Contributor

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Kent Planning Update

The team at DHA, Kent's largest independent planning consultancy combining expert advice on town planning and development, transport, design, environmental impact, infrastructure and land, uses its in-depth local knowledge to consider the property market outlook for 2021 – and the key planning issues facing the county.

Housing Delivery

When it comes to the scale of new homes anticipated across Kent and Medway, the Government has just announced it is raising the bar with a new method for calculating Housing Need for each district. Nationally the Government now wants to see housing delivery rise to 337,000 units per annum, up from the previous target of 270,000.

If, as expected, the new calculation is adopted, it will mean districts across Kent and unitary authority Medway Council will collectively have to deliver 14,908 dwellings per year, up from the previous 12,073. However, this needs to be seen in the context of actual delivery, which has averaged 8,026 dwellings per year.

The Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results, published in February and pre-COVID-19, shows mixed three-year results, leading to Government intervention. A number of

local authorities, including Gravesham, Medway, Swale and Sevenoaks, are now each required to implement a 20% buffer under the NPPF. Housing delivery in Tunbridge Wells, Ashford, Canterbury and Dover has also been below Government expectations at less than 95% of the allocated target. These councils must now implement an Action Plan to assist in new homes delivery.

Meanwhile, in Thanet, the under-delivery of new homes means a presumption in favour of sustainable development now applies to housing proposals in the district.

Kent has a healthy community of SME housebuilders, including the recently formed SME Network, alongside national suppliers. This means the area is well-placed to deliver a range of dwellings to help local authorities reach these national targets – and meet local demand.

When it comes to regenerating our local economies and unlocking important infrastructure, the winning authorities will be those able to make quick evidence-based development decisions.

Local Plan progress

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the Local Plan making process, with many at different stages of adoption. The team at DHA continues to closely monitor the progress of each plan across Kent, Sussex and Surrey and is perfectly placed to inform and advise clients and help secure allocations.

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Barton Court, Main Entrance.

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Proposal for Eastwood Farm, Sevenoaks.

Local authorities find themselves having to respond to the issues of infrastructure, budgetary pressures as the economy looks to recover. Many continue to face the perennial Green Belt issue of exceptional circumstances for development and this requires a sensitive approach to planning.

Supporting investor confidence

There remains an ambition among landowners and developers to bring forward residential and commercial projects across Kent and the winning areas will be those offering a degree of certainty for development and willingness to support investment.

Planning for the future

Finally, its been a busy summer for the Government having consulted on the new Planning White Paper 'Planning for the Future' as well as other changes to Standard Methodology, Developer Contributions, Affordable Housing Thresholds and as a major overhaul of Permitted Development Rights. These all put forward the Government's vision to radically change England's current planning system which include more radical proposals to adopt zonal planning, centralise decisions and new local design codes

As always DHA will watch with interest as to how the changes will impact our clients.

For more information:
www.dhaplanning.co.uk