

Dover District Council Leadership Forum

The Ark, Dover
11th July 2018



Introduction

Dover District Council has commenced a Local Plan Review which will cover the period up to 2037. In order to inform this process, two workshops were organised to obtain initial thoughts on a new vision and objectives for the District, and to reconsider how we make allocations for new housing. The focus of the events was on a fully participative process with small group discussions and plenary clustering of outcomes.

The first workshop held at The Ark, Dover on 11th July 2018 involved members of the District Council Leadership Team. The event was facilitated by Peter Woodward, an experienced independent facilitator. This report contains all the outcomes from the group discussions. These have been accurately transcribed. Inevitably they will require further reflection and refinement during the Local Plan preparation process.

Attending participants were:

Leader of the Council
Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder for Built Environment
Chairman of the Council
Portfolio Holder for Access & Licensing
Head of Regulatory Services
Leadership Support Officer
Head of Community Services
Head of Inward Investment
Head of Museums & Tourism
Portfolio Holder for Environment, Waste and Health
Head of Finance
Head of Assets & Building Control
Head of Legal Services
Solicitor to the Council
Chairman of the Planning Committee
Team Leader (Development Management)
Head of Strategic Housing
Head of Parks and Open Spaces

Our Vision and Objectives

The group were given a brief presentation by Adrian Fox, DDC Policy and Projects Manager and were then tasked with identifying up to ten “***Distinctly Dover District***” objectives through to 2037. Once these had been considered, the groups were asked to write a short overall vision statement.



Their collective observations were captured and grouped, identifying some areas that were attracting particular focus:

Population age demographic:

- Encouraging growth in working age population (change the demographic)
- Rebalance population age: encourage retention of working age
- Embrace our aging population and coastal location

Tourism:

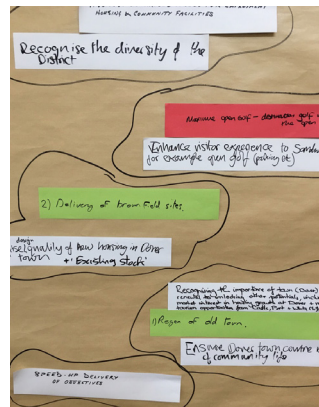
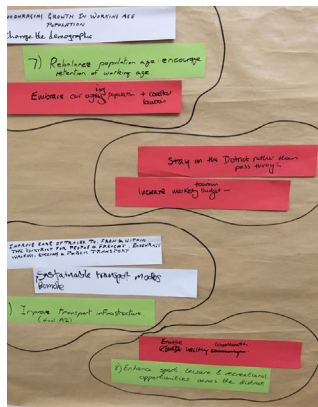
- Encourage people to stay in the District rather than pass through
- Increase the tourism marketing budget

Transport:

- Improve ease of travel to, from and within the District for people and freight.
- Encourage walking, cycling and public transport
- Promote sustainable transport modes
- Improve transport infrastructure (dual A2?)

Health:

- Enable healthy communities
- Enhance sport, leisure and recreational opportunities across the District



Residents:

- Improve residents' skills levels and reduce social deprivation

Digital skills:

- Greater support for small business, invest in digital technologies and infrastructure
- Improve digital skills and ways of working (broadband enhancement)
- Enhance connectivity to do business

Housing:

- Sufficient housing - broaden the range, offer and quality of homes for life
- Deliver more housing of the right type in the right places
- Housing growth - promote existing allocations
- DDC should be more pro-active in investment and delivery of homes
- Change policies to enable housing growth
- Harness the power of development to address infrastructure issues in Deal

Diversity:

- Address localised needs for employment, housing and community facilities
- Recognise the diversity of the District

Golf:

- Maximise open golf - re-brand as 'destination golf', not just about the 'Open'
- Enhance visitor experience to Sandwich, for example open golf (parking etc.)

Brownfield sites and housing:

- Delivery of brownfield sites
- Raise design quality of new housing in Dover town, and existing stock

Dover town centre:

- Recognising the importance of the town, unlocking other potentials, including market interest in housing growth at Dover and more tourism opportunities from Castle, Port and White Cliffs.
- Regeneration of the Old Town
- Ensure Dover town centre forms part of community life



Objectives:

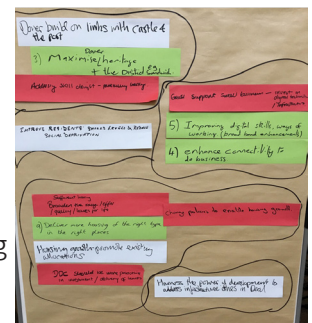
- Speed up delivery of objectives

Heritage:

- Build on links with castle
- Maximise Dover's heritage and the District as a whole (e.g. Sandwich)
- Address skill deficit particularly re: heritage preservation

Plenary observations on objectives

- Interesting to note the shift of focus from just Dover to District-wide
- Challenge is to drill down and make it more specific and distinctive
- 'Digital District' is a strong emerging theme
- Smarter, quicker, sooner delivery! How do you get momentum going? How do we as a Council become a dynamic enabler? Organisational implications?
- Old objectives - low to better. New ones more imaginative and positive
- Who is this for?
- How does everyone see themselves in the plan?



The following vision statements were devised:

- Maximise our heritage
- Healthy living agenda
- Investment in digital technology
- Maximise open golf to make Dover a destination for golf all year round
- Make us a connected District
- Mars bar - 'sell the sizzle'

‘Make Dover the Gateway to Europe and the most connected town and district in the UK, effectively utilising the port, HS link and digital technology to make the District a desirable place to live, work, stay and play.’

‘Dover is a diverse District - in the coming years we will build on the strengths of each community.’

Informing the Local Plan Approach towards Housing Distribution

The group were given a brief presentation by Mike Ebbs, DDC Head of Regeneration and Development, and were then asked to identify any additional criteria to guide future housing allocations. They were given a copy of the Core National Criteria for guidance if they wished to refer to it, and then their criteria were fed back during a plenary session along with general observations.

The group’s additional criteria were:

- Digitally enabled, superfast broadband
- Sustainable criteria - look at Otterpool Park garden village as an example
- Market desirability and deliverability
- Marketable
- Market-led approach or regeneration-led?
- Promote fewer, but larger developments to secure infrastructure.
- Consider a new settlement
- Proportional development to existing communities (including Hamlets)

- Promote a settlement hierarchy with a focus on Dover - roll forward with Core Strategy approval
- Accessibility - transport and services
- Appropriateness of infrastructure
- Ask developers to demonstrate how their development meets the health and wellbeing agenda

So how can this be delivered on the ground?

Suggestions included:

- DDC as landowner and developer
- Should DDC become a housing developer?
- Make effective use of Council land
- Market or needs/regeneration led?
- How do we work with the market?
- Go out and attract new housebuilders to the District
- Promote residential building in the town centre
- It’s not just about the delivery of housing. This needs to be a place people want to live

The group’s observations on this were:

- How do we make the Dover District a place of “choice” in the East Kent context?
- Look at the success of growth at Aylesham in terms of its connection to Canterbury
- How do we make Dover **really** attractive? Crack that and you’re half-way to solutions!
- Council has to use all levers at its disposal to make it happen
- Be aware of existing infrastructure challenges on new developments
- Water, sewage, energy all need to be carefully considered.



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