



mapping out the future



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September 2003

Kent & Medway Structure Plan: Summary Brochure



# Mapping out the future

Kent and Medway Councils have published a new draft Structure Plan for public consultation. It sets out the policies that the Councils think should be used to guide decisions on development in Kent and Medway until 2021. The policies will come into full effect once the draft plan, including any amendments, is finally adopted. This will follow the current consultation and a public examination of the Plan in mid 2004.

This leaflet outlines the key proposals contained in the draft plan and explains how you can find out more.

If you wish to comment on the Plan then make sure you get in touch by **November 10th 2003**. See the back page of this leaflet for information on how you can make your views known.

## What is the Structure Plan?

The Structure Plan sets out the strategic planning framework for protection of our environment, major transport priorities, and the scale, pattern and broad location of new development including provision for new housing and major economic development across Kent and Medway. It does not specify the use of individual sites - this is the job of the Local Plan for each area. The purpose of the Structure Plan is to guide the preparation of Local Plans and provide a framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made. It also guides and informs investment decisions made in both the private and public sectors.

It is important that the policies in the Structure Plan are the right ones for Kent and Medway. This is a time of significant pressure for development and growing demand for new homes, jobs and services. The Plan must ensure that necessary development happens in a way that brings benefits to the people of Kent and to future generations.

## How did we draw up the draft Structure Plan?

In the Spring of 2002 we carried out a major consultation exercise on a document called 'mapping out the future'. This set out options for policy and sought people's views about future priorities for development, the environment and transport in Kent and Medway. The two month consultation period resulted in almost 7,300 individual comments from more than 1,000 people and organisations.

## Some of the key issues raised were:

### The need for a better relationship between:-

- the pace of housing development and the provision of essential facilities such as schools;
- housing and job growth. Kent and Medway's economic performance continues to fall short of that of other parts of the South East;
- providing sufficient housing but also ensuring that the new homes provided reflect the nature of housing need.

### The impact of out-of-town shopping developments on town centres

### Loss of countryside to make way for homes and roads

### The need for more environmentally-friendly alternatives to car transport

### The need to respond to change in the rural economy

All the responses were carefully considered and helped to shape the draft Structure Plan that is outlined within this leaflet.

# The Overall Strategy of the Plan: Key Elements

The policies of the Plan must all be considered together. Policies can have multiple benefits; as an example, those aimed at reducing transport congestion will also help combat greenhouse gas emissions and global warming; the provision of services close to new development can help reduce the need to travel.

## Homes and Jobs

- Providing land for 116,100 new homes over 20 years (2001-2021). This meets the requirements of regional planning guidance to 2016; provides for a continuing role after 2016 for Ashford and Thames Gateway as growth areas for the region but elsewhere envisages a slower rate of growth for the longer term.
- District targets for the proportion of housing development to be met on brownfield land (70% for Kent and Medway overall).
- Supporting the provision of a wide range of affordable housing including shared equity and key worker housing.
- Improving the balance of jobs and housing in order to reduce commuting.
- Protecting land that is strategically important for the development of business.
- Supporting 'clusters' of knowledge and technology-based industries, tourism, rural businesses and appropriate farm diversification
- Enhancing the role of the key deep water and 'Gateway' ports (Dover, the Channel Tunnel, Sheerness, Thamesport and Ramsgate)
- Attracting a wider range and higher quality of jobs, particularly in areas of need in North and East Kent

## Protecting our natural environment

- Protecting and improving Kent and Medway's varied and distinctive countryside and coast
- Conserving and enhancing our natural habitats and biodiversity
- Assessing and protecting the countryside in a manner that reflects its character and biodiversity as well as its natural beauty

## Spatial Strategy

- Promoting development and investment, particularly in North and East Kent.
- Capitalising on the way we can use our role as a gateway to the UK to attract investment in jobs and commercial opportunities.
- Growth areas at Ashford and Thames Gateway provide opportunities for major new sporting or recreation facilities to meet regional needs as well as benefiting local communities.
- Concentrating development in larger towns, especially the five major urban areas of Kent Thameside, Medway, Thanet, Ashford and Maidstone with the 'Medway Gap'.
- Focusing on the role of 'rural service centres' outside urban areas as offering the best prospects in rural Kent for supporting a sustainable pattern of development.
- Using more previously-developed ('brownfield') land and relying less on "greenfield" sites for development; introducing challenging targets for the use of 'brownfield' land.
- No major revisions to be made to the Green Belt to ensure that the countryside on the outskirts of London remains protected, the identity of settlements in West Kent is maintained and urban regeneration is supported
- Retaining a 'strategic gap' between the Medway Towns, Maidstone and the 'Medway Gap' and restricting further development.
- Creating a new 'strategic gap' between Medway and Sittingbourne/ Ridham/ Kemsley to prevent nearby urban areas from merging.
- Examining the potential for new regional parks in North and East Kent.
- Supporting the development of Manston as a regional airport for passengers and freight.
- Specific objectives and policies for each part of the county – the four sub areas of North Kent, the East Kent Triangle, the Channel Corridor and West Kent and each of the districts within them.





## Managing our natural resources

- Improving air and water quality and ensuring that development does not create unacceptable levels of pollution.
- Stronger management and protection of areas of potential flood risk.
- Encouraging energy conservation and greater use of sources of renewable energy.
- Protecting high quality agricultural land but also taking account of the environmental value of alternative land of poorer agricultural quality when locating new development.
- Reducing disposable waste to a minimum and disposing of it in a way that maximises benefits from recycling.
- Establishing landbanks for our major mineral resources and safeguarding important mineral reserves.

## Ensuring communities benefit from development

- Insisting upon high quality development alongside the more effective use of land.
- Promoting design and layout of development that contributes to a healthy, safe and secure environment, enhances the quality of public areas and fosters the conservation of resources such as water and energy.
- Making sure that new community facilities supporting housing or other development are provided when required.
- Protecting existing town centres by ensuring new shopping and leisure facilities are located within them.
- Ensuring that water supply and waste water treatment facilities are sufficient and that good water quality is maintained.

## Moving around Kent and Medway

- Reducing the need to travel by promoting developments where homes, jobs and leisure facilities are sited close together.
- Promoting public transport, cycling and walking and the use of travel plans for larger developments to encourage the use of these forms of transport.
- Supporting the transfer of freight from road to rail.
- Identifying key transport schemes which are fundamental to the well-being of the people of Kent and Medway, the economy of the area and the accommodation of regionally important growth. These include some schemes outside Kent but which impinge upon it and schemes or needs that require action by other agencies e.g. the Strategic Rail Authority.



## Did consultation make a difference?

Yes - the draft Plan responds to a number of issues raised during earlier consultation. These include:  
Strong policies on the identification and delivery of community facilities and services needed to support development.

- Strong policies on the design and quality of development and conservation of the distinctive character of Kent's towns and villages.
- Retention of the A227(A25) Borough Green and Platt Bypass as a major transport scheme - an option to delete this scheme generated substantial comment in favour of its retention.
- Strong emphasis on satisfactory resolution of the infrastructure needs associated with major growth at Ashford and in Thames Gateway.
- Retention, in part, of options for strategic scale development on the East Bank of the Medway (within Tonbridge and Malling).
- Revision of proposals for the distribution of housing provision to reflect more fully the opportunities for using previously developed ('brownfield') land.

Consultation in 2002 presented a range of options for the scale and pattern of new housing provision in Kent and Medway. A major concern was how Kent would respond to the Government's house-building programme.

The Structure Plan has to reflect the Government's national and regional policy, and in Kent's case this means providing for the large amount of new housing outlined in regional planning guidance. While accepting this responsibility, Kent and Medway Councils are



determined that new housing should be accompanied by the necessary improvements in roads, other infrastructure and community facilities.

Necessary development must be a positive force for change making the best use of land whilst reflecting a high quality of design and sensitivity to community needs. The draft Structure Plan contains policies to ensure that these aims are pursued.

## What does the Kent and Medway Structure Plan seek to do?

The Structure Plan sets out a vision for Kent and Medway that focuses on improving quality of life for people. It aims to help people enjoy healthier, safer and more prosperous lives, with better jobs, transport, housing, leisure, educational and cultural facilities. At the same time it aims to make sure Kent's countryside and natural habitats are vigorously protected and, where possible, enhanced.

The Structure Plan seeks to ensure that development in Kent and Medway is "sustainable". This means increasing the economic, social and environmental well-being of those living today while protecting and improving the environment for future generations.

## How has the plan been assessed?

During its preparation the 'sustainability' of the draft Plan was tested against a checklist of considerations which represented 'best practice' from across the country. This has included an independent external assessment. A separate document explaining how this appraisal was carried out is available.

## Where can I see the Plan?

We can send you a copy of the Plan if you ask for one (see the addresses overleaf). You can also see a copy at all libraries, your district/borough council office or at the Kent County and Medway Council addresses below. It is also available on the internet at [www.kmsp.org.uk](http://www.kmsp.org.uk)

## How can I comment on the Plan?

Comments on the Plan should be submitted on a form which is available from the addresses overleaf or at [www.kmsp.org.uk](http://www.kmsp.org.uk). A copy of the form accompanies each copy of the Plan.

**All comments must be received by Monday November 10th 2003.**

## What happens next?

At the end of the consultation period, Kent and Medway Councils will consider all the comments received and decide whether or not any changes to the Plan should be proposed. An Examination in Public (EIP), which is similar to a public inquiry, will be held in 2004 before an independently appointed panel.

The EIP will examine key issues raised during the consultation and may recommend that the Councils change some of the policies. There will then be an opportunity to comment upon any modifications that the Councils propose to make to the Plan before it is finally adopted. This is expected to be in late 2004/early 2005.



Courtesy of Eurostar (UK) Ltd

## For further information, or to comment on the plan, please contact:

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