

Dover District Local Plan Examination – DDC Opening statement to EiP

Good morning. I'm Ashley Taylor the Planning Policy and Projects Manager at Dover District Council.

I'd like to warmly welcome everyone participating in the hearing sessions today and in the coming weeks, and to everyone watching, here and online.

And on behalf of Dover District Council, I'd particularly like to welcome the Inspectors, Mr Birkenshaw and Mr Coyne, to Dover and to recognise all the work that you have, and will be carrying out over the next few weeks for Dover's Examination.

I am sure that many of you would also like to share in my thanks to Ms St John How, the Programme Officer, who has organised the examination process and hearing sessions.

The Council has taken a bold decision in moving forward with its Local Plan. We have cross-party support in progressing the strategy, and at a time of uncertainty, members haven't paused Local Plan preparation, they have made the difficult decisions needed to plan for growth in the District.

I would like to acknowledge the huge amount of input we have had from all of those who have contributed to the production of the Local Plan in recent years. We are so grateful for the time that hundreds of local residents, landowners, statutory consultees, councillors and other stakeholders have invested in contributing to the Local Plan process and shaping its strategy.

The Council has taken everyone's views on board where it has been possible to do so. We do recognise that, as the formulation of a Local Plan requires a balancing and consideration of competing issues and views, it is not possible to resolve all concerns, with difficult decisions having had to be made to deliver a sound Plan.

What the Plan does

Our Local Plan has been prepared during what we believe to be an important time of evolution and progress for Dover.

The district is growing, and we will see significant change over the next two decades. Our homes and communities need to be built to be resilient and flexible to respond to the challenges ahead and our Local Plan looks to provide the framework for this.

Between now and 2040, there is a need for over 10,000 new homes, to ensure that sufficient affordable, high quality housing is provided and the Local Plan is a vital part of facilitating and directing that growth.

The Plan looks also to attract investment into the district by identifying sites and setting the right parameters for employment development – to encourage opportunities for local

people – helping to implement the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy that seeks to enable the whole of our district to thrive.

The Plan isn’t just about meeting quantitative needs for housing and employment. There is an overarching need to ensure that all development is sustainable – enabling the provision of homes and communities where people want to live, whilst also protecting and enhancing the wider character of the district, including the world class natural environment and heritage that make Dover District a uniquely attractive place to live, work and visit.

Striking this balance is one of the key purposes of the Local Plan and the Council believes an appropriate balance has been achieved.

The Plan sets out a strategy that places Dover Town and its surroundings as the main focus for new development, building on its excellent connectivity and stimulating opportunities to deliver significant regeneration of the Town.

It looks to protect the settings of Deal, the medieval town of Sandwich and of the villages, while also enabling these settlements to evolve in a way that is appropriate to their context and character, and supporting them to thrive.

The Plan aims to ensure that development is of a high quality and will be fit for purpose now and in the years ahead – and so contains new policies on design, place-making, natural environment and heritage to enable us to mitigate and adapt to the realities of climate change while delivering attractive and well-planned communities.

Preparation

The plan has been prepared in accordance with the relevant legal and policy framework, and the Council considers that the Plan before you is fundamentally sound. We will work constructively and positively on potential modifications that may be considered necessary.

The Framework, at paragraph 35, sets out the tests of soundness. It is considered these four tests have been met:

Firstly, the plan has been **positively prepared** -it based upon an up-to-date assessment of development needs for the District and proposes to meet those needs in full.

Secondly, we consider the Plan to be **justified**. Reasonable alternatives have been assessed as part of the Sustainability Appraisal and the Plan is justified by an up to date, proportionate evidence base. This has included consultation with local residents, stakeholders and statutory bodies.

The significant consultation undertaken is in accordance with the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement and the relevant legal and policy requirements.

Thirdly, we believe this Plan is **effective**, as it is **realistic and deliverable**. Extensive work has been carried out, through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, to

consider the availability and delivery of sites proposed for development, alongside the Whole Plan Viability Assessment.

The Plan provides housing sites to enable a 5 year land supply through the plan period and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan sets out a strategy for delivering the infrastructure necessary to support the Plan's growth.

The Plan is also effective in relation to cross-boundary strategic matters. We have worked closely and constructively with neighbouring authorities and other relevant organisations, which the Council considers meets the legal requirements of the Duty to Co-operate introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

And fourthly, the plan has been prepared and Policies have been drafted to ensure it is **consistent with national policy**.

Conclusion

And so to round up, the preparation of the Local Plan has been a long and thorough process, requiring careful balancing of different and competing issues.

The Council considers that this Plan provides a strategy that promotes growth that is sustainable and deliverable, responds to a changing climate, and that conserves and enhances the district's designated natural and historic environments - providing a sound basis for delivering growth in the District.

I would finally like to give my personal thanks, to the planning team for their hard work in getting us to this point and we're looking forward to participating in the Public Examination Hearings over the next few weeks.

Thank you.