

Contributors

Continued



Kent Planning Update

Despite Britain's departure from the European Union dominating national politics, the need to fix the housing crisis remains high on the Government's agenda. Chancellor Phillip Hammond's Budget made a commitment to boosting land available for housing development and speeding up delivery of new homes where planning permission had been granted.

Housing need

The Government remains committed to a standardised methodology for calculating local housing need, following the 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' consultation, which considered neighbourhood planning, viability assessments and planning fees.

A planning authority's requirement to adopt the 'standardised methodology' is ingrained in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the number of new homes needed calculated on household growth projections as well as an affordability ratio.

The onus remains on councils to prepare evidence-based Local Plans that seek to meet their housing need to be NPPF compliant. Those that fail to allocate sufficient housing land to meet identified needs will be given short shrift by

the Planning Inspectorate, with plans either being found unsound at their Examination or sent back for modification.

Local Authorities unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply, or who fail to adequately deliver, will remain open to speculative/unplanned applications that engage the Government's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

The NPPF also provides guidance on viability assessments and revised policies on how local authorities can amend Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans. Other changes include:

- Reinstatement of references to garden city principles.
- Inclusion of social rent and affordable rent within the revised definition of affordable housing.
- A requirement of housing need to be met on small sites.

Local plan progress

Across Kent, local authorities are making significant progress.

Sevenoaks recently consulted on its draft Local Plan (September 2018), setting out how it proposes to meet its objectively assessed development needs between 2015-2035. The proposed spatial strategy seeks to maximise development on brownfield sites (including those in the Green Belt), only releasing Green Belt land where 'exceptional circumstances' are demonstrated.

Medway Council has also made good progress and consulted (May 2018) on a development strategy that considers broad options for growth for 2012-2035. Medway's strategy appears focused on brownfield and riverside development and expansion of existing settlements, with a longer-term goal for a new settlement on the Hoo Peninsula.

Gravesham Borough Council has consulted on strategic options for growth with detailed policies. Dartford is also considering the big strategic issues and recently opened a call for sites to inform the preparation of a strategic land availability assessment.

Despite adopting its Local Plan 'Bearing Fruits' in July 2017, Swale recently started a review. The consultation (April 2018) focused on spatial planning challenges and the possibility of delivering a new garden community as a long-term strategic

development. Swale aims to adopt its new Local Plan by 2022.

In terms of those authorities in the latter stages of preparation, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Folkestone & Hythe District Council (formerly Shepway) recently secured approval to consult on their draft Local Plan (regulation 19).

Ashford's Local Plan is currently going through independent examination and is expected to be adopted in early 2019.

In summary, the Local Plan making process continues to throw up new challenges and this is likely to continue in 2019.

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Proposal for Linden Park Road, Tunbridge Wells.