

Statement of Common Ground
Between
Ebbfleet Development Corporation (in its role as
Local Planning Authority) and Dartford Borough
Council
November 2021

List of Parties Involved

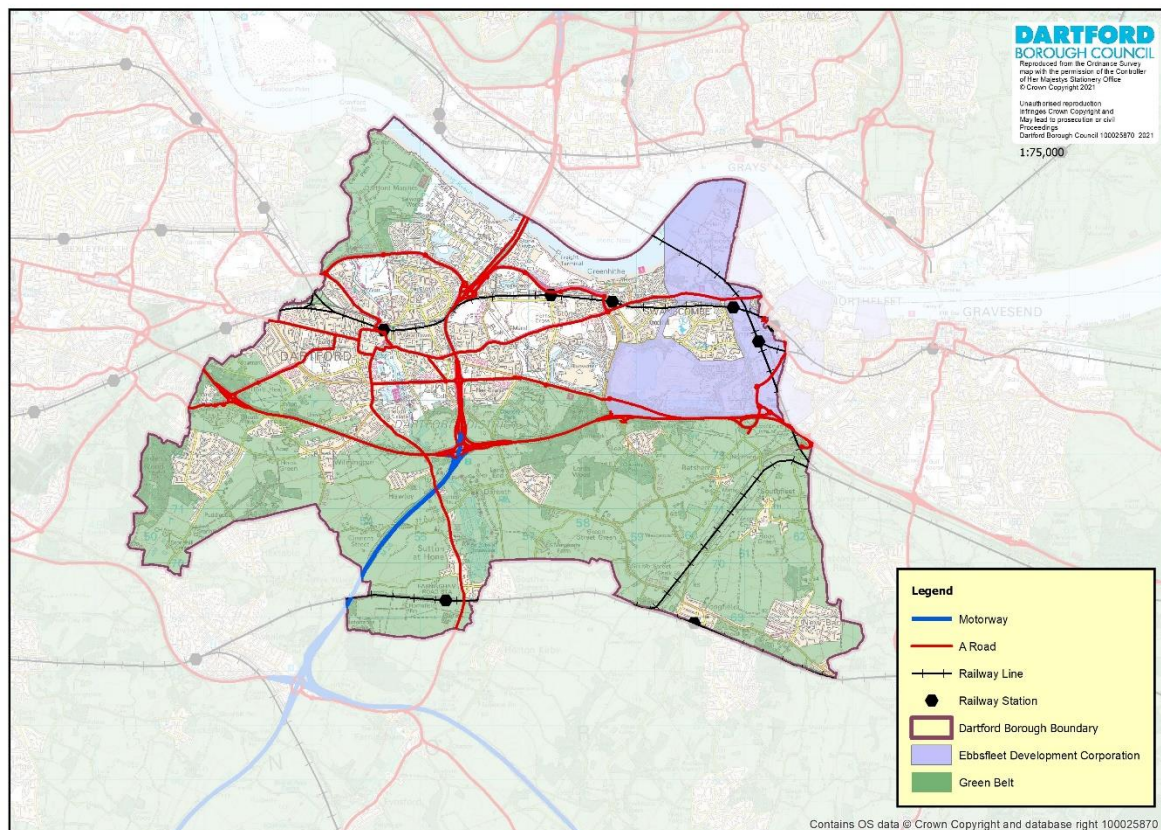
This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been prepared by Dartford Borough Council (DBC) and the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) in its role as local planning authority.

DBC is the plan making authority for the area of the EDC urban development area (UDA) that falls within the Dartford Borough. With powers under Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the EDC is the development management authority for Ebbsfleet Garden City, dealing with planning applications and planning enforcement in this area. The EDC was set up by the central government in 2015 to oversee and facilitate the delivery of a 21st Century Garden City in North Kent consisting of up to 15,000 homes, employment opportunities, open space and community infrastructure. The leaders of DBC and Gravesham Borough (GBC) and a cabinet member from Kent County Council (KCC) sit on the Board of the EDC. The EDC's Planning Committee includes one councillor from DBC, one councillor from GBC and one councillor from KCC.

This SOCG is intended to reflect the current position at this stage of the local plan making process. It sets out the key strategic issues and areas of agreement on them.

Strategic Geography

DBC is a second tier local authority which lies to the south of the River Thames within Kent County Council's area. The EDC has been established in the eastern part of the Borough and extends into Gravesham Borough. The location of the EDC UDA is shown in the map below. The upper tier authority is Kent County Council (KCC).



Much of the area to the north of the A2 within the Borough is of an urban character. The main settlement is Dartford but there is a series of smaller settlements running along the A226 – Stone, Greenhithe and Swanscombe. Ebbsfleet Garden City is centred around Ebbsfleet International Station and the Ebbsfleet Valley. The EDC boundary surrounds the town of Swanscombe, and the Bluewater shopping centre lies immediately to the west of the EDC boundary. The Garden City includes sites previously associated with the cement industry including quarrying activities, some were then subsequently used for landfill. A number of these sites are currently well underway to being developed as new communities (e.g. Ebbsfleet Green, Castle Hill).

The EDC area contains habitats and geology of national and local importance at Eastern Quarry (Alkerden Lane Local Wildlife Site) and at the Swanscombe Peninsula and in parts of the Ebbsfleet Valley (the Swanscombe Peninsula SSSI and the Ebbsfleet Marshes Local Wildlife Site). There are current proposals for an international entertainment resort, known as London Resort, principally located at Swanscombe Peninsula which has been accepted as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). An application for a Development Consent Order for the London Resort was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2020 and accepted for examination in January 2021.

Bean Triangle, which lies within the EDC area to the north of the A2, is within the Green Belt. The area to the south of the A2 lies within DBC and is outside the EDC area. This is more rural and largely comprises Green Belt.

The A2 is a strategic highway route running through DBC to the south of Ebbsfleet Garden City. The A226 runs east-west, bisecting the Garden City and linking various urban settlements in DBC with Northfleet and Gravesend in Gravesham Borough.

There are also a number of railway lines serving the area, the key ones of which are the High Speed 1 line (connecting Ebbsfleet International with Stratford and London St Pancras) and the North Kent line (connecting Swanscombe, Dartford and intervening stations with London). Ebbsfleet International directly serves the Ebbsfleet Garden City and Swanscombe Station is in close proximity to it.

Planning Documents – Current Status

Dartford Local Plan

DBC's current adopted Local Plan comprises the adopted Dartford Core Strategy 2011 and the adopted Dartford Development Policies Plan 2017. DBC is preparing a new Local Plan which will replace these documents. Information on the consultations which have taken place and the expected timescales for the new Local Plan is contained in the table below.

Reg 18 consultations	Reg 19 consultations	Target Submission Date	Target Adoption Date
Strategic Issues Jun-Jul 2018	First Reg 19 Feb-Apr 2021	Nov 2021	2022 (covering period to 2037)
Preferred Options Jan-Mar 2020	Second Reg 19 Sep-Oct 2021		

Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework

The EDC has set out a Vision for Ebbsfleet in 2035. This is articulated through the Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework 2017 approved by EDC for development management purposes

as a material consideration and endorsed by DBC, GBC and KCC. This combines the previously approved masterplans for the area and shows how the area will knit together and connect to existing communities to set out a vision for the Garden City. It includes an area-wide spatial framework and the principles which will apply to Ebbsfleet's four strategic development areas, including the following within DBC's area:

- Ebbsfleet Central
- Castle Hill, Western Cross, Alkerden and Ebbsfleet Green
- Swanscombe Peninsula

At the consultation stage of the Framework, DBC responded as follows:

- It supports the Framework for providing clarity with regard to the integrated masterplanning of the whole of the EDC area.
- It endorses the Framework as guidance for pre-application discussions with developers and a material consideration in determining planning applications but with primacy given to Dartford's Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents where there is a conflict between the documents and as a basis for the comprehensive identification of policy requirements.
- The Council considers there are some specific areas of non-compliance between the Framework and the Council's planning policy framework but will assist the EDC in resolving these issues when proposals come forward.
- That endorsement of the Framework does not imply acceptability of some of the proposals or information shown outside the EDC area.

Strategic Issues

Strategy

There has been a longstanding strategy for the regeneration of the Thames Gateway area extending from east London to north Kent and south Essex. As part of this, Dartford (and Gravesend) north of the A2 were identified a growth area of regional significance in the government's Thames Gateway Planning Framework in 1995 (RPG9a), known as Kent Thames-side. This set out a focus on the development of damaged land and identified a number of development opportunities, including Ebbsfleet Valley, Eastern Quarry and Swanscombe Peninsula which are now within Ebbsfleet Garden City.

This focus for regeneration was taken forward in the South East Plan 2009. The parts of DBC (and Gravesham Borough) to the north of the A2 were within the Kent Thames Gateway Sub-Regional Strategy Area, identified as a growth area. Policy KTG1 set out the overall strategy for this area. The parts of this policy most relevant to development within what is now Ebbsfleet Garden City included:

- as a first priority, making full use of previously developed land before greenfield sites, except where there are clear planning advantages from the development of an urban extension;
- locating major development to exploit the potential of the regional hub at Ebbsfleet and locations served by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, and locate housing, employment and community services where they are accessible by a choice of transport; and
- creating higher density development in the main urban areas, lined by public transport to one another and to London.

The supporting text to policy KTG1 recognised that the main locational effects of this policy would include concentrations of new dwellings, employment and services at major regeneration locations, including at the strategic sites of Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet and the

Thames Riverside. Within these locations, it stated that development would be particularly concentrated near the transport hubs of Ebbsfleet (and the Medway Towns).

DBC has taken forward the key elements of the established approach in the second Publication Dartford Local Plan. Importantly, these are in line with the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The new Dartford Local Plan has also been informed by an evidence base, some of which DBC has commissioned in liaison with the EDC, and other evidence produced through direct ongoing engagement and updates.

Points of Agreement

It is agreed that the Dartford Local Plan is informed by an evidence base that has had close consideration of the achievement of significant sustainable development at Ebbsfleet, including through the:

- Extensive and detailed collaboration on projected housing deliverable land, other sites and build out rates (reflected in the Plan's housing trajectory, and the Dartford Borough Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) and the Dartford and Ebbsfleet Residential Needs Assessment
- Dartford and Ebbsfleet Retail & Leisure Study
- Dartford Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling
- Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework

It is agreed the strategic policies of the second Publication Dartford Local Plan, including policies S1 to S4, set an appropriate sustainable growth framework, with Ebbsfleet Garden City identified as one of the two overriding priority development focal points in the Plan.

Ebbsfleet Garden City

Since 2016, DBC, EDC, Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) have maintained a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the collective working the parties will undertake in support of the development objectives set by government for Ebbsfleet Garden City. The MoU includes a section on Duty to Cooperate and partnership working and paragraph 38 states the following:

“It is agreed between the Parties that the overall objective of this Memorandum is to assist in achieving the sustainable development and regeneration of the Development Corporation Area, areas within the immediate vicinity and, where appropriate, its wider hinterland and to do so in the context of the Boroughs and County's adopted development plans and in a co-ordinated manner with other development taking place within the Boroughs' boundaries.”

The MoU commits the parties to contributing towards the Planning Liaison Group which shall conduct “engagement on strategic planning, including planning policy, major applications and infrastructure matters and ensure effective working between the EDC and the local authorities”. The Planning Liaison Group has met and will continue to meet regularly, with cooperative information sharing between the parties on the Dartford and Gravesham Local Plans, and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The following issues are of relevance to the strategic development areas within Ebbsfleet Garden City as identified in the Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework:

- The EDC in its role as local planning authority is currently involved in pre-application discussions in relation to proposed city-scale mixed commercial and residential

development of the area. The initial application will not cover all the Ebbsfleet Central strategic area identified in the Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework.

- Natural England notified DBC and EDC of the Swanscombe Peninsula Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in March 2021. This covers the western part of the Ebbsfleet Central strategic development area and much of the Swanscombe Peninsula strategic development area identified in the Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework. The SSSI was confirmed by Natural England on 10 November 2021 with some small amendments to the boundaries. The Policies Map Changes document which accompanies the second Publication Local Plan shows the SSSI boundaries as notified in March 2021. The EDC and DBC welcome any opportunity that there may be to make modifications to the Local Plan as it progresses through examination to show the final approved boundaries of the SSSI. There may also be the opportunity to make some associated modifications to relevant allocation and area policy boundaries but it is recognised that this may need to be subject to further consultation.
- The Ebbsfleet Central allocation in the second Publication Dartford Local Plan excludes the area of the originally notified Swanscombe Peninsula SSSI.
- The London Resort is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project proposed on the Swanscombe Peninsula. London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH) submitted an application for a Development Consent Order to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2020. There have been delays to the progress of this as a result of the need for further information and the notification of the Swanscombe Peninsula SSSI. DBC, EDC and KCC are working in partnership to assess the implications of the proposed development, and to engage with the developers and the Planning Inspectorate in the consideration of the application. The authorities are working jointly to ensure that any Development Consent Order granted thoroughly mitigates the impacts of the proposal on the area and that any requirement and s106 obligations are integrated across the authorities.
- There are planning permissions in place for new neighbourhoods at Ebbsfleet Green (former Northfleet West Substation site) and within Whitecliff (Eastern Quarry). The neighbourhoods at Ebbsfleet Green and Castle Hill (the first village within Eastern Quarry) are nearing completion. Detailed proposals have or are expected to come forward for new neighbourhoods at Alkerden and Ashmere (also within Eastern Quarry).
- Bean Triangle is within the Green Belt and no development is planned in this location but there are opportunities to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists, landscaping and the overall quality of the area.

Points of Agreement

It is agreed that there have been frequent meetings between the EDC and DBC and others since the inception of the new Dartford Local Plan to discuss relevant planning policy issues which should be addressed within the Plan. The EDC has been given the opportunity to input on a detailed basis in advance of the finalisation of policies and diagrams in the Ebbsfleet and Swanscombe chapter of the first and second Publication Local Plans.

It is agreed that the EDC, GBC and KCC have had ongoing, active and effective input to the Dartford Local Plan through the Planning Liaison Group and other discussions.

It is agreed that Policies E1 (Ebbsfleet and Swanscombe Strategy), E2 (Ebbsfleet Garden City Principles) and Diagram 10 of the second Publication Local Plan suitably reflect EDC's vision and principles for Ebbsfleet Garden City, including as set out in the Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework.

It is agreed that Policy E4 (Ebbsfleet Central Allocation) of the second Publication Local Plan identifies an appropriate mix of land uses and infrastructure in support of the development of a strategic hub for Ebbsfleet Garden City. EDC as planning authority will work positively to determine proposals appropriately and expeditiously.

It is agreed that Policy E5 (Alkerden and Ashmere Allocation) of the second Publication Local Plan appropriately provides strategic policy guiding what can be achieved on the site, and reflects extant permissions and deliverable residential opportunities. Whilst there is a longstanding extant outline planning permission for the site, EDC agrees to use every opportunity to achieve the policy requirements set out in the new Dartford Local Plan wherever possible.

The Pre-Submission (Publication) Local Plan Policies Map Changes September 2021 largely reflect the Swanscombe Peninsula SSSI boundaries as notified by NE in March 2021. The boundaries of the confirmed SSSI now differ from this. It is agreed that if there is the opportunity to make modifications to the Local Plan as it progresses through examination to show the final approved boundaries of the SSSI, DBC and the EDC would support this. Any potential consequent modifications as necessary to the boundaries of the Ebbsfleet Central allocation (policy E4) and North of London Road Area, Swanscombe (policy E6) policy boundaries would need to be considered via the examination and be subject to due process.

It is agreed that whilst policies E1, E2, E4, E5 and E6 refer specifically to development within the EDC part of Dartford Borough's area, all policies in the second Publication Local Plan will apply to development taking place in this location.

It is agreed that an entertainment resort on Swanscombe Peninsula if approved and built is likely to have significant impacts on the existing and new communities both within and close to Ebbsfleet Garden City, infrastructure, the environment and the delivery of development at Ebbsfleet Central. EDC and DBC will continue to work together with KCC to input into the examination of the application for a DCO and ensure that adequate mitigations are put in place to manage the impacts of the development.

Transport

The Dartford Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2020 sets out the list of projects to support planned new development in DBC and meet the demands that this will generate. It indicates projects where: the full level of funding has been identified (including direct provision by developers); the application of Community Infrastructure Levy funding could help to unlock delivery; and other projects which may be needed to support development but currently need to be further defined to confirm delivery timescale and potential funding. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan includes transport, health and education projects including a significant number of projects within Ebbsfleet Garden City. Furthermore, the second Publication Dartford Local Plan includes an Infrastructure Diagram which includes various transport improvements linked to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet Transport Enhancement Options

There has been collective working between a number of partners since 2015 on potential options to improve public transport between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet. In 2020, DBC and EDC, along with Gravesham Borough Council, Kent County Council, London Borough of Bexley, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, the Greater London Authority, Network Rail and Transport for London, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport) on Transport Enhancement Options between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet. Under

the MoU, the Partnership is working together to take forward a study into transport capacity and connectivity options between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet with a view to delivering ambitious and sustainable housing and economic growth in the area.

Road Network, Public Transport, Walking and Cycling

The Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme (STIP) is a package of transport improvements that was created in 2005 in response to the anticipated impact of planned development across DBC and Gravesham Borough, including the subsequently created Ebbsfleet Garden City. The broad aim of the programme is to deliver improvements at key locations across the transport network that would enable the planned level of development to be realised. The programme was developed through a partnership involving DBC and Gravesham Borough Council as the local planning authorities and Kent County Council as the local highway authority. Ebbsfleet Development Corporation subsequently joined the partnership.

The STIP programme is part of the wider transport strategy for DBC and Gravesham Borough (including Ebbsfleet Garden City) and complements Kent County Council's Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2035. Substantial improvements to public transport provision and the better integration of development with more sustainable forms of transport are key elements of the transport strategies which aim to maintain an effective transport network.

DBC and EDC are committed to continue working in partnership with the relevant stakeholders, including Kent County Council and Highways England. Both parties recognise that securing sufficient funding to deliver transport improvement schemes is essential. DBC and EDC are committed to working together to secure the necessary funding and to ensure that transport infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner to support sustainable growth.

Points of Agreement

It is agreed that EDC and DBC will continue to work as part of the partnership exploring potential for public transport enhancements between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet. This is reflected in policy M16 of the second Publication Dartford Local Plan.

It is agreed that DBC and EDC will continue to work with Kent County Council to deliver transport related improvements to the local road network, including projects which utilise Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Infrastructure Programme funding.

It is agreed that DBC and EDC will continue to work with Kent County Council to deliver public transport schemes and improvements to the cycle and footpath network in the area to ensure an integrated network.

Infrastructure

The Dartford Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2020 sets out the list of projects to support planned new development in DBC and meet the demands that this will generate. Further information is set out in the Transport section above. The Infrastructure Diagram in the second Publication Dartford Local Plan shows the locations of new schools and health facilities as well as search zones in areas where further such facilities are likely to be required.

Infrastructure is a significant issue in relation to supporting development coming forward in Ebbsfleet Garden City. As already set out in the Ebbsfleet Garden City and Transport sections above, partnerships exist which are working to address infrastructure matters.

DBC has a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule. DBC's Leader's Advisory Group on CIL provides a means for keeping DBC's members and officers from a number of organisations updated on CIL and infrastructure issues. Officers from EDC are invited to sit on this group.

Point of Agreement

It is agreed that EDC and DBC will continue to work with Kent County Council, the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and other infrastructure providers, guided by the Dartford Local Plan and EDC documentation to ensure that infrastructure and community facilities to support new development in Ebbsfleet Garden City is provided in a timely way and opportunities to improve access to this by residents of existing communities in the wider area is maximised.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The Dartford GTAA 2019 has been produced to support DBC's new Local Plan. It sets out the needs for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople to 2035. For gypsies and travellers who meet the planning definition, the need is for 48 pitches to 2024 and an additional 22 pitches from 2024-2035 (total of 70 pitches). For travelling showpeople who meet the planning definition, the need is for 1 plot to 2024 and no additional plots from 2024-2035. Taking into account planning permissions which have since been granted and the need for a five year supply of pitches/ plots, the needs are now 34 pitches and 1 plot respectively from 2019-2026.

The Dartford GTAA notes the particular nature of needs arising and existing provision in the Borough. It finds the need can often be met through additional touring caravans on existing sites which are, generally, each equivalent to the provision of a pitch (as opposed to more formally set out pitches).

The second Publication Dartford Local Plan allocates two sites for the provision of additional gypsy and traveller pitches. DBC is carrying out further work on identifying sites to meet the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople which has been delayed as a result of Covid-19 related tier and national lockdown restrictions. The latest position on this work is outlined in the "Meeting the Needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Report September 2021"

Point of Agreement

It is agreed that EDC and DBC will work together to explore opportunities for identifying a site or sites which may be suitable for gypsy and traveller pitches within Ebbsfleet Garden City, particularly in the event that the London Resort proposal does not proceed.

Signatories

Signed on behalf of Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (as local planning authority)	Signed on behalf of Dartford Borough Council
	
Position: Chief Planning Officer	Position: Head of Planning Services
Date: 17 November 2021	Date: 18 November 2021