

## INTRODUCTION



### Context of the Plan

1.1 Shepway District covers an area of 35,670 hectares (140 sq. miles) on the east Kent coast about 75 miles from London. It has a population of nearly 100,000 most of whom live in the Folkestone and Hythe Urban area, but there are also sizeable settlements at Lydd and New Romney and along the coastal strip. The District occupies a key strategic position between the United Kingdom and mainland Europe at the end of the M20 motorway and with the Channel Tunnel, the port of Folkestone and Lydd Airport providing gateways to continental Europe.

1.2 The Shepway District Local Plan is a district wide local plan prepared by Shepway District Council in accordance with national planning policy as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and with the strategic plan for Kent; the Kent Structure Plan – Third Review. The Shepway District Local Plan was adopted in October 1997 and covers the period to 2001. This Plan, the first review of the adopted Plan, provides guidance for the period to 2011. The current Kent Structure Plan is the Third Review which was adopted in 1996. It covers the period to 2011. Work is now well advanced on the preparation of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan which is expected to be adopted in 2006. Where reference are made to Kent Structure Plan policies, in the following chapters, these refer to the adopted 1996 Plan.

1.3 The Plan consists of two elements; the Written Statement which sets out policies and proposals with accompanying text which explains the reasoning behind them, and the Proposals Map which shows where site specific policies and proposals apply. The Plan covers a wide range of issues and in some cases more than one policy may be relevant to a particular development. It is therefore important that the Plan is read as a whole rather than as a series of self-contained policies. Cross referencing between parts of the Plan has been used to draw attention to particular occasions where additional policies should be looked at, but this does not cover linkages of a more general nature.

1.4 The Written Statement and the Proposals Map are the statutory parts of the Plan to which Section 54A (see paragraph 1.5) applies. The Appendices to the Plan and the Development Briefs and guidance notes referred to in the Plan are regarded as 'Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)'. This is not part of the statutory plan but is intended to assist those using the Plan. It may also be taken into account in reaching decisions on planning applications. More weight is attached to the contents of SPG if it has been through a process of public consultation.

### The background to the Plan

1.5 Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 gives primacy to the development plan. It states: -

"Where, in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

1.6 The Shepway District Local Plan together with the Kent Structure Plan and the following local plans make up the 'development plan' to which section 54A applies.

Kent Minerals Local Plan:

Construction Aggregates (adopted December 1993)  
 Chalk and Clay (adopted December 1997)  
 Oil and Gas (adopted December 1997)  
 Kent Waste Local Plan (adopted March 1998)

1.7 The function of the Local Plan is to translate the strategic policies of the Kent Structure Plan into detailed local policies and proposals. Increasing weight is given to the provisions of local plans which are being prepared, as they progress through the formal stages to adoption. Once adopted as a statutory local plan considerable weight will be given to it by the District Council and by the Department of the Environment when considering development proposals. In accordance with Section 54A it will be the prime deciding factor in planning matters.

## The Local Plan process

1.8 Work commenced on the current review in May 1997 when extensive publicity was carried out inviting a wide range of organisations, local amenity groups and local residents to submit views on what issues the Local Plan review should have regard to. All comments and representations received have been considered in the preparation of this Plan. Figure 1 shows the stages, which all local plans must go through to achieve adoption.

1.9 The First Deposit Stage was published on 1st November 2001 when it was made publicly available and could be viewed at Council offices and public libraries. The six week consultation period ran until 13th December 2001 during which time over 1600 objections, representations and comments were made. The District Council considered all representations received and decided to make certain changes to the Plan. This Plan was known as the Revised Deposit Stage, and a further six week period for consultation was held.

1.11 The District Council held a public local inquiry in June – December 2003. An inquiry must be held unless all the objectors, whose representations have not been resolved, state in writing that they do not wish to take part. The purpose of a public local inquiry is for objections to the plan to be heard by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. The Inspector will then consider all the facts and arguments and prepare a report with recommendations on any changes which should be made to the plan.

1.12 The Inspectors report was received in June 2004. The District Council is required to consider the Inspector's report and decide what action to take on each of the recommendations. Where they decide not to accept any recommendation they must prepare a statement giving full reasons for their decision.

1.13 The Council approved a list of proposed modifications and these were advertised in November 2004. Following consideration of the responses received, the Council then resolved to make two further proposed modifications, and these were advertised in May – June 2004.

1.14 The Secretary of State has reserve powers to direct the Council to modify the Plan and a direction was issued in January 2006. The Councils Cabinet agreed to make the required amendment to the Plan in February 2006. The adopted Plan will, together with the Kent Structure Plan and the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, form the main basis for planning decisions in the district.

## Starting points

1.15 The Shepway District Local Plan First Review is based on the following principles:-

(a) The District has a diverse and attractive natural environment, which gives the District its special character. It deserves protection and enhancement because of its contribution to the quality of life and its role in achieving other Plan objectives.

(b) The Council is committed to promoting and applying the principles of sustainable development through development plans, local transport plans and all other activities of the Council. This means that a policy approach which seeks to ensure that the sum total of decisions taken today do not deny future generations the best of today's environment.

(c) The area suffers from problems of slow growth in the local economy, relatively high levels of unemployment and low wage levels. The District faces major structural imbalances in its economy which has led to the District being granted Assisted Area Status, being partly identified as a Rural Development Area and receiving funding from the Single Regeneration Budget.

(d) The Channel Tunnel, with its associated improvements in road and rail links has provided an opportunity

to boost the local economy and deal with related social and environmental difficulties.

(e) The Kent Structure Plan Third Review provides a quantitative basis for the Local Plan. Over the period 1991 – 2011 provision should be made in the District for 7,800 dwellings, 90,000 sq. m of floorspace for business (Use classes A2 and B1) and 130,000 sq. m of floorspace for industrial and warehouse development (Use Classes B2-B8).

(f) The District Council has adopted a Local Agenda 21 Strategy, which is a comprehensive plan for promoting the well being of the area, based on local needs. It sets out priorities for action on the top ten quality of life issues identified locally.

## General Aims

1.16 The Shepway District Local Plan Review has the following aims. All the aims are interrelated and need to be read together to form an overall strategy. An individual aim should not be considered in isolation from the others. The order of the aims below should not be regarded as an order of priority.

- a) To move towards more sustainable patterns of development.
- b) To concentrate new development in or adjoining the main urban areas, wherever possible, whilst protecting identified areas of open and undeveloped space with recreational or amenity value.
- c) To improve people's employment opportunities and support the local economy.
- d) To maintain an adequate supply of suitable housing and meet the challenges of affordability, dereliction and decay.
- e) To support the vitality and viability of Folkestone Town Centre as the main retail, commercial and cultural centre.
- f) To protect the countryside from inappropriate development and to safeguard areas with particular importance for landscape and nature conservation.
- g) To enhance people's quality of life through meeting economic and social needs in a way that ensures the protection and enhancement of the environment and of resources for leisure, arts, recreation and sporting activities.

## The Strategy

1.17 The overall strategy of the Local Plan is based on the above general aims. Each chapter of the Plan contains a list of aims and objectives which translate the general aims into a subject specific context.

Aim a) Chapter 2 deals with the issue of sustainability. The council is committed to promoting and applying the principles of sustainable development through Development Plans, Local Transport Plans, the Community Strategy and all other activities of the Council. This means the adoption of a policy approach which seeks to ensure that the sum total of decisions taken today do not deny future generations the best of today's environment.

Aim b) The main urban area in the district is Folkestone where 46% of the population live and 61% of jobs in Shepway are based. The other main towns are at Hythe, Lydd and New Romney. Folkestone, Hythe, and New Romney are also important centres for retail, social, cultural and recreational facilities. The Plan seeks to capitalise on the sustainability advantages of the Folkestone and Hythe urban area by identifying new development opportunities within or adjoining the urban area. This should not, however result in the development or destruction of open areas which have value or potential for recreation or amenity use, or make a significant contribution to the built environment. A balance must be struck between the need to provide for development and the need to maintain the quality of the urban environment. Sites considered suitable for development are identified in the Plan, whilst areas with recreational or amenity value or potential, are protected.

Aim c) Chapter 4 deals with employment issues. Sustainability is not just about protecting the environment and reducing the need to travel. It also encompasses quality of life issues such as meeting people's needs for new homes, jobs, services and community facilities. There is a need for people to have the opportunity for satisfying and rewarding work, with minimal damage to the environment. A major priority of the Plan's

employment policies is to identify sufficient land to provide enough jobs for the projected workforce of the district. The Plan identifies sites for new employment which will provide for a range of jobs close to the major centres of population, and where any adverse environmental effects will be minimised.

Aim d) Chapter 3 deals with housing issues. The projected growth of the local population and the continuing rise in the number of households results in a continuing need for additional new homes. In line with principles of sustainability the selection of new sites is based on a sequential approach which favours sites within the urban areas and then sites on the edge of the urban area before any sites should be found on greenfield land or outside urban areas. Hawkinge will continue to play an important role in meeting the needs for housing generated within the Folkestone and Hythe urban area, but major new development sites are identified at Folkestone Seafront and Nickolls Quarry, West Hythe, which will help to meet needs over the full Local Plan period and beyond.

Aim e) Chapter 5 deals with shopping issues and chapter 13 deals with Folkestone Town Centre. A major new retail development is planned for Folkestone Town Centre, which is intended to extend and improve the range of comparison goods available in the town. There will also be major leisure and residential development in the seafront area to provide a catalyst for the regeneration of this part of town which has become run down and unattractive. Any development will be subject to the need to protect the potential for the restoration of a cross channel passenger ferry link. Policies in the Shopping and Folkestone Town Centre chapters seek to support the vitality of Folkestone Town Centre for shopping, leisure, tourism and business.

Aim f) Large areas of the district are protected by national, strategic and local countryside, wildlife and landscape designations, and within these areas priority will be given to the protection of their special qualities. Outside the designated areas the countryside and rural environment are important as green open spaces and there will be strict control on developments which would conflict with, detract from or damage the undeveloped rural character. Only where developments can be justified in relation to important national, strategic or urgent local needs will these safeguards be relaxed.

Aim g) Policies in the Plan aim to move towards a more sustainable pattern of development, in particular, one which maintains and enhances the provision of a social and community facilities, and supports the provision of amenities, services and facilities close to the centres of population at towns and villages, where they will be accessible to the greatest number of people.

## **The local plan review process**

## Main stages

## Timing

