

How can I get involved in the Local Plan?

Every resident could be affected by development across the borough so it's important to get involved in the preparation of the new Local Plan. Although the general principle of the plan is to encourage growth within the economy of Ashford, it also seeks to protect Ashford's valued assets such as heritage, leisure, nature and open spaces.

Once adopted, the policies within a Local Plan are used as the starting point to decide planning applications for future development.

By working together with you, our residents and stakeholders, we can ensure that the development our borough needs in order to provide local people with affordable homes and the related infrastructure is carefully considered.

In summer 2024 we are holding a series of 'Our Local Plan Explained' events and would like to hear your views on Ashford's future and any particular issues you are facing in your local area.

View more details on our 'Our Local Plan Explained' events at:
haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk/lp-explained-events

Where can I go to find out more information on the new Local Plan?

For more information, visit our website at: www.ashford.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan



The new Local Plan for Ashford

Ashford Borough Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan for the borough.

Read on for a summary on what the new Local Plan is all about, the process the council must follow to produce it and how you can get involved.



What is a Local Plan?

Local Plans are at the heart of the planning system and provide the opportunity to shape the places that we live, work and socialise.

A Local Plan sets out a vision and framework for future growth and development to guide and manage change over a minimum 15 year period to make sure that building is in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Once adopted, the policies within a Local Plan are used as the starting point to decide planning applications.



Why do we need a Local Plan and what will it cover?

The Government requires all local planning authorities to produce a Local Plan.

It is important to have a Local Plan so that planning decisions are informed by the latest evidence to make sure that we are planning for the current and future needs of everyone in our community.

A Local Plan identifies sites for different land uses and sets out policies to respond to key issues such as:

- making sure new housing meets local needs and is delivered in the most sustainable way
- making sure employment needs are met and that development supports our local economy
- delivering different types of infrastructure and community facilities to benefit both existing and new residents
- achieving well designed places
- looking after our natural and historic environment; and
- tackling climate change

An up-to-date Local Plan is the main way that councils set their planning policies. Local Plans that are out of date do not carry the same weight when it comes to deciding the outcome of a planning application. Without an up-to-date Local Plan, councils can sometimes lack the policies they need to prevent inappropriate or damaging development in their area.

Why is the council preparing a new Local Plan now?

The Government requires local planning authorities to review Local Plans every five years.

The current Ashford Local Plan 2030 was adopted in February 2019 and so is more than five years old. As the Local Plan is now over 5 years old it is considered 'out-of-date' according to national planning policy guidance.

The review of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 is complete and a new Local Plan for Ashford is being prepared.

The new Local Plan will look at the needs of the borough for the minimum of the next 15 years.



What is the process for preparing a Local Plan?

Preparing a new Local Plan takes time. Apart from the fact that we need to collect lots of information ('evidence') to justify the proposals and policies that the plan will eventually contain, we need to allow time for residents and other organisations to review the proposals in the plan and provide feedback through formal consultation.

In the simplest terms, the Local Plan process can be broken down into the following stages:

1. Initial plan preparation (includes the development of a comprehensive evidence base)
2. Preparation and publication of the draft Plan Strategy
3. Public consultation
4. Revise the plan based on comments and suggestions from the local community and key stakeholders
5. Public consultation
6. Independent examination of the Local Plan by the Secretary of State
7. Adoption of the Local Plan

Councils are required to publish a Local Plan timetable in a document called a Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The latest Local Plan timetable is available to view at:
www.ashford.gov.uk/local-development-scheme

What has been done on the Local Plan so far?

Work commenced on a new Local Plan in 2023 when the council held a 'Call for Sites' in autumn 2023 asking landowners, developers and the local community to submit sites for consideration in the new Local Plan. All the sites that were submitted are available to view at haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk/call-for-sites

Please note: *at the time of writing the published sites are available for information purposes only. The sites have not yet been assessed to check for their suitability for inclusion in the new Local Plan.*

The council is gathering evidence to support a new draft strategy and policies in the new Local Plan.

It is also holding a series of community engagement events throughout the summer of 2024 to provide local residents with the opportunity to find out more about the plan making process and how it is preparing the new Ashford Local Plan.

