hill Hospital

### **3.4 Site Specific Policies**

#### **Land at Station Road Greenhithe**

3.4.1 A 1.4 ha site between the Asda store at Greenhithe and the River Thames is allocated for a predominantly residential scheme. Because the site lies next to a neighbourhood centre, and close to the railway station and proposed Fastrack routes, a high density scheme will be appropriate. Whilst development on the east side of the site must be of a similar scale to existing housing, higher buildings may be possible on the west part of the site. However, a visual impact analysis must accompany any proposal for high-rise development (more than 4 storeys).

3.4.2 Other issues which need to be addressed are:

- the inter-relationship with the aggregates wharf to the west, and the need for visual and sound mitigation measures
- The effects of traffic generation on the surrounding road network
- The need to take advantage of the riverside aspect (A scheme might include a riverside pub or restaurant for example) and other riverside opportunities
- The need to provide green grid links along the entire river frontage and along the line of Station Road
- Possible ground contamination, and tidal flood risk.

3.4.3 Planning guidelines have been prepared for the site and adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

## **H2a: Land at Station Road, Greenhithe**

**Land at Station Road, Greenhithe, is allocated for predominantly residential development. Proposals for the development of this site must:**

- **be designed to take account of the aggregates wharf and must include appropriate visual and sound mitigation measures**
- **take account of traffic generation and the local road network**
- **be designed to take advantage of the riverside aspect and other riverside opportunities**
- **incorporate appropriate green grid links, including a riverside walkway with unrestricted pedestrian and cycle access**
- **include, in the case of a high-rise scheme, a visual impact analysis**
- **include a ground contamination survey and appropriate remedial measures**
- **accord with the adopted planning guidelines.**

### **Stone House Hospital and Bow Arrow Lane Sites**

3.4.4 The Stone House Hospital complex and associated grounds have been declared surplus to health service requirements. The main hospital building and the chapel to the north of this are Grade II listed buildings, and, together with the other structures, comprise the most complete Victorian hospital complex remaining in South East England. In formulating redevelopment proposals it is therefore important that this integrity is not compromised. A development brief which will provide detailed conservation requirements is currently in preparation.

3.4.5 There is scope for new residential development on land to the north of the chapel extending to Bow Arrow Lane and Cotton Lane, but this must respect the setting of the chapel and must retain the mature landscaping. There is also scope for conversion of the hospital buildings, mainly to residential use. However a commercial, community or other non-residential use may be appropriate for the chapel. The setting for the remainder of the complex must also be respected. In particular the parkland area to the south of the main hospital range must be retained and maintained.

## **H2b Stone House Hospital**

**Stone House Hospital and associated grounds are allocated for residential and associated uses. Development proposals must:**

- **retain the hospital complex, the chapel and their setting**
- **retain the parkland area to the south of the main hospital range**
- **accord with a development brief for the site**
- **be accessed off Cotton Lane**

**The conversion of the hospital buildings to residential and other uses must conserve their character and features as far as possible.**

3.4.5a There is also scope for new residential development on land to the north of Bow Arrow Lane. The former 'Fantaseas' site, north west of the Cotton Lane/Bow Arrow Lane junction, comprises previously developed land and is identified for housing in Policy H1. Development proposals should take account of the site's elevated position, be of a 'landmark' design appropriate to the site's prominent location, and take account of their visual relationship with Stone House Hospital.

## **H2c Bow Arrow Lane**

**The Bow Arrow Lane site is allocated for residential uses. Development proposals must:**

- take account of the site's elevated position**
- be of "landmark" design appropriate to the site's prominent location**
- take account of their visual relationship with Stone House Hospital**

## **West Hill Hospital**

3.4.6 The West Hill Hospital site has become surplus to Health Authority requirements now that Darenth Valley Hospital is operational. This site, close to the Town Centre, represents a major opportunity for a compact form of residential development, within easy walking distance of public transport and a wide range of other facilities.

## **H2d West Hill Hospital**

**West Hill Hospital is safeguarded for residential development. Development proposals will only be permitted if the following criteria are met:**

- 1. the residential layout should be designed to be 'close knit' in character;**
- 2. a comprehensive scheme should be prepared for the whole site - piecemeal development will not be permitted;**
- 3. no retail element shall be included;**
- 4. the layout and design should respect both the Town Centre conservation area and the amenity of surrounding residential areas: housing on the King Edward Avenue frontage should be executive style;**
- 5. reduced parking standards appropriate to a Town Centre location will apply (see Transport chapter);**
- 6. the improvement or relocation of the existing hospital access off West Hill, and an improvement to the junction of King Edward Avenue and West Hill;**
- 7. vehicular access to the site will not generate adverse traffic management, road safety or amenity problems in surrounding residential roads; and**
- 8 the improvement of pedestrian accessibility to public transport and the incorporation of pedestrian links into, out of, and within the site.**

## **3.6 Windfall Sites**

3.6.1 Sites of less than 5 units are not identified in Policy H1, but collectively they form a significant proportion of total supply and must be included in any assessment of potential provision. Additionally, it is probable that other sites, not currently identified, of 5 units or more may become available for development in the future. In accordance with PPG3, an Urban Capacity Study has been conducted to identify the likely sources of future development opportunities and thereby limit the need for greenfield land releases. The findings of the study are summarised in Appendix 1c. Provided 'windfall' proposals are well located and meet sustainable development criteria they will form a valuable additional source of housing supply.

## **H4 Windfall Sites**

**Residential development on previously unidentified sites within both the built-up areas and villages confines will only be permitted if the following criteria are met:**

- 1. the site is on previously-developed land and in a location that would facilitate sustainable development;**
- 2. neighbouring uses would not cause loss of amenity to its residents;**
- 3. the proposal respects the street-form and public realm;**
- 4. there is sufficient amenity and parking space;**
- 5. the design is in sympathy with its surroundings;**
- 6. it is of a scale, density and layout compatible with its surroundings; and**
- 7. it would not cause the loss of public open space.**

**Backland development (development behind the main frontage) will only be acceptable if the street pattern and built form can satisfactorily accommodate the development, there is no overshadowing or loss of privacy, and adequate access and amenity space can be provided. Tandem development (one house directly behind another sharing an access) is unacceptable.**

### **3.8 Existing Housing**

- 3.8.1 It is important to ensure that the existing stock of housing is not unduly diminished by inappropriate changes of use and that the residential amenity of an area is not spoilt by such changes of use. Changes of use will only be acceptable where they enhance the functioning of a neighbourhood centre (for example, to provide small shops, small business units or social facilities), or in areas which no longer have a viable residential function.

#### **H6 Loss of Residential Accommodation**

**The loss of residential accommodation through change of use or redevelopment will not be permitted, unless:**

- 1. the area is identified as a neighbourhood centre. In such areas changes of use of ground floor residential accommodation may be permitted, where this contributes to the functioning of that centre;**
- 2. the area is predominantly non-residential and its residential function has ceased to be viable;**
- 3. the existing dwelling no longer provides accommodation of a satisfactory standard and is incapable of being improved at reasonable expense; and**
- 4. the proposal comprises the loss of part of a dwelling to a use compatible with a residential area, provided the remaining residential floorspace forms a viable dwelling.**

### **3.9 Layout, design and density**

- 3.9.1 New residential development should achieve a sustainable design, and:
- where appropriate incorporate the principles of the urban village concept and walkable neighbourhoods, as set out in section 2.3, and should be compatible with the urban village or neighbourhood in which it is situated.
  - be sympathetic to its environs in terms of scale, massing and design, and should respect the street form
  - include appropriate levels of open space and landscaping, and contribute where appropriate to the Green Grid
  - incorporate the principles set out in
    - o 'Kent Design: a guide to sustainable development' - KCC
    - o Sustainable Settlements: A Guide for Planners, Designers and Developers' - DTLR
    - o 'Places Streets and Movement' - DTLR
    - o 'By Design: better places to live' - DTLR

- achieve a high standard of residential amenity, by creating attractive, well-defined spaces, with gardens and amenity spaces that enjoy sufficient daylight and privacy
- serve to promote sustainable urban communities
- include provision for the necessary infrastructure, unless already available.

3.9.2 PPG3 advises that developments of less than 30 dwellings per hectare should be avoided, encourages housing development which makes more efficient use of land (between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare) and seeks greater intensity of development at places with good public transport accessibility. The Urban Village concept seeks to achieve compact forms of development close to public transport nodes and other facilities. However this should not be at the expense of the amenity of those areas. Environmental enhancement through good design is a fundamental objective for future development within Kent Thameside. Layouts and overall densities (measured in accordance with PPG3's definition of net densities) need to incorporate variety and visual richness so that interesting spaces and places are created. Sections 2.2 (Policy DD1 in particular) and 2.3 give further guidance on built form and layout relating to public transport orientated development, and the creation of mixed use urban villages and walkable neighbourhoods. Residential developments will not be judged on the basis of an arithmetical calculation of density alone.

3.9.3 The most effective way to secure the necessary standard of design to achieve appropriate levels of residential amenity in new developments is by preparing and testing schemes against qualitative-based criteria which clearly set out the objectives which need to be met. These are set out at Appendix 1a. Schemes which perform satisfactorily against these criteria will not be subject to any minimum space or distance standards. Schemes which do not satisfy these criteria will be subject to the quantified standards set out in Appendix 1b.

## **H8 Layout, Design and Density**

**Residential development will only be permitted if it:**

- (1) is of a density, layout and design compatible with the urban village and walkable neighbourhood concept and its location within the urban village or neighbourhood;**
- (2) is sympathetic to the character of the area;**
- (3) has appropriate levels of open space and landscaping and contributes to the Green Grid;**
- (4) incorporates sustainable development principles;**
- (5) delivers the objectives for residential amenity set out in Appendix 1a or, in default, meets the minimum standards set out at Appendix 1b; and**
- (6) includes provision for the necessary infrastructure, unless already available.**

### **3.11 Vehicles in Residential Development**

3.11.1 Many modern housing developments, designed to accommodate the car through the generous provision of road space and numerically high parking standards, produce environments which are of a uniform layout, are often of poor quality and which fail to deal with the car satisfactorily. For example, large kerb radii at T-junctions encourage traffic to speed out of minor roads and footways become dangerous and impassable with cars parked on them. A fresh approach is needed in which:

- the road layout fits into the development rather than development into the road layout;

- the design of new development is based on a network of spaces (streets, squares, courtyards);
- there is a better balance between highway requirements and other design factors;
- overly prescriptive standards are substituted by more sensitive and flexible design solutions;
- places are created which put pedestrians first (developments where vehicles are catered for but do not dominate); and
- layouts contribute to walking, cycling and public transport aims.

3.11.2 These matters are dealt with in the companion guide to Design Bulletin 32 'Places, Streets and Movement', to which the Council will have particular regard in applying policy H10.

#### **H10 Vehicles in Residential Development**

**Residential development will only be permitted if it meets the following criteria in respect of its accommodation of vehicles:**

- 1 the layout is designed to place the needs of people before ease of traffic movement;**
- 2 the design ensures that travel by foot, bicycle and public transport have priority; and**
- 3 the design creates a high quality public realm, including the provision of convenient and safe pedestrian areas and routes, and cycle routes.**

#### **3.12 Residential Conversions**

3.12.1 Many buildings outlive their original uses and become available for conversion to residential use. Provided such structures are sound and lend themselves to this purpose, conversions can represent an effective and efficient means of increasing the housing stock, avoiding the substantial costs and resource input of new build.

3.12.2 Floorspace above shops and other commercial premises represents a significant and underused resource. This Plan seeks to encourage the conversion of these spaces into flats. The dwelling stock could be substantially increased, and the residents of these properties could bring new vitality to shopping centres out of working hours, reducing fear of crime and disorder. Concerns over security within premises and lack of residents' parking can be obstacles to such conversions. However, it may be possible to relax some policy requirements.

3.12.3 The change of use of commercial properties on the periphery of the Town Centre and local centres, which are no longer viable, may represent further opportunities. The conversion of redundant agricultural buildings and buildings of architectural or historic interest are discussed in the Countryside and Villages and Built Environment chapters respectively. Sympathetic conversions will be acceptable where this provides for a beneficial use that ensures preservation.

3.12.4 The conversion of large single dwellings into flats will normally be acceptable, although special criteria apply in Areas of Special Residential Character (see Appendix 7). Policy H12 and Appendix 2 set out the criteria against which proposals for flat conversions will be considered.

## **H11 Residential Conversions**

**Conversions of buildings to residential use will be permitted, if the following criteria are met:**

- 1. the building is suitable for conversion and provides adequate amenity space for use by residents;**
- 2. the building is in an area appropriate for residential use; and**
- 3. the proposal does not harm the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties or the character of the area, including the Green Belt, as the result of increased vehicular activity, noise, loss of privacy, or the visual impact of any alterations or extensions.**

### **3.13 Empty Properties**

3.13.1 The 1991 Census indicates that some 4.2% of residential properties in the Borough were vacant. Excluding new properties and those under improvement, 2.9% of properties had no occupants. Whilst a certain level of vacancy is inevitable, not least to facilitate movement within the stock, dwellings left unnecessarily vacant over the longer term represent a wasted resource. Further, they can blight the surrounding area and can become a target for vandalism and other crime.

3.13.2 The Council has adopted an Empty Properties Strategy which seeks to return as many dwellings as possible to beneficial use. The Strategy contains the following elements:

- a register is kept of properties vacant for over 2 years, which is regularly reviewed;
- persuading owners of the benefits of bringing their properties into use;
- as a last resort, compulsory purchase powers may be used under the Housing Act 1985.

3.13.3 In some cases blighted properties are patch repaired and used as short-term accommodation pending redevelopment. The bringing into use of an empty dwelling is outside the scope of planning control unless it is being subdivided into more than one unit. In certain circumstances, however, the use of planning controls may be appropriate: for example, a repairs notice can be served on the owner of an empty listed building falling into disrepair, a notice can be served requiring untidy land to be tidied up if it affects the amenity of the area, and changes of use of dwellings to other inappropriate uses can be refused (see policy H6).

### **3.14 Flats and Flat Conversions**

3.14.1 The Council has prepared criteria against which proposals for flats and flat conversions will be considered (Appendix 2). Matters covered by Building Regulations, such as ventilation, sound insulation, noise, fire safety and refuse storage, are not included.

## **H12 Flats and Flat Conversions**

**Proposals for the development of flats or the conversion of existing dwellings to flats must not harm the character of the locality and must meet the criteria in Appendix 2.**

### 3.15 Extensions and Alterations

3.15.1 The adaptability of dwellings to meet the changing circumstances and aspirations of their occupiers is necessary in maintaining the amenity of existing stock. However, it is important that the amenity of neighbouring properties and the general area does not suffer as a result of extensions or alterations. Proposals for house extensions and alterations will be considered against the criteria set out below in policy H13 and in Appendix 3. Proposals for loft conversions will be considered against the criteria set out in policy H13 and Appendix 4.

#### **H13 Extensions and Alterations**

**House extensions will only be permitted if they:**

- 1. are in keeping with the scale, design and materials of the main dwelling;**
- 2. do not occupy an unduly large proportion of the garden;**
- 3. respect the streetscape and the public realm;**
- 4. do not result in loss of privacy or amenity to neighbouring properties; and**
- 5. comply with the other criteria in Appendix 3 and, where applicable, with those in policy H8.**

**Loft conversions will only be permitted if they:**

- 1. do not include dormer windows that dominate the principal elevation or other conspicuous elevations;**
- 2. do not result in loss of privacy or amenity to neighbouring properties; and**
- 3. comply with the other criteria in Appendix 4 and, where applicable, with those in policy H8.**

3.15.2 Minor alterations to single dwellings often fall within the scope of the General Permitted Development Order and consequently do not require specific permission. Local authorities are only able to withdraw permitted development rights for existing dwellings (through an Article 4 Direction) in exceptional cases – such as properties in conservation areas and other sensitive areas.

### 3.16 Mobile Homes and Caravans

3.16.1 Caravans can provide suitable temporary accommodation for construction workers and temporary agricultural workers for a limited period, where a permanent dwelling may be inappropriate. In most cases the siting of caravans for these purposes is covered by permitted development rights.

3.16.2 Mobile homes providing permanent residential accommodation will be subject to the same policies and criteria which apply to permanent dwellings. However mobile homes are unlikely to be appropriate in traditional residential areas. Development proposals will also need to satisfy policies NR6 and NR7 which deal with the tidal and fluvial flood zones.

### 3.17 Demolition

3.17.1 Demolition of most dwellings is permitted development, subject to a period of 28 days notification with the local authority. Within the 28-day period of notice, the Council will decide whether to impose conditions on such demolition or to resist it by means of an Article 4 direction. In dealing with such cases the Council will be mindful of the need to protect residential amenity.

#### **H15 Demolition**

**Proposals for the demolition of dwellings will not be permitted if:**

- 1. they are likely to result in a loss of amenity to an area;**
- 2. they are not accompanied by full and firm plans for replacement buildings;**
- 3. they adversely affect the integrity of a terrace of dwellings, or a group of flats; or**
- 4. they will result in one of a pair of semi-detached dwellings being demolished.**

### **3.18 Affordable Housing**

3.18.1 Government Guidance makes it clear that a community's need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration which should be taken into account in formulating Local Plan policies. Special measures are needed to cater for those with insufficient means to meet their housing requirements on the open market and where there is evidence of a need for affordable housing, local plans should include policies for its provision on suitable sites.

3.18.2 The Guidance emphasises that the local plan policy approach for affordable housing should be based upon a clear and up-to-date rigorous assessment of local need for the area over the plan period. DETR publication 'Local Housing Needs Assessment: A Guide to Good Practice' (July 2000) sets out a Basic Needs Assessment Model which local authorities are encouraged to adopt.

3.18.3 In translating housing needs assessments into Local Plan policies and targets the guidance states that other factors may need to be considered. Circular 6/98, for example, advises local planning authorities that in preparing local plan policies for affordable housing and in assessing the suitability of sites to be identified in the plan, that consideration should be given to factors such as whether there will be particular costs associated with development of the site, or that the provision of affordable housing would prejudice the realisation of other planning objectives that need to be given priority in the development of the site. Table 8.1 of the DETR publication 'Local Housing Needs Assessments' advises local planning authorities to consider the appropriateness of applying affordable housing requirements on developments where there is neither the development value in the site nor the prospect of social housing grant to support it.

3.18.4 Circular 6/98 states that in preparing Local Plans, authorities should ensure that their policies for affordable housing are compatible with their housing strategies as well as with their objectives for land-use planning and urban and economic development.

3.18.5 The Council commissioned a Housing Needs Survey in 2001 to assess the likely requirement for affordable housing for the period 2001 to 2011. The survey, which followed the Basic Need Assessment Model recommended by DETR, has produced an estimate of the scale of affordable housing required over the period 2001 to 2011, taking account of the backlog of existing need, newly arising need and the existing supply of affordable housing. The survey indicates that there will be a need for 3375 new affordable homes over the Plan period. This, based upon the housing allocation for the same period set out in this Plan at Policy H1, implies an affordable housing target of 43% for every site.

3.18.6 The vast majority of the allocated sites in policy H1 are on previously developed land or are damaged or despoiled sites, whilst the six strategic sites (Ebbsfleet, Eastern Quarry, North Dartford, Stone Castle, Swanscombe Peninsula West and Ingress Park) account for 60% of allocations up to 2011.

3.18.7 The Kent Thameside Land Economics Study 1998 was commissioned to consider the level of contribution the development value of the major sites in Kent Thameside should make to social and transport infrastructure. The study commented that:

“As much of the land under review has been quarried and suffers from obstructions, flooding or contamination, ground conditions are in many places worse than a “normal” development site you might find in North Kent. On top of this, the scale of the sites is in itself “abnormal.”

3.18.8 Therefore, in recognition of the higher costs generally associated with developing brownfield sites in the Borough, together with the scale of the necessary new social, community and transport required to serve the large sites, the Council recognises the need to ensure that developments are not subject to unduly onerous planning obligations, including those for affordable housing, that might prevent the realisation of other key policy objectives or prevent regenerative development taking place at all. A target figure for affordable housing has therefore been set at 2,500 dwellings, which represents approximately 30% of residential allocations.

3.18.9 Dartford’s reliance on large previously developed sites, with significant remediation costs, means the required proportion of affordable housing cannot be set unduly high. In order to attain sufficient affordable units, the threshold must be set lower, so that more smaller windfall sites (which generally do not have high remediation costs) contribute to the total. Because of the scale of need, and the fact that the vast majority of residential allocations lie within the urban area, the policy approach seeks a target of 30% from all allocations and windfall urban sites that are 0.5 hectares or more, or where 15 or more units are proposed. This will include mixed-use sites, conversions and changes of use. The allocations to which this policy approach applies and the number of affordable housing units that should be provided is set out in policy H16. For the purposes of policy H16 the Plan treats the residential communities at Joydens Wood and Wilmington as part of the urban area.

3.18.10 The 2001 Housing Needs Survey identifies some limited housing need in the rural area, including the villages. Opportunities for development in the villages are extremely limited, whilst land outside the confines of the villages lies within the Green Belt where the Plan resists new residential development. The Plan does not specifically allocate any residential sites within the identified villages or the rural area. It will therefore be important to maximise the affordable housing yield from any new residential development, including conversions, that do occur. Developments (and conversions) in the villages and conversions in the rural area will not normally carry the high cost penalties associated with the redevelopment of urban brownfield sites and will therefore be capable of providing a higher proportion of affordable housing. Thus in line with the Rural White Paper in the villages and rural areas the Plan will seek a target of 50% affordable housing from developments (including conversion) for 2 or more residential units.

3.18.11 The affordable housing targets are considered reasonable and realistic requirements and includes provision for a range of needs. The council defines ‘affordable housing’ as:

“residential accommodation that is provided with a subsidy to ensure that the rent or sale price is set and remains at a level that is genuinely affordable to local people whose income does not enable them to secure housing adequate for their needs through the local housing market.”

3.18.12 Given the dynamics of the housing market the target figure will be carefully monitored over the period of the Plan to ensure that it remains relevant and reflects prevailing needs.

3.18.12a The Council recognises that the provision of affordable housing could be achieved through a variety of means and might include submarket housing options such as shared ownership, entry level initiatives designed to address the needs of key workers in the area, intermediate housing needs, as well as social rented accommodation which responds to the needs of those on the Council's Common Housing Register. Early engagement with the Council's Housing Strategy Team is advisable to determine an appropriate strategy for provision on specific sites.

3.18.12b Additionally, in conjunction with assessing housing needs, a "Private Sector Stock Condition Survey" was completed in 2001. This showed real issues for some parts of the Borough. As guidance evolves at the national planning policy level (for example the consultation relating to affordable housing carried out on PPG3 suggested "there may be scope to address opportunities arising in the existing stock") there may well be the opportunity to develop a strategy which, in appropriate circumstances, channels some of the resources available through planning obligations into enhancing the contribution of the existing stock, thus helping to spread the benefits of regeneration to the existing communities.

3.18.16 The Council's Housing Strategy is reviewed regularly and provides annually a dynamic and relatively accurate assessment of the current level of housing need and will be taken into account in monitoring the effectiveness of affordable housing policies. Primarily this will be through its effect in reducing numbers of households on the Council's Need Registers. The Housing Strategy is also informed by a range of primary and secondary sources of research on local housing needs that help assess demand for specialised forms of housing or housing to meet the needs of particular groups of people with care needs. The authority will expect affordable residential development proposals to cater for such needs, which might include for example proposals to provide for the elderly, the disabled, young single people and those in need of hostel accommodation.

3.18.17 The size, tenure and mix of affordable housing units provided as part of any development proposal will be expected to reflect the local housing needs as identified by the Council in its Housing Strategy, taking account of any relevant guidance on need assessment issued by Government at the time. Detailed guidance will be given in site-specific planning briefs or at the submission of a planning application.

3.18.18 In line with Circular 6/98 the Council believes a partnership approach with developers with the involvement of an RSL is the most effective way of ensuring occupancy and ensuring that the accommodation remains genuinely affordable over the longer term. Where possible RSLs who are to be involved in the delivery of affordable housing on a particular site should be party to any planning agreement. Where it is not proposed that an RSL approved by the Council will manage the housing, the Council will expect to see measures in place that:

- restrict the occupancy to households who are unable to compete in the housing market;
- ensure that units are genuinely affordable at both the outset and longer term;
- provide housing of a comparable quality and level of service to that provided by an RSL; and
- are safeguarded through a planning agreement.

3.18.19 In order to ensure that a clear, consistent and unprotracted approach to negotiation of planning agreements is adopted it is anticipated that draft agreements or Heads of Terms where appropriate will be considered by the Council at the same time as the planning application.

3.18.20 It is anticipated that the bulk of affordable housing needs will be met through development of the larger allocated housing sites. The new urban village developments at North Dartford, Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet, Swanscombe Peninsula West and Ingress Park, and the proposed walkable neighbourhoods at Stone Castle, Bexley Hospital and West Hill Hospital represent the main opportunities for cross-subsidising affordable housing.

3.18.21 Development proposals will be expected to identify the affordable housing units in terms of siting, paying particular attention to the need to ensure that they are well related to services. The authority is keen to avoid high numbers of affordable housing concentrated into one location on a site and will ensure that affordable housing provision is both reasonably proportionate with the footprint of the residential development site as a whole and well related to the rest of the residential units. The authority considers that this might best be achieved by arranging the affordable housing in clusters within other residential areas.

#### **H16 Affordable Urban Housing**

**On the allocated housing sites listed below the local planning authority will seek to achieve 30% affordable housing:**

**Bexley Hospital\***  
**Ebbsfleet\***  
**Ingress Park\***  
**Powdermill Lane (including Brooklands Lake)\***  
**Stone Castle (Phase 1)\***  
**Stone Castle (remaining phases)**  
**West of Archery House\***  
**St Edmunds Road**  
**49 Westgate Road**  
**125-129 Dartford Road**  
**Bow Arrow Lane**  
**Darenth Road**  
**East Hill ATC**  
**London Road/Craylands Lane**  
**Lowfield Street**  
**Maypole School**  
**Oakfield Lane Campus**  
**South of University Way**  
**Station Road, Greenhithe**  
**Stone House Hospital**  
**Tylers House, Dartford**  
**Watling Street**  
**West Hill Hospital**  
**Westgate Road**  
**St Mary's Road, Stone**  
**North Dartford**  
**Eastern Quarry**  
**Swanscombe Peninsula West**

**On other urban windfall sites (including conversions) that are over 0.5 hectares or where 15 or more units are proposed the local planning authority will seek to achieve 30% affordable housing.**

\* Development on the sites identified above with an asterisk were granted planning permission before the end of March 2001 and are to include an element of affordable housing based on the Council's earlier requirement of 20%. Any renewal or re-negotiation of these permissions that result in an increase in dwellings will be subject to the policy approach set out in policy H16 above.

#### **H17 Affordable Rural Housing**

**In the following villages where developments, including conversions, are proposed for 2 or more residential units the local planning authority will seek to achieve 50% affordable housing:**

1. **Bean**
2. **Betsham**
3. **Green Street Green**
4. **Hawley**
5. **Lane End**
6. **Longfield**
7. **Longfield Hill**
8. **New Barn**
9. **Old Rectory Estate, Sutton-at-Hone**
10. **Southfleet; and**
11. **Sutton-at-Hone**

**Outside these villages the local planning authority will seek to achieve 50% affordable housing from proposals for residential conversions for 2 or more housing units.**

#### **Payment in Lieu of Affordable Housing**

3.18.22 The majority of residential development will occur on a relatively few large sites. For this reason, and in order to enable the development of mixed communities, it is therefore important that the affordable housing requirement should be met on site. Exceptions to the policies may apply where the planning authority agrees that the site is inappropriate for the inclusion of a particular size, mix or level of provision or where it may be preferable for the provision to be made elsewhere. In such circumstances payment in lieu or land/units in lieu of the on site provision of affordable housing will be expected. The expectation is that such payment would be sufficient to provide the same level of housing as would be required by the policy if it were to be provided in full on site. Early engagement with the Council's Housing Strategy Team is advisable to determine an appropriate strategy for provision on specific sites.

#### **H18 Payment in Lieu of Affordable Housing**

**A developer may offer some form of off site provision or make a payment, in lieu of on-site affordable housing, for the construction of those units elsewhere in the Borough where particular local circumstances demonstrate that this is a preferable form of delivery for the local community.**

### 3.19 Special Accommodation Needs

3.19.1 Some sections of the community have accommodation requirements which need special consideration. The Housing Corporation has compiled a list of supported housing categories. This includes the elderly, people with learning disabilities, those recovering from mental health problems and young people leaving care. The affordable housing requirements of this plan also include subsidised special needs accommodation. It should be noted that for the purposes of assessing housing supply, such accommodation cannot be counted in with general needs housing in terms of meeting the housing requirement set out in the Structure Plan.

3.19.2 Special needs accommodation should be located close to (that is, within residents' easy walking distance of) basic shopping and other facilities including a post office. Parking standards will be dependent upon how well the site is served by public transport. Special needs accommodation will be subject to the same policy criteria as other residential accommodation, including Policy H8 (Layout Density and Design) and its requirement for an appropriate level of amenity space.

#### **H19 Special Needs Accommodation**

**Proposals for special needs accommodation will only be permitted where they are located within 400m of a post office, convenience shopping facilities, and a bus stop on a main bus route, via an easy pedestrian route.**

3.19.3 Residential care and nursing homes should be situated close to facilities and should not adversely affect the amenity of residential areas. Some large residential properties lend themselves to conversion for nursing homes. Such properties should be of sufficient size for the purpose, without the need for unduly large extensions which would affect the residential amenity of the area. Both purpose-built and converted properties should comply with the criteria in policy H20.

#### **H20 Residential Care and Nursing Homes**

**Proposals for residential care and nursing homes will only be permitted if they meet the following criteria:**

- 1. the site should be located near to local services including shops, health care and public transport; and**
- 2. they must not have a detrimental impact on the character and amenity of residential areas.**

**Additionally, in respect of proposals for conversions of existing properties to residential care and nursing homes: the building must be sufficiently large to accommodate the home without the need for significant extensions or for the loss of an undue proportion of the garden to car parking. Conversions will not be permitted in areas of estate-type housing; or in flatted, terraced or semi-detached properties.**

### 3.20 'Lifetime' Homes

3.20.1 The Plan seeks to ensure that a proportion of all new housing is suitable for all stages of its occupants' lives and for those with disabilities. This means designing the house in such a way that it can be easily converted for disabled use.

External pedestrian access and parking for disabled occupants also requires special consideration.

- 3.20.2 Part M of the Building Regulations (as amended), which covers this issue, was extended to residential properties in October 1999. However, Part M aims to achieve a 'visitorability' standard rather than a 'lifetime' home standard. Lifetime homes include 12 basic features to ensure a new house or flat will meet the needs of most households. The Lifetime Homes criteria have been developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, extensively researched by leading architects and the Access Committee for England and tested by housing associations. Appendix 6 sets out design criteria for a proportion of market and affordable housing which will be sought over and above that required by Part M (as amended).

## **H21 'Lifetime' Homes**

**An element of 'Lifetime Homes', the criteria of which is set out in Appendix 6, will be sought on the sites listed or specified in policy H16, on the following basis:  
25% of general market housing;  
25% of affordable housing (including social needs and low-cost market).**

### **3.21 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People**

- 3.21.1 Gypsies are defined in statute as "persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin" but does not include travelling show people or people engaged in travelling circuses and such like.
- 3.21.2 The duty on local authorities to provide and manage sites for gypsies was repealed in 1994 by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Authorities still have discretion to provide further caravan sites for gypsies where appropriate.
- 3.21.3 An official gypsy site for 12 pitches exists at Bean. There are 6 families on the Council's waiting list. Bids by the Council to provide mains drainage to improve the Bean site were unsuccessful in 2001 and 2002. There are also 12 private sites in the Borough that provide for up to 29 pitches. This includes a tolerated site with two pitches. It is the authority's experience that increasingly gypsy families prefer to provide their own sites.
- 3.21.4 Dartford Borough is experiencing substantial residential and commercial development which in turn draws travellers seeking seasonal or temporary work. This is expected to continue during the Plan period. The bi-annual count of unauthorised gypsy encampments issued by the former DTLR shows that unauthorised encampments are a seasonal phenomenon. This is supported by Borough Council experience which indicates that the peak period for unauthorised encampments is from April to October.
- 3.21.5 The Kent authorities are investigating the possibility of developing a countywide network of transit sites for temporary occupancy by travellers.
- 3.21.6 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister announced a radical overhaul of policy on unauthorised traveller encampments on 5 July 2002. The Government will provide initial funding to facilitate the provision of temporary, transit and emergency stopping place sites for travellers. The details are currently being drawn up, and bidding guidance with full details will be issued in the autumn. New guidance will be issued this Autumn on managing unauthorised camping. The new strategy will provide police with new eviction powers where local authorities have made

provision for temporary, transit and emergency stopping sites proportionate to the numbers of travellers that regularly pass through their area. It will therefore be important that the Council's planning policy approach is consistent with the announced review of Government policy and that it is part of a co-ordinated strategy for Kent in general and for North Kent in particular.

3.21.7 Circulars 1/94 "Gypsy Sites and Planning" and 18/94 "Gypsy Sites Policy and Unauthorised Camping" along with Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 "Housing" provide guidance on the provision of sites for gypsies. Circular 1/94 states that as a rule it will not be appropriate to make provision for gypsy sites in areas of open land where development is severely restricted such as Green Belt and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Local planning authorities are advised not to allocate sites in Green Belt locations. The Circular also requires local planning authorities to make provision for additional accommodation if required. Wherever possible sites should be identified but where this is not possible, criteria based policies should be used. Accordingly, in view of the review of Government policy and the evidence of some need for permanent gypsy accommodation within the Borough the Council will seek to identify sites for permanent and temporary accommodation. In the meantime planning applications for gypsy sites and sites for transit travellers will be judged against policy H22. It will be important that any application provides evidence of genuine local connections, for example having lived in the area for at least five years or have strong kinship connections with existing permanent gypsy families living in the area.

3.21.8 Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 "The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development" as revised encourages local planning authorities to resist development of greenfield land, including the best and most versatile agricultural land unless opportunities have been assessed for accommodating development on previously-developed sites and on land within the boundaries of urban areas. Therefore where greenfield sites are proposed for gypsy sites evidence will be required that a sequential approach has been adopted for the identification of a site and that more suitable sites are not available.

3.21.9 Show people are defined as self employed business people who travel the country holding fairs, chiefly during the summer months. Dartford is the base for a local fairground who occupy a long-established permanent "winter quarters" at Darenth Wood Road. There have not been any requests from the site owner to extend facilities nor from other show people for a permanent base in the area. In line with Circular 22/91, in the absence of any established need and given the Green Belt nature of the rural part of the Borough the Plan does not identify any sites for travelling show people. Any proposals for such sites will be judged against policy H22.

## **H22 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People**

**Proposals for gypsy caravan sites, transit travellers and sites for travelling show people will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:**

- 1. The site must be well related to the highway network, and be appropriately located in terms of vehicular access and proximity to essential local services such as shops, schools, public transport, medical and social services;**
- 2. The proposal would have no detrimental effect on the amenity of local residents in terms of its siting, scale, undue disturbance by the creation of**

- excessive noise, or traffic, or from related processes and/or activities, and in particular, no commercial operations shall be carried out at the site;**
- 3. Sites must be appropriately located for the scale and type of uses and activities proposed;**
- 4. Sites must be fully serviced to provide water, electricity and mains drainage;**
- 5. Sites must be adequately screened from surrounding land by landscaping and screen planting;**
- 6. The configuration of the site is sufficient to accommodate the proposed uses and its physical containment against unauthorised extension is achievable; and**
- 7. The best and most versatile agricultural land is avoided.**

**Proposals will not be permitted in the Green Belt, including incursions resulting from extensions to existing sites. A bond or undertaking may be required by way of planning agreement to ensure satisfactory operation of the site, and reinstatement of the site to its former condition should the permitted use cease.**

**Applications for accommodation for gypsy families or travelling show people will need to prove that they have genuine local connections. In appropriate circumstances an occupancy condition will be attached to a planning application. With regard to gypsy accommodation the local planning authority will resist a concentration of such accommodation within a local area.**

3.21.10 Any breach of planning control, which results in loss of amenity, or constitutes a threat to public health or safety, will be rigorously enforced against.

### **3.22 Areas of Special Residential Character**

3.22.1 Some residential areas in the Borough are characterised by a relatively low density with substantial properties and mature planting. These have been designated as Areas of Special Residential Character (ASRC), and the Council wishes to preserve their 'Arcadian' qualities. This does not preclude new development, but proposals must respect and maintain such qualities.

3.22.2 The criteria against which proposals for reviewing existing ASRCs and for designating new ones are:

- an established, attractive residential character;
- generally lower density (that is, larger plot sizes);
- a coherent layout and building line;
- generally consistent scale, height massing, plot width, garden depth and distances between buildings;
- high quality of materials;
- large rear gardens, open spaces and mature vegetation;
- absence of unsympathetic conversions; and
- inconspicuous car parking.

Boundaries are defined by:

- clear changes in the character of development; and
- other prominent features such as roads and open spaces.

3.22.3 Twelve ASRC have been designated within the Borough. Each one has an established, attractive residential character and quality of amenity. These are:

- Bean Road, Greenhithe
- Betsham

- Chaucer Park, Dartford
- Darenth Road, Dartford
- Green Street Green
- High Road, Wilmington
- Joydens Wood
- Longfield Hill
- New Barn
- Oakfield Lane, Wilmington
- Shepherd's Lane, Dartford
- Southfleet

3.22.4 A number of changes are proposed to the boundaries of the existing ASRCs shown on the adopted Borough Local Plan proposals map. These have been made based upon the criteria set out above. The changes are as follows:

- Bean Road, Greenhithe – slight adjustment to the southern and eastern boundary to exclude recent higher density housing.
- Green Street Green – amalgamation of existing ASRC and ASC but no change to existing boundaries.
- High Road Wilmington – revision to exclude that part of the ASRC within the Church Hill, Wilmington conservation area, together with 9 properties in Church Hill and 2 in Church Field.
- Joydens Wood – revision to include only Birchwood Road, developments off Birchwood Road, such as Clarendon Place, some of the properties in Birchwood Drive and Joydens Wood Road, most of the properties in Woodlands Park, and part of Summerhouse Drive.
- Longfield Hill – revision to include the whole of the settlement of Longfield Hill.
- Shepherds Lane, Dartford – adjustment to include nos 237-299 Princes Road and 2 properties in Heath Lane.
- Southfleet – revision to those parts of the ASRC now part of the Southfleet Conservation Area, Hook Green Conservation Area and Red Street Conservation Area.

3.22.5 The Council has produced draft appraisals of each of the 12 ASRCs, describing the area and identifying the special character and features. Following public consultation, nine of these were adopted as supplementary planning guidance and will be taken into account in determining future development proposals. The remaining three (High Road, Wilmington, Joydens Wood and Oakfield Lane, Wilmington) were the subject of objections, and will be resolved through the Local Plan review process. Copies of the appraisals are available from the Council.

## **H23 Areas of Special Residential Character**

**Development proposals in Areas of Special Residential Character (ASRC) will only be permitted where they respect the special qualities of the ASRC and meet the criteria in Appendix 7.**

### **3.23 The Town Centre**

3.23.1 Dartford Town Centre is a very good location for housing. It contains a wide range of facilities, has good public transport links and, as discussed above, there is a considerable amount of underused floorspace above shops with the potential for residential conversion.

3.23.2 If and when sites become available for redevelopment, a residential element may be appropriate. Higher density flatted or terraced developments would be particularly well suited to a central location. Parking requirements may be reduced or waived, as the area is well served by public transport, subject to the particular circumstances of the site.

3.23.3 Particular areas which may offer potential for housing are:

- land between Overy Street and the River Darent
- land between Central Park and Lowfield Street frontage properties
- land at the junction of Westgate Road and Kent Road

3.23.4 Policies and proposals for the town centre are discussed more fully in the Dartford Town Centre chapter.

## Appendix 1a

### Residential Layouts and Amenity (Policy H8)

Residential development will be permitted if it meets the following criteria in respect of layout and design:

1. layouts and buildings should be designed to prevent the overlooking of neighbouring properties which results in a material loss of privacy;
2. rear garden space, particularly for family houses, should be useable, private and regularly shaped, readily and directly accessible to the dwelling. It should be designed to receive sunlight for part of the day throughout the year, and at least part of the garden should be shielded from view from any public right of way or from neighbouring properties;
3. private communal amenity space should be provided for flats which is useable, private and of regular shape, and readily and directly accessible from the dwellings it serves. It should be designed to receive sunlight for part of the day throughout the year, and at least part of the amenity space should be shielded from view from any public right of way or from neighbouring properties;
4. layouts and buildings should be designed to take full advantage of daylight, sunlight and natural ventilation to all rooms and should also be designed to prevent the loss of daylight and sunlight into, and outlook from, habitable rooms; and
5. adequate daylight and sunlight should be provided to adjoining buildings and land.

To prevent the subsequent over-intensification of a development the Council may remove householders permitted development rights from developments where rear gardens are less than 10 metres in length, and in environmentally sensitive areas such as in the Green Belt and on former landfill sites.

## **Appendix 1b**

### **Quantified Space Standards for Residential Amenity (Policy H8)**

For schemes not meeting the criteria set out in Appendix 1(a), the following minimum standards will be applied:

#### 1. Minimum separating distance

Rear windows facing other windows: 20m.

Windows facing flank wall: 12m.

#### 2. Rear garden sizes

3 or more bedrooms: 70 sq m.

2 bedrooms: 50 sq m.

1 bedroom: 40 sq m.

Flats, maisonettes (communal space): 30 sq m. per flat.

#### 3. Rear Garden length for houses

Minimum length: 10m.

#### 4. Privacy in rear gardens and amenity space

Privacy in rear gardens shall be ensured, if necessary, by a screen wall or fence 1.8 m. high.

## Appendix 1c

### Urban Capacity Study – Summary Sheet (Paragraph 3.3.2)

Category		Discounted assessment			Policy based yield
		0~5 years	5~10 years	Other (2011+)	
<b>Part A – Large identified sites</b>					
1.1	Vacant sites	378	2210	9380	11968
1.2	Redevt existing housing	10	0	0	10
1.3	Redevt employment land/bldgs	1597	313	0	1910
1.4	Redevt institutional uses	1622	974	300	2896
1.5	Redevt car parks	0	0	0	0
1.6	Redevt minerals and waste sites (no restoration conditions)	0	0	0	0
1.7	Redevt of other uses	128	0	0	128
2.1	Devt within existing residential areas (intensification)	77	0	0	77
3.1	Change of use to housing	0	0	0	0
3.2	Subdivision of dwellings	10	0	0	10
				<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>16999</b>
<b>Part B – windfall developments</b>					
					<b>Windfall based yield</b>
4.1	Devt of vacant sites	large			
		medium			
		small			0
4.2	Redevt of housing	large			
		medium	4	4	8
		small	19	19	38
4.3	Redevt of other uses	large	29	29	58
		medium	77	77	154
		small	17	17	34
4.4	Infill/Intensification	large			
		medium	6	6	12
		small	40	40	80
4.5	Subdivision of dwellings	large			
		medium	4	4	8
		small	24	24	48
4.6	Change of use to housing	large			
		medium			
		small	35	35	70
4.7	Flats over shops	large			
		medium			
		small	21	21	42
4.8	Empty homes back into use	large			
		medium			
		small	20	20	40
				<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>592</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4118</b>	<b>3793</b>	<b>9680</b>	<b>17591</b>

## **Appendix 2**

### **Criteria for Flats and Flat Conversions (Policy H12)**

#### **1. General**

- 1.1 Each flat should be self-contained and reached directly from outdoors or through a common area, not through any other flat.
- 1.2 Flats should be separated horizontally and vertically from each other and common areas. Stacking of rooms by function is required, that is, bedrooms in one dwelling should not be created next to (vertically or horizontally) living rooms in another dwelling.
- 1.3 The location and arrangements of new flats on the site and their internal layout and construction should comply with Part M of the Building Regulations 1991 (as amended). Developers should consult with the Council's Building Control Section.

#### **2. Natural Lighting**

- 2.1 All habitable rooms shall have an area of clear glazing (either a window and/or a door) equivalent in total to at least 10% of the floor area of the room.
- 2.2 Whenever practical, all kitchens and bathrooms should be provided with windows to this standard. All glazing to windows in bathrooms and w/c's shall be obscure.

#### **3. Refuse and Storage**

- 3.1 The Borough Council encourages developers to provide facilities for wheeled bins at all new properties as this is generally considered the safest, most hygienic and most convenient form of collection. It is preferable that each property is able to have its own wheeled bin within the curtilage of the property, although with flats, it is recognised that communal bin stores may need to be considered. Ideally bins should be kept at the rear.
- 3.2 Wherever possible storage areas for portable items such as bicycles, prams and should be provided.

#### **4. Amenity Areas**

- 4.1 Private communal amenity space shall be provided for each flat in accordance with either the principles set out in policy H9 or the standards set out in Appendix 1. The design and finish of all such external areas shall enable them to be easily maintained. Boundary walls or fencing will be required to all common boundaries. Direct access from the flats should be provided to the garden.

#### **5. Parking Requirement**

- 5.1 Parking provision, including parking for the disabled, should be in accordance with the Council's standards.
- 5.2 Parking provision should be sited so as to minimise any impact on the amenity of adjoining properties or on the street scene, and should include appropriate boundary treatment, landscaping and vehicular and pedestrian arrangements.

5.3 The design and layout of new flats should afford easy access for disabled people moving between their vehicles and homes.

## **6. Noise**

6.1 Developments should provide internal acoustic insulation that meets the requirements of the Building Regulations as well as providing appropriate noise insulation from external noise, such as traffic or industrial or commercial noise. With regard to traffic and industrial and commercial noise the Planning Section will be guided by the advice of Environmental Services.

## **7. Character of Area**

7.1 In the application of these guidelines, proposals to convert modest sized terraced and semi-detached single family dwellings will be considered with particular regard to the impact on the character of the residential locality. In the Areas of Special Residential Character, proposals will also be considered against the guidelines set out at Appendix 7. An ability merely to comply with the minimum standards, especially amenity and parking standards is not, in itself, sufficient justification for the conversion of moderate sized properties where there are others of a similar type in the area.

## Appendix 3

### Criteria for House Extensions (Policy H13)

#### 1. General

- 1.1 Proposals for extensions to residential properties should not:
- enable occupiers to directly overlook windows to habitable rooms of neighbouring property or the private upper (patio) areas of rear gardens, which could result in a material loss of privacy, or themselves be overlooked;
  - result in a material loss of daylight or sunlight to the habitable rooms of neighbouring properties or the private upper (patio) areas of rear gardens; and
  - have an overbearing visual impact on neighbouring properties or the street scene or be materially disruptive to the near outlook of neighbouring dwellings or their garden areas.
- 1.2 Proposals should comply with the provisions of policy DD10.

#### 2. Rear Extensions

- 2.1 Single storey extensions to the rear of semi-detached and terraced properties should not normally be greater than 3.5 metres in depth on a common boundary. The Council will consider an increased depth in instances where adjoining properties have themselves already been extended or where the proposed extension is itself inset from the common boundary.
- 2.2 Two storey extensions to the rear of semi-detached properties or end of terrace properties need very careful consideration. Extensions should be inset 2 metres from the common boundary at first floor level and should normally be no deeper than 3.5 metres. However, there may be cases where meeting these requirements still results in an extension which fails to comply with the advice in 1.1 above. The Council will therefore consider each case on its merits.
- 2.3 Two storey extensions to the rear of mid terraced properties cause particular problems and will not normally be permitted unless it can be established that there will be no undue impact on adjoining properties.
- 2.4 Almost invariably and provided they do not affect neighbours' amenities pitched roofs will be required for two storey rear extensions. They are also to be preferred to flat roofs on single storey rear extensions.

#### 3. Side Extensions

- 3.1 Two storey side extensions within 1 metre of a common boundary should have their front walls set back at least 0.5 metre at the point where they join the existing building. This is to ensure that they remain subordinate to and thereby retain the identity of existing dwellings and to minimise any undesirable terracing effect.
- 3.2 In instances where the spatial relationship between adjacent dwellings or between the flank of a dwelling and an adjacent highway contributes significantly to the character of the street scene, the desirability of maintaining such relationship will be a major consideration in assessing the scope to extend.
- 3.3 Roofs must match and tie into or respect the plane of the existing roof.

#### **4. Front Extensions**

- 4.1 Extensions in front of the existing building line and on corners or conspicuous sites are particularly sensitive and have a significant impact on the street scene. On semi-detached or terraced properties forward projections will normally be limited to porches and to garage extensions where these do not adversely impact on neighbour's amenities and where they represent the style and character of the existing building and the street scene. Front extensions should not normally exceed 1 metre in depth. Extensions will be considered in instances where dwellings are set on a varying building line and/or where involving detached dwellings in substantial plots and where again the style and character of the existing building is fully respected and there is no detrimental impact on neighbour's amenities or the appearance of the street scene.
- 4.2 Front extensions will normally be unacceptable where they displace required vehicle parking space and where no acceptable parking space can be provided within the house plot.

## Appendix 4

### Criteria for Loft Conversions (Policy H13)

1. Roof extensions associated with loft conversions should not normally exceed the ridge height of the existing roof and should be designed such that dormers do not dominate the appearance of the existing dwelling and create a top heavy effect.
2. Dormers should be designed such that they respect the character, style and scale of the existing building and its windows. They should be visually contained by the existing roof elevation above, to the sides and - other than in the case of half dormers - below. They should preferably face to the rear of the property and will normally be discouraged in hipped side roof slopes because of overlooking and design considerations, particularly where the property is semi-detached or at the end of a terrace. In instances where roof extensions are considered acceptable on side roof slopes then window openings should normally be limited to front and rear elevations unless they are high level or they are obscure glazed and non-opening below a conventional fanlight.
3. A roof extension entailing replacement of a gable end with a hipped end on a semi-detached or end of terrace property will not normally be permitted on account of it disrupting the overall symmetry of the building. An exception could be in circumstances where two neighbouring semi-detached properties comprising a single building are proposed to be similarly extended, subject to there being no adverse impact upon the character of the street scene or dwellings either side.
4. The Council has published 'A Development Guide to Roof Extensions' for development control purposes. Applicants will be expected to take account of such supplementary design advice relating to loft conversions and to any published amendments thereto. Window and rooflight design should facilitate escape in accordance with Approved Document B – Means of Escape, of The Building Regulations 1991. In this respect developers should contact the Council's Building Control Section.

## Appendix 6

### ‘Lifetime’ Homes Criteria (Policy H21)

#### Outside

‘Lifetime’ Homes are designed to give easy and comfortable access. There are five features relating to the outside of the building.

1. Where car parking is adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3.6m width.
2. The distance from car-parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and should be level or gently sloping.
3. The design and layout of new flats should afford easy access for disabled people moving between their vehicles and homes. Developers should consult with the Council’s Building Control Section with regard to Approved Document M of the Building Regulations 1991 (as amended).
4. Lifts, lobbies and stairs should comply with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations 1991 (as amended). In this respect developers should consult with the Council’s Building Control Section.
5. The entrances should be covered and illuminated and have level access over threshold.

#### Downstairs

All Lifetime Homes are designed to be capable of modification if a member of the household is unable to climb stairs. Careful design ensures there is space to provide separate and private living space, plus extra bathroom facilities on the ground floor. The criteria are:

1. The sitting-room should be at entrance level.
2. Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails.
3. In two-storey houses, there should be space on the ground floor that could be used as a bedspace.

#### Upstairs

As with the ground-floor features, the emphasis on upper floors is on thinking ahead to ensure ease of adaptation when it is needed. Lifetime Homes contain no special visible features upstairs, but attention to detail at the construction stage cuts the cost and work needed later.

The criteria for upstairs are:

1. The bath/bedroom ceiling should be strong enough to support a hoist. The bath/bedroom wall should have a removable panel, from floor to ceiling, to enable tracking to connect the two rooms.
2. The design should incorporate provision for a future stairlift and a suitably identified space for a through-the-floor lift from the ground to the first floor, for example, to a bedroom next to the bathroom.

#### Features and Fittings

Lifetime Homes must meet two particular standards on fixtures and fittings:

1. Windowsills should be no higher than 750mm (except in special circumstances such as certain kitchens) and windows should be easy to open/operate.
2. Heater controls, fuse boxes, etc. should be at a height usable by all (i.e. between 600mm and 1200mm from the floor).

## Appendix 7

### Criteria for Development in Areas of Special Residential Character (Policy H23)

1. The density of new development shall accord with that existing in the area.
2. Proposals for new flatted development must:
  - be of scale and design compatible with surrounding residential properties so as not to alter the character or appearance of the residential area;
  - incorporate substantial landscaped amenity areas, compatible with adjoining gardens and open spaces; and
  - accommodate residents' car parking in a manner that is not unduly conspicuous and does not disrupt the character of adjoining properties.
3. The spatial standards of new development (including plot width, garden depth and distances between buildings) shall accord with that existing in the area.
4. The general height and massing of new development shall accord with that of existing buildings in the area.
5. Residential development behind an existing frontage will only be acceptable if:
  - a satisfactory means of access can be obtained;
  - there is adequate space between existing and proposed dwellings, compatible with the existing density of development;
  - there is no undue overshadowing or loss of daylight, or overlooking as a result
  - a coherent pattern of built form can be established which is compatible with the general character of the area; and
  - it does not result in tandem development (that is, one house immediately behind another sharing the same access), and there is no loss of trees or other adverse impact on the landscape character of the area.
6. New development should take account of existing building lines.
7. Existing trees and landscaping shall be retained where reasonably possible.
8. Conversions, where appropriate, shall not materially alter the external appearance of the building or the character of the area.
9. Materials shall match or complement those of existing buildings in the area.

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