

DARTFORD AND GRAVESHAM SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2008 – 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Boroughs of Dartford and Gravesham are at the heart of the Thames Gateway regeneration area. Between 2008 and 2026 it is proposed that 30,000 new homes and 50,000 new jobs will be created in the area. There are a number of key drivers underpinning the regeneration agenda, such as the development of the Ebbsfleet Valley as a one of the primary business locations in the Gateway; the rejuvenation of Dartford and Gravesend town centres; promoting a strategic transport programme which meets the transport infrastructure needs of the new developments and the area as a whole; the creation of sustainable communities and developments, with low carbon footprints, integration between new and existing communities and improved health and well being. Finally raising educational standards and skills so that residents can benefit from new job opportunities and attract new employers into the area.

There has been a great deal of progress since the last Community Strategy was published in 2003. The Ebbsfleet International Station has opened, linking Dartford and Gravesham to Paris, Brussels and the wider European high speed rail network. Fastrack routes A and B are now operational with levels of usage surpassing expectations. Plans are being brought forward for major new developments in Dartford and Gravesend town centres. A Strategic Transport Programme has been agreed with Government and the private sector, which includes setting a tariff on new developments in the area to help meet transport costs.

Many challenges remain. The current turmoil in the financial markets will have an effect on the local economy and the housing market. The severity of the down turn is yet to be fully assessed; however the financial services sector is seen as a key element in the Ebbsfleet Valley development, whilst the current housing targets were set at a time that the housing market was still rising.

The Dartford and Gravesham Sustainable Community Strategy sets out how the Local Strategic Partnership intends to deal with these issues. The overall vision which the Strategy sets out is to see Dartford and Gravesham as:

PLACES OF CHOICE TO LIVE, WORK AND ENJOY

The Strategy is set out under five themes. These are:

- Economic Development
- Health and Wellbeing
- Safer Communities
- Environment and Transport
- Housing and Stronger Communities

These themes link to the Vision for Kent, Kent Agreement 2, the South East Regional Economic Strategy, the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan and the South East Plan.

Discussions are also under way to set up a Multi Area Agreement (MAA) involving Dartford, Gravesham and Swale Borough Councils, the Medway Unitary Authority and Kent County Council. It is likely to focus on issues such as the economy and skills, transport and housing. The MAA will concentrate on how joint action can add value, to ensure the delivery of agreed objectives, with support from Government.

The Dartford and Gravesham Sustainable Community Strategy recognises that there are differences between the two Boroughs, both in terms of their socio economic profiles and policy priorities. The Strategy is therefore divided into three parts. The first sets out areas for joint activity across Dartford and Gravesham, through the Local Strategic Partnership. These are centred on a small number of actions and targets under the five themes. The second and third elements of the Strategy are area plans for Dartford and Gravesham individually. These go into more detail and deal with issues which may not be seen as joint priorities.

The Local Strategic Partnership will use the Sustainable Community Strategy to focus partnership activity around the key needs and opportunities which exist within the two Boroughs. The actions and targets contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy will be monitored through the Dartford performance management system and the Local Strategic Partnership will be regularly updated on progress with these actions and targets. Individual organisations or relevant sub groups of the Local Strategic Partnership have agreed to be accountable for their performance against relevant actions and targets in the Strategy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC AIM: TO DELIVER SUSTAINABLE, EMPLOYMENT BASED REGENERATION IN DARTFORD AND GRAVESHAM WHICH BENEFITS NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITIES

At the heart of the economic development agenda for Dartford and Gravesham is Ebbsfleet Valley. This area is designated as a “Diamond for Growth” in the South East Regional Economic Strategy, the only one in Kent. Whilst in the Thames Gateway delivery Plan the Ebbsfleet Valley is seen as one of four economic transformers in the Gateway.

As has been stated the International Station was opened in November 2007 and domestic services will begin operation from 2009, bringing Central London within 17 minutes journey time. This, coupled with the improvements made to the M25/A2 should make the area very attractive to business, particularly in the business support and financial services sectors. However the recent down turn in the economy, particularly in the financial services sector, and the lack of available credit may affect the development of key sites. It will also be important to help new local businesses to be created and to grow.

Increasing the skills levels of residents is also a major priority in both Dartford and Gravesham. The Thames Gateway Skills Audit, undertaken in 2005, suggests that 60% of the new jobs which will be created in the Gateway will require a NVQ Level 3 qualification or above. In Dartford 36.9% of residents of a working age have Level 3 and above, whilst in Gravesham the figure is 32.1% against a South East average figure of 49.6%. If the aspiration to reduce both outward and inward commuting is to be met then skills levels must be increased.

Transport infrastructure and the environmental impact of regeneration activity are also important elements for this theme and are dealt with in more detail under the Environment and Transport theme.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- ED 1. To promote Ebbsfleet Valley as the financial/business heart of Dartford and Gravesham, and to support business growth in Dartford and Gravesham.**

- ED2. Improve access to jobs for local people through skills, training and other initiatives.**

ACTIONS:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE
To develop Ebbsfleet Valley as the financial/business heart of Dartford and Gravesham, and to support business growth in Dartford and Gravesham.	ED1(a) To ensure that the Master Plans for the site meet both District Council requirements for the mix between commercial and housing development.	Dartford and Gravesham Planning Policy Teams in conjunction with the Kent Thameside Regeneration Partnership	April 2011
	ED1(b) To complete and adopt the LDF Core Strategies for Dartford and Gravesham, including elements on Ebbsfleet Valley	Dartford and Gravesham Planning Policy Teams	April 2011 (Dartford)
	ED1(c) As part of the Multi Area Agreement process map enterprise and innovation services in North Kent	Thames Gateway North Kent Partnership	April 2009
	ED1(d) Support SEEDA proposal for a place-based Innovation and Creativity team for Kent and ensure that North Kent maximises the benefit it receives from the team.	Thames Gateway North Kent Partnership	April 2009
Improve access to jobs for local people through skills, training	ED2(a) Implement Learning and Skills Strategy for Kent Thameside.	Learning and Skills Council	April 2009

and other initiatives.	ED2(b) Develop the multiversity concept in Kent Thameside, building on current educational facilities, the Nucleus and the proposed centre for training in sustainable construction.	Kent Thameside Regeneration Partnership	Ongoing
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INDICATORS:

INDICATOR	BASELINE	2008/09 TARGET	2009/10 TARGET	2010/11 TARGET
LI /ED 1 Jobs created at Ebbsfleet	0	Target to be reset in the light of current economic conditions	Target to be reset in the light of current economic conditions	Target to be reset in the light of current economic conditions
N171 New Business Registration Rate (KA2 Indicator)	Baseline awaited from Kent Partnership	N/A	To be set at the refresh of the Kent Agreement	To be set at the refresh of the Kent Agreement
NI 164 Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 3 or higher	34.9%	35.9%	36.9%	37.9%

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

STRATEGIC AIM: TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO LEAD HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL.

Dartford and Gravesham faces a number of health issues. 11.5% of children, at Reception year, are obese, compared to 9.4% in Kent as a whole. 27.4% of adults in the area smoke compared to 24.6% in the rest of Kent, and in some wards, such as Swanscombe that figure rises to 40%. This leads to over 140 premature deaths each year. 9.5% of the population undertake at least 30 minutes physical activity three times per week, compared to 11.6% in England. Partner agencies have already taken steps to deal with these issues. There are healthy Living Centres in Temple Hill and the Gr@nd in Gravesend High Street. A range of new sport and leisure facilities have been opened and work is continuing to create a network of footpaths and green spaces, designed to encourage walking and cycling. Choosing Health funding has allowed the development of programmes such as “Don’t Sit Get Fit” and the appointment of health specialists in the area.

There is recognition of the opportunities presented by the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics, both in terms of tourism and encouraging interest in sport.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

HW1. To improve the health of local people through reducing obesity and smoking and increasing physical activity

HW2. Increase opportunities for sport, leisure and cultural activities

ACTIONS:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE
To improve the health of local people through reducing obesity and smoking and increasing physical activity	HW1(a) Implement Active Gravesham and Active Dartford programmes with initiatives aimed at weight management, smoking cessation and participation.	Dartford and Gravesham Health and Wellbeing Sub Group	October 2010
	HW 1(b) Ensure fair funding for Choosing Health in Dartford and Gravesham, reflecting the higher levels of health inequality in the area compared to West Kent as a whole	Dartford and Gravesham Health and Wellbeing Sub Group	April 2009
Increase opportunities for sport, leisure and cultural activities.	HW2(a) Through the Local planning process ensure the provision of green space, sporting and cultural facilities as part of new developments.	Planning Policy Teams	April 2011

	HW2(b) Maximise the benefits to Dartford and Gravesham from the Cultural Olympiad	Thames Gateway Working Group for the 2012 Games	April 2011
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INDICATORS:

INDICATOR	BASELINE	2008/09 TARGET	2009/10 TARGET	2010/11 TARGET
NI 55 Obesity in primary school children in reception year (KA2 Indicator)	11.5%	10.5%	10.3%	9.7%
NI 8 Adult participation in sport and active recreation (KA2 Indicator)	17%	19.5%	22.3%	28.7%
NI 120 All age all cause mortality (KA2 Indicator)	581 per 100,000 population	555 per 100,000 population	543 per 100,000 population	535 per 100,000 population

SAFER COMMUNITIES

STRATEGIC AIM: TO MAKE DARTFORD AND GRAVESHAM A SAFER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE WORK AND SOCIALISE

In 2007 the Dartford and Gravesham Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships were combined and two Borough based Public Service Units were created. The area has experienced a substantial reduction in reported crime, the largest in Kent. The Crime and Disorder Partnership has published a new Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy which identifies the following issues as priorities:

- Acquisitive crime
- Anti social behaviour
- Public confidence
- Substance misuse
- Violent crime
- Young people

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

SC1. To increase public confidence and reduce the fear of crime

SC2. To reduce anti social behaviour

ACTIONS:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE
To increase public confidence and reduce the fear of crime	SC1(a) Improve communication between communities and the CDRP	Dartford and Gravesham CDRP	April 2011
	SC1(b) Ensure that the PACT Panels engage a large cross section from the local community and reflect the views of local people.	Dartford and Gravesham CDRP	Ongoing
To reduce anti social behaviour	SC2(a) Tackle anti social behaviour caused by individuals or families through methods such as Anti Social Behaviour Agreements, Anti Social Behaviour Orders and CCTV	Dartford and Gravesham Multi Agency Anti Social Behaviour Group	April 2011

INDICATORS:

INDICATOR	BASELINE	2008/09 TARGET	2009/10 TARGET	2010/11 TARGET
NI 21 Dealing with local concerns about anti social behaviour and crime by the local Council and the Police	23%	N/A as baseline year	N/A as Place Survey not undertaken in financial year	33%

ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

STRATEGIC AIM: TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, ADAPTED TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND SERVED BY A RANGE OF TRANSPORT PROVISION.

Dartford and Gravesham have a number of natural assets, including historic downland, parks and open spaces, historic monuments and leisure and sporting facilities. The area is also faced with development on a scale not seen in many other parts of the country, with over 25,000 new homes to be built by 2026. The area is also crossed by the strategic motorway network with both the M25 and the A2. There are therefore many pressures on the local environment.

The Dartford and Gravesham Local Strategic Partnership recognises that it needs to play its part in dealing with the effects of climate change. DEFRA figures show that total carbon dioxide emissions per capita in the area amount to 9.3 tonnes per annum, compared to a national mean of 10.6 tonnes. Individual partner organisations can contribute to lower carbon emissions by looking at their own operations. Planning policies are also being pursued which ensure that new development is phased to match infrastructure needs, that local jobs are produced reducing commuting and that opportunities for reducing energy consumption are taken up through the provision of zero carbon homes, micro generation and combined heat and power plants.

Transport is a major issue for the area. New development will increase pressure on the local road system which cannot simply be met by building more roads. Emphasis will be placed on giving people more choice in terms of their travel options, including the provision of local facilities close to communities, increasing accessibility by foot or bicycle and providing reliable public transport. Fastrack routes A and B are now operational with passenger numbers exceeding initial forecasts by some 50%. Improvements have been made to the A2 and the M25, which should reduce congestion.

A programme of transport schemes has also been identified to help contain the impact of traffic growth. Funding for this programme is to come from a variety of sources, including a strategic transport tariff and Central Government contributions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

ET1. To reduce carbon emissions

ET2. To manage transport demand in a sustainable way and increase transport options

ACTIONS:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE
To reduce carbon emissions	ET1(a) Ensure all partner agencies reduce their organisational carbon footprint	All partners	April 2011
	ET1(b) Introduce appropriate planning policies and work with developers to reduce energy use.	Dartford and Gravesham planning teams	April 2011 (Dartford)
To manage transport demand in a sustainable way and increase transport options	ET2(a) The Strategic Transport Programme is implemented	Dartford and Gravesham planning teams and Kent County Council as the Accountable Body	Ongoing to 2026
	ET2(b) Expand Fastrack to include new development sites.	Planning Policy Teams in conjunction with the Kent Thameside Regeneration Partnership	April 2011

INDICATORS:

INDICATOR	BASELINE	2008/09 TARGET	2009/10 TARGET	2010/11 TARGET
NI 186 Per capita CO2 emissions in the area (KA2 Indicator)	9.3 tonnes	8.8 tonnes	8.4 tonnes	8.1 tonnes
L1/ET Strategic Transport Tariff contributions on trajectory	N/A	Awaiting Trajectory		

HOUSING AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

STRATEGIC AIM: TO ENSURE THAT THE HOUSING NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE ARE MET AND TO CREATE STRONG AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES.

Dartford and Gravesham are at the heart of one of the largest regeneration areas in Europe. The scale of change means that there is a need to ensure that local people are involved in the decisions which affect their lives. Government plans call for over 25,000 homes to be built in the area up to 2026. The recent down turn in the economy is likely to have an effect on the phasing of the build. The approach being taken to housing is the promotion of stable communities through the provision of a range of housing types which meets people's needs as their circumstances change, which in turn allows them to put down roots in the area.

There is also a need to ensure that the new and existing communities are integrated and participation in voluntary and community organisations is seen as a way of bringing this about.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

HSC1. To meet the housing needs of the area

HSC2. To help create strong, integrated communities in Dartford and Gravesham

ACTIONS:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE
To meet the housing needs of the area	HSC1(a) Agree Local Development Framework Core Strategies for Dartford and Gravesham setting out an agreed approach to the creation of sustainable communities with housing relevant to local needs and the provision of a comprehensive range of local community services.	Planning Policy Teams	April 2011 (Dartford)
To help create strong, integrated communities in Dartford and Gravesham	HSC2(a) Promote volunteering activity around sport, leisure and community activities	Leisure Teams	April 2011
	HSC2(b) Ensure the delivery of the Youth Strategy	Youth Sub Group	April 2010

INDICATORS:

INDICATOR	BASELINE	2008/09 TARGET	2009/10 TARGET	2010/11 TARGET
NI 3 Civic participation in the local area (KA2 Indicator)	12.5%	N/A	N/A as Place Survey not undertaken in this financial year	14.5%
NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities (KA2 Indicator)	60%	N/A	67%	75%
NI 154 Net additional homes provided (KA2 Indicator)	904	1198	1072	951
NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (KA2 Indicator)	297	359	321	285

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