

# AGENDA ITEM 16.1

Town Council 14/01/2021

## DARTFORD DRAFT LOCAL PLAN – SWANSCOMBE EXTRACT (p).

Dear Town Council

I hope everyone is as well as can be expected at present as we face up to the new year.

I am contacting the Town Council as Borough officers are proposing that Swanscombe has its own devoted policy in the forthcoming new Local Plan governing development of Dartford. Please see the attached extract – the preamble is followed by the policy itself.

This sits in the Plan alongside rather different policies will be applied by the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation when they deal with planning applications in their area. As their administrative area encircles Swanscombe, we considered it was better that the town be recognised in the independent context and clear principles set out for the future of the town (rather than sidestep this reality) in order to maximise benefits for Swanscombe. Other key principles in that section of the plan include supporting the Ebbsfleet Central development, subject to matters such as keeping the area between the development by the station and the town as open/park land.

You may also wish to know that although the developer is looking to push the London Resort forward, officers are instead recommending an alternative policy features in the Local Plan that is based on retention of open greenspace across much of the peninsula, with only recognition of selected brownfield land for any future smaller-scale development.

Finally please note there are around two dozen other Borough wide policies on environmental and community protection etc that apply across the Borough, including all of Swanscombe i.e this is not the only approach governing over any development proposals in Swanscombe. Some of these generic development management principles are similar to those introduced in 2017 but updated to apply more strongly.

Due to government pressures, we are now having to move this forward very rapidly. In terms of key comments from the town council, I am afraid I can only allow 7 days **(January 15<sup>th</sup>) to receive any key comments**. Of course there is expected to be a formal public period forthcoming when any organisation can make written representations on the soundness of the plan – however this will be for the consideration of the Planning inspectorate, not the Council. So please do contact me should the Town Council wish to discuss it further. I realise a full official town council response may not be appropriate, but if it can be circulated internally, we would be happy to consider feedback/ comments from town councillors (or applicable Borough councillors).

A session to brief all Dartford Borough Councillors on the Plan as a whole is being arranged for late January, in advance of an expected extraordinary full council.

Kind regards,  
Mark.

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BA(Hons) MA MSc  
*Planning Policy Manager*



**Swanscombe (Policy E3)**

- 4.19 Swanscombe is distinctive neighbourhood in the northeast of the Borough. It is not part of the Ebbsfleet Garden City/ Development Corporation. Whilst little major development is planned for Swanscombe itself, it is appropriate to set out some guiding principles for the future of the town in light of the known and potential changes that are happening around it. These take into account the need to protect Swanscombe's existing character and opportunities arising from the new development which have the potential to benefit the town.
- 4.20 The town is located next to ongoing and planned developments at Castle Hill, Alkerden and Ashmere (within Ebbsfleet West and South), and Ebbsfleet Central, and at the smaller Craylands Lane/ Croxton Garry site northwest of the town. It also has the potential to be significantly impacted by the proposals for the London Resort on Swanscombe Peninsula, should they proceed.
- 4.21 It is expected that the existing residential character of Swanscombe will be maintained and there are limited opportunities for infill residential development. However, there are some disused/ underused former garage courts and small businesses on brownfield sites within the residential area which may be suitable for small scale new homes development subject to consideration of impacts on residential amenity and parking. A number of these already have planning permission and/ or are identified as suitable for development in the housing land supply, totalling less 100 homes in the plan period. Family housing will be a priority part of any residential development.
- 4.22 Swanscombe High Street contains a variety of shops and local services, as a result of which it is designated as a District Centre. There is also a small Local Centre providing a smaller cluster of shops around Craylands Lane/ Milton Road/ Milton Street. These are both identified on the Policies Map, and policy M23 seeks to protect the function of these centres. There are significant issues with through traffic and on-street parking in parts of Swanscombe, particularly along the High Street, and there may be opportunities to improve the environment to benefit pedestrians and cyclists. There is a critical need to improve Swanscombe railway station and its poor quality pedestrian access arrangements.
- 4.23 Swanscombe also has a number of open spaces and community facilities. These are protected under policies M14 and M18. Swanscombe Heritage Park and Craylands Gorge provide a significant historic and biodiversity resource, being the site of Lower Palaeolithic human remains (Swanscombe Skull Site of Special Scientific Interest) and hosting scarce plant species and invertebrates (Alkerden Lane Pit Local Wildlife Site). These are also protected under policy M15 but there is an opportunity to enhance Craylands Gorge (which lies within Ebbsfleet Garden City) as part of proposals coming forward for Alkerden/ Ashmere.

- 4.24 The proximity of Swanscombe to major development taking place within Ebbsfleet Garden City means that there are opportunities for residents to benefit from better access to the high quality public transport network there, in particular Fastrack routes and Ebbsfleet International Station. This will be achieved by ensuring that provision is made for improved or new pedestrian and cycle links between developments occurring in the surrounding area and Swanscombe.

### Policy E3. Swanscombe

1. Swanscombe will retain and improve its identity and positive characteristics including the popular residential core, stock of dwellings for small and larger families, generous-sized open spaces and approaches, and the local High Street. The following principles will apply:
  - a) The continued cohesion and sense of community in the town should be maintained by the principle of retention of existing dwellings as single family housing accommodation, where applicable; and
  - b) Facilities at the well-established High Street District Centre, and other focal clusters and locations within Swanscombe should be retained/ improved.
2. Where shown to be consistent with the principles set out in criterion (1), there may be opportunities to provide additional local services, environmental improvements and proportionate developments of new family homes at small brownfield sites.
3. Development in Ebbsfleet Garden City should ensure wherever possible that Swanscombe benefits from:
  - a) Access to better facilities and public transport, including upgrades to or a wholly new railway station; and
  - b) improvements to existing connections and the delivery of new green walking/ cycling connections, particularly towards the River Thames and Ebbsfleet International Station.

**Recommended:** To formulate any comments to the draft policy for submission to DBC.