



THE LOCAL PLAN

Frequently asked questions

General

Why do we need a Local Plan?

The plan shapes how Thanet will develop over the next 20 years and sets out how much development is needed to support the future population and economy. The Local Plan will give Thanet District Council greater control over where and what type of new developments can take place.

The plan must be based on evidence from a number of studies covering a wide range of subjects and take account of national policy.

When will we know more detail on layout of the developments?

The Local Plan allocates land for potential development. The detail of what will be built will come at the planning application stage when a developer proposes a scheme. Their proposals will need to include the requirements of the relevant policy in the Local Plan. The council will consult with residents and other stakeholders on the planning application before it is decided.

What communication has there been about this consultation?

The following is being carried out to publicise the consultation:

- Seven public engagement sessions
- Press releases and press briefings
- Adverts in the Thanet Gazette (Circulation approx. 9,000) and in the KM Extra (circulation approx. 30,000)
- Twitter and Facebook posts to promote the consultation and public consultation sessions
 - Thanet District Council Twitter
- 6,331 followers
 - Thanet District Council Facebook
- 1,849 followers
- Facebook advertising
- Email to business networks
- Emails and letters to people registered on our planning consultation database
 - Approx. 1,300 contacts

- Posters and leaflets have been sent to:
 - Parish Councils
 - Libraries
 - Council Offices
 - Thanet Gateway
- Parish Council and other organisation/group briefing session

Where can I find the council's supporting evidence?

Our evidence base to date can be found on the council's website at www.thanet.gov.uk/localplan by clicking the square marked 'Evidence Base' on the left hand side. (As this is an informal consultation some of our evidence base is still being prepared.)

New evidence supporting this consultation can be found on the Council's consultation portal.

Why haven't you taken my previous comments into account?

The Council does try to take people's concerns into account in preparing the Local Plan.

For example, at the last stage of consultation, people raised a lot of concerns about the provision of infrastructure – education, health, utilities, transport, etc. Although the council is not directly responsible for a lot of these matters, it has been working actively with the various service providers to try to ensure that the necessary services are provided alongside new development.

However, like all planning authorities, the council is to some extent limited in terms of the changes it can make to its Plan. This is because it must follow national government guidance in order to ensure that the Local Plan is accepted through the independent Examination process. An independent Inspector looks at the Plan to make sure it is "sound", which means:

- Positively prepared – seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable





development

- Justified – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives
- Effective – the plan should be deliverable and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- Consistent with national policy – the plan should be consistent with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance

So, for example, the overall housing numbers that the council needs to find are determined by a specific formula in national guidance, and it is expected that councils will prepare Plans that meet those housing requirements. This means that objections relating to housing numbers have to be considered in this context. It is not open to the council to simply ignore those housing numbers.

What does this consultation cover?

This consultation is only focusing on the changes which have been made since the 2015 Preferred Options consultations. These include.

- The housing provision over the plan period is 17,140 homes – about 7,800 either already built, with planning permission, empty homes or “windfalls” – the draft Plan only needs to find 9,300 additional homes.
- The airport site is proposed as a site for mixed-use development – housing, employment and leisure, together with new local facilities and infrastructure.
- Other new housing allocations are proposed at Westwood (with mixed leisure uses) and Shottendane.
- Identification of key road schemes to be provided to create a new “Inner Circuit” to relieve pressure on the existing road network.
- To invite proposals for sites to be considered as Local Green Space within the Local Plan.
- Amended location for the proposed Thanet Parkway station
- Proposals for adopting new national technical standards in relation to water efficiency; internal space standards and accessible and adaptable accommodation.

Transport

Where is the new link road going to go that extends from Minnis Road and the A28?

The draft Plan is not prescriptive about the specific location or alignment of a new road link, but it does show a general line for the new roads, under the New Strategic Routes Policy.

This would be a matter to be considered when any planning application is received.

When is this likely to happen if approved?

Planning for this is still taking place and is included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Roads are already at capacity. 17,000 households will add to the problem. What plans are there to deal with this?

We are working with KCC Highways to prepare a Transport Strategy, which is likely to be published later in the year. A key element of the Strategy is the Inner Circuit, which seeks to relieve pressure on the existing road network. This is a proposal in the Proposed Revisions consultation. Detailed schemes will be drawn up at the planning applications stage and advice will be sought from KCC as the highways authority.

Housing

What will happen if we don't plan for more houses? Why can't we just say no?

If the council does not allocate land for houses, developers could apply for planning permission to build houses anywhere and it would be difficult for the council to refuse these applications

How are housing numbers determined?

There is a methodology set out in Government guidance, which councils have to follow to calculate their “objectively assessed need” for housing. This takes into account likely population change, any additional requirement arising from economic requirements, household size and other factors. Population projections are undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and household projections by the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG), and these form the basis for calculating the housing requirement.





Why have housing numbers gone up to 17,140?

In 2016, a new set of household projections were published by the government, which meant that the Council had to recalculate its housing requirement based on the new figures.

What about Brexit? Won't that reduce housing requirements?

At this point, it is impossible to say what the impact of Brexit will be on housing numbers, as there are many factors to be considered. Once the Brexit process is finalised, we will be clearer about how housing figures might be affected. This would need to be addressed in a future review of the Local Plan.

Who will be living in the houses once they are built? Could they be filled by people from outside the area?

In this Local Plan, the council is not planning to meet the housing needs of other areas. However, it is not possible to be precise about how many residents of the new housing market will be Thanet residents. In terms of affordable housing, the council has a policy of requiring new development to provide 30% affordable housing. The council is able to nominate people for the affordable housing from its own housing register. In 2013, the council closed its housing register to people outside Thanet. The nominations are based on the council's policy of prioritising people with a local connection of three years or more.

Is the council allocating areas of precious, prime agricultural land for housing development that should be used for growing food?

In developing the Local Plan we have tried to allocate as much housing on brownfield or developed land as possible.

However this still leaves a shortfall in the amount of houses required, which means we have had to also look at allocating greenfield or undeveloped land for possible housing developments.

It is anticipated that about 40% of the planned homes in the draft Plan would be on brownfield land.

Unemployment is high in Thanet, we need industry not houses, how will this be addressed?

Government's National Planning Policy Framework requires us to objectively assess future housing requirements and meet them. The level of provision

in the Draft Plan has been informed by a range of forecasts taking into account past trends and potential employment growth.

The Plan also contains measures to accommodate employment growth. The council has recently adopted a new Economic Growth Strategy which will support this.

A significant part of the future housing requirement relates to the needs of the District's existing population such as young people who will come to need a home of their own.

What is the council doing to stop Thanet being turned into a large housing estate?

The Local Plan allows us to control where and how many houses are built in Thanet. Without the Local Plan it would be harder for us to prevent development in non-allocated areas.

The Local Plan aims to safeguard the individual identity and essential separation of individual towns and villages.

How will the council ensure that the new developments in rural areas do not result in existing villages losing their identity?

The Local Plan includes further information about how we have decided on the development in rural areas. Please see paragraphs 11.11-11.15 of the draft Plan.

What is the criteria used to identify/assess potential housing sites?

A range of criteria is applied and these are identified in our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Strategy for Planned Location of Housing. These include, for example, potential for flooding, archaeology, transport considerations.

What are the plans to improve infrastructure for the proposed housing sites ie: Doctors, Dentists, Schools, roads etc.

The council is working with the agencies responsible for delivering medical services, schools and transport infrastructure on an ongoing basis.

The Council has published a working draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) as a background document to this consultation.

The draft IDP covers a range of infrastructure (including transport; education; health and utilities), but a lot of work with key stakeholders and service providers is still





ongoing to try to ensure that infrastructure is provided alongside new development.

We bought a house recently why didn't the search pick the housing allocation up?

The Local Plan is still only a draft so the sites which we propose for allocation will not yet show up on your search.

Why can't all the empty properties be used for new housing instead of finding new sites?

This is based on the position that such housing is returned to the market, almost as if it were new housing stock. It is believed that the Local Plan can include in the housing land supply 540 units for the Plan period arising from empty properties being brought back into use.

The council works vigorously to bring empty property back into use, and has an active Empty Homes programme. The council can count some empty homes as part of the housing supply, if:

1. The properties in question have been empty for a period of four years or more.

This is based on the position that over that period it can be argued that those properties have been vacant and unused for such a long period that they are no longer available in the housing market and therefore not part of the active housing stock; and

2. The council has an active and robust programme for bringing those properties back into use.

Former Manston Airport Site

Why is the council proposing a change of use for the former airport site?

The council must set out planning policies within its Local Plan that are based on evidence.

Within the current Local Plan the Manston Airport site is designated for 'aviation use only'.

To continue with this designation in its new Local Plan, the council would have to provide evidence to the independent planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, that a future airport could be viable. The council commissioned Avia (an aviation management consultancy) to produce a report on the

financial feasibility of operating Manston Airport as a standalone entity.

The report concluded that the reopening of an airport would be unviable.

What does this mean?

It means that the council does not have sufficient evidence to continue to designate the site 'for aviation use only' within its Local Plan.

The proposed revisions to the Local Plan indicate that the Manston Airport site is designated for mixed-use development.

Where can I find more information on the former Manston Airport site?

More information can be found at thanet.gov.uk

Environment

Thanet is already a water stressed area – will there be enough water for all of these new houses?

The council has been working with Southern Water to make sure that they provide water and sewage facilities for the predicted growth included in the draft Local Plan. We will continue to work with them throughout the process, and our draft Local Plan has informed their business plan so they can ensure our growth needs are met.

The council is also proposing (through these revisions) to implement higher water efficiency requirements in new development

Economy

Why are there 17,000 houses but only 5,000 proposed jobs? There is high unemployment here – won't this make it worse?

The level of housing proposed is 17,000 new homes over the 20 year period to 2031. Housing numbers are not determined by jobs numbers alone, and so there is not a direct relationship between homes and jobs. This figure takes account of both the homes needed to accommodate changes in the existing population together with some in migration including homes for the additional labour force associated with the target of 5,000 additional jobs.

Homes are required to reflect new households forming as younger people leave the family home (where some





will already have jobs), people retiring to the area and people moving into the area (some of whom already have jobs).

Where are these jobs coming from?

Experian carried out employment forecasting for the council. The report showed that there is already strong growth in the tourism and green sectors of the economy and this is likely to continue. Thanet is also strong in cultural, retail and public administration professions.

Most of these jobs are likely to arise in smaller numbers across a large number of companies, rather than a lot of jobs in a small number of companies. The council has recently adopted a new Economic Growth Strategy which will support this.

Why are you focussing retail development at Westwood?

Thanet's town centres all perform different and complementary functions and retail development is supported at all of them.

The Local Plan does not propose to expand Westwood beyond its existing boundaries.

