

Appendix 1

Dover District Council Local Plan Engagement Strategy

Overview

The decision was taken by Cabinet in March 2017 to proceed with a review of the Dover District Local Plan.

The Local Plan will set out the planning framework for the District over the next 20 years and cover issues such as housing provision, the economy, retail and town centres, infrastructure provision and the environment. The Local Plan will also set out the policies by which planning applications will be determined, in addition to allocating land for housing, employment and retail uses.

Introduction

Planning plays an essential role in shaping the places where we all live, work and socialise. The outcomes of planning have an effect on everyone and for this reason everyone should have the opportunity to become involved in the planning process.

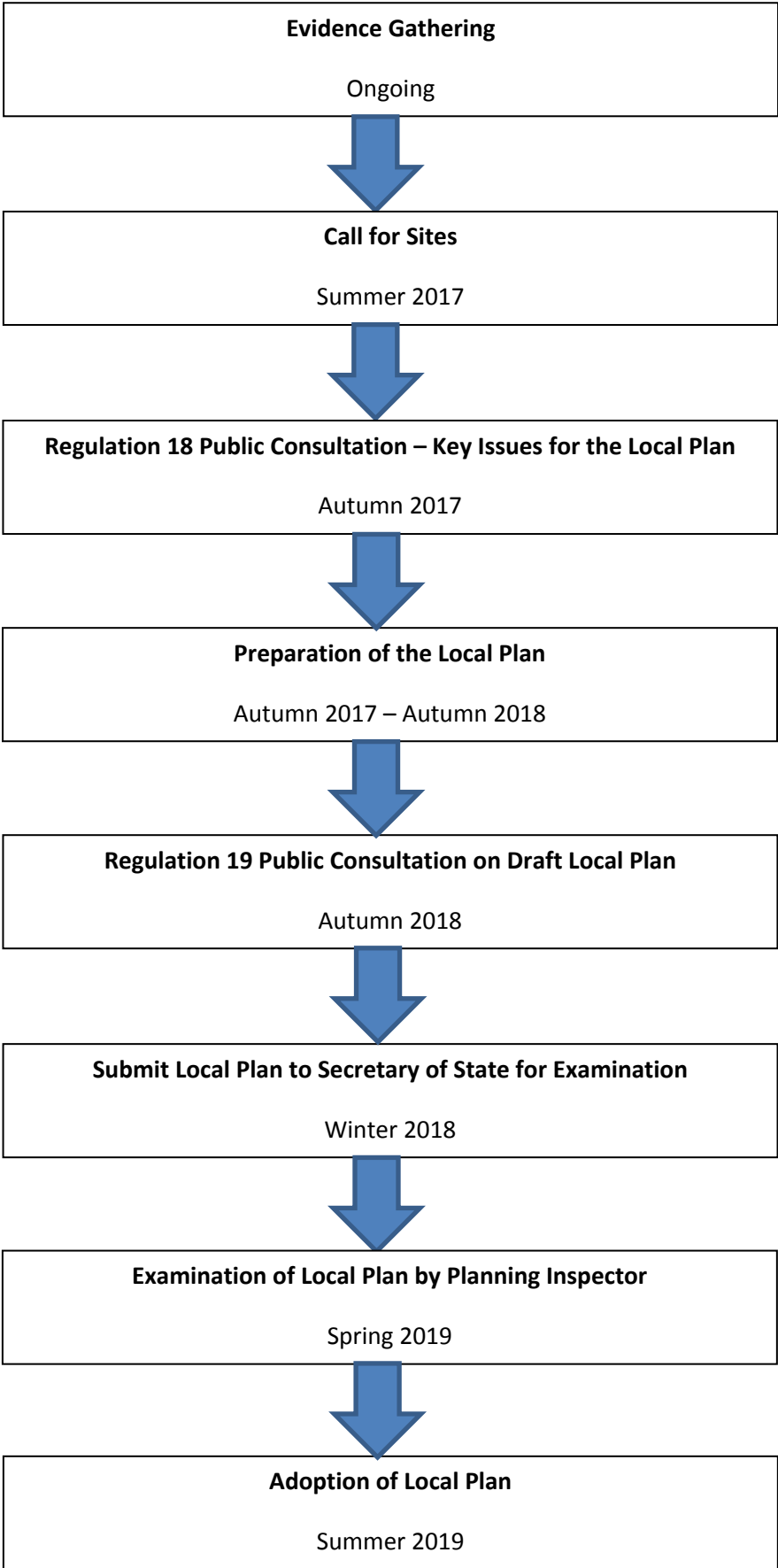
This document sets out the Council's approach to consulting and engaging the community on the Dover District Local Plan. The Local Plan goes through a number of stages of preparation and it is important to clearly set out how and when people can become involved in the process. This document also sets out the hierarchy of decision making in the Council; at what point key decisions will need to be made; and which Council committee will be responsible for making the relevant decisions, to ensure that the decision making process is as transparent as possible.

The principles set out in this document are consistent with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2016). The approach and specific suggestions are also in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012).

Process and Timetable

The process of producing a Local Plan involves different stages, many of which require the Council to consult with stakeholders and residents. The timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan is set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme <https://www.dover.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Regeneration/Plan-Monitoring/Local-Development-Scheme.aspx>

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan
Ongoing



The main stages are outlined below:

Evidence Gathering

The Council is in the process of preparing a number of studies to support the Local Plan, including the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment. The Council will carry out both formal and informal engagement with a range of stakeholders as part of the evidence gathering stage, the outcomes of which will inform the development of policies in the Local Plan.

Call for Sites

As part of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment the Council will issue a call for sites. Here, developers, land owners, agents, and the public will be invited to submit sites to the Council for assessment, to see if they are suitable for inclusion within the Local Plan. There will also be an ongoing dialogue with developers and landowners throughout this study.

Public Consultation – Key Issues for the Local Plan (Regulation 18)

This stage in the process provides an opportunity for local residents and other key stakeholders to engage with the Council on the key issues that the Local Plan ought to cover. Consultation will take place with a wide range of stakeholders including local residents, developers and landowners, statutory consultees, internal departments within the Council and Members. A consultation document setting out key issues for the Local Plan will be published for an eight week period of consultation. Following on from the consultation, officers will review and respond to all representations received, and these will help inform the development of a draft Local Plan.

In addition to this, further consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012), will also be held with key stakeholders throughout the preparation of the Local Plan (see below).

Preparation of the Local Plan

Once the Council has established the key issues for the Local Plan to consider, officers will commence work on the preparation of the Plan. The Local Plan will be prepared in consultation with key stakeholders and will incorporate key findings from the Council's evidence base.

Public Consultation on the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19)

Prior to the submission of the Local Plan for examination, the Council must consult the public on the draft Local Plan, this will also include the development management policies and sites allocated for future housing, employment and retail development. The document will be made available for an eight week period of consultation with local residents and other key stakeholders, and comments will be passed onto the independent Inspector appointed to examine the draft Local Plan.

Submit Local Plan to Secretary of State for Examination

Following the Regulation 19 Public Consultation on the Draft Local Plan, the draft Local Plan and associated documents will be submitted to the Secretary of State. This stage triggers the independent examination of the document.

Examination of Local Plan by Planning Inspector

The Secretary of State will appoint an independent Inspector (from the Planning Inspectorate) to consider the 'soundness' of the draft Local Plan as part of a public examination. In determining whether or not the draft Local Plan is 'sound', the Inspector will consider the representations received during the Regulation 19 consultation, and where appropriate, individuals or organisations that submitted representations will be invited, by the Inspector, to appear at the examination. Following the examination, the Inspector will produce a report in order to determine whether or not the plan can be considered to be 'sound'. This report may include changes to the draft Local Plan where the Inspector feels that these are necessary to ensure that the plan is sound.

Adoption of Local Plan

The final stage in the plan making process is the formal adoption of a Plan. In accordance with the Council's constitution, the adoption of the Local Plan must take place at a meeting of Full Council. Following adoption, the Local Plan will become the main document against which decisions on planning applications will be made.

Who will be Consulted

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires Local Planning Authorities to consult both general consultation bodies and specific consultation bodies in the preparation of Local Plans, in addition to residents and other persons carrying out business in the local planning authority's area.

General consultation bodies include:

- voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area;
- bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area;
- bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area;
- bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority's area; and
- bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area;

Specific consultation bodies include:

- the Coal Authority
- the Environment Agency
- the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
- the Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587)
- the Highways Agency
- a relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority's area,
- electronic communications providers
- Electricity providers
- Gas providers

- Primary Care Trust
- Sewerage undertaker
- Water undertaker
- Homes and Communities Agency

Duty to Co-operate

The duty to co-operate was introduced in the Localism Act 2011 and places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis to maximise the effectiveness of local plan preparation relating to strategic cross-boundary matters.

Paragraph 156 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies the following as strategic issues requiring cooperation:

- The need for and provision of homes and jobs in an area;
- The provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- The provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply and waste water treatment, flood risk management, the provision of minerals, and energy supply;
- The provision of infrastructure for health, security, community wellbeing and culture;
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- The conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment.

A full list of ‘duty to cooperate bodies’ is set out in Part 2 of the Local Plan Regulations 2012, and Dover District Council's main duty to cooperate bodies are listed below. However, the nature of the duty means that it would never be possible to produce an exhaustive list.

- Kent and Medway Planning Authorities
- The Civil Aviation Authority
- The Environment Agency
- The Greater London Authority
- Highways England
- Historic England
- The Homes and Communities Agency
- South East Clinical Commissioning Group
- Canterbury and Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group
- Natural England
- The Office of Rail and Road
- Transport for London

The Council is also required to ‘have regard to’ the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Kent and Essex when drawing up policies and plans. Both now have an important role in strategic planning – in particular, the LEP is responsible for bidding for and prioritising infrastructure investment, and a close working relationship is therefore crucial.

In February 2016 the Council adopted a Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the duty to cooperate between the East Kent Regeneration Board members. This includes:

- Ashford
- Canterbury
- Shepway
- Thanet

- Dover; and
- Kent County Council

The memorandum does not override the statutory duties and powers of the identified parties. It is not legally binding nor is it intended to cover every detailed aspect of their relationships; rather it is a statement of principles to guide relations between the parties and provide a set of workable ground rules for early discussion and co-operation in addressing strategic and cross-boundary issues.

Engagement Strategy

There are a variety of ways in which people and groups can become involved in the preparation of the Local Plan. The minimum requirements for consultation and community engagement are set out in the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement (2016). However, it is proposed that the Council is much more proactive in engaging with the local community, in keeping with the spirit of the Localism agenda. Table 1 therefore sets out a comprehensive engagement strategy for the Local Plan designed to reach out to as many people and groups as possible.

Table 1: Local Plan Engagement Strategy

| Stage in Plan Preparation | Key Issues to be Considered | Methods of Engagement |
|--|--|---|
| Evidence Gathering (including Call for Sites) Ongoing | The Council is updating the evidence base to support the Local Plan. The evidence base will cover a variety of topics including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Employment • Retail • Green Infrastructure • Open space and sports provision • Flooding • Landscape character • Climate change and energy efficiency • Transport • Viability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold workshops with key stakeholders and duty to co-operate bodies to involve them in the preparation of key evidence base documents. • Present the key findings from studies to the Council’s Leadership Forum. • Hold 1:1 meetings with stakeholders and service providers to discuss future needs, aspirations and service/infrastructure capacity issues and how any infrastructure issues can be overcome. • Organise regular meetings with the Planning Advisory Group to discuss key issues for the Local Plan. • Send emails/ letters informing consultees of consultation dates and how to view and respond to documents where appropriate. • Publicise on the Council’s Facebook page and Twitter as required. • Publicise progress on the Local Plan in the DDC Newsletter at appropriate stages in the process. |

| Stage in Plan Preparation | Key Issues to be Considered | Methods of Engagement |
|---|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Issue a call for sites, as part of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. |
| <p>Regulation 18 – Key Issues Consultation</p> <p>Autumn 2017</p> | <p>At the start of the Local Plan preparation process the Council is required to notify specific groups as to the subject of the Local Plan which it intends to prepare and invite them to make representations about what a Local Plan with that subject ought to contain.</p> <p>This consultation will set out the structure of the Plan and overarching themes to be covered by the Local Plan.</p> <p>At this stage it is envisaged that the Plan will cover the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing, employment and retail provision ● Infrastructure provision ● Health ● Sustainability ● Design ● Natural and historic environment ● Development management policies ● Site allocations <p>A key part of the Regulation 18 consultation will also be to ask the local community and key stakeholders whether they agree with the issues set out in the consultation document and if there are any other key issues for the District that should be included in the Local Plan.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eight week consultation period ● Consultation documents to be made available on the Council’s website and at the Council’s main office. ● Issue a Public notice. ● Send Letters/emails informing consultees of consultation dates and how to view and respond to documents. ● Hard copies of the consultation document to be made available at libraries in the District and in the mobile library, to reach more rural communities. ● Issue press releases advertising the consultation. ● Article in the DDC Newsletter (subject to timescales). ● Publicise on the Council’s Facebook page and Twitter. ● Produce leaflets, as appropriate. |
| <p>Preparation of the Local Plan</p> <p>Autumn 2017 – Autumn 2018</p> | <p>In preparing the Local Plan the Council will seek to address all the issues outlined above.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold topic based workshops around the different issues to be addressed in the Local Plan with key stakeholders. ● Hold regular meetings with the Planning Advisory Group ● Brief Leadership Forum ● Hold 1:1 meetings with stakeholders and service |

| Stage in Plan Preparation | Key Issues to be Considered | Methods of Engagement |
|--|---|---|
| | | <p>providers to discuss future needs, aspirations and service/infrastructure capacity issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold meetings with landowners and agents • Hold meetings with Parish and Town Councils in the District if there are any specific issues facing a particular area • Run specific sessions with young people and hard to reach groups • Engage with the Gypsy and Travelling community • Issue an online newsletter twice a year updating consultees on progress with the Local Plan |
| <p>Regulation 19 – Consultation on the Draft Local Plan</p> <p>Autumn 2018</p> | <p>Prior to the submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination the Council is required to publish the draft Local Plan for consultation.</p> <p>The purpose of this consultation is to establish whether respondents support or object to the plan and, if they object, what the basis for their objection is.</p> <p>The consultation will also need to establish whether local people and statutory organisations consider the Council has met the legal requirements for the preparation of the plan and whether it meets the tests of soundness which are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>The key tests of soundness are that a Plan is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positively prepared • Justified • Effective • Consistent with national policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight week consultation period • Consultation documents to be made available on the Council’s website and at the Council’s main office. • Send the consultation document to specific consultation bodies. • Inform general consultation bodies of the public consultation. • Issue a Public notice. • Send Letters/emails informing consultees of consultation dates and how to view and respond to documents. • Hard copies of the consultation document to be made available at libraries in the District and in the mobile library, to reach more rural communities. • Issue press releases advertising the consultation. • Publicise progress on the Local Plan in the DDC Newsletter at appropriate stages in the process. • Publicise on the Council’s Facebook page and Twitter. • Produce leaflets, as appropriate. • Hold a number of public exhibitions across the District, in towns and villages. These would be advertised and staffed at specific times. |

| Stage in Plan Preparation | Key Issues to be Considered | Methods of Engagement |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Submission to Secretary of State</p> <p>Winter 2018</p> | <p>The submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State triggers the examination in public of the Local Plan.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to appoint an independent programme officer that will be responsible for assisting the Inspector with the smooth running of the Examination. This will involve keeping people informed about the forthcoming examination. • Submit Local Plan and associated documents including Sustainability Appraisal and the Statement of Consultation to the Secretary of State. • All documents to be made available on the Council's website and at the Council's main offices. • Copies of documents to be sent to specific consultation bodies. • Inform general consultation bodies and anyone requesting notification of submission that documents are available for inspection. • Issue a Public Notice. |
| <p>Examination</p> <p>Spring 2019</p> | <p>The Local Plan will be examined by an independent inspector whose role is to assess whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is sound.</p> <p>The key tests of soundness are that a Plan is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positively prepared • Justified • Effective • Consistent with national policy | <p>Working with the programme officer, at least 6 weeks before the examination starts the Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue a Public Notice. • Publish details on the Council's website. • Notify people who made a representation of the time and place of examination and the name of the person appointed to hold the examination. • Publish all examination details including agendas, and statements on the Council's website. |
| <p>Adoption</p> <p>Summer 2019</p> | <p>Following Examination it will be for the Council to decide whether it wishes to adopt the Local Plan for decision making purposes.</p> | <p>The Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make adopted documents, adoption statement and the sustainability appraisal available for inspection and available on the Council's website. • Issue a Public Notice. • Inform all consultees of adoption. • Send the adoption statement to anyone who requested to be |

| Stage in Plan Preparation | Key Issues to be Considered | Methods of Engagement |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | | notified of adoption. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send the adoption statement and document to the secretary of state. |

How to comment, consideration of comments and feedback

Each stage of consultation on the Local Plan requires the submission of written or electronic comments known as representations to the Local Planning Authority.

The Council will make the consultation document available for comment online along with providing hard copies at specific deposit points across the District (this will include Council Offices; and libraries where appropriate). Supporting documents will also be available online where necessary.

Where possible the Council will actively encourage online responses to consultation. The Council’s preferred means of receiving comments is through the interactive online system ‘Objective’ via the Council’s website http://dover-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/?q:sortMode=title_asc&q:advanced=false&q:folderId=19736&pageSize=20 . Using the Online Form has a number of advantages. It is the fastest and most accurate method and helps us to manage representations quickly and efficiently. It ensures that representations are attached to the correct section of the consultation document. It also allows respondents to provide their own summaries to representations, which helps us avoid any risk of misrepresentation of respondent concerns.

The Council however recognises that not everyone is able to use the online consultation system, so paper copies of response forms will also be made available. Guidance notes will also be provided to aid completion of responses.

The use of planning jargon within consultation documents will be minimised. However, there are elements of consultations that are guided by regulations and the requirements of the examination in public. For example, response forms need to include questions related to the tests of soundness for planning documents, and if a person objects to an element of the Plan, they need to relate this to one of the tests of soundness. In order to assist people in negotiating these regulatory requirements, guidance on the tests of soundness will be provided.

Once representations are received, they will be added onto the Council’s online consultation system ‘Objective’. Once all representations have been processed in this way, confirmation emails/letters will be sent to all those who have submitted representations.

At the end of each consultation period, all representations will be considered and analysed by officers. A response will be formulated and changes will be proposed to the document, where necessary. A summary of all representations, responses and proposed changes will be considered and agreed by Councillors prior to moving onto the next stage.

Decision Making Framework for the Local Plan

Decisions will be made on the Local Plan by either Cabinet or Full Council, which are the Council's formal decision making bodies. These decisions can be reviewed by the Council's Scrutiny Committee who can make recommendations to Cabinet.

Officer groups, the Planning Advisory Group and Leadership Forum will feed into the Local Plan process; however these bodies cannot make formal decisions on the Local Plan.

Key decisions will need to be taken by the Council at the following stages of the Local Plan process:

- Evidence Gathering: Officers will update the Planning and Advisory Group and the Council's Leadership Forum on the preparation of the evidence base to support the Local Plan.
- Regulation 18 Public Consultation – Key Issues for the Local Plan: Approval was given by Cabinet in March 2017 to proceed with the Regulation 18 key issues consultation.
- Preparation of the Local Plan: Officers will involve the Council's Leadership Forum and the Planning and Advisory Group in the preparation of the Local Plan.
- Regulation 19 Public Consultation on the Draft Local Plan: Officers will seek approval from the Council's Cabinet prior to going out to consultation on the draft Local Plan.
- Submit Local Plan to Secretary of State for Examination: Officers will seek approval from the Council's Cabinet and Full Council prior to submitting the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Examination.
- Examination of Local Plan by Planning Inspector: The Secretary of State will appoint an independent Government Inspector (from the Planning Inspectorate) to consider the 'soundness' of the draft Local Plan as part of a public examination.
- Adoption of Local Plan: In accordance with the Council's constitution, the Local Plan will be presented to a meeting of Full Council for formal adoption.