Ashford Borough Council is proposing a number of ‘Main Changes’ to the policies and supporting text of the Regulation 19 version of the Ashford Local Plan (published in June 2016). These changes address a range of issues raised during public consultation, to ensure the Local Plan is up to date, reflects the latest evidence base and meets the requirements of the latest national planning policy.

Consultation on the ‘Main Changes’ will run to the end of Thursday 31st August 2017 and can be viewed and commented at www.ashford.gov.uk/consult

During this period a series of exhibitions will be held that will enable local residents to ask questions and find out more about the ‘Main Changes’ to the Local Plan 2030.

For more information about the exhibitions and guidance visit www.ashford.gov.uk/local-plan-2030
The Local Plan to 2030 aims to make sure that future development within Ashford is well planned, helping to create great places and strong communities and provides a consistent approach to planning across the whole borough.

What is the Local Plan 2030?

The Local Plan 2030 allocates sites for development as well as establishing planning policies and guidance to ensure local development is built in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. It addresses housing, employment, retail, leisure, transport, community infrastructure and environmental issues such as adapting to climate change and ensuring high quality design. The general principle of the Local Plan is to encourage growth within the economy of Ashford to provide homes, employment, retail floor space and infrastructure such as community facilities and green spaces. Whilst growth in the economy is important, the plan also seeks to protect Ashford’s valued assets such as heritage, leisure, nature and open spaces. A draft of the Local Plan 2030 (Regulation 19 Version) went out for an eight week public consultation in June 2016.

What are ‘Main Changes’?

The council is now proposing ‘Main Changes’ to some of the policies and supporting text of the June 2016 version of the Local Plan for a number of reasons:

• To address a range of issues raised during the 2016 public consultation
• To ensure it is up to date and in accordance with national planning policy
• It reflects the latest evidence base, such as the revised population forecasts

It is considered necessary to address these issues before the Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State to be examined by an independent Planning Inspector. ‘Main Changes’ are changes to policies, maps and supporting paragraphs which are significant in nature and which represent a fundamental change to the way in which the policy could be interpreted. There are a number of ‘Main Changes’ that are completely new topic or site policies. It is therefore important that interested parties are given an opportunity to consider and respond to these changes.

The consultation is focused only on the ‘Main Changes’. The consultation is not an opportunity to repeat or raise further representations about other parts of the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan or to seek wider changes. All previous comments are to be retained and will be submitted to and considered by the Inspector, alongside any additional comments received.
Summary of the significant ‘Main Changes’

This document has been prepared to provide an overview of some of the key matters linked to the consultation on proposed ‘Main Changes’ to the Regulation 19 version of the Ashford Local Plan 2030. More information is available at www.ashford.gov.uk/consult including the consultation documents and background studies that have helped inform the Councils in the plan making process.

Part 1 of the ‘Main Changes’ consultation contains amendments to text and content within the Regulation 19 – June 2016 Version of the Local Plan 2030. Part 2 of the consultation contains a number of completely new topic and site policies and a new appendix. All ‘Main Changes’ are given a reference number with the prefix ‘MC’.

Summarised here are some of the most significant ‘Main Changes’:

• The overall requirement for housing has increased from 14,680 to 16,120 dwellings. This reflects the new national population projections. Policy SP2 – Strategic Approach to Housing Delivery has been replaced to reflect this increase (see MC4)

• Increased capacities are proposed on housing sites: S4 and S5, South of Kingsnorth (MC11 & MC12), S14 Park Farm South East (MC21), S16 Waterbrook (MC23), S19– Conningbrook (MC25), S20 Eureka Park (MC26), S24– Tenterden Phase B (MC29), S26 Appledore (MC31), S33, High Halden (MC37) and S38– Smeeth (MC42)

• In addition, and in order to also address the 5 year housing land supply issue, a number of additional housing allocations have been identified across the borough in the following locations: Ashford, Bridgefield, A20 (Hothfield, Westwell and Smeeth), Aldington, Brook, Challock, Charing, Chilham, Hamstreet, High Halden, Mersham, St.Michaels, Wittersham and Woodchurch (See MCs 88-105 in Part 2 of the consultation for full details)

• Deletion of the proposed Park and Ride site at the Warren (MC64) and Lower Road, Woodchurch housing site S39 (MC43)

• Windfall housing policies have been amended to provide a reasonable balance between the longstanding Local Plan policy of resisting any new general market residential development outside the built up confines of identified settlements and the NPPF’s less restrictive approach to rural housing, particularly where such development could be regarded as “sustainable development”. (MC50 and MC51)

• Affordable housing Policy HOU1 has been amended to reflect new guidance to remove the starter homes reference and require an amended mix of affordable home ownership products being included in the policy requirement in different parts of the borough (MC48)

• New policy HOU18 promotes a range and mix of dwelling types and sizes to be provided on sites of 10 dwellings or more (MC86)

• New policy SP7 seeks to resist the coalescence or merging of two or more separate settlements or the erosion of a gap between settlements resulting in the loss of individual identity or character (MC85)

• A new policy for the former Bombardier works site at Chart Road for commercial uses but which safeguards the area of the site adjacent to the railway including the railway sidings for operational railway use (MC87)

• The overall level of allocated land for economic development has been increased to 22 hectares by increasing the site area of the Waterbrook S16 allocation (MC23)
‘Main Changes’

Frequently Asked Questions

I made comments on the draft Local Plan in 2016 so do I have to comment again?

The comments received in response to consultation on the Regulation 19 draft Ashford Local Plan last summer have been analysed and, as considered necessary, have resulted in the ‘Main Changes’ that are now subject to consultation. A number of supporting documents are published with the ‘Main Changes’ including a Consultation Statement, which provides an account of the comments made in 2016 and the council’s related response. This document is available on the council’s website.

Comments made during the previous consultation on the Local Plan in 2016 will be taken forward alongside comments received during this consultation on the ‘Main Changes’ to be considered by the Planning Inspector at the Examination of the Plan. Comments made previously in 2016 do not therefore need to be repeated in this consultation, but can be added to, replaced or withdrawn if related to a proposed ‘Main Change’. As such, new or repeated representations relating to parts of the Local Plan that are not subject to a ‘Main Change’ will not be accepted.

Why does Ashford need this additional housing when the Government’s Localism Act allows local communities to determine their own housing growth?

Government policy requires local authorities to determine their own housing needs. However, this must be based upon an assessment of housing need through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), to ensure that general market and affordable housing needs are fully met until 2030. The SHMA was updated in 2017, which is why many of these changes have been made and additional sites have been allocated.

A general misunderstanding of the Localism Act is that the Government allows local communities to simply say NO to development. The choice is more about where the development needed should best be located.

Where can I find more information and make comments on these ‘Main Changes’?

The consultation documents are available on the council’s consultation portal, where you can register and make comments online at
www.ashford.gov.uk/consult

A number of exhibitions are being held across the borough during the consultation period.

More information is available at
www.ashford.gov.uk/local-plan-2030

In addition, there are hard copies of the documents, additional guidance notes and representation forms available at the Civic Centre and main libraries. Forms can also be requested to be posted or emailed out.

Any member of the Planning Policy team at Ashford Borough Council will be able to provide further assistance. You can contact them:

• 01233 330229
• planning.policy@ashford.gov.uk

What happens after my comments have been made?

Following public consultation, it is the council’s intention to assess the comments made, and if no further changes are required, submit the draft Local Plan and ‘Main Changes’ (along with relevant supporting documentation and comments received on both) to the Secretary of State. There will then be an independent examination where an appointed Planning Inspector will consider the ‘soundness’ of the Local Plan having regard to all of the comments received.

At the Examination in Public, the Inspector will look at the plan, the evidence supporting it and representations received at the Publication round of consultation (June 2016 and July 2017) and judge whether it is sound and whether it meets the legal requirements. Further information will be provided on the Examination process as this stage of the plan making process commences, and if you have made comments on the Local Plan in 2016 or during this ‘Main Change’ consultation, you will be kept informed.