

# General Information Document on Town and Country Planning, including Neighbourhood Planning

## 1. The Planning System

1.1 The planning system manages the use and development of land and buildings with the aim of creating sustainable places to live and work. Without a planning system in place, development would not be controlled and could take place anywhere, with considerable impact on people and the environment. Potential development activity is managed through planning applications, using local plans as a basis to make decisions.

1.2 The planning system has two parts which are usually the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority (Thanet District Council):

- Plan making - setting out proposals for development and policies to guide development over a period of time.
- Development management – where planning decisions are made through the assessment of planning applications.

1.3 Not all forms of development require planning permission as some proposed development, depending on the scale and type, is covered by permitted development rights. For development that requires planning permission, Thanet District Council is responsible for deciding whether the development should go ahead. Decisions on planning applications in Westgate are currently based on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the adopted Thanet Local Plan 2020, and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030. Subject to a positive vote at referendum, the Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Plan will also become part of the Development Plan and be used in decision making on planning applications within the Westgate area.

## 2. National Planning Policy

2.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The framework gives guidance to local planning authorities in drawing up development plans and on making decisions on planning applications. The NPPF includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and sets out core planning principles to be followed which include environmental, social and economic aspects. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) supports the NPPF and provides further guidance on planning issues such as neighbourhood planning.

## 3. Local Plans

3.1 Local Plans are prepared by Local Planning Authorities and set out the strategic priorities and planning policies for the local authority area. The policies in a local plan set out to deliver key development including homes and jobs required, the provision of retail and community facilities and infrastructure. Policies relating to managing climate change, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment are also included. Local Plans must be positively prepared, justified,

effective and consistent with national policy in line with s20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the NPPF.

3.2 The current Local Plan for the district is the adopted Thanet Local Plan 2020. Further information on the adopted Local Plan can be found here - [Adopted Local Plan 2020](#)

## 4. Neighbourhood Planning

4.1 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced under the 2011 Localism Act. It provides an opportunity for local communities to shape future development in their local area.

4.2 In areas with a town or parish council, neighbourhood plans can be produced by town or parish councils which are referred to as the 'Qualifying Body'. In this case, the Qualifying Body is therefore Westgate-on-Sea Town Council.

4.3 Neighbourhood plans have to meet a number of basic conditions in order to proceed to the referendum stage. An independent examiner is appointed to check that a plan meets the basic conditions which are set out below:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.
- Be compatible with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights obligations.

## 5. What is a Neighbourhood Plan Area?

5.1 A neighbourhood plan must apply to a specific designated area which can range from single streets or large rural or urban areas.

5.2 The boundary of the neighbourhood area for the Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Plan was approved by the district council in October 2016 and follows the area boundary. Following an independent Examination, the district council agreed with the Examiner's recommendation to proceed to a referendum based on the Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Area as approved by the council.

## 6. Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

6.1 The draft Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Plan has been examined by an Independent Examiner who issued his report on 24 April 2023. The Examiner recommended a number of modifications to the Plan and that, subject to those modifications being accepted, it should proceed to referendum.

6.2 The Council accepts the recommended modifications from the Examination and the Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Plan, amended according to those modifications, can proceed to referendum.

6.4 The Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Plan referendum will be held on **31 August 2023**.

6.5 The proposed Neighbourhood Plan needs to gain the approval of the majority of voters (more than 50%) in the local community for the Local Planning Authority to 'make' the neighbourhood plan.

6.6 Subject to a positive vote at referendum, the Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for the district and therefore the implementation of the policies contained within it will impact on planning decisions made in the district, specifically in relation to Westgate. After a positive vote at referendum, the Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood Plan will then be 'made' (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority. If more people vote 'no' than 'yes', then the Neighbourhood Plan will not become part of the Development Plan for the local area and will not be 'made' (adopted) by the Local Planning Authority.

6.7 Additional information on neighbourhood planning is available on the following website  
<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>