

1.3 The Strategy for Dartford

- 1.3.1 The Strategy for Dartford in essence has been determined by two factors - Dartford's fundamental role within the Thames Gateway as a growth area, and how the scale of development can be achieved in a form which meets sustainable objectives.
- 1.3.2 The overall philosophy of the Strategy for the Borough is to accommodate significant levels of growth in a way that maximises the achievement of sustainable objectives, fully serves the needs of both the existing and future residents of the Borough and conserves the best of the natural and manmade environment. It is from this key principle that the Plan's aims, objectives, policies and proposals flow.

What is the Strategy About?

In simple terms, it means creating an attractive and exciting place for people to live and work. It means raising the quality of the environment and creating strong links between the new and the existing. *It means creating a safe and healthy environment where people can relax.* It means planning for all forms of transport, not just the car, to make walking, cycling and travelling by public transport an attractive and safe choice. It means protecting the ~~local~~ *natural* environment and the Green Belt. It means designing new ~~places~~ *sustainable communities* in which to live, work, shop, relax and visit which respect what is important to local people. Above all, it means making the most of the opportunities in this part of Kent to create a vibrant place to live and do business which meets the needs for all our residents for the 21st century.

- 1.3.3 The Strategy essentially comprises two elements - a focused framework which comprises the main aims and guiding principles for new development within the Borough; and a geographic description which broadly indicates how and where new growth is to be accommodated.

Strategic Aims

- *To take account of the need to protect the environment so that present day demands do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs or enjoy a high quality environment.*
- *To safeguard and improve the quality of life of residents, conserve energy resources, and protect and where possible enhance, the Borough's essential character and main environmental assets.*
- To meet current and future housing needs *of all sectors of the community* in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable way.
- To seek high standards of design and quality of development throughout the Borough.
- To foster a ~~strong~~ *sustainable* economic base for the Borough, through the ~~sustainable~~ growth and diversity of employment opportunities.
- To ensure the ~~satisfactory~~ *necessary* provision of community and social facilities that meet the needs of new and existing communities.
- To promote efficient, safe, reliable and convenient access for everyone working, visiting or living in the Borough, compatible with improving quality of life and prosperity and with the minimum of environmental harm, by planning for a high quality, comprehensive transport system, well integrated with new ~~development~~ and existing communities *and synchronous with all new development.*

- To foster a sustainable pattern of retail provision that meets the needs of, and is accessible to, the whole community.
- To protect and enhance the special and distinctive features of the Borough's environment and to minimise adverse environmental impact arising from development and transport.
- To provide for the leisure needs of the Borough's residents, and to promote Dartford as a sporting, cultural and entertainment destination.
- To safeguard and conserve the Borough's heritage resource and develop its potential for leisure, education and tourism.
- To conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Borough's countryside, protect the rural areas from adverse environmental impact and promote a healthy rural economy.
- To maximise the opportunities for housing, transport, economic regeneration, environmental improvement and leisure use of the River Thames and along the waterfront while minimising the adverse impact upon the natural environment.
- To maintain and enhance Dartford Town Centre's roles as the Borough's main centre providing a comprehensive range of facilities and mix of uses and as a district shopping centre.

1.4 Strategic Principles for Achieving a Sustainable Urban Structure

- 1.4.1 The aims need to be read in conjunction with a series of guiding principles, which will help determine the form and structure of future development. The purpose of these principles, set out below, is to guide developers and landowners in producing development proposals which will help to achieve a sustainable urban structure for Dartford.

Strategic Principles

- Maximise the beneficial use of urban land and buildings while maintaining and enhancing overall quality.
- Incorporate a high standard of quality in new design in buildings and their settings which maximises energy efficiency and energy conservation.
- Maximise the opportunities for pedestrian, cycling and high quality public transport accessibility to and from new development, integrated with existing communities.
- Plan for residential density, patterns and layouts which maximise access to both existing and potential routes.
- Incorporate measures which seek to reduce people's propensity to use cars, such as adopting a compact rather than a dispersed form of development *and setting vehicle parking standards which are consistent with good traffic management and a high quality of environment.*
- Plan for a mix of land uses, especially on large sites which can encourage multi-purpose or linked trips.
- Establish a Green Grid of inter-connected open space with landscape, recreational and ecological roles.
- Enhance the quality of the urban environment and social and community facilities.
- Use land and buildings more intensively around centres and along corridors with existing or potential good public transport.
- Maintain strong protection for the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- Conserve and protect the Borough's areas of nature conservation interest.

- *Safeguard and improve the amenity and quality of life of residents.*
- *Protect or enhance the Borough's heritage, special built character areas, including conservation areas, and the best of the Borough's landscape.*
- *Secure the provision of sufficient affordable housing to meet the needs identified by the Council based on the Housing Needs Study.*

1.4.2 The Plan's Strategy is based on the requirement for all new development to accord with principles of sustainability. Sustainable development aims to achieve, now and in the future, development to facilitate higher living standards for all while protecting and enhancing ~~the natural~~ *key aspects of the local* environment. A sustainable pattern of development is the key to accommodating the scale of growth in Dartford into the twenty-first century. It is essential that Dartford maximises the opportunities to develop new homes and jobs, while at the same time enhancing the quality of life and minimising the *detrimental* impact on ~~the natural~~ *all aspects of the* environment.