

ASHFORD LOCAL PLAN 2030
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Ashford Borough Council

AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT

2016 – 2017

(Published Dec 2017)



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Executive Summary

This Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) has been prepared by Ashford Borough Council's planning policy team, and covers the statistical monitoring period from the **1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017**. It does however, include the most up the date information at time of publishing (Dec 2017) for topics such as neighbourhood planning and Local Plan preparation.

Please note that Chapter 5 - Employment monitoring statistics is not included within the report, and will be published in early 2018.

Key Housing Statistics

This summary covers the monitoring period from the 1st April to the 31st March 2017.

- **A total of 696 net additional dwellings were completed in the Borough in 2016/17.**

This is lower than the number of completions in the previous monitoring year (of 1,022), but is the second highest total completions figure since 2004/05.

- **There were 148 Affordable Housing completions.**
- **504 of the new dwellings were located in the urban area**
- **283 of these dwellings (40%) were built on brownfield land (previously developed land)**

Local Plan 2030 Update

Following the first Regulation 19 consultation in 2016, a series of 'Main Changes' to the document were made which went out for consultation in July 2017. These 'Main Changes' included updated policies in accordance with national guidance updates and new site policies to meet the increased national population projections. The eight week public consultation ended on the 31st August 2017.

The final composite version of the Local Plan 2030 (Submission Version) is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in December 2017. More information is available in chapter 3.

Chapter 2 – Introduction

Introduction

This authority Monitoring Report (AMR) has a number of functions which include:

- Reviewing progress of the council's Local Plans
- Recording Consultation and Duty to Co-operate Events
- Reporting on Neighbourhood Planning
- Providing borough-wide planning statistics on housing, employment, community, environment and transport

The Localism Act 2011 withdrew guidance on local plan monitoring, allowing councils to choose which targets, indicators and information to include in AMR's, as long as they are in line with the relevant UK and EU legislation. However, as Ashford have a number of adopted plans, it is considered appropriate to monitor many of the targets set within them, to measure the effectiveness of the adopted policies currently in place.

The Regulations now state that local planning authorities must publish the information direct to the public at least yearly in the interests of transparency and accountability. It also requires monitoring information to be made available online and in council offices as soon as available to the council, rather than waiting to report annually. To achieve this we separate the AMR into sections and publicise the information on our website as soon as the information is available, once all complete it is collated into a final report. *This combined report is awaiting the data collection from the employment floorspace survey, and therefore is due to be finalised in early 2018. All other sections are complete at publication in Dec 2017.*

Content of this AMR

- Chapter 3: Status and Progress of Local Plan Documents
- Chapter 4: Housing Statistics
- *Chapter 5: Employment Statistics (expected early 2018)*
- Chapter 6: Recreational and Community Facilities
- Chapter 7: Environment and Land Use Statistics
- Chapter 8: Transport Statistics
- Chapter 9: Duty to Co-operate and Public Consultations
- Chapter 10: Neighbourhood Planning Update
- Appendix – Housing Performance Indicators and Statistics

Chapter 3 – Status and Progress of the Local Plan Documents

Status and Progress of Local Plan Documents Local Development Scheme

The council is required to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS) in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The LDS sets out the geographical area and the timescale for the production of the Local Plan and covers the period 2013 to 2017. The proposed timetable and milestones contained within the LDS are reviewed through this report.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The Ashford Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in October 2013. The SCI sets out how the planning department intends to achieve community involvement, public participation and cooperation in all planning matters, including the preparation of local development documents, supplementary planning documents and arrangements for consultation on planning applications.

Current Adopted Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Area Action Plans (AAPs)

The Council currently has a suite of adopted development plan documents (DPDs) and supplementary planning documents (SPDs) that guide future development within the Borough to 2021. The Core Strategy is the principal document and sets out a series of guiding principles and a spatial strategy based around a number of core policies. The main focus of these policies is to achieve sustainable development through a balance of economic, environmental and social considerations. Other DPDs including Area Action Plans sit beneath the Core Strategy (and are in conformity with it) and make site-specific allocations and include topic policies. The current adopted statutory development plans for the Borough are:

- Core Strategy (July 2008)
- Ashford Town Centre AAP (February 2010)
- Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD (October 2010)
- Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD (October 2012)
- Chilmington Green AAP (July 2013)
- Local Plan 2000 (Saved Policies only)

Chapter 3 – Status and Progress of the Local Plan Documents

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) support the DPDs. All matters covered in SPDs must relate to policies or proposals in a DPD or a saved policy from the Borough Local Plan 2000.

SPDs are also a material consideration when determining planning applications and provide more detailed guidance into the interpretation and/or implementation of adopted policies.

The current supplementary planning documents for the Borough are:

- Affordable Housing SPD (February 2009)
- Landscape Character SPD (April 2011)
- Residential Parking SPD (October 2010)
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (April 2012)
- Sustainable Drainage SPD (October 2010)
- Residential Space and Layout SPD (October 2011) *Only external standards apply*
- Public Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD (July 2012)
- Dark Skies SPD (July 2014)
- Stables, Arenas and other horse related development SPD (October 2014)
- Chilmington Green Design Code SPD (2016)

Please note that the council also provides informal design guidance notes with regards to residential layouts, wheeled bins and screening containers.

Policies Map

The Council is required to produce an adopted Policies map in its Local Development Plan, showing the location of proposals in all current adopted Local Plan documents on an ordnance survey base map. It reflects the most up-to-date spatial plan for the Borough and is continually being updated as new policies are adopted.

The Current Policies Map is available to view on the Council's website at:

<http://www.ashford.gov.uk/maps>

Chapter 3 – Status and Progress of the Local Plan Documents

The next section of the report will consider whether the timetable and milestones contained with the Local Development Scheme (LDS) May 2017 for emerging Local Plan documents have been met, or what progress is being made towards them.

Local Plan 2030

The Local Plan to 2030 sets out the land that needs to be provided in order to accommodate new homes and jobs up to 2030, and will replace all the existing DPD and AAP documents within the current local development framework, with the exception of the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan.

Following the first Regulation 19 consultation in 2016, a series of 'Main Changes' to the document were made which went out for consultation in July 2017. These Main Changes included updated policies in accordance with national guidance updates and new site policies to meet the increased national population projections. The eight week public consultation ended on the 31st August 2017.

The final composite version of the Local Plan 2030 (Submission Version) is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in December 2017.

Further details on the progression of the Local Plan to 2030 and evidence base is available at: www.ashford.gov.uk/local-plan

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Due to recent (2017) announcements from National Government relating to the implementation of CIL, the Council has placed further production of this document on hold until these issues are resolved. Production of the CIL Charging Schedule is therefore temporarily removed from the revised LDS 2017 timetable.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD

To enable the Council to re-run a specific 'call for Gypsy & Traveller sites' process, and to ensure an up to date evidence base on the topic of Gypsy and Travellers accommodation, it is now the Council's intention to produce a specific DPD relating to the subject, which will support the Local Plan 2030. The DPD will aim to update the evidence base and identify further sites for allocation. The initial consultation and evidence gathering stages, including an updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and Issues and Options consultation will commence in early 2018, with proposed Adoption planned for early 2019.

Chapter 4 - Housing

Part 1 - Summary Housing Statistics

This part of the document covers the period from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017 and contains information on yearly housing completions and performance against housing policies / indicators

Completions:

Total Net Housing Completions: 696

- Ashford Town Centre and Urban Areas: 504
- Tenterden and Rural Areas: 192

Housing completions on 'windfall' sites: 259

Number of affordable housing completions: 148

Completions on Brownfield Land (PDL): 283 (40%)

Permissions:

New dwellings granted planning permissions (inc outlines): 7,306

Number of affordable houses granted permission: 91

Number of new dwellings given prior approval through permitted development rights: 203

Size of dwelling granted planning permission:

- 1 bed: 392
- 2 bed: 315
- 3 bed: 78
- 4 bed: 71
- 4 bed: 72
- Not known: 715

Number of permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches granted permission: 5

Chapter 4 - Housing

Part 2 - Context of the Ashford Local Plan 2030

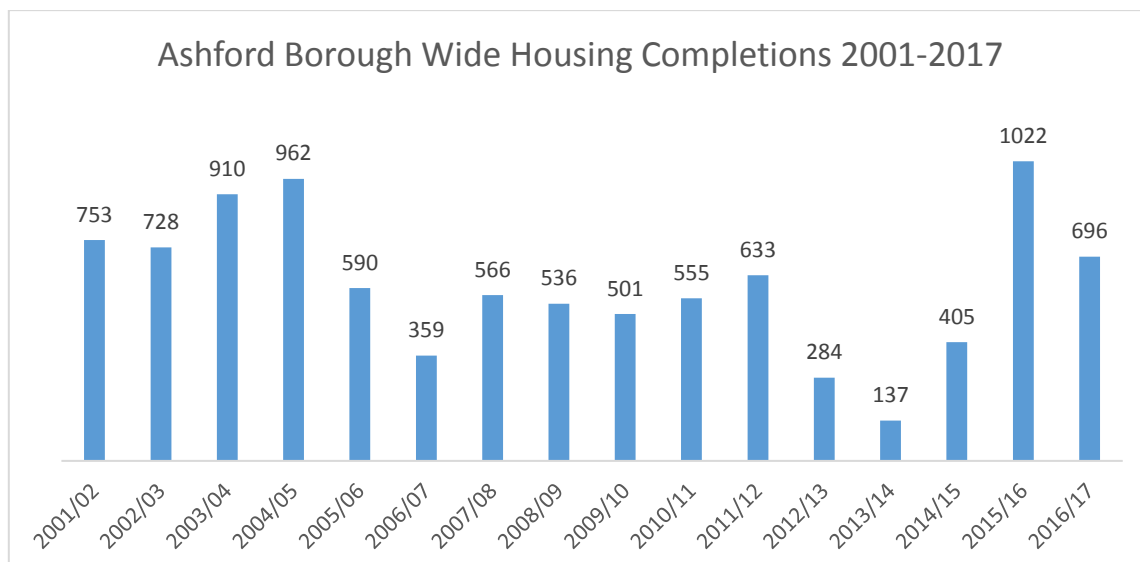
This monitoring report contains data that was collected during the monitoring year, 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. As the Local Plan 2030 is still at the draft stage (Submission) and has not yet been adopted, all of the figures provided in this document have been compared to the requirements of the Ashford Core Strategy (using 2001 as start date), and other relevant DPDs as these are the current adopted development plan.

Part 3 - Housing Completions

Borough Wide Housing Completions

The net number of housing completions across the Borough in the 2016/17 monitoring year was **696**, with 283 units (40%) being built on previously developed land. This is not quite as high as the number of completions in the last monitoring year (1,022), but is the second highest total completions figure since 2004/05. This completion rate can be attributed to the fact that as of 31st March 2016, there were 519 dwellings under construction. Due to the high number of planning applications being submitted and granted in 2017, it is envisaged that housing completions will continue to remain relatively high over the next few years.

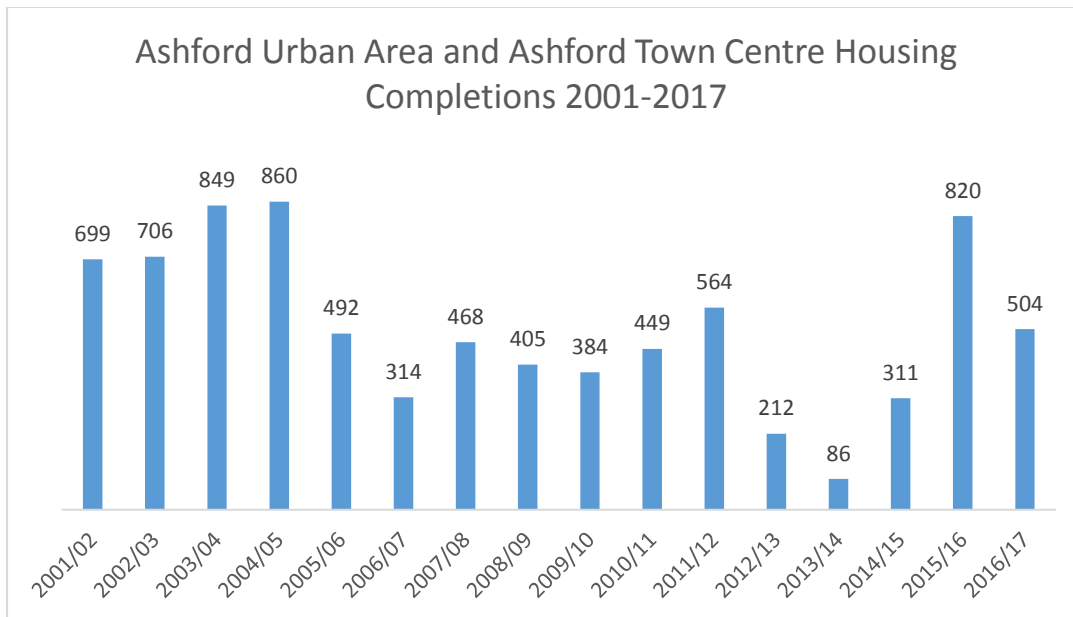
The cumulative total of completions for the period 2001 to 2017 now stands at **9,637** dwellings.



Chapter 4 - Housing

Ashford Urban Area and Ashford Town Centre Housing Completions

The net total number of housing completions in the urban area, including the town centre, this year was **504**. The graph below sets out these completions for the period 2001-2017. As of 31st March 2017, a total of 480 dwellings were under construction in the urban area and town centre.

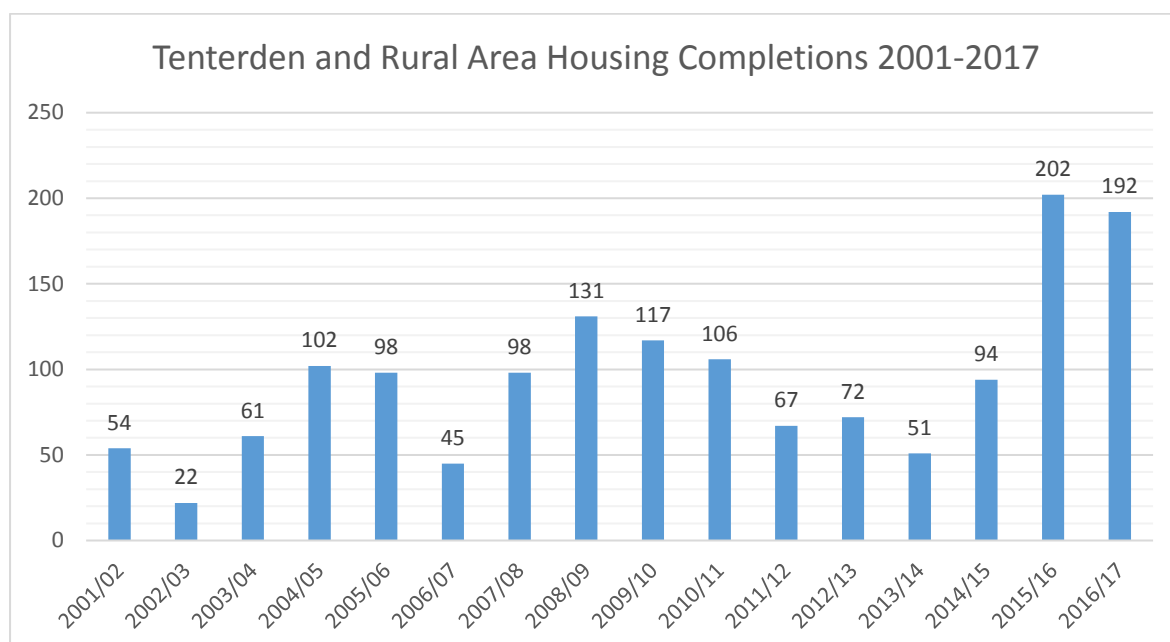


Notable urban area and town centre developments that have contributed to the above completion graph	Completions 2016/17 monitoring year
Park Farm (Bridgefield)	86
Templer and Rowcroft Barracks (Repton Park)	138
Cheeseman's Green (Finberry)	102
(POLICY TC8) Godinton Way	31
Former Phoenix Primary School	14
Trafalgar House, Elwick Road	33
Elwick House, Elwick Road	15

Chapter 4 - Housing

Tenterden and Rural Area Housing Completions

During the 2016/17 monitoring year, there have been **192** completions in the rural area, which brings the cumulative total since 2001 to 1514.



Major development sites (over 10 units) that have contributed to these figures are set out below:

Notable Tenterden and Rural Area developments that have contributed to the above completion graph	Completions 2016/17 monitoring year
(POLICY WYE1) Land north east of Kelston, Churchfield Way, Wye	10
(POLICY CHIL1) Former Chilham Saw Mills, Ashford Road, Chilham	11
(POLICY ALD1) Land abutting Celak Close south east of, Calleywell Lane, Aldington	29
Land part of Aldington Quarry south east and opposite Wellside, Calleywell Lane (Extra Care home)	33
(POLICY CHAR2) Land South West of A20 roundabout, Maidstone Road, Charing	17
Shadoxhurst Garage, Woodchurch Road, Shadoxhurst	16

Chapter 4 - Housing

Windfall Applications

259 dwellings were completed on windfall (not allocated) sites during the monitoring year. Overall, the urban/town centre contribution was 138, whilst windfall completions in the rural area amounted to 121 units.

Permissions Granted

A total of 7,306 dwellings were granted planning permission in 2016/17, of which 6620 were within outline permissions and 686 in full planning permission¹ or reserved matters. This figure of 7306 is predominantly due to the approval of the Chilmington Green outline application (12/00400/AS), which provides permission for the development of 5750 dwellings – subject to agreed reserved matters applications.

In total, the council approved 181 housing applications in the 2016/2017 monitoring year. Some of the major applications can be seen below:

App No	Type of permission	Site	Site Location	Number of units
15/01671/AS	Full/Outline Planning Permission	Former Powergen site, Victoria Road, Ashford, Kent	Town	660
11/00405/AS	Outline Planning Permission	South Kent College, Jemmett Road, Ashford, Kent	Urban	160
12/00400/AS	Outline Planning Permission	Land at Chilmington Green, Ashford Road, Great Chart, Kent	Urban Edge	5750
16/00549/AS	Reserved Matters Permission	Land parcels 19-23 former Rowcroft and Templer Barracks site, Templer Way, Ashford	Urban	105
15/01586/AS	Reserved Matters Permission	Land at Cheeseman's Green, Cheesemans Green Lane, Kingsnorth, Kent	Urban Edge	67
15/01555/AS	Reserved Matters Permission	(POLICY ROLV1) Halden Field, Tenterden Road, Rolvenden, Kent	Rural	40
14/01456/AS	Full Planning Permission	(POLICY U5) Land adjoining 1 Willesborough Court, Blackwall Road South, Willesborough, Kent	Urban	34

¹ Includes residential units allowed through permitted development rights

Chapter 4 - Housing

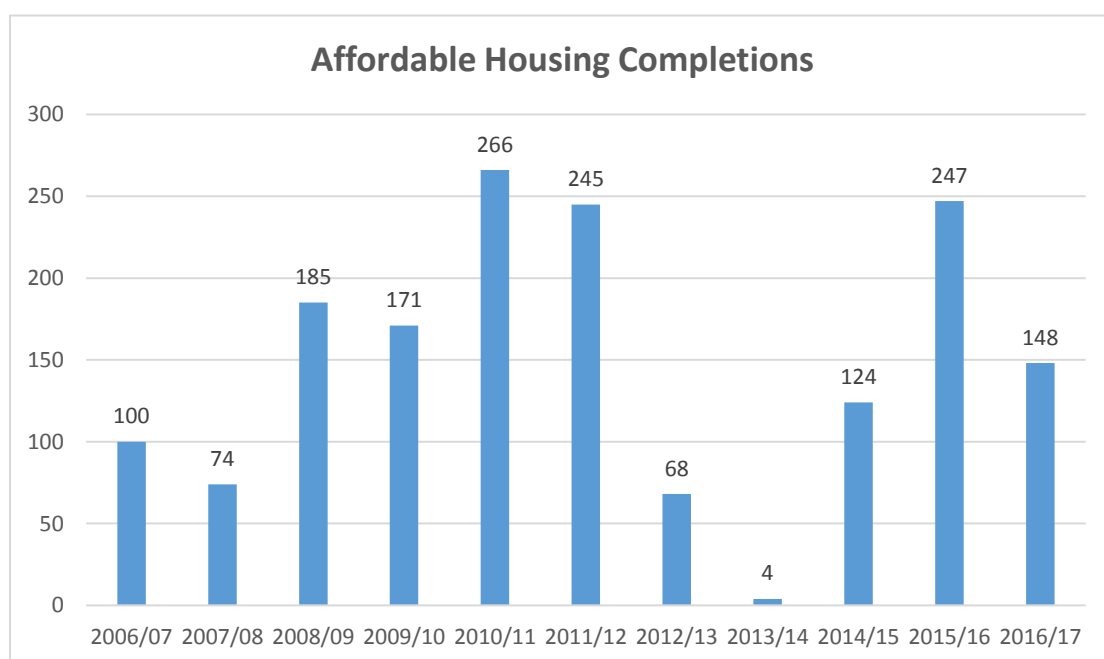
Residential dwellings provided through Permitted Development Rights

In April 2014, the government introduced permitted development rights in England allowing the change of use of certain retail units, office and agricultural buildings to be converted into residential accommodation via a prior approval application made to the Council. Under this scheme **200 residential properties were given prior approval** during the 2016/17 monitoring year.

Part 4 - Affordable Housing

The provision of additional affordable housing is a key priority of the council and is reflected in the Housing Strategy, the Core Strategy and draft Local Plan 2030.

A total of 148 units of new affordable housing have been delivered in the borough for this monitoring year. Of these units, 100 have been for older persons and 11 supported housing. Within the total of 148 units, 167 were for Affordable rent and 80 were shared ownership.



The delivery of new affordable homes in the borough is being made possible from funding secured through the government's Home and Communities Agency's (HCA) 'local authority new build programme'. The initial grant was received in 2009 and since then the council has continued to successfully bid for additional funding. A further 72 new affordable homes are expected to be delivered through this scheme by March 2018 bringing the total to 190.

Chapter 4 - Housing

Although this year's figure is lower than previous, this is in correlation with the overall completions data. Affordable housing provision is likely to stay at a higher level over the coming years as 91 affordable units were granted planning permission during the 2016/7 monitoring year; 18 for social rent, 43 for affordable rent, 0 for intermediate rent and 0 for affordable home ownership. 30 units are yet to be determined.

Local Needs and Specialist Housing in the Rural Area

Local needs housing is aimed at people that have a specific local connection with a parish as defined in paragraph 7.24 of the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD and who cannot afford to rent or buy a house in that area. The council also recognises that some residents within the rural areas may require specialist accommodation to enable them to stay within their community and live a higher-quality life.

Where a need is identified the council will consider the use of exception sites to bring forward carefully planned and designed schemes to meet these local needs. This is set out in Policy 'TRS4 – Exception sites for local needs housing' and 'TRS5 – Exception sites for specialist housing schemes' in the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD and is transferred into the draft Local Plan 2030 as policy HOU2.

During the 2016/17 monitoring year there were **12 local needs homes (exception site) under construction** which is land rear of 12 to 16 Jubilee Field, Wittersham for 4 dwellings and 8 dwellings at land north of Bower Farm in Mersham.

In addition to Local Needs housing provided through exception sites, there is also a local lettings plan to help provide affordable homes for local people. A local lettings plan is an agreement between ABC and the Housing Association which sets out preferences on who the properties will be let to. Generally, priority will be given to people with a local connection and a housing need to 100% of the first lets and thereafter 50% of relets. This differs from Local Needs exception sites where the local connection always takes priority and the definition of what constitutes a local connection is included within the s106.

The following affordable properties were subject to a Local Lettings plan during the 2016/17 monitoring year:

- 15/00436/AS- Erection of 4 no affordable dwellings including associated parking, refuse stores and external sheds.
- 15/0029/AS- Erection of affordable local needs for 2 no. 1 bed flats, 2 no. 2 bed flats, 3 no. 2 bed dwellings and 1 no. 3 bed dwellings with associated road and hardstanding

Chapter 4 - Housing

Gypsy and Travellers

During the 2016/17 monitoring year 5 permanent pitches and temporary pitches were granted planning permission.

In August 2015, the Government published the new planning policy for traveller sites (PPTS), which supports the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and sets out the national policy requirements with respect to Gypsy and Traveller provision. The 2015 PPTS replaced the 2012 PPTS, at the same time redefining the definition of who qualifies as a 'traveller'. Under the new definition travellers who have ceased to travel are now excluded.

Providing for Gypsies and Travellers in the draft Local Plan 2030

The draft Ashford Local Plan 2030, published in June 2016, sets out the Council's proposed approach to delivering pitches in the borough over the plan period. Due to the change in definition of gypsies and travellers the GTAA evidence base has been re-interrogated to provide an Objectively Assessed Pitch Need (OAPN) for the Local Plan period, 54 pitches by 2030.

The draft Local Plan proposes to meet the above need by allocating 2 sites in the borough, providing 4 pitches and delivering the rest through a windfall policy. There will also be a traveller site retention policy to ensure that existing sites are not lost to other uses and remain available to future generations of travellers. In addition there will be a separate Gypsy and Traveller DPD (see Chapter 3).

<i>Applications granted during the 2016/17 monitoring year</i>	No of pitches granted	Decision date	Granted on Appeal
<i>16/01232/AS - Three Oak Drive, Nickley Wood Road, Shadoxhurst, Ashford, Kent</i>	2	04/11/2016	No
<i>16/00493/AS- Caravan at, Holly Bush Farm, Warehorne Road, Kenardington, Ashford, Kent</i>	2	13/06/2016	No
<i>15/00863 CloverBank Stables</i>	1	12/09/2016	Yes

Chapter 4 - Housing

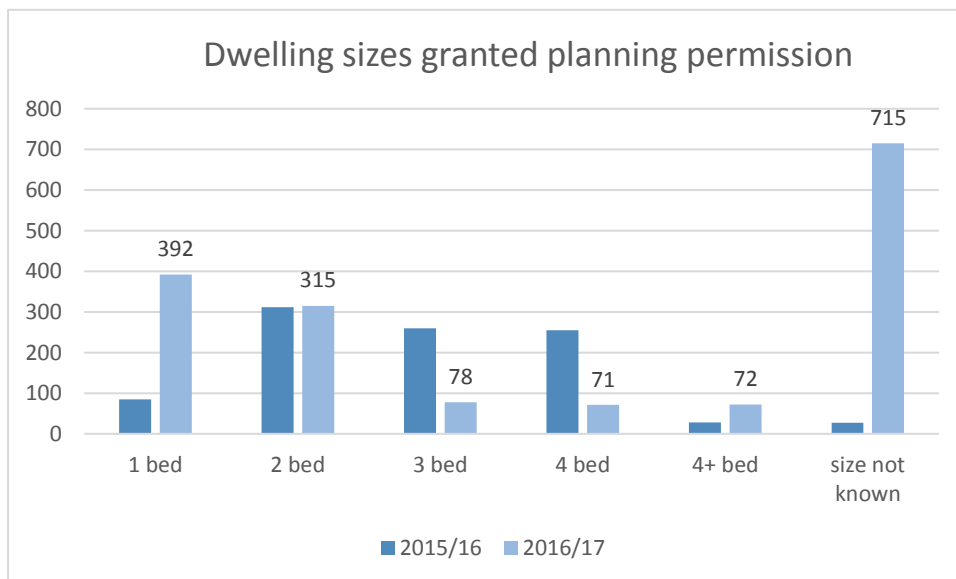
Part 5 - Design of new housing

Providing a range of Dwelling Types and Sizes

Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy aims to respond to identified local housing need for a reasonable mix of house size and type within the Borough. A performance indicator is used to monitor 'the number and location of planning permissions granted for dwelling sizes: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 4+ bedrooms'. A similar policy has been transferred across to the draft Local Plan as policy HOU18.

696 dwellings were granted planning permission during the 2016/17 monitoring year. The table below provides an indication as to the size of dwelling granted planning permission during the monitoring year and the table below information on the size of dwelling granted permission by Ward.

Overall it can be seen that a range of house sizes are being permitted across the borough. This year has seen an increase in the number of 1 bedroom properties, which is in contrast to last years' permissions which showed more three bedroom properties (see table below). However, there is generally a similar percentage split between different property sizes since last year. It should be noted that there are a high number of dwellings this year that it is 'not known' how many bedrooms they have, these are all dwellings that have gained permission under the permitted development rights/prior approval where details so not need to be provided to the council. This data also excludes the dwellings at the land at Chilmington Green of 5,750 dwellings.



Chapter 4 - Housing

Ward	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	>4 Bed	Size not known	Sum of Dwellings
Ashford		2			1	2	5
Aylesford Green		3				0	3
Beaver		2				154	156
Biddenden	2	1	1	4	1	8	17
Boughton Aluph & Eastwell			1	1		0	2
Charing					1	11	12
Downs North		1	1	1		0	3
Downs West		3	2	12	11	0	28
Godinton	4	2	1			129	136
Great Chart					1	2	3
Isle of Oxney			8	4	5	2	19
Kennington	2	3				0	5
Norman	3		1			0	4
North Willesborough		2	12	21		68	103
Rolvenden & Tenterden West	23	25	19	14		0	81
St Michaels		1	2		2	0	5
Saxon Shore		5	4	2	2	15	28
Tenterden North		7				10	17
Tenterden South			2			0	2
Victoria	258	212	7			161	638
Weald Central		3	3	3	4	58	98
Weald East		1	3	3		67	74
Weald North		3	3	6		2	14
Weald South	1	6	5		13	8	87
Wye with Hinxhill		6			1	0	7
TOTALS:	392	315	78	71	72	715	696

Table showing permissions by ward and bedroom numbers in 2016/17

Density

Quality place-making and design is a key priority for Ashford Borough Council and this is reflected in policy CS9 of the adopted Core Strategy.

The density targets contained within the Core Strategy were set by government legislation, which was in place at that time. The overall aim was for the majority of sites delivering 10 dwellings or more, to be in the density range of 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare (dph), with a small amount above 50dph, which would most likely occur in town centres.

Since the Core Strategy was adopted in 2008, the council has introduced further additional requirements for new developments to meet. These new standards which are contained within the Residential Space and Layout SPD and the Residential Parking and Design Guidance SPD have influenced the overall site densities and impacted on the density figures that were anticipated in 2008.

The figures for 2016/17, show that of the major sites (of 10 units or more), a total of 414 of the 542 dwellings were completed at a density of 30-50dph, the remainder were all completed at less than 30dph.

Part 6 - Monitoring of performance indicators

In accordance with section 16 of the Core Strategy effective monitoring is an essential component in achieving sustainable development and sustainable communities. Monitoring provides crucial information to establish what is happening now and whether policies are working or need amending in the future. Set out in Appendix 1 is the full list of performance indicators for housing monitored against the data collected for 2016/17 year, many of which have been summarised in this chapter.

Please note Chapter 5 – Employment, is expected to be published in early 2018

Chapter 6 - Recreational and Community Facilities

An important part of creating sustainable developments, is the planning and delivery of cultural and community infrastructure that meets the needs of the local population. The council, through adopted Core Strategy Policy CS18: Meeting the Community's Needs, sets out the requirement for infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs generated by new development, including public open space, recreation, sports, children's play, leisure, cultural, education, youth, health, public service and community facilities.

Section 106 Agreements

Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as s106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. They are focused on site specific mitigation of the impact of development. S106 agreements are often referred to as 'developer contributions'.

A report has been produced on Section 106 activity for the period 1st April 2016 to the 31st March 2017 in Ashford. The primary purpose of the report is to show transparently how contributions are being collected and applied in a proper way and that the monitoring of section 106 contributions remains a very important resource stream. It includes details of new contributions negotiated, an accounts update and details of funds received from existing agreements.

This report was prepared for the Cabinet Meeting which took place on the 15th June 2017 and is item 8 from the following list available to view at:

<https://secure.ashford.gov.uk/committeesystem/SearchDocuments.aspx>

Chapter 6 - Recreational and Community Facilities

Recreation, Sport and Play

Undertaking recreational, sport and play activities form an important role in the quality of our lives and wellbeing. As Ashford continues to grow, a need for the provision of new facilities is required, along with the need to upgrade any existing provision. New housing developments also have a requirement to provide open space and leisure facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

Ashford Borough Council is committed to providing local communities with high quality and accessible play spaces, and we continually seek to secure additional funding to maintain and strengthen the local play offer. The following provides a brief overview of schemes that have been, or are in the process of being delivered:

Kestrel Park

As reported in the previous year's monitoring report a new park has been created, working alongside the Conservation Volunteers (TCV), local parish council and ward members to ensure support and long-term management. The park is now completed and opened in June 2017.

Repton Park Community Facility

As a result of local housing development, Section 106 funding became available to create new community facilities for Repton Park. In line with Ashford Borough Council's commitment to improving community and youth facilities across the Borough, this Section 106 money has been used to fund the upcoming Repton Connect Community Centre. This brand new community space will include a new building, a multi-use games area, and be able to host clubs, educational courses, cooking workshops, social events and much more.

Building work on Repton Connect began on Saturday 24th September 2016, with a special ceremony and community picnic taking place to mark the commencement of the works.



Chapter 6 - Recreational and Community Facilities

Park Farm Community Park

Creation of a community park and play area including a community orchard and nature conservation area. The proposed development is to be constructed in a two phased approach with the nature conservation area being proposed as part of phase two. The play area is to cater for all age groups, to provide a play experience that is different yet complimentary to what is in the local area. The concept of the play area and designed equipment promotes the three themes of the Iron Age, Nature and Water. The play area will include amongst other play equipment a bespoke tower with two zip wires, trampolines, swings, carved farm animals and small and full size play tractor. The scheme was by planning committee and preliminary and archaeological works have begun on site.



Kingsnorth MUGA

Another project fully funded by Section 106 contributions was the creation of a new Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) for the residents at Kingsnorth.



Chapter 7 – Environment and Land Use

Biodiversity

In the Ashford Borough, there are a number of designated areas for their landscape or ecology value:

- Two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – Kent Downs and High Weald
- Three National Nature Reserves (NNR) - Hamstreet Woods, Wye Downs and Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay
- 13 units for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- 5 Special Landscape Areas (SLA) - North Downs, High Weald, Greensand Ridge, Low Weald, Old Romney
- 68 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) of County-wide importance
- Two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) - Wye and Crundale Downs and Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay

Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay EU designation

On the 30th March 2016, the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI, NNR and SAC was also registered as a Ramsar Special Protection Area, an international designation that provides protection for wetlands and their resources. Due to coastal processes, the area has become a valuable diverse coastal landscape, comprising of a vast variety of habitats including mud flats, reedbeds, grazing marshes, shingle beaches, freshwater pits and saline lagoons to name but a few. With over 34,000 individual waterbirds using the site in the non-breeding season, the site is incredibly important to a number of different species, particularly birds such as the Ruff, Aquatic Warbler, Mediterranean Gull and Bewick's Swan.

The Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar site lies immediately to the south west of Hamstreet and immediately to the north east of Appledore along the Royal Military Canal. Wittersham lies to the north west of the site. All applications for development of this site should therefore include an Environmental Impact Assessment Study, demonstrating how the proposals will effect upon the integrity of the biodiversity of this designated wildlife area.

SSSI

An assessment of the condition of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) units is available on the Natural England website:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>.

The latest information (21 January 2017), shows there are 186 units within the Ashford Borough. Designations are not contained within borough boundaries and

Chapter 7 – Environment and Land Use

therefore if a small area of SSSI crosses into Ashford from another borough, it will form part of the Ashford unit for monitoring purposes.

The SSSI unit conditions classified within the borough shows the following results:

- Favourable: 113 sites (61%)
- Unfavourable: 0
- Unfavourable/Declining: 5 sites (3%)
- Unfavourable/No Change: 2 site (1%)
- Unfavourable/Recovering: 66 sites (35%)

Compared to last year, there are no additional favourable sites in the borough. The figures for unfavourable/no change and unfavourable/declining are effectively the same but there is more unfavourable/recovering sites in the borough but as an overall percentage the unfavourable sites have decreased by 10%.

Water

South East Water: Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) covers the period 2015 to 2040 and was approved by DEFRA in June 2014. It forecasts that the total household per capita consumption of their supply area will reduce from 173.1 l/hd/d in 2012 down to 148.7 l/hd/d by 2040.

Ashford Borough Council has been working closely with South East Water (SEW) to establish a baseline for water consumption for the Ashford Borough which can be used in future to assess the outcomes of policy to reduce water use.

The SEW average measured household pcc² for 2013/14 was 147.28 l/hd/d. Across the Ashford Borough the average measured household pcc for the same time period was 130 l/hd/d. It can be seen that consumption in the Ashford Borough is slightly lower than the SEW average which is anticipated to be due to the higher proportion of new homes and development in Ashford.

Policy CS10 requires new dwellings on major sites to be built to Code for Sustainable Homes standards. On sites required to meet Code level 3 and 4 they must be designed to use no more than 105 litres per person day of potable water. It can be seen that new dwellings are helping to contribute to the efficient use of water.

Policy CS20 of the adopted Core Strategy requires that all development should include appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) for surface water management, in order to avoid any increase in flood risk or adverse impact on water

² the amount of water typically used by one person per day.

Chapter 7 – Environment and Land Use

quality. This policy is supported by the Sustainable Drainage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

This SPD sets out how developers can meet the requirement of Policy CS20 and provides guidance on the provision of sustainable drainage systems for the disposal of surface water and rainwater, so that it is retained either on-site or within the immediate area.

Flooding

In 2016/17, no planning permissions were granted against the advice of the Environment Agency on flood defence or water quality grounds.

Land Use

One of the guiding principles contained within Policy CS1 of the current adopted Core Strategy is:

'The best use of previously developed land and buildings to help regenerate urban areas and the carefully phased release of green field land to make best use of a finite resource'.

Of the 696 housing completions for 2016/2017, 283 dwellings were completed on previously developed land (PDL) which equates to around 40%. This is lower than the previous year's figure of 58.5%, but is expected as many of the vacant brownfield sites around the urban area have been developed or due to commence shortly.

However, in 2016/17, out of the 19 major housing applications granted in the monitoring year, a large development granted on PDL was the Former Powergen site, Victoria Road (Town Centre) into the erection of 400 dwellings, a retail kiosk/café unit (Use class A1/A3) and associated parking, public surface car park, plant and storage, together with landscaping and access works.

Chapter 8 – Transport

Transport

Policy CS15 of the adopted Core Strategy is seeking to promote public transport and other non-car based modes of travel. Ashford already benefits from a strong road network that provides excellent links to the UK and the continent. As Ashford grows, it is important the town's transport infrastructure can cope with the increased traffic.

During 2017, Kent County Council prepared a now adopted **Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without gridlock 2016-2031**. The Plan highlights KCC's priority schemes that are nationally important, such as a solution to Operation Stack, as well as priority local schemes within Ashford borough such as enhanced Station access, a cycling strategy and bus improvements. Investment in infrastructure is vital to boost the economy and support a growing population.

Major highways development progress

M20 Junction 10a

Highways England are proposing a new motorway junction (Junction 10a) and new access road from the A2070 which was submitted to the Secretary of State (SoS) on 01 September 2017. A decision on the project was received from the SoS in December 2017, which granted the development consent order (DCO). Work is expected to be completed in May 2020.

More information on this development can be found on the Highways England Website.

A28 Chart Road, Ashford

Kent County Council is promoting the improvement of the A28 Chart Road between the Tank and Matalan roundabouts. This follows the award of £10.23 million from Government Local Growth Funding. Work on improving traffic flow by providing a two lane dual carriageway is due to commence in 2018. Further information is available on the KCC website.

Chapter 8 – Transport

Walking and Cycling

With many new housing and business developments within about 2 miles of the town centre, we need to ensure that cycling and walking is promoted. The aim is to provide a high quality network of routes that will encourage people to cycle or walk to their place of work, school, college and into the town centre. Reducing the need to travel by car is key, to ensure the sustainable growth of Ashford and will help to reduce congestion and pollution in the area. Alternative means of travel such as cycling or walking, offer a pleasant recreational activity and considerable health benefits.

The current Ashford Cycling Strategy focuses on the need to encourage people to cycle to work instead of using cars, and thus help to reduce congestion and pollution in the area and promote regular exercise. The targets in the strategy include:

- Increase the amount of people cycling to work to 15% by 2015
- Plan and construct a comprehensive cycle network in Ashford
- Integrate the Cycling Strategy with Ashford's Public Transport Services
- Help local schools increase the numbers of pupils, staff and parents switch to cycling to travel to and from school
- Ensure all future cycling/shared routes also serve local schools where possible
- Promote the health benefits of cycling (such as active commuting) via projects with local businesses and schools
- Promote an annual cycling event for all abilities and ages

Ashford is continuing to make progress towards providing a comprehensive network of cycle routes. As the town continues to grow there is opportunity to create better and more attractive cycle routes, with greater access to green spaces and open countryside. At present, cycle trips are monitored by five automated cycle counters positioned at different sites across the town. They count the number of bikes going over them but are very susceptible to breakdown. KCC Highways and Transportation provide information on the number of people that use the relevant monitored cycle paths, but unfortunately due to anomalies with data, figures are not available for this monitoring year.

As there are no cycling/walking figures available for 2017, ABC are unable ascertain whether the number of people cycling or walking has increased in 2016/17.

Chapter 9 – Duty to Co-operate and Public Consultations

Duty to Co-operate

Local Councils are expected to address strategic issues relevant to their areas through the “Duty to Co-operate” which is set out in the Localism Act (2011) and described in the National Planning Policy Statement (NPPF) March 2012.

Section 110 of the Localism Act sets out the guidance for the new Duty to Co-operate:

- Relates to sustainable development or use of land that would have a significant impact on at least two local planning areas or on a planning matter that falls within the remit of a county council;
- Requires that councils set out planning policies to address such issues
- Requires that council’s and public bodies engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis to develop strategic policies; and,
- Requires councils to consider joint approaches to plan making

Paragraph 156 of the NPPF sets out the strategic issues where co-operation might be appropriate. Paragraphs 178-181 provides guidance on “planning strategically across local boundaries”, and highlights the importance of joint working on areas of common interest. The emphasis is on working collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across boundaries are properly co-ordinated.

Evidence will be required to demonstrate having successfully cooperated on issues with cross boundary impacts.

The duty to co-operate also covers a number of public bodies in addition to councils. These bodies are required to co-operate with Councils on issues of common concern to develop sound local plan. These bodies are currently identified in the Local Planning Regulations as:

- Environment Agency
- Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (known as Historic England)
- Natural England
- Mayor of London
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Home and Communities Agency
- Each clinical commissioning group established under section 14D of the National Health Service Act 2006
- Office of Rail Regulation
- The National Health Service Commissioning Board
- Transport for London

Chapter 9 – Duty to Co-operate and Public Consultations

- Office of Rail Regulation
- Integrated Transport Authorities
- Highways Authorities
- Marine Management Organisation
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Local Nature Partnership

Section 34 (6) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires that where a local planning authority have co-operated with another local planning authority, county council, or a body or person prescribed under section 33A of the Act, the local planning authority's monitoring report (AMR) must give details of what action they have taken during the period covered by the report.

The duty to co-operate is a legal requirement of the plan preparation process and in order for the plan to be examined by the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) councils need to demonstrate that the Duty has been undertaken appropriately.

This report sets out the actions that have taken place during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

The Council has always adopted good practice in terms of consultation with other adjoining local authorities, including Kent County Council and other partners, on planning policy matters which continues today.

Discussions have been ongoing throughout the year with meetings held with officers from the following neighbouring authorities:

The East Kent group of authorities – Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet - continued to meet in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding that was agreed by the Council in April 2014. There was a meeting of the authorities in August 2016 and in February 2017.

Topics of discussion included emerging Local Plans and examinations, Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and other evidence base.

The Council continued to work with Maidstone BC and Tonbridge and Malling BC on the joint SHMA including appropriate up-date reports

Chapter 9 – Duty to Co-operate and Public Consultations

In terms of specific Duty to Co-operate requirements that Council agreed a Statement of Common Ground with Maidstone BC in September 2016 prior to the public examination of the Maidstone Local Plan.

A requirement of the duty to co-operate is the need for local planning authorities, county councils and other public organisations to engage with one another and consider joint approaches to plan making. In this respect, Ashford Borough Council undertook a joint SHMA with Maidstone Council and Tonbridge and Malling Council, with the need to address areas of cross boundary policy issues.

The council also continues to attend the Kent Planning Officer Group (KPOG) and Kent Planning Policy Forum (KPPF) meetings, which brings together planning officers from across Kent to discuss key issues and to share and encourage best practice.

A full Duty to cooperate Statement for the production of the Local Plan 2030 will be available as a background document from December 2017.

Public Consultation

Community involvement is an important part of preparing Local Plans. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the council intends to achieve continuous community involvement in the preparation of local plan documents in their area as well as involve the public on consultation on planning applications.

The aim of the SCI is to ensure that all sections of the public and community, including local groups and organisations, are actively represented and involved throughout the process of preparing any Local Plan Documents. The consultation events carried out between the 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017 followed the guidance set out in the council's SCI 2013 are detailed below.

Local Plan 2030 Consultation events 2016/2017

Ashford Borough Council are preparing a new Local Plan to 2030. It is being prepared with the aim of ensuring that future development within Ashford is well planned and managed effectively whilst having a positive impact on local communities, the economy and the environment. The new Local Plan will provide a consistent approach to planning into the future across the whole of the borough. Once adopted, the Local Plan 2030 will form the statutory development plan. A draft of the Plan was formally published and made available for consultation during the summer of 2016.

Chapter 9 – Duty to Co-operate and Public Consultations

This section sets out the main consultation/community engagement events that have taken place during the exhibition of the Regulation 19 (Publication Version) of the Local Plan.

As per the requirements of Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the local planning authority must make a copy of each of the proposed submission documents and a statement of the representations procedure available in accordance with regulation 35, and ensure that a statement of the representations procedure and a statement of the fact that the proposed submission documents are available for inspection and of the places and times at which they can be inspected, is sent to each of the general consultation bodies and each of the specific consultation bodies invited to make representations under regulation 18(1).

The Regulation 19 consultation took place between 15 June 2016 and 5pm on 10 August 2016, for an eight week period.

Drawing on its own database of groups who have expressed an interest in the evolving Local Plan in the past (including those consulted during the Regulation 18 stage) and its obligation to identify specific and general consultation bodies, the Council notified statutory bodies, parish and town councils within the borough, and adjoining local authority areas, statutory undertakers and a range of social and environmental groups, industry and trade bodies in addition to local residents.

During the eight-week period the following documents were made available for public consultation at the 5 public deposit points and the documents were also made available for viewing online on the Council's website.

The whole suite of formal documentation was uploaded to memory sticks, with one sent to each statutory consultation body, each specific consultation body (as outlined in the SCI), each Parish Council and Community Forum, and each Ward Member. A formal advert advertising the consultation was placed in the Kentish Express (Ashford and District) on Thursday 16th June 2016.

A number of public exhibitions were also held across the borough. At these events, which were well-advertised through multiple means in advance (as outlined in other sections of this statement), poster displays guided attendees through the process of production of the Local Plan and CIL schedule, and presented site allocations, capacities and policy text in a logical way. Each session was tailored to some extent to give primacy to development proposals in the immediate vicinity of the venue.

Chapter 9 – Duty to Co-operate and Public Consultations

A number of Planning Policy officers (never fewer than three) circulated at each session to answer questions, provide clarity and talk through the Local Plan process. The exhibitions were held at:

Sandyacres Centre, Ashford	Tues 21/06/2016	15:30- 19:30
Kingsnorth School	Tues 28/06/2016	16:30 - 20:30
Hamstreet Village Hall	Weds 29/06/2016	15:00 - 18:45
Park Mall, Ashford	Weds 06/07/2016	12.00 - 16.00
Ashford Market at Orbital Park	Fri 08/07/2016	15:30 - 20:00
Charing Village Hall	Tues 12/07/2016	15:30 - 19:30
Julie Rose Stadium, Kennington	Thurs 14/07/2016	15:30 - 20:00
Tenterden Leisure centre	Mon 18/07/2016	16:00 - 19:30
Smeeth Village Hall	Fri 22/07/2016	15:30 - 19:00
Biddenden Village Hall	Tues 26/07/2016	15:30 - 19:00
Egerton Village Hall	Wed 27/07/2016	15:30- 19:00

A number of additional media promotion activity was undertaken by the council to better disseminate the information and engage communities. They were targeted through news releases and adverts such as Kentish Express and Kent Online. Further advertising was carried out through posters and A5 leaflets placed in a variety of locations around Ashford Borough. There was also promotion on the Ashford Borough Website and other forms of social media.

Further public consultation on the Local Plan and 'Main Changes' to the Regulation 19 version has been undertaken during 2017, and will be reported in the 2017/18 AMR.

Chapter 10 - Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Plans consultations

Adoption of Neighbourhood Plan

Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan (consultation: 8 September 2016- 24th October 2016). Following a positive referendum result, Ashford Borough Council has adopted the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan 2016-30 as part of Ashford Borough Council's Development Plan in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

New Designations

Egerton Neighbourhood Plan: On 30 March 2017 Ashford Borough Council received an application from Egerton Parish Council for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area. The area requested to be designated is the entire Parish of Egerton. The application and map of the area was open for public consultation for 6 weeks from Monday 24 March to Monday 5 May 2017. On 13th July, ABC approved the designation of the Egerton Neighbourhood Area.

Appendix 1- Housing Statistics

Set out below is the list of performance indicators for housing monitored against the data collected for 2016/17 year.

1. Borough Wide Completions

Core Strategy Indicator

Net additional dwellings for the plan period and reporting year

Target - 21,850 additional dwellings for the period 2001-2021

Actual – 2001-2017: 9,637 dwellings (2016/17: 696 dwellings)

2. Urban Area Completions (including Town centre)

Core Strategy Indicator

Net additional dwellings completed per annum within the Ashford urban area (including Town Centre)

Target: 6,250 net dwellings for the period 2006 - 2021

Actual: 2006–2017: 4,517 (2016/17: 504 dwellings)

3. Number of net and annual additional dwellings completed within the Ashford Urban Area up to 2017(excluding Town Centre)

Core Strategy and Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD Indicator

Target: Core Strategy: 1,782 dwellings to 2017

Target: Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD Housing Trajectory:

Monitoring Year	Target dwellings:	Actual dwellings:
2012/13	387	211
2013/14	461	73
2014/15	510	280
2015/16	514	586
2016/17	440	420
TOTALS:	2,312	1,570

4. Rural Windfall Sites Completions

Core Strategy and Tenterden and Rural Sites Indicator

Net additional dwellings completed per annum within rural windfall sites (not including countryside)

Target:

2006 to 2016 = no allocation

2016 to 2021 = 35 dwellings per annum

Actual:

2009/10: 89 dwellings	2013/14: 40 dwellings
2010/11: 81 dwellings	2014/15: 75 dwellings
2011/12: 54 dwellings	2015/16: 25 dwellings
2012/13: 63 dwellings	2016/17: 121 dwellings

Appendix 1- Housing Statistics

5. Countryside dwelling completions

Core Strategy and Tenterden and Rural Sites Indicator

Net additional dwellings completed per annum on windfall sites within the countryside

Target: To minimise development in the countryside

Actual:

2009/10: 12 dwellings

2010/11: 17 dwellings

2011/12: 7 dwellings

2012/13: 4 dwellings

2013/14: 6 dwellings

2014/15: 5 dwellings

2015/16: 20 dwellings

2016/17: Data not available for 2016/17 due to national 'countryside' definition change to 'isolated'.

6. Allocated Rural Sites Completions

Core Strategy Indicator

Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD - Net additional dwellings completed per annum within allocated rural sites

Target - 865 additional dwellings for the period 2008 – 2021

Phasing: 2008 - 2016 = 74 dwellings per annum, 2017 - 2021 = 54 dwellings per annum

2008/09: 2

2009/10: 16

2010/11: 8

2011/12: 8

2012/13: 5

2013/14: 5

2014/15: 14

2015/16: 151

2016/17: 71

7. Gypsies and Travellers

Core Strategy Indicator

Net additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches delivered- Transit and Permanent

Target – The GTAA set a pitch target of 57 permanent pitches between 2013 and 2028.

The draft Local Plan revised this figure to 54 pitches for the same time period, due to the change in traveller definition.

Actual – 2016/17: 5 Pitches

8. Affordable Housing completions – Borough Wide

Core Strategy Indicator

Gross affordable housing completions

Target – 1,400 additional affordable dwellings for the period 2006 - 2011

Actual – 2006-2017 Total of 1,552 dwellings **(2016/17: 148 dwellings)**

Appendix 1 - Housing Statistics

9. Affordable Housing completions – Rural Area

Core Strategy and Tenterden and Rural Sites Indicator

Rural- Gross affordable housing completions within the rural area/ amount of Local Needs completions provided within the rural area/ Amount of dwellings completed on exception sites for specialist housing schemes

Target – No rural target

Actual – 2009/10: 30 dwellings (all local needs)

2010/11: 35 dwellings (all local needs)

2011/12: 37 dwellings (12 local needs)

2013/14: 0 dwellings 2012/13: 0 dwellings

2014/15: 22 dwellings (5 local needs)

2015/16: 57 dwellings (12 Local Needs, 45 Local Lettings Plan)

2016/2017: See Chapter 4 (12 Local Needs on rural exception site)

10. Affordable Housing granted permission

Core Strategy Indicator

% of planning permissions granted on all qualifying sites providing 30% of affordable housing in the Ashford growth area and 35% in the rest of the borough

Target – 100%

Actual – 2016/17: **See Chapter 4**

11. Density

Core Strategy Indicator

% of new dwellings on sites of 10 or more completed at:

i) less than 30 dwellings per hectare

ii) between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare

iii) above 50 dwellings per hectare

Target – % of new dwellings completed for the period 2006-2021:

i) 0%;

ii) 88%;

iii) 12%

Actual – **2016/17:**

i) 24%

ii) 76%

iii) 0%

12. Design Quality

Core Strategy Indicator

Success of Design Quality policy at appeal (Policy CS9)

Target – 100%

Actual – **2016/17: Data not available for this monitoring year**

13. Space Standards

Core Strategy Indicator

Number of new residential properties granted planning permission per year, which either do or do not comply with Residential Space and Layout SPD

Target – People are content with the standard of their home and its ability to adapt to their lifestyle **Actual** – **2016/17: Data not available for this monitoring year.**

