



A PLANNING PROTOCOL

# DELIVERING GROWTH

IN KENT AND MEDWAY





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This planning protocol was developed jointly by Kent County Council, Kent Developers Group, Kent Housing Group and Kent Planning Officers Group.

Its role is to encourage continued collaborative working between all those involved in delivering growth in Kent. It is an advisory document and is not binding on any party, but by following these principles, all parties demonstrate their commitment to the agenda.

The Protocol relates principally to the pre-application and planning application stages of the process but where applicable the principles will also apply at the plan making stage.



Paul Carter,  
Leader



Nick Fenton,  
Chair



Eileen Martin,  
Chair



Cllr David Jukes,  
Vice Chair



Simon Thomas,  
Chair



Cllr Alan Jarrett,  
Leader

BY 2034, KENT'S  
POPULATION WILL  
RISE BY MORE  
THAN 403,200



## INTRODUCTION

In Kent and Medway, we are ambitious for growth. Over the next twenty years, our population will rise by over 403,200 – an increase of 22.2%. This will mean delivery of some 199,200 new homes, the equivalent of nearly 10,000 per year – making a major contribution to the Government's commitment to a million new homes by 2020.

Yet in recent years delivery has failed to keep pace with demand. Over the past decade we have only built around 6,000 homes a year and the rate of delivery has fallen and infrastructure costs have impacted on viability.

So we must plan strategically for growth. We will strive to meet

projected demand and build resilient, sustainable communities for the future. Good progress is being made across the county in producing Development Plans to support growth.

But it will be councils and communities together with developers that will secure the right growth for Kent and Medway. This Protocol sets out our commitment to working together. It builds on the good practice already taking place across the county to promote a more collaborative approach. Together, local authorities, developers and infrastructure providers are vital to the delivery of quality, sustainable development: this Protocol is our shared commitment.

Statistics from Kent County Council



# OUR GOALS

## TOGETHER WE AIM TO:

Deliver, through the planning process, the environment for quality and sustainable growth in Kent and Medway to strive to meet the county's employment and housing needs.

Provide increased efficiency and certainty in the planning process for communities and developers.



### **Commitment 1:** We will ensure that appropriate resources are made available to deliver an efficient, high-quality planning service

- Councils, supported by developers, will ensure that there are sufficient planning officers with the right skills and qualifications to meet demand, work collaboratively and pro-actively to manage development proposals through the planning system, and facilitate sustainable development.
- Developers will ensure sufficient resources to make clear, evidenced, quality applications. This will ensure that development proposals are made with sufficient and accurate supporting information and are well-presented, enabling planners to efficiently manage the application through the planning system for determination within the statutory period.
- Developers, where appropriate, will provide financial support to authorities to buy in additional resources via Planning Performance Agreements, to assist in the efficient management of larger and more complex schemes.
- Charges for pre-application advice will be sufficient to support a high quality pre-application advice service, maximising the availability of planning officers to provide advice to developers and developers should utilise this service at the earliest opportunity.



## Commitment 2: We will promote training opportunities

- Councils will work jointly with developers and other bodies to provide training opportunities for all groups, including elected Members to build capacity and to promote a common understanding of issues, approaches and good practice.
- Elected Members will be offered regular training on planning issues and the opportunity to visit completed schemes and maintain a dialogue with developers.



### **Commitment 3:** We will communicate effectively

- We will ensure that council officers keep applicants updated with information about their applications and developments to facilitate greater common understanding and consensus on planning matters.
- Developers will engage positively and directly with planners and provide the required, high quality, information in a clear and accessible format within a reasonable timescale, including at pre-application stage.
- Planners and developers will positively engage through the pre-application process to allow early identification of key issues.
- High quality and consistent pre-application advice will be provided, with service standards published on the website of each council. This will increase certainty for developers and will include clear advice on consultation requirements and the information to be submitted with a formal planning application.
- Where appropriate, there will be an increased opportunity for engagement with elected Members, through briefings at the pre-application stage. This will ensure that community issues and needs are considered early in the process and that Members will have a better understanding of developers' proposals at the pre-application stage.
- Developers will engage early, openly and collaboratively with community and amenity groups and where relevant, Town and Parish Councils before and when planning applications are made. Where appropriate, developers will demonstrate in support of any subsequent planning application, how the responses to this engagement have been taken into account and have shaped the scheme.



## Commitment 4: We will increase certainty and consistency

All parties will engage positively and proactively with consultees to ensure that all considerations are addressed at an early stage.

- Developers and Councils will seek buy-in from the Statutory Consultees to the principles of this agreement.
- Where appropriate and for schemes that will have significant impacts, democratically elected Members will be invited to become involved in pre-application briefings to ensure that the needs of the local community are taken into account when proposals are formulated.
- The use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) will be encouraged to achieve a more efficient and effective application process. Where appropriate, KCC Highways and the legal departments of other relevant parties will be included in PPAs, which should be established and set up at pre-application stage.
- Local Authority Officers including Housing Officers will provide planners with clear and consistent advice at an early stage in the planning process and will maintain dialogue throughout the application process up to and including the heads of terms of the section 106 agreement.
- Registered Providers (RPs) will be involved at the earliest possible stage in the planning process where affordable housing is required or proposed.
- Developers will provide draft heads of terms of section 106 agreements in advance of applications and at the earliest opportunity to ensure that all necessary information about the proposed development is available to decision makers.
- All parties will seek to negotiate and conclude section 106 agreements so that planning permissions can be granted without unreasonable delay.
- All parties will seek to minimise the number of pre-commencement conditions requiring the submission of further details.
- All parties will seek to develop a better shared understanding of design quality standards, and, where appropriate, to engage in a Design Review at the earliest stage.

## Monitoring success

This protocol sets out a shared approach to development by developers and local authorities. Kent Developers Group, Kent Housing Group and Kent Planning Officers Group will periodically review the implementation and effectiveness of the Protocol and share best practice that emerges from such reviews.



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