



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), Chapter 12 - Ashford Growth Area



July 2004



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The alterations set out in this document replace the text of chapter 12, paragraphs 12.63 to 12.65, of Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) published in March 2001. It is also available in electronic form as part of the updated RPG9 on www.go-se.gov.uk

As part of RPG9, the new text provides the spatial framework for the preparation of the Ashford Local Development Framework which, informed by community consultations and ongoing studies, will be the mechanism for setting the detailed policies required to ensure the sustainable development of Ashford.



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Policies

Policy 1: Scale of Growth

The Ashford Growth Area should seek to deliver the following levels of housing provision and jobs over the period 2001-2016:

	2001-2011	2011-2016
Housing - of which up to 30% should be affordable	7,900	5,200
Jobs	5,900	4,400

To achieve the longer-term potential growth in the area which, subject to testing through the RPG process, is envisaged in the Communities Plan, active pre-planning is necessary, to achieve capacity increases in strategic infrastructure, particularly in respect of water supply, waste water treatment, health and education facilities and sustainable transport.

Policy 2: Spatial Framework

New development in the growth area will be delivered through urban intensification and the development of new sustainable urban extensions integrated with the provision of new and enhanced bus-based public transport and interchanges. Broad areas of search for new development are identified in Map 2.1.

At present there is sufficient planned employment land supply to meet forecast demand to 2016. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of supply and demand for employment land should be kept under review in the Local Development Framework process, in order to encourage job growth to move forward in tandem with housing development.

To support sustainable growth, the provision of infrastructure should take place in parallel with development. Key transport improvements that are likely to be required by 2016 (subject to further detailed appraisal and statutory procedures) are:

- Improvements of Junction 10 of M20 and additional Junction 10a.
- Frequent domestic services on the new CTRL, with links to East Kent.
- Improvements to the Ashford-Hastings railway line.
- A south Ashford rail station.
- Co-ordinated bus route planning with new and existing development.
- A new central bus interchange.
- Park and ride facilities.
- Facilities and measures to support cycling and walking.

and after 2016:

- A south Ashford orbital road linking the A28 to the A2070.

Further work is required to examine the linkages between infrastructure provision and development and these linkages need to be investigated to inform the identification of priorities and the timing and sequencing of growth.

Policy 3: Sustainable Communities

The growth envisaged at Ashford should deliver an enhanced quality of life following the principles of sustainable development. This will necessitate the phased and co-ordinated provision of quality community, economic, environmental and social infrastructure. This shall include the following:

- Affordable housing – significant increase in provision, mix and choice.
- Urban renaissance – major improvements to the town centre and the public realm, linked to substantial additional provision of well-managed public open spaces.
- Employment – creation of a range of suitable business space to help promote economic growth.
- Water-related - the provision of reinforcements to water supply in parallel with demand management measures, and water treatment capacity.
- Drainage - the strategic planning of surface water drainage management to minimise flood risk.
- Social - the timely provision of additional local educational, health and community facilities.
- Resource efficiency – more efficient use of resources, particularly energy, waste and water.
- Design quality – a step change in sustainable design, construction and innovation, including use of the SEEDA Sustainability Checklist.
- Urban fringe – positive management of the area around Ashford for recreation and biodiversity.

Policy 4: Effective Delivery

Delivery partners should make a firm commitment to the Delivery Board, the local delivery vehicle, whose structure should be kept under review as growth progresses. The dedicated Delivery Team should be maintained, reporting to the Board.

Delivery partners should investigate private and public sources of funding and work together to find a mechanism to forward fund strategic infrastructure.

Ashford

12.63 Scale of Growth

- 1 A detailed study of Ashford's potential for development, looking up to 30 years ahead was undertaken in 2001/02 by a consultancy consortium led by Halcrow and partners (Ashford's Future, December 2002). The Study was managed by a steering group of representatives from the relevant local authorities, Government Office for the South East and regional agencies including the South East England Regional Assembly.
- 2 The study concluded that Ashford did have potential for substantial growth both in the medium and longer term. Ashford's location astride the major communities' corridor between London, the rest of England and continental Europe has obvious attractions. The opening of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, with Ashford as a major stopping point on the route, will enhance the attraction. The study, however, also drew attention to earlier efforts to realise this development potential which have been only partially successful. It concluded that a sustained programme of investment, promotion and quality development would be necessary if these potentials were now to be realised. Even with such an effort, it would take some years to build momentum from a relatively low current rate of development.
- 3 The Ashford's Future Study included a sustainability appraisal of the levels of growth now proposed and independent consultants, appointed by the Assembly, have subsequently verified that their analysis was concomitant with the sustainability appraisal used for all Assembly strategies.
- 4 The Ashford's Future Study considered a range of options for growth from 20,500 to 42,000 new homes to 2031. The study concluded that a rate of growth of 31,000 homes supported by 28,000 new jobs was the most realistic option. This alteration includes 13,100 new houses and 10,300 new jobs up to 2016 which is in line with the Sustainable Communities Plan. On the basis of the Ashford's Future Study it is assumed there will be a greater build rate after this period and to achieve this higher build rate good pre-planning will be necessary. It will be for the Regional Spatial Strategy to set out the housing requirement in the period 2016 to 2026.

Policy 1: Scale of Growth

The Ashford Growth Area should seek to deliver the following levels of housing provision and jobs over the period 2001-2016:

	2001-2011	2011-2016
Housing - of which up to 30% should be affordable	7,900	5,200
Jobs	5,900	4,400

To achieve the longer-term growth envisaged in the Communities Plan, active pre-planning is necessary to achieve capacity increases in strategic infrastructure, particularly in respect of water supply, waste water treatment, health and education facilities, and sustainable transport.

12.64 Spatial Framework

- 1 The Ashford Growth Area is focused on the town of Ashford and is wholly contained within the borough of Ashford. The borough is predominantly rural in nature, with Ashford being the largest of a number of small and medium-sized towns. However, Ashford's growth should not be seen in isolation. Neighbouring areas especially those identified as Priority Areas of Economic Regeneration in East Kent and East Sussex, will also be affected. It will be important that Ashford and its neighbours seek complementary growth, differentiating between target sectors of activity and recognise the potential to spread the benefits from Ashford's growth to the wider area.
- 2 The Ashford's Future Study (December 2002) sought to make full use of opportunities to consolidate the existing urban centre, and particularly to renew and reinforce the town centre. The scale of such opportunities, although significant, would not however be sufficient to cater for all needs, and additional greenfield land would need to be released for housing purposes. The release of greenfield land for development needs to be carefully phased through the Local Development Framework so that it is part of a co-ordinated strategy for the regeneration of the existing town. The supply of employment land is adequate for envisaged needs until 2016.
- 3 Additional allocations will not therefore be required, although substantial additional office and service floorspace will be needed, close to the town centre and international railway station. Some additional land will also be required for supporting services, such as waste and waste water treatment, flood prevention and educational services.
- 4 Although additional land allocations for economic development may not be needed, strong and sustained job growth will be essential to accompany housing development. With the anticipated completion of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, an increase in commuting from Ashford to London and the Thames Gateway area is anticipated. It is important, however, for Ashford not to become over-dependent on the commuting element if it is to develop successfully as a well-rounded community. The economic analysis in the Ashford Study and other subsequent analysis has confirmed that substantial job growth of some 10,000 new jobs by 2016 is needed at Ashford to match the new housing. To achieve this figure, however, will require a substantially enhanced economic development programme led by significant funding for education and skills, for business start-up, for growing existing businesses and for major inward investment programmes.
- 5 A spatial strategy will concentrate development in or close to the existing urban area, with a strong emphasis on the integration of land uses and transport through the focusing of development in areas that can be well-served by co-ordinated bus route planning and new park and ride facilities, well connected to the town centre and international railway station. A new bus interchange linked to the railway station will probably be needed and Ashford's predominantly level topography should encourage the provision and use of a high quality cycle network. Major improvements to Junction 10 of the M20 and a new junction (10a) will also be essential to improve Ashford's accessibility and attractiveness. The Ashford-Hastings railway line is the subject of a two stage study sponsored by the local authorities and the SRA, and along with the SRA's Regional Planning Assessment, any proposed improvements would support the growth at Ashford and also benefit Hastings. (Further information on these schemes can be found in Annex 2 Table 5 of the Regional Transport Strategy.) Other ongoing transport studies connected to the Greater Ashford Development Framework Study will better inform Policy 2 which should clarify these transport schemes and identify other possible transport schemes to support the growth in Ashford. All Government supported schemes are subject to value for money and affordability tests and most are subject to the completion of statutory procedures.

- 6 It is important that Ashford's transport strategy comprises a balanced package of measures in line with national and regional transport strategies especially T11 which includes a full list of mobility management measures. It is equally important that bus services are planned to support new residential areas. The broad cost of improving transport in the Ashford area is estimated to be approximately £217m.
- 7 At present the town centre and the neighbourhoods of the town are independently connected. To improve the performance of the town centre and connectivity with its environs, it will be necessary to improve the physical fabric, reduce the severance caused by the town centre road network and create a high quality public realm. The town centre will benefit from the assembling of sites to create opportunities for commercial space and city living. A programme of major redevelopment and renaissance of the town centre, coupled with strong physical and transport linkages with housing and employment, is proposed.
- 8 It is recognised that the Greater Ashford Development Framework Study will also be relevant for refining the 'development areas of search' and will inform the Local Development Framework process. Beyond 2016 the precise directions and scales of growth will need further assessment but the principles outlined should continue to apply. The general direction of this longer term growth is likely to extend into the south west quadrant of Ashford. This is indicated on Map 2.1. A substantial development programme is expected to continue, quite possibly increasing in scale as the benefits of earlier infrastructure investment create momentum.

Policy 2: Spatial Framework

New development in the growth area will be delivered through urban intensification and the development of new sustainable urban extensions integrated with the provision of new and enhanced bus-based public transport and interchanges. Broad areas of search for new development are identified in Map 2.1.

At present there is sufficient planned employment land supply to meet forecast demand to 2016. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of supply and demand for employment land should be kept under review in the LDF process, in order to encourage job growth to move forward in tandem with housing development.

To support sustainable growth, the provision of infrastructure should take place in parallel with development. Key transport improvements that are likely to be required by 2016 (subject to further detailed appraisal and statutory procedures) are:

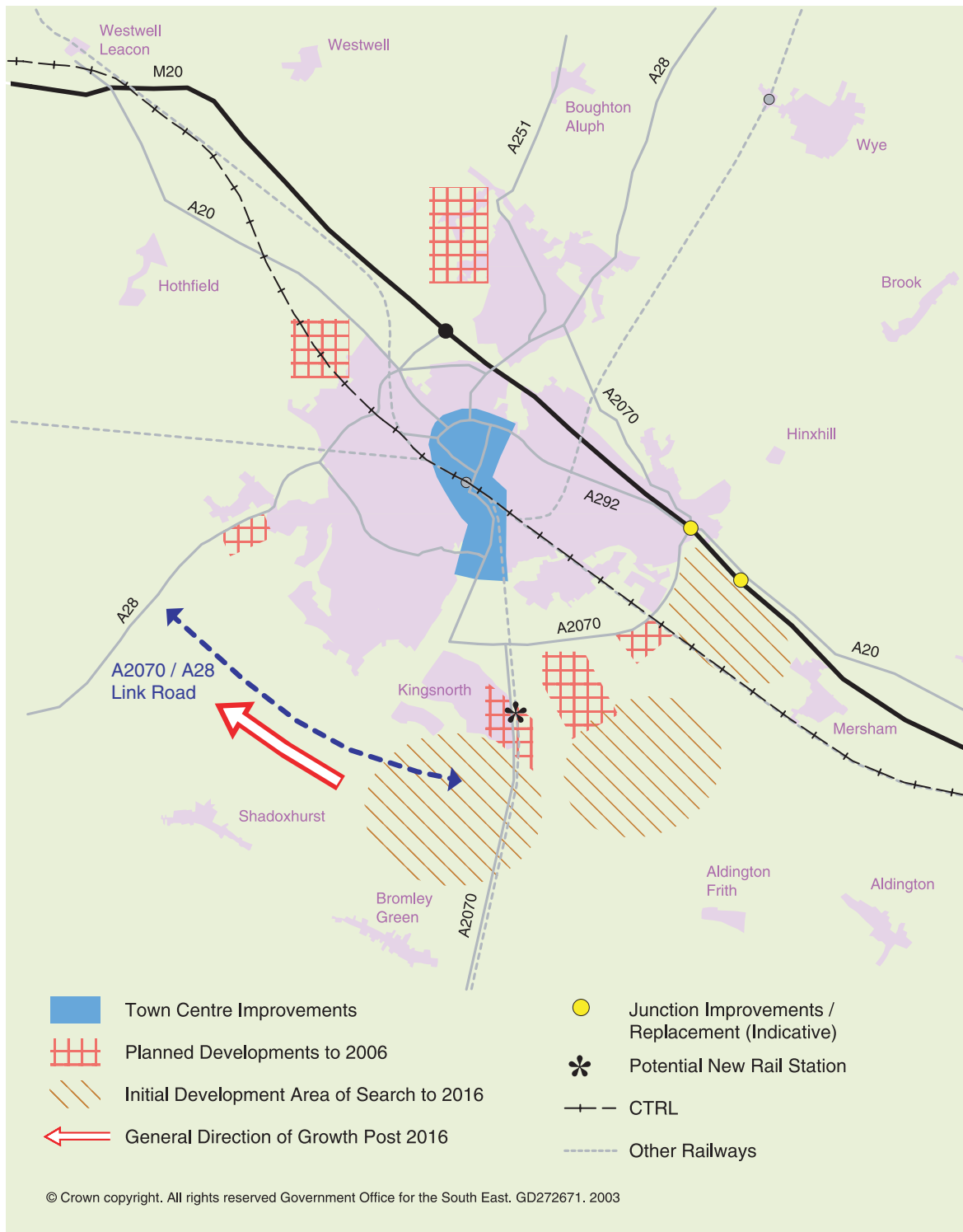
- **Improvements of Junction 10 of M20 and an additional Junction 10a.**
- **Frequent domestic services on the new CTRL, with links to East Kent.**
- **Improvements to the Ashford-Hastings railway line.**
- **A south Ashford rail station.**
- **Co-ordinated bus route planning with new and existing development.**
- **A new central bus interchange.**
- **Park and ride facilities.**
- **Facilities and measures to support cycling and walking.**

and after 2016:

- **A south Ashford orbital road linking the A28 to the A2070.**

Map 2.1

All site and area boundaries and road alignments are purely indicative



Further work is required to examine the linkages between infrastructure provision and development and these linkages need to be investigated to inform the identification of priorities and the timing and sequencing of growth.

Sustainable Communities

- 9 The delivery of sustainable communities requires the integration of new development with a high quality environment, the provision of housing for all members of the community, excellent public services and community facilities and a prosperous economy. Combining all these elements is a major challenge. Ashford is well placed to deliver growth to this high standard and could provide leadership on how to deliver sustainable development with high quality design.
- 10 Ashford is not one of the parts of the South East with the greatest pressure for affordable housing, partly because house prices are relatively low. Nevertheless, as Ashford is a regional growth area, it will be imperative to ensure that there is adequate provision for both local and incoming key workers who need to rent or want to own their own homes through such schemes as 'joint equity' affordable housing. The provision of both should be addressed through development plan policies. The importance of achieving job growth and appropriate skill levels within the workforce has also already been emphasised in paragraph 4.
- 11 The renewal and renaissance of Ashford town centre will also be of national importance. New opportunities will need to be sought to diversify the towns housing stock especially in and around the centre to accommodate new urban lifestyles.
- 12 Water related issues such as water supply, trunk sewers and waste water treatment as well as drainage and flooding are of special importance, given Ashford's location in an area of relative deficiency for water supply and the local river system's vulnerability to flood. Investment will therefore be needed to both augment the water supply and increase the capacity of the waste water treatment works, including the possibility of a new Waste Water Treatment Works as an alternative to expansion of the existing works. Demand management measures should be promoted in parallel with augmenting water supplies. Improving the water quality of the river Stour catchment area is also important. Surface water drainage improvements will need to be undertaken following Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) principles. This flooding sensitivity, however, also presents an opportunity to create an attractive strategic network of water and public green-spaces, which can help linkage across the urban area and enhance environmental quality. The broad cost of water related improvements is estimated to be around £116m.
- 13 Additional education, health and community facilities will also be required on a phased basis to ensure that sufficient social infrastructure is not only provided in parallel with new housing development but also supports existing development. Service planning will need to include retrofitting of infrastructure to existing development. These requirements will need to be reflected in the delivery programmes of the various agencies. The broad cost of this is estimated to be approximately £363m.
- 14 It is expected that Policy 3 will be read in conjunction with other emerging regional policy documents including those for energy and waste, as well as those for sustainable transport.

Policy 3: Sustainable Communities

The growth envisaged at Ashford should deliver an enhanced quality of life following the principles of sustainable development. This will necessitate the phased and co-ordinated provision of quality community, economic, environmental and social infrastructure. This shall include the following:

- **Affordable housing** - significant increase in provision, mix and choice.
- **Urban renaissance** - major improvements to the town centre and the public realm, linked to substantial additional provision of well-managed public open spaces.
- **Employment** - creation of a range of suitable business space to help promote economic growth.
- **Water-related** - the provision of reinforcements to water supply in parallel with demand management measures, and water treatment capacity.
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- **Urban fringe** - positive management of the area around Ashford for recreation and biodiversity.

12.65 Effective Delivery

- 1 The Ashford Delivery Board has been set up and will act as the local delivery vehicle. There needs to be a firm commitment from all partners on the Board to deliver against agreed parameters for job growth and affordable housing provision if the scale of growth proposed is to be successfully delivered. The levels of job growth required will only be achieved by an increased programme of promotion and investment. The same point holds true for affordable housing provision and transport infrastructure. Appropriate local delivery structures such as a dedicated delivery team have been put in place. This team will be directly responsible to the Delivery Board rather than individual partners. The structure of the Delivery Board itself will also need to be kept under review. These structures will also need to be demonstrably supported by central government and its various implementation agencies. The local authorities and the development industry will not be able to forward fund the necessary infrastructure without assistance.

Policy 4: Effective Delivery

Delivery partners should provide a firm commitment to the Delivery Board, the local delivery vehicle, which should be kept under review as growth progresses. The dedicated Delivery Team should be maintained, reporting to the Board.

Delivery partners should investigate private and public sources of funding and work together to find a mechanism to forward fund strategic infrastructure.

Monitoring and Review

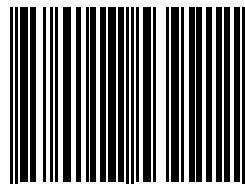
- 2 The progress of these proposals will be monitored against the following indicators:
 - Levels of housing development achieved per annum.
 - Levels of affordable housing achieved per annum.
 - Levels of job growth achieved per annum.
 - Progress with the provision of key infrastructure.
 - Increased waste water treatment capacity by 2007.
 - Junction 10a by 2010.
 - Water supply increases by 2017.
 - Relationship between new homes and jobs.
- 3 The results of the monitoring will be incorporated in the Regional Assembly's Annual Regional Monitoring Report. More detailed monitoring of local targets such as travel to work and water usage per household must take place at the local level. The Local Development Framework system will set out more detailed qualitative and quantitative local monitoring indicators. The Borough Council will need to take account of the monitoring results in considering the allocation and phasing of land for development. If necessary, they may need to revise parts of the Local Development Framework.
- 4 The results of local and regional monitoring will also help to inform the preparation and future reviews of the new Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East.

RPG 9



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