

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

Planning Policy Programme

DBC Planning Services

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DARTFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Dartford Borough Council

Local Development Scheme 2026 – 2028

Introduction

- 1) A Local Development Scheme (LDS) by local planning authorities is required under national legislation. It sets out what the planning policies proposed by a local authority are, how they will be introduced, and when.
- 2) An LDS confirms how the planning strategy is to be implemented and kept up-to-date. This is valuable to inform the public and organisations of the main issues to be addressed, of opportunities to participate in the formation of additional policy, and to outline new policies that would apply fully to planning applications.
- 3) The LDS therefore clarifies how Dartford Borough Council intends to review and refresh the approach to Borough development. To forward plan, it accounts for recent changes but considers likely local and national future opportunities and risks.
- 4) The proposed approach is outlined in the following sections of the LDS:
 - **Dartford Local Development Scheme Timetable** (Figure 1)
 - **Profile of new documents** proposed:
 - Table I: The Development Plan
 - Table II: Supplementary policies proposed
 - Table III: Discretionary statutory tools
- 5) The Explanatory Note is provided in the Appendix. This sets the background and usefully provides more detail. It covers the adopted Dartford Plan and other current policies and infrastructure planning, their performance, external and internal needs, and development/strategy issues; all of which informed the LDS proposals.

Dartford Local Development Scheme Timetable

	2026				2027				2028	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Parking standards update	A									
HMO SPD	M,P	A								
Central Dartford design SPD		M,P			A					
River Darent/ flooding SPD		M,P		A						
Local Plan [from new legislation]				M	P	TBC: P, A	TBC: P, A	TBC: P, A	TBC: P, A	TBC: P, A
HMO Article 4										
CIL charging schedule review										
Infrastructure funding statement				R				R		
Authorities monitoring report			R				R			
Brownfield land register				R				R		
Five year deliverable housing supply			R				R			

Figure 1:

The Dartford Local Development Scheme Timetable

Legend:

- **M** = Member confirmation to progress
- **P** = Public consultation
- **A** = Final adoption/agreement by Members
- **R** = Data report

Profile of new documents proposed (Tables I-III)

TABLE I: The Development Plan

TOPIC	APPLICABILITY	PURPOSE	RELATIONSHIP WITH EXISTING POLICY	KEY PRODUCTION STAGES
NEW LOCAL PLAN (REVISED FORM)	Borough-wide, including Ebbsfleet (once full legislation in place)	To set Borough development and infrastructure strategy, and to provide the main local basis for determining planning applications. It will contain the Borough's spatial strategy, identify/allocate new residential and commercial sites, and other criteria. The accompanying policies map will define Metropolitan Green Belt boundaries, which may need revision as a result of higher-level planning policy requirements. It will <u>not</u> derive the local housing target, or feature a comprehensive suite of development management policies. There may be a need to include some policy details currently in SPD (proposed to be abolished in national reforms).	There may be proposed aspects of continuity with the existing Dartford Plan strategy. However, it must be produced in general conformity with any Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) that may be in place in the subregion by then, and directly apply the housing target allocated to the Borough. It will also have to take proper account of national policy, including National Development Management Policies. Other policies including Minerals and Waste and Neighbourhood Plan(s) will need to be considered.	<i>TBC nationally. Required to complete within 30 months.</i>
REST OF DEV. PLAN		[KENT COUNTY COUNCIL & STONE TOWN COUNCIL are responsible for (review of) the rest of the development plan policies within the Borough. More details are given in the Appendix]		

TABLE II: Supplementary policies proposed (under current legislation)

TOPIC	APPLICABILITY	PURPOSE	RELATIONSHIP WITH EXISTING POLICY	PRODUCTION KEY STAGES
HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) SPD	Borough-wide	To provide additional planning criteria specific to HMOs that planning applications can be considered against. It is expected policies will set out requirements to be met with regard to the location of new HMOs and criteria to be met in order to ensure the impacts of the HMO does not cause harm.	Helps deliver Dartford Plan objectives and policies, including Policy M10 part one: <i>Development must maintain a range of dwelling sizes and sufficient garden land, retain or enhance the character, local environment and amenity of established residential areas, and achieve satisfactory quality of development.</i>	- Evidence gathering with applicable stakeholders, - Draft to Cllrs, - Public consultation, - Amendment; - Cllrs adopt final SPD
CENTRAL DARTFORD DESIGN SPD	Central Dartford (see Chapter 3 of the Dartford Plan)	To provide further development and design clarity over the opportunities and requirements for regeneration in/around Dartford town centre. Will be illustrated to convey the potential of the area in a publicly accessible way for stakeholders including landowners and investors. Outlining overall masterplan principles will promote how high-quality development can be achieved, and help de-risk the delivery of new homes and businesses, services, and infrastructure in line with agreed objectives.	Will deliver several key objectives of local and national plans and policies, especially the Dartford Plan, and spatial strategy, including Policy D1 part one: <i>The high quality transformation of Central Dartford is actively supported as a destination to invest, be productive and creative, visit for shopping, leisure and services, and as a place to call home. Valued, good quality buildings and spaces will be repurposed, enhanced and better used. Development in and around the Town Centre will bring an expanded range of activities and services to the town including cultural and creative facilities, increasing economic vitality and the choice of jobs, providing new infrastructure, and will grow the resident community</i>	- Evidence gathering with applicable stakeholders - Draft to Cllrs, - Public consultation, - Amendment; - Cllrs adopt final SPD

<p>RIVER DARENT/ FLOODING SPD</p>	<p>Lower Darent Riverside area and/ or potentially applicable in part Borough-wide</p>	<p>To assist the long-term sustainable development of Lower Darent (including Dartford town centre) and better manage flood risk in the Borough. This can inform funding and investment bids in flood management and the Riverside, and along with projects such as TE2100.</p>	<p>For use in infrastructure planning and to deliver Dartford Plan aims for Central Dartford regeneration. SPD will support its use in development management, especially if it assists to clarify issues such as the sequential test and amended national guidance. It can be an update to and formalisation of the current Lower Darent Riverside Strategy. Is essential to achievement of the Dartford Plan Policy M4 for part one: <i>Development with a frontage along the Rivers Thames or Darent will be expected to fully explore the potential for improving: the riparian landscape, biodiversity, access and appeal for pedestrians and cyclists, and opportunities for river based recreation. This should be planned along with securing any flood defence infrastructure that may be required...</i></p>	<p>- Evidence gathering with applicable stakeholders, - Draft to Cllrs, - Public consultation, - Amendment; - Cllrs adopt final SPD.</p>
<p>PARKING STANDARDS GUIDELINES</p>	<p>Borough-wide</p>	<p>To provide guidelines relevant to individual planning applications on the approach to (including the form and level of) potential vehicular parking needs arising from some developments. Takes account of a range of factors including on-street parking arrangements, highway and pedestrian safety, townscape and local amenity, retention of gardens and green space, consumer preferences, and the need to promote sustainable transport, including active travel. The parking guidelines will also include expectations for cycle parking provision</p>	<p>Updates the existing 2012 standards. It may seek alignment with the approach of the County Council as the Local Highways Authority. The Dartford plan states (policy M16 part five): <i>Development must provide an appropriate level and form of vehicle parking provision, taking into account any existing provision as relevant to the development, and in full accordance with the applicable Parking Standards...</i></p>	<p>- Evidence gathering with applicable stakeholders, - Cllrs agree.</p>

TABLE III: Discretionary statutory tools

TITLE	DESCRIPTION	RELATIONSHIP WITH EXISTING POLICY	CONSEQUENCE
COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) CHARGING SCHEDULE	The charging schedule sets the types of development and levy rates (£/sqm) at which developments in the Borough contribute to infrastructure through CIL. It is developed through a process similar to a streamlined local plan production process, i.e. with consultation and the scrutiny of an independent examination.	<p>A new charging schedule should be supported by a fresh infrastructure development plan outlining infrastructure proposals, plus the associated statutory infrastructure funding statement reporting on total CIL receipts.</p> <p>Dartford's CIL, with developer contributions identified via the charging schedule, is integral to the delivery of several key objectives of local and national plans and policies, especially the Dartford Plan, and spatial strategy, including Policy S3 part seven:</p> <p><i>Dartford's infrastructure planning documents will set out the Council's priorities for infrastructure, and be a principal basis for working with partners on infrastructure delivery. Development will contribute to infrastructure provision as necessary in line with national policy through: a. Contributions via Dartford's Community Infrastructure Levy;</i></p>	<p>There is potential to update and replace the original 2014 Dartford charging schedule. CIL rates have been increased/ maintained in real terms since then (building cost indexation increases are applied to the CIL rates annually).</p> <p>A charging schedule proposes the local CIL rates and the applicable uses/proposals based on an assessment of economic viability of development.</p> <p>A review can reconsider the financial and development impacts of the local application of CIL. There are relationships with the ability of the private sector to deliver development (particularly on some brownfield land sites for example in the town centre), and with the scope to negotiate an affordable housing contribution that will materialise through successful development. It also determines levels of CIL receipts.</p>

**ARTICLE 4
DIRECTION
(HMO)**

A mechanism local planning authorities can deploy if appropriate legal requirements are followed to remove permitted development rights 'national grants of permission' for particular activities, e.g. certain change of uses, typically in a targeted area. Legislative requirements for introduction include publicity and notification procedures.

(Not policy making but note HMO SPD above).

An Article 4 Direction on HMOs could seek to remove the permitted development rights in an area that currently allow dwellings to become small HMOs without applying for planning permission. This would bring small HMOs in line with larger ones where there are no national permitted development rights. Material changes of use to an HMO would therefore require permission, regardless of size. The application will then be determined for approval or refusal in the usual way, including with the standard right to appeal to a planning inspector retained.

Appendix – Explanatory Note

1. Current Dartford planning strategy

1.1 Local planning policies with Development Plan status are the legal starting point for deciding applications. National policy is an important material consideration, but does not equate to the Development Plan.

1.2 Under current legislation, planning policies with full Development Plan status in an area typically comprise:

- Borough-level strategy and policies in the adopted Local Plan (shown on a Policies Map),
- Any ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plans (e.g. by a parish council), and;
- Plans with policies focused on minerals and waste development (unless in a unitary authority area).

1.3 Dartford’s general policies with this status have been provided for the Borough through:

- **The [Dartford Plan to 2037](#) and [Policies Map](#)** (adopted 2024),
- And, where within the designated area, the **[Stone Neighbourhood Development Plan](#)** (made 2022).

“The adopted Dartford Plan identifies continued brownfield land recycling, particularly to further advance the Dartford Town Centre regeneration and growth at Ebbsfleet, and identifies a clear overall Borough-wide spatial strategy with Key Diagram.”

1.4 The adopted (2024) Dartford Plan covers the whole Borough and is therefore also applied by the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation in the Borough. It wholly replaces previous plans by Dartford (including the 2011 Core Strategy). The Plan provides for a range of economic, community and environmental facilities to support new development and the wellbeing of all residents. Along with the associated Policies Map:

- The Dartford Plan identifies the level of and best locations for infrastructure, new homes, services, economic development, and green space.
- It specifically identifies and prioritises sustainable locations and continued brownfield land recycling, particularly to further advance the Dartford Town Centre regeneration and take forward agreed growth at Ebbsfleet, with devoted chapters on these locations, and a clear overall Borough-wide spatial strategy set (and illustrated in the key diagram).

1.5 For minerals and waste proposals, [Kent County Council](#) has been updating its policies. These would apply to qualifying developments in Dartford.

1.6 The principal relationship between types of local planning policy applying in Dartford is illustrated in Figure 2. At the heart of Borough-wide strategy is The Dartford Plan to 2037, complemented where appropriate by neighbourhood planning policies for Stone, plus guidance through SPDs. Planning policies for mineral or waste developments sit alongside these.

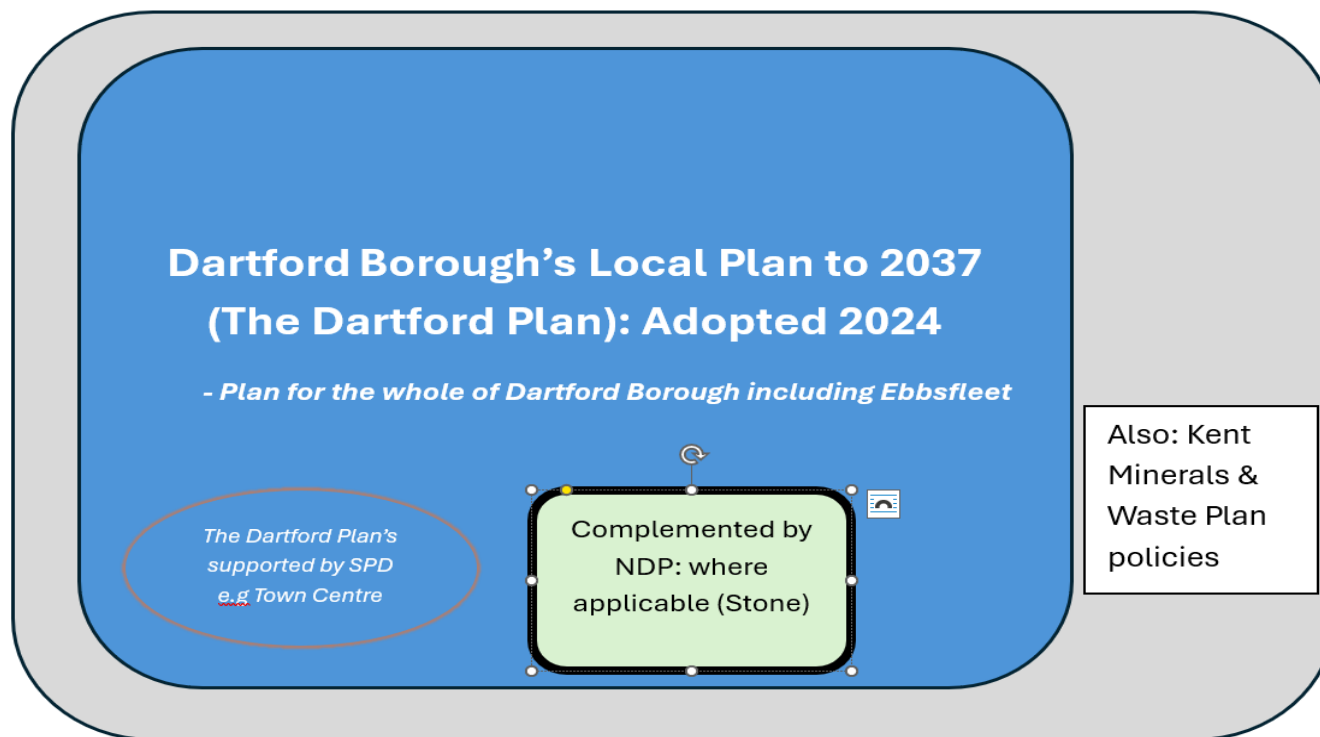


Figure 2:

The 2024 adopted Dartford Plan provides the Borough wide development plan (and for proposals in Stone, the neighbourhood plan), as does County minerals and waste policy.

Additional Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) may be produced for guidance.

1.7 Outside of development plan documents, currently the other form of local planning policy is the option of introducing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). These provide additional guidance on applying certain policies laid out in Local Plans.

1.8 Although holding a supplementary role, SPDs often provide useful guidelines on specific local topics. Alternatively, they may relate to a particular location, as with the Dartford town centre in Figure 2.

1.9 The Dartford Plan refers to two existing SPDs:

- The Dartford Town Centre Framework SPD 2018
- The Parking Standards SPD 2012

As set out later, their status will be reviewed and revised content is anticipated. Nevertheless, they benefit from material weight in decision-making, having been through public consultation and current legislative requirements.

1.10 To manage development and infrastructure proposals sustainably over time and place, planning may also operate through other statutory tools. These can be usefully included in the LDS to inform the public of Dartford's overall approach. Ongoing monitoring and data reporting, outlined below, informs stakeholders of the performance of existing policy. This information is used by the council and planning system to review and manage the current Local Plan.

1.11 Active infrastructure planning by Dartford is central to delivery of the adopted Local Plan. See paragraph 1.13 below.

1.12 Statutory and local data monitoring:

- The *Authority Monitoring Report* (AMR) will continue to be produced annually to report on the performance and relevance of policies and the Dartford Plan, and to provide data against economic, environmental and social objectives.
- The *Brownfield Land Register* identifies potential housing sites on applicable land, and as a statutory document it can be a significant tool (the Dartford Plan has not so far included a Part II: identifying new sites).
- The *five-year housing land supply statement* is produced at least annually in response to national planning policy. It estimates the available level of housing sites in the Borough that can be shown to be 'deliverable' over the next five years, and calculates if they will cover the average housing requirement of 790 dwellings per annum established in the Dartford Plan.
- The above three documents (plus the IFS in paragraph 1.13 below) are *data reports* published as shown in Figure's 1 timetable.
- Other statutory documents include Dartford's *Statement of Community Involvement* (SCI) outlining how the crucial process of public engagement will shape local planning outcomes.

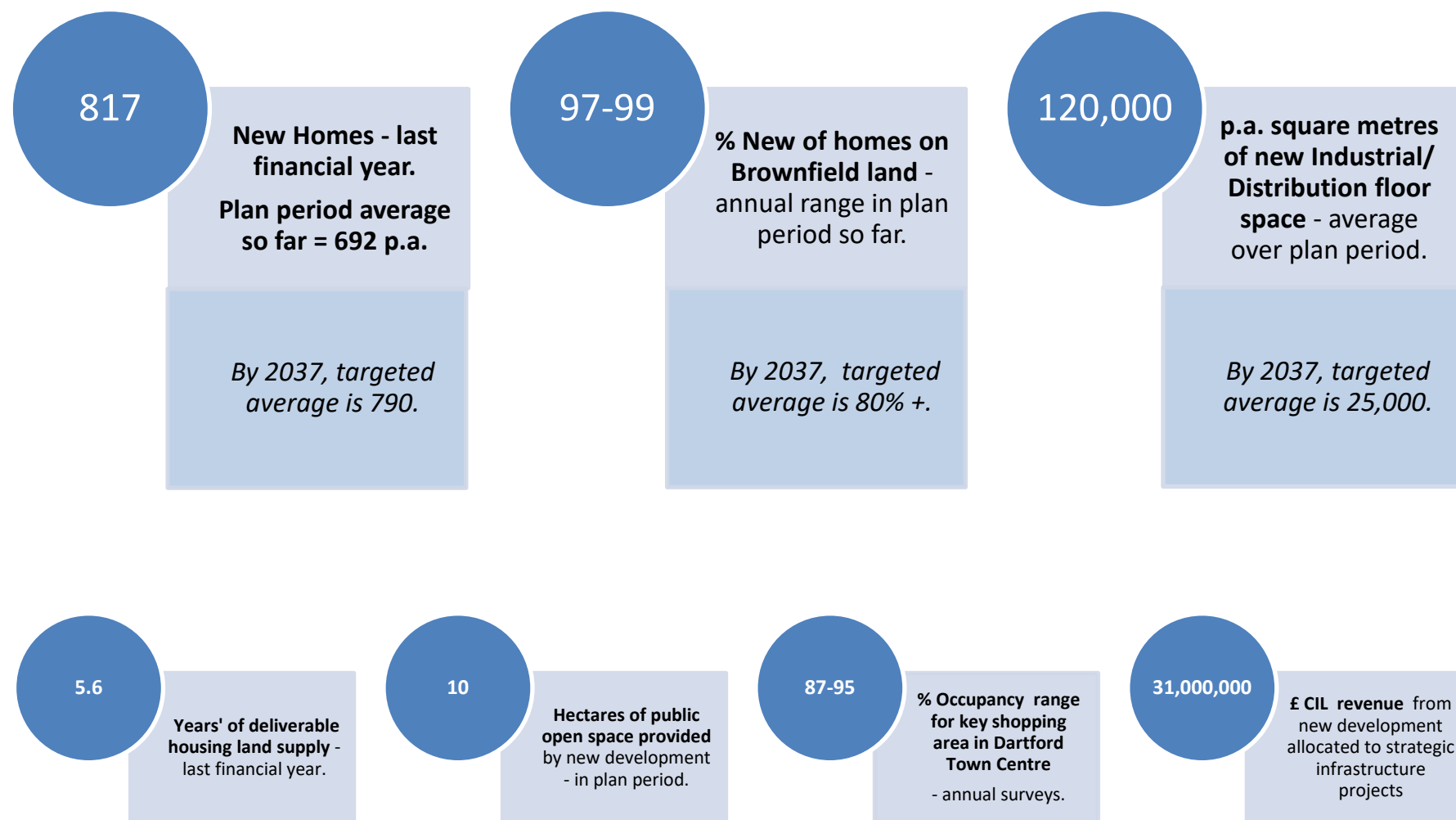
1.13 Local infrastructure planning:

- Dartford has implemented a *Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)*. The CIL charging schedule sets the rate and categories of development on which Dartford's levy is applied (£/sqm). It is produced through a process similar to Local Plans.
- The *Infrastructure Funding Statement* is a report required by law annually documenting the level of developer contributions received (CIL and individual Section 106 agreements) and its expenditure on infrastructure.
- Dartford also produces regular non-statutory information to assist infrastructure planning. This includes an *Infrastructure Delivery Plan*, categorising anticipated projects. Dartford has also produced a frequently asked questions guidance note for developers/landowners paying CIL.

2. Review of current provisions: summary

2.1 Evidence and monitoring data indicates that under the 2024 Dartford Plan sufficient development is happening overall, and at sustainable locations (reducing pressure on transport networks and the Metropolitan Green Belt). high. The illustration below, Figure 3, shows progress so far (and Local Plan targets- where applicable). Use of brownfield land and new industrial/ distribution development levels have been high.

Figure 3 – Sample indications of Dartford Plan development outcomes (plan period from April 2021)



2.2 There has been significant recent progress in strategic infrastructure projects coming forward successfully bidding for Dartford's CIL. Out of available funds from new development, £31 million has been allocated from CIL so far to help secure delivery of education, NHS and environmental improvements in the Borough.

2.3 It is however noted the Borough's CIL charging structure and rates (charging schedule) date from 2014. The financial viability of locations/types of development may have changed considerably, and there is therefore a case for considering a review of the charging schedule.

2.4 Figure 3 above, and the wide range of datasets collected on past and anticipated delivery, show some significant changes, and the impacts of changeable national and local economic and planning conditions. Borough prospects for maintaining residential developments – at planned locations set out in the Local Plan – are at present generally positive with the Dartford Plan's extensive housing land availability (subject to the national economy and planning reforms). No major housing sites have resulted from the overturn on appeal of decisions made under the current adopted plan.

2.5 Both the town centre and smaller local centres continue to have vacancy rates below national averages. Residential development levels have varied within the town centre (Central Dartford as described in the Local Plan) but Figure 3 shows occupancy annually as being at least 87%. Its renewal has progressed, particularly through council investment in public realm and environmental improvements to improve traffic and transport.

2.6 With the policy framework (as outlined in Section 1 above) supporting effective local decisions on planning applications, and continued performance as a spatial strategy providing clarity for the Borough, the Dartford Plan will be maintained. It will remain the primary factor managing environmental, economic and housing needs and pressures faced by towns and villages in the Borough.

“The Dartford Plan will remain the primary planning factor in managing environmental, economic and housing needs and pressures faced by towns and villages.”

2.7 There is clearly an option for new or updated SPDs to help delivery and keep guidance up-to-date. To meet a range of sustainable development needs, and to maintain support for committing to additional planning policy activity, it is recommended this should focus on themes that collectively address environmental, economic and social sustainability issues.

3. Maintaining Dartford's planning policies

Risks and issues

3.1. Across the sustainable development aims that underpin the planning system, are currently worldwide pressures. Namely:

- *environmental* protection, with growing risks and natural hazards due to climate change
- *economic* wellbeing, with international political uncertainty undermining confidence, and reduced productivity and other challenges to the stability of the globalised (post)industrial economies,
- *and* social progress, with quality of life reducing due to very high costs of living, including for housing and energy.

3.2 At a national level, the government is proposing the reorganisation of both the planning system and local government. This may be largely intended to respond to the above pressures, but it increases the challenges of achieving policy framework updates in the shorter term.

3.3 The government reforms aim to speed up and further increase the number of new homes granted planning permission. A new approach is set to be put forward on the steps necessary to introduce a new Local Plan. Plan content is also expected to have a clearer site/area development and delivery focus, with lesser emphasis on local development management (detailed topics) policies than in the past.

3.4 Over time, local plans will have to be in general conformity with a 'spatial development strategy' introduced as a new level of planning, to coordinate development and strategic infrastructure. It will be on a wider geographic scale than local plans that housing targets will be confirmed (consistent with national policy), with delivery to be addressed and detailed through the local plans within the spatial development strategy's sub-region.

3.5 There are no 2026 elections in Dartford, but the even more impactful structural issue of relevance is the proposed local government reorganisation, currently stated to be complete in 2028 ('shadow election' the year before). This LDS is by, and for, Dartford Borough Council and does not put forward initiation of new workstreams beyond this but has regard to future implications.

3.6 The LDS addresses this by proposing productive local activities that can be undertaken initially under the Dartford Plan and current planning system. It also outlines activity needed once forthcoming legislative and structural changes for planning and local government have been confirmed.

3.7 With the need to consider the new local plan system, and an emphasis on getting input from residents and local organisations, there is the opportunity for public engagement with Dartford's residents and stakeholders to express, discuss and build consensus on Dartford's specific future growth requirements. Early-stage local plan preparation and public participation will distil the regeneration and sustainability priorities of this area. This information should be carefully considered and taken forward in future development strategy, whatever the form of local government and planning that emerges.

"Planning policy activities are proposed under the Dartford Plan and current planning system. But once changes have been confirmed, public participation towards a new local plan can build consensus and distil the specific priorities of Dartford, to be tackled through future development strategy including within a wider area."

3.8 Following any local government reorganisation, extant adopted planning policies will remain applicable across the Borough.

3.9 Other potential risk factors include:

- Medium chance/medium levels of implications: *additional resources needed* following new government policy. There are increased expectations for greater digitisation and using technology to deliver better quality public engagement and document presentation/policy. These are likely to prove resource and potentially labour intensive, prior to the medium/longer term (at least).
- Medium chance/high levels of implications: *recruitment and retention* issues could worsen still, presenting difficulties in the recognised context of skills shortages in the planning profession, a wider range of urban design and infrastructure skills required; added to the lesser resilience of a small team.

3.10 There are many uncertainties, risks and challenges. Nevertheless, in these circumstances a clear indication of the future policy framework for the Borough can be of particular benefit. The appropriate documents/topics are profiled above in the main body of the LDS. The timetable outlined to take forward (Figure 1) is considered possible and suitable to address evolving development issues in the Borough.

3.11 The council is aware that updated timetabling, including on CIL and SPDs, is useful so it will ensure applicable details are made available for information purposes through its website. Estimating specific dates for all future stages is considered unrealistic. They will be confirmed and publicised via the website. A reasonable projection of expected broad dates for these has been featured in the LDS timescale all the best available information, and with flexibility to complete work streams and potentially instigate new tasks as required at later points/once there is greater clarity.

Dartford's LDS - proposed activities

3.12 The actions and new documents Dartford proposes, with key stages for each component scheduled and illustrated in LDS, are detailed below.

3.13 *Work towards a new form local plan covering Dartford is programmed to start late 2026 contingent on national policy legislation (with a public consultation held in advance of local elections/ reorganisation). See LDS Table I:*

- The importance of local plans will continue, and The Dartford Plan adopted last year is to be retained (a first statutory review is not required until 2029). Notwithstanding the current local, recognising the scale of ongoing change, it is considered beneficial for the LDS to address the potential commencement of activity for a new local plan.
- This would ensure development priorities of the Dartford area are subject to fresh discussion and public participation.
- This would have to be under the new system to be introduced, so the opportunity to do this identified in the LDS could only be an approximate estimate of initial steps.

3.14 *New supplementary policies are proposed to be introduced in 2026 and early 2027 in advance of local elections/reorganisation. See LDS Table II:*

- A balance of policy needs to be maintained to influence, and be considered for, relevant planning applications, promoting suitable and better designed development. Further policy should support achievement of the strategic objectives of the Dartford Plan. These are for well-being of communities (W1-W5), for infrastructure and economic development (I1-14) and for a green and an attractive environment (G1-G5) in the Borough.
- This would mostly be through producing formal Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) under current regulations, to be agreed by the council after public consultation. SPDs are the established means to build on existing strategy, address specific local development matters arising, provide additional guidelines and bring greater clarity.
- Some of the Borough's existing SPDs are ageing, for example the parking standards guidance. This should be considered for replacement, or at least a form of refreshed advice for planning applications introduced.
- Other potential matters to address include new issues around houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), Dartford town centre, and possible need for additional guidance for the Darenth Riverside/flood risk management; these will be considered to help achieve priorities of the Dartford Plan.

3.15 *Other planning tools (discretionary but locally essential) will be introduced/updated in support of Dartford's planning policies, with an urgent Article 4 Direction on HMOs followed by work on a new CIL charging schedule starting 2026. See LDS Table III:*

- The Article 4 Direction is required to ensure smaller HMOs are subject to scrutiny by requiring planning applications for them in this Borough. This would bring them under the ambit of the proposed SPD.
- A review of the CIL charging schedule enables consideration of the viable scope for updating and amending the categories and rates on which CIL is charged. This will ensure Dartford's regeneration locations can be delivered, that the developer contributions for infrastructure affordable housing are optimised, and that Dartford incentivises as much as possible the right location and types of development to meet local needs.

3.16 Informing the updates, a continuous cycle of data gathering to monitor performance, maintain housing sites/data, produce the comprehensive AMR, and reporting on CIL and infrastructure delivery (and providing data for service providers in Dartford) will be undertaken. See the lower four rows of Figure 1, the LDS timetable.