



Local Plan 2030 and 'Main Changes'

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Local Plan 2030 and 'Main Changes'?

The draft Local Plan to 2030 (2016) and the 'Main Changes' proposed to it (2017) have been prepared by Ashford Borough Council. It sets out the vision, policies and proposals to guide future development and the use of land within the whole of Ashford.

It will give a degree of certainty to developers and members of the public as to where development is likely to take place and guide decision makers on the most appropriate forms of development over the plan period to 2030.

As a place-shaping document, everyone can be affected so everyone should contribute – it is therefore important to engage with the whole community in the preparation of the Local Plan.

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 2016, which is why many of these changes have been made and additional sites 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 are the additional jobs and infrastructure to meet all the new residents' needs?

The delivery of additional jobs and key infrastructure over the plan period to 2030 is a critical requirement for the delivery of a successful Local Plan. The plan provides for approximately 80 ha of land for new economic development, supporting the growth of 11,100 new jobs in the borough.

Also, as part of the documentation that runs alongside the Local Plan, the council has prepared an 'Infrastructure Delivery Plan', which identifies the need for new infrastructure resulting from development.

New developments are required through various policies in the draft Local Plan to provide the infrastructure needed to support it.

The schools, roads, water/sewerage services, GP's and William Harvey Hospital are over capacity – Are you going to improve these services before you build more houses?

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan has been prepared in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders relating to services, including KCC Highways & Education, water companies and the Environment Agency, the Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group and the East Kent NHS Trust.

It is the responsibility of these stakeholders to identify and ensure delivery of the infrastructure that is required. The Local Plan plays a supporting role in helping to deliver the infrastructure, by allocating sites or requiring developers to make financial contributions.

These stakeholders will also be formally consulted on these draft plans during this consultation stage, and we will continue to work with them in understanding the borough's infrastructure needs.

Why are you developing 'greenfield' sites when there are previously developed (brownfield) sites that could meet the housing need in Ashford?

There are insufficient brownfield sites across Ashford to meet the level of new housing that needs to be delivered in the borough, the majority of growth will therefore have to be delivered on greenfield sites on the edge of the urban area and in the rural area.

Many of the previously developed sites in the town already have redevelopment proposals underway. However, the Local Plan will encourage the re-use of previously developed sites where environmental constraints allow and sites are sustainably located.

Please note that Greenfield sites are not designated 'Green Belt', which is nationally protected land. There is no 'Green Belt' designation in the Ashford borough.



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Have the site allocations within the Local Plan and 'Main Changes' already been decided?

Extensive evidence gathering, consultation and sustainability appraisal has been carried out on alternative development site options.

The outcomes from these tasks has informed the council's selection of preferred development sites to the extent required to meet needs, most significantly for housing and employment sites.

However, the 'Main Changes' are still draft proposals and the current consultation provides the opportunity for comments to be made and further changes proposed. Amendments can still be made to the draft Local Plan 2030 and if changes are made it may require a further round of public consultation.

In addition, planning permission will still have to be obtained for Local Plan allocated sites and planning applications must be made and determined in the usual ways, assessed against all the policies within the local plan.

What happens to the sites already identified and allocated in Ashford's current Local Plan/ development plan documents?

Do these remain allocated or will the new Local Plan make them defunct?

The new Local Plan 2030, including the 'Main Changes' (once adopted), will replace all existing site allocations and policies contained in the saved Local Plan 2000, The Core Strategy 2008, The Town Centre Area Action Plan 2010, The Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan Document 2010 and the Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document 2012.

Some allocations from those documents have been revised and replaced within the draft Local Plan 2030, others will be removed.

Is the Chilmington Green development to be reviewed as part of this Local Plan?

No. The Chilmington Green plans will not be reviewed as part of this Local Plan. The housing proposed at Chilmington Green will contribute to the borough's housing need and is taken into account when determining how many additional sites needed to be allocated in this plan.

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'.

In conclusion, comments are invited on all the 'Main Changes' but new or repeated representations relating to parts of the Local Plan that are not subject to a 'Main Change' will not be accepted.

What happens after my comments have been made?

Following public consultation on the 'Main Changes', 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 at the end of 2017. 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 comments received at the Publication rounds 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 Changes' consultation, you will be kept informed.