Ashford Borough Council

Ashford Local Plan 2044

Gateway 1: Self-assessment summary

October 2026



How we got ready to prepare a new local plan

We started preparing a new local plan for Ashford Borough on the 30 October 2026.

Government policy says we should adopt the new plan within 30 months of this date. This is to help ensure we have an up-to-date local plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities.

This page explains what we did to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe. It also has links to further information and where you can get updates.

Read about how we are preparing our new Local Plan to guide growth and change across the borough, at: https://www.ashford.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan.

We published a timetable for preparing the plan

The timetable shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing a plan. It helps us check if and how we can adopt the plan within the 30-month timeframe. We'll keep this updated as we make more progress.

The timetable has been updated at the same time that this self-assessment is published. This is to enable more time to take into consideration the implications of the August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework, to assess the additional site submissions made during the recent scoping consultation and also to avoid key stages taking place during the pre-election sensitivity period in advance of the Local Elections in May 2027.

We think that this adjustment, which is within the 30 month period for preparing the Local Plan, will ensure that the plan will be suitably advanced for passing Gateways 2 and 3.

View the local plan timetable, at: https://www.ashford.gov.uk/lp-timetable.

We established project management and governance arrangements

Preparing a local plan is a complex process. It involves many people across the council and from other organisations. Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us monitor our progress and keep the work on track. It also helps us anticipate and manage any risks to us adopting the plan within 30 months.

The Council's Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group (LP&PPTG) comprised of locally elected members and chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing Delivery & Communication meet regularly approximately every 6 weeks to consider progress on the Local Plan and provide a steer for officers.

Local Plans prepared in Ashford are usually accompanied by a Planning Implementation Document (PID) and this has recently been reviewed and updated by the Project Management Group.

The minutes of the LP&PPTG are regularly reported to and agreed by the Cabinet.



View the LP&PPTG minutes regularly reported to Cabinet, at: https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=

We planned how we'll consult on the plan

Public consultation is essential for the local plan to represent the needs of our communities. It must be easy for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops. By planning this early, we can ensure people are aware in advance and can get involved from the start.

We began scoping the content of the plan

Scoping includes considering how well the existing plan is working and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions. Starting this early means we can begin preparing the new plan with a clear vision, making it quicker and easier to consult on the plan and make decisions about it.

We have undertaken a scoping consultation to get people's views on what the plan could contain and how we propose to consult on the plan at key stages.

The scoping consultation must be held prior to Gateway 1 and should last a minimum of three weeks. A three-week scoping consultation was held from 9am on the 2 September until 5pm on the 23 September 2026.

The scoping consultation sought the views of local residents, organisations, stakeholders, and infrastructure providers on the following:

- The main issues facing the borough;
- What the Local Plan should include, and;
- How residents and stakeholders would like the Council to keep in touch and involve them in the preparation of the Local Plan.

View the scoping consultation, at: https://haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk/alp43-scoping-consultation

We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

We're legally required to identify, describe and evaluate likely significant effects on the environment of:

- implementing the local plan
- reasonable alternatives, taking into account the plan's objectives and scope

This process will consider how community, national and international environmental protection objectives and any other environmental challenges are taken into account in the plan. It will help us to predict significant environmental effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and offsetting these.



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It is important we start this work early and are transparent about how we're doing the assessment when engaging stakeholders and communities.

The consultants AECOM Ltd have been appointed to prepare our SEA. An inception meeting was held in September and work is underway to prepare an interim report.

View information about the SEA and all the Local Plan evidence, at: https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-development/our-planning-policies/emerging-local-plan-and-design-code/emerging-evidence-base-documents/

We have been busy assessing sites submitted under the Call for Sites in 2023, 2025 and during the scoping consultation in September

Although the Ashford Local Plan 2044 is using the new planning system launched in March this year, we have been able to use the Call for Sites submissions made under the previous Local Plan and most recently during the scoping consultation in September.

Find out more about the Call for Sites, at: https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-development/our-planning-policies/emerging-local-plan-and-design-code/call-for-sites/.

How to stay up to date

For updates on the Local Plan, you can register your contact details on our website.

Sign up to stay up to date on our Local Plan process, at: https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-development/our-planning-policies/emerging-local-plan-and-design-code/local-plan-timetable-and-how-to-get-involved/subscribe-to-our-local-plan-updates/

Alternatively, visit our website for regular updates, at: https://www.ashford.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan.

Dated: 30 October 2026

