

Core Strategy: Issues and Options Report

Preface

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1 Contents

Introduction 1

Introduction

1.1 The recently adopted [Tunbridge Wells Borough Sustainable Community Plan](#) tells us what you want the Borough to be like in the future. You said that you expect to have:

- An environment that is conserved and enhanced, both for ourselves and for the benefit of future generations
- A prosperous local economy
- A wide range of high-quality and enjoyable leisure opportunities
- A reduction in crime and the fear of crime
- Safe, convenient and sustainable travel options to work, school, health and leisure facilities
- Housing and related support which meets the needs of local people of all ages
- Access to healthy lifestyle choices and the right healthcare facilities to meet the community's needs
- An opportunity for everyone to lead a fulfilling life with equal access to opportunities and services
- Improved educational achievement across the borough and opportunities for everyone to acquire the lifetime skills required to find and remain in work

Our Vision in the [Sustainable Community Plan](#)

1.2 The Borough Council will seek to deliver this vision in a number of ways. Planning can contribute significantly through a continually developing portfolio of new planning documents, together known as a Local Development Framework (LDF).

1.3 Central to the LDF is a strategic planning document called the **Core Strategy**, which the Council is now beginning to prepare. The Core Strategy will provide a local planning framework to deliver the essential development needs of the Borough whilst preserving its high quality environment.

1.4 The Core Strategy will be a long-term document that will set the strategic pattern of development in the Borough to 2026, so it is important that you get involved now. This Issues and Options Report seeks your early views in preparing the Core Strategy and, by responding to the questions within it, you can help to shape what Tunbridge Wells Borough will be like in the future.

Why Produce a Core Strategy?

1.5 The Borough Council is required to prepare a Core Strategy as part of the new system of 'spatial' planning, which was introduced by the Government in 2004.

What is spatial planning?

Spatial planning aims to integrate land use planning policies with the policies of other plans, programmes and strategies (produced by other Council departments, by Government, or by other external bodies), which also influence the nature of places and how they function. Such policies may impact on land use by creating a *need* for development, but cannot necessarily be implemented by the granting or refusal of planning permission.

1 Introduction

1.6 Currently, the development plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough consists of the [Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan](#) and the [Kent and Medway Structure Plan](#). Under the new system, these plans will be replaced by a portfolio of strategic and detailed planning documents, known as a Local Development Framework (LDF). Many of the separate LDF documents can be updated individually as changing circumstances dictate. Figure 1 below shows how the LDF is put together.

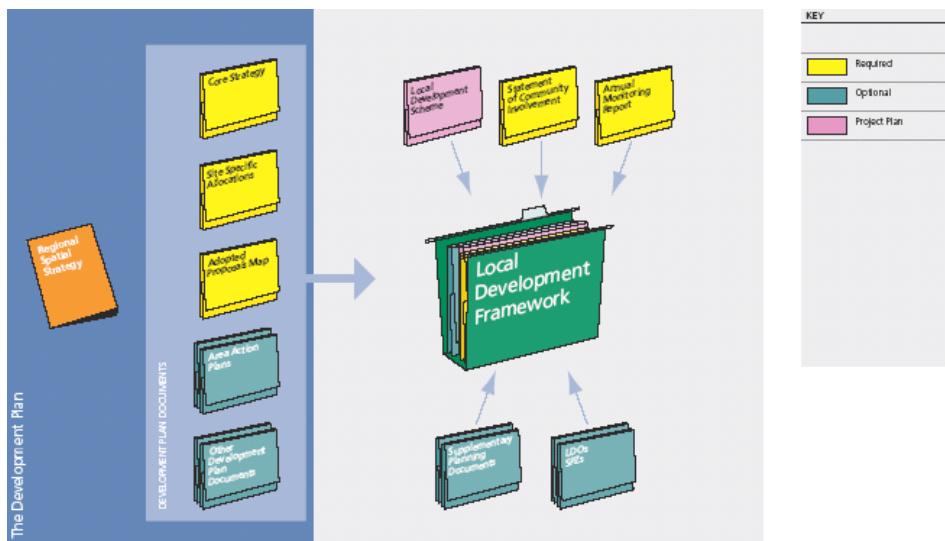


Figure 1 LDF Document Structure

1.7 As the diagram shows, six types of document will make up the Development Plan for the Borough. Of these, the [draft South East Plan](#), produced by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), and the Core Strategy differ from the other development plan documents (DPDs) in that they will be long-term and strategic, whilst the others are likely to be shorter-term and more detailed. Both the [draft South East Plan](#) and the Core Strategy will cover the period to 2026. Together, they will provide the overall planning strategy to guide the other LDF documents.

1.8 The [draft South East Plan](#) sits 'above' the Core Strategy because it will set the wider planning context for the entire South East region. It therefore establishes some fixed aims and parameters with which the Core Strategy must conform. For example, it specifies the number of homes that must be built in *this* Borough in order for the wider housing needs of the South East to be met.

What Will the Core Strategy Do?

1.9 The Core Strategy will provide the local planning framework necessary to deliver the essential development needs of the Borough in an appropriate manner. A successful Core Strategy must reconcile competing land uses and balance them against any constraints on development.

1.10 The Core Strategy will set the *broad* pattern of development for the Borough, with the more detailed LDF documents providing site-specific allocations and detailed policies on particular issues. It will be comprised of the following elements:

- A Spatial Vision
- Strategic Objectives for the Area
- A Spatial Strategy
- Core Policies
- A Monitoring and Implementation Framework

Introduction 1

1.11 This Issues and Options Report seeks your early views in developing the first three elements set out above.

2 Format of the Issues and Options Paper

2.1 This Chapter explains the format of the Issues and Options Report and describes how the different sections within it have been formulated.

The Spatial Vision - Chapter 3

2.2 Chapter 3 provides a *Spatial Vision* for the Borough. The Core Strategy must provide a clear vision of what is to be achieved in the Borough by 2026. The basis of this vision is already established in the [Sustainable Community Plan](#), in that it tells us what you have already said you would like to see. However, the Core Strategy's vision must go further than this. It must:

- a. be a *spatial* vision that is deliverable through the planning system.
- b. take account of the wider vision for the Borough and the South East region derived from other plans, programmes and strategies, particularly the [draft South East Plan](#).

Crosscutting Issues: Strategic Opportunities, Context and Constraints - Chapter 4

2.3 Chapter 4 identifies the themes which permeate the Core Strategy as a whole – from the opportunities presented by the designation of Tunbridge Wells as a Regional Hub, to the need to preserve the Borough's high quality built and natural environment.

2.4 The Borough's Core Strategy is not prepared in isolation from the broad crosscutting themes and issues that are set out in other planning policy documents, programmes and strategies. These include, for example, National Planning Policy Statements, the [draft South East Plan](#) and the regional housing and economic development strategies.

2.5 These considerations provide a context for the Borough's Core Strategy and highlight the strategic opportunities, context and constraints of which the Core Strategy must take account, alongside the issues identified at 'grass roots' level through the [Sustainable Community Plan](#).

The Themes - Chapter 5

2.6 Chapter 5 of this Report is divided into the following Themes, which are taken directly from the [Sustainable Community Plan](#):

- Safeguarding our Environment
- Maintaining a thriving Local Economy
- Enabling people to take part in and enjoy Leisure Activities
- Transport – Getting around the Borough
- Meeting the Need for Housing
- Maintaining Community Safety and Reducing the Fear of Crime

2.7 Many of the issues considered under these themes are *spatial* and can, therefore, be addressed by the planning system, either directly or indirectly. Where the other themes of the [Sustainable Community Plan](#) are not spatial per se, but do raise some spatial issues, these are considered under the most appropriate theme above.

The Issues

2.8 Each Theme has specific issues associated with it that the LDF must address. In accordance with the aims of spatial planning, when developing the Core Strategy we must consider the issues raised in other plans, programmes and strategies and how they can be addressed through the wider LDF. This Issues and Options Report has taken account of many of these issues already and links are provided to the relevant reports throughout, should you wish to refer to them in detail. Some issues are broadly relevant, whilst others are locally specific:

Format of the Issues and Options Paper 2

- **Broad Considerations**

Some of the issues that the LDF must consider are relevant beyond the boundaries of this Borough. These are generally raised in national Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and the [draft South East Plan](#), with which the LDF must conform. These documents set the wider aims and parameters for the Core Strategy.

- **Local Issues**

Other issues are specifically relevant to Tunbridge Wells Borough. Many of these have been brought together by the [Sustainable Community Plan](#).

Strategic Objectives

2.9 Spatial objectives are suggested for each Theme to indicate *how* the Core Strategy should address the broad considerations and local issues raised.

The Options for a Spatial Strategy - Chapter 6

2.10 Chapter 6 of this Report introduces four potential options for a spatial strategy for the Borough to 2026.

What is a spatial strategy?

The spatial strategy that is taken forward in the adopted Core Strategy will determine broadly where future development will be located in the Borough, how it will be distributed, what form it will take and when it will be built.

2.11 The four Options for a spatial strategy are to:

1. Concentrate new development at the main urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough
2. Focus new development at the main urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, with modest development at the small rural towns of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst
3. Disperse new development throughout the Borough's settlements
4. Build a new or expanded town

How has the Borough Council arrived at the four Options above?

2.12 There is no single, correct way to deliver the development needed in Tunbridge Wells Borough. In terms of physical space, numerous locations throughout the Borough could accommodate some, or all, of the development required. However, as the issues presented in this Report will show, the potential of some areas is constrained by factors such as landscape sensitivity, the nature of the existing built environment or a lack of suitable infrastructure.

2.13 Having analysed the issues and constraints identified in this Report, the Borough Council considers that the development required could be delivered by any of the spatial strategies above, or by a combination of particular elements of them.

2.14 Only one spatial strategy will be developed in detail and taken forward into the final Core Strategy. For more information on the next stages in producing the Core Strategy, please refer to the Next Steps section on page 45.

2 Format of the Issues and Options Paper

2.15 The spatial strategy chosen will depend on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the ability of each to address the development objectives for the Borough. Chapter 6 begins to discuss these.

Your Views

Your views are extremely important to the Borough Council in developing its Core Strategy, which is why it is presenting these ideas to you at this early stage.

Many decisions must be taken in order to choose an appropriate spatial strategy and determine the form new development will take. The Borough Council needs your help in making decisions about how development should be distributed between different areas; what types and sizes of houses should be built; and what types of jobs should be provided. The questions in this document are intended to stimulate discussion only. They are not survey questions and the development option will not be determined by numerical weighting of the answers.

Please take the opportunity to make your views known now, as there will be less opportunity to influence the Core Strategy later on.

The Spatial Vision 3

3.1 The LDF must seek to deliver the following Spatial Vision for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells. It has been derived from the [Sustainable Community Plan](#) and the wider vision for the Borough and the South East region.

A Spatial Vision for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells

The Core Strategy will aim to:

- Deliver sustainable development
- Conserve and enhance the environment, both for ourselves and for the benefit of future generations
- Provide a prosperous local economy
- Provide a wide range of high-quality and enjoyable leisure opportunities
- Reduce crime and the fear of crime
- Provide safe, convenient and sustainable travel options to work, school, health and leisure facilities
- Provide housing and related support which meets the needs of local people of all ages
- Ensure access to healthy lifestyle choices and the right healthcare facilities to meet the community's needs
- Create the opportunity for everyone to lead a fulfilling life with equal access to opportunities and services
- Improve educational achievement across the Borough and opportunities for everyone to acquire the lifetime skills needed to find and remain in work
- Focus development around the regional hub of Tunbridge Wells (jointly designated with Tonbridge) and seek infrastructure to support this role
- Deliver 60% of new development needs on previously developed land
- Retain the extent of Green Belt in the Borough

4 Crosscutting Issues: Strategic Opportunities, Context and Constraints

Crosscutting Issues: Strategic Opportunities, Context and Constraints

4.1 This chapter sets out the principal strategic opportunities, context and constraints surrounding development in Tunbridge Wells, which do not fall under a particular theme in Chapter 5, but instead influence the direction of the Core Strategy as a whole.

4.2 The Core Strategy must take account of these issues if the Borough is to be a success in terms of providing essential development, fulfilling its strategic role within the South East region and reconciling competing land uses with often-major constraints on development.

Strategic Opportunities

a) *The Strategic Role of Tunbridge Wells in the South East Region*

4.3 The Borough must be able to meet its strategic planning role within the South East region and in Kent, as defined by the [draft South East Plan](#). Most significantly, Tunbridge Wells is identified as a joint Regional Hub with Tonbridge.

What is a Regional Hub?

Regional Hubs are centres of economic and social activity, well supported by transport services, on a regionally significant scale. To take advantage of these benefits, Regional Hubs should be developed as a focus for the provision of economic, social and transport services.

The Role of Tunbridge Wells

Together, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge should provide a balance of business, commercial and residential development, particularly designed to meet local needs. Links between the two urban areas should be improved. The [draft South East Plan](#) recognises the importance of developing the Hub within the context of this Borough's sensitive environment and its location within the Green Belt and AONB.

4.4 The Hub designation offers a number of opportunities:

- To focus development on economic and urban regeneration of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre
- To reinforce the role of Tunbridge Wells as a commercial, retail, service, leisure and cultural centre
- To bid for transport and other infrastructure improvements within the town and also for wider links to support the Hub status

Crosscutting Issues: Strategic Opportunities, Context and Constraints 4

Strategic Context

4.5 The Core Strategy must be in accordance with national planning policy context and priorities in respect of specific topics or themes. The following are very important:

a) An urban focus for development

4.6 The [draft South East Plan](#) establishes an urban focus for development in the South East in order to support accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services and to avoid unnecessary travel. In line with this, it sets a target to achieve at least 60% of all new development on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings.

What is Previously Developed Land?

Previously developed land (PDL), sometimes described as 'brownfield' land, is land that is, or has been, occupied by a permanent structure and associated fixed surface infrastructure. Agricultural and forestry buildings are excluded from this definition.

The opposite of PDL is **greenfield land**, which is land (that can be a defined site) that has not been previously developed.

b) Respecting the function of the Green Belt

4.7 The designation of Green Belt land is a long-standing instrument of national and regional policy. Fundamentally, it is intended to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. 22% of the Borough's land area is designated as Green Belt, the western end of which constrains the main urban area to a degree.

4.8 In order to ensure the endurance of Green Belt boundaries, the Borough Council has also defined areas of 'Rural Fringe' with a view to safeguarding land to meet future development needs. The need to release this over the next 20 years will be considered by the Core Strategy.

c) Delivering Sustainable Development

4.9 [Planning Policy Statement 1 \(PPS1\)](#) sets the delivery of sustainable development as the overarching goal of the spatial planning system.

What is Sustainable Development?

'Sustainable development' is a term, now commonly used, to describe development that simultaneously ensures social progress that recognises the needs of everyone; protects the environment; makes prudent use of natural resources; and maintains high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

4.10 The Core Strategy will be appraised to ensure that it will deliver sustainable development. To reflect it from the outset, this Issues and Options Report has drawn on the findings of the [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#) undertaken for the Borough Council, which highlights the sustainability issues raised in the other plans, programmes and strategies that have been considered. An initial [Sustainability Appraisal Report](#) accompanies this Report.

d) Locating development within the existing settlement hierarchy

4 Crosscutting Issues: Strategic Opportunities, Context and Constraints

4.11 Regional policy indicates that achieving a successful Core Strategy relies on locating development (and the infrastructure and services to support it) appropriately within the hierarchy of settlements within the Borough, with urban areas being the main focus for development. This is for the following reasons:

- Focusing development on the main urban area is a sustainable development strategy
- Concentrating new development on larger sites offers greater opportunity to achieve affordable dwellings and service and infrastructure provision
- Small rural towns act as a focus for service provision in the rural areas. They generally offer the opportunity for minor development, although more significant development may be appropriate where good public transport links exist
- Small rural settlements need sufficient development to meet local needs and diversification of rural economy

Constraints

a) *The Borough's Environment*

4.12 The high quality of the Borough's environment is a constant consideration. The following constraints have informed previous strategic planning documents, but must be updated and reviewed as the spatial vision for the Borough is rolled out for the next 20 years:

- 69% of the Borough is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) landscape
- 25 Conservation Areas
- Approximately 3,000 Listed Buildings

b) *The Location of Existing Infrastructure*

4.13 To a certain extent, future development is likely to be constrained by the nature of the Borough's existing infrastructure:

- Transport infrastructure is focused on the main urban area
- Higher order services are focused at the main urban area

Key Diagram

Key Diagram

4.14 For the purposes of this Issues and Options Report, the Key Diagram (Figure 2) below shows the relationship between the main settlements, transport links and environmental constraints in the Borough. (Environmental constraints are shown in more detail in Figures 4-7 at Appendix 2). These present the basic spatial context for the Core Strategy and the options for a spatial strategy suggested in Chapter 6. It is in diagrammatic format only.

4.15 As the Core Strategy is developed, this diagram can be used to show *general* locations for development (i.e. which towns or villages, rather than specific sites); transport links; links with other areas, where relevant; and constraints which make up the Core Strategy.

Crosscutting Issues: Strategic Opportunities, Context and Constraints 4

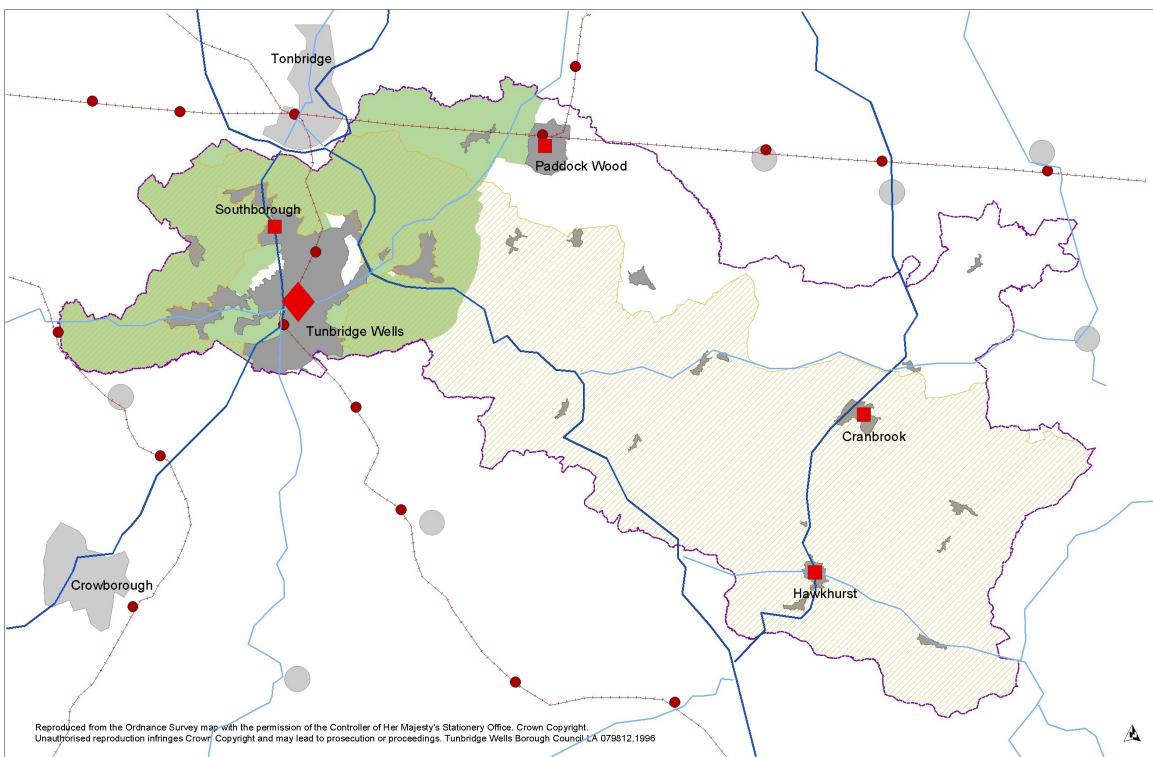


Figure 2 Key Diagram

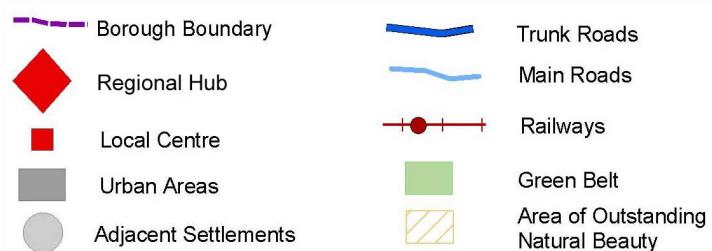


Figure 3 Key Diagram Legend

5 The Themes

Safeguarding our Environment

Broad Considerations

5.1 LDF policies should:

- Contribute to the global effort to arrest the effects of climate change
- Minimise pollution resulting from new development and ensure that development is not affected by existing sources of pollution
- Observe the general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- Conserve the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside
- Conserve, enhance and restore diversity of wildlife and geology
- Protect and enhance the historic environment
- Reduce and manage flood risk where possible and minimise adverse effects of development upon water supplies and water quality
- Seek to minimise waste

Local Issues

5.2 The environment, and our interaction with it, can have a major impact on quality of life, both now and in the future. The exceptional combination of buildings, open space and landscape in this Borough contributes significantly to the quality of life for those living and working here and also attracts visitors and tourists alike.

5.3 Balancing the protection of the environment and natural resources with the development needs and aspirations of the local community is the essence of sustainable development. To achieve this, the following topics must be considered:

Constraints on Land Available for Development

5.4 In addition to the strategic policy constraints explained in Chapter 4, there are a number of environmental designations which may also constrain the opportunities for development. It is important to understand the relative value of the different designations, both to residents and, intrinsically, in order for environmental protection and development needs to be balanced through the LDF. The main considerations are as follows:

Landscape Designations: AONB and SLA

5.5 Figure 1 at Appendix 2 shows the extent of the Borough which forms part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and/or Special Landscape Area (SLA). AONBs are nationally designated for their exceptionally high quality. Together with National Parks, they have the highest level of protection in order to conserve and enhance their beauty. From a planning perspective, whilst some development may be permitted in the AONB if it is to meet local economic and community needs, it will not be possible on a significant scale. Similarly, whilst the SLA does not have the same status nationally, it has been identified for its unspoilt, locally distinctive character and development should not harm this.

The Themes 5

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Designations: SSSIs, SNCIs, SLNCVs and LNRs

5.6 In addition to the landscape designations shown above, the Borough also contains areas and specific sites which are important from a nature conservation perspective. There are ten Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 59 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs), 17 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Value (SLNCVs) and four Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). The Borough also benefits from relatively large areas of Ancient Woodland and Commons, which are shown in Figure 2 at Appendix 2, along with the SSSIs. Of all the areas, the nationally-designated SSSIs are accorded the greatest protection and no development that would harm their status can be permitted. The others, although not statutorily designated, contribute substantially to the overall environmental quality of the Borough and it is likely that development would only be acceptable if the need for it would outweigh the nature conservation interest of the site.

Land at Risk of Flooding

5.7 Figure 3 at Appendix 2 shows the areas of the Borough which are at risk of flooding – principally Paddock Wood, Five Oak Green and Lamberhurst. Given the limited supply of land unconstrained by other designations, it is increasingly necessary to consider ways of utilising these areas if flood mitigation measures are possible.

The Built Environment: Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

5.8 It is not only the *natural* environment which must be taken into account when planning for new development. Over 3,000 Listed Buildings of architectural or historic interest and 25 Conservation Areas contribute to the Borough's high quality built and cultural heritage (see Figure 4 at Appendix 2). New development can, and should, have a positive impact upon the character of the existing environment.

5.9 Taking all of the above considerations together, it is apparent just how much of the Borough benefits from, but at the same time is constrained by, natural and built characteristics, all of which contribute to providing the high quality environment we value. Nonetheless, new development *must* take place and it is for the LDF to determine how to best utilise the few areas emerging as relatively unconstrained and to ensure that development that does occur elsewhere respects the sensitivity of its location.

5.10 To protect the wider environment, the LDF must also consider the following:

Renewable Energy

5.11 Current use of renewable energy in the Borough is relatively low, but both local residents and developers are supportive of the effort to increase this. In response the Borough Council has produced a Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to offer guidance to developers and members of the public alike.

5.12 The Borough Council's *current* policy is to seek renewable energy generation on the following types of new development: *housing schemes of ten or more units and commercial schemes of 1,000sqm or more*. On such schemes, at least 10% of the total energy demand should come from renewable sources. It may be desirable to change these thresholds through the LDF, particularly given the growing expectation for local authorities to take a pivotal role in meeting national carbon reduction targets.

5 The Themes

Environment

Do you agree that the Borough Council should take measures to increase the amount of renewable energy supplied to:

Question 1a

New housing developments?

Question 1b

New commercial developments?

Environment

Question 2

Do you agree that the use of small-scale renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels or micro domestic wind turbines, is an efficient way of increasing the amount of renewable energy supplied to individual dwellings?

Environment

Question 3

Do you agree that private developers should contribute financially towards renewable and sustainable energy schemes at a borough level?

Air Pollution

5.13 Air pollution in the Borough is generally low, but pockets of poorer quality do exist, such as along the A26 from Royal Tunbridge Wells to Southborough. Through the Borough's [Carbon Management Plan](#), an [Air Quality Management Order](#) was issued for this area in 2005. As this example shows, air pollution is likely to be greatest where car use is high. The LDF must recognise this and seek to reduce the need for car travel where possible.

The Themes 5

Waste

5.14 The Borough currently achieves highly in terms of recycling waste. Currently, 40% of the Borough's household waste is recycled, which is significantly more than the Government's target of 30% for 2005/06. However, the majority of non-recyclable waste is sent to landfill and, as there are no landfill sites in the Borough, the majority is transported to sites in Essex.

Contaminated Land

5.15 The Borough contains relatively few contaminated sites owing to its largely rural character. Those few sites which are contaminated are shown on Figure 2 at Appendix 2. It is consistent with the principles of sustainable development to bring contaminated land into new uses and therefore the Core Strategy should encourage its redevelopment, provided that the site can be rendered fit for the purpose proposed.

Objectives

- To increase energy efficiency in new and existing developments and to maximise the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources
- To minimise the impact of development on pollution to land, air, soil and water
- To make optimum use of land in urban areas in order to minimise the impact of development upon the function of the Green Belt
- To protect and enhance the natural environment, having particular regard for sites of special designation (e.g. AONB) and biodiversity (e.g. SSSIs)
- To conserve and improve the Borough's unique built environment, including public spaces, heritage sites, Conservation Areas and listed buildings
- To minimise the impact of development upon water resources, both in terms of supply and flood risk management
- To minimise waste in the first instance and to reduce the volume that is generated being sent to landfill by facilitating recycling

5 The Themes

Maintaining a Thriving Local Economy

Broad Considerations

5.16 LDF policies should:

- Encourage economic growth whilst maintaining a high quality environment
- Provide accessible, attractive and vibrant town, neighbourhood and village centres as focal points for a range of uses, including retail
- Seek to re-use appropriately located, existing buildings in the countryside to support rural economies

Local Issues

Regional Context

5.17 The South East Plan defines Royal Tunbridge Wells with Tonbridge as a Regional Hub. To fulfil this function, the LDF should seek to achieve a balance of business, commercial and residential development to meet locally-based needs. It is recognised that such development must take place within the context of the town's setting of a high quality built and natural environment.

Loss of Employment Land across the Borough

What is Employment Land?

Employment Land is the total amount of land reserved for industrial and business use awaiting development.

5.18 In 2005/06, approximately 19% of the total amount of land allocated for employment was lost to alternative uses. 13% of this was taken up by residential development.

5.19 Employment development should be primarily focused on the redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL) and on the existing employment areas within the Borough and Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre. The Local Development Framework is required to accommodate both residential growth and the future retail needs of the area. The Core Strategy must balance these needs with the need for business space.

5.20 It is essential when planning for the future of the Borough to ensure the following are met:

- Providing a diversity of employment in Royal Tunbridge Wells
- Addressing the loss of land to other employment uses such as retail, warehousing and car showrooms
- Encouraging the provision of space to support diversification in the rural areas, particularly smaller unit space
- Ensuring there are sufficient sites to develop to provide space suitable for small businesses, particularly professional and business services users

The Themes 5

Economy

Question 4

Do you agree that it is acceptable to continue to allow commercial sites, which generate local jobs, to be converted to, or redeveloped for, housing in Royal Tunbridge Wells/Southborough, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst?

Local Employment Opportunities

5.21 The vitality and viability of the Borough's economy is increasingly dependent upon the service sector. Several major employers, particularly in the financial services sector, such as NPI, have left Royal Tunbridge Wells in recent years.

5.22 It is important for the LDF to facilitate the maintenance of an appropriate number and range of employment opportunities, particularly given that jobs in leisure, tourism, business tourism and retailing, whilst presently sustaining a competitive economy, are generally low paid.

5.23 Failure to provide an appropriate range of employment opportunities could lead to an increase in the present trend of out-commuting of the Borough's highly skilled workforce. Combined with the effects of an ageing population, this could lead to future labour shortages.

5 The Themes

Economy

To what extent do you agree that the Borough needs more of the following type and size of business and commercial premises:

Question 5a

Small office units for less than 10 employees?

Question 5b

Small industrial units/start-up units, e.g. a mechanic's garage?

Question 5c

Large office units for 10 or more employees?

Question 5d

Large industrial units, e.g. food manufacturers?

Question 5e

Storage and distribution units, e.g. home storage facility?

Local Labour Issues

5.24 Unemployment in the Borough is generally low, but pockets of deprivation do exist, with 10% of the population having no earned income at all and 12% having no qualifications. Through the new system, the LDF will be informed by the aims of other agencies and their strategies which may, for example, seek to improve skills levels amongst particular groups.

The Role of Royal Tunbridge Wells

5.25 Royal Tunbridge Wells serves as a sub-regional shopping centre and it should continue to be the focus for retail, tourism, leisure and other town centre uses. It is important to recognise increasing competition, both within the retail sector and from major developments outside the Borough, such as Maidstone's Fremlin Walk. Failure to respond to such pressures could potentially impact on the vitality and viability of the centre.

The Themes 5

5.26 Royal Tunbridge Wells is trading relatively well and competing effectively with other centres performing at a similar level. However, it is likely to experience further competition due to continuing improvements in other centres. Therefore, in order to maintain and improve its current market provision, Tunbridge Wells should be looking to enhance its comparison shopping function through the development of new floor space to meet identified need.

Economy

Question 6

To what extent do you agree that the Borough Council should take measures to attract more shoppers to Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre in the light of increasing retail competition from neighbouring town centres, such as Maidstone? Please give some suggestions in the comments box as to what you think would attract more shoppers to the town centre.

The Rural Economy

5.27 The rural towns of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst will continue to serve the wider rural hinterland with a range of local services. These, plus other small village centres, will remain the focus of their community and their vitality and viability will be enhanced where possible by new development opportunities.

Economy

To what extent do you agree that a greater range and number of job opportunities should be provided in the following towns?

Question 7a

Paddock Wood.

Question 7b

Cranbrook.

Question 7c

Hawkhurst.

5 The Themes

5.28 Recent trends in rural areas show a loss of services and employment through the closure of local services, such as post offices, banks and pubs within the rural villages. The conversion of former employment sites and premises to residential has also added to the loss of rural employment opportunities.

Economy

To what extent do you agree that the Borough Council should continue to support the provision of key services, such as post offices, shops, doctor's surgeries and libraries in the following areas of the Borough?

Question 8a

Villages.

Question 8b

Neighbourhood Centres.

Question 8c

Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst.

Question 8d

Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough.

5.29 Rural economies are further threatened by the decline in agriculture, which is further narrowing the employment base for rural residents.

The Themes 5

Economy

Question 9

Do you agree that farmers should be allowed to convert surplus agricultural buildings for commercial use, bearing in mind the possible impact on the countryside and the rural road network?

5.30 Provision for tourism in the Borough includes accommodation and visitor attractions, offering opportunities for leisure, shopping, eating and access to museums, galleries and theatres. Combined with a strategic location between London and the south coast and its transport connections, this has made the Borough a valued destination for visitors, with Tunbridge Wells Borough attracting a large share of visitors in Kent.

5.31 The tourist industry is significant in terms of the investment and employment that it generates. However, changes in the tourism market, particularly with the availability of cheaper flights for weekend breaks as well as for longer holidays, has, and will, continue to affect the Borough. Therefore, it is essential that the Core Strategy emphasises the protection and enhancement of the Borough's assets.

Economy

Question 10

Do you agree that more tourists should be encouraged to visit the Borough? Please give some suggestions in the comments box as to what you think would attract more tourists.

Objectives

- To stimulate and sustain economic growth and competitiveness by providing suitable accommodation for a wide range of enterprises throughout the Borough
- To continue to promote tourism throughout the Borough and to enhance the attractiveness of towns and centres to businesses, shoppers and other high spending visitors, but to increase opportunities for higher value employment at the same time
- To ensure that jobs match the skills of local residents, including those people living in deprived wards and those with special needs
- To support the rural economy by facilitating agricultural diversification and supporting rural services and facilities where appropriate
- To ensure that all people, not only those of school age, can access the facilities they need in order to acquire the lifetime skills they require to find and remain in work

5 The Themes

Enabling People to Take Part in and Enjoy Leisure Activities

Broad Considerations

5.32 LDF policies should:

- Recognise the benefits of access to open space, sport and recreation and cultural activities in terms of quality of life, health and well-being and community cohesion
- Locate leisure and tourist facilities in town centres wherever possible to take advantage of public transport accessibility

Local Issues

The Benefits of Participating in Leisure Activities

5.33 The Council recognises the Government's priority of creating healthier, stronger and safer communities. Leisure is key to achieving this. Activity rates amongst the Borough's residents are marginally higher than the national average, but [Sport England](#) suggests that raising activity levels by just 10% nationally could save 6,000 lives per year. The Borough Council's LDF should contribute to achieving this target by taking account of the following issues:

The Broad meaning of "Leisure"

5.34 'Leisure' can mean different things to different people. It can be formal or informal and can take place in a variety of places, including recreation grounds, sports centres, community halls, museums, theatres, cinemas art galleries and tourist attractions. The LDF must recognise the broad definition of 'leisure' and seek to provide facilities to suit the greatest possible number of people.

Leisure
Question 11
Do you agree that the Borough offers an adequate range of leisure facilities? If not, please state which ones you think are lacking in the comments box.

Limited Resources

5.35 Notwithstanding the above, the Council does not have sufficient human or financial resources to directly provide and maintain all facilities desired by all residents. However, of those respondents to the Borough Council's 2005 Residents Survey who stated that Leisure was their top priority, 78% felt that the provision of accessible, high quality facilities was most important. The LDF must therefore consider:

- Whether fewer, but better quality, facilities should be provided in the future
- How to facilitate co-operation with external organisations to provide additional facilities
- How greater community use of private facilities could be secured

The Themes 5

Leisure

Do you agree that the quality of the following types of Council-owned facilities within the Borough is good? If you think that certain facilities need improving, please provide details in the appropriate comments box.

Question 12a

Parks and recreation grounds

Question 12b

Sports pitches or outdoor courts, e.g. tennis courts.

Question 12c

Equipped play areas for children up to the age of eight years.

Question 12d

Equipped play areas for children between the ages of eight and 14 years.

Question 12e

Allotments.

Question 12f

Indoor sports centres/swimming pools.

Question 12g

Theatres.

Question 12h

Community centres.

5 The Themes

Question 12j

Museums/art galleries.

Valuing our Environment

5.36 The pursuit of leisure activities is not only beneficial from the perspective of personal well-being. It can also have significant economic and environmental benefits as visitors often provide the means and the incentive to look after places. For example, our historic buildings attract large numbers of tourists, whilst the public interest in Dunorlan Park enabled us to secure £2.1 million of Lottery funding to restore it. In addition, the Borough's wealth of high quality natural open space has great potential in terms of informal recreation, health and well-being. The LDF should continue to recognise the value of maintaining a built and natural environment that is attractive to visitors.

Access to Formal and Informal Recreational Facilities

5.37 Both the Leisure Strategy and Open Space Assessment indicate that difficulty of access to facilities is more often a barrier to their use than is a physical lack of provision. Access difficulties may include the physical distance to facilities combined with limited public transport or certain features of a specific site.

5.38 It is critical that the LDF seeks to address problems of access in order to ensure that all people are able to make optimum use of the facilities available. This is particularly important given that competing development priorities, a limited land supply and resourcing issues will make it impossible to provide all types of facility everywhere. It may be desirable, however, to continue to ensure the provision of certain types of recreation space, including children's play areas, close to people's homes. The LDF should pay close attention to the location of facilities and to making them accessible for all people, but particularly for those whose circumstances may make it more difficult – primarily the elderly and the disabled, but also those living in the rural areas or the more deprived wards.

The Themes 5

Leisure

Do you agree that the existing levels of access to the following types of Council-owned facilities within the Borough is good? If you think that access to certain facilities needs improving, please provide details in the corresponding comments box.

Question 13a

Parks and recreation grounds.

Question 13b

Sports pitches or outdoor courts, e.g. tennis courts.

Question 13c

Equipped play areas for children up to the age of eight years.

Question 13d

Equipped play areas for children between the ages of eight and 14 years.

Question 13e

Allotments.

Question 13f

Indoor sports centres/swimming pools.

Question 13g

Theatres.

Question 13h

Community centres.

5 The Themes

Question 13j

Museums/art galleries.

Objectives

- To provide and retain a range of high quality formal recreational and cultural facilities according to need
- To improve access to existing formal and informal recreational facilities and to natural open space for all people through the provision of appropriate infrastructure and improved marketing
- To provide space for recreation close to people's homes in new developments

The Themes 5

Maintaining Community Safety and Reducing the Fear of Crime

Broad Considerations

5.39 LDF policies should:

- Ensure that the way places are designed and laid out are safe (in terms of road safety and personal security), accessible and allow for the ability to move, see, hear and communicate effectively, creating natural surveillance
- Consider the likely impact of development on crime and anti-social behaviour, not only in the urban environment but also in areas of the countryside open to the public

Local Issues

Crime Rates vs. the Fear of Crime

5.40 The crime rate in Tunbridge Wells Borough is low in comparison to national figures and those of other Kent Districts. In spite of this, there is a perception amongst residents that crime has increased - 57% of respondents to a survey into the impact of CCTV believed Tunbridge Wells Borough had crime and disorder problems. This perception may lead to a fear of crime, even where the actual threat is very low. It is, nevertheless, important to tackle the fear of crime due to the negative impact this has on people's quality of life. When we examine the reasons behind the increasing fear of crime, it is clear that the LDF could make some contribution to its reduction through careful planning and good urban design measures.

Reasons for the Fear of Crime

5.41 The Borough's Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008 commends the generally low and declining crime rates in the Borough. It recognises, however, that the persistence of two types of crime in particular, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage, serve to undermine efforts to reduce the fear of crime. These types of crimes are highly visible and tend to create an impression of disorganisation, which has been found to increase the fear of crime.

What can the LDF do?

5.42 Disorder and damage-related crimes tend to be committed disproportionately in particular locations such as town centres. Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre has the highest level of recorded crime in the Borough, largely as a consequence of its extensive retail and night time economies. When planning for development here, and in other similar locations, the LDF should take account of the impact of allowing concentrations of certain types of uses, such as drinking establishments, on crime.

5.43 The other primary role for the LDF is to encourage designs which minimise the opportunities for crimes in all locations and all types of development. Designs that facilitate natural surveillance (where car parks are overlooked and dark alleyways are avoided, for example) should be standard.

5 The Themes

Crime

Question 14

Do you agree that using appropriate design measures ("designing out crime") will be effective in reducing crime and the fear of crime? If you can think of any other measures that would help to reduce this, please describe them in the comments box.

Objectives

- To reduce both the opportunities for committing crime and the fear of crime through careful planning and good inclusive urban design measures

Transport - Getting Around the Borough

Broad Considerations

5.44 LDF policies should:

- Promote sustainable travel choices for people and freight to reduce dependence on the car and lorry
- Facilitate sustainable access to key services and facilities to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, by the careful allocation of land
- Seek to tackle congestion and introduce traffic management measures in urban and rural areas
- Achieve and maintain a high level of accessibility and provide high quality interchange facilities between all modes of transport in line with Tunbridge Wells' regional hub status
- Ensure that infrastructure and services are provided to support new development

Local Issues

Responsibility for Transport

5.45 The Local Authority does not control the transport system and complementary transportation and land use planning strategy is achieved through co-ordination with the relevant authorities. The Department for Transport (via the Highways Agency) is responsible for Trunk Roads such as the A21. Construction, improvement and maintenance of other statutorily adopted highways are the responsibility of Kent County Council, as Highway Authority.

5.46 The rail infrastructure and services are the responsibility of the Department for Transport, Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies. Bus services are provided by private transport operators, some of which are supported or procured by Kent County Council or through planning agreements. Despite this, the Local Authority has a significant role to play, whether in terms of local transport provision required to serve new development, to safeguard routes for transport infrastructure, or to set out transport and parking proposals for settlements where necessary.

Congestion and Car Parking

5.47 Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre is accessed via five main routes, including the A26 as the main north-south route, the A264 which runs east-west and the A267 which provides access from the south east. All routes are heavily congested during peak times and the A26 through Southborough remains congested throughout the day. Many vehicles will only be occupied by a single person, which is not the best utilisation of finite road space. Furthermore, the school run adds significantly to congestion.

5.48 Car parks within Royal Tunbridge Wells are close to capacity. Considerable peak hour congestion causes both environmental impacts, e.g. air pollution, as well as economic impacts, e.g. people may be deterred from travelling to Royal Tunbridge Wells to shop due to congestion. The LDF should minimise the need to travel by private car by enhancing public transport provision and sustainable transport options.

Public Transport, Walking and Cycling

5.49 While there are good rail services from Royal Tunbridge Wells to Tonbridge and London, facilities for cycling and public transport are poor and this is borne out by low public transport usage and low walking and cycling rates. For example, only 1.71% of people coming into Royal Tunbridge Wells do so by bus and only 0.67% of people do so by cycle. Therefore, there is

5 The Themes

significant opportunity through various means, such as Travel Plans, to increase the use of public transport services, as well as facilities for both pedestrians and cyclists. In turn, this will help to reduce pollution levels and cut congestion.

Movement of Freight

5.50 Due to the absence of any dedicated freight lines/sidings and the position of Royal Tunbridge Wells on the strategic highway network, movements of freight into, and through, the town by road are high. This further adds to congestion levels and pollution. Therefore, the LDF should seek to address these issues, through measures such as promoting a Quality Freight Partnership that promotes efficient and effective distribution of freight movement.

Rural Transport

5.51 Transport issues in the three rural towns (Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst) and the wider rural areas are very different from those in Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough. Public transport coverage is poorer in the rural towns and rural areas. With a much smaller range of services and fewer local employment opportunities, local residents must travel much further and often these journeys are undertaken by car. While it is recognised that the car will remain the dominant mode of transport, particularly in the rural areas, the LDF must encourage and promote the uptake of sustainable transport modes where possible. This includes using public transport facilities and improving both pedestrian and cycle facilities where possible.

The Themes 5

Transport

To what extent do you agree that the following measures would be effective in reducing congestion in Royal Tunbridge Wells/Southborough? Please state which option you think would be most effective in the corresponding comments box.

Question 15a

Addressing deficiencies in the frequency, coverage and quality of bus services.

Question 15b

Addressing deficiencies in the frequency, coverage and quality of train services.

Question 15c

Improving cycling facilities.

Question 15d

Improving footways.

Question 15e

Improving the interchanges between bus, rail, car and cycle facilities.

Question 15f

Continuing to pursue the provision of Park and Ride facilities.

Question 15g

Minor highway improvements (e.g. junction improvements where feasible).

Question 15h

Major highway improvements (e.g. A21 dualling, Colts Hill improvements).

5 The Themes

Question 15j

Introducing congestion charging.

Question 15k

Significantly increasing car parking charges.

Transport

Question 16

Do you agree that there may be measures, other than those suggested in Question Transport 1, that would persuade you to travel into Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre without your car? Please specify what measures in the comments box.

Objectives

- To promote the role of Tunbridge Wells/Tonbridge Regional Hub
- To secure necessary infrastructure enhancements to support development at strategic and local levels
- To address congestion and pollution by reducing the need to travel through careful development planning and to increase the use of public transport, cycling and walking where travel remains necessary
- To address existing barriers to use of sustainable transport modes
- To seek to reduce car use through initiatives such as car sharing, whilst recognising that the car will remain the primary mode of transport for many residents, particularly those in the rural areas
- To ensure that car parking policies serve the aims of sustainable transport strategies, such as increasing vehicle parking at rail stations
- To improve accessibility to all services, particularly for those who may need them most, but are least able to access them

Meeting the Need for Housing

Broad Considerations

5.52 LDF policies should:

- Provide sufficient housing to meet strategic requirements set out in the South East Plan
- Illustrate how the housing land supply will be made up for 15 years from adoption of the LDF
- Aim to meet national and regional targets of at least 60% of new housing on previously developed land and through re-use and conversion of existing stock
- Meet current and future demand for housing
- Locate new housing in accordance with the spatial strategy in the South East Plan
- Ensure that new housing is located sustainably in regard to employment, community services, retail, leisure and a choice of modes of transport
- Ensure that the national target of 30 dwellings per hectare, and the regional overall target of 40 dwellings per hectare, are met
- Provide a mix of dwelling sizes and types appropriate to meet the needs of different types of household over the Plan period
- Meet the regional target of 35% affordable housing and set local targets for the amount and type of affordable housing
- Ensure that new housing is built to high design and energy efficiency standards
- Set out the Local Planning Authority's approach to managing delivery of housing and previously developed land targets, including phasing and contingency arrangements

Local Issues

5.53 In recent years, the Borough has had a plentiful housing land supply, principally from small, previously developed sites, conversion of existing houses and redevelopment of existing houses at higher densities. A large proportion of this development has taken place on small sites that were not previously identified and allocated through the development plan, but strategic housing requirements have been met and significantly exceeded.

5.54 Whilst this has meant that the Borough Council has been able to avoid release of sensitive greenfield sites, the small size of many sites coming forward means that few sites have been large enough to trigger policy thresholds for the provision of affordable housing. This has made it difficult to address local affordability problems.

5.55 Government planning policy now requires that a five-year supply of identified housing sites be maintained on a rolling basis. This will make it difficult to continue to rely upon previously developed windfall sites.

5.56 Much of the previously developed housing land supply has been achieved through conversion or redevelopment of commercial and business land and premises, which has led to concern about retention of the Borough's economic development and employment base, to balance the provision of housing in a sustainable way. A balance of housing and employment is not only essential to maintain the economic health of the Borough for the longer term, but also provides the opportunity for people to live and work locally rather than undertaking long commuting journeys. An appropriate balance must be achieved through the LDF process.

5.57 The amount of previously developed land which can be identified in the LDF for housing is therefore finite and some greenfield release to meet strategic housing requirements may be necessary.

5 The Themes

Housing

Question 17

To what extent do you agree that new housing should be provided, as far as possible, on previously developed land?

Housing

Question 18

To what extent do you agree that increasing the density of housing (subject to good quality design and layout) is preferable to taking more greenfield land and countryside to meet housing requirements?

Housing

Do you agree that open space should be provided with each of the following types of dwelling? In the corresponding comments box, please specify which of the following types of open space would be most appropriate in each case: private balcony/yard; private garden; or communal outdoor space.

Question 19a

Flats.

Question 19b

Small houses (1-2 bedrooms).

Question 19c

Larger houses (3+ bedrooms).

The Themes 5

Housing

Question 20

To what extent do you agree that it is important for new housing to have private/on-site car parking, where communal or on-road spaces are available?

Affordable Housing

What is affordable housing?

Affordable housing is housing provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It includes *social rented* and *intermediate* housing.

Social Rented housing is rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and registered social landlords, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.

Intermediate Housing is housing at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market price or rents.

5.58 The Borough Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) indicates that house prices in the Borough continue to be high in relation to local incomes, making it difficult for first time buyers to either purchase or rent a property. The most recent Local Housing Needs Study (2005) indicated that some 66% of affordable housing need in the Borough was located in the urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough. The remaining 33% was in the rural areas, including the small rural towns of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst.

5.59 The study identified a need of 406 new affordable homes per annum, which exceeds the overall strategic requirement and also the likely sources of funding available. For this reason, it has been necessary to set a more realistic target of 500 new affordable homes over a five-year period in the Borough Housing Strategy.

5.60 It is recognised that this will not meet the shortfall in affordable housing and the LDF will need to address this. Currently, the Borough Council seeks 30% affordable housing on developments of 15 dwellings or over. Council policy also allows for affordable housing schemes to be built outside existing built up areas in exceptional circumstances if this is the only way of meeting local needs, such schemes are known as Rural Exception Schemes.

5.61 The LDF may consider setting a new overall target for affordable housing provision to 2026 and new targets for the size, type and tenure of affordable housing and the site size threshold on which it is to be sought. The Local Housing Needs Study recommends that the 15 dwelling threshold is revised and that the percentage sought be raised to 40%. It may be appropriate to use different thresholds for different parts of the Borough.

5 The Themes

Housing

Currently, developers are only required to provide affordable housing where the site is capable of accommodating 15 or more dwellings. To what extent do you agree that this should be changed to the following suggested thresholds?

Question 21a

Three or more dwellings.

Question 21b

Five or more dwellings.

Question 21c

10 or more dwellings.

Question 21d

15 or more dwellings, as at present.

Question 21e

Variable threshold, depending on whether the site is in a town or village.

The Themes 5

Housing

Currently, on sites that trigger the (15 dwelling) site threshold for affordable housing provision, 30% of the total number of new houses built must be affordable. To what extent do you agree that this should be changed to the following suggested percentages?

Question 22a

30%, as at present.

Question 22b

35%, as per regional target.

Question 22c

40%, as recommended by Housing Needs Study.

Question 22d

Variable, based on local needs.

Housing

Question 23

In addition to providing affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites, to what extent do you agree that it is appropriate to specifically allocate similar sites for this purpose?

Household Type and Size

5.62 In 2001, some 70% of the Borough's existing housing stock was larger family homes (three or more bedrooms). Population projections indicate that household size in the Borough will continue to decrease from an average of 2.3 persons per household at 2006 to just over two persons by 2026. One-person households are likely to increase by some 30% over the same period and will be the most common type of household in the Borough by 2026. This indicates a continuing strong need for smaller dwellings, particularly if they are to be within the financial means of single people. It is recognised, however, that there remains a need for large *affordable* dwellings.

5 The Themes

Housing

To what extent do you agree that the identified need for small dwellings in the Borough should be met by the following?

Question 24a

Building new flats.

Question 24b

Sub-dividing existing large houses into flats.

Question 24c

Building small houses.

5.63 Population projections also highlight the sharp growth in the proportion of elderly people expected to live in the in the Borough by 2026. In particular, the 65-84 year old age group is expected to increase from 15,400 in 2006 to 21,700 in 2026 - an increase of 40.7%. The population of over 85 year olds is expected to increase by 47% in the same period, from 2,100 people in 2006 to 3,000 people in 2026.

5.64 Whilst this trend is not unusual in relation to the rest of Kent, it must be recognised and provided for through the LDF. Specialist housing for the elderly, and/or adaptable dwellings will be needed in locations where services and facilities can be easily accessed.

Gypsies and Travellers

5.65 Historically, the Borough has had relatively low numbers of gypsies and travellers resorting to or residing in it and the Gypsy and Traveller Survey (January 2007) indicates that requirements over the next five years are likely to remain very low. The South East Plan will allocate strategic requirements to each district in due course, but in the interim, the Borough Council has a recently-adopted criteria-based policy for Gypsy and Traveller applications that appears adequate for the limited demand.

The Themes 5

Housing

To what extent do you agree that either of the following approaches should be used to meet the need for Gypsy and Traveller Sites?

Question 25a

Allocate specific sites for Gypsies and Travellers.

Question 25b

Respond to individual applications using a criteria-based approach, as at present.

Objectives

- To meet our strategic housing requirements, 5,000 homes should be built in the Borough in the period 2006-2026 (South East Plan, Policy H1 - subject to revision following South East Plan Examination in Public)
- To prioritise the use of previously developed land
- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home, which is capable of being adapted to meet changing personal needs
- To meet affordable housing needs as far as practicable
- To promote safe, sustainable communities by facilitating mixed communities, meeting the specific housing needs of identified groups and utilising good quality urban design
- To ensure an appropriate housing mix, taking account of the Borough's small household size and ageing population
- To make the most efficient use of land and existing housing stock

6 Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough

Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough

6.1 The Theme sections in Chapter 5 set out the physical constraints and policy considerations which have to be balanced against the development requirements of the Borough over the next 20 years. Some fundamental decisions have to be made about how this balance is to be achieved.

Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough 6

Spatial Strategy

To what extent do you agree that the following approaches to development are acceptable, given the issues identified in this document? Please give brief reasons for your answers in the corresponding comments boxes.

Question 26a

Building in the Green Belt.

Question 26b

Building in areas subject to AONB and/or SLA landscape designations.

Question 26c

Building in areas subject to SSSI, SNCI, SLNCV and LNR nature conservation and biodiversity designations.

Question 26d

Allowing some types of development (e.g. business and non-residential uses) to be accommodated in areas that are vulnerable to flooding, subject to flood risk analysis and suitable mitigation measures.

Question 26e

Allowing residential development to be accommodated in areas that are vulnerable to flooding, subject to flood risk analysis and suitable mitigation measures.

Question 26f

Continuing to allow the intensification of development within existing towns and villages, whilst respecting both conservation areas and listed buildings.

Question 26g

Allowing some expansion into the countryside around villages with good existing services and public transport facilities.

6 Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough

Question 26h

Building on public open spaces within existing housing areas (e.g. wide verges, spaces between dwellings that are not formal playing areas, or private gardens).

Question 26j

Redevelopment of existing houses with large gardens for higher density housing development.

6.2 Taking account of the considerations presented in the Theme Sections, several possible options emerge for a spatial strategy that could potentially accommodate the development required. Each has different strengths and weaknesses in terms of sustainability and best fit with the national and regional planning policy context. Please see the accompanying initial Sustainability Appraisal for more details.

Possible Spatial Development Strategies

Option 1

CONCENTRATION OF DEVELOPMENT AT THE MAIN URBAN AREAS OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS AND SOUTHBOROUGH

This could be achieved by meeting development requirements firstly through previously developed land:

- within main urban areas
- within small rural towns
- within villages

followed by:

- major extension(s) to the main urban area
- minor extensions to small rural towns and villages to meet local needs housing only

Strengths, Weaknesses and Sustainability of Option 1:

Strengths

- Would maximise the advantages of Regional Hub status for Tunbridge Wells
- Maximises the opportunities for re-use of previously developed land
- Maximises efficiency in the use of infrastructure and offers the greatest opportunity for the provision of additional infrastructure
- Focuses on the opportunities for town centre regeneration in Royal Tunbridge Wells
- Focuses on reinforcing the main economic base in the Borough
- Focuses on the area with the greatest identified need for affordable housing

Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough 6

- At a borough-wide level, offers the most potential for the close proximity to most jobs, shops, services and new housing; and would reduce the need to travel and the length of journeys, particularly by car; and maximises the viability of public transport
- The potential to enhance the most deprived areas in the Borough

Weaknesses

- Likely to involve greenfield land take around the town and pressure to review the Green Belt boundary in the medium term
- Impact on both the built and natural environment of the town
- Likely to involve higher density development
- Focuses development and infrastructure on the main urban area, rather than being pro-active at smaller centres
- May be less able to address affordable housing and other local issues in the rest of the Borough

Option 2

MAIN FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT AT THE MAIN URBAN AREAS OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS AND SOUTHBOROUGH, WITH MODEST DEVELOPMENT AT THE SMALL RURAL TOWNS OF PADDOCK WOOD, CRANBROOK AND HAWKHURST

This could be achieved by meeting development requirements firstly through previously developed land:

- within main urban areas
- within small rural towns
- within villages

followed by:

- extensions to the main urban areas and small rural towns
- minor extensions to small villages to meet identified local needs only

Strengths, Weaknesses and Sustainability of Option 2:

Strengths

- Offers some opportunity to capitalise on the benefits of Regional Hub status at Royal Tunbridge Wells
- At a borough-wide level, the majority of new housing development would be in close proximity to most jobs, shops, services and new housing and would reduce the need to travel and the length of journeys, particularly by car and maximises the viability of public transport
- Opportunity to provide some local housing at the small rural towns with proximity to a reasonable level of service provision
- Paddock Wood is the only other settlement with a good rail link
- Paddock Wood is the only other settlement with opportunity for major employment development
- Opportunity to reinforce the economy and regenerate the centres of the small rural towns
- Likely to result in less greenfield land take at Tunbridge Wells

6 Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough

Weaknesses

- Cranbrook and Hawkhurst are within Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape
- Paddock Wood is subject to flood risk
- At a borough-wide level, more greenfield land could be taken, as the small rural towns have limited amounts of previously developed land
- May detract from the use of previously developed land and regeneration of the Regional Hub at Tunbridge Wells

Option 3

DISPERSE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH'S SETTLEMENTS

This could be achieved by meeting development requirements firstly through previously developed land:

- within main urban areas
- within small rural towns
- within villages

followed by:

- modest extensions to meet the needs of each settlement

Strengths, Weaknesses and Sustainability of Option 3:

Strengths

- Opportunity for greater housing choice in rural areas
- Possibility of improved services and easier access to them for some rural areas
- May promote stronger rural communities and support the local economy

Weaknesses

- Very significant greenfield development in Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- At a borough-wide level, the majority of new housing development would not be in close proximity to most jobs, shops, services and so would increase the need to travel, and the length of journeys, particularly by car. The viability of public transport is questionable
- The scale of development in any settlement may be insufficient to make new services and facilities viable
- May detract from the use of previously developed land and regeneration of the Regional Hub at Tunbridge Wells

Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough 6

Option 4

NEW/EXPANDED TOWN

This could be achieved by meeting development requirements firstly through previously developed land:

- within main urban areas
- within small rural towns
- within villages

followed by:

- major new expansion in a sustainable location
- minor extensions to small villages to meet identified local needs only

Strengths, Weaknesses and Sustainability of Option 4:

Strengths

- Potentially few landscape impacts than other options, depending on location of development. Paddock Wood, for example, is relatively unconstrained by landscape designations
- Opportunity for some lower density development
- May allow greater delivery of affordable housing
- Scope for mixed use development and a range of employment opportunities
- Some settlements, such as Paddock Wood, have good rail links
- May afford a higher level of services and facilities for some parts of the Borough

Weaknesses

- May detract from the use of previously developed land and regeneration of the Regional Hub at Tunbridge Wells
- High greenfield land take would be required
- At a borough-wide level, it is unlikely that a smaller settlement could provide the higher order services provided in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Accessing them elsewhere increases the need to travel and length of journeys, particularly by car. The viability of public transport is questionable
- The local road network capacity may not be adequate for this scale of development in certain locations
- Some parts of the Borough, particularly Paddock Wood, would require the use of flood mitigation measures to satisfy the Environment Agency
- There are potential difficulties of integration of new land uses and population with a pre-existing settlement

6 Options for a Spatial Strategy for the Borough

Spatial Strategy

To what extent do you agree that each of the following Options would provide an appropriate Spatial Strategy for the Borough? Please give reasons for your answers in the corresponding comments boxes.

Question 27a

Option 1: Concentration of development at the main urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough.

Question 27b

Option 2: Main focus of development at the main urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, with modest development at the small rural towns of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst.

Question 27c

Option 3: Disperse development throughout the Borough's settlements.

Question 27d

Option 4: New/expanded town.

If you wish to suggest any sites within the Borough (whether previously developed land, buildings or greenfield sites) that the Borough Council should consider for future development when preparing the Core Strategy, please write to, or email, the Borough Council giving brief details of site location, area (in hectares) and potential preferred use.

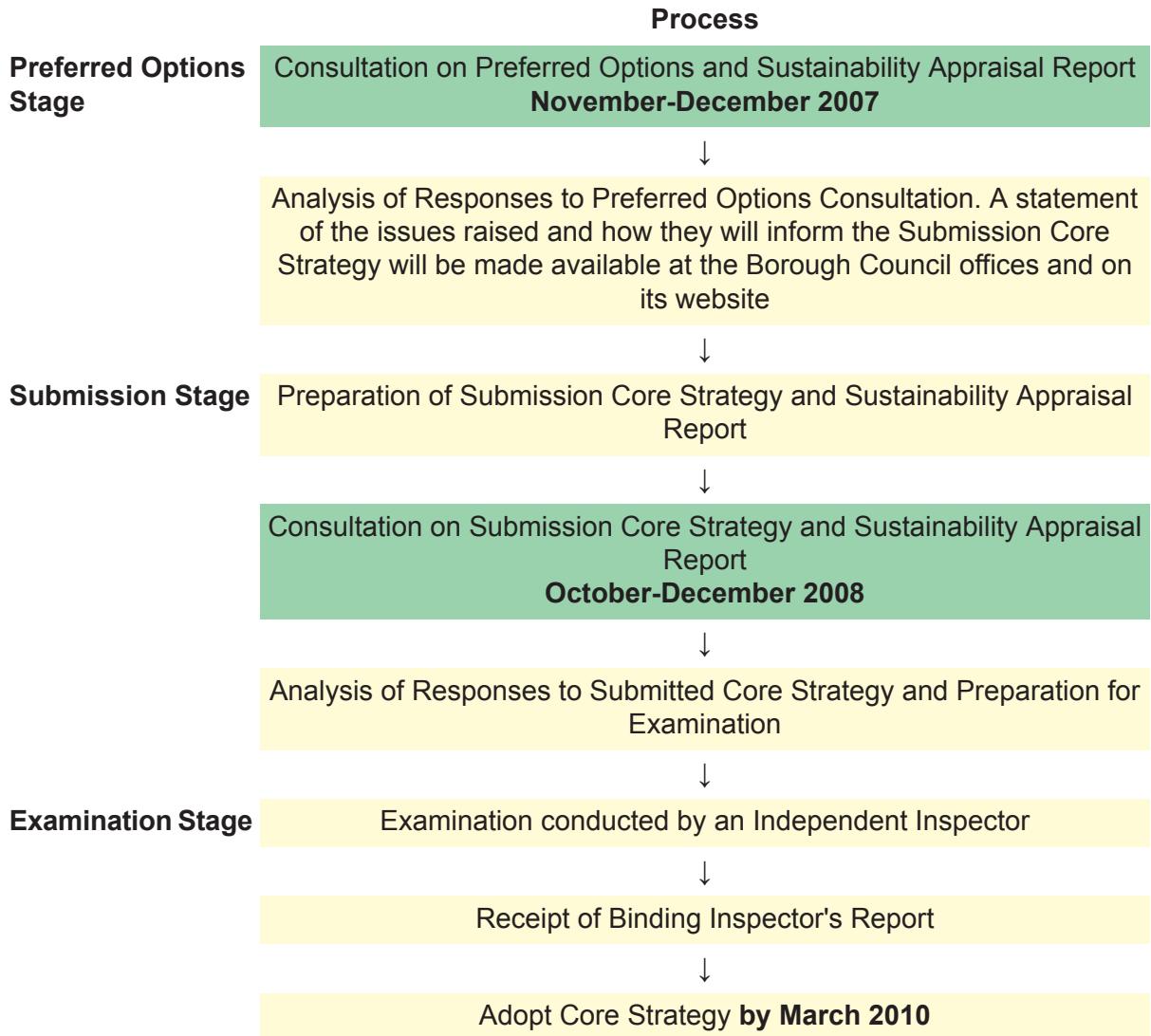
Please note that specific site allocations will be made in separate Site Allocations Development Plan Documents.

Next Steps 7

Next Steps

7.1 Consultation on this Issues and Options Stage will close on **02 April 2007**, after which your comments will be analysed to inform the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy. A statement of the main issues raised during consultation will be made available at the Town Hall and on our website as soon as possible after the close of the consultation period.

7.2 The diagram below sets out the future stages for producing the Core Strategy in more detail. You will be able to get involved at the stages that are shaded green.



Next Steps

7.3 Thank you for taking the time to participate in the production of the Core Strategy. If you require any additional information or assistance, please contact the Planning Policy Team using the details provided at the beginning of this document.

7 Next Steps

Glossary and Abbreviations 1

For the purpose of this report the following terms and definitions apply:

Glossary and Abbreviations	
AONB	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) and, along with National Parks, they represent the finest examples of countryside in England and Wales
Adopted	There are many stages in the production of planning policy documents such as the South East Plan and Core Strategy. In the case of the Core Strategy, the final stage is where the document is 'adopted' by the Council
Affordable Housing	Housing provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market
Agricultural Diversification	Activities involving a change of use of land, or buildings, or new development not falling within the definition of agriculture).
Air Quality Management Order	Imposed in areas where there is a likelihood that the air quality objectives set out in the Air Quality Regulations 2000 will not be met.
Conservation Area	An area designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as being of special architectural or historic interest, the character and interest of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance
DPD	Development Plan Document – A Local Development Document which forms part of the statutory development plan, including the Core Strategy, Proposals Map and Area Action Plans
Employment Land	Land reserved for industrial and business use awaiting development
Green Belt	Green Belt is undeveloped land, which has been specifically designated for long-term protection. It is a nationally important designation. Green Belt land exists to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land free from development
Greenfield Land	Land (which can be a defined site) that has not been previously developed
LDL	Local Development Document – comprising two main types: Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, which together form the Local Development Framework
LDF	Local Development Framework – the portfolio or folder of Local Development Documents, which set out the planning policy framework for the district. The Core Strategy is a Local Development Document
Listed Building	A building included on a list of buildings of architectural or historic interest, compiled by the Secretary of State, under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
LNR	Local Nature Reserve -habitats of local or regional significance that make a useful contribution both to nature conservation and to the opportunities for the community to see, learn about, and enjoy wildlife.
PDL	Previously Developed Land (or brownfield land) - land that is, or has been, occupied by a permanent structure and associated fixed surface infrastructure. Agricultural and forestry buildings are excluded.

1 Glossary and Abbreviations

Glossary and Abbreviations	
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance – Guidance documents which set out national planning policy
PPS	Planning Policy Statement – Guidance documents which set out national planning policy. These are gradually replacing PPGs
Previously Developed Land	A piece of previously developed land or buildings that is abandoned or underused. According to national planning guidance, residential gardens are regarded as previously developed land
Rural Exception Site	Small sites to be used specifically for affordable housing in rural communities that would not normally be used for housing, because they are subject to policies of restraint. Rural exception sites should only be used for affordable housing in perpetuity. (PPS3)
Rural Fringe	Land between built up areas and the Green Belt that has been reserved to meet longer-term development needs.
Saved	Certain documents, such as the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, are ‘saved’ for the time being. This means that the policies in that document have to be taken into consideration
SEERA	South East England Regional Assembly
South East Plan	This is the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East Region. The Core Strategy must be in general conformity with it.
Spatial Planning	System to integrate land use planning policies with the policies of other plans, programmes and strategies, which also influence the nature of places and how they function.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document – a Local Development Document that is part of the Local Development Framework but does not form part of the statutory development plan. SPDs elaborate upon policies and proposals in a Development Plan Document or ‘saved’ policies and include development briefs and guidance documents
SLA	Special Landscape Area - strategically important landscape character areas identified at the County level. Designated for their high scenic quality and distinctive local character.
SLNCV	Site of Local Conservation Value - sites designated high-grade habitat value, within, or adjacent to, built up areas where the greatest development pressure exists
SNCI	Site of Nature Conservation Interest - sites designated by Kent Wildlife Trust for wildlife interest of county-wide significance
Sustainable development	Development that simultaneously ensures social progress that recognises the needs of everyone; protects the environment; makes prudent use of natural resources and maintains high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest – the best sites for wildlife and geological features in England as designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Glossary and Abbreviations 1

Glossary and Abbreviations	
Windfall Sites	Windfall sites are those which have not been specifically identified as available in the local plan process. They comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.

Glossary and Abbreviations

2 Constraints Maps

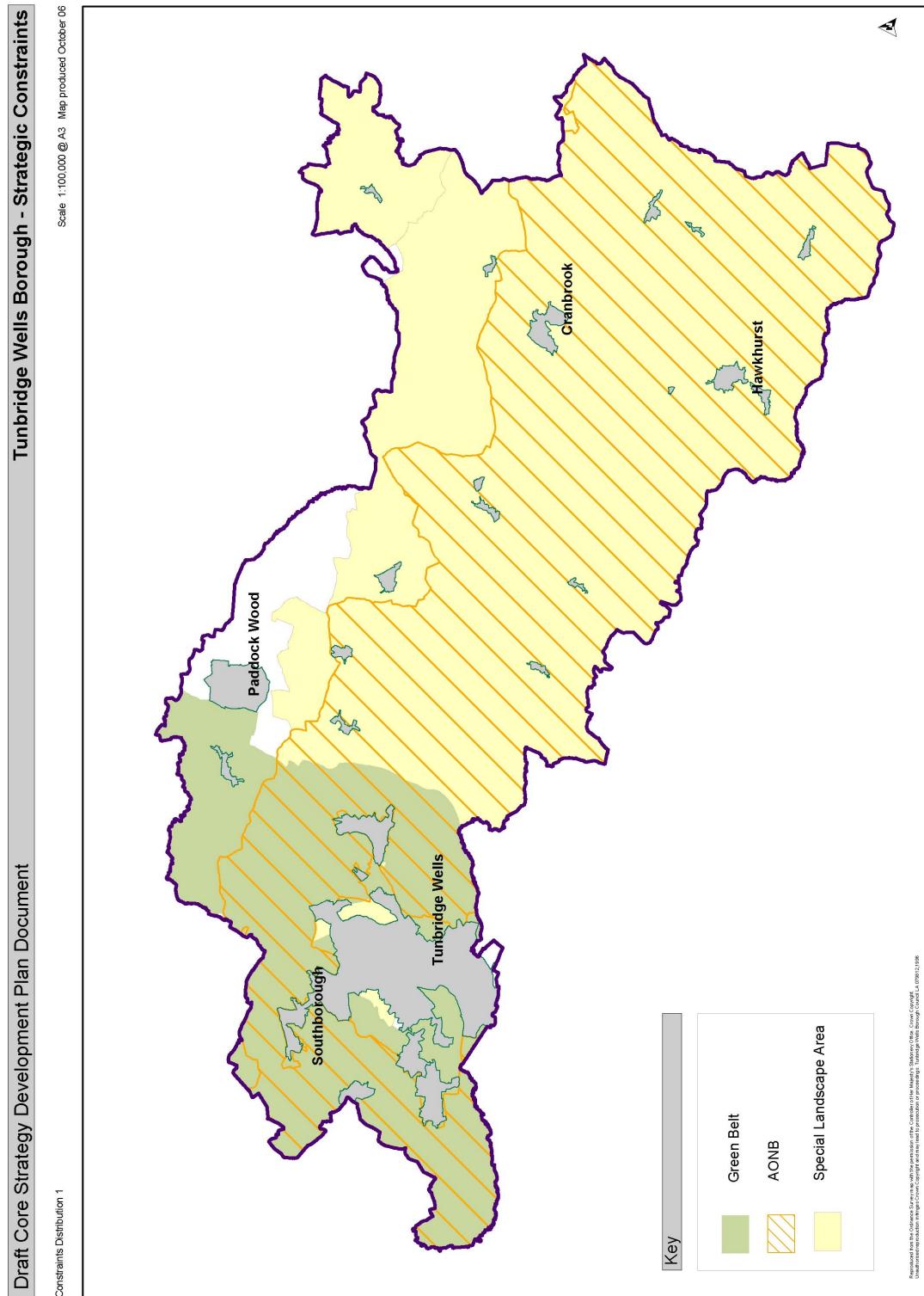


Figure 4 Landscape Designations: AONB and SLA Designations

Constraints Maps 2

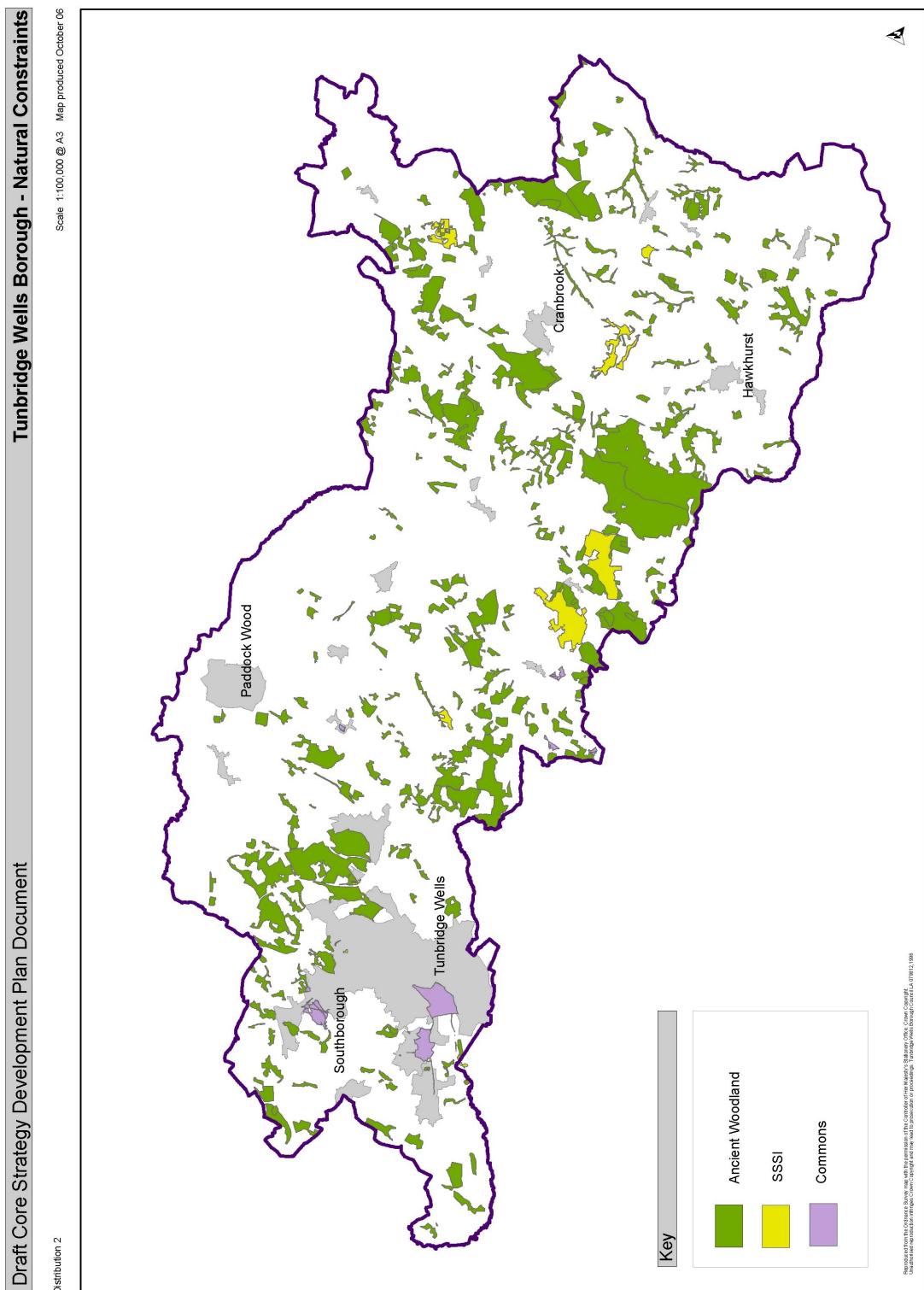


Figure 5 Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Designations: SSSIs, SNCIs, SLNCVs and LNRs

2 Constraints Maps

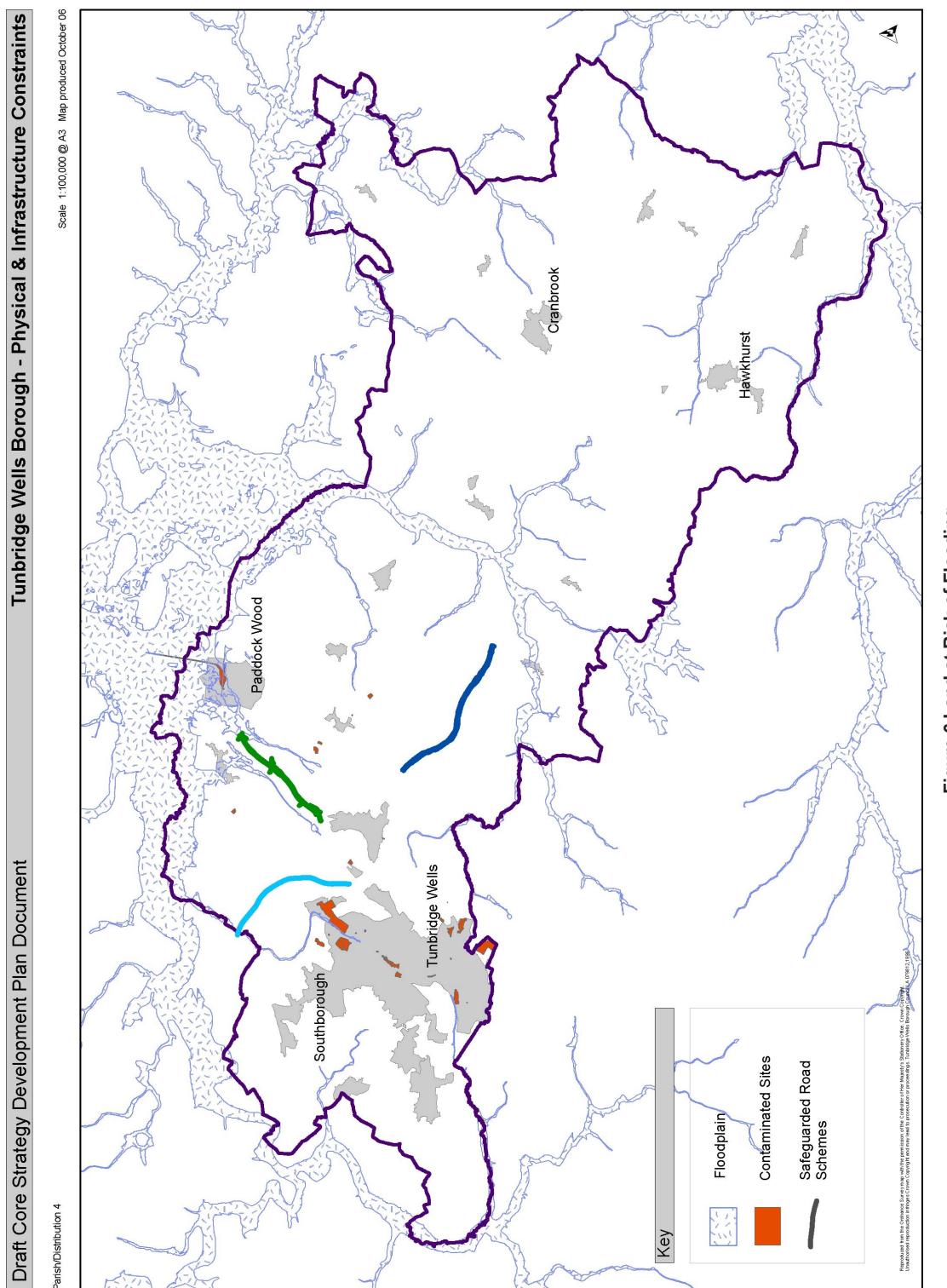


Figure 6 Land at Risk of Flooding

Constraints Maps 2

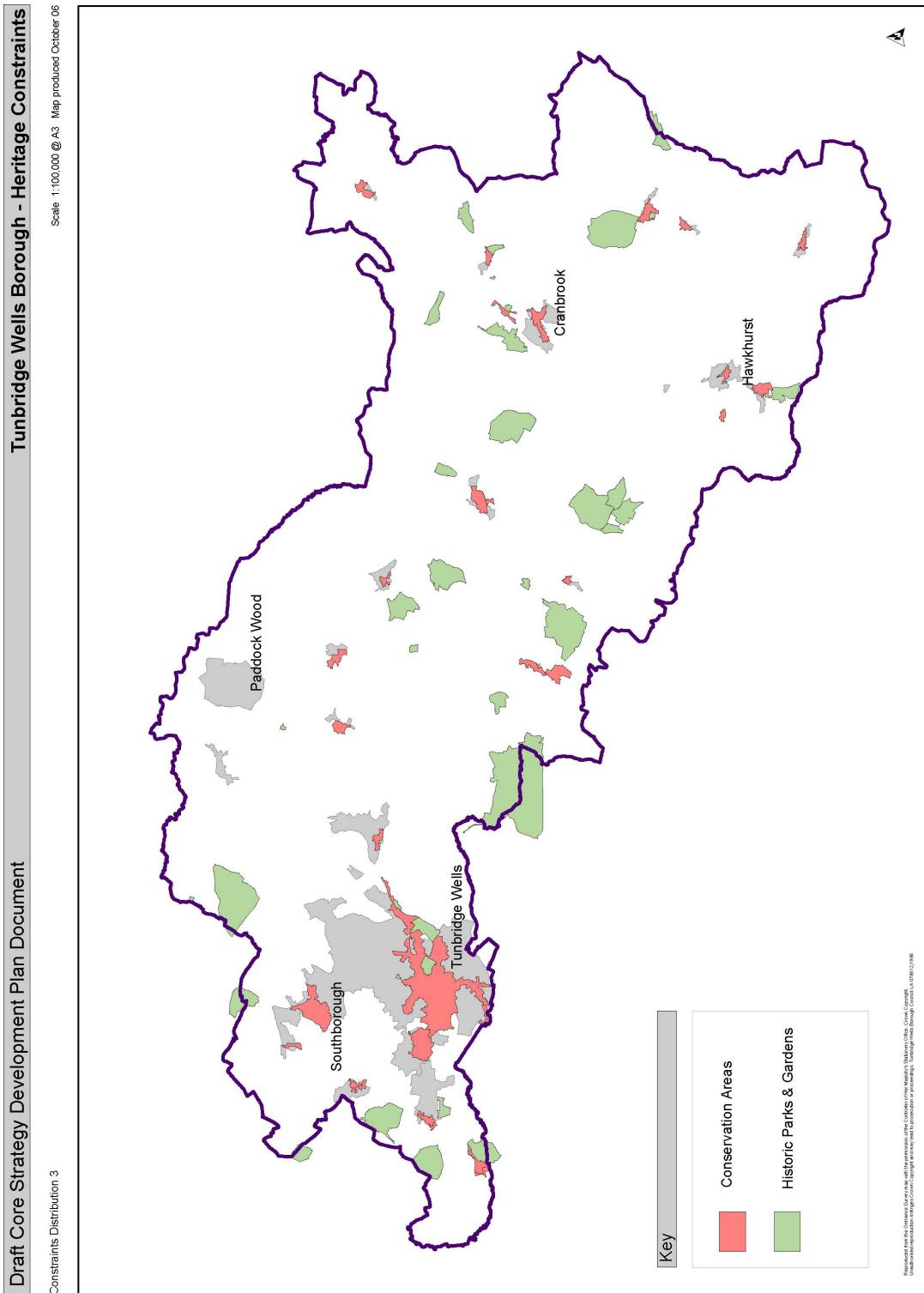


Figure 7 The Built Environment: Historic Parks & Gardens and Conservations Areas

3 Bibliography

Bibliography

DOCUMENT	WEBSITE LINK
National Planning Policy	
<u>Planning Policy Statements</u>	
PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1)	PPS1 - www.communities.gov.uk
Consultation - Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change - Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1	PPS1 Supplement - www.communities.gov.uk
PPS3: Housing	PPS3 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPS6: Planning for Town Centres	PPS6 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas	PPS7 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation	PPS9 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control	PPS23 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPS25: Development and Flood Risk	PPS25 - www.communities.gov.uk
<u>Planning Policy Guidance Notes</u>	
PPG2: Green Belts	PPG2 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPG4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms	PPG4 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPG13: Transport	PPG13 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment	PPG15 - www.communities.gov.uk
PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation	PPG17 - www.communities.gov.uk
Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17	PPG17 Companion Guide - www.communities.gov.uk
Regional Planning Policy	
Draft South East Plan	www.southeast-ra.gov.uk
County Documents	
Kent & Medway Structure Plan	www.kmsp.org.uk
Kent Minerals & Waste Development Framework	www.kent.gov.uk/environment/planninganddevelopment/mineralsandwaste/
Borough Council Documents	
Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan, adopted 2006	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Sustainable Community Plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough 2006-2011	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Bibliography 3

DOCUMENT	WEBSITE LINK
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Leisure Strategy: 'Delivering for the Future' 2006-2012	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Tunbridge Wells Borough Housing Needs Survey 2005	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Tunbridge Wells Borough Employment Land Study 2006	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Tunbridge Wells Borough Retail Study 2006	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Tunbridge Wells Borough Transport Strategy 2003	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Draft Tunbridge Wells Borough Housing Strategy 2006-2011	www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Gypsy and Traveller Survey 2007	Completion anticipated March 2007

Bibliography