

What is a Local Plan?

- 1.1 As the name implies, a Local Plan is a locally-based land use document. It looks ahead ten years and makes provision for both change and the conservation of the best features of the locality.
- 1.2 In essence, the Local Plan, which should be in general conformity with the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006, has two main functions:
- to set out the Local Planning Authority's policies for the control of development; and
 - to make proposals for the development and use of land and to allocate land for specific purposes.

The Local Plan Process

- 1.3 Public consultation on the draft Local Plan Review was undertaken in three stages. The Local Planning Authority consulted on "2000+ Local Plan Review 2001" in October 1998 on the key planning issues for the period 2001-2011. Comments on this consultation, together with revised Government guidance, were fed into the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan Review – Deposit Copy, May 2001. Wide public consultation undertaken on this draft, and representations received, were fed into the Second Deposit Copy, approved in October 2002.
- 1.4 A Public Inquiry into outstanding objections was held under the direction of an Inspector from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister over the period September 2003-November 2004. The Inspector made a number of recommendations for modifying the Plan. These recommendations were considered by the Borough Council and an opportunity was given for representations on the Proposed Modifications to the Plan.
- 1.5 The Proposed Modifications, together with a number of minor changes made for clarity, consistency and to update factual information, have now been incorporated into the Plan.
- 1.6 On adoption, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (2006) will supersede the previously adopted Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (1996) and will form part of the statutory development plan for the area. This comprises the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and subsequently the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006); together with the Kent Minerals Local Plan and the Kent Waste Local Plan and the emerging South East Plan Regional Spatial Strategy.

The Area Covered by the Local Plan

- 1.7 The Plan area is shown on the Proposals Map accompanying this document and comprises the whole of the administrative area of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- 1.8 The Plan area covers 326 square km (126 square miles) from Speldhurst Parish in the west to Sandhurst in the south east and has a population totalling some 103,100 (source: Kent County Council, Small Area Population Estimates 1999). The Borough is located in the south-western corner of Kent and borders East Sussex. Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough form the urban nucleus at the western end of the Plan area.

Why is a New Local Plan Needed?

- 1.9 In March 1996, the Borough Council adopted the first Borough-wide Local Plan to cover the period to 2001.

- 1.10** Since 1996, the new housing, factories, shops, restaurants, schools, community halls and recreation open space proposed, or enabled, by the adopted Local Plan (1996) has taken place. However, some sites have not come forward and their continued appropriateness for development should be reviewed.
- 1.11** The adopted Local Plan (1996) made it clear that many policies (such as those relating to the Metropolitan Green Belt and the conservation of the Borough's environmental heritage) are long term in nature and have no specific end date. The high-quality environment remains a key feature of the Borough and this Local Plan aims to ensure its protection and enhancement. Nevertheless, there is a need to re-assess new development requirements for the next ten years and for it to be accommodated in the most appropriate locations.
- 1.12** The planning decisions of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council do not take place in a vacuum. Regional Planning Guidance is provided through the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and approved by the Deputy Prime Minister. The latest regional advice for South East England is contained in the Regional Planning Guidance Note No. 9 (2000) and the emerging South East Plan, which is expected to be submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister for consideration in spring 2006.
- 1.13** In addition, the Borough Council has produced, or updated, a number of local strategies including those relating to the environment, housing, sport and recreation, tourism and transport. The Borough Council approved the first Borough Community Plan in 2004. In 2000, Kent County Council approved the first Local Transport Plan for Kent. There is a need to ensure consistency between these strategies and the Local Plan.
- 1.14** As planning applications and appeals must be determined in law in accordance with the Local Plan (and succeeding Local Development Frameworks), unless material considerations indicate otherwise, the Government wishes to ensure that such plans are kept up to date. The plan-led system can only be successful and command public confidence if plans are kept up to date.

The Kent Structure Plan

- 1.15** The Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006) currently provides the strategic planning framework for the whole of Kent for the period to 2016.
- 1.16** Kent County Council has issued a certificate indicating that this Local Plan conforms generally with the strategic guidance laid down in the Kent Structure Plan (1996) for the period to 2011. This will be superseded by the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006), which does not alter strategic guidelines for the period to 2011. A further certificate of conformity will be issued after adoption of the latter.
- 1.17** This Local Plan should be read in conjunction with the approved Kent and Medway Structure Plan, the policies of which are also applicable within the whole Plan area. Due to new legislation, however, it is expected that the Kent and Medway Structure Plan will be superseded by the new South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy).

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

- 1.18** In September 2004, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act came into force. This will replace the system of Borough-wide Local Plans and County Structure Plans prepared in the context of Regional Planning Guidance with a new system of Local Development Frameworks and Regional Spatial Strategies.
- 1.19** The Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan will automatically be saved as part of the Local Development Framework for a period of three years from adoption under the new legislation and specific parts of it may be saved for longer. This Local Plan will be

replaced on a rolling programme by a series of subject- or site-specific Local Development Documents. The programme for the production of these documents is set out in the Local Development Scheme, which was first approved in April 2005 and will be reviewed in each successive year. This should facilitate faster updating of parts of the planning policy context for the Borough as and when it becomes necessary, without the need to review or replace the whole Plan.

- 1.20** The Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006) will be saved for a period of three years under the new legislation, or until the new Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (RSS) is adopted by Government. The Local Development Framework which gradually replaces the Local Plan will need to be in conformity with the RSS.
- 1.21** This Local Plan should be read in conjunction with the Kent and Medway Structure Plan until this is superseded by the RSS and then read in conjunction with the RSS. The annually updated Local Development Scheme will illustrate which parts of this Local Plan are in force and which have been superseded by new Local Development Documents.
- 1.22** Since the first Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan was adopted in 1996, there have also been changes to national planning policy and Government is currently part way through a rolling programme of revision and updating the Planning Policy Guidance Notes into Planning Policy Statements.

The Plan Period

- 1.23** The Plan has been prepared against the background of the Kent Structure Plan and the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and both Structure Plans cover the period up to 2011. Although, as detailed above, the Local Plan and Structure Plan system will be superseded, many policies (for example those relating to Metropolitan Green Belt, environment and conservation) are long term in nature and may be saved for the longer term or carried forward in the new planning policy documents.

The Format of the Local Plan

- 1.24** This Local Plan comprises two main parts, the Written Statement and the Proposals Map, which are cross-referenced to each other.

(a) The Written Statement (This Document)

The Written Statement is sub-divided into Chapters which, after the Planning Strategy Chapter, concentrate on specific topics. Each Chapter is sub-divided into Sections which deal in turn with the Local Planning Authority's objectives and then the Planning Strategy. Each part of this strategy is justified and is normally followed by a policy. The policies can be distinguished by their bold type and individual policy reference numbers. Where a policy refers specifically to an appendix, the appendix forms part of the policy itself. In explaining specific policies and proposals for towns or villages this Local Plan will always begin, where relevant, with the larger settlements of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst, followed by the villages in alphabetical order.

(b) The Proposals Map (contained in a Separate Wallet)

The Proposals Map defines the sites which are allocated for development, or where other policies will apply. The Proposals Map consists of the following:

- 1.25** Some of the Local Plan policies are general and apply throughout the Plan area, whilst others are site- or area-specific and apply only to the appropriate areas illustrated on the Proposals Map. In considering proposals for development, the Borough Council will apply all relevant policies of the Plan. It is therefore assumed that the Plan will be

1 Introduction

read as a whole and, as far as possible, cross-referencing between Plan policies has been kept to the minimum necessary to ensure clarity.

Sheet No	Area	Plan Ref	Scale
1	Tunbridge Wells Borough (Western Area)	Proposals Map A	1:25,000
2	Tunbridge Wells Borough (Eastern Area)	Proposals Map B	1:25,000
3	Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough	Inset 1	1:10,000
4	Royal Tunbridge Wells Central Area	Inset 1(a)	1:2500
5	Southborough Central Area Paddock Wood	Inset 1(b) Inset 2	1:2500 1:5000
6	Cranbrook Sissinghurst	Inset 3 Inset 4	1:2500 1:2500
7	Hawkhurst Gills Green	Inset 5 Inset 6	1:2500 1:2500
8	Langton Green Speldhurst	Inset 7 Inset 8	1:2500 1:2500
9	Five Oak Green Bidborough	Inset 9 Inset 10	1:2500 1:2500
10	Pembury	Inset 11	1:2500
11	Benenden Iden Green Goudhurst Kilndown	Inset 12 Inset 13 Inset 14 Inset 15	1:2500 1:2500 1:2500 1:2500
12	Brenchley Matfield Frittenden Sandhurst	Inset 16 Inset 17 Inset 18 Inset 19	1:2500 1:2500 1:2500 1:2500
13	Horsmonden Lamberhurst	Inset 20 Inset 21	1:2500 1:2500
14	<u>Information:</u> Illustrative maps showing transport and highway management proposals for Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough and Royal Tunbridge Wells Central Area		
15	<u>Information:</u> Illustrative maps showing transport and highway management proposals for Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst		

(c) The entire Local Plan is also available on the website.