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1 Why are we engaging with you now?

1.0.1 A local plan sets out local planning policies and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built where. A local plan when adopted forms part of the framework to guide development across England. The latest Swale Borough Local Plan was adopted in 2017 and is called Bearing Fruits 2031.

1.0.2 We need to prepare a new local plan every five years and there are major challenges for our next local plan to address. We must deal with matters raised by the inspection of our 2017 adopted local plan and address coming changes to national planning policy, particularly those around future housing numbers and how they may impact upon us. These are likely to mean that we will need to build more new homes every year than we have done in the past - perhaps an increase in our housing target number from 776 per year, to over 1,050 per year, once the new local plan is in place in 2022.

1.0.3 This is a very early opportunity to influence and engage with this new local plan - its scope and content. It will give us an important chance to gather opinions and gauge the wider appetite for certain approaches that could be further considered, particularly about how we can in future provide for new development needs.

1.0.4 *Looking Ahead* takes an initial look at some of the possible and likely influences on our futures and what these might mean for the next local plan. To help, we asked consultants Peter Brett Associates to take a look at some of these issues and advise us on what they felt the way forward might be. We have drawn upon some of this work for this consultation and engagement document, but please [take a look their full report](#).

1.0.5 Although not part of the *Looking Ahead* consultation, we have also separately published a '[New Garden Communities Prospectus](#)', where we are giving landowners and developers an opportunity to submit proposals for new stand alone communities so that we can further consider and decide whether they should form part of our shortlist of possible ways forward. We'll explain a bit more about this later in this document.

1.0.6 Throughout *Looking Ahead*, we have included some questions that we would really value your views on, especially the issues we have raised in Section 8. However, please feel free to comment on any aspect of *Looking Ahead* or the new local plan in general. You can use the question at the end of the document to do this.



Picture 1.0.1 The Sheppey crossings

An important note

We have not decided anything at this stage and the Council is open-minded about the way forward. Likewise, unless stated otherwise, nothing within this document represents the Council's policy – all decisions are for later on in the process for preparing the local plan.

2 How do I get involved?

2.0.1 We will be undertaking this consultation and engagement in accordance with our [Statement of Community Involvement](#).

2.0.2 If you need any assistance on *Looking Ahead* or the new local plan in general please:

- Call: 01795417118
- Email: planningpolicy@swale.gov.uk

2.0.3 Should you wish to respond to *Looking Ahead*, you can do so in one of the following ways:

- **Online** – on our [consultation website](#). This enables you to submit comments against specific parts of *Looking Ahead*. If you have made comments this way before on any of our previous consultations, with your password and user name you can do the same again, making it easier to submit comments this time. If you have not used this before, why not set yourself up to use it?
- **By email** – (bearingfruits@swale.gov.uk).
- **Social media** - Facebook: [Swale Borough Council](#) | Twitter: [SwaleCouncil](#)
- **By letter** – to the Spatial Planning Manager, Swale Borough Council, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent. ME103HT.

2.0.4 To help us, please submit any comments before 4 June 2018. We cannot guarantee to consider comments that are later than this.

2.0.5 We are also undertaking other community engagement during this early stage of the next local plan. This includes an on-line survey with a short set of simplified questions based on this document. [You can respond to this survey](#) in addition to or instead of this document.

3 What happens after I respond to this document?

3.0.1 It is really important that as many as possible engage with *Looking Ahead* at this early stage. This is because in Summer 2019, we will be publishing a statutory Issues and Options consultation document which will include a series of strategic spatial

alternatives – these are the choices potentially available for addressing the amount and distribution of development across the Borough. These will be subjected to scrutiny and testing against relevant criteria and objectives and we want to get as many early thoughts as possible on how we should be going about this next stage.



Picture 3.0.1 Sheerness beech (SBC)

3.0.2 Later in 2018, we will be digesting the comments we receive in respect of this current engagement process and will be reporting to Council elected Members a summary of the opinions that have been expressed. Council Members will be able to see all the representations made in full, but we will not be supplying individual responses to comments received at this stage. You will be able to see how we have used the comments received to influence the next more statutory stage in the process.

4 What will the next local plan be covering?

Headlines

Local Plans must be revisited every five years and there are considerable challenges ahead for us; major global ones that may impact upon us, but local ones too - transport constraints in the Sittingbourne area, a need for new employment land and a likely 35% increase in future housing targets. The Government is also proposing changes to its National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance. There is little time to lose in preparing a new local plan to address these issues.

4.0.1 Although we adopted our local plan in 2017, to comply with new requirements all councils must review or replace them every five years. With the clock already ticking we need to consider now what the next local plan should include and how it is taken forward. We intend to ensure that our next local plan covers at least 15 years from the intended new adoption date of 2022. This means moving the end date of the current adopted plan from the year 2031 to 2038.



Picture 4.0.1 Elmley (R Canis)

4.0.2 It is too early to conclude whether this will be a partial or complete review of the local plan. However, as of this moment, we think that some aspects of the adopted local plan may not require substantial alteration, particularly where the general policies used to guide planning decisions remain compliant with any new national policy and guidance. In addition, whilst our adopted local plan development allocations will go through a re-assessment process, we will need to ensure that it continues to make available a supply of

housing land and it is therefore possible that many of these allocations will remain in place.

4.0.3 However, what is highly likely is that pending new national policy will result in significantly higher housing targets and it is these that will present particular challenges for us and our communities. We'll take a closer look at them in Section 7.3.

Question 1

Scope of the next local plan

1. Are there any specific matters that you consider the next local plan should be covering or amending from the [adopted version?](#)

4.0.4 Supporting the next local plan will be technical evidence prepared by or on behalf of the Council. It will include reviews of land supply, landscape designations, retail, housing and employment needs, transport modelling and open space, viability and flood risk assessments. There will also be a sustainability appraisal which we will use to determine how our alternatives, policies and proposals could perform against economic, social and environmental objectives.

4.0.5 Some of our evidence will be subject to engagement and consultation in their own right, either generally or with specific parties as appropriate. Other evidence though will be entirely technical and will simply be noted by the Council and published. All evidence will be published on the Council's website.

Question 2

Evidence for the new local plan

1. Are there any specific topic areas that you think need further research?

5 What are the stages in preparing the next local plan?

Local Plan Stage	When do we think this will happen?	What it's all about?
This document - ' <i>Looking Ahead</i> '. (Regulation 17)	We are engaging with you on this document now (23 April - 4 June 2018)	Early opinion gathering and engagement about the scope of the new local plan and possible ways forward.
Issues and options consultation (Regulation 18)	Summer 2019	To test and seek opinions on a series of options for the distribution of development in the Borough. This stage may also include an initial indication of our preferred approach and an early draft of the new local plan.
Submission draft local plan (preferred option) consultation. The publication version (Regulation 19)	Spring 2020	This is the version of the local plan that we believe is sound, (as defined by Government Policy) in other words it is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positively prepared; • justified; • effective; and • consistent with national policy.
Submission of draft local plan to Secretary of State (Regulations 20-22)	Autumn/Winter 2020	This version of the local plan is provided to the Government, together with the representations received on the previous stage.
Examination in public	Spring/Summer 2021	A Government Inspector considers whether the local plan is sound. The Inspector tests whether the plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complies with the legal requirements; • complies with the duty to cooperate and; • meets the tests of soundness.
Main Modifications (if required) consultation	Autumn 2021	This stage may be required if the Inspector agrees that modifications to the local plan are required to make it sound. These modifications would be drafted and consulted upon.
Examination in public phase 2 (if required)	Winter 2022	A Government Inspector considers whether the modified local plan is now sound.
Examination Inspector's final report	Summer 2022	The Inspector's formal letter as to whether the plan is sound/unsound.
Adoption of local plan by Swale Borough Council	Summer/Autumn 2022	If the plan is found sound, the Council formally adopts the document as part of the statutory development plan.

Table 5.0.1 Stages of local plan preparation

6 What are the 'big picture' challenges facing us?

Crystal ball gazing - The Big Headlines

The truth is that no-one can be sure of the long term future. It is driven by demographic, social, climatic, attitudinal, product and technological changes, making it very hard to predict. However we must do our best and be flexible to unexpected changes.

6.0.1 Much of what we try and plan for relies on us trying to understand what the future might have in store (as well as learning lessons from the past). The future has a habit of out-maneuvering us across many fronts - demographic, social, climatic, attitudinal, product and technological - but when we are preparing a local plan, we must be aware of these possible big, often national or even global challenges. Whilst we must try and plan ahead as best we can, as there are always uncertainties, we will need to ensure that we are as flexible as possible.



Picture 6.0.1 Looking ahead (and behind)

6.0.2 Before taking a look at the more local challenges for Swale in Section 7, we'll take a brief look at some of the possible big global and national challenges affecting us.

The Economy - The Big Headlines

Ideas of the future vary widely – but many agree that some of the coming changes are likely to be highly disruptive - labour markets drastically changed by IT and automation, shifts from spending on material goods towards spending on experiences, possible lower levels of economic growth.

6.0.3 There is not a great deal of agreement from economists about what might happen and this makes successfully predicting change difficult, but moves toward complete automation in some sectors and a lesser emphasis on material goods are potentially profound and their effects could be disproportionately felt. There will also be change following the UK's departure from the EU. Changes such as these can affect the preparation of local plans because the forecasting methods they traditionally use cannot easily deal with the types of off-trend, non-linear shifts that we may see. Flexibility will be the watchword.

Population and social change - The Big Headlines

Continuing social and attitudinal changes appear likely. Housing needs will significantly increase, whilst demands on our social infrastructure, brought about by technological, lifestyle and demographic changes, will have profound effects on health and social welfare and could bring disproportionately heavier impacts on poorer populations.

6.0.4 Social and attitudinal change is difficult to predict and will inevitably effect political outcomes, but shifts in the structure of populations will be a significant feature for us in the UK, potentially and significantly impacting upon two main areas - housing and our social infrastructure, and in particular, health and social care.

6.0.5 The Office for National Statistics 2014 Based Household Projections paint a picture of a dramatically ageing population and an increase in single households - all this points to increasing housing need.

6.0.6 A major challenge will be meeting the nations housing needs. Nationally, all the main political parties

agree that the UK has under-supplied housing over the last 30 or so years. There is a national housing backlog to fill which will see significantly increased levels of new housing coming to most areas, but for many in our society, an affordable home remains out of reach.

6.0.7 New development can take many years to plan and build out. This means that we will be planning for very different groups of people, some of whom are children now. Overall though, we will be planning for the “Baby Boomers” (b: 1946-1964) through to “Generation Z” (b: 2000 onward). We will also need to be thinking about meeting the specific needs that will arise from these groups. For example, the “Baby Boomers” are set to form a significant part of our population and their housing needs will be very different from the rest, and, for some, more specialised.

6.0.8 One of the great success stories of the past century has been the almost continuous rise in life expectancy, much brought about by technological advances in health care and improved living conditions. As the proportion of older people increases and more of us survive once incurable conditions, the demands on health and social services will massively increase. Furthermore, whilst there have been sustained pushes for us to lead healthier lifestyles, obesity, drinking and smoking all cause, and will continue to cause, disease and death, adding billions of pounds to health and social care bills. All this, together with mental health and care needs of young people and vulnerable adults, not only fuels demand on and access to the health and social care services themselves, and also the type and design of housing we need to plan for.

6.0.9 Future changes in our economy, population and health may also bring with them social changes. Whilst some may be beneficial and liberating, more disruptive changes have the potential to disproportionately and adversely affect us and it may be the more socially marginalised sections of society where these will be most heavily felt.

Climate Change - The Big Headlines

Evidence of warming of the climate system is unequivocal, driven by economic and population growth, requiring substantial sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Health, low lying areas, areas important for biodiversity and productive farmland will all be at risk. Alongside this, a green 'Big Bang' of renewables and battery use is getting nearer.

6.0.10 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change believes that continued emissions will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all parts of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems, affecting health, low lying areas and farmland. Despite some improvements here in the UK, limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, together with wider adaptations within society in general, such as new responses to the way we plan and design new developments.



Picture 6.0.2 Low lying communities (SBC)

6.0.11 In our economy and utilities, the increasing use of renewable energy and batteries is generating a potential worldwide 'Green Big Bang', but despite advances in reducing CO₂ emissions in some areas, there remains much to do.

Transport - The Big Headlines

We may be entering a period of unprecedented change in the transport environment. Technological advances and the emergence of the sharing economy have the potential to transform the way we travel.

6.0.12 There are potential big changes ahead in the transport environment as we look to technologies to fix the problems that our carbon based travel patterns have caused.



Picture 6.0.3 The 'Google' prototype autonomous vehicle (Popular Science July 2016)

6.0.13 Nationally, air quality is a problem for many areas, but there is speculation that this might be reduced or even eventually solved by future technological changes. For example, diesel car sales are collapsing, whilst November 2017 saw hybrid car sales rise by 33.3% year on year. By 2019, every Volvo sold will have an electric motor and by 2040, 30% of the world's cars are expected to be all electric. The all electric HGV is also coming.

6.0.14 Will technological changes reduce or solve congestion too? For example, some manufacturers have announced plans to operate driverless vehicles and ride hailing services. However, it seems likely that these new technologies will be sitting alongside the old for some years to come.

6.0.15 It is difficult to predict transport growth and demand and be able to reliably and successfully plan in the face of disruptive changes to travel patterns. Furthermore, there is already a back-log of transport infrastructure needs and securing political and financial

support for major infrastructure projects will not get easier.

The Environment - The Big Headlines

Healthy environmental resources are important to our economy, health and well-being and, of course, to the ecosystems they support. However, species and habitats are in trouble and here in the UK, land is a finite resource where we will need to try and reconcile competing uses - all under pressure from a wide range of human growth activities. In the urban environment, we need to focus on the quality of our surroundings, both for the majority of us currently, as well as those we are planning for in the future.

6.0.16 The environment affects the quality of life people enjoy (or not). Environmental conditions affect human health and well-being, both directly, for instance through pollution, and indirectly, for instance through adverse effects. People value their access to environmental resources and services, ranging from basics, such as clean water to amenities, such as open-air recreational spaces and noise-free space in which to live and work.

6.0.17 People take such environmental factors into account in their choices too, for instance, when deciding where to live. They may decide to pay more for a house in a pleasant environment, or live out of town to enjoy a good environment, even when this can involve higher commuting costs. Environmental factors can also indirectly affect other quality of life aspects, including economic prosperity, health and inequality.

6.0.18 We can expect big changes in the ways that we both use and appreciate the built form and the spaces that make up the urban environment. For example, our new buildings could start to look very different as they accommodate different ways of living and technological change. However, the process of urban renewal is a very gradual one and in the future it will be the existing urban areas where we will need to address these changes, as well as for those we are planning for the future. At the same time, the pace of change and, in particular, the quality of the urban environment is strongly linked to prosperity. If urban decay is not to markedly increase and the quality of the urban environment improve, prosperity will need to embed itself deeper within society.

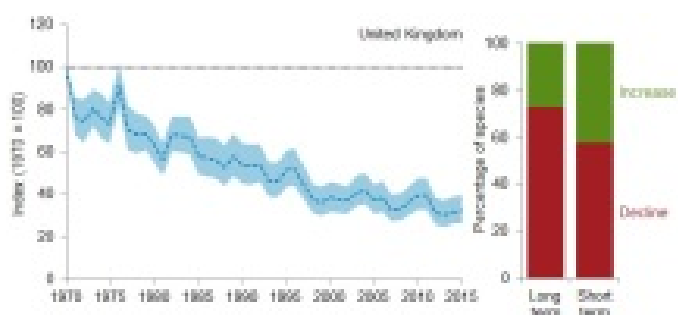
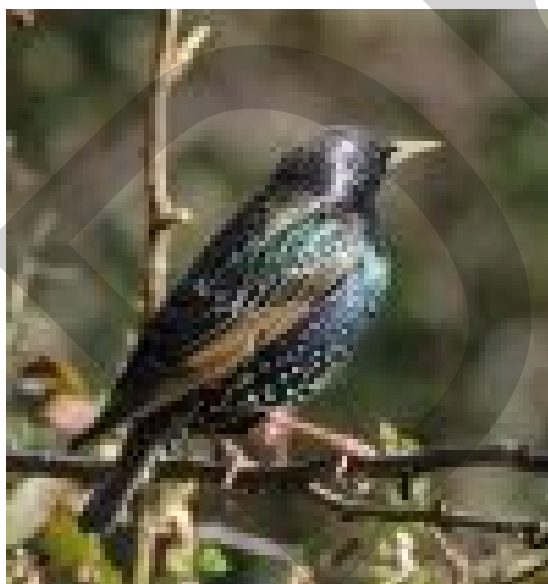


Figure 6.0.1 Change in the relative abundance of priority species in the UK, 1970 to 2015 (JNCC biodiversity indicators 2017).

6.0.19 Internationally and in the UK, we have failed to meet biodiversity targets past and present. Although there have been real gains for wildlife in some areas, there is still a gradual loss of habitats and species overall, which represents a threat to the intrinsic value of our natural environment and to the economic, health and social benefits that it provides us. Continued funding for environmental projects also present uncertainties in our ability to reverse these declines, whilst feeding ourselves and improving our food security will not only be amongst the challenges of our time, but will also need to be reconciled with on-going environmental protection and new development.



Picture 6.0.4 The UK starling population has crashed (RSPB)

Question 3

The 'big' future questions

1. We have provided just a small digest of some of the big challenges that may face us. This is your chance to tell us your own thoughts about what the future may mean for us. What do you think?

7 What are the local challenges for Swale?

7.1 What are our Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?

7.1.1 We did an initial SWOT analysis of Swale. Below is what we came up with.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections to London and Europe (via road, sea, Eurostar and HS1) • Employment opportunities at large distributions centres such as Aldi and Morrisons and at business parks such as Kent Science Park and Eurolink • Horticultural fruit production, processing and storage • Relatively cheap land and house prices • Open and flexible environment for businesses to thrive • Burgeoning 'creative industries' in Faversham and rural areas • Outstanding natural environments and heritage assets • An increasingly enterprising, engaged, skilled and volunteering sector of the population 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low wage levels compared to the rest of the South East • Perceived lack of 'USP' for Swale to the outside world • Dwindling employment land supply • Low skills levels and educational attainment in some areas • Poor land values and viability limits potential for high quality development and affordable housing • Deprivation within some urban areas • Under-performing town centres with poor retail offers, an undeveloped vibrant evening/night time economy and deteriorating streetscapes • Increasing congestion and air quality problems • Limited provision and low usage of public transport • Underdeveloped and under exploited cultural offer
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to capture footloose commercial investment • J5 improvements, Lower Thames Crossing, increased capacity, access to new markets, shorter journey times • Network Rail's proposed direct rail link from Faversham to Ashford • Potential for new infrastructure and community facilities with new housing • Sittingbourne Town Centre regeneration • Available land for low-carbon power sources (e.g. solar, wind, battery storage) • Special natural and built environments which can support the economy, health and well-being • Migration of people from London expanding Swale's skills profile and bringing more economically active people into Swale 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration of people from London could increase competition for houses and jobs • Lower Thames Crossing; potential increased traffic through Swale which could impact on transport capacity and air quality • Potential for developers to control development of land in key new locations that could work against the maximisation of land values and therefore, community benefits • Poorly managed housing growth leading to transport, social infrastructure and environmental pressures • Viability problems in some areas, with a risk of a cycle of deprivation in some areas and a widening gulf of affordability for new housing • Increasing automation impacting upon Swale's manufacturing and warehouse sectors • Labour supply changes in key Swale sectors following UK departure from the EU • Ageing population reducing percentage of local people of working-age, increasing demands on community services

Table 7.1.1 The Swale SWOT analysis

Question 4

Swale's Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

1. Do you agree with this analysis of Swale's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats? If not, what should be added or taken away?

7.1.2 We'll take a look now at some of the local planning challenges around where we will work and live and how we can manage our environment and infrastructure.

7.2 Where will we work?

The Swale Headlines

The Swale economy is forecast to be more prosperous, but this will not happen by itself. The changing economic map of the UK and our departure from the EU will also create opportunities and challenges. To ensure prosperity, we will urgently need new sites for employment and must upgrade our image, whilst ensuring that high quality economic activity and skilled workers are embedded in the local economy. We may also need to deal with some disruptive changes which could impact upon our more deprived communities, whilst in our town centres, people will expect them to offer the opportunities for social and cultural contact within a better quality of place.

7.2.1 Best estimates by economic models suggest that Swale will be wealthier by 2037/8; marginally outperforming South East and UK averages. Over time, Swale could look and feel more prosperous compared to other parts of the UK.

7.2.2 These forecasts are relatively positive because the broader Swale area has growing sectors. However, none of this success is guaranteed as the forecasts rely on us being able to find site capacity at roughly the same rate as we have done in past. However, whilst we still have a numerically generous land supply, there is already evidence to indicate that we have a

pressing need to find the next generation of employment sites.

7.2.3 In 2017 we asked landowners to submit potential employment use sites to us. The sites submitted are being assessed, but notable by their absence are the next generation of sites similar to that provided at Eurolink in Sittingbourne, or the large scale sites for distribution users with good access to the strategic road network. Landowners and developers are encouraged to submit sites in these locations for consideration. [Please contact us](#) should you wish to do this and we will tell you what you need to do.

Question 5

The next generation of employment sites

Where should we be locating the next generation of employment sites?

7.2.4 Some of our forecast growth is likely to be due to other nearby areas also performing well. Economically active people are likely to commute from Swale to these neighbouring areas (including Medway Towns, Canterbury and London), but as a result of living in the Borough, they may also spend more in our economy, provided we are offering what they want.



Picture 7.2.1 Aldi Depot, Queenborough (SBC)

7.2.5 Apart from just being able to find more employment land, for any long term prosperity in Swale to happen and be sustained, we will need to upgrade our image as a place to live and work, as well as making our local economy more fit and flexible to face the rigours of future competition and change. We think that this will mean ensuring that high quality economic activity and skilled workers are embedded in the local

Looking ahead

economy as well as doing more to increase the skills of the current work force.

7.2.6 We also believe that prosperity is more likely to be sustained in a place when it has access to (and can draw upon) supporting high quality labour markets, face-to-face communication and a network of competing and collaborating firms. We should not forget that housing is a critical part of this picture because a high quality offer is essential if a skilled population is going to be retained and attracted. Skills are also an important element of employers' willingness to invest in a location and factors likely to attract skilled labour include:

1. The ability to provide locations and context for face-to-face contact – such as a strong retail offer.
2. Opportunities for social and cultural interaction – such as cinemas, theatres, cafes and restaurants.
3. A strong quality of place – particularly natural, recreational and lifestyle amenities.

7.2.7 Many prospective workers balance economic opportunity and lifestyle in selecting a place to live and work. Skilled workers have a wider range of job opportunities and have a greater ability to choose between locations so they can pick those that are attractive places to live as well as work. We need to be one of these places of potential choice and this needs actions across a number of fronts, including improving the skills and training of sections of our own

workforce. Alongside apprenticeships, a focused Further Education facility in Sittingbourne is needed to help meet employer needs, but there also remains the need to address the deep-rooted basic skills issues that limit opportunities for some residents.

Question 6

The Swale economy

1. How can Swale ensure that its current positive economic forecasts come to fruition and are sustained? Do you agree with our assessment of what we need to provide to ensure that the economy is sustained?

7.2.8 The economic geography of the UK is changing, with uncertain implications for us in the south-east. There are aspirations for a new 'northern powerhouse', supported by new infrastructure that could create new, more integrated economic patterns. The first phase of High Speed 2 (HS2) (expected in 2026), will create new configurations of labour and product markets, as well as creating an accumulation of possible benefits and effects on growth patterns. On our own doorstep will be the new Lower Thames Crossing and a completed new Junction 5 of the M2, whilst longer term, there may be improvements for Junction 7 of the M2 at Faversham. Again, these too will bring of a mix of changes and opportunities.



Figure 7.2.1 The changing transport map (Alan Baxter Associates in Independent Transport Commission (2015) Connectivity and Cities)

7.2.9 There are wide contrasts between neighbourhoods in the Borough, from the most prosperous parts of Faversham and rural areas in the south of the Borough, to some of England's most

deprived neighbourhoods on Sheppey and in parts of Sittingbourne and Faversham. This deprivation displays itself in the poorer levels of educational attainment, ability to access jobs and health.

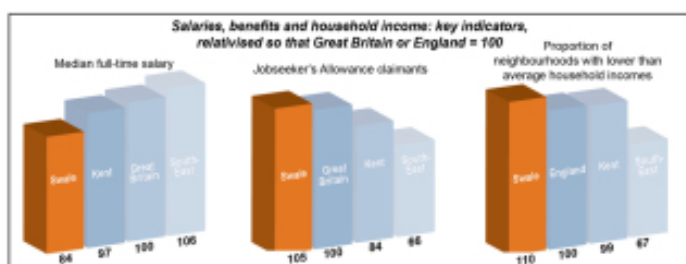


Figure 7.2.2 Comparisons of Swale key indicators with Kent, SE and GB (Nomis, SBC 2016)

7.2.10 Notwithstanding forecasts indicating future improved levels of prosperity for us, the challenge will be ensuring that deprivation does not widen still further, especially in the face of radical changes in the economy, such as from the complete automation of manufacturing, storage and distribution sectors.

Question 7

Making our communities more resilient

1. What will Swale need to do to make its most deprived communities more resilient in the face of future economic change?

Strategic employment locations

7.2.11 The adopted local plan contains a number of strategic employment locations that include our town centres and main business parks, but also the Port of Sheerness and Kent Science Park.

7.2.12 In the case of our town centres, our biggest priority will be ensuring that Sittingbourne's regeneration is delivered, but once in place, it will raise questions as to the role of the existing High Street shopping area; indeed future retail changes will challenge all of our high streets.

7.2.13 Traditionally, we strongly defended our town centre retail shopping frontages from non-retail proposals which were seen as diluting their vitality and viability. Increasingly, non-retail uses such as restaurants are establishing in our centres and these and changing shopping habits are bringing challenges to established policies. In the case of Sittingbourne, a reconfiguration of its overall shopping layout also means that the time is right to pose the question across all of our centres as to how viable in future they will be for supporting large extents of retail floorspace?

7.2.14 For Sittingbourne, has the time come for a contraction of the retail core of the centre away from East Street, West Street and the lower part of the High Street and to encourage other uses, such as new housing and dining, that can bring life into the centre?



Picture 7.2.2 Sittingbourne town centre regeneration

7.2.15 Some proposals for retail and leisure development outside of town centres require assessments to determine their impacts on the centre. Should we set a floorspace threshold (lower than the current threshold of 2,500 sq m) for triggering the preparation of such an assessment?

Question 8

Our town centres

1. What do you think the future planning policy should be toward our town centres, in particular, how can we ensure that the areas beyond the core retail areas remain vibrant and how can we ensure the vitality and viability of our centres as a whole?

For the Port of Sheerness and Kent Science Park, our existing adopted planning policies seek to support the existing employment activities, whilst allowing for some expansion where existing transport and environmental constraints allow.



Picture 7.2.3 Sheerness Docks (SBC)

In the case of the Port of Sheerness, the outstanding heritage assets of the area need to be safeguarded and more widely appreciated, whilst at the Kent Science Park, highway, landscape and biodiversity constraints limit the full potential of this regionally important cluster of technology and knowledge-based businesses. Unless these constraints can be addressed, opportunities to regenerate, expand and diversify the local economy will struggle to be realised at these key locations.

Question 9

Strategic employment locations

1. How can the economic and other opportunities of the Port of Sheerness and Kent Science Park be more fully realised?

7.3 Where will we live?

The Swale Headlines

Swale needs to plan for further significant levels of housing growth and needs to find the best way to respond, whilst addressing the housing needs of an increasingly older population, poor affordability and the slow delivery of development.

7.3.1 Changes to the way that central Government calculates housing targets are undergoing consultation and it is highly likely that we will need to build more

new homes every year than it has done in the past. The exact outcomes are still to be determined, but the new method could increase our target housing number from 776 per year, to over 1,050 per year (a 35% increase), once the new local plan is in place (2022).

7.3.2 The headline housing figure needing to be provided over a plan period to 2038 could be some 16,800 dwellings. When compared with the adopted local plan target (2022 to 2031), this could mean that the next local plan would need to include sites for around an extra 9,800 dwellings, plus any shortfall in housing provision against the current adopted local plan target up until 2022. However, this will depend on assumptions such as how much of the current 'bank' of allocated and permitted sites will have actually taken place and whether any replacement provision will need to be made.

7.3.3 There are other pressures too – household change in Swale is not especially influenced by international incoming migration rates, but is driven by natural change and ongoing 'domestic' migration, notably from London. This might be further boosted by any need to comply with national policy, such as accommodating unmet housing need from London and other highly constrained councils in the south east. Not only that, we may also need to make an additional uplift in our figures to respond to market conditions. We could also choose to increase provision for reasons yet to be assessed or determined (see below).

7.3.4 Finally, our overall housing numbers are dependent on the publication of further household projections, but it seems unlikely that the final 'target' number decided upon for Swale will fall below 1,000 per year. Whatever the outcome, the Government's 'starting point' for housing targets are now significantly higher than when the current adopted local plan was submitted for examination and we can expect them to rise further over time. This is because:

- Household sizes continue to fall, with more people living alone.
- People are living longer, so absorbing more housing.
- Domestic migration from London is highly likely to continue, as individuals move out of the capital looking for more space and a better environment.



Picture 7.3.1 We will need to plan for more housing (URBED for the 2014 Wolfson Prize)

7.3.5 Regardless of what Swale is required to provide, there are two fundamental choices for the Council to consider about the number of new homes that it wants to build; namely whether it:

1. Does the minimum to meet the Government's 'starting point' target - a 'passive' approach; or
2. Selects a level of growth greater than the Government's 'starting point' target - an 'active' approach.

7.3.6 A passive approach would see us meeting Government 'imposed' targets and no more. Although the scale of change would still be significant, we would need to ask ourselves whether this would be the best way to minimise any adverse impacts on our communities, environment and infrastructure? For example, would it also mean that any positive shift in our economy would be less successful, be a lost opportunity to get the right quality of new development and environmental improvement or a less coordinated and more incremental approach to the planning of infrastructure?

7.3.7 If London out-migration is highly likely to happen anyway, should we be posing ourselves the question as to whether we should be actively planning for it to allow us to use and direct its growth in positive and sustainable ways? Therefore, a more active approach could involve us deliberately opting to try and expand the Borough's labour supply (and thus grow our economy in a context which would otherwise see our workforce age). This would require us to build more houses so that more younger people could move to Swale to work; it might even mean us planning

positively to take London growth and/or other councils' who cannot meet their own housing needs. Another reason why this approach might be considered could also be if we needed to support the construction of major infrastructure.

7.3.8 However, would this active approach cause significant harm to the environment and infrastructure, or perhaps cause out-commuting if the growth in housing could not be matched with a growth in local jobs? If this were the case, then greater levels of growth might not be sustainable.

7.3.9 Passive or active, either approach to house building could also involve thinking about longer term options that would extend beyond 2038. The framework for which would need to be started now because of the lead in time needed to put new housing and infrastructure in place. Thinking longer term could also:

1. Provide greater contingency to secure delivery.
2. Avoid having housing shortages at each successive round of plan making.
3. Enable consideration to be given to larger, potentially more sustainable, housing options which have long lead in times and span several local plan time periods.
4. Secure better quality new development and environmental improvement and better infrastructure planning.

Question 10

The approach to housing numbers

1. What would the implications be for Swale if it were to adopt either a 'passive' or an 'active' approach to meeting new housing targets?

7.3.10 Some councils may be asked by other local authority areas to provide an element of their development needs in circumstances where, for instance, there is a lack of physical capacity or because to do so would cause significant harm to national planning policy. This approach is only likely to be followed where areas are significantly and adversely

Looking ahead

physically affected by international and national biodiversity designations, irreplaceable habitats, Local Green Spaces, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, heritage assets and locations at risk of flooding or coastal change.

7.3.11 Swale has many of these constraints, but their physical extent and the impacts upon them have not previously been considered significant enough to prevent the identification of land sufficient to meet future development needs. We will need to determine whether this will change as a result of considering future development targets and of course, we should not overlook that we may be asked by one or more of our neighbours to consider taking their unmet housing need.

7.3.12 We will be talking to our local authority neighbours and other bodies in the months ahead.

Question 11

Co-operating with other councils to meet development needs

1. Do you believe that Swale should consider asking its council neighbours to provide for its unmet development needs? If so, what reasons would the Council give, who would it ask and why would they be well placed to help? Likewise, if asked by a neighbouring council to consider meeting their unmet development needs, what should be our response and why?

Housing delivery

7.3.13 We have been concerned for a number of years that for reasons sometimes outside of our control, the housing market has not delivered the number of new homes dictated by our housing targets. Our last local plan examination showed us that these concerns were not sufficient reason for us to set a lower housing target, so we need to consider how we can increase and speed up the delivery of new homes in Swale. For example, could we try and allocate a larger number of smaller sites to supplement the larger ones that might take longer to bring forward or somehow encourage the sub-division of large sites? Alternatively, could and where could we use Local Development Orders to help bring forward small sites or should we require certain developments to

commence within a time-scale shorter than the current default period for a planning permission?

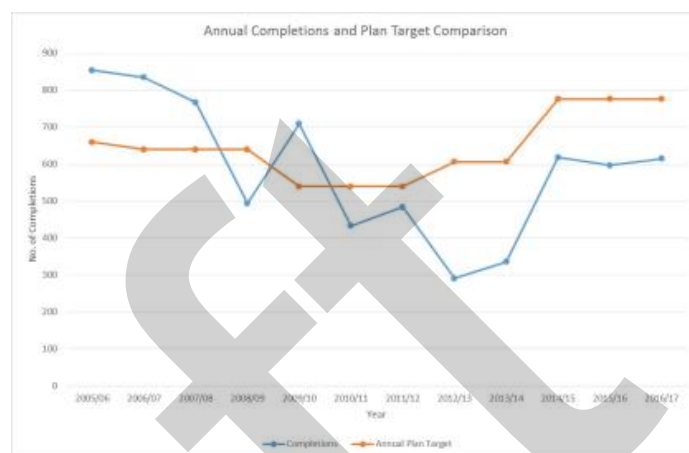


Figure 7.3.1 Comparison of housing delivery against housing targets (SBC)

7.3.14 Outside of the five-year supply, we also currently make an allowance of 110 dwellings delivered per annum for windfall sites as part of our anticipated supply of housing. Early evidence indicates that this may have been a conservative estimate, so should we review the contribution of windfall sites to our supply, for example by trying to establish whether an allowance should be made for all or part of the five-year supply?

Question 12

Increasing housing delivery

1. How can the Council increase and speed up the delivery of new homes in Swale?

Affordable housing

7.3.15 There is a significant need in Swale for a mix of all types and sizes of affordable housing. Previous evidence prepared for the adopted local plan showed that we should be building 190 affordable homes each year. Nothing like that has been achieved as Registered Social Landlords have faced funding restrictions, whilst viability problems for developers in certain parts of the Borough have led to very little provision being made on new development sites.

7.3.16 The definition of affordable housing is currently proposed to include housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market. The current proposed national definition comprises:

1. Affordable housing for rent: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy, or is at least 20% below local market rents; (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except when part of a Build to Rent scheme; and (c) remains at an affordable price for future eligible households, or the subsidy is recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.
2. Starter homes: as specified in legislation. Income restrictions used to limit a household's eligibility.
3. Discounted market sales housing: sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value.
4. Other affordable routes to home ownership: housing provided for sale as a route to ownership for those who could not achieve it otherwise. Includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale and rent to buy. Where public grant funding is provided, homes will remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or the receipts recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

7.3.17 One idea currently being considered nationally is supporting the development of 'entry' level exception sites, suitable for first time buyers or renters. These would be located adjacent to existing settlements on non-allocated land. Swale already operates a similar policy, but it has not yielded any proposals to date.

7.3.18 Affordable housing need is likely to have increased (we will determine by how much in due course) and whilst it is hoped that there will have been some improvements in viability that the next local plan can reflect, the fundamental question as to how provision can be increased will remain. What role should the housing products described above play in Swale?

Question 13

Affordable housing

1. How can the Council increase the amount of affordable housing that is currently built?

Community led housing

7.3.19 Local communities themselves increasingly want to take control over the way that new housing is delivered, whether this be through the preparation of a neighbourhood plan or more directly via the establishment of a [Community Land Trust](#). If there are initiatives being considered by local communities, or you would like to find out more, [please contact us](#).

Mix of dwellings

7.3.20 We will also need to try and ensure that the homes we build match our future needs, not only in terms of the size of property, but also for their intended occupants. For example, as the population ages there will be a significantly increased need for us to build more market and affordable homes for older people and for those requiring specialist care (including wheelchair adapted housing).

7.3.21 For market housing, much of our housing need is for smaller properties such as flats/apartments, but some developers prefer to build three and four bedroomed houses which do not always meet the needs of local people. However, for affordable homes, there is a housing need for all types/sizes of homes, including larger homes.

7.3.22 It is also likely that we will need to allocate further suitable sites to meet the future needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the Borough and a new assessment to determine the levels needed is underway.

Question 14

Mix of dwellings

1. What mix of new houses should we be trying to build in the future and how can we ensure that the housing market provides for all housing needs?

7.3.23 Since 2016, we have been keeping a register of those wishing to build their own homes in Swale. Many of those on the register wish to build them in the rural areas at or close to villages, often in areas where the building of new homes has traditionally been restricted to protect the wider countryside. Should we be looking to relax these policies for self-builders or

Looking ahead

should we be considering identifying larger areas of land reserved specifically for them?

Question 15

Self and custom build

1. How best should the local plan make provision that will enable people to build their own owns?

Housing technical standards

7.3.24 National planning guidance allows councils, if they wish, to establish 'optional technical standards' for housing within their local plans. Swale already operates one such optional standard for water usage. These optional standards exceed the minimum standards required by Building Regulations and, as well as water, could be used to improve accessibility and wheelchair housing and internal space standards for all house types/sizes. We would need to gather evidence to determine whether there is a need for these additional standards.

Question 16

Optional housing technical standards

1. What evidence is there that Swale should set additional housing technical standards in the next local plan?

Making effective use of land

7.3.25 We should be making as much use as possible of brownfield land, however, our supplies of such land will be inadequate to meet all our future development needs. However, could more be made of such spaces as, for example, estate regeneration, converting spaces above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure? Should we have specific policies to encourage development of these sites and what role should our compulsory purchase powers play in the above areas?

Question 17

Making effective use of land

1. How can more effective use of brownfield land be achieved?

7.3.26 The adopted local plan does not set minimum density standards, but the new local plan has the option to consider them. Our current approach is to allow density to be set at the planning application level, having regard to the housing need and the context of the area within which it is to be located. However, through our land availability assessments we do make assumptions about density in order to arrive at the housing numbers for our allocations. Generally speaking, densities are estimated as being higher within central areas and lower at the edges of settlements and in the rural areas.

7.3.27 Although there is evidence to suggest that developers increase housing numbers from that indicated by the local plan (they are expressed as minimum figures when allocated), there are few examples in Swale where high quality higher densities are being used both to create strong design statements and a diversity of housing mix. There is no reason why higher densities and good design cannot go hand in hand and we want to explore how this can be done.



Picture 7.3.2 Can higher densities achieve high quality design?
(SBC)

7.3.28 Of course, if the Council were to set higher minimum densities, this could have the additional effects of reducing the amount of land needing to be released for development and/or increasing the land available for other uses like open space. If it were to set its own density standards, how would the evidence for this be determined?

Question 18

Density

1. Should the next local plan set minimum density standards? If so, what standards should the Council be considering?

7.4 How we will get the services and infrastructure we need?

The Swale Headlines

As well as the existing demands placed on our services, future demographic and lifestyle changes will bring massive demands. New development will need to deliver some of this new infrastructure, but there are problems of poor development viability to support new infrastructure and delays in the timing of its provision. Is it time to consider more radical new ideas to capture land values so that infrastructure can be properly funded?

7.4.1 Local communities strongly believe that existing community services are being stretched by the demands placed upon them by new housing. For the adopted local plan, transport, education, social and primary health care were identified as our top infrastructure priorities. Health services and education are foremost in many people's minds, but in reality, not all of the pressures on these services are as a result of new development - they also arise from increased demographic, technological and lifestyle demands within our wider society.



Picture 7.4.1 GP surgeries - a Swale priority (Brighton and Hove CCG).

7.4.2 Of course, there are a wide range of other services and infrastructure critical to communities in Swale - shops, community halls, open spaces, play areas, sports facilities and cycle facilities to name a few. Despite our priorities, these too must be secured to support the achievement of sustainable communities.

7.4.3 Developers cannot legally be asked to deal with existing capacity issues and can only reasonably contribute toward increasing the capacity of services that are put under direct pressure as a result of the needs generated by their schemes. However, there are tensions. Firstly, the Government requires that expectations upon development to fund community demands should not compromise their viability and, secondly, the time lag between development commencing and new community provision being made does not always lead to timely provision.

7.4.4 Not all infrastructure is provided by new development, for example waste and fresh water supply infrastructure is made by the water companies via their strategies, having first been consulted by the local authority on the extent of their growth proposals.

7.4.5 Infrastructure providers are asked to highlight their broad future infrastructure requirements in Swale; accepting that we will need to consult direct with providers in due course as the local plan progresses.

Question 19

Social and physical infrastructure

1. What do you consider the broad social and physical infrastructure priorities should be for Swale in the coming years?

Capturing the value of development to meet infrastructure needs

7.4.6 Increasingly developers and landowners are coming under scrutiny in terms of the land values being sought and the amount being paid. In short, if land values are too high, they can significantly impact upon the monies available for new infrastructure. Councils and local communities are becoming increasingly frustrated when developers and landowners claim that poor viability prevents them from having to meet all of the infrastructure needs generated by their developments.

7.4.7 The Government's Communities and Local Government Committee is to examine the effectiveness of current land value capture methods and potential new ways of capturing any uplift in the value of land associated with the granting of planning permission or nearby infrastructure improvements. They are looking at whether current methods, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (see below) are adequate, what new methods could be employed, the advantages and disadvantages of alternative systems and lessons learnt from the past.

7.4.8 Pending any specific Government measures, attention is being given to the role that more radical initiatives undertaken by local authorities and partners can play in maximising community benefits (see Statement 1).



Picture 7.4.2 Primary school at Leysdown (SBC)

Statement 1

Capturing the value of development - A 'master developer' and 'plot passport' approach?

A master developer might be a local council, development corporation or a public-private partnership. They are responsible for developing a masterplan and for putting in place the infrastructure, but are not responsible for building any of the homes or other buildings; instead they package-up land for sale. The masterplan is then translated into a set of rules for each plot - a passport, which is then made a non-negotiable condition of the sale or lease of the land and enforced through land ownership rather than planning powers.

The master developer sells plots to individual developers that can range from individual plots for self-build to the sale of hundreds to larger house builders. In between, there may be opportunities to sell smaller numbers of plots to local developers, community land trusts or housing associations to increase the diversity of the development. Depending on the density of the housing proposed, the cost of each plot would generate a land value that would return to the master developer.

7.4.9 A large share of the 'land capture' question can lie with the landowner who, in many cases, may otherwise wish or be persuaded either to sell to the highest bidder and/or to a volume house builder, the majority of whom have standardised delivery models and short-term investment cycles. We want to encourage both landowners and developers to see the many benefits of adopting a more long-term approach that can better secure the infrastructure we need.

7.4.10 There are options that can be examined for funding infrastructure that can be built into agreements between developers and landowners, such as:

1. Landowners forward funding infrastructure themselves;
2. Developers funding the infrastructure in phases;
3. The Government helping with loans; and
4. Developers entering into creative agreements with infrastructure providers to help fund upfront costs in return for savings later on.

Question 20

Capturing land values for social and physical infrastructure

1. What more can be done by the Council to ensure that the infrastructure needs generated by new development are matched by a developer's financial contributions? Should more radical approaches toward 'land value capture' be considered?

7.4.11 Radical or alternative approaches will not work for all sites. At present, councils can use the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements to secure infrastructure. CIL can be a charge on all development, whilst Section 106 agreements are more targeted to the needs generated by individual development proposals. At present Swale has not chosen to introduce a CIL charge, but we are considering one in support of the next local plan.

7.4.12 We are of the view that there remains a big role for central Government/agency funding being used in Swale, particularly for transport, and especially for strategic infrastructure that can serve a very much wider area than just for Swale residents and businesses. There are also strong arguments that development should make a contribution and there are national intentions that CIL and S106 should be improved. The Government is also consulting on changes to specifically targeting land use change (e.g. agricultural values to housing values). This could be very helpful as there is significant value created by planning permission when moving from agricultural values to housing values.

7.4.13 A possible way forward for Swale might be as follows:

1. Layer 1: "new" CIL targeted on greenfield to residential change of use – spread right across Swale. This would raise money for infrastructure and could be spent anywhere on anything relating to the delivery of growth. This would need to be in place as soon as possible, in order to hold down hope value.
2. Layer 2: S106 Agreements on S106 that would be more closely targeted on mitigating specific development impacts other than strategic transport.

7.4.14 This two-layered approach could have the effect of reducing the dependence of Swale on individual proposals.

Question 21

A Swale Community Infrastructure Levy

1. Should Swale introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy on the development of greenfield sites to housing across Swale?

7.5 How will we adapt to the impacts of climate change?

The Swale Headlines

Large parts of Swale are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and we will need to ensure that we can adapt. Swale has considerable potential for renewable energy, battery energy storage and climate mitigation strategies and approaches.

7.5.1 Severe weather events cost Kent an average of around £4m per year. Large parts of Swale are vulnerable to rising sea levels and unexpected weather events, whilst thousands of hectares of land used for agriculture could be affected by changing climatic conditions, new pests and variable water supplies. However, the process may not be without opportunities in certain locations and sectors.



Picture 7.5.1 Sustainable urban drainage scheme

Looking ahead

7.5.2 There will also be challenges to the way we develop places so that they can reduce their carbon footprints and increase opportunities for biodiversity. At the same time, we need to create environments that are not subject to extremes in climate, such as by the avoidance of heat traps and use of sustainable urban drainage schemes.

7.5.3 Currently we in Swale tie our sustainable design and construction standards toward the Building Regulations, except for water usage. This is because previous viability evidence did not support the imposition of higher standards. We will be re-examining our approach toward these issues.

Question 22

Mitigating impacts of climate change

1. How can planning policies positively influence climate change outcomes or mitigate their impacts?

7.5.4 Since 2005, Kent was estimated to have reduced its CO₂ emissions by 21%, equivalent to 2,831 kilotons CO₂, a significant way towards its target of 34% by 2020. Kent also generated over 640GWh of renewable energy annually (including offshore wind this figure increases to over 4,000GWh), whilst 1,370 installations were registered in 2013-14 alone. Despite these advances, there remains much to do.

7.5.5 Renewable energy and battery production/energy storage is booming, particularly as a result of falling costs. In Kent, the low carbon and environmental goods and services sectors indirectly or directly employ more than 55,000 people; around 10% of Kent's working population. In particular, Swale has considerable potential for increasing renewable energy and battery capacity and this could bring major benefits to the economy and local communities. This will mean changes with new and different infrastructure appearing in our communities and landscapes.

Question 23

Green energy

1. What opportunities do you see in green energy for Swale and how should our planning policies seek to encourage or manage them?

7.6 How will we move around?

The Swale Headlines

Transport infrastructure and its delivery is of critical importance to Swale and major new infrastructure measures will have significant costs and lead in times. With its lower levels of public transport use, Swale needs to consider how it can make more attractive the alternative to the car.

7.6.1 Transport infrastructure and its delivery is a significant issue for Swale - a point borne out by the Examination into our adopted local plan. The impacts of new development on the transport network is probably the single biggest issue raised by our communities when development proposals are being considered and there is considerable skepticism about expert opinions and the forecasting of transport capacity.

7.6.2 The improvement to our biggest infrastructure needs - Junction 5 of the M2, and to a lesser extent the A2500 Lower Road - are currently programmed, whilst the improvements needed at Junction 7 at Faversham are subject to increasing attention by Highways England.

7.6.3 However, Swale has another problem highlighted by the last local plan Examination. The local transport network on the A2 around Sittingbourne is likely to be under unacceptable levels of stress after 2022; not only will this expose local communities to greater levels of congestion, but poorer air quality too. This brings with it a further problem, in that housing and other developments in these areas may be delayed until these issues are resolved.

7.6.4 It seems likely that some of these A2 issues will be resolved through proposed schemes at Key

Street at Sittingbourne and at Grovehurst, but although we will need to confirm our intuitions by transport modelling, we believe that a more significant package of measures might be required on the A2 to the east of Sittingbourne and towards Faversham. We believe that some of these measures might lie beyond the scope of what is possible within the current road network.

7.6.5 The adopted local plan has safeguarded an area of land within which a future Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road, linking the A249 with the A2, can be brought forward. The next local plan will need to resolve a route for this road, but it is also a Council resolution to link the Northern Relief Road with an A2/M2 link (inc. a new M2 Junction), located at a point between Sittingbourne and Faversham. If this were to proceed, this would not only have a bearing upon the alignment for the Northern Relief Road, but it would be a major reconfiguration of the current road network; not only providing for an alternative M2 link for A249 traffic to and from Sheppey, but also possibly making the motorway more attractive, as opposed to the A2, for traffic to and from Faversham.

7.6.6 The costs of this infrastructure will be significant and the lead in time for delivering it could be lengthy. Whilst we are already pursuing all avenues to secure public funding for all or some of it, a key question for the new local plan is (and assuming an A2/M2 link is justifiable), whether new development should be specifically promoted in order to generate funding toward it, or indeed to pay for all of it.

7.6.7 At Faversham, there are concerns for the A2 as new development starts to change its function from a road that skirts the edge of the current town to one that will be servicing development both to the north and south. Are there options here too that should be considered to alter the highway network?

7.6.8 On Sheppey, once the A2500 Lower Road is improved at Minster, what can be done to improve access from the eastern end of the Island?

Question 24

Improving the capacity and environment of the A2 corridor

1. What solutions should we be considering for improving the A2 corridor?

Sustainable transport

7.6.9 Most new transport initiatives in Swale have tended to be road based, but these will not always be able to deliver the best community outcomes. We need to be able to consider what role the more sustainable transport options - rail, bus, cycling and walking - should be playing, both at the strategic and site level of planning.



Picture 7.6.1 High speed rail service

7.6.10 Although there are reasonably good east to west rail links in Swale, links southward involve at least one change. There are longer term aspirations by Network Rail to reinstate a connection between lines at Canterbury East and West that will enable direct connections between Ashford and Faversham. If implemented, this would potentially alter travel patterns, certainly for the eastern part of the Borough, although it is unclear as to what impacts these would bring. As future levels of housing growth are being considered for Swale, we will also need to work with Network Rail to ensure that there is sufficient capacity both at Swale rail stations and on the trains themselves.

7.6.11 Our bus network is underdeveloped, partly due to the nature of the highway network, but also because of lower levels of patronage on the buses themselves. This is probably not untypical for a Borough with a significant rural area and no city or large prosperous town. However, although some improvements have taken place, such as the introduction of direct services to Canterbury from Sittingbourne and 'click' ride services, growth should ideally be accompanied with major public transport investment that could make a real difference to travel

patterns and usage. For example, if we were to consider radical changes to the locations where we develop, what public transport projects would really make a difference to their accessibility and sustainability?



Picture 7.6.2 Public transport use in Swale is low (SBC)

7.6.12 Too often our central urban areas are hostile toward cycling. Swale towns, unlike larger towns and cities, do not have a comprehensive network of wide verges, parks and other spaces where urban cycle routes can be created. Some progress on a Swale cycle network was made in the 1990s and 2000s, but this has tailed off. Some major new developments have been able to supplement the network, but it remains far short of comprehensive as too often the connecting network beyond the development site is fragmented or non-existent. The same might be said of the encouragement and facilities given to pedestrians.

7.6.13 With the dominant nature of road spending, there will be challenges as to how major spending on more sustainable modes can be achieved. We must also be realistic. For example, are major public transport and cycling initiatives only likely to be achievable in the big cities and prosperous towns or, if we are serious about major new development areas, should we not be placing non-car travel on an equal footing? However, if we were to move significantly away from road spending, would this just mean that our legacy of road based problems would not be tackled?

Question 25

Sustainable transport projects

1. What are the next big sustainable transport projects that should be being considered?

Congestion and air quality

7.6.14 It is not easy for transport modelling methods to accurately predict transport growth, demand and impacts, particularly as a result of new technology such as automated and electric vehicles. Likewise, this new technology has the potential to alter or even solve transport and air quality problems in the longer term.

7.6.15 In the case of the poor air quality experienced by some communities in Swale, how reasonable is it to wait for technology to produce the solution? Whilst both the local plan and planning applications must address issues of air quality, in practice, the mitigation that can be offered at the local level does not address the central issues that can only be tackled nationally by Governments. What else can be done?

Question 26

Planning, congestion and air quality

1. How much should Swale be relying on future technological fixes to address perceived air quality and congestion problems? What can be practically achieved by the planning system to mitigate or remove the adverse impacts upon air quality?

7.7 How will our environment be managed?

The Swale Headlines

The Borough has an outstanding built and natural environment and a significant resource of some of the UK's most productive agricultural land. These resources are also important to the Borough's economy and health and well-being, now and in the future. However, species and habitats are in trouble, the condition of some of our landscapes and heritage assets are declining, whilst pressures are mounting on our land resources.

7.7.1 Swale has an outstanding built and natural environment across its coast, downland, woodlands and in its highly productive agricultural plains. Our towns, villages, hamlets and landscapes contain a huge wealth of historic buildings and other heritage. However, the extent and condition of some of our landscapes and biodiversity are declining as a result of agricultural change and development, whilst within the built environment, the quality of parts of our urban areas, including some of our heritage assets, appears to be declining.



Picture 7.7.1 The Kent Downs AONB (SBC)

7.7.2 Ensuring that we continue to provide an outstanding environment is increasingly important for our future prosperity and the health and well-being of our existing and future residents. It will also significantly contribute to place making, regeneration and the visitor economy. We will need to ensure that future growth is at least able to maintain environmental quality and, where possible, is able to enhance it.

Biodiversity

7.7.3 Kent has failed to meet its biodiversity targets and is likely to fail its set 2020 targets. Despite real gains for wildlife in some areas, there is still a gradual loss of habitats and species across Kent and Swale. We need to do so much more to reverse this in the planning and development process.



Picture 7.7.2 The swift - a summer visitor to Swale (RSPB)

7.7.4 National policy expects new developments to secure net gains in biodiversity wherever possible, however, it seems likely that we will need to work much harder than this in future if we are to reverse declines and we should be looking to make these net gains the norm. The design, layout, landscaping and the construction of new buildings themselves can easily and cheaply be adapted to make spaces for species. Should adopting formal best practice standards for green infrastructure and biodiversity in new development, such as those offered by 'Building with Nature', be part of the way forward by becoming a requirement for planning in Swale?

Question 27

Securing net gains in biodiversity

1. What steps should the Council be taking to ensure that all projects, as far as possible, bring with them the necessary measures to secure real enhancements for biodiversity?

Landscape and settlement separation

7.7.5 At present, we use both landscape character area appraisals and local landscape designations to consider the special characteristics of our diverse landscapes. Outside of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the adopted local plan contains a series of 'Areas of High Landscape Value' for the most locally special and valued areas. We have also adopted other designations and these include countryside gaps intended to keep settlements separate and defined built up area boundaries around settlements that seek to protect the wider countryside.



Picture 7.7.3 Swale landscapes (SBC)

7.7.6 Local communities value these policies, but others believe them to be inflexible, over-restrictive and limiting to new sustainable development opportunities.

Question 28

Locally designated land

1. What should the approach be to the existing 'local designations' in the next local plan?

Design

7.7.7 The adopted local plan has policies intended to encourage high quality design in our new developments. We also use other initiatives, such as our 'Design Panel', masterplans and design codes, to ensure that new development is designed in such a way that existing and new communities can value. There are notable successes, but there is much room for improvement. The main challenge we face relates to the low values that developers can achieve in some parts of the Borough and this feeds into the quality of design, whilst the limited pattern book available to volume house builders can produce 'any place' designs.

7.7.8 There is evidence to show that over the life cycle of a development, tangible benefits, e.g. sale prices achieved, accrue to schemes which place an emphasis on good design and place-making. However, whilst developers take their share of criticism for 'any place' housing estates, landowners can take more control of how their land is developed. The landowner has the choice to ensure their legacy is one of good stewardship by insisting that principles of good design are adopted. Landowners can also structure land deals with a developer as a means to increase the emphasis on good design. Alternatives include:

1. A consortium agreement: the landowner enters into an agreement with the developer to act as a consortium, with the site master-planned as a whole and promoted as an estate development, with phases transferred to the developers upon the grant of detailed planning permission. Houses are then sold and transferred direct to the buyers.
2. A development agreement: enters into an agreement(s) with the selected developer(s) for phases to be constructed under licence, with the land retained by the landowner. The landowner master plans the site and agreements are conditional on the grant of planning permission. The developer sells the houses and on completions the landowner transfers the homes to the buyers.

7.7.9 As part of these arrangements, and to secure the original design vision on the longer term, a landowner can retain title or covenant over the land, while the developer is building out, transferring the freehold on a phase of building only when it has been built out in accordance with a design code and detailed plans.

7.7.10 Whilst the above approaches are not under the direct influence of the local plan, we are taking the opportunity as part of this consultation to say that change is possible in Swale and that we want to see it happen.

Question 29

Achieving good design

1. How can the local plan help bridge the gap between ordinary and extraordinary design?

Heritage and the built environment

7.7.11 Swale has a wealth of heritage assets and we are currently preparing a major heritage strategy that should support their conservation and enjoyment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. The number of these assets at risk appears to be increasing and whether by the regeneration of wider areas or by finding new uses, the local plan will need policies aimed at tackling decline, not only in just the small percentage of buildings and structures that are listed, scheduled or in conservation areas, but also in our wider urban areas where the majority of us live, work and play.

7.7.12 Some of our existing former public housing estates require enhancement, should the local plan also be looking at other initiatives such as estate regeneration?

Question 30

The built environment

1. What initiatives should we be pursuing through the local plan to improve the built environment, including for historic buildings, structures and areas?

Agricultural land

7.7.13 Swale contains some of the highest quality agricultural land in the UK. Of the approximately 23,000 ha of land in Swale that is farmed, an estimated 15,000 ha (approx. 70%) is classed as best and most versatile - a finite resource. It has been calculated that

for every 100 ha of such land lost, between £0.7 million - £1.7 million of output and between 5 and 13 jobs in agriculture, could also be lost, alongside job losses in those local businesses that process produce. The UK's departure from the EU will also bring changes to labour supplies and with lower quality land in suitable locations difficult to find in Swale, development options could well increasingly accelerate losses of high quality land important for food production and security.

Question 31

Agricultural land

1. How can Swale keep the loss of agricultural land to development to a minimum, especially the highest quality land? Where high quality land is being considered for development, how can the Council balance the need for new development with the value and quality of agricultural land, particularly best and most versatile?

Green Spaces

7.7.14 Maintaining and enhancing the existing sports, leisure and open space network across the Borough is an important component of ensuring a strong quality of life and health and wellbeing. Additional provision will also need to be made to support future growth and we will be undertaking assessments to determine the standards that we will be pursuing. Currently, our standards seek to increase provision in line with the existing proportions present within the population. Should this continue?

7.7.15 We also want to consider the better integration of open space needs with other elements of green infrastructure in order to ensure that the network is providing for the complete 'ecosystem' of needs. As with biodiversity, should we be considering the adoption of existing best practice for providing green infrastructure, such as those offered by 'Building with Nature'?

7.7.16 The Borough also contains 410 hectares of land designated as Local Green Spaces by the adopted local plan - green areas of particular importance where new development can be ruled out other than in very special circumstances. There is an opportunity now for local communities to put forward new areas for assessment by the Council. Submissions should

include a map, information on ownership (where known) and, importantly, details as to why they are of importance.

Question 32

Green spaces

1. How can we better integrate green space needs so that we provide multi-functional spaces to both maximise health and well-being and biodiversity? Should we be increasing open space provision above that currently sought and should we be considering the adoption of existing best practice for providing green infrastructure, such as those offered by 'Building with Nature'?

8 Key questions and how should we take them forward?

8.0.1 This section takes the challenges and key issues raised in Section 7 and looks at how they might be taken forward. Clearly they will require action across a range of planning and other initiatives, but in this section we want to focus upon some of the key decisions we will need to make.

Statement 2

Challenges facing Swale

Our thoughts around the challenges we face globally and locally lead us to initially think that for the next Swale local plan we need to provide:

- The right development that is well designed within superb environments and within this context deciding how the increases in the housing that we need to build are addressed.
- Better links to large labour markets and a better image so that prosperity can flourish.
- The means to create, attract and retain highly skilled populations.
- A superb place to live and socialise.
- Strong, attractive and competitive town centres, leisure opportunities, high levels of social cohesion and trust, excellent education, health provision, childcare and, great transport links.
- Sustainable and long term solutions to the transport issues facing us.
- Ways to ensure that major and potentially disruptive social and economic changes in the coming decades do not hit the poorest communities the hardest.
- The housing and commercial capacity and design to facilitate adaption, change and growth, whether it be for demographic, social, economic and environmental change.
- Strong policies for the protection and enhancement of environmental quality as the means to reverse declines and to support economic prosperity and health and well-being.
- A clear way to secure the infrastructure we need that minimises the compromises that currently results.

Question 33

The Swale challenges

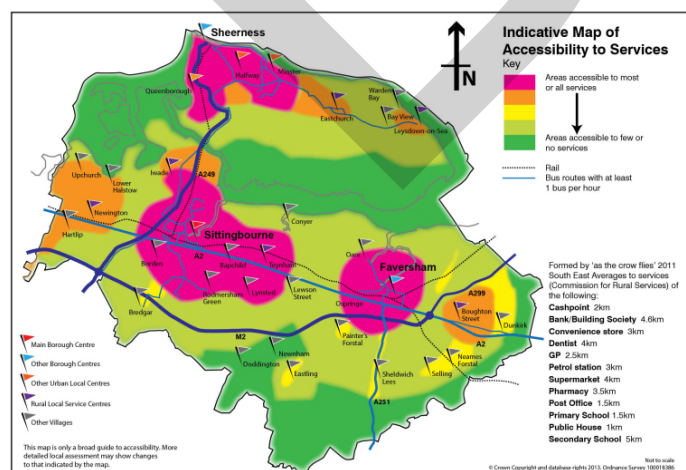
1. Do you agree that the challenges for Swale in Statement 2 represent the big challenges for Swale? If not, what would you include or remove?

8.0.2 To help us move forward with these to the next stage of the local plan process in Summer 2019 - Issues and Options - we wish to consider whether we need to change some of the fundamental ways we have previously strategically planned in Swale. This means looking at our currently adopted local plan vision, its settlement strategy - this guides the distribution of development across the Borough - and where we should be looking to direct growth in the future. Finally, we want to pose the question as to how radically we should be thinking.

8.1 Our local plan vision and settlement strategy

8.1.1 Our adopted local plan vision reflects a settlement strategy that directed overall levels of development in priority order of Sittingbourne, as the major town, followed by the other urban areas and then by the larger villages. Within this sequence, there is also a weighting of additional growth toward the Sittingbourne/Sheppey areas (part of the Government's Thames Gateway growth area) as opposed to the Faversham area and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where a strategy of 'organic growth' is promoted that involves significantly smaller scales of growth. For the adopted Local Plan this resulted in approximately 85% of the allocations made within the Thames Gateway and 15% in the Faversham area.

8.1.2 This is a strategy that has been largely followed unchanged over the last 25 years and has meant that with each local plan we prepared we encouraged urban regeneration projects, whilst successively added to existing settlements with a range of urban and village extensions.



Map 8.1.1 Current strategy based around relative accessibility of settlements (SBC)

8.1.3 A key question for us to consider early on in the preparation of the next local plan, is whether this adopted vision and settlement strategy will be fit for purpose in the medium to longer terms? Can we, and should we, carry on with incremental growth to our existing towns and larger villages, what will be the future of the Government's Thames Gateway growth area, and what should this mean for Faversham? Should it continue to accommodate a smaller share of the growth and if not, how and should the 'organic' growth envisaged by the current local plan vision be continued?

8.1.4 Whatever we decide, we will still need to ensure that those existing allocations from our adopted local plan that we carry forward are implemented. This is because we must ensure a continuous supply of housing land, whilst new sites to meet revised housing targets are being identified and making their way through the local plan process. Some of our new allocations may also be needed to support this continuous and increased supply and even if the direction of our strategy changes in the medium to longer terms, we may, in the short and medium terms, still need to continue to consider some in locations that reflect the current strategy approach.

8.1.5 New growth requirements are coming and whether we decide to do the minimum necessary or to try and exceed them, the question is how best to approach the situation and whether it will mean that we must change the adopted local plan vision and settlement strategy. Questions and issues that we need to consider to help us decide include:

1. Can the current transport network, notably the A2, continue to function in terms of congestion and air quality?
2. Brownfield land is finite and many areas, including Swale, are now running out of supply - our brownfield land register has inadequate supplies of suitable land.
3. Genuine concerns about the ability of existing settlements to cope with edge of town developments. There can be community and political difficulties in this type of expansion given that green spaces around existing settlements are prized for their informal leisure uses and amenity (see Statement 3).
4. The new and increasing focus on the ability of new settlements to deliver the housing that the

UK needs – as shown in the Government's Housing White Paper *Fixing our broken housing market* (2017) - *“Well-planned, well-designed, new communities have an important part to play in meeting our long-term housing needs. Provided they are supported by the necessary infrastructure, they are often more popular with local communities than piecemeal expansion of existing settlements.”*

5. The Government view that over the long term, more housing supply will moderate the price rises of market housing, and be used to provide affordable housing.

Statement 3

A view of urban extensions

“The truth is that the current planning and development model, which meets housing needs...by pressing sequential development into and up against existing communities, drives high densities and low quality, and so ramps up local people's opposition to development. Such development, building on the next field, endlessly adding to existing communities, directs development to the very bits of environment most precious to people – at the end of their garden, the gateways to the town, the fields they most treasure precisely because they are on their doorstep. It makes new housing development politically toxic for local politicians.

As a consequence, limited land releases result in high density, poor quality estates, often without services or jobs, without so much as a café or shop. Each proposal is fought at the planning stage as if it were the last word (stop it and protect the town), yet in reality each is just a small step on a never ending conveyer belt – gradually encircling the community with ever more dormitory housing estates”

Policy Exchange (2015) Garden Villages

Question 34

The current approach to meeting development needs in Swale

1. What would be the possible consequences of continuing with the current approach to meeting development needs in the Borough as set out by the adopted local plan vision and settlement strategy?

8.1.6 With the above key questions and issues in mind, if it were the case that we needed to create a more flexible local plan vision that could potentially allow for other options to be considered in the medium to longer terms, how would this sit with the current adopted approach? If we needed to change the local plan vision, then how should it change? In table 8.1.1, we have drafted one possible version of a changed local plan vision. It uses the current local plan vision as its starting point, retaining much of its current wording, however, it also adds a degree of flexibility into the more tighter and sequential approach of the previous strategy.

An alternative to the adopted local plan vision?

It is 2038 and Swale continues to thrive by the fruits of its endeavours.

We continue to harness our assets – a strategic location, diverse communities and an outstanding natural environment – and are a sustainable, flourishing place in which to enjoy life and do business. In achieving this, we have successfully steered our way through changes and uncertainties. As a result, we are now meeting our needs whilst our communities have helped shape our places and economy to be adaptable with an enduring prosperity. We have:

- Created flourishing environments with a strong and distinctive design quality that has enhanced local character and enabled communities to enjoy the local places they value.
- Created fresh and innovative approaches to new locations for growth and their long term management that have secured prosperity and environmental quality.
- Established strong links to larger labour markets and attracted highly skilled populations to our diverse business environment.
- Achieved healthy and inclusive communities through the maintenance and creation of high quality economic, social, heritage, cultural and environmental experiences.
- Enhanced access to infrastructure and services, particularly transport, health, education and outdoor activities.
- Championed the capture of land values from development and the long-term stewardship of shared assets for the benefit of our communities.
- Embraced opportunities to create a lower carbon economy and more opportunities for local food production and energy self-sufficiency.
- Developed and managed a sustainable transport network to both support better conditions for our communities and provide opportunity for prosperity.
- Maintained and enhanced our environmental assets and extended our network of green infrastructure with space for communities and nature.

We have accomplished:

- At Sittingbourne, a re-focussed town centre aimed at securing a vital and viable retail heart supported by leisure and dining opportunities, whilst enabling new high density residential and community activity. This has been achieved by wider regeneration, public realm improvements, and reconfigured and improved transport connections at and around the town.
- At Sheerness and Queenborough, beacons of coastal rejuvenation leading the way to success for all communities on the Isle of Sheppey. It has been achieved by urban regeneration, port development, the modernisation of the tourism economy and the enhancement of natural and coastal assets.
- At Faversham, a thriving market town and heritage destination that has successfully managed 21st Century demands. It has been achieved by encouraging a wider range of services that have increased diversity and interest for residents, visitors and the wider area. Development has exploited accessible locations to achieve economic success and has shaped a special, distinct and separate identity that respects the town and created improved transport conditions.
- At our rural communities, success across the downs, farmed plains and coast as places of innovation; nurturing enterprise and opportunities for renewable energy, local produce and greater self-reliance. It has been achieved by a positive framework of planning policies, new development appropriate to the size, role and character of communities and countryside and the protection and enhancement of historic and natural assets.

Table 8.1.1 An alternative to the adopted local plan vision

Question 35**The local plan vision and settlement strategy**

1. If the next local plan were to require a new vision, what are your views on the approach set out in table 8.1.1?

8.2 What are the possible alternatives for future growth?

8.2.1 Alternative approaches to meeting future growth needs have to be considered by councils as part of preparing their local plans. These may relate to the levels of housing growth, their distribution and location. They are often called 'strategic spatial alternatives' and we will need to set these out at the next stage in the preparation of the local plan – Issues and Options. However, we need to start thinking about them now and we are interested in your views as to what elements we should be thinking of including.

8.2.2 Below are some ideas about elements which might be included within future spatial alternatives are explained over the next few pages:

1. Continuing with the existing approach i.e. at larger existing settlements.
2. Focusing on a number of 'key' settlements in locations that are sustainable or can be made so.
3. Minimising the loss of high quality agricultural land.
4. Focusing growth in a specific location(s), such as a new settlement.
5. Dispersing rural growth, e.g. across a wide range of villages.

8.2.3 We'll take a closer look at one of these elements - new settlements - in more detail in Section 8.3 - but here's a slightly closer look at what our other possible ideas might mean. Remember, none of these elements are fixed as yet.

8.2.4 It might be helpful to think about these different elements in terms of building the circa 16,800 new homes that in total might be needed by 2038. We

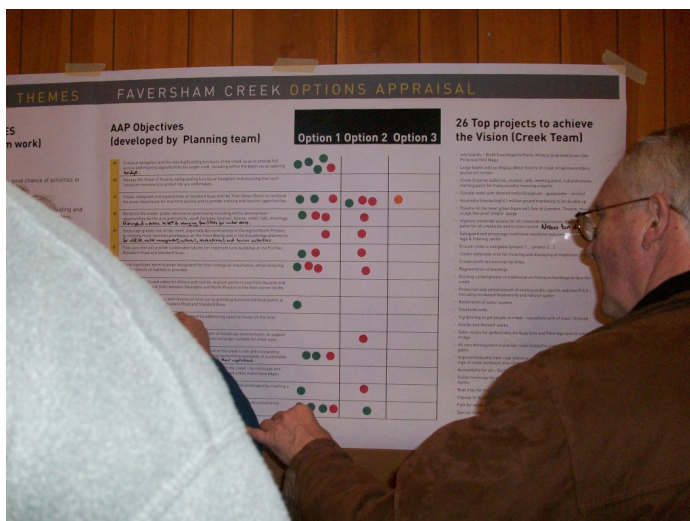
should remember that not all would need to come from new sites if all the existing adopted local plan allocations were built. If this were the case, then fresh land for only about 9,800 dwellings might be needed, although the final figure is not yet certain. In addition, because we do not have vast reserves of brownfield land, we should assume that the significant majority of these homes would be on greenfield sites. We should also not rule out the possibility that Swale could consider building a greater number of new homes if it believed that there was good reason to do so.

8.2.5 It may also be prudent to assume that all these possible elements would probably still need to include some new sites that would accord with the existing strategy approach. This is because we will need to provide for a variety of sites and ensure a continual supply whilst the lead in time for any new strategy was being put in place.

8.2.6 Of course our final spatial alternatives could involve a hybrid involving two or more of the above elements. For example, use of the dispersed rural growth element might not be able to deliver adequate numbers of new homes, but could support another alternative to both help certain rural communities and deliver housing more quickly from smaller sites.

8.2.7 At this stage, we are not so much interested in hearing about the actual implications of pursuing any of these elements - that is for another stage, but whether they (or any other we have not mentioned) should form part of our shortlist of spatial alternatives for further consideration.

8.2.8 Any element that is to be included within any of our future strategic spatial alternatives will be subject to consultation and engagement, testing by the sustainability appraisal process, alongside viability and transport modelling.



Picture 8.2.1 Assessing potential alternatives (SBC)

1. Continuing with the existing approach

8.2.9 This would mean continuing to incrementally build in accordance with the settlement strategy of the adopted local plan - approximately 85% of future housing growth being directed at Sittingbourne and western Sheppey areas and 15% to the Faversham area. Within these proportions, Sittingbourne would receive the greatest 'share', but growth would also be directed to the largest villages at Newington, Iwade, Teynham, Eastchurch, Leysdown and Boughton. A variant of this element could however involve adjusting the percentage proportions between the urban (town) areas.



Picture 8.2.2 Sittingbourne and Milton Creek

8.2.10 If environmental or other capacity was to become further stretched in these areas, villages at less accessible locations within the settlement strategy of the adopted local plan might need to be considered.

This would probably be at varying scales having regard to their environmental sensitivity and more limited services, but at villages which display more sustainable characteristics. Consideration would be given to development in villages such as Bapchild, Borden, Bredgar, Doddington, Eastling, Hartlip, Lower Halstow, Lynsted, Newnham, Oare, Rodmersham Green, Sheldwich Lees, Upchurch and Warden.

8.2.11 New employment land would also continue to be directed toward Sittingbourne and western Sheppey, but other accessible locations close to the strategic road network at the eastern end of the Borough might also need to be considered.

2. Focusing on 'key' settlements

8.2.12 This would assume that there were some limits to growth for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (environmental and infrastructure capacity) and look to perhaps focus on locations that have seen some growth in previous local plans, but which nevertheless might offer sustainable options for larger scales of growth. Basing this approach on the current settlement, this might include Faversham, Newington, Teynham, Eastchurch, Leysdown and Boughton, but might also need to consider smaller settlements which offer reasonable levels of facilities (which might be enhanced) and/or public transport provision. Examples of villages that might be said to stand out from others in terms of existing facilities and services could include Upchurch, Oare and Bredgar, but some consideration could perhaps be given to Neames Forstal where there is an underused rail station (Selling), but no other significant facilities.



Picture 8.2.3 Faversham

8.2.13 New employment provision would probably be similar to that set out in paragraph 8.2.11.

3. Minimising the loss of high quality agricultural land

8.2.14 The basis for this approach would be on reducing the loss of high quality agricultural land that could otherwise occur under other elements. A likely location would be the Isle of Sheppey where growth might be able to support improvements to some of the Borough's more deprived communities as well as potentially resolving highway constraints on the Lower Road from Minster to Leysdown. As well as developing existing committed locations such as at Queenborough-Rushenden and Minster-Halfway, there would be further concentrations of growth on the Island which could involve some or all of the following opportunities being explored: major urban regeneration opportunities, such as at the Port of Sheerness; urban and village extensions, probably at Minster/Halfway and Eastchurch; a focus at the eastern end of the Island at Leysdown and Warden; and the possible redevelopment of some poorer quality holiday park areas not subject to flood risk or coastal erosion.

8.2.15 New Employment provision would also be Island focussed.

4. New settlements

8.2.16 This would require the identification of one or more new settlements for significant scales of growth - no smaller than 2,500 homes each, but potentially much greater. They would normally focus on a 'new' location away from existing larger urban areas or perhaps located closer where new infrastructure can be provided to serve them. These settlements would be more self contained for services and employment than conventional urban extensions, but function in such a way as to support the main centres, whilst offering breathing space in terms of releasing pressure from the main urban areas and larger villages.

8.2.17 No possible location can even be indicated at this stage, as this would need to be the subject of much further work. Such an approach would require an even longer term view taken as the time taken to deliver new settlements is lengthy. Not only would this extend growth beyond the plan period of the new local plan (2038), but could only be used in conjunction with another alternative able to deliver housing in the shorter term. However, because of this lengthy lead in time, the framework for it would need to be considered now by our new local plan process.

5. Dispersed rural growth

8.2.18 This would require a contribution from villages across the Borough at a scale compatible with their character. Development could help support rural services and local housing needs and might avoid placing strain on the major road networks. Employment provision could be sought, but given the likely employment needs across the Borough, there would still be a need for major employment land releases elsewhere.



Picture 8.2.4 What should the approach be to new housing in villages? (Explore Visit England)

8.2.19 We are particularly interested in whether this element should be further pursued, but as it would rely significantly on landowners, communities and Parish Councils being prepared to consider limited land releases in their areas, we want to hear further from those parties.

Question 36

Village housing

1. Parish Councils and rural communities are asked to consider whether they would be willing to consider limited releases of land in their areas to support housing needs?

Question 37

Elements that could be included in our future spatial alternatives for the distribution and location of development

1. What elements should be further considered for inclusion as spatial alternatives for the distribution of development in Swale?

8.2.20 As well as views on the overall approach to be taken, we are also interested to hear about any specific sites that might be felt suitable for development. If you are a developer or landowner who has already submitted a site to the Council up until the time of publishing *Looking Ahead*, we don't need to hear further from you as your sites will go through a formal assessment process in due course. If you have not submitted a new site to us before, then [please contact us](#) and we will tell you what you need to supply us. It is important that you do this now as it may become more difficult for you to do so at a later stage.

8.2.21 We would also welcome submissions from individuals and Parish Councils. However, for them to be formally assessed, these ideas would need to be on sites where the owners were known to be willing to develop their land.

8.2.22 Other than the Council's remaining local plan allocations, unless you have already submitted a site to us, or intend to do so by the close of this consultation, we will not be carrying forward 'old' sites prior to 2017 from our earlier land availability assessments into our new assessment work.

Question 38

Possible locations for new development

1. Unless you have advised us already via one of our previous 'calls for sites', are there any locations or sites you think would be suitable for future development? If so, where, why and what for?

8.3 Should we consider new settlements?

8.3.1 In the previous section, we speculated whether new and more radical methods might be needed to address our future development needs. However, such approaches might not currently immediately 'fit' to the established settlement strategy of the adopted local plan. New settlements are one example of such a possible approach.

8.3.2 We are consulting on this question of new settlements because we are serious about meeting the challenges that future new growth brings to the Borough and how it should be achieved. We also believe that if this approach is to be successful, we need to be pro-active and at least initially challenge the development assumptions of the past.

8.3.3 New settlements would normally be located (although not necessarily so) away from the established urban areas in the Borough. The important consideration is the degree of self-containment and self-reliance that the community is likely to be able to achieve, recognising that these settlement would need to support and be supported by the main centres, whilst giving them both space to breath.

8.3.4 To see whether such ideas were worth considering, we asked consultants Peter Bretts Associates (PBA) to take a look at the potential for Swale to consider such a radical approach. Their study investigated the possibility of a locally led vision of new garden villages and looked at various sizes of settlement; the most common being for around 5,000 dwellings. [Their report can be viewed here.](#)

Statement 4

The new settlement question: Some important things to note

1. The consultant's advice to the Council was entirely their own and did not in any way represent the views of the Council.
2. No party should believe that there is any intended signal by the Council at this stage to depart from the strategy or policies of the adopted local plan.
3. If new settlements are either to be shortlisted or carried forward as a preferred approach, a full assessment of the social, economic and environmental implications of the location would need to be undertaken by the Council.
4. With every home built in Swale we could need around £15,000 of supporting social infrastructure, which could easily be doubled if major transport infrastructure were also needed. This would be collected either by the Community Infrastructure Levy (if progressed by Swale) or by Section 106. These costs are ultimately paid out of land values, which means that new settlements can only work if landowners do not have unrealistic expectations about the value of their land. Proposals where landowners seek too higher costs or the developers who pay them too much may not see their schemes progressed further by the local plan.
5. If this approach is to be pursued, it must be led by the local plan process. The Council will not accept a position by which planning applications seek to undermine this process.

closer to Swale, Ebbsfleet in Kent, is now being developed using garden community principles.

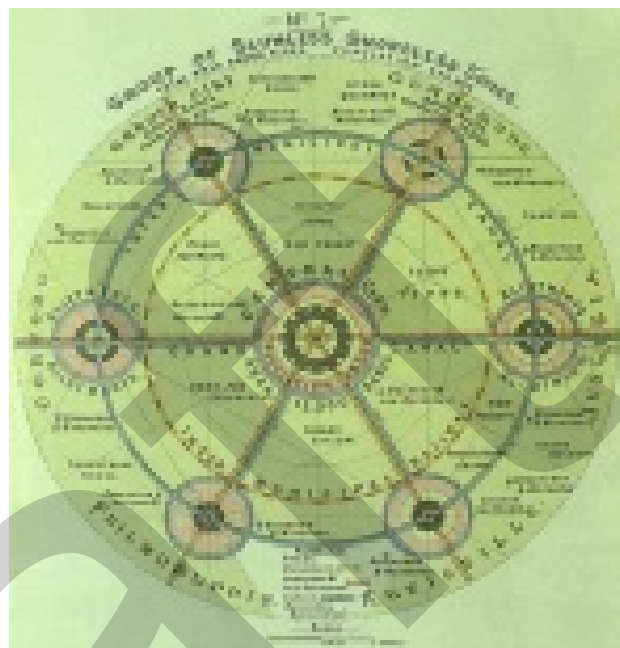


Figure 8.3.1 Garden City Concept by Sir Ebenezer Howard (TCPA)

8.3.7 These settlements aim to be holistically planned in a way that enhances the natural environment and offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. The Garden City principles, developed by the Town and Country Planning Association, are seen as an indivisible and interlocking framework (see Statement 5). In the words of Raymond Unwin, one of the garden settlement pioneers, they offer a 'more harmonious combination of city and country, dwelling house and garden' – the exact opposite of the 'bolt-on estates.'

What is a 'garden' community?

8.3.5 There is much current talk about new 'garden' communities and we want to explore these further.

8.3.6 Garden communities are not a new idea; Sir Ebenezer Howard introduced them as a method for urban planning in the UK in 1898. The first garden communities were both in Hertfordshire, Letchworth, in 1903 and Welwyn Garden City in 1920. They served as prototypes of the new towns organised by the British government after World War II. During the 1960s and 70s, 'garden' communities lost their way, but the concept is now enjoying a resurgence. For example,

Statement 5

Garden communities - what are they?

The Town and Country Planning Association states that garden communities have:

- Land value capture for the benefit of the community.
- Strong vision, leadership and community engagement.
- Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets.
- Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable.
- A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes.
- Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and including opportunities to grow food.
- Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains, and that uses zero-carbon and energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience.
- Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.
- Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.

an employment area, recreational space and landscaped areas. Larger settlements are also possible and bring with them commensurate scales of community provision and employment.

8.3.10 Whilst adherence to the principles of 'garden' communities will be important to the success of any new settlement, it would be important to ensure that this was a distinctive 'Swale specific' approach that recognises the need to support the services and employment provision at the main settlements.



Picture 8.3.1 Are new communities the way forward? (URBED)

8.3.8 The 'garden' status of a settlement does not reside solely in the appearance or density of development. Whilst these are very important, the critical difference between 'garden' communities and other developments relates to the way that the land value increases that have been created are used. Not only are they used to the benefit of both landowners and community, the income captured allows for proper infrastructure investment and the long-term stewardship of shared assets.

8.3.9 Garden settlements of at least 5,000 dwellings allow potentially for a secondary school as well as primary schools, a vibrant village centre, including a shop, pub and health facility and community provision,

Statement 6

What is the New Garden Communities Prospectus?

There is little point in even considering the concept of a possible new settlement if there is no interest from anyone in building one.

We have therefore published a "[New Garden Communities Prospectus](#)" which is seeking to test whether landowners and developers are willing to bring forward land sufficient for major new settlements and supporting infrastructure. We are especially interested in the 'garden' settlement concept.

The prospectus enables those who are serious in wishing to consider developing a new settlement to make submissions to the Council. Having regard to the 'garden' community principles, any submissions made will be independently evaluated for their contributions toward local key issues and design principles, sustainable development, as well as needing to be deliverable/developable. Submissions considered worthy of further detailed analysis, will be put forward as part of our consultation on 'Issues and Options' document (scheduled for Summer 2019). In other words they could form part of the list of strategic spatial alternatives.

If you are interested in finding out more about this process, please download the document or make contact with planningpolicy@swale.gov.uk.

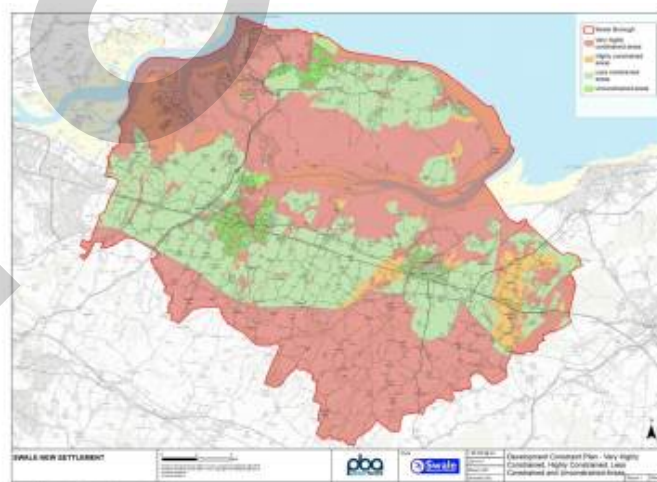
Please note, the prospectus is not a consultation document. If you wish to comment on the concept of new settlements and their appropriateness for Swale, please respond to Question 39.

Where might a new settlement be located?

8.3.11 In a perfect world, a new settlement would be located in a place that was environmentally unconstrained, popular in the marketplace and with local communities and with ready access to existing infrastructure. The real world is far messier and the search for locations are probably more likely to involve a series of imperfect sites with a mix of advantages, infrastructure to be established and disadvantages needing to be managed and balanced.

8.3.12 Our consultants PBA looked at these issues for us and were of the view that:

1. Development was likely to be most environmentally acceptable in a band of less constrained land (but not unconstrained) which runs from west to east through the centre of Swale and to the north of the Isle of Sheppey (shown green on Map 8.3.3).
2. Development is most market viable in the area to south and south east of Sittingbourne and Faversham. Sheppey is unlikely to be popular with the market, and subsidy is unlikely to be available in the long term to make it so.
3. Infrastructure change could have fundamental effects on a spatial approach to housing. For example, new transport infrastructure might unlock areas for new development and help solve congestion and air quality problems in areas such as the A2. Also, locations around rail stations and with good links to strong labour markets could be sought after by employees and their employers.



Map 8.3.1 High level assessment of potential location for new settlement(s) (shown green) (PBA 2017).

8.3.13 For comparison purposes, PBA undertook a very high level assessment of a series of location scenarios for possible new settlements. [These can be viewed here.](#)

8.3.14 The work done so far is far from being the final word on the subject. If a new settlement approach were to be pursued, it would need to be properly assessed. It would also be very important that the Council collectively owned this future land use strategy, via its local plan, and that it was the result of political support and community involvement - in other words,

not solely the work of the development industry, landowners or outside consultants.

Question 39

New settlements

1. Should the Council consider the opportunities offered by new settlements, in particular those which have had regard to 'garden' community principles? If yes, please explain why and where should they be promoted and at what scale.

9 Do you have any other comments?

Thank you

9.0.1 Thank you for taking the time to respond to this consultation. We will review all your comments in taking the local plan forward to its next stage. If you have any other comments not covered by any of the other questions in this document, please include them in response to the question below.

Question 40

Any other comments

1. Are there any other matters not covered by any of the other questions in this document that you would like to tell us about?