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LOCAL PLAN AND POLICY CONTEXT

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Legislative and Policy Framework



2.1 The preparation of this Local Plan is governed by a robust legal and policy framework.

2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the Plan has been prepared having regard to national planning policy and guidance, notably the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). These documents set out the Government's planning policies for England and provide a framework for their application at the local level and are a material planning consideration in planning decisions. The Local Plan has also been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and associated Regulations.





The Development Plan



2.3 Once adopted, the Local Plan will form part of the Development Plan for the borough. The Development Plan also includes the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2025) and any 'Made' Neighbourhood Plans.

2.4 The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2025) sets out the vision and strategy for waste management and mineral provision up until (and including) the year 2039. An important part of the strategy is the safeguarding of mineral resources, waste management and minerals infrastructure. The plan also contains several development management policies.

2.5 Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity for parishes and local communities to plan for their local community and reflect more local aspirations for their areas. Neighbourhood Plans must be prepared in general conformity with the strategic policies set out in the Adopted Development Plan. This currently includes the following:

- Core Strategy 2006-2021 (September 2007)
- Development Land Allocations DPD (April 2008)
- Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan (April 2008)
- Managing Development and the Environment DPD (April 2010).

2.6 However, this will change to the new Local Plan once adopted, as this will supersede all policies in the current Adopted Development Plan.

2.7 There are currently no adopted / 'made' Neighbourhood Plans within the borough. However, there are a number of Neighbourhood Plans in the early stages of preparation. The council will continue to provide support for communities wishing to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Any Neighbourhood Plans that are subsequently made will form part of the Development Plan and will be used in the determination of planning applications.

2.8 The timetable for producing Development Plan Documents including this Local Plan is set out in the council's Local Development Scheme.

Sustainable Development

2.9 The primary purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development. This involves balancing various needs and interests, including economic, social and environmental considerations.

2.10 Ensuring sustainable development means 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

2.11 The Government has agreed to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the period to 2030, to address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection. These are provided at Figure 2.1.

2.12 In relation to achieving sustainable development, the NPPF sets out that both Local Plans and planning decisions should apply a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. For plan-making, this means that the Local Plan promotes a sustainable pattern of growth that meets the needs of our area (including housing, employment, infrastructure and other uses), whilst improving our environment and mitigating and adapting to climate change. This has been a key consideration throughout the preparation of the Plan. For decision taking, it will mean that planning applications that accord with our Plan, once adopted, will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.



Figure 2.1: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Progressing a Local Plan and Plan-Making



Understanding local priorities and ambitions

2.13 Developing a Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider local priorities and ambitions of the council and its partners and consider how to respond to these spatially.

2.14 This Local Plan therefore supports the council's [Corporate Strategy](#), which sets out the council's aims and priorities up to 2027. It also considers a range of other council and partner organisation strategies, including those relating to climate change, infrastructure delivery, economic development, health and wellbeing, transport, biodiversity and environmental protection.

Evidence base

2.15 To meet national planning policy, Local Plan policies must be based on current, relevant, and robust evidence.

2.16 The Local Plan is supported by a comprehensive, proportionate and up-to-date evidence base which has informed the development of the vision, objectives, spatial strategy, policies and site allocations contained within the Plan. The evidence base is available to view on the council's [website](#) and forms part of the supporting documentation submitted alongside the Local Plan.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.17 As part of the plan-making process, we are required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

2.18 SA evaluates the Plan's social, economic, and environmental impacts, ensuring it promotes sustainability. It's an integral part of the plan making process, ensuring the Plan contributes to sustainable development.

2.19 The HRA focuses on the potential impacts of the Local Plan on protected international and European wildlife sites. It involves a screening assessment to identify potential significant effects, and a more detailed "Appropriate Assessment". The SA and HRA processes are both iterative, meaning that they are revisited and refined throughout the Plan's development. The findings of the HRA, including any mitigation measures, may inform the SA, and vice versa.

2.20 We have published an SA Scoping Report and SA alongside the Local Plan. We have also published a HRA. The SA and HRA have informed the preparation of the Local Plan and form part of the evidence base supporting the Regulation 19 version of the Plan.





Equality Impact Assessment

2.21 As part of the plan-making process, we have undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA).

2.22 The EqIA is a way to help identify the likely or actual effects of policies upon all people and sectors of the community.

2.23 The aim of the assessment is to ensure that any negative consequences for those people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 are eliminated or minimised, and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.



Strategic Cross Boundary working

2.24 Many planning issues extend beyond local authority boundaries and require joint working between local planning authorities, infrastructure providers, statutory bodies and other organisations. The Council has therefore worked with a range of partners throughout the preparation of this Local Plan to ensure that strategic matters have been appropriately considered and addressed.

2.25 Engagement has informed the preparation of the Plan's vision, spatial strategy, site allocations and policies. Strategic matters considered through this process include housing, employment, transport, education, healthcare, infrastructure, flood risk, water resources, climate change, biodiversity, Green Belt, the historic environment, and minerals and waste planning.

2.26 Whilst the statutory Duty to Cooperate no longer forms part of the plan-making system, national policy continues to require local planning authorities to work collaboratively on strategic cross-boundary matters and to maintain effective cooperation with neighbouring authorities and relevant organisations.

2.27 The Council has engaged with neighbouring local authorities, Kent County Council, National Highways, Natural England, the Environment Agency, utility providers and other relevant organisations throughout the preparation of the Local Plan. The outcomes of this engagement are documented in the Council's Strategic Cross-Boundary Working Statement and associated Statements of Common Ground. These documents explain how strategic matters have been identified and addressed and form part of the evidence base supporting the Local Plan.

2.28 The Council will continue to work with its partners during the examination, implementation and monitoring of the Local Plan.