

Local Plan Timetable March 2025

Folkestone & Hythe District Council



Introduction

The Local Plan Timetable sets out the key dates in the production of the next Folkestone & Hythe District Local Plan, district wide design codes and any supplementary plans the local authority may produce. The Local Plan Timetable replaces the district council's Local Development Scheme, which was adopted by the council in 2020.

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 has introduced changes to the planning system. This Local Plan Timetable has been produced following the introduction of the Act but in the absence of any new government regulations that would provide further detail and direction. It has therefore been informed by the previous government's consultation 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms' (published July 2023).

The Local Plan Timetable will, therefore, need to be reviewed once the new regulations have been published.

The Local Plan Timetable will first consider the legislative requirements, give a brief overview of the current plans that form the Development Plan and then an overview of the new plan-making process. This will be followed by the profiles of the forthcoming Local Plan and any other documents.

Legislative Requirement

The requirement for a Local Plan Timetable is set out in the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 Section (Part 2 Section 15B).

This states that local plan timetables must specify:

- a)** the matters which the authority's local plan is to deal with,
- b)** the geographical area to which the authority's local plan is to relate,
- c)** any supplementary plans which the authority are to prepare,
- d)** the subject matter and geographical area, site or sites to which each of those supplementary plans is to relate,
- e)** how the authority propose to comply with the requirement in section 15F(1) (requirement in relation to design codes),
- f)** whether the authority's local plan is to be a joint local plan and, if so, each other local planning authority for whose area the joint local plan is to be their local plan,
- g)** whether the authority are to prepare a joint supplementary plan and, if so, each other local planning authority who are to prepare that joint supplementary plan with them,
- h)** any matter or area in respect of which the authority have agreed (or propose to agree) to the constitution of a joint committee under section 15J, and
- i)** a timetable for the preparation of the authority's local plan for their area, and any supplementary plans the authority are to make, which is consistent with this Part and any regulations made under it.

A new requirement introduced in the 2023 Levelling-up and Regeneration Act is that if a local authority has not prepared a local plan timetable, the Secretary of State may prepare one for the local authority and direct the authority to bring that into effect.

Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises a series of policy documents (local and neighbourhood plans) which set out the long-term strategic plans for the district, as well as other non-strategic planning policies to manage development within its boundaries.

The Development Plan is used by planning officers and the planning committee when considering planning applications. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission “be determined in accordance with the development plan and any national development management policies, taken together, unless material considerations strongly indicate otherwise”¹. (It should be noted that, at the time of writing this local plan timetable, the Government had not published the national development management policies.)

The adopted development plan documents for the district currently consist of:

The Core Strategy Review (2022)

A local plan which sets out the district-wide spatial vision, objectives, development strategy and a series of overarching strategic policies that will guide the scale, location and type of development in the district until 2037.

Places and Policies Local Plan (2020)

The Places and Policies Local Plan identifies small- and medium-sized sites for development across the district to meet the targets in the Core Strategy Review; as well as setting out detailed development management policies to assess planning applications.

St. Mary in the Marsh Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

This was produced by St. Mary in the Marsh Parish Council and was brought into force by the district council in 2019. The plan sets out local policies for the whole area covered by the parish.

Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2016) as amended 2020

The Kent Waste and Minerals Local Plan (2016) sets out the vision and strategy for waste management and mineral provision up until the year 2030 in the county. An early partial review of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan was adopted in September 2020.

1 Section 38 of PCPA 2004 (development plan) as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023

The Plan-making Process

The government proposes to publish regulations for authorities to prepare local plans. This local plan timetable is based on proposals put forward in 2023 by the previous government. This process has the following key stages and activities:

1

A scoping and early participation stage –

- The first stage would include notifying the public and stakeholders (including statutory bodies) and “invite” participation;
- The local authority would then prepare, or update, the local plan timetable;
- A minimum of four months’ notice before a local authority intends to formally commence the 30-month plan preparation timeframe (starting with the first gateway assessment);
- Participation and evidence gathering required to inform the Strategic Environmental Assessment (and its eventual replacement Environmental Outcomes Reports) also begins in this stage.

2

Plan visioning and strategy development –

- Including a requirement to undertake visioning about the future of the area;
- And the first formal public consultation on the plan.

3

Evidence gathering and drafting the plan –

- Including a requirement to undertake the second gateway assessment.

4

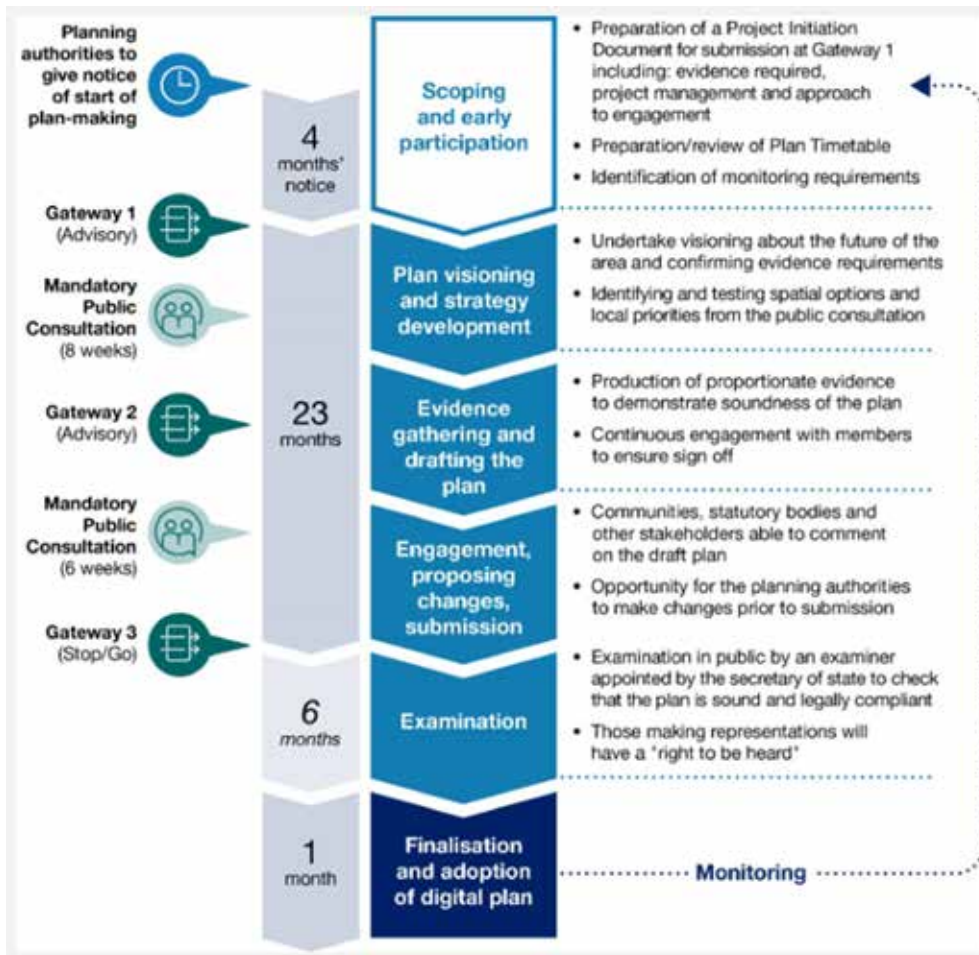
Engagement, proposing changes and submission of the plan –

- A requirement for the second public consultation on the plan; and
- Undertaking the third gateway assessment.

The Gateway Assessment

Under the process set out in 2023, authorities will be required to seek advice from the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State at prescribed times. These are known as ‘gateway assessments’ (‘gateways’) and they are intended to ensure a more supportive approach to plan-making and provide greater visibility to key stakeholders and the wider community about how the local plan is progressing.

The figure below outlines the new plan making process and the timelines to do this.



Profiles of Forthcoming Plans and Documents

This section of the timetable sets out the proposed plans and documents the council intends to produce over the next five years. The Local Plan Timetable will be reviewed when regulations are published and at the start of the plan-making process.

Folkestone & Hythe District Local Plan

The new Folkestone & Hythe District Local Plan will replace both the Core Strategy Review and the Places and Policies Local Plan.

The matters in the local plan will cover the whole of the district. It will set out the spatial vision, objectives, development strategy and the over-arching strategic policies that will guide the scale, location and type of development in the district until 2045. It will also include small and medium allocations as well as any development management policies considered necessary for specific local issues (this will be subject to the introduction of National Development Management Policies by government, expected in spring 2025).

Based on the current available information, and assuming the regulations to the 2023 Levelling-up and Regeneration Act are published in June/July 2025, the timetable for the next local plan would be:

Scoping & Early Participation	4 months	July - October 2025
Gateway 1 - at start of formal process	---	November 2025
Plan Visioning and strategy development	5 months	November 2025 – March 2026
Public consultation	8 weeks	January - February 2026
Evidence Gathering and drafting the Plan	10 months	April 2026 – January 2027
Gateway 2 - mid-way through evidence-gathering and plan drafting	---	August 2026
Engagement, proposing changes & submission (Public consultation 6 weeks)	8 months	February 2027 – September 2027 (March – April 2027)
Gateway 3 – ‘stop/go’ decision before progressing to local plan examination	---	April 2027
Examination	6 months	April 2027 – September 2027
Finalisation and adoption of digital plan	1 month	October 2027
Total duration from Gateway 1 to adoption	30 months	

Policies Map

Local authorities must ensure that a policies map is prepared. Policies maps illustrate the geographical application of policies (such as residential allocations or the extent of landscape policies) in the development plan for the authority’s area. These must be kept up to date. The update of the policies map will feature throughout the plan-making process and will be adopted alongside the new local plan.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood plans are produced by local communities through their parish or town councils (or neighbourhood forum if there are no parishes). They put in place planning policy for a designated area (called the neighbourhood area) to guide future development and form part of the overall Development Plan.

The district council has a duty to assist local communities and to formerly undertake the latter stages of the plan-making process, such as the formal consultation, the examination and referendum. If the referendum is successful, then the neighbourhood plan must be brought into force by the district council.

At the time of writing this Local Plan Timetable, Lyminge Parish Council is at the early stages of producing a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish area. No formal timetable has been published.

Supplementary Plans

Supplementary Plans are being introduced by the government to enable planning authorities to react and respond quickly and positively to unanticipated changes in their area without the need

to revise or update the whole local plan. They will be subject to consultation and independent examination to enable them to carry the same weight as a local plan.

Supplementary Plans may only be used on a site-specific basis (e.g. to support a new development opportunity) or to build on existing policies in the development plan (e.g. to set out a masterplan or design code for a site allocated in a local plan). District-wide policies should be contained in the Local Plan, the exception to this being district-wide design codes.

Following the introduction of Supplementary Plans, the legal powers behind Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have now been removed. SPDs are non-statutory documents that can form part of the Local Development Framework and can cover a wide range of issues giving detailed guidance on how policies or proposals in the local plan will be implemented. [Current SPDs](#) will only remain in force until the new local plan is adopted.

The council is not currently planning to prepare any Supplementary Plans for the district or any joint plans with neighbouring authorities. This Local Plan Timetable will be kept under review, however, and may be updated if proposals for Supplementary Plans are introduced.

District-wide Design Codes

A design code is a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements that are visual and numerical, wherever possible, to provide specific, detailed rules for the development of a site or area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences. Design codes and guides should provide a framework for creating high-quality places.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, together with the local authorities of Ashford, Canterbury, Dover and Thanet, successfully bid for funding through the Planning Skills Delivery Fund to undertake design codes for each local area.

This work is programmed to start in January 2025 following procurement of consultants.

Code Process

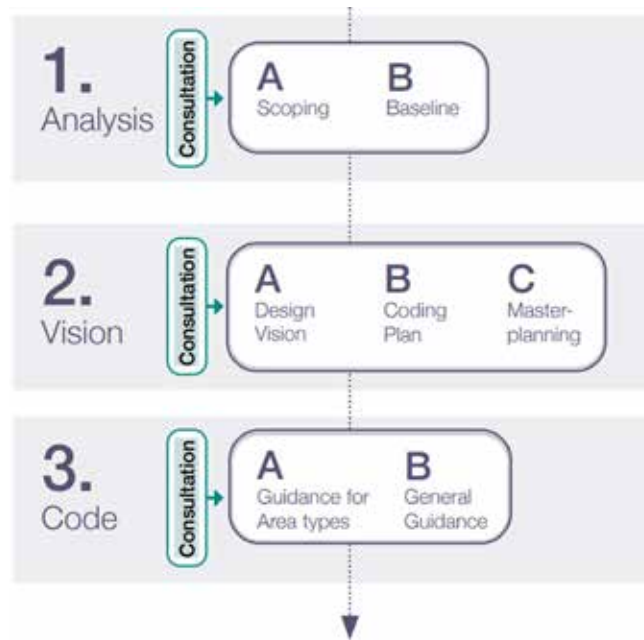
The process for creating design codes is set out in the National Model Design Code. There are three steps to this process.

- Step 1 is Analysis: This includes ‘Scoping’ (agreeing on the geographical area and what policy areas that will be addressed) and ‘Baseline’ (bringing together the analysis).
- Step 2 is Vision: This includes ‘Design Vision’ (identifying ‘area types’), ‘Coding Plan’ (preparing a plan that maps out each area type and large developments) and ‘Masterplanning’ (on larger sites, working with developers to identify key parameters and area types).
- Step 3 is the Code: developing guidance for area types and the code-wide guidance.

Each step would include public consultation.

The funding would enable each authority to complete the first two steps. There may be opportunity for the local authorities to bid for further funding so that step three could be completed with the assistance of consultants.

The National Model Design Code has produced the diagram below of the process:



Design Code - Provisional Timetable

The provisional timetable for carrying out this work is set out below.

At the time of preparing this timetable, it is not known how the requirement for authority-wide design codes set out in the 2023 Levelling-up and Regeneration Act may be taken forward by the government. In response to comments on consultation on the new National Planning Policy Framework, published in December 2024, the government stated:

“We will keep under review the provisions contained in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 on authority wide design codes and national policy and guidance on design in relation to how the use of localised design codes and other design tools, including masterplans and design

guides, can be embedded as part of the plan-making process. We will use the feedback from this consultation to inform future decisions.”

For the purposes of the timetable below, it is assumed that the authority-wide design code will be developed alongside the local plan and that the Inspectors examining the local plan will also examine the design code.

DESIGN CODE – STEPS 1 AND 2		
Step 1: Analysis, Step 2a: Design Vision and Step 2b: Coding Plan		
Process	Design Code Process: Key Outputs and Actions	Estimated dates
Consultation Strategy	Consultation Strategy - creation of specialist Community Panel and Stakeholder Engagement techniques for each of the key steps / stages set out in National Model Design Code	April 2026 – January 2027
	Step 1.A Scoping Including consultation	February 2025 – May 2025
Design Code Production	Step 1.B Baseline Including consultation	March 2025 – June 2025
PARTS 1 & 2 (including consultation)	Step 2.A. Design Vision Including consultation	May 2025 – August 2025
	Step 2.B. Coding Plan Including consultation	July 2025 – October 2025
Local Area Design Code Toolkit	Finalise Area Wide Design Code Documents – including consultation	September 2025 – November 2025
	Produce the Stakeholder Guide to provide advice on process and methods for future production of Local Area Design Codes by local planning authority officers or community.	October 2025 - November 2025
Design Code Amendments	Final Amendments to documents and sign off/ approval by each local planning authority.	December 2025
DESIGN CODE – STEP 3		
Step 3a: Guidance for Area Types, and Step 3b: General Guidance		
Step 3a	Guidance for Area Types	January 2026 – March 2027 (dependent on outcome of Steps 1 and 2)
	General Guidance	
Step 3b	Examination of Design Codes (alongside Local Plan) – if required	April 2027 – September 2027
	Finalisation and adoption of Design Codes	October 2027



Local Plan Timetable

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

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