
Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 Preferred Options

To: **Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 27th November 2014**

Main Portfolio Area: **Housing and Planning Services**

By: **Ismail Mohammed, Interim Strategic Planning Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All**

Summary: The report presents to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel the Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 Preferred Options Document that will be presented to Cabinet for their consideration on 11th December with the recommendation that it is progressed for public consultation. The report provides the Panel the opportunity to review how the Draft Thanet Local to 2031 Preferred Options document has been formulated in accordance with the government regulations and National Planning Policy Framework and an assessment of the options for the spatial and land-use policy considerations for the future growth, development and regeneration of the District.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is also provided the opportunity to raise any issues on the proposed policies, proposals and land-use allocation as well as examining the procedures put in place for progressing the Local Plan, the time-table with the critical milestones and how the Council will consult with local communities.

The report also includes the Project Plan to progress the Thanet Local Plan to 2031 for their information.

For Decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 National planning policy stresses the central importance of a Local Plan. It is a key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities and providing the framework for guiding the determination of planning applications in order to manage development effectively.
- 1.2 The Local Plan must be in compliance with the Localism Act, National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance and be prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 1.3 To meet its statutory obligation to produce a “Sound” Local Plan, the Council has prepared the Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 Preferred Options document for consultation. This is the second stage of public consultation for preparing the local plan and builds on the Stage One “Issues and Options” consultation that was

undertaken between June and August 2013. The views represented by the local communities and stakeholders have assisted in formulating the future preferred options for the growth, development and regeneration of the district.

- 1.4 Community and stakeholder participation and consultation at various stages of the preparation are important elements for producing a “Sound” Local Plan. This also includes consultation with the neighbouring councils, public agencies, service providers and statutory service and infrastructure providers.

2.0 Governance and formulating the new Local Plan

- 2.1 Over the past few years, the Council has established the Local Plan Cabinet Advisory Group (LPCAG) to work with the officers to formulate the Thanet Local Plan. The LPCAG is a cross-party Group that has reviewed the progress of the planning policy document and examined the various growth, development and regeneration options. At the time of writing this report, the Group were due to meet 18th November to discuss and finalise the Preferred Options Document and were being recommended to submit it for the consideration of their consideration. A verbal update report will be made at the meeting.

- 2.2 The new Thanet Local Plan will be the Council’s single and overarching planning policy document, which will cover the whole of the District for the period to 2031.

- 2.3 The Plan will set out policies and proposals that will be used to guide decisions and investments on the development and regeneration over the plan period. It will set out how and where the homes, jobs, community facilities, shops and infrastructure will be delivered and the type of places and environments we want to create. It will also identify land to be protected from development.

- 2.4 The Plan will form the statutory planning framework for determining planning applications and replace the current ‘saved’¹ policies from the Thanet Local Plan 2006.

- 2.5 The Local Plan should be prepared in compliance with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The core principle of the NPPF is:

“to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.”

- 2.5 The NPPF also states that:

- planning authorities should set out a clear economic vision and strategy for their areas which positively and proactively encourages sustainable growth, identify strategic sites to meet anticipated needs over the plan period, support existing business sectors and plans for new and emerging sectors,
- policies should be flexible to accommodate needs not anticipated and to allow rapid responses to changes in the economy,
- clusters or networks of knowledge driven and creative high technology industries should be planned for in priority areas for economic regeneration,
- infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement should be identified, and

¹ These are policies from the Thanet Local Plan 2006 that were saved by the Secretary of State’s direction (under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004), and continue to be part of the Development Plan, until specifically replaced.

- flexible working practices such as the integration of residential and commercial uses within the same unit should be facilitated.”

2.6 National policy requires the Plan to be ‘sound’. This means:

- **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.7 The Local Plan must be based upon adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area. Evidence gathering is an on-going process.

2.8 The governance arrangements put in place by the Council in constituting the Local Plan Cabinet Advisory Group (LP CAG) to manage the Local Plan for Thanet provides the opportunity to engage with elected Members in the formulation of the planning policy documents for the District. The LP CAG have been meeting regularly to consider the content of the Plan and policy and land-use options for delivery the Council’s corporate objectives. These arrangements meet with the government guidance and planning “good practice” for the preparation of the strategic and local planning documents. A number of sessions have also been arranged to engage with and inform the wider Council members on the progress of the Thanet Local plan with “drop-in” sessions and a Member Briefing events.

3.0 The proposed Preferred Options Document for consultation

3.1 The proposed Preferred Options Document for consultation with stakeholders and communities is included as Annex 1 to this report. The Document is informed by the strategic priorities and objectives of the Council, the evidence of future needs of the local communities and businesses. This includes population and household statistical trends and projections and economic information. The Documents also builds on the responses received by the Council to the Stage 1 consultation on the “Issues and options” which has identified issues that concern the local communities.

3.2 The following section provides a structure of the Document and summary of the priorities and key issues that have been addressed.

Strategic Priorities and Objectives

3.3 The strategic priorities and objectives set out in this plan are seeking to achieve the Council's vision and deliver sustainable development for the District and these are to:

- create additional employment and training opportunities,
- facilitate the continued regeneration of the coastal town centres,

- provide homes that are accessible and suited to the needs of the community,
- safeguard local distinctiveness and promote awareness, protection, enhancement and responsible enjoyment of Thanet's environment, and
- deliver infrastructure required to support existing communities and new developments.

Economy and Town Centres

- 3.4 The economic approach is to develop the local economy and promote prosperity, create new jobs over the plan period. Employment generating uses and the proposed planning policies reflect this. The Local Plan requirement is:
- employment target to deliver a minimum of 5,000 jobs during the plan period to 2031 to meet the projected labour supply increase of around 5,800 jobs, and
 - to reduce unemployment to 3%.
- 3.5 The future job growth will be in town centres, in tourism uses, public administration and education and also expected growth within the health and caring professions.
- 3.6 Given the diverse economy of the District, the Local Plan promotes a flexible approach to accommodate economic growth by:
- allocation and retention of employment land and premises within strategic locations;
 - allowing flexibility of uses on other employment land not considered to be strategic;
 - accommodate a wide range of compatible uses in the town centres;
 - allow flexibility with uses related to tourism, leisure and holiday accommodation, education and skills facilities;
 - promoting and regenerating transport hubs and infrastructure;
 - flexible approach to support growth in the green economy providing suitable and sufficient employment land.
- 3.7 It is proposed that the airport and its surrounding area should be designated as an “opportunity area”, that will require the Council to prepare an Area Action Plan Development Plan Document that will consider the future development options for the area with the appropriate evidence supporting the development options.

Housing

- 3.9 The Local Plan approach for housing is “to provide good quality housing that is affordable, meets people’s changing needs and aspirations and is located within pleasant, safe and sustainable communities.”
- 3.10 The Local Plan identifies sufficient and suitable land to deliver a range of homes to meet the local housing need and which is affordable. It also ensures that better use is made of existing housing stock across all tenures, housing conditions are improved, enables vulnerable people access to good quality housing and to live independently and delivers housing in support of wider regeneration and economic development.
- 3.11 The housing provision over the 20 year period to 2031 is for 12,000 additional homes. This reflects the forecasts based on recent migration trend, population projections and the labour requirements to support the Council’s aspirations for economic and employment growth.

- 3.12 Identification and allocation of housing land has been informed by assessment of the sustainability of individual sites through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment alongside the strategy for the planned location of homes. The key principles are to:-
- make best use of the sites in the built up areas of the coastal towns,
 - focus remaining provision at sites abutting existing urban areas, and
 - make modest provision at rural settlements to meet identified need for affordable homes and to provide locational choice at a scale compatible with their character and access to services and facilities.
- 3.13 Therefore, the approach adopted in the preparation of the Local Plan is to focus future development in locations that are:
- accessible;
 - with existing infrastructure and services, and
 - within or on the edge of existing urban areas.
- 3.14 The areas and sites being promoted provide the opportunity to deliver development at a scale that will serve both to facilitate a step change in delivering the type of homes required to meet need and secure the infrastructure required to support them. Such large and clustered sites have been identified as strategic housing allocations that will be of particular importance in delivering the Plan's housing objectives. For this reason new greenfield sites are proposed in the following locations:
- Westwood
 - Birchington
 - Westgate on Sea
 - Manston Green

Environment and Quality of Life

- 3.15 The Preferred Options seek to protect the important countryside, open spaces, heritage and the built and natural environment around the district as these provide important landscapes and character that contribute to its sense of place, as well as making the district an attractive place that people want to come to. Much of the countryside is classified as 'best and most versatile agricultural land'. Similarly, the Green Wedges giving separation between the existing Thanet towns are significant in shaping the character of the district which has historically wrapped around the built development along the coast. These Green Wedges provide a clear visual break when passing between the towns, giving a recognised structure and identity to the urban settlements and are distinct from other types of open space as they provide a continuous link between the open countryside and land which penetrates into the urban areas.
- 3.17 The preferred policy option will therefore provide strong resistance against any new development in the countryside and green environment unless the sites are allocated in the plan to meet the development needs of the district. The housing sites put forward for future development that are classified as greenfield have been carefully assessed and whilst some have been allocated in the countryside, this has been very carefully considered against the sustainability criteria and is appropriate to meet the needs of sustainable development.

Transport and Infrastructure

- 3.18 The Key message for transport is that the system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people real choice about how they travel. The

aims of the preferred policy options is for a balance of land uses that encourages people to minimise journey length for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities. The level of economic growth proposed, and the strengthening of the local economy will also serve to reduce the need for local residents to commute to work outside the district.

- 3.19 Transport is a critical factor to the district's aspirations for sustainable economic regeneration. There is a potential that over the period of the Local Plan some traffic congestion will begin to increase at certain junctions at peak times, particularly with the level of future development and growth that is expected. The Transport Strategy, working with the County Council, will aim to address the transport issues and future developments will be expected to mitigate against the any adverse impact.
- 3.20 The introduction of high speed trains connecting Thanet with the High Speed 1 (HS1) service has reduced journey times from Ramsgate to London by over 30 minutes. A surface access strategy and travel plan will be required alongside planned growth to promote sustainable travel, particularly by the workforce.
- 3.21 Kent County Council's Transport Delivery Plan "Growth without Gridlock" identifies strategic transport projects to support Kent's sustainable economic growth. It acknowledges the need and potential for coastal areas to derive greater benefit from the High Speed 1 rail service including through potential increases to line speeds for domestic link services, and a new railway Parkway Station is promoted for wider economic benefit to the district.

4.0 Public Consultation

- 4.1 The proposed consultation on the Preferred Options Document of the Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 is an informal consultation stage in the preparation of the Local Plan. However it is an important stage in examining the future policy direction of growth and development in the District and this stage provides a significant opportunity for meaningful engagement with the local communities and stakeholders before the more formal consultation on the Presubmission Document of the Draft Thanet Local Plan. The consultation will be for a period of six weeks, beginning week commencing in January 2015
- 4.2 It is intended that there will be wide publicity to promote this consultation and up to four roadshow events will be organised around the District. These will be in Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Westwood Cross. The roadshow at Westwood Cross will on a Saturday. These will provide the local community the opportunity to discuss any local issues and to get information on development and growth proposals and how they can respond. Further events will be arranged at the request of the community groups.
- 4.3 There will be briefing session for the Parish and Town Councils to inform them of the Local Plan and to encourage them to promote the consultation in their areas. Should the Parish and Town Councils request a briefing session or meeting to discuss the impact of the Local Plan on their locality then officers will arrange to meet with them.
- 4.4 There will be a dedicated information page on the Council's website that will direct visitors to the Local Plan consultation link. Limited number of copies of the Preferred Options consultation document will be available. Specific effort is being made to engage with the local youth through a roadshow session with the local sixth form schools and colleges.

5.0 Future Programme

- 5.1 On the conclusion of the consultation, the representation received will be reviewed and the Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 Presubmission Document will be prepared for a formal Regulation 18 Consultation. This is programmed for September/October 2015. Attached as Annex 2 to this report is the Project Programme for preparing the Thanet Local Plan to 2031.
- 5.2 The Local Plan Cabinet Advisory Group will be reconstituted to work with the planning officers to review the representation submitted and review future policies for progressing the Local Plan to presubmission stage. On the conclusion of this stage of the Local Plan, it will be submitted to the Cabinet for their consideration to proceed to further six week public consultation.

6.0 Corporate Implications

6.1 Financial and VAT

- 6.1.1 It is envisaged that any costs associated with the consultation can be absorbed within the current budgeting procedures for preparation of the Local Plan and this report at this stage does not give rise to specific additional financial implications.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements of a local planning authority when preparing a Local Plan. The Regulations require local planning authorities to notify specific bodies and persons of the subject of a local plan which the local planning authority proposes to prepare and invite each of them to make representations to the local planning authority about what the local plan with that subject ought to contain.
- 6.2.2 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 set out the requirements in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA), and requires that the SA considers all reasonable alternatives.
- 6.2.3 Legal advice has been sought in relation to the consultation process that should be carried out in order to meet the statutory requirements. It is important that the consultation process should inform the process of option selection i.e. that consultees have a genuine opportunity to influence the decision made. This requires consultation on all reasonable alternative options not just in relation to sites but also in terms of levels of development, how that development should be distributed and how it should ultimately be managed.

6.3 Corporate

- 6.3.1 The Local Plan will represent the Council's overarching plan for shaping future development of the District over the period up to 2031. It contains a vision and sets out the issues and opportunities facing the district and takes account of the plans and resources of a wide range of agencies and organisations who will participate in its delivery.
- 6.3.2 The production of the Local Plan will help to deliver the majority of the Council's priorities in the Corporate Plan. In particular the Local Plan will play a key role in supporting the growth of our economy and the number of people in work, planning for the right type and number of homes in the right place to create sustainable

communities, working to improve parking and transportation and protecting and preserving our public open spaces.

6.4 Equity and Equalities

6.4.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the way in which all sectors of the community will be given the opportunity to become involved in the planning process. The SCI was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment, and this consultation is proposed to take place in accordance with the SCI.

6.4.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out for the next stage of the preparing the Draft Thanet Local Plan, when a draft plan is produced.

7.0 Recommendation(s)

7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to note the processes that have been followed in the preparation of the Local Plan, the previous consultation with the local communities and stakeholder on the Issues and Options and the arrangements for the proposed public consultation for the Preferred Options. The Panel is requested to receive the report and give their observations and comments on the Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 Preferred Options Document for consultation with the stakeholders and local communities.

8.0 Decision Making Process

8.1 This is a non-key decision and observation/comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Pane will be reported to the Cabinet for their meeting on 11th December.

Future Meeting: Cabinet	Date: 11 th December 2014
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Annex List

Annex 1	Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2013 Preferred Options Document
Annex 2	Thanet Local Plan: Project Programme

Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>	<i>DCLG website</i>
Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012	<i>DCLG website</i>
<i>Draft Environmental Assessment</i>	<i>Planning Policy Team, Council Offices</i>
<i>Local development Scheme</i>	<i>Planning Policy Team, Council Offices – TDC website</i>

<i>Statement of Community Involvement</i>	<i>Planning Policy Team, Council Offices – TDC website</i>
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Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	
Legal	