

Environmental Statement

Volume 2: Appendices (Chapter 6)



Appendix 6.1

Socio-Economic Planning Policy and Guidance

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National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 6.1. National planning policy is contained principally in the NPPF (December 2024)¹. At the centre of the NPPF is the principle of sustainable development, in which the planning system should 'contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner' (Paragraph 7).
- 6.2. There are three overarching objectives of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.
- 6.3. The economic objective is *'to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure'* (Paragraph 8).
- 6.4. The NPPF states that local plans and spatial development strategies should address relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains) and states:

"Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued. Where significant adverse impacts are unavoidable, suitable mitigation measures should be proposed (or, where this is not possible, compensatory measures should be considered)." (Paragraph 33).
- 6.5. The NPPF requires planning authorities to work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area (Paragraph 39). Section 6 of the NPPF 'Building a strong, competitive economy' states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential." (Paragraph 85).
- 6.6. Furthermore, Paragraph 87 acknowledges that *'planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors'* stating:

"This includes making provision for:

 - a) *Clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries (including data centres and grid connections);*

- b) *Storage and distribution operation at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation; and*
- c) *the explanation of modernisation of other industries of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience.” (Paragraph 87)*

National Planning Practice Guidance

6.7. The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on a range of different topics. The ‘Housing and Economic Needs Assessment’ PPG² is of relevance to the socio-economic assessment providing guidance to policy making authorities on how to determine the type of employment land that is needed. To understand current and potential future requirements, authorities are required to assess:

- *“The best fit functional economic market area;*
- *The existing stock of land for employment uses within the area;*
- *The recent pattern of employment land supply and loss...;*
- *Evidence of market demand...;*
- *Wider market signals relating to economic growth, diversification and innovation; and*
- *Any evidence of market failure – such as physical or ownership constraints that prevent the employment site being used effectively.” (Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 2a-026-20190220)*

Local Planning Policy

Ashford Local Plan 2030³

6.8. The Ashford Local Plan 2030 was adopted in February 2019 and establishes a policy and delivery framework that provides guidance to ensure that the Council's planning and land use aims for the Borough are achieved up to 2030.

6.9. The Plan's Vision states:

“Ashford Borough will meet its housing and employment needs, and take account of the needs of investors, through the provision of new high quality development forming attractive places, with the necessary supporting infrastructure and services, and in sustainable and accessible locations that take account of the Borough's environmental constraints.” (Page 8)

6.10. Local Plan policies of relevance to the socio-economic assessment include:

- **Policy SP1: Strategic Objectives**, identifies a number of strategic objectives to deliver the Council's Vision, including:
 - a) *“To focus development at accessible and sustainable locations which utilise existing infrastructure, facilities and services wherever possible and makes best use of suitable brownfield opportunities;*

h) To provide a range of employment opportunities to respond to the needs of business, support the growing population and attract inward investment."

- **Policy SP3: Strategic Approach to Economic Development** states that "job growth and economic prosperity will be supported in order to enable the achievement of a sustainable economy with the intention to deliver 63 hectares of new employment land and a total of 11,100 jobs in the Borough between 2014 to 2030."
- **Policy EMP2: Loss or Redevelopment of Employment Sites and Premises** states that "proposals for the loss of redevelopment of existing employment sites or premises (outside the town centre) will not be permitted unless.... c) the premises are replaced with similar facilities within the existing site or elsewhere in the Ashford urban area, providing at least the overall amount of developable B class employment floorspace that would be lost to redevelopment."

References

- ¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (December 2024) National Planning Policy Framework
- ² Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (March 2015) Housing and Economic Needs Assessment – Revised 20/02/2019 and 22/07/2019
- ³ Ashford Borough Council (February 2019) Ashford Local Plan 2030