

02 THE PROCESS

This section reviews the process in the GADF masterplanning exercise. It includes four key aspects of the process:

- **The first is the Process of Decision Making**

This outlines the development of the Plan from the principles that were established, to a Compact Strategy for growth, to a series of options for growth within the Compact Strategy. It identifies how key decisions were taken through testing and modelling exercises and a public consultation process. It also clarifies how the GADF Masterplanning will relate to the Local Development Framework.

- **The second is a Public Consultation Process**

This records the key public events and mechanisms that were used to gain public input into the process and the evolution of the Plan. The full consultation process is outlined in the Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement.

- **The third includes a background to the Strategic Environmental Assessment**

The role of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is to both set performance standards and targets for growth, as well as use the targets as a means of evaluating how the options for growth and plan evolves.

- **The fourth includes a background to the Technical Studies**

The role of the transport and flood modelling is to assess the land use and infrastructure proposals for growth relative to the Ashford Area Transport Strategy (AATS) and Integrated Water Management Strategy (IWMS).

02.1 THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

This section deals with the process of decision making related to the preparation of a Local Development Framework for Ashford. This process should be read in conjunction with the Consultation Process outlined in Section 02.2, (as shown in the table opposite) the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process in Section 02.3, and the Transport Modelling Process in Section 02.4.

Ashford's Local Development Framework

The Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF) will be one of the first masterplans to be prepared within the context of the new planning framework, as set out in the 'Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004'. The GADF will be given a formal and statutory basis through its incorporation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

The LDF will comprise of two types of documents:

- Local Development Documents (LDD) - a 'Core Strategy' plus other geographical or issue specific documents.
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) - explaining how core policy, included in the LDDs, will be interpreted and implemented.

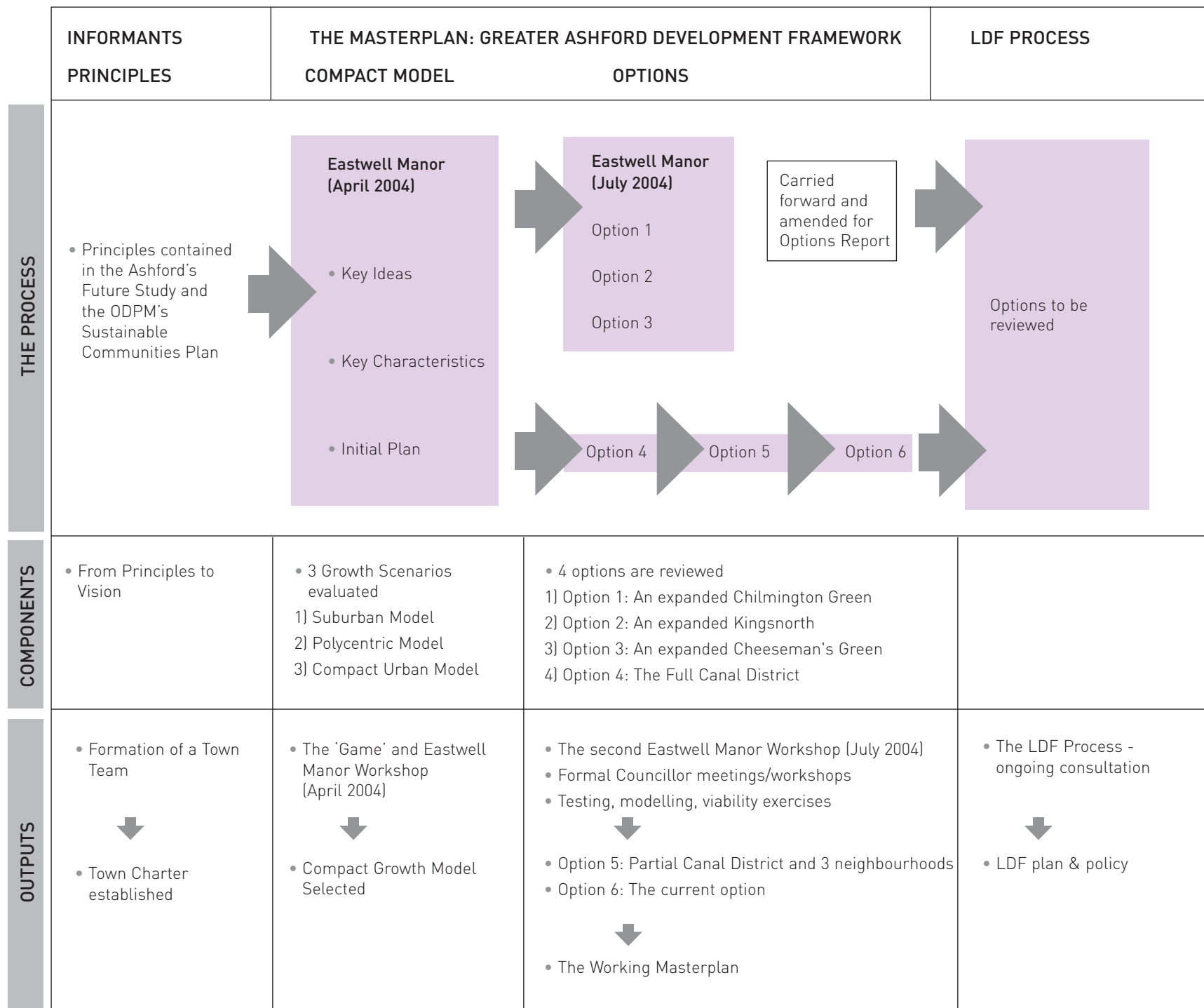
The LDDs will be subject to full consultation and scrutiny - including a public examination in front of an independent inspector. SPDs will be subject to full consultation - but without a public examination. The documents forming the LDF will cover the whole range of issues raised by both the 'Sustainable Communities Plan' and the GADF, including:

- The 30 year vision.
- The development framework for the LDF period (to 2021).
- A broad phasing strategy.
- Policies for developer contributions and delivery.
- A 'Town Wide' design code.
- Area Action Plans for urban sites and the urban extensions (coming forward in line with the phasing strategy).

The GADF process has been structured to ensure that there is a seamless transition between the informal masterplanning work and preparation of the LDF. This 'Stage 4' Final Masterplanning report acts both as a summary of the GADF work and as an important supporting document for the LDF.

Initially the Masterplanning Report will be used as a supporting document for the 'Core Strategy Options Report' - explaining and justifying the preferred option and other options considered. It will also be used as a supporting document for the LDDs submitted to the Secretary of State, as well as further SPDs.

A key difference between the GADF masterplan and the emerging LDF will be the timescale. The GADF is a strategy for the development of Ashford up-to 2031. The LDF will cover the period to 2021. However, the context of the LDF will be set by the longer period - this is particularly important in providing the context for some of the major pieces of infrastructure that are subject to long planning and delivery timescales.



An outline of the Process of Decision Making

02.2 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

This section deals with the public participation process including major public events, capacity building and gaining input for the evolving Plan for Ashford.

- The first major consultation event was the Eastwell Manor Workshop, where a selected stakeholder group was invited to participate in an intensive four-day workshop.
- The second was the establishment of a Town Team as a group of community representatives who will liaise with their respective communities as the project evolves. The Town Team also has a primary role in the formation of a Town Charter, which establishes the primary principles and aspirations for development in Ashford.
- The third strand was the public exhibition that involved a far broader range of Ashford's citizens where views and comments were expressed.
- The fourth event was a series of reviews and workshops held from 12-16 July.
- A number of Parish and Borough Council meetings have also occurred.



The Strategic Growth Model Workshop Eastwell Manor: April 2004



The Eastwell Manor Workshop was held between the 26 – 29 April 2004, at Eastwell Manor on the outskirts of Ashford. This was the first major consultation exercise and four major groups were represented:

The Consultants

The Consultants appointed to the Greater Ashford Development Framework, as well as Consultants working on other projects in Ashford.

The Broad Client Group

The broad client group includes English Partnerships, Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, Ashford's Future, SEEDA, GOSE and the Environment Agency .

The Agencies

The agencies include the key public organisations and officials working at the hands-on level with issues that affect Ashford, for example the Highways Agency, as well as private agencies such as Stagecoach.

The 'Town Team'

The 'Town Team' is a group of individuals who represent key Civic and Community organisations such as Councillors, Ashford Volunteer Bureau, Ashford Rural Trust, Kent Association for the Disabled, Ashford Visual Artists, and Tenants and Community Residence Groups.

The Workshop Agenda

• Capacity Building

To start building the capacity of civic and community groups to participate in the process through the formation of a 'Town Team'.

• Focus on the Quality Agenda

To propose key themes for growth around the quality of settlement and the quality of landscape, picking up on the principles included in the Ashford's Future Study which were set out in the brief.

• Build on Previous Work

To pick up principles included in Ashford's Future Study (Halcrow 2002) as set out in the Brief for the GADF.

• Scale of the Growth Challenge

To review the scale of growth and change through comparisons to relevant examples such as Oxford and Cambridge.

• Confirm Workstream Objectives

To clarify the issues of growth from the perspective of each workstream.

• Explore Growth Scenarios

To explore and broadly assess three possible growth scenarios for Ashford. The exploration of the three scenarios is described in Chapter 05 of this document.

• Identify Preferred Growth Model

To establish a preferred growth scenario as a primary output of the workshop. The 'in principle' support of the Compact Growth Model is covered in Chapter 05.

The Town Team and Town Charter

One of the key roles of the Town Team is to develop, refine and promote a manifesto for quality growth and change in Ashford. This manifesto or Town Charter establishes and affirms the local aspirations of the citizens of Ashford as their town evolves and develops. The Town Team draws on the talents and expertise of a cross section of local citizens who work together on the Town Team. The Town Charter qualifies the following questions:

- What kind of a town do we have now?
- What kind of a town do we want?
- What kind of town can we make?
- What do we need to make it happen?

The general response from the Town Team to the potential of a Town Charter was positive – Town Team members felt the need to challenge the recent directions that growth in Ashford has taken. The Town Team has established a charter editorial group with members of the Town Team, and the Ashford's Future Team. The central issues raised by the majority of the Town Team are;

- To develop the Charter through a broader consultation programme;
- To develop a Charter of aspirations for broader public review.
- The charter process will be developed over 2005.



The core aspirations for the Charter are as follows:

Our Aspirations

- We believe that Ashford should enhance its image in order to retain and attract high quality development, jobs, and investment. Ashford has many positive features. The pedestrian district in the town centre, an international rail station, a central park, natural water courses, and attractive countryside within easy reach of every resident. These are not, though, always designed, managed or used to their full potential. We believe that by having a clear vision and a good plan we can make Ashford a more beautiful place to live and work in.
- Ashford should grow within a defined and compact area with clear boundaries that respect the qualities and heritage of Ashford and its natural surroundings.
- Ashford's growth should create distinctive neighbourhoods that have new schools; health centres and well-connected streets. Ashford should be a series of friendly communities.
- Ashford's growth must deliver a stronger and more vibrant town centre.
- The growth must benefit the most deprived communities in Ashford.
- Our aspiration is that Ashford becomes a socially and economically successful town of regional importance with a distinctive cultural identity.

we want ashford to be...
the great town in the great setting

The Wider Public Consultation Event Ashford Town Centre: May 2004

On 22 May a team consisting of representatives from the Consultants, Ashford Borough Council and Ashford's Future held a public consultation event at the County Square Shopping Centre in Ashford's Town Centre. The key purpose of the consultation event was to introduce the growth challenge in Ashford to the broader public, and to capture public ideas and opinions.

The level of public engagement and response was positive.

- 1500 people were directly engaged in consultation activities.
- Of the 1500 people approximately 500 people were involved in playing a version of the Scenario 3 game (see section 05).
- Approximately 1000 additional people walked through and viewed the exhibition without direct engagement from members of the team.
- There were 300 written responses from a wide range of groups.



The Strategic Concept Plan Workshop Eastwell Manor and Charter House: July 2004

The July Workshop was held between the 12th to the 16th of July and was broadly broken into three components:

- **The two-day workshop at Eastwell Manor**

The stakeholder group broadly comprised of the same groups that had attended the April Workshop at Eastwell Manor.

- **The two-day series of specialist workshops at Charter House**

A series of focus group sessions were held, namely:

- Town Centre Landowners, Developers and Strategic Owners around the edge of the town;
- Civic Domain (key public service groups such as education, social services, health, community services and church groups);
- Green Spaces (including representatives from English Nature, Kent Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, & KCC Landscape and Heritage);
- Town Centre (including key consultants, specialists and members of the Client Group).
- Victoria Way which focused on the role of a major public transport corridor and important street running parallel to Victoria Park past the Retail Outlet and into a redeveloped Romney Marsh Road. Three focus areas were reviewed

- **The exhibition at Charter House:**

The exhibition included the work that had been undertaken by the various groups over the course of the week. Participants of the two-day workshop at Eastwell Manor were invited to view the exhibition. In addition the material was left on display a two-week period after the July Workshop.

The central purpose of the July Workshop was to revisit the preferred Strategic Growth Model identified at the April Workshop and show how the team had moved forward with testing a series of Strategic Concept Plans. A key part of the workshop was to introduce and review the four variations on the model or option's that had developed since this date. The options at the stage prior to the July Workshop reflected a set of common themes (as established by the Consultant team) and alternative scenarios for dealing with additional housing numbers required to meet the plan. The risks for each of these options were also covered.

These four options are fully reviewed in Chapter 06 of this report. A fifth option arising from this workshop is included in Chapter 07.



02.3 THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process that has run alongside development of the Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF). The SEA both establishes targets or performance criteria for the Development Framework, and evaluates the Options and Working Plan as they have evolved. This section provides a brief background to the SEA.

Introduction

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as defined by the EU Directive is the process for ensuring "the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans... with a view to promoting sustainable development".

SEA provides a systematic process for evaluating and anticipating the environmental consequences of decisions prior to the project stage. It is both a decision-aiding tool, and provides an audit trail of the decisions taken in plan preparation.

The diagram shows the SEA stages and interfaces with the Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF) preparation. Progressing the SEA in parallel with GADF preparation is key to ensuring that the GADF reflects sustainability objectives which were developed in the early stages of the Development Framework process, building on 'Handbook for Change' (Halcrow, 2002).

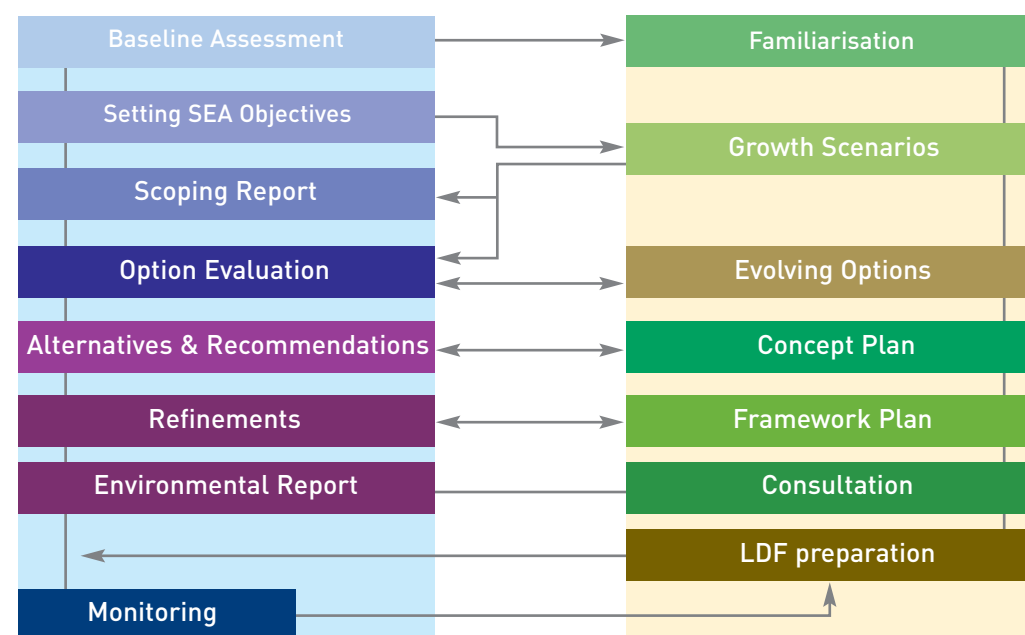
Appraisal Process

Following the establishment of the appraisal framework, the initial Growth Scenarios were appraised, and recommendations made in respect of the Preferred Scenario. The appraisal framework and appraisal outcomes were the subject of the Environmental Scoping Report which was distributed to Statutory Consultees (EN, EH, EA and the Countryside Agency).

The next key SEA phase has been the appraisal of Urban Initiatives Stage 3 Report (November, 2004), and associated Plans. The SEA focussed on the 4 evolving options and included recommendations for a preferred option to be taken forward, as well as the Concept Plan appraisal. In addition, a follow-through appraisal (assessing the extent to which the recommendations contained in the 1st Environmental Report have been addressed in Concept Plan development) was undertaken. The outputs from these appraisals are the subject of the 2nd Environmental Report which includes consideration of comments received from the statutory consultees, and recommendations in respect of alternatives to be considered as well as mitigation measures to improve the sustainability performance of the Concept Plan.

It was incumbent upon the GADF team to take these recommendations into consideration during the Final Stage of the GADF preparation. The Final Masterplanning Report will be subject to a final appraisal as part of the SEA, with any recommendations for further refinements made at this stage. It is intended that the Final Environmental Report will be updated to review the performance of the Framework Plan against sustainability objectives and targets.

It is intended that the Environmental Report will be made available for consultation at the same time as the GADF. The final Environmental Report (No. 4), Strategic Growth Scenario, is scheduled for publication in Summer 2004. Further SEA stages will include the development of a monitoring strategy, which will form the basis for the review of the LDF.



Integrating SEA and Development Framework Preparation in Ashford, showing key interfaces

The Appraisal Matrix and Presentation

In order to facilitate legibility and ease of understanding and use, the sustainability objectives, criteria, indicators and targets have been set out in the form of a matrix, and is being used to assess the GADF's sustainability performance.

The appraisal objectives and associated criteria, indicators and targets are not limited to environmental concerns only, but also address the broad range of social, economic and transport considerations.

The SEA topics, as identified in the SEA Directive, form the organisational logic of the matrix. These topics include: Biodiversity; Water & Soil; Population & Human Health; Air, Climatic Factors; Material Assets; Social Inclusiveness; Economic Development. The sustainability objectives have been classified into these themes for the purposes of clarity.

Objectives

The requirements set out in the SEA Regulations concentrate on environmental issues. During the initial scoping of this work the client group took the view that the SEA should be used as a tool for the whole community development programme. The Ashford SEA is not just confined to considerations of impacts on the environment, but also considers the ability of proposals to satisfy the full range of sustainability topics. These topics are social progress which recognises the needs of everyone, effective protection of the environment, prudent use of natural resources and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment. In addition transport and accessibility considerations have been included, as these issues are considered critical to future development in Ashford.

The objectives form the common basis for all the studies relating to Ashford's development. In order to ensure that the range of objectives proposed is in line with current sustainability guidance and practice, a range of documents were reviewed, including:

- Criteria
- Indicators
- Targets

Criteria

The criteria focus on the items, which are of direct relevance to the Development Framework preparation. For the purposes of the SEA, the extent to which the Development Framework is able to satisfy these criteria needs to be measurable, which is why the appraisal framework includes a series of indicators.

Indicators

The indicators are the yardsticks by which the performance of the Development Frameworks can be evaluated. These provide relevant measurements for the success of the Development Framework in achieving the identified objectives, and are a means of measuring the direct impacts associated with the Framework Proposals themselves. The Indicators will form the basis for monitoring the ability of the Frameworks' to deliver sustainable growth.

Targets

Where possible, specific targets have been identified relating to each of the criteria. These have been developed specifically for the Ashford context but have their origins in a range of sources. In most cases these targets have reference to the applicable statutory targets. However, the intention is that the Development Framework SEA Targets should not only consider the part Ashford has to play in meeting national or regional targets, but also to ensure that any backlogs in the achievement of these targets is addressed as part of new development. Further, the targets have been developed in such a way to promote the delivery of sustainable development in Ashford to a level over and above that set out in the statutory targets.

Refinement of the Appraisal Matrix

The draft appraisal matrix was prepared in October 2003, and issued for comment to the following consultees: the English Partnerships, Environment Agency, SEEDA, Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council English Nature, Kent Wildlife Trust as well as BDP who were working on the Town Centre Development Framework and the Building Research Establishment who were acting as advisors to this process.

The stakeholders were provided with at least 3 separate opportunities to provide input into the appraisal matrix development.

The full Appraisal Matrix is included on the following pages

Appraisal Matrix

Topic	Objective	Targets
1.0 Biodiversity, fauna and flora	1.1 Protection Ashford's natural ecosystems and its biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero development in designated areas. • Avoidance of development on sites which support protected, rare, scarce or locally important habitats and species as identified in the Kent BAP • Provision of resources for replacement habitat of equivalent or better value & agreement about the resources for the maintenance and management of these habitats
	1.2 Enhancement and improvement of biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in habitat extent & species numbers in Ashford in accordance with incidence/ % increase identified in the Kent BAP. • Increase the extent of watercourses maintained & enhanced for wildlife and habitats. • The creation of a green network by reducing fragmentation and increasing connectivity between habitats, natural, and semi-natural areas in Ashford.
	1.3 To enhance awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and wildlife issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DF to achieve English Nature's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard in Ashford. Ensuring every home is within 300 m of an accessible natural greenspace of at least 2 ha, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km • At least one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km • At least one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km • Management measures are established for all natural areas • Achievement of EN's Countryside for All standards for disabled access & people with special needs.
2.0 Water and soil	2.1 Protection and enhancement of ground and surface waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of paved areas in new development composed of porous paving & 75% of new roads to be served by Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.¹ • All new development to include on-site provision for rainwater re-use, with the intention of achieving rates of run-off comparable to an undeveloped site. • Provision of integrated, decentralised wastewater treatment solutions as part of development proposals • Up to 2010, all development to allow for retrofitting of grey water recycling. All development post-2010 to include provision for grey water recycling.
	2.2 To ensure a sustainable water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in average household water consumption by 30% (over existing consumption levels) in new developments by 2010. 50% in new developments, post 2010. • All new development to include water saving technologies. No outside taps connected to the public water supply in new development. • Retrofitting to achieve reduction in average household consumption by at least 5% in existing development by 2010, and by 20% by 2030. • New water supply infrastructure to be provided by 2021² • Measures for retro-fitting of existing development to enable rainwater collection and grey water recycling to be promoted in conjunction with the EA and water companies by 2005.
	2.3 To ensure that new development does not increase flood risk and protects the capacity & integrity of flood storage areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new housing will be at risk of flooding: either by building outside the floodplain or through specific design measures • Maximise the proportion of run off in new developments which is dealt with on site/ locally, with a target 50% reduction in runoff (peak) in new developments by 2010.
	2.4 To minimise the irreversible loss of agricultural land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid the irreversible loss of high grade agricultural land to development, unless it can be categorically established that no alternatives exist.
	2.5 Minimise the loss of soils to new development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero loss of soils, which have an ecological or food-producing function (stripping and re-use to be incorporated as part of development where necessary). • 30% of development to include green roofs/ green walls.
3.0 Population and human health	3.1 Encourage healthy lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of development to be within walking distance of local amenities, including the following within 1000m: post office & banking facilities, primary and secondary school, medical centre, leisure centre, community centre, public house, children's play area. • To peg overall traffic levels to a maximum permissible 25% increase over current flows in Ashford. • To reduce modal share of the private car from 70% to 40%. • 95% of new dwellings to have provision for the adequate storage of cycles as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 and 2 bedroom flat/house – storage for 1 cycle • 3 bedroom flats/houses – storage for 2 cycles • 4 bedrooms and above – storage for 4 cycles. • 80% of roads in new development to comprise home zones/ 20 mph zones
	3.2 Improve everyone's access to open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the amenity value of the floodplain. • To establish connectivity between all green spaces
	3.3 Decrease impacts from noise and odour pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2010 all public transport vehicles to be "low noise" emission vehicles
4.0 Air	4.1 Reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve over the longer term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking standards for new development to be 25% below current ABC standards • Additional car parking in the town centre to be located in underground/ multi-storey car parks • Ensure all new buses are low carbon variety with the aim of introducing zero carbon as soon as technology permits • To ensure that design of new development enables the use of locally sourced materials with a targets of 20% of all materials to be sourced from within a 50km radius and 80% of built materials sourced from within 30km.
	4.2 To reduce air pollution from vehicular sources by improving transport choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public transport use to at least 25% of modal share for local trips by 2010, across Ashford,³ and 40% of modal share in the town centre by 2020. • Achieve an improvement in average public transport journey times to the town centre and employment areas over current journey times

Topic	Objective	Targets
5.0 Climatic factors	5.1 To reduce the impacts of climate change, with a particular focus on reducing levels of CO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2020 over 1990 levels • 50% of energy requirements in new development to be provided from community renewable sources/ integrated renewables (e.g. photovoltaics) by 2020 • New development to be 30% more energy efficient than under current building regulations • All development to meet the Eco Homes or BREEAM ratings of "good"/ "very good by 2005", and "excellent "by 2010. • New development to result in a reduction in the average number of motorised transport trips per capita.
	5.2 To ensure that development is capable of withstanding the effects of global warming and climate change and microclimatic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of all new development to demonstrate robustness to climate change and to include weather resistant built forms.
6.0 Material assets	6.1 To maximise the use of previously developed land and buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To accommodate at least 6,000 new dwellings on brownfield sites
	6.2 To maximise the efficiency in the use of land	
	6.3 To protect and reduce the use of non-renewable resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that at least 50% of construction materials are derived from renewable sources, including recycled sources, such as wood and concrete
	6.4 To promote waste reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery over the disposal of waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce pro-active waste management initiatives aimed at reduction, re-use and recycling in conjunction with design initiatives in new development.
7.0 Cultural heritage & landscape	7.1 To maintain and enhance the historic & cultural assets of Ashford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero adverse impacts on significant archaeological / historic sites as a result of development. • Design of new development to respect and reflect historic setting • Increase the number and quality of cultural opportunities in Ashford
	7.2 To maintain and enhance the quality of Ashford's landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No net loss of land within, or damage to the natural beauty or the setting of areas of landscape importance.
	7.3 Promote access to cultural opportunities & Ashford's public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1% of cost of development to be spent on public art
	7.4 Reinforcement of the role & vitality of the town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of community, cultural and education uses (such as main library, museum, theatre & tertiary education facilities) within the town centre. • Increase proportion of retail floorspace located in the town centre.
8.0 Social Inclusiveness	8.1 Promote equity & address social exclusion by closing the gap between the poorest communities and the rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of public & community buildings to be accessible by mobility impaired • 100% of pedestrian crossings and public spaces to be accessible by mobility impaired.
	8.2 To ensure that everyone has access to good quality housing that meets their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% of new build to be affordable housing (Proposed alterations to RPG- South East- Ashford Growth Area) • 10% of all new build housing to be accessible to disabled people
	8.3 To enhance community identity and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise and continue stakeholder and local community dialogue as part of the DF and LDF development process. • Maximise initiatives to integrate new development into the existing community
	8.4 Reduce both crime and fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All public spaces (including parking) designed to be overlooked
9.0 Economic Development	9.1 Promote economic diversity, growth & self sufficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employment growth in key sectors • To ensure employment growth keeps pace with housing growth. • To achieve a balance between in and out-commuting • Increase number of fringe farming initiatives. • To improve access to training and education
	9.2 Improving attractiveness of the town to inward investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a range and adequate supply of employment land • Undertake a programme of initiatives to market Ashford as a location for investment. • Improve journey times between M20 and Ashford town centre. • J10 improvements by 2010 and J9 improvements by 2015 • Improved linkages between IPS and town centre
	9.3 Maintain high and stable levels of income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved overall skill levels. • Improved range of employment opportunities. • Increase proportion of workforce with NVQ4+ too 30% by 2010, and 40% by 2020. • Improved overall environmental & social performance of businesses in Ashford. • Annual increase in community/ social enterprises

¹ With due consideration given to zones of High Aquifer Vulnerability.

² Either through raising of Bewl Reservoir or development of Broadoak Reservoir, will require liaison with the EA and Mid-Kent Water.

³ Busses capture only 3-7% of modal share in Ashford currently

⁴ Currently delays of more than 10minutes occur at J10 during peak periods.

⁵ In 200, 22.4% of the Ashford workforce were qualified to the level of NVQ4+5.

02.4 THE TECHNICAL STUDIES

Transport and Movement

The Masterplan for Ashford aims to build upon the work of the 'Ashford's Capacity Report' (Halcrow) which established the intention to shift emphasis from the car to other, more sustainable modes of transport during expansion. From the earliest stages of option development particular emphasis has been placed upon developing a framework that supports commercially viable public transport services, walking and cycling as an integral part of the plan. Providing for these 'sustainable modes' has necessarily required an innovative approach to transport matters. Transport has thus been planned in tandem to land use with the location of homes, jobs and community facilities considered in the context of transport requirements and vice versa.

The 3 key roles of the Transport & Movement Workstream have thus been to:

1. Advise all Workstreams on how the location of homes and jobs will affect the viability of sustainable modes of transport.
2. Devise integrated walking, cycling, public transport and traffic networks whilst identifying and investigating the opportunities to create the new streets, bus links, bridges and other infrastructure that will encourage sustainable modes and disperse traffic.
3. Identify when that infrastructure should be provided, balancing the need to secure access to new development with advice on costs and the availability of funding from other Workstreams.

Encouraging Sustainable Modes of Transport – Making theory work for Ashford

Theoretically, high density development that mixes homes and jobs is the most sustainable in transport terms. This is for a number of reasons:

- The massing of people in close proximity increases the viability of shops and services enabling the creation of local centres.
- The close proximity of homes to employment, shops and services in local centres encourages walking and cycling.
- The mix of homes, employment, shops and services will increase demand for public transport throughout the day to and from the area.
- The massing of people in close proximity increases the viability of public transport since there are more potential users in any given area.

The ideal arrangement of such development is in a continuous corridor with a Town Centre at its focus. In simple terms then, the greater the proportion of Ashford's new homes and jobs that can be located this way, the better the quality of any public transport service will be. Consequently, development becomes more sustainable.

With the exception of this second additional recommendation, most advice was incorporated leading to the development of a new Option 6. In this latest Option, both the Canal District and Kingsnorth are identified as areas for development later in the plan period. Public Transport proposals are arranged such that access to other growth areas will not be compromised by the later development of these areas.

- Much of Ashford's existing development is suburban and low density. Roads are circuitous and direct through routes rare. Without controversial redevelopment, opportunities for areas of the existing town to form part of (and benefit from) the envisaged high density corridor were likely to be limited without undermining service quality.
- An alternative strategy of developing on the green corridors that penetrate the town centre might avoid the need for redevelopment but could have environmental and ecological implications.

It should also be considered that the advice of other Workstreams might conflict with this aspiration. For instance, the suggestion to mix jobs with homes throughout new areas of development might best support sustainable modes of transport. However, market advice might be that employers will only be attracted to Ashford if jobs are located in large business parks close to the motorway. It has been the task of all Workstreams to reconcile these opinions.

Stage 1

The Ashford Area Transport Study (AATS) established the baseline transport conditions in Ashford. The study sought to understand transport connections in the town and the wider area as the basis for the development of proposals and led to the establishment of an enduring philosophy. This remains to promote a Masterplan that:

- Supports public transport, cycling and walking as a priority.
- Provides adequate access for vehicles without compromising the public realm.
- Aids congestion through the intelligent dispersion of traffic.

- Ensures the safety of all road users.

In quantitative terms these principles manifest themselves as changes in modal share – reduction in car use in conjunction with increased walking, cycling and public transport usage. Assessment of Masterplan options has taken place in these terms.

Three initial scenarios drawn up by Urban Initiatives were tested in advance of major public consultation at the April 2004 Eastwell Manor Workshops which aimed to reach a consensus on a preferred Strategic Growth Model for further development by the various Workstreams. These were:

- **Scenario 1 (The Dispersed Model)** Largely suburban growth around the periphery of the town.
- **Scenario 2 (The Decentralised Neighbourhood)** Limited higher density mixed use neighbourhoods located on the edge of the existing urban area.
- **Scenario 3 (The Compact Urban Model)** High density mixed use corridor development partly within the existing urban area.

Embodied in all Scenarios was the commitment to 'mend it before you extend' – that is to correct the town's fundamental problems before attempting further growth. A paramount concern in this respect was providing for downgrading of the ring road which hinders development of the town centre.

In the assessment, Scenario 3 performed best in Transport terms due to the presence of higher density corridors of development linked to the town centre.

The consensus at the Eastwell Manor Workshop was for a Hybrid of Scenarios 2 & 3.

Stage 2 – Refinement of the Strategic Growth Model

In the following months work focussed on further developing the 'Preferred Strategic Growth Model'. Advice from the Movement Workstream was informed by preliminary modelling of some proposed road link options carried out as part of the Ashford Highway and Traffic Study (AHTS).

The 'Preferred Model' by now included a framework of key movement corridors agreed between the Transport and Land Use Workstreams. In order to limit the amount of new road building required these were focussed on existing roads and rights of way.

Ongoing Stage 2 Development

Further development of the Strategic Option took place over the following months as the team looked to progress this to a Strategic Concept Plan. The Movement Workstream undertook ongoing consultation with key stakeholders such as the SRA, Sustrans, and Local Public Transport Operators to assess the viability of proposals. These included:

- The opportunity to establish Ashford as hub in the UK Rail Network.
- Strengthening the case for bringing domestic CTRL services to Ashford which is competing with the Medway Towns.
- The potential to expand Lydd airport which could be served by rail or bus connections from Ashford.
- Developing existing proposals for a new National Cycle Network (NCN) route 17 through Ashford to ensure this serves the new growth areas where necessary.
- Investigating in principle opportunities to reduce unnecessary Freight movements through the town.

However, the evolution to a 'Strategic Concept Model' was guided mostly by developments in the Land Use Workstream and the development of four Strategic Options. These four options were unveiled and debated at a further Eastwell Manor Workshop and a following series of specialist workshops during July 2004. The major area of change for the Movement Workstream included work on revising the focus of the main public transport corridor and shifting the bulk of the development to the east of the town.

Strategic Concept Model - Option 5

These ideas were further synthesised into a fifth, 'Strategic Concept Plan' (Option 5), that was presented beside the other 4 options.

As such a decision was taken to assess the likely viability of a 3 armed high quality public transport service (by now dubbed 'SMARTLINK').

Each arm will be reinforced by a Park and Ride site at junctions with strategic road corridors.

It was identified that the least viable of the three arms was likely to be that to Kingsnorth since scaling back of the Canal District has weakened this particular corridor.

Towards a final Masterplan – Option 6

RPS undertook testing of the preferred Option 5 as part of the AATS. This reported disappointing performance of SMARTLINK relative to a similar service proposed in the AATS. The key AATS recommendation was to reduce SMARTLINK from a three arm to a two arm service in order to support SMARTLINK's business case. The Movement Workstream recommended the Kingsnorth arm be dropped and development from Kingsnorth be redeployed to reinforce the two remaining SMARTLINK corridors.

Other key recommendations included:

1. Increasing the mix of development along the Cheeseman's Green corridor through Sevington where it remained coarse
2. Redeployment of escalating non-industrial employment in Waterbrook to be spread along the SMARTLINK corridor to improve accessibility.

With the exception of this second additional recommendation, most advice was incorporated leading to the development of a new Option 6. In this Option, both the Canal District and Kingsnorth are identified as reserve areas for possible development later in the plan period. Public Transport proposals are arranged such that access to other growth areas will not be compromised by a decision not to develop these.

The decision to change the location of the urban neighbourhoods has necessarily required some revision to the framework of Key Movement Corridors. Proposals for these have been developed in tandem to revisions to Transport Infrastructure phasing. Both have been informed by other Workstreams as well as preliminary feasibility studies and workshops. These have investigated delivery issues along several key movement corridors and the feasibility of key Transport Infrastructure such as Park & Ride.

Stage 4

Work has focussed mostly on the refinement of Transport Infrastructure phasing in response to infrastructure costing work by other Workstreams. Some improvement to the land use mix in Sevington has also been achieved. This is anticipated to bolster the business case for SMARTLINK.

With proposals for Walking, Cycling and Public Transport firming up, the key movement corridors have been further refined in tandem with the development of 'Design Codes' detailing the aspirations for the character of each. Further details are as outlined elsewhere in this report.

Transport Modelling

Ashford Area Transport Study (AATS) – the AATS is first stage in developing a strategy for development in Ashford. The aim of AATS is to produce an early vision of future transport in Ashford and a framework for its subsequent development. The study considers all transport modes and land uses in an integrated manner with the following objectives:

- To develop an integrated, multi-modal transport strategy for inclusion in the Local Development Framework (LDF) with an horizon year of 2031.
- To develop transport strategies that support current and future sustainable developments within Ashford.
- To reduce the impact of transport on the environment and promote social inclusion.
- To assist in developing a spatial strategy that minimises car use and the need to travel.

The principal output from AATS is a report titled 'Towards a Transport Strategy'.

Ashford Highway and Traffic Study (AHTS) – the AHTS takes transport trip information from AATS and specifically considers the vehicular element of future trips in Ashford. The study develops a phased highway strategy for Ashford, identifying, analysing and appraising solutions to problems on the trunk road and County Road networks. The objectives of the study are:

- To devise options for the highway network consistent with the strategy work from the AATS.
- To consider the identified highway network needs in terms of deliverability, design, costs and benefits.
- To report on the procedures necessary for implementation of the required highway proposals and to advise on critical path actions necessary for delivery to the required timescale.

The principal output from AHTS is a report titled 'Report of Highway Needs'.

Flood Modelling

The flood modelling strategy for GADF has developed in close collaboration with the Environment Agency drawing on their detailed knowledge of the flood risk in Ashford, their Integrated Water Management Study (IWMS) being undertaken alongside GADF to look at flood risk waste management, water supply and water quality issues, and the requirements set out in PPG25 for development in flood plain areas.

Initial ideas for managing flood risk were identified at the IWMS Blue Sky Workshop in March 2004, and developed further in the IWMS phase 2 report published in April 2004. These included re-provision of flood plain areas, use of SUDS and conveyance improvements to channels.

Impacts from different growth scenarios were considered at the April Workshop and summarised in the GADF stage 2 report. The workshop concluded that some development in flood plain areas was necessary for a sustainable urban expansion of Ashford. This would require an equivalent replacement area ensuring no net loss to the floodplain.

Following meetings with Environmental Agency to review the scope of flood modelling HR Wallingford undertook initial modelling on behalf of English Partnerships to establish the effects of taking land out of the flood plain in the Canal District, and the extent to which increased flood levels would be mitigated by compensation storage.

The results from the modelling assisted with the ongoing development of the growth model. Further flood modelling was undertaken through IWMS looking at the overall impact of GADF option 5, the beneficial effects of using SUDS, channel improvements and the overall impact of climate change.

Following this modelling work the Environment Agency instigated a detailed review of the base flood model and undertook further the flood modelling scenarios for GADF.

The outcome of this process as summarised in the Infrastructure stage 4 report is agreement with the Environment Agency that sufficient flood modelling has been undertaken for GADF, with detailed modelling to be undertaken as part of the Town Centre Development Framework for the Victoria Way corridor and areas south of the CTRL. The strategy for the Canal District has also been agreed whereby flood plain compensation measures would be undertaken ahead of development to take potential development areas out of the flood plain.