

The Council's preferred option – **1** – Overall Vision for the Borough

The preferred option is to retain the general approach set by the existing Plan's Guiding Principles and Design Principles but to update and amend these as necessary and, in particular, to reflect:

- A) The objectives the Council has set for the Ashford's Future capacity study (the 'Halcrow' report) and masterplanning (the Greater Ashford Development Framework);
- B) The main issues emerging from community involvement in planning in the urban and rural areas of the Borough;
- C) The need to reflect national policy guidance and trends;
- D) The need to relate the Local Development Framework very closely to the Borough's Community Strategy

The Council's preferred option – **2** – The broad distribution of development

The consultants' work has spanned many months and included a vast amount of source material – listed in the appendix to the GADF Final Report. A large number of stakeholder groups and local representatives have been involved in challenging and helping to shape the masterplan as it has emerged. Given the scale of development proposed and the inevitable concerns people will have it will always be difficult to endorse every aspect of the 'preferred option' the consultants' have arrived at.

It is important to remember that the purpose of agreeing an options report is to start a wider debate on the Council's approach to its LDF – not to reach a fixed set of ideas or conclusion. On the basis that the preferred masterplan represents the conclusion of a long, thorough and independent process it seems reasonable to conclude that this should be broadly endorsed as the Council's 'preferred option' for the spatial strategy for the Ashford growth area. This will now be open to comment and representations from all sides and the Council will formally consider all of these and amend its preferred approach where necessary. Only then will the Council move to a submitted version of its Core Strategy for the Local Development Framework.

The Council's Preferred Option – **3** – Ashford Town Centre

Priority will be given to bringing forward redevelopment opportunities in the town centre in advance of major releases of greenfield land on the periphery of Ashford.

The town centre should be expanded to accommodate up to 2,500 new dwellings, 94,000 sq.m., of new retail / leisure floorspace, 85,000 sq.m. of new office floorspace by 2021. Priority needs include a new FE/HE campus, the Discovery Centre and a mix of leisure, retail and other active uses at ground floor level to help bring activity and add real character to well designed urban streets.

The transport and movement strategy for the town centre shall include the provision of a new strategic east/west link through the Victoria Road area and the phased implementation of two-way traffic flow on the Ring Road. Car parking provision should be made in a way that best complements the new movement patterns whilst providing easy access on foot to the town centre.

The Council's preferred approach – **4** – Ashford Urban area

On phasing and delivery - to adopt the broad phasing approach suggested in the GADF report but to seek to bring forward brownfield development at the earliest opportunity. Where development proposals come forward that will provide key infrastructure early this is an important issue that the Council will need to consider as part of the overall merits of the scheme and could justify support for a 'departure' application in advance of the completion of the LDF process.

Broadly endorse the GADF masterplan and work up the proposals it includes in more detail so that they can be examined properly and tested fully in the subsequent stages of the LDF process. The general approach should be based on using a mixed use approach whereneeded, creating better linkages between areas and targeting attention to tackle the particular needs of areas currently performing less well.

The Council's preferred option – **5** – The Growth areas around Ashford

In planning for the proposed peripheral growth areas the following issues should be considered in particular:

- A) the scale and layout of the growth areas is planned in a way that maximises the opportunities to achieve a strong balance of mixed use places of real character, and the potential level of use of the bus system;
- B) the growth area's setting is particularly carefully planned and adequate resources set aside (from development contributions and other sources) to enable the proper planting and provision of appropriate facilities in a transition zone of suitable scale between urban and rural areas, and for their long term maintenance;
- C) the need to control the rate of release of development land to keep in step with infrastructure and the other elements of a balanced, mixed community (e.g. local job creation) – both in terms of the responsibilities of the landowners/ developers and the wider public sector responsibilities to deliver necessary infrastructure when it is needed;
- D) establish the Council's commitment to the use of design codes to complement the Action Area Plans needed for each peripheral growth area.
- E) as far as the Cheesemans Green Borough Local Plan site is concerned, indicate that should the part of the site outside the masterplan proposals be built then a reduction would be made in development elsewhere.

The Council's Preferred Option – **6** – Tenterden, the villages and rural areas

Phase the release of new sites in two phases – the first up to 2011 with the rest after then. On a proportionate basis, sufficient land for 250 new dwellings would be allocated in the first phase and 550 in the second.

New residential development allocations in the LDF period will be to focused firstly on Tenterden and then subsequently on suitable opportunities within Charing, Wye, Hamstreet, Biddenden, Chilham and Aldington. Outside of these settlements, it is not proposed to make any residential allocations in the LDF and development should be limited to minor redevelopment and infilling through a revision to current policy HG6.

New building in the open countryside should be strictly controlled and no new residential development should be permitted beyond the built confines of existing settlements, which should continue to be defined as the 'limits of continuous development (inc. narrow gaps which may be suitable for 1 or 2 dwellings only) forming the existing built-up area of the settlement.'

Local needs housing shall continue to be provided through the implementation of an 'exception sites' policy.

Seeking to retain a major presence of Imperial College at Wye in the interests of both the local community and the Borough's economic future.