

# **Dartford Development Plan**

*Local Development Scheme 2016-2018*



**December 2015**

**Dartford Borough Council Local Plan**  
*Local Development Scheme*

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## **1. Purpose of this Document**

- 1.1 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a project management document produced to set out and maintain an up-to-date and relevant planning strategy.
- 1.2 It confirms Dartford's existing and emerging planning policy framework. The LDS clarifies how Dartford Council intends to tackle the need to review and refresh policies for the Borough's long-term development. The LDS sets out the council's timetable for preparation and adoption of future Local Plan documents and other planning policies over the following three years.
- 1.3 A clear planning policy programme explains both:
  - The characteristics of current and forthcoming documents. This identifies their overall role and scope in response to local requirements and the issues they are expected to address. This is outlined in section 4.
  - The key stages in producing policy. Developers are informed of the introduction of new policy approaches. Moreover this provides organisations and the public with notice of forthcoming opportunities to get involved in Local Plan production. The timetable is illustrated in section 7.
- 1.4 Effective involvement of organisations and local communities improves planning policies, and is a requirement of producing sound Local Plans. Clarity on planning policy production can be seen as important to supporting the legal requirement for effective co-operation on Local Plan production between public bodies (Duty to Cooperate).
- 1.5 Planning for the future needs to account for recent changes (see next section), but also to have regard to likely future opportunities and risks. These matters are considered in section 5.
- 1.6 Dartford Borough now faces a unique combination of potential future changes in its development, including:
  - Very large developments commencing within the Borough
  - Major new national transport schemes that may occur in, or with impacts on, the Borough
  - Significant uncertainties over further amendments to the national planning legislation and policy, and new planning strategies being explored in adjoining areas.
- 1.7 This LDS outlines the resulting planning policy programme put forward for Dartford looking towards 2018.

## **2. Current Planning Policy Documents**

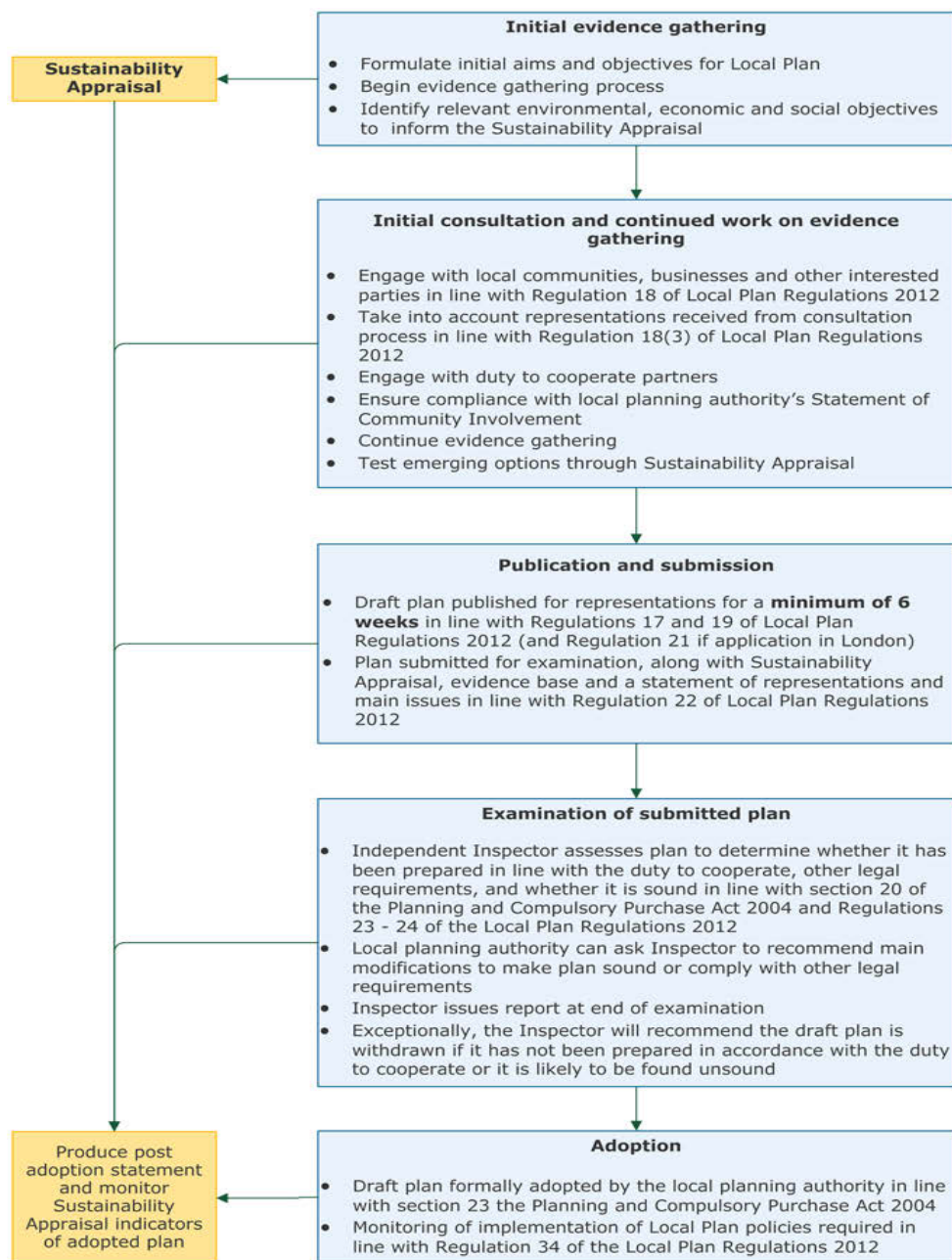
2.1 Planning policies with Development Plan status comprise of Local Plans it adopts, Neighbourhood Plans successfully produced, and Minerals and Waste Local Plans prepared and adopted by the County Council.

2.2 Development Plan documents in the Borough produced by Dartford Council is currently made up of:

- **The Dartford Core Strategy (2011) including changes to the Proposals Map.**
- **The Borough of Dartford Local Plan (1995) and Proposals Map of the Borough–** those policies subsequently 'saved' by direction of the Secretary of State.

2.3 Policies from 1995 are currently being replaced by a new Local Plan document concerning development management. This is called the Development Policies Plan, and will result in a new Policies Map of the whole Borough.

2.4 Local Plans are produced through an iterative process structured by national regulations, with public consultation / examination at milestone stages. This is set out in the diagram below, extracted from the online national planning policy guidance. The parallel process of Sustainability Appraisal is also highlighted:



2.5 The thrust of main government policy (the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework) is found in the Dartford Core Strategy, however there have been continuing changes to the planning system.

2.6 Changes include direct government initiatives/ policy, but also precedents established in relation to the application of planning provisions as they 'bed in'. Most notably, supporting statutory processes for Local Plans are significant, such as The Duty to Cooperate, Habitats Regulations Assessment and testing of Local Plan options by formal Sustainability Appraisal. Other legislation can also impact on how planning policy has to be prepared.

2.7 Some of the main issues arising, and proposed further initiatives, since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2011 are discussed elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. In summary, these changes in the 'tools available' to deliver planning policy throw up major practical implications. They will be addressed in Dartford through the Development Policies Plan.

2.8 As explained below, Dartford Borough Council has reviewed national and local requirements and is proposing to retain its Core Strategy. The focus is on its delivery and updating details necessary for its implementation. This decision has considered issues of timing and prioritisation, in particular the fact that the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) has been responsible since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 for determining planning applications using policy produced by Dartford (and where applicable in the EDC area, Gravesham Borough Council).

2.9 Therefore the next Local Plan to be adopted will be the second part Local Plan, the Development Policies Plan document. It has been through two rounds of public consultation in 2013 in 2014/15.

### **3. Future Local Plans**

3.1 Potential risks to plan production (see overview in section 5) need to be balanced against risk of insufficient guidance being available for the major proposals emerging at Ebbsfleet and other growth locations identified in the Core Strategy. It is essential a suitable local framework is in place for decision takers.

3.2 The focus on the Ebbsfleet area follows the allocation of land there in the Dartford Core Strategy. Significant work is now ongoing in the area, led by the EDC to accelerate delivery. This includes masterplanning work, which is anticipated to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by Dartford and Gravesham Boroughs. Similarly, development proposals at Swanscombe Peninsula (London Paramount) are emerging.

3.3 The decision to continue to focus on Core Strategy delivery particularly reflects its positive approach to growth, based on three large priority areas (including at Ebbsfleet). This is considered consistent with the NPPF.

3.4 The Core Strategy sets out an ambitious 'up to' housing level in policy CS10. However a there is also a lower Core Strategy trigger for management action of 11,700 dwellings (2006 to 2026). This is considered in the approved Dartford 5 Year Supply (2015) as a suitable proxy for objectively assessed need, as required by the NPPF. As noted in the paragraph 5.3 of the 5 Year Supply Cabinet Report (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2015) this is supported by the fact the 11,700 (lowest Core Strategy level) is in excess of the latest DCLG household growth projections for Dartford.

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<sup>1</sup> DBC (2015) Evidence of Reasoning: Core Strategy and NPPF Compliance Update.

3.5 The Core Strategy's provisions need to be allowed to come to fruition (notably through the Development Policies Plan). As stated in the most recent 5 Year Supply Cabinet Report (October 2015, paragraph 6.4):

*Dartford can demonstrate a housing land supply which significantly exceeds current demographic projections of housing need; the Core Strategy is considered fit for purpose in delivering the sustainable development and regeneration of Dartford; and there is a pressing need to put in place detailed policies to ensure the development which is now rapidly coming forward, meets the expectations for sustainability and quality of both Dartford Council and the EDC.*

3.6 Given the excess of capacity identified in the Core Strategy over indications of local need, and the government's preference for minimising the number of Local Plans, a plan under the Core Strategy making land allocations for a range of uses such as new housing sites was not envisaged and remains unnecessary.

3.7 National policy changes for Gypsies and Travellers accommodation also present uncertainty. Moreover, interpretation and application to take time to bed in. However updated provisions, including criteria to deal with planning applications, are suitable in a development management plan.

3.8 In summary, there are a number of shifts underway: national planning reform driven by the government, options to amend London's spatial strategy and, in this Borough, ongoing major projects within the EDC area. However it is anticipated that greater clarity on these issues will emerge as 2016 progresses, and there is at that stage expected to be an opportunity to begin work on looking at a review of strategic policy.

3.9 A Core Strategy review/ single Local Plan will be a fundamental corporate undertaking requiring considerable up front evidence gathering, including major cooperation on strategic matters, confirmation of objectively assessed need and a fresh programme of public participation. A consultation document is unlikely to be available for discussion until 2017, with adoption of the Plan not possible until 2019 at the earliest. However it is considered important broad dates are outlined and understood to explain the local approach to dealing with strategic issues.

3.10 In the intervening period, the focus remains on Core Strategy delivery through cooperation with public bodies, working on infrastructure projects, the Development Policies Plan and (where necessary) supplementary policy. Progressing these areas will enable objectives to be met, and the required balanced growth of homes, jobs and infrastructure to be delivered.

## **4. Existing Supporting Documents**

4.1 Documents (other than Local Plans) produced to support planning and regeneration in the Borough are highlighted here.

4.2 Finalisation and implementation of the Development Policies Plan will require completion/ maintenance of significant *technical or delivery documents* on certain topics, for example in relation to Habitats Assessment. These and other key issues may form part of the monitoring regime set out. The Five Year Supply will be closely monitored and fully updated at least annually.

4.3 *Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)* expand or add details to policies laid out in Local Plan documents. The 'Dartford Development Policies Plan & Overall Programme' Cabinet Report (December 2014, paragraph 3.4) noted: "The following are expected to remain important parts of the Borough's

planning policy framework:

- The Dartford Housing Windfall SPD 2014
- The Parking Standards SPD 2012
- The Northern Gateway SPD 2012

These should be accorded significant weight, having been through the formal process and consultation set out in the relevant legislation. In contrast other development guides/ briefs still in existence (available on the Council's website) have lesser weight."

4.4 Although not a formal requirement to include in the LDS, for the avoidance of doubt Section 6 outlines some important further SPDs proposed.

4.5 *The Authorities Monitoring report (AMR)* will continue to be produced annually to report on the performance and relevance of these policies and Local Plans, and to provide data on against economic, environmental and social objectives. The AMR will also report on ongoing Duty to Cooperate activity.

4.6 *The Dartford Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)* came in to force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. The Borough's CIL Charging Schedule, introduced after viability testing, public consultation and Examination in Public, sets out £/sqm levies on certain types of development to help fund infrastructure. Viability assessment supporting Dartford's CIL was done before the current upturn in house prices and delivery.

4.7 The CIL regime takes some time to have effect on infrastructure funding, and its operation in Dartford is still effectively settling in. It would also be impacted by prospective changes to national government policy e.g. attempts to impose national affordable housing site size thresholds.

4.8 However the government is starting to review its overall performance nationally. The Council has therefore identified a potential period to allow for consideration of any amendments to the national CIL regime, and to review if there appear clear benefits if the Dartford CIL Charging Schedule were to be revisited.

4.9 The council is aware that timetabling information on CIL and SPDs is useful so will ensure applicable details are made available for information purposes through the council's website.

4.10 *The Dartford Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)* sets out how the crucial process of public engagement will shape planning in the district. Dartford's SCI was adopted in 2006 following Examination in Public. Its central principles are still salient for guiding public involvement.

## **5. Risk Assessment/ Monitoring and Review**

5.1 The proposed production timetable is considered to be appropriate to allow for the completion of the Development Plan and for up to date policies to be maintained. However there are considerable risks and uncertainties to delivering the schedules proposed in the LDS from external factors. Major changes to the planning system present **high risks with high levels of implications**, but other potential factors include:



- **Medium risk/ high** levels of implications: Ongoing *recruitment and retention* issues could continue, presenting difficulties in the recognised context of skills shortages in the planning profession.
- **Medium risk/ medium** levels of implications: *Duty to cooperate* actions should enable Local Plan adoption, but by its nature any joint work (e.g. collective studies) increases the risk of the Borough not being able to adhere to its own timetable. Duty to Cooperate/ Localism Act implications are featured in the Appendix.
- **Low risk/ high** levels of implications: *Political change*; Borough elections are however not scheduled until May 2019, and the next general election will be 2020.
- **Low risk/ low** levels of implications: Additional resources needed following unexpected *outcomes of engagement* with key stakeholders and the public (an abnormally large volume of comments at consultation stages, or demands for further technical evidence),

5.2 National legislation/ policy and recruitment/ retention of planners therefore together presents a substantial risk to the production of new Local Plans. These are highly pertinent to the delivery of the steps envisaged towards the latter part of the period.

5.3 Risks are regarded as slightly lesser for a development management plan (compared to reconsidering overall long-term strategy) given new national policy/ guidance is largely complete and reform such as the Housing Standards Review has been delivered.

5.4 The legislative need and political commitment to have up-to-date plans in place remains firmly in place. A flexible strategy to planning policy production can deal with both short term pressures and longer term expectations, and this philosophy has influenced the programme proposed here.

5.5 Monitoring and review of the LDS will be carried out through the Authorities Monitoring Report (AMR). This is important to enable communities and interested parties to be aware of progress.

## 6. Profile of Proposed Planning Policy Documents

6.1 Work will be undertaken on the following key documents over the next three years (2016-2018). Other planning policy documents may also apply.

### 6.2 Development Policies Plan

<b>Role / Subject</b>	<p>The second part of the Development Plan, flowing from the Core Strategy, this Local Plan will include development management policies. It will cover both specific topics for development or protection, and generic policies used as the basis for determining most planning applications.</p> <p>It will support and deliver objectives in the Core Strategy to allow appropriate sustainable development to take place across the District. There will be new cross cutting/ Borough-wide topic policies.</p> <p>It will replace The Borough of Dartford Local Plan (1995) and include policies to directly address the NPPF.</p>	
<b>Conformity</b>	<p>Implementing the Core Strategy and NPPF, with regard to other policy. Produced in accordance with Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations requirements. No further Local Plans are expected under the Core Strategy.</p> <p>It will be important, depending on circumstances, to read the document with the SPDs outlined here, or any adopted Neighbourhood Plan. It could be supported in future by other potential SPDs as necessary (to be confirmed).</p>	
<b>Coverage</b>	Whole Borough including EDC area within Dartford, to 2026.	
<b>Potential Key Partners Include</b>	LPAs and public bodies (Duty to Cooperate if strategic), EDC, Parish/Town Councils, and residents and workers across the Borough.	
<b>Timetable:</b>		
Commencement of formal public representations on 'Publication' Plan (Regulation 19)	January 2016	
Submission for Examination in Public	April/ May 2016	
Adoption (if found 'sound' at Examination).	By November 2016	

### 6.3 Dartford Policies Map

<b>Role / Subject</b>	<p>It will illustrate decisions made through the Core Strategy and Development Policies Local Plans, and other key environmental designations e.g. protected areas. Milestones in its production and drafting will therefore stem from the parallel stages above; although full digitisation/ illustration of ‘for information only data’ may not occur before adoption.</p> <p>It is the map showing applicability of all geographic Local Plan policies, for example employment allocations, retail frontages, key local environmental characteristics etc. Green Belt boundary will not change as a result of the Local Plans.</p> <p>Formerly known as the Proposals Map, this resource is currently in the form of a website; and in terms of printed documents, 1995 maps and the 2011 Core Strategy appendix.</p>	
<b>Coverage</b>	As Development Policies Plan	
<b>Status</b>		
<b>Potential Key Partners Include</b>		
<b>Timetable</b>		

### 6.4 Ebbsfleet Masterplan SPD

<b>Role / Subject</b>	A masterplan to provide coherent and up-to-date sustainable development and design guidance, to provide clarity for the public and development community and for use by the EDC.	
<b>Conformity</b>	Implementing Local Plans and the NPPF, with regard to other policy.	
<b>Coverage</b>	The EDC area (parts of Dartford/Gravesham Boroughs).	
<b>Potential Key Partners Include</b>	Gravesham Borough Council, Kent County Council, EDC, Parish/ Town Councils, Landowners and residents and workers,	

<b>Provisional Timetable (To be confirmed with partners):</b>	
<b>Evidence gathering</b>	Commenced
<b>Initial public participation</b>	Commenced
<b>Commencement of public consultation on draft document</b>	April 2016
<b>Adoption</b>	Summer 2016

## 6.5 Dartford Town Centre SPD

<b>Role / Subject</b>	A vision and framework acting as a catalyst for regeneration and delivery of Core Strategy priorities in the Town Centre.
<b>Conformity</b>	Delivering Dartford Core Strategy/ Development Policies Local Plans, the NPPF, and with regard to other policy.
<b>Coverage</b>	In/around Dartford Town Centre as defined on the Policies Map.
<b>Potential Key Partners</b>	Kent County Council, Parish/Town Councils, Landowners and residents and workers.
<b>Timetable:</b>	
<b>Evidence gathering</b>	Commenced
<b>Initial public participation</b>	February 2016
<b>Commencement of public consultation on draft document</b>	Summer 2016
<b>Adoption</b>	By November 2016

## 6.6 Core Strategy Review / Single Local Plan

<b>Role / Subject</b>	<p>A revised strategic approach for the Borough, including any changes to account for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duty to Cooperate progress,</li> <li>• objectively assessed housing need,</li> <li>• progress on developments in the EDC area</li> <li>• national infrastructure decisions e.g. transport projects</li> <li>• latest national / regional policy including potential London Plan review implications, and</li> </ul>
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	Local Plans produced elsewhere. Informed by major new technical studies.
<b>Conformity</b>	National policy, with regard to other policy. Produced in accordance with Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations requirements.
<b>Coverage</b>	Whole Borough including EDC area within Dartford.
<b>Potential Key Partners Include</b>	LPAs and public bodies (Duty to Cooperate), EDC, GLA, Parish/Town Councils, and residents and workers across the Borough.
<b>Timetable:</b>	
<b>Evidence gathering</b>	To commence by end 2016
Initial public consultation (Regulation 18)	Winter 2017
Commencement of public consultation on options (Regulation 18)	Autumn 2018
Submission for Examination in Public	End 2018*
<i>*Anticipated to be adopted (if found 'sound' at Examination) in 2019.</i>	



## 7. Timetable Illustration

	2016												2017												2018																
	J a n	F e b	M a r	A p r	M a y	J u n	J u l	A u g	S e p	O c t	N o v	D e c	J a n	F e b	M a r	A p r	M a y	J u n	J u l	A u g	S e p	O c t	N o v	D e c	J a n	F e b	M a r	A p r	M a y	J u n	J u l	A u g	S e p	O c t	N o v	D e c					
DP Local Plan & Polic- ies Map	P*			S							A*																														
Town Cent- re SPD (tbc)		I				C					A																														
Ebbs- fleet SPD (tbc)	I			C					A																																
CIL													R		(N)																										
New Local Plan & Polic- ies Map																							I													C*					
AMRs	M												M													M															
5yr S									F					M									F					M										F			

## Milestones and Key to Diagram

### New Planning Policies (Local Plans/ SPDs):

Whole work period shown shaded

- **I: Initial public involvement as part of early preparation**
- **C: Key public consultation stages for planning policy**
- **P: Formal representations period (on publication Local Plan).**
- **S: Submission for independent Examination (Local Plans)**
- **A: Adoption (Subject to Examination outcome).**

\*: Local Plan documentation accompanied by separate Policies Map documentation.

### Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule:

- **R: Review of CIL sufficiency**
- **(N): New CIL Charging Schedule work (consultation, examination to adoption) if required following Review**

### Monitoring:

- **M: AMR on previous financial year**
- **F: 5 year deliverable housing land supply for the year**

- tbc: To be confirmed