

Contributor



Kent Planning Update

DHA is Kent's largest independent planning consultancy combining expert advice on town planning and development, transport, design, environmental impact and infrastructure, with in-depth local knowledge.

Housing Delivery

In February 2019 the Government published an updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the long anticipated first set of Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results. The HDT results are important as they were introduced as the Government's response to avoid unnecessary discussion of what constitutes 'persistent under delivery'.

Under the amended NPPF, each Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required to take action if housing is not being delivered in line with anticipated targets. When delivery has been below 85% in the past 3 years, a 20% buffer should be included within a LPA's five-year housing land supply.

The results have seen a number of LPA's implement a 20% buffer, including Gravesham, Dover, Medway, Swale and Thanet. Housing delivery in Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells has also been below Government expectations (less than 95%) and each is required to implement an 'Action Plan' to assist with the delivery of new homes. We are yet to see what these actions plans will include.

Housing Need and NPPF

The revised NPPF continues to endorse the standardised methodology for calculating housing need, based on demographic projections. Now termed 'local housing need', it is the baseline for the preparation of new Local Plans and for determining a five-year supply of housing land when relevant strategic policies are more than five years old.

In September 2018, the Government published the household growth projections for 2016, however, these were lower than the 2014 projections and moved them further away from meeting their ambition to build 300,000 new homes a year. The Government has subsequently confirmed – in response to the technical consultation on updates to national planning policy and guidance – that the 2014 growth projections should be used as the baseline for calculating housing need. The government has also clarified the definition of deliverable, how five-year supply should be calculated and that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should not be automatically disengaged when an appropriate assessment is required.



PHOTO: BPTW PARTNERSHIP

Proposal for Rochester Riverside.

Local Plan Progress

Across Kent, local authorities are making significant progress. In February 2019, Ashford BC adopted its new Local Plan, while Tonbridge & Malling BC, Thanet DC and Sevenoaks DC all submitted their plans for independent examination.

Meanwhile, Tunbridge Wells BC is due to publish its draft Local Plan for consultation in September, setting out proposals to meet its local housing need. The proposed strategy includes the release of Green Belt to the east and west of Paddock Wood to deliver approximately 4,000 new homes and the release of Green Belt at Capel to form a new garden community. The Council is looking to adopt a proportionate growth approach, with development distributed between the wider villages based on the level of services, facilities and infrastructure.

Progress in Medway is on hold awaiting news of a £17m bid from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to transform the Hoo Peninsula and waterfront regeneration sites. Medway is one of 45 authorities shortlisted for HIF support, which is a capital grant programme of up to £5bn, aiming to help deliver 600,000 new homes across England.

Despite adopting its Local Plan in October 2017, Maidstone recently commenced a review of its Local Plan with an initial Call for Sites in May. This was followed by a 'Scoping, Themes and Issues Consultation' in July 2019, looking at the strategic issues facing the borough, how they should be addressed while delivering its development needs. Likewise, Dartford BC also commenced work on reviewing its Core Strategy, looking at the 'Big Strategic Issues'.

In summary, the Local Plan making process continues to throw up new challenges and opportunities and this is likely to continue into 2020. For an update on the current Local Plan situation across Kent please contact DHA on 01622 776226.

For more information:
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