

3 The vision and objectives for Swale

3.1 The vision for Swale

3.1.1 [Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning \(June 2008\)](#) looks to Core Strategies to produce a vision for the future of places. The vision should respond to and address a locality's problems, needs and ambitions in a way that is locally distinctive as well as being robust, inspiring, realistic and in the best interests of local people, businesses and the environment. The draft [National Planning Policy Framework](#) carries these general principles forward.

What is driving Swale's vision?

3.1.2 We know that Swale is not a single recognisable place, but a collection of many diverse communities and places. Its residents know where they live but the reputation, features, attractions, facilities or qualities of places in other locations can carry further afield, perhaps because of a cathedral, university or a spectacular landscape. Although the communities, businesses and environment here in Swale are not widely known further afield, this is not to suggest there is nothing of interest here. The great potential of Swale's greatest assets - its position within the Thames Gateway, its diverse communities, excellent location and transport links and an outstanding natural environment - are often a surprise and unknown. Building on these, coupled with a strong ambition for change, are the driving forces behind the vision for Swale. It means moving Swale - its places and spaces - from the unknown to the known; taking Swale forward to 2031 and beyond; making it known for what is here and what has been achieved.

3.1.3 The journey through Swale in Chapter 2 showed it to be a collection of diverse places and spaces. The Borough crest and its motto - *Known by their fruits* - is a reflection both of an agricultural past, present and future, but also as a metaphor for what can be achieved to make it known further afield. The vision for Swale also needs to express what the fruits of those endeavours will be by 2031. They will have used those key and unique assets of location, communities and environment to drive both a strong economy and the continuation of an outstanding environment for all our communities. Underpinning this is sustainability and climate change - the significant challenges for communities everywhere in the 21st century.

3.1.4 If Swale is not a single place, then its vision cannot hope to embrace every place within it. Four distinct parts of the Borough - Sittingbourne, the Isle of Sheppey, Faversham and the rural areas - are well understood and recognised. The vision distinguishes and responds to their uppermost challenges: a Sittingbourne that residents will be proud to use; Sheppey coastal communities not at the end of the line, but celebrating their rejuvenation; a market town at Faversham that retains its character whilst thriving as a centre for services and tourism; and rural communities that continue to remain relevant to 21st century needs. But, the future is uncertain, so the vision is flexible, whilst setting the bar high for all to aim for.

3.1.5 The vision has been developed in broad consultation with a wide variety of people and parties, including the Local Strategic Partnership (recently replaced with the [Locality Board](#)). At its start were the important questions posed about the direction the Borough was heading, the uncertain world within which we must live, the things that Swale did well or could do well and the things it did less well. The involvement and support of the Swale Partnership demonstrates that the Core Strategy Vision is both directly taking forward the Sustainable Community Plan - [Ambitions for Swale](#) and informing its future reviews.

3 The vision and objectives for Swale

Statement 3

The Vision for Swale

It is 2031 and Swale is known by the fruits of its endeavours.

We have harnessed our assets – a strategic location, diverse communities and an outstanding natural environment – and are a sustainable, flourishing place in which to enjoy life and do business with:

- Sittingbourne transformed into an attractive, competitive and prosperous town, with a thriving centre that residents across the Borough are proud to use;
- Sheerness and Queenborough as beacons of coastal rejuvenation leading the way to success for all communities on the Isle of Sheppey;
- Faversham, a thriving market town and heritage destination that has grown organically; and
- Successful rural communities across the downs, farmed plains and coast as places of innovation; nurturing enterprise, local produce and greater self-reliance.

3.1.6 Chapter 4 of this document sets out a strategy stemming from the vision. Further amplification of what the Council believes the vision might mean in practice is provided below.

3.2 How do we make the vision happen?

3.2.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy *Ambitions for Swale* requires a transformation of the social, economic and environmental profile of the Borough. Despite the current difficult economic context, those charged with delivering the vision will continue to raise the bar of aspiration for the Borough, together with the development standards and actions needed to support them. Within this context, the following principles should be adopted:

1. Working towards sustainable development in Swale;
2. Adding value to our economy, embracing our potential for new technologies, whilst improving the skills of our workforce so that they can play their part;
3. Delivering urban regeneration, including access to services and facilities, arts and culture in areas facing challenges of disadvantage and deprivation;
4. Cost effective, flexible and continuous partnership working with public, private and voluntary bodies to achieve what we can in an uncertain economic climate;
5. Led by design, aspiring to the best quality of development through better use of resources and responding to local distinctiveness and place;
6. Integrating land use and travel in as sustainable way as possible;
7. Promoting healthy, inclusive, safe and, ultimately, successful communities;
8. Managing demands on existing infrastructure and making new provision at the right time; and
9. Increasing access to nature and open space, sporting and recreation provision, in both urban and rural environments.

3.2.2 These principles are then used to develop a series of objectives for the Core Strategy, as follows in Section 3.3.

3.3 Core Strategy objectives

Cross cutting objectives for Sustainability and Environment, Prosperity, Homes and Communities, Infrastructure:

1. Adapt to climate change with innovation, reduced use of resources, managed risk to our communities and opportunities for biodiversity to thrive.
2. Use our coastal assets to support a strong economy and a sustainably managed environment.
3. Support economic success and improve community wellbeing with a network of maintained, protected and improved natural assets in town and country.
4. Use our historic and natural assets to drive regeneration, tourism, and environmental quality.
5. Strive for high quality design to bring a better quality of life and self-confidence to our communities.
6. Support sectors that can build on our strengths, diversify our economy, promote investment in skills, and develop our distinct opportunities in pursuit of greener and pioneering technologies.
7. Bring economic growth, regeneration and community development, especially to our most deprived communities.
8. Support our farming and food sectors so that they are at the forefront of increasing food security, reducing food miles and increasing local food consumption.
9. Provide the right housing to support regeneration and stronger, greener communities.
10. Develop tourism and culture to support regeneration, employment growth, communities and environmental management.
11. Improve prosperity and environmental quality with efficient and sustainable transport networks.
12. Ensure timely delivery of the services and infrastructure to support strong communities.

Place based objectives:

1. Re-establish Sittingbourne as the principal town with investment in retail, leisure, culture and community services and further education, within new and improved green spaces and streets.
2. Reinforce Sheppey's uniqueness by ensuring change supports Sheerness as its commercial and service focus; strengthens and integrates communities at Rushenden, Queenborough and Minster/Halfway; manages coastal and heritage assets; modernises leisure and tourism industries; and supports isolated communities.
3. With conservation and enhancement as the primary aim, sustain Faversham's role and character as an historic market town for residents and visitors with a range of businesses and services that increase diversity and interest.
4. Address identified needs in our rural communities so that they are sustained in ways that also respects their scale and character.

3 The vision and objectives for Swale

4 The strategy

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section provides the overall spatial strategy. It sets out the overall principles of the Core Strategy:

- Where we are going;
- The amount and type of development and its location (via strategic policies); and
- What it means for each part of the Borough.

4.2 The Spatial Strategy

Where are we going?

4.2.1 *It's 2031 and Swale is known by the fruits of its endeavours.* Bearing the fruits of the vision for Swale (Chapter 3) comes at a time of huge economic uncertainties. Swale is looking to be acknowledged further afield for what it will have achieved at a time when achievements of any kind will be a major challenge.

4.2.2 This is a Core Strategy with a 20 year time span during which much can change. It is, therefore, a spatial strategy which will provide solid foundations for growth for current and future generations, even though the timing of that growth will not be clear at this time. The Borough wants to play its role in supporting the national growth agenda and will bring forward a generous and flexible supply of land for the market, both to support its own economic strengths and for emerging and growing economic sectors. It will also provide markers for the future in areas where the way forward for them is not yet clear. Alongside this, it also provides a clear statement of responsibility for the protection and enhancement of the Borough's and indeed, some of the Nation's, most important environmental assets – its wetland, downland and huge collage of historic assets.

4.2.3 The spatial strategy acknowledges that compromises have been and will have to be made. Severe, deep and protracted economic difficulties mean we cannot achieve all we want when we want it. These may be especially evident when meeting our needs for infrastructure and affordable housing. Despite these limitations, the spatial strategy remains one of support for growth. This though is not growth at any cost, for the scale and pace of growth will be adjusted where:

- progress on creating jobs lags behind housing growth; or
- overloading the capacity of infrastructure leads to unacceptable consequences without the foreseeable means of resolving them; or
- avoidance, mitigation of impacts and management cannot prevent fragmentation or damage to our most important wildlife and landscapes.

4.2.4 These checks guide the spatial strategy toward achieving sustainable development. For Swale, this means moving toward, as far as practical:

- supporting communities to be more self-sufficient to reduce impacts elsewhere;
- satisfying our social, economic and aesthetic needs; and
- providing a robust, adaptable and enhanced environment.

4 The strategy

4.2.5 The cross cutting policies in Chapter 5 will set out the central role of the Core Strategy in explaining what developments will need to try and achieve so as to be judged as fitting in terms of a sustainable pattern of development in Swale.

Economy

4.2.6 We describe this spatial strategy as 'employment led'. What does this mean? It means continuing Swale's track record of providing numerically generous amounts of employment land that will give flexibility to the market. By providing an employment floorspace target of some 546,000m² and 8,500 jobs with further potential at the Port of Sheerness, this generous provision additionally gives the opportunity for those who live in Swale and work elsewhere to do both here if they wish. This affords the opportunity for people to re-balance their lives, retain more spending within the local economy and reduce the number and length of journeys for daily needs. Ultimately the spatial strategy will aim for better efficiency and self containment.

4.2.7 As well as supporting current economic strengths, the spatial strategy will address qualitative as well as quantitative needs within the local economy. This will enable it to branch out into under represented sectors, increase higher growth/value businesses, reduce commuting for better paid jobs, improve skills and, in doing so, create a better business image for Swale.

4.2.8 The Borough's existing land bank for new employment developments is relatively high. However, in future we must think about what it can actually provide. We need also to identify other sites to create a step change to alter market perceptions, address future needs and demands, improve the quality of our provision and give greater market choice. Whilst delivering flexibility and market choice may not lead to all this land being developed in the plan period, we are not only trying to reduce the need for out-commuting by our residents for work, but we want to establish Swale as the home of businesses that are not only locally, but nationally important, such as those in the environmental and knowledge based sectors. As a result, a hopeful early outcome for the spatial strategy will enable the UK to become a major hub for the manufacture of off-shore wind turbines based on the facility at the Port of Sheerness where a total of 80,000m² and 1,720 direct jobs could be created.

4.2.9 A longer term opportunity to address the qualitative needs of the local economy exists at Kent Science Park, to the south east of Sittingbourne. The Council supports the principle of major expansion here. However, for this Core Strategy, the means of delivering the infrastructure necessary to support this growth is too uncertain for this proposal to progress as a strategic allocation at this time. A 'signpost' for the longer term potential is provided, with a framework identified for bringing it forward via a Core Strategy review once the right conditions or opportunities present themselves.

4.2.10 This spatial strategy recognises that growth in retail and leisure will lead to job creation in the early years of the plan period. The start of major developments at Sittingbourne town centre and Queenborough will be an early win, with over 56,000m² of employment floorspace and 1,400 jobs ultimately the goal. These will re-capture spending currently lost to other centres outside the Borough. Action will also need to be taken to address the health of Sheerness town centre where there are particular areas of concern.

4.2.11 Tourism will continue to be a significant contributor to the economy and is likely to be a beneficiary of reduced travel and spending abroad. Flexible policies will encourage growth of the Borough's cultural offer by the extension, diversification and modernisation of its tourism products, particularly in the areas of sustainable rural tourism, high quality niche markets and for Sheppey's chalet and caravan industry.

Housing

4.2.12 As an employment led spatial strategy, land for new housing to support new jobs will be provided so as to minimise the risk of excessive commuting into the Borough for work. The housing target will meet the future needs of the current local population, and provide for additional numbers of economically active people to help ensure an adequate supply of local labour. With a target of 13,500 new homes (10,406 from 2011), as an indicator of success, the spatial strategy will seek to maintain a relationship of a potential 0.8 jobs (42m²) for each new house built to maintain its employment led emphasis.

4.2.13 Delivering affordable homes will be difficult in the prevailing economic climate. The spatial strategy will be flexible over how provision can be made and will improve the supply of affordable homes and general market homes in rural communities. An increase in the number of larger family homes will be needed, which will also benefit the viability of some developments. Despite economic difficulties for the housing sector, the spatial strategy will recognise that quality new housing can help change perceptions of poorer housing markets like Queenborough and Rushenden and parts of Sittingbourne and Sheerness.

Environment

4.2.14 Maintaining and enhancing Swale's outstanding environment will be a precondition for the success of the spatial strategy, as will be improvements to the environment of deprived urban communities and rural landscapes in decline.

4.2.15 Swale's coast will be a thriving resource in the face of climate change. It will be both resilient to future changes and support new opportunities that arise. Businesses will be encouraged to suitable locations, whilst sites that cannot be made safe will be avoided. A coastal change management zone will ensure decisions taken now do not prejudice any future measures that may be needed to mitigate climate change effects.

4.2.16 Spatial strategy policies will encourage new development to make better use of resources, whilst strategic allocations will support energy strategies that will explore the opportunities to provide renewable and decentralised energy networks.

4.2.17 The spatial strategy is supported by a Green Infrastructure Plan - a high level network of accessible urban and rural green spaces. Existing assets will be protected, whilst development, where it can, positively maintains and improves the network of green infrastructure and maximises opportunities for biodiversity and access for all.

Transport

4.2.18 Transportation will play a key role in the delivery of the spatial strategy. New infrastructure will help to support economic growth by providing additional highway capacity and measures to promote equality of access to transport through an integrated and sustainable transport network. The key themes which the transport system will need to address include:

- supporting economic growth;
- promoting equality of independence;
- tackling climate change;
- contributing to safety, security and health; and
- improving the quality of life.

4 The strategy

4.2.19 Success in delivering the spatial strategy will make further demands on our transport systems, especially the road network, which comes under pressure at peak times. The spatial strategy will manage these demands and address the above key themes, by working with partners to achieve an integrated approach to transport provision. This will be through the sensible location of new development, which:

- minimises the number and length of journeys people need to make for everyday needs;
- directs transport movements onto public transport and those part of the network where most capacity exists; and
- encourages walking and cycling.

4.2.20 The spatial strategy will be assisted by a Local Transport Strategy to be prepared in partnership with Kent County Council, with measures to reduce car use and manage transport demand more sustainably.

4.2.21 Whilst highway congestion will increase as a result of general increase in traffic and the proposals in the spatial strategy, this will remain within acceptable limits than that experienced at other successful towns in Kent, enhanced by providing the final link in the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road, joining the A249 with the A2 east of Sittingbourne. This will improve transport conditions in central Sittingbourne, and complement traffic management and public transport improvement measures associated with regeneration projects in the town centre and strategic development at north east Sittingbourne.

4.2.22 Longer term considerations will need to be given to measures to relieve junction 5 of the M2 and to improve the distribution of traffic into Sittingbourne from the west. This re-balancing of the network could be achieved by a Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road linking the M2 to the A2 east of Sittingbourne. This project, though, having no clear means of delivery at this time is, nonetheless, included as a 'signposting' policy in this Core Strategy to meet future development needs.

Deprivation Issues

4.2.23 Whilst wider action to raise prosperity in the Borough will impact positively upon all residents, the spatial strategy requires proposals to demonstrate clear benefits to the Borough's most disadvantaged communities. Priority will be especially given to development proposals able to support the most disadvantaged wards. However, the spatial strategy's commitment will be seen principally within regeneration proposals at Sittingbourne town centre, at Queenborough/Rushenden, the wind turbine manufacturing proposals at Sheerness and in targeted areas of Faversham. A specific priority will be the high incidence and coincidence of poor health in many communities and the spatial strategy will require the proactive assessment and implementation of health action plans for major developments.

The focus for future developments needs

4.2.24 The Spatial Strategy will weight levels of growth toward Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey, reflecting their position within the Government's Thames Gateway Growth Area. This also reflects the achievable opportunities available and character of that area, as distinct from those in Faversham and remaining rural areas. The spatial strategy will give priority to the use of brownfield land, although its availability is lower than other Council areas within the Thames Gateway area and is therefore insufficient to meet all future development needs. The state of the

economy will also impact upon the delivery of brownfield land and this will mean that some development on greenfield land as urban and village extensions will be needed to maintain a supply of land for housing and jobs.

4.2.25 Within the context outlined above, the spatial strategy has four foci for growth, descending in order of scale. This approach will be a key part of what makes development sustainable in Swale, meaning the convenient location of services, employment and good transport links close at hand to where people are to live.

4.2.26 The main focus will be the development and expansion of the principal town of Sittingbourne which will be established as the location of choice for better shopping, leisure, cultural and public services in order to retain spending within the area and attract people to the town.

4.2.27 The secondary focus will be at the other Borough urban centres of Faversham and Sheerness, where development will support their role as neighbourhood centres, alongside the centres of nearby Queenborough, Rushenden and Minster/Halfway where new housing and employment may fulfil a wider role. However, each of these settlements has additional considerations that require adjustments to the overall weighting of growth and distribution.

4.2.28 Faversham is a small and compact historic market town, with 40% of its area within a designated conservation area. Maintaining the urban environment with a vibrant mix of uses will be a priority here. At its urban edge, the landscape has only a low to moderate capacity for change. For this area the spatial strategy is therefore a 'conservation first' approach, and development levels for housing will be restrained in contrast to the likely demand, whilst improving the quality of local employment land. Growth will be 'organic' – a gradual process by which growth is not forced and where its scale is emphasised. Whilst Faversham is a focus for development, it will be the capacity and quality of the environment that leads developments decisions here.

4.2.29 At Sheerness, the needs of the community cannot all be provided within the town, or by its expansion, due to the presence of the coast and the undeveloped flood plain. The larger settlement at Minster/Halfway is on higher ground and has land with fewer constraints, but it lacks a focal point for provision of new services. In contrast, the smaller settlements of Queenborough and Rushenden have major opportunities for the regeneration of older industrial areas. The development needs of Sheerness, Queenborough and Rushenden, Minster and Halfway are therefore considered together and referred to collectively as Western Sheppey by the spatial strategy. This is to achieve a more sustainable development pattern for western Sheppey as a whole through maximising opportunities close to the main transport networks. Care will nevertheless need to be taken to maintain the separation in identity of each settlement. This approach represents a more sustainable option than locating major new development at the more remote eastern end of the Island.

4.2.30 The third focus for development will be at local service centres – Iwade, Newington, Eastchurch, Leysdown, Teynham and Boughton. These settlements will be the most appropriate focus for new development in the rural areas. However, the individual capacity of each settlement for growth is variable because of differences in their accessibility to a range of services and jobs and in the quality of the environments in and around them. On this basis, appropriate allocations are made by the Core Strategy.

4.2.31 The fourth focus will be the wider rural areas, where scales of development will be modest and not involve the actual allocation of development sites by the Core Strategy. Within this area, the spatial strategy distinguishes between villages where development can take place within their boundaries or at sites to meet local needs, as opposed to smaller villages, hamlets and the open

4 The strategy

countryside where only essential development is envisaged. Built-up area boundaries for some settlements, defined on the Proposals Map, will be used to guide where and what types of development will be allowed at settlements and in the open countryside.

4.2.32 All these rural areas will be supported by policies that maintain sustainable growth that in turn enables investment in new business and housing to meet local needs. Priority will be given to the extension of digital infrastructure into rural areas, whilst new businesses and agricultural enterprises will bring benefits when they can be established without significant harm to the character of the countryside. Here the spatial strategy will acknowledge flexibility over such matters as the essential use of cars in remote rural areas, the growth of home working and the meeting of local needs. Local communities themselves may also bring forward proposals for development to meet their own particular objectives in areas where previously they may not have done.

The draft Core Strategy Key Diagram

4.2.33 The Key Diagram is intended to illustrate the overall intentions of the spatial strategy and those policies that critically effect where development should be located. In doing so, it outlines where the focus for major development will take place over the plan period and how this links with the main transport routes and neighbouring districts within Swale. It can be found at the end of section 4.2.

Considering the Pick Your Own options

4.2.34 The Spatial Strategy is the result of an assessment of the four strategic spatial options from the January 2011 [Pick Your Own](#) document (PYO) and supporting SA/SEA. The PYO consultation presented choices around the overall levels of development in the Borough and their potential distribution. As indicated by the PYO consultation document, given the variety of settlements and issues affecting the Borough, the strong likelihood would be that an eventual shape of a preferred option would lie somewhere amongst the four options, perhaps as a hybrid of two or more of them. This has proved to be the case, as elements of each of the four consultation options have been carried forward to a Preferred Option and the Spatial Strategy of this draft Core Strategy. Further background information, can be found in the following background papers: Technical Paper No.1 [Determining a local employment target for Swale](#) and Technical Paper No.2 [Determining a local housing target for Swale](#) .

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
PYO Option 1 focus at urban areas for 13,500 homes and lower employment growth.	<p>Adoption of Option 1 in its entirety was not pursued because its employment aspirations were not considered adequate to meet the future economic needs of the Borough. It also failed to reflect emerging proposals for wind-turbine manufacture at the Port of Sheerness. Too much reliance was also placed on unachievable housing contributions from urban regeneration projects at Sittingbourne Town Centre and Queenborough-Rushenden which, together with the need for further employment land, would have meant that the amount of land identified for development by the option was inadequate.</p> <p>Features taken from Option 1: Level of housing, development focus (but with wider search needed to also include Faversham and some rural service centres), Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road, improvements to waste water.</p>

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
<p>PYO Option 2 focus at urban areas and larger villages for 13,500 homes and lower employment growth.</p>	<p>In addition to those reasons provided for Option 1, adoption of Option 2 in its entirety was not pursued because it pushed too much new housing development away from the principal centres of population, employment and services. Although providing rural homes, its scale would have led to less sustainable patterns of travel and more severe impacts on the countryside than at the main urban settlements.</p> <p>Features taken from Option 2: As per Option 1.</p>
<p>PYO Option 3 focus at urban areas for 13,500 homes and higher employment growth.</p>	<p>Adoption of Option 3 in its entirety was not pursued because delivery of major elements of the option were found to be uncertain. Firstly, the reclamation of land from the sea at the Port of Sheerness and the development of its operational land for some 2,400 homes were insufficiently advanced in their planning. Secondly, proposals for major expansion at the Kent Science Park near Sittingbourne could not be achieved due to uncertainties over access to the site. Finally, providing an initial phase of a new Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road from a new junction on the M2 could not be funded with any certainty. The failure to progress the housing proposals at the Port of Sheerness, together with changes to the other urban regeneration sites, outlined in Option 1, also meant that the reduced reliance on the use of Greenfield land for housing, by Option 3, could no longer be relied upon.</p> <p>Features taken from Option 3: Increased overall employment provision at greater levels than option 1, but lower than option 3. Development focus with much reduced and more variable levels at local service centres. Growth at Kent Science Park and Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road as signposting for future consideration.</p>
<p>PYO Option 4 focus at urban areas for 18,500 homes and higher employment growth.</p>	<p>Adoption of Option 4 in its entirety was not pursued as the construction of 18,500 homes was found to be undeliverable and to have unacceptable consequences for the loss of countryside and high quality agricultural land. It would also have been at odds with the Council's reasoned housing target of 13,500 homes for the Core Strategy period. This target is intended to meet local needs as well as an element of in-migration in order to address future local labour supply demands. The target also reflects the amount of land available that can be developed without significant adverse impact on the environment. As with Option 3, delivery questions at the Port of Sheerness, Kent Science Park and the Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road showed that key parts of the Option could not be pursued.</p>

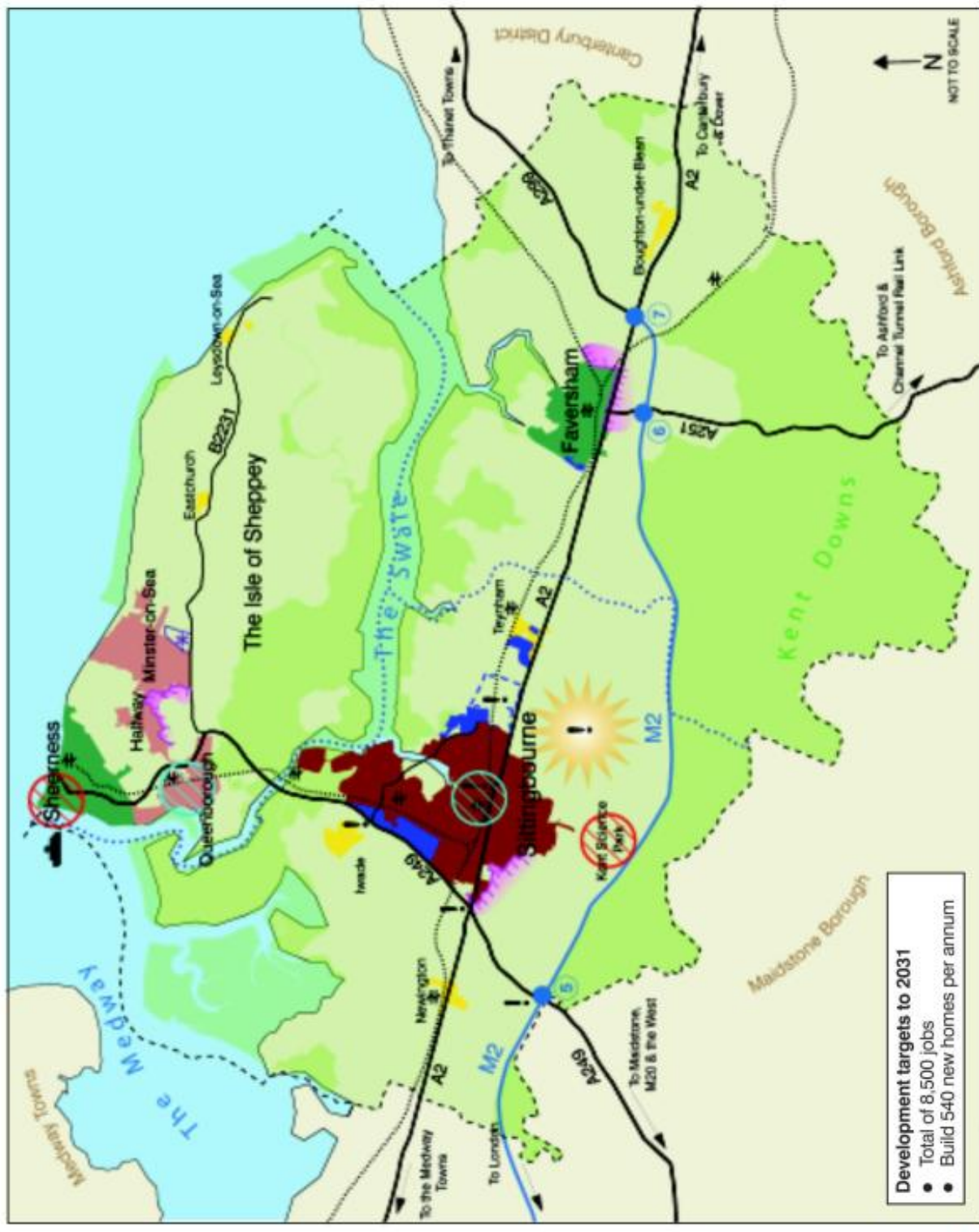
4 The strategy

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	<p>Features taken from Option 4: Increased overall employment provision at greater levels than option 1, but lower than option 4. Growth at Kent Science Park and Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road as signposting for future consideration.</p>

Table 4.2.1 Considering the Pick Your Own options

Key

- Principal Natural Environmental Asset (DM5)
- Protection of wider countryside (DM5, DM6)
- Main Borough Centre (CP1 Primary growth focus)
- Other Borough Centres (CP1 Secondary, constrained, growth focus)
- Other urban centres (CP1 Other secondary growth focus)
- Local service centres (CP1 Main focus in rural area)
- Borough boundary
- Strategy area boundary (ST3-ST5)
- Proposed strategic allocation (SA1-SA4)
- Proposed strategic allocation area of search for Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road (SA5)
- Transport improvement
- Main regeneration opportunities
- Main future area of change (CP2, AC2, AC3)
- Areas of search for allocations (ST3-ST5)
- Future area of search for Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road (not geographically specific) (AC1)
- Reserve housing site (RSA1)



Development targets to 2031

- Total of 8,500 jobs
- Build 540 new homes per annum

Isle of Sheppey

- Focus of growth on West Sheppey
- Delivery of major projects at Queenborough/Rushenden (employment/housing) and Port of Sheerness (employment)
- Future action to improve health of Sheerness town centres
- Area of search for 660 homes at Minster/Halfway
- Support for modernising tourism
- Protection of wildlife assets

Sittingbourne Area

- Principal town & focus of development in the borough. Establish town as location of choice for shops, jobs & services
- New mixed use sites in NW and NE Sittingbourne 1,000 homes & 110,300m² of employment floor-space in total
- Area of search for 130 homes in SW of the town
- Protection of countryside between Sittingbourne & villages

The Rural Area

- 433 homes & 26,840m² of employment floor-space at Teynham
- Protection of wider countryside & natural assets
- Flexible planning policies to enable communities to meet local needs

Faversham Area

- "Conservation first" approach & employment priority at town
- 12,800m² & 135 enabling homes at Western Link
- Area of search for 20,000m² of employment & 150 enabling homes
- New Neighbourhood Plan for Faversham Creek

4 The strategy

4.3 Provision for jobs and homes

4.3.1 In this section two policies are envisaged. The first, Policy ST 1 sets out overall amounts of new development to guide the Core Strategy. The second, Policy ST 2, guides the general location of allocations. Implementation of the spatial strategy requires land to be allocated for new jobs, homes and other community uses. These are led by strategic allocations – those considered the most essential to achieving the objectives of the Core Strategy, especially those associated with employment delivery.

4.3.2 Strategic allocations are set out in Chapter 6. These do not represent all of the Borough's development needs and other allocations are required to meet the Borough's housing target. The balance of housing and employment provision is expected to be progressed via the preparation of a separate *Site Allocations* Development Plan Document, although this may be dependent upon publication of the final version of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#). The Core Strategy nevertheless indicates locations which will be used to provide this balance from the sites identified by the Council's [Swale Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment](#).

Employment Development Targets

4.3.3 Employment provision has been made having had regard to the Council's 2010 [Employment Land Review](#)

4.3.4 In terms of its current supply of employment floorspace, Swale has a sizeable amount compared with nearby districts, with the stock dominated by manufacturing and warehousing premises, but with a very low proportion of office space. Since 2010, net new floorspace completions have been very low, reflecting economic conditions and losses of manufacturing space. The quality of the stock of industrial premises is relatively poor and dated in some areas and there are few dedicated office parks or modern office premises with those available currently under pressure to change to non-employment uses. Land allocated by the [Swale Borough Local Plan](#) or with unimplemented planning permission already provides for a significant land supply. Despite this, there is a limited supply of readily available sites for general industrial development and large scale distribution uses, and even fewer opportunities for offices and small, serviced office units in the right locations to meet the future needs of existing local businesses. In short, a more flexible and better quality supply is needed.

4.3.5 The Council has undertaken an assessment of need and demand relative to the constraints to development and the opportunities available. This assessment can be found in Technical Paper No.1 [Determining a local employment target for Swale](#) (March 2012). The Council's net employment floorspace and job target for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2031 is for 545,614m² having a capacity to provide 10,685 jobs falling predominantly within what are referred to as 'B' Use Classes, comprising office, industrial, storage and distribution uses, but also including retail and leisure provision. Floorspace figures for approved waste and energy projects are also included. The Council's job target however has been set at 20% below the capacity figure at around 8,500 jobs.

4.3.6 Table 4.3.1 shows how the employment floorspace target will be met from a mixture of existing committed employment sites and new provision. Excluded from this overall floorspace/jobs target and the table below is potential for a further 80,000m² and some 1,720 jobs from the proposed wind turbine manufacturing facility at the Port of Sheerness.

Source of land	Amount of floorspace (m ²)
Available and achievable existing employment land commitments waiting to be built (inc. waste/energy/retail/leisure).	525,874
Floorspace to be achieved by draft Core Strategy Strategic Allocations.	169,940
Less floorspace estimated to be lost during plan period.	150,200
TOTAL NET AMOUNT OF EMPLOYMENT FLOORSPACE BEING PROVIDED BY CORE STRATEGY	545,614
Amount of committed floorspace identified as not being built before 31 March 2031	20,439
Other floorspace potential (Port of Sheerness)	80,000

Table 4.3.1 Existing and proposed sources of employment land 2011-31

Retail and Leisure Development

4.3.7 Swale has three principal towns: Sittingbourne (the main shopping and administrative centre); Faversham (a market town serving a rural hinterland); and Sheerness (the main town on the Isle of Sheppey). The Borough is accessible to higher order centres at Canterbury, Ashford, Maidstone and Chatham. The regional centre at Bluewater retail park is a 30 minute drive away.

4.3.8 The approach to retail and leisure provision has had regard to the Council's 2010 [Retail Assessment](#). This showed that Swale retains high levels of local spending in the everyday supermarket shopping sector (convenience shopping). It also highlighted the need for a further 14,000m² of comparison (non-food) floorspace by the year 2025. Development at these levels will help claw back expenditure lost to centres such as Maidstone and Canterbury which have a wider representation in terms of national multiples and department stores. This will boost the market share and retention of spending in the Borough. In terms of quantitative deficiencies, the retail assessment identified potential remedies. First, over trading at stores in the town requires additional floorspace in or close to Sittingbourne town centre (at the Forum and north and south of the railway line), whilst a new main food store could be sustained toward the eastern side of the Isle of Sheppey.

4.3.9 These deficiencies have been met largely at Sittingbourne town centre by the permissions for retail and leisure uses recently granted or resolved to be granted. In the case of convenience shopping, these permissions additionally resolve issues with significant over-trading in some locations. They, in effect, signal the implementation phases of the town centre regeneration policies of the *Swale Borough Local Plan* (2008). These policies continue to support those development proposals, together with the town centre partnership activities between the Council and the Spirit of Sittingbourne development company. Proposals are being worked up to regenerate other parts of the town centre south of the railway, for leisure, civic and other town centre uses.

4.3.10 Convenience shopping needs in other parts of the Borough have already been largely met as a result of recent planning permissions on western Sheppey and by a permission already implemented at Faversham.

4 The strategy

4.3.11 In total, the extant proposals outlined above amount to some 56,349m² of retail and leisure floorspace, providing a job capacity of 1,792 (included within the overall job target referred to above) as calculated by Technical Paper No.1 [Determining a local employment target for Swale](#) (March 2012). In consequence, it is not considered that the Core Strategy needs to make any additional provision Borough-wide, above and beyond that which the Council has recently approved.

4.3.12 The Retail Assessment identifies a retail hierarchy for the Borough as set out in Table 4.3.2.

Status	Location
Town centre	Sittingbourne (principal town), Faversham, Sheerness
Local centre	Queenborough & Rushenden, Halfway, Minster, Milton Regis, Boughton, Eastchurch, Iwade, Leysdown, Newington, Teynham

Table 4.3.2 Swale's retail hierarchy

4.3.13 In line with Government policy, the preference for major new retail and leisure development are the main town centres. For the purposes of determining whether retail and leisure applications fall within these centres, the town centre boundaries for Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne are defined in 'saved' Swale Borough Local Plan 2008 policies AAP1, AAP4 and AAP7 respectively. Additionally, 'saved' policies B3 and B4 will continue to guide planning applications, as they support Core Strategy objectives and they are considered to be in accordance with the emerging NPPF. With planned developments at an advanced stage in the process, it is not considered necessary at this time to propose new retail development management policies.

4.3.14 Within the town centres the core and secondary shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, are also 'saved' in their current extent. This is because the 2010 Retail Assessment Study does not recommend any changes to these areas at the present time. However, once the implementation of the new retail proposals referred to at Sittingbourne have been implemented, a review of these designations may be warranted.

4.3.15 In the case of proposals for both new floorspace and changes of use, use of 'saved' Local Plan policies B3 and B4 to assess the impacts on vitality and viability should also be used with reference to the health checks undertaken for the Retail Assessment.

Tourism Development

4.3.16 Swale Borough has a rich cultural heritage and the contribution of tourism to the local economy can be overlooked. Although there is specific evidence to support the need for further tourist facilities within Swale, including that for hotels, the precise amount of provision is not quantifiable and as such future floorspace and job provision is excluded from the overall employment targets.

4.3.17 The 2009 [Cambridge Model](#) showed that total expenditure on tourism in Kent and Medway generated £2.6 billion directly and indirectly to local business, a 4% increase from 2006, and that tourism supports 63,261 actual jobs, an increase of 7% since 2006. For Swale, the model showed that total expenditure on tourism in Swale generated £207 million directly and indirectly to local business, an 8% increase from 2006 and supporting 4,252 actual jobs - a 10% increase since 2006. Swale's location relative to London and Europe is advantageous to tourism growth as will be the legacy from the 2012 London Olympics.

4.3.18 The key tourism aim of the Core Strategy is to improve the range of tourism facilities and the tourism offer, with emphasis upon improved quality to enhance the visitor profile of the Borough, hand in hand with regeneration of its town centres. This will be dependent upon continued growth in holidays within the UK. Specifically, accommodation needs to improve and expand and the current and potential range of tourism assets safeguarded. The value of tourism is recognised by the spatial strategy.

4.3.19 Tourism, as part of a wider cultural offer, will be important within regeneration projects. At the coastal towns of Faversham and Sheerness, it will be used to achieve a wider reputation for high quality consumer and leisure facilities. Given its location and proximity to other tourist centres at Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay, Faversham has strong potential to diversify its economy around tourism - a key component of the Core Strategy Vision for the town. For Sheerness to recapture its former role as a tourism centre for the Island, it must be a central part of wider regenerative initiatives for the town. Regeneration here could consolidate the Island's role as the Borough's unique offer. The contribution of the Borough's rural areas is significant and improved attractions, accommodation provision and recreational and leisure activities should be encouraged where appropriate.

4.3.20 The report *Kent Hotel Development Hotspots Final Report*, prepared by Hotel Solutions for Visit Kent & Tourism South East April 2011, indicates the type of hotel accommodation that could be needed in Swale.

At Sittingbourne:

- Immediate market potential for a further budget hotel in Sittingbourne with Travelodge now having secured a site with planning permission in the town centre, with longer-term potential for further budget hotels as the town's economy develops and the town centre is regenerated.
- A redeveloped and expanded Coniston Hotel will meet any requirements for a higher quality hotel in Sittingbourne.

At Faversham:

- There is commercial interest for a budget hotel.

On the Isle of Sheppey:

- There is potential for a budget hotel at Queenborough given the planned regeneration of Queenborough and Rushenden including the current development of Neats Court Business Park on the A249 and the Sheerness Port development.

Housing Development Targets (including provision for Gypsies and Travellers)

4.3.21 A Borough housing target of 13,500 homes for the period 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2031 has been set by the Council. Its assessment of need and demand, and capacity and opportunity can be found in Technical Paper No.2 [Determining a local housing target for Swale](#) (March 2012). The Council does not need to find extra land for the whole of its target as a considerable part is met by dwellings already completed, outstanding planning permissions and 'saved' allocations from the adopted *Swale Borough Local Plan 2008* (see Table 4.3.3).

4 The strategy

Source of land	Number of new homes
Homes built between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2011.	3,238
Homes with planning permission waiting to be built.	1,821
Sites reviewed and committed as allocations from the adopted 2008 Swale Borough Local Plan.	3,492
New land identified for housing.	3,643
Amount of new housing coming from windfall sites (sites not known or identified).	1,450
TOTAL AMOUNT OF HOUSING BEING PROVIDED BY CORE STRATEGY	13,644
Amount of housing identified as not being built before 31 March 2031.	850

Table 4.3.3 Existing and proposed sources of housing land 2006-2031

4.3.22 New housing provision has been made having considered the [East Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009](#), the draft [Swale Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment](#) (2010-11) and other wider impacts. The land availability assessment has not identified sufficient land to meet the housing target, so to limit the use of environmentally unacceptable land, the Council has made an allowance for 'windfall' sites. These are sites that are known to come forward all the time, but the Council is unable to predict where they may be. Government policy guidance indicates that they should not be relied upon for housing land supply during the first ten years of the plan period, but an allowance of 145 dwellings per annum has been assumed for the latter ten year part of the plan period. *Technical Paper No.2* provides further details.

4.3.23 The draft 2010-11 *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* is available for consultation alongside this draft Core Strategy. It includes all the sites that were put forward by landowners and developers for consideration for housing and mixed uses. Appendix 3 of the draft Core Strategy provides further details of sites judged to be achievable within the plan period and which may be potential sites in the Council's future *Site Allocations Development Plan Document*. Alternatively, subject to finalisation of Government policy, the Council may include these sites as allocations at the next stage of the Core Strategy.

4.3.24 The Core Strategy contains an indicative target of 30-35% (depending on location) for the proportion of total housing that should be provided as affordable and is considered in greater detail under Policy DM 12.

4.3.25 As part of the overall housing target, there will be provision included for gypsies and travellers. Rather than numbers of homes, provision for this section of the community is expressed as 'pitches', which are usually sites big enough for a home and its associated domestic requirements. The Council is not yet able to say what proportion of its overall housing target will be for the gypsy and travelling communities. This is subject to an assessment of options for an overall target for pitch numbers in the Borough and their suggested distribution. Further details can be found at Section 4.7 and in Technical Paper No. 3 [Review of evidence to determine pitch number options for gypsies and travellers in Swale](#) (March 2012).

Bringing Development Forward

4.3.26 Development targets should be viewed as minimum figures and the Council will consider further provision on suitable sites that accord with the Strategic Policy, (Policy ST 2) and other relevant Core Strategy policies. For housing, these may be via the redevelopment or conversion of existing buildings or due to higher than expected densities being achieved on allocated sites (or through Neighbourhood Plans). For employment, these may be by way of the expansion of existing sites.

4.3.27 The Council wishes to ensure that the scale and pace of development, in particular that for housing, does not undermine the employment led Core Strategy or lead to unacceptable consequences because necessary infrastructure cannot be provided to support it.

4.3.28 In the case of employment provision, a simple ratio that divides the number of new homes with the number of jobs and floorspace to be provided from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2031 is used. Subject to ratios changing because the level of new jobs was not keeping pace with the number of new homes, this may trigger further research which could, in turn, lead to a deferral of further permissions for housing or a review of the Core Strategy if more serious and structural difficulties are indicated.

4.3.29 Proposals involving retail and leisure uses (over and above that recently approved or resolved to be approved) which would significantly increase floorspace above that identified by the Council's needs assessment will be assessed in accordance with saved Swale Borough Local Plan policies.

4.3.30 Levels of housing development could have potential impacts upon sites of European Importance for Biodiversity. There will be a need to consider the findings of the bird population and visitor studies commissioned by the [North Kent Environmental Planning Group](#). These will be considered through all relevant planning documents, such as development briefs, and in the assessment of planning applications and may require both detailed design measures or adjustments made to the phasing, amount or type of development.

4 The strategy

Policy ST 1

Land for jobs and homes 2011-2031

Land is identified for the following uses:⁽¹⁾

Floorspace and jobs for employment uses (m ²) identified by Core Strategy				Number of new homes identified by Core Strategy		
General employment identified from existing commitments and Core Strategy Strategic Allocations.	Balance of general employment identified by future Site Allocations Development Plan Document.	Retail and leisure ⁽¹⁾	Total jobs (target)	Via Strategic Allocations, Neighbourhood Plan, sites within existing and proposed built up area boundaries, outstanding commitments ⁽²⁾ and an allowance made for windfall sites.	Balance of housing provision to be provided by Site Allocations Development Plan Document ⁽³⁾	Total traveller pitches.
639,465	None	56,349	8,548	9,616	790	To be determined following options consultation

Table 4.3.4 Land for jobs and homes 2011-2031

1. Subject to resolutions to grant planning permission.
2. Includes planning permissions yet to be built, allocations subject to 'saved Local Plan policies'.
3. Unless resolved to be formally allocated for submission version of Core Strategy.

Planning permission will be granted for development meeting or exceeding these targets unless:

1. progress on creating jobs lags behind housing growth leading to the number of jobs per new housing falling significantly below 0.8 jobs (or 1 dwelling per 42m²) per dwelling completed; or
2. overloading the capacity of infrastructure leads to unacceptable consequences without the foreseeable means of resolving them; or
3. avoidance, mitigation of impacts or management cannot prevent fragmentation or damage to designated European wildlife habitats; and
4. in the case of retail/leisure proposals, need and impact assessments demonstrate significant harm to the spatial strategy, including the vitality and viability of an existing centre.

1 excluding completions between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2011 and losses in employment land floorspace

Employment development (other than retail/leisure) at the Port of Sheerness shall be permitted additionally to the provisions of Policies ST1 and ST2.

Alternatives considered - Land for jobs and homes 2011-2031

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
1. Provide for a higher level of new housing.	Provision above the housing target (e.g. 18,100 to meet demographic trends) would not be deliverable as it would involve levels of growth above historical rates and is unlikely to be achievable in the current economic climate. There are not significant levels of in-commuting in Swale that would suggest a need to provide more houses locally to support employment growth. Increased housing targets would also result in the use of environmentally unacceptable sites and/or sites in locations that are not considered sustainable.
2. Provide for a lower level of new housing.	If housing were only provided to meet the demographic needs of the existing population (e.g. 9,500), this would result in an increasingly older population that would not provide the Borough with the necessary influx of economically active people. It could also potentially lead to increases in commuting into Swale because of a lack of available housing locally to support job creation.
3. Provide for a higher level of new employment	There are insufficient opportunities available to increase the amount of employment floorspace further than proposed due to competition for land with housing and other uses. Employment growth could be significantly increased with formal allocation of Kent Science Park for expansion. However, assessment has shown this not to be deliverable at the present time due to the lack of an achievable means of access.
4. Provide for a lower level of new employment	This would not enable Swale to compete with other locations or enable it to address the strengths and weaknesses identified by the <i>Employment Land Review 2010</i> .
5. Provide for lower levels of housing and employment	These would combine the negative impacts of alternatives 2. and 4.
6. Provide for a higher level of retail and leisure provision	Significant provision is already planned to meet identified needs. With a lack of town centre or edge of centre sites, this would run the risk of undermining the viability and vitality of existing centres. Higher levels of provision could run the risk of out of town locations coming forward, potentially at the cost of delivering sustainable town centre regeneration.
7. Provide for a lower level of retail and leisure provision	This is not a realistic alternative as there are resolutions to grant planning permission for the levels identified in the Policy. Lower levels would not be realistic since this would result in the gradual

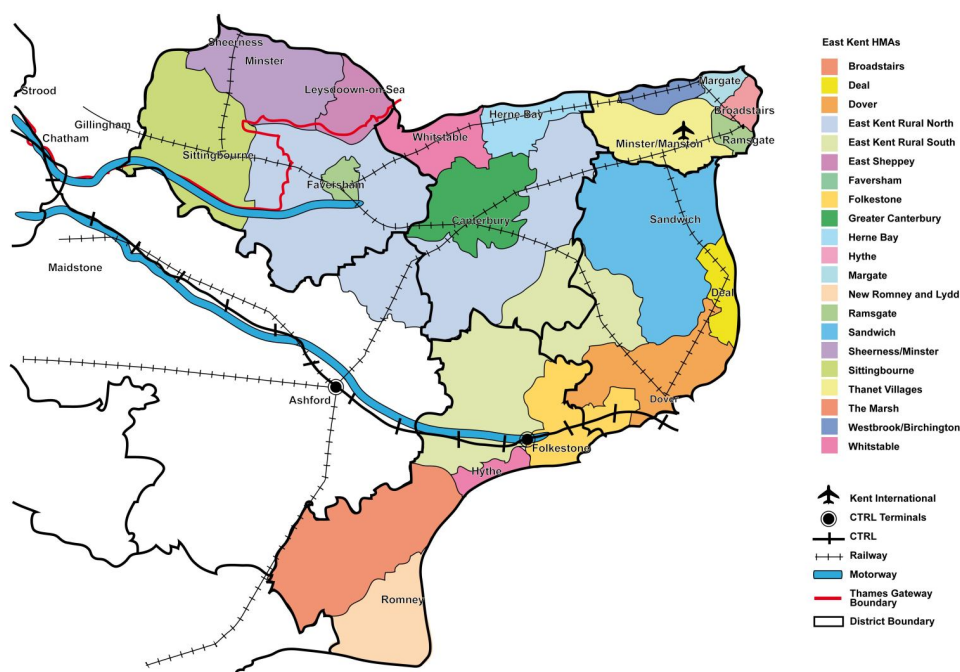
4 The strategy

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	decline of town centres within the Borough as other nearby centres expand and compete for business.

Table 4.3.5 Alternatives considered - land for jobs and homes

The location of development

4.3.31 The broad distribution and means of allocation for land in the Core Strategy is set out in this section. It has been guided by the spatial strategy and by Policy CP 1 on sustainable development. It has also had regard to the *East Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010* (undertaken in partnership between Swale and the other East Kent local authorities) which identified a number of local housing market areas as shown in Map 4.3.1.



Map 4.3.1 Local Housing Market Areas in Swale and East Kent. Source: East Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010

4.3.32 Table 4.3.6 shows the approximate distribution of new⁽²⁾ Core Strategy allocations across local housing market areas.

Area	Housing	Employment (all types) floorspace (m ²)
Sittingbourne	1,959 (53.8%)	110,300 (65%)
Sheerness/Minster	763 (21%)	0 (0%)
East Sheppey	10 (0.3%)	0 (0%)

2 Not previously allocated or an outstanding planning permission.

Area	Housing	Employment (all types) floorspace (m ²)
Faversham	439 (12%)	32,800 (19.3%)
East Swale Rural Area	472 (13%)	26,840 (15.7%)

Table 4.3.6 New Core Strategy allocations across local housing market areas.

4.3.33 The Core Strategy Implementation Plan (Chapter 8) will, when finalised, set out its risk assessment and contingencies in the event of shortfalls in delivery of development.

4.3.34 Policy ST2 sets out the sources and development locations of allocations. Further details of the site schedule for the sites associated with this policy can be found in Appendix 3. Here can be found links to the Council's draft *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* (2010/11) and its *Employment Land Review* (2010). Reference in the Policy to preparation of a *Site Allocations* DPD are subject to review and sites may be 'converted' to allocations for the submission version of the Core Strategy. The policy also provides a contingency in response to potential risk of non delivery of one of the Council's preferred housing locations at Queenborough-Rushenden by identifying a 'reserve' site elsewhere on the Isle of Sheppey.

Policy ST 2

The location of development

Planning permission will be granted for development as specified on land allocated to meet the provisions of Policy ST1 in accordance with the following distribution:

Source	Housing	'B' Class employment (m ²)	Retail/Leisure (m ²)
1. 'Saved' Swale Borough Local Plan 2008 allocations as reviewed by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. ⁽¹⁾	3,492	173,329	56,349
2. Sites within existing built up area boundaries as identified by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.	912	Not applicable	Not applicable
3. From proposed changes to built up area boundaries, as shown on the Proposals Map.	121	Not applicable	Not applicable
4. Within the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan at Faversham Creek, as shown on the Proposals Map. ⁽²⁾	102	To be determined	To be determined

4 The strategy

Source	Housing	'B' Class employment (m ²)	Retail/Leisure (m ²)
5. Strategic Allocations, as shown on the Proposals Map, at:	1,718	169,940	0
a. NW Sittingbourne	880	69,100	0
b. NE Sittingbourne	120	41,200	0
c. Teynham	433	26,840	0
d. Faversham Western Link	135	12,800	0
e. Faversham 'area of search' to meet employment needs	150	20,000	0
6. Within 'areas of search', as shown on the Key Diagram, with provision to be made via Site Allocations DPD:	790	0	0
a. SW Sittingbourne	130	0	0
b. South and west Minster/Halfway, Isle of Sheppey	660	0	0
7. Via Windfall Allowance	1,450	Planning permissions granted in accordance with Spatial Strategy.	Planning permissions granted in accordance with Spatial Strategy
TOTAL	8,585	343,269	56,349

Table 4.3.7 The location of development

1. Not re-allocated by the Core Strategy, but remaining part of the Borough's land supply and shown on the Proposals Map.
2. Final number to be determined by Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council will monitor the supply of housing and employment land. In the event that adjustments are necessary to the scale and/or pace of delivery, the Council will take action in line with the Core Strategy Implementation Plan. Any shortfall in provision within the Sittingbourne and Sheppey areas will not be made good by substitution of sites within Faversham or the rural areas, as this would be contrary to the spatial strategy. Should a shortfall in provision occur at the 'saved' Local Plan allocation at Queenborough - Rushenden, the Council will release land subject to Policy RSA1 of this Core Strategy.

Alternatives considered - the location of development

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
<p>1. Identify alternative strategic allocation locations at Sittingbourne</p>	<p>The location at NW Sittingbourne was chosen because the Council's landscape evidence showed the majority of the area able to accommodate this level of change – it is well contained by roads and existing development. The site has no environmental constraints and is close to the strategic road network and has a rail halt. It is large enough to contain mixed uses able to make more sustainable communities and is the only site with potential for a decentralised energy network. The site has been modelled for its transport impacts and has been shown to be acceptable. No other site at Sittingbourne has the combination of these attributes. Site constraints, such as flood risk, are capable of being addressed. There is loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (in common with most urban extension sites at Sittingbourne), but its protection is judged to be outweighed by sustainability benefits.</p> <p>At NE Sittingbourne, again landscape evidence shows parts of the site as being able to accommodate change. It has good access to the strategic road network and is one of the few options available in the Borough to provide a significant level of new employment – the site is next to the Eurolink business park – a strong and proven existing location in the Borough. The site can be accessed by public transport. As has been achieved on the adjacent East Hall Farm site, the site has good potential to create sustainable mixed use communities. A considerable amount of open space/habitat creation is also proposed. The site has been transport modelled and has been shown to be acceptable, although mitigation at junctions is likely to be required. The main constraints are (i) best and most versatile agricultural land (ii) tidal flooding and (iii) adjacent SSSI/SPA. In respect of (i), there is limited loss of such land and is judged to be outweighed by the benefits above. In the case of (ii) the residential element is not affected and the employment component has the agreement of the Environment Agency. In terms of the sequential test (as required by PPS25) for the employment site, there are other locations, but none close to the main centres of population and strategic road network. No exceptions test is necessary. In the case of (iii), although a matter for the Appropriate Assessment, considerable open space and biodiversity mitigation is proposed, which, at this stage, is anticipated as being able to limit access to the wider SPA.</p> <p>Other alternatives considered at Sittingbourne. Other areas that could have been considered at Sittingbourne are in its SW and SE sectors. In respect of the SW Sector, major sites in this area were rejected because they would not be able to provide for employment and housing needs at the scale needed without</p>

4 The strategy

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	<p>critically damaging settlement separation with nearby villages. No employment was additionally proposed by site promoters and would not have therefore contributed to the Council's employment led strategy. Additionally, land here is not as well located in relation to services as other urban extension locations. Land here is also best and most versatile and, in the absence of any overriding sustainability benefit arising from proposals here, its protection was considered to take priority. Access to the strategic road network would also be problematical. Note, however, inclusion of a proposed area of search for smaller sites in this location in the draft Core Strategy (see below).</p> <p>In respect of the SE Sector, landscape evidence showed that the scale of growth there would harm landscape/visual amenity. The area also contains best and most versatile land and development here (although reasonably close to facilities) would fail to offer the strategic benefits of the other locations to be considered as outweighing of this constraint.</p>
<p>2. Identify alternative strategic allocation locations at other urban extension locations in the Borough.</p>	<p>Having exhausted the opportunities for urban extensions at Sittingbourne – for the reasons above – could other locations have been considered in other settlements in the categories below in Table 5.2.1.?</p> <p>Although Faversham and Sheerness have good levels of services and infrastructure, neither are the primary focus for growth as set out by the spatial strategy. Additionally, in the case of Sheerness, there are no locations for urban extensions due to the sea and land at flood risk. At Faversham, the town is small, compact and historic, where maintaining the urban environment with a vibrant mix of uses is a priority. At its urban edge, landscape evidence shows it to have only a low to moderate capacity for change. The Core Strategy vision and spatial strategy is clearly a 'conservation first' approach, with development levels restrained in contrast to the likely demand. Growth is described as 'organic' – a gradual process by which growth is not forced and where its scale is emphasised. Whilst Faversham is a focus for development, it is the capacity and quality of the environment that leads developments decisions here. Whilst two strategic allocations are to be identified here, a scale of growth equivalent to that identified at the principal settlement Sittingbourne would not be possible without critical damage to the character and setting of the town as a whole.</p> <p>Elsewhere on Sheppey, the Council has considered whether there is potential for strategic allocations at the other urban centres of Queenborough, Rushenden and Minster/Halfway. Queenborough already has a long standing commitment to major</p>

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	<p>regeneration on previously developed land in a deprived community and there is no major further scope outside this area due to land at risk of flooding and of interest to biodiversity. Minster/Halfway has been and continues to be a long standing commitment for housing growth in the Borough, and although on higher ground with fewer constraints, a strategic scale of growth here would have significant visual issues on the higher ground; although the land is low quality agriculturally and not designated. It should though be noted that the Council has identified an 'area of search' on the southern and western fringes of Minster/Halfway (see below).</p> <p>Other locations for strategic allocations could have been considered at north Halfway and east Minster. In the case of north Halfway, this is a high flood risk area, a local wildlife site and also performs a settlement separation function. There are no realistic sites available that could pass flood risk tests. In the case of east Minster, sites were potentially available on higher unconstrained ground, however, these were judged by the SHLAA (supported by landscape evidence) to have more significant landscape/visual impacts and are further away from transport, employment and service links – in short, they were less sustainable and would rely on unsuitable roads.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that the Council is considering the need for a 'reserve' site, to address land supply issues, on land to the east of Scocles Road, Minster. The site has landscape/visual impacts and is less central to employment and service opportunities. The site represents the 'least worse' option of those available as potential alternative strategic allocations for the reasons set out above.</p> <p>Further east of Minster, communities have increasingly poorer accessibility to major services. The distance to services and employment are such that strategic levels of development would be extremely unsustainable (rail, bus and trunk road links are all at the western end of Sheppey, together with most of the Island's population).</p> <p>In conclusion, the spatial strategy addresses the development needs of Sheerness, Queenborough and Rushenden, Minster and Halfway together.</p>
3. Identify alternative strategic allocation at local service centres (i.e. Alternatives to the choice of Teynham)	The draft Core Strategy settlement strategy has six identified local service centres at the tier below the various urban centres in the Borough. These represent a third focus for development.

4 The strategy

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	<p>In the case of lwade, the SHLAA identified scope for development, in addition to the considerable levels of growth seen since the 1990's. This has not been accepted by the Council. It acknowledges that this would enable the use of lower quality agricultural land, however, the in-combination impacts with the NW Sittingbourne Strategic Allocation were considered to have a critical impact on the settlement separation between the village and Sittingbourne. The Council considers that the NW Sittingbourne site (it being within a higher settlement category within Policy CP1) should be viewed as having greater priority.</p> <p>Boughton was not pursued for major growth as it is outside the Thames Gateway area and does not have a good range of public transport opportunities. Land around the village is also visually sensitive. However, some small scale developments are identified as small extensions to the existing built up area boundary of the village. The village has a good range of services which this limited growth could support.</p> <p>Leysdown – at the extreme eastern tip of Sheppey – was not pursued because of its remoteness, very poor access and limited public transport availability. There are some services available to support the local and summer communities, but not sufficient to serve strategic level development. Outside the seasonal holiday industry, the nearest employment centre is 11km distance and main shopping facilities 14km in Sheerness town - both on a local rural 'B' road.</p> <p>Eastchurch, although having some local services, the village is some 9km from Sheerness on local roads. The SHLAA and landscape evidence identified visual/landscape impacts as potentially high around the village. However, a small scale development is identified as an extension to the existing built up area boundary of the village. The village has a good range of services which this limited growth could support.</p> <p>Newington, although having development opportunities and a reasonable range of service (inc. rail station), there is an air quality management area on the A2 in the centre of the village which sites cannot avoid. Traffic conditions in the centre of the village are poor because of the A2 - these in turn adversely impact upon the historic environment of the village.</p> <p>In contrast, Teynham has a good range of services, employment and public transport (inc. rail station). It is close to major services and employment at Sittingbourne. There are development opportunities well related to the existing developed framework of the village north of the A2. To the south of the A2 the land is</p>

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	<p>exposed and strategic scale development would be visually harmful, whilst land to the east drops into a visually prominent shallow valley.</p> <p>A strategic allocation is made at Teynham for mixed uses inc. housing and rural employment (an important benefit). Although the sites are likely to comprise best and most versatile agricultural land, they are largely within the village confines and the sustainability benefits are considered by the Council to be overriding. A wider constraint is capacity on the A2 which would need to be assessed, but the site can be phased in the latter part of the Plan period to allow for other infrastructure (i.e. the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road) to be in place. The capacity of the waste water treatment works at the village needs to be upgraded and this is allowed for.</p> <p>Beyond the service centres there are a range of smaller villages across the Borough. These are located away from transport routes and/or in open countryside. Many are located within the Kent Downs AONB. All are considered unsuitable for strategic or major scales of growth on the basis of the character of the surrounding countryside, relative remoteness from a full range of services and have limited services of their own.</p>
4. Identify alternative strategic allocation locations at Faversham	See alternatives considered under Policy ST 5
5. Identify alternative 'area of search' at Sittingbourne	See also above. The identified 'area of search' is limited to small to medium sized sites well related to the urban framework with limited impacts upon best and most versatile land. One site, at Ufton Court Farm, identified by the SHLAA, was not accepted by the Council because of the loss of agricultural land. Although an alternative search area could have been identified in SE Sittingbourne, sites would have potentially adversely impacted upon landscape/visual and agricultural land issues and smaller sites were not being promoted by landowners.
6. Identify alternative 'area of search' on Isle of Sheppey	See also above. The identified 'area of search' is limited to small to medium sized sites behind the ridge of hills as identified by the SHLAA and supported by landscape evidence – one exception is the larger site of 500 units at Cowsted Corner where the site size has been limited to reduce adverse visual impacts. Although other areas of search could have been identified at Minster/Halfway in the same locations as considered (and rejected) strategic allocations, the smaller scale of growth raised the same issues.

4 The strategy

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
7. Significant failure of housing delivery leading to identification of 'reserve' site	These risks are most likely to be associated with the two major urban regeneration sites at Sittingbourne Town Centre and Queenborough/Rushenden. The first is not considered to be significant given the phasing of development in the latter part of the plan period. The second has greater risk given that delivery is expected during the first 10 years of the plan period. A reserve site would need to be identified on Sheppey, and would require identification of a site from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment that has been rejected due to its suitability. Such sites would be on greenfield land and not offer the same regenerative benefits to deprived communities.
8. Significant failure in employment delivery	Failure is most likely to be attributed to economic conditions. Given the extent of the supply and the length of the Plan period, no contingency is considered appropriate. In certain marginal situations enabling housing is considered as the means to deliver employment floorspace. However, Policies ST1 & 2 address the situation where employment delivery does not keep pace with housing in order to preserve a sustainable balance between jobs and labour supply.
9. Include Kent Science Park as additional employment site	Employment growth could be significantly increased with formal allocation of Kent Science Park for expansion. This would support the diversification of the economy in the Borough and potentially raise local skills. However, assessment has shown this not to be deliverable at the present time due to the lack of an achievable means of access.
10. Focus more development on previously developed land.	Not including outstanding sites with planning permission, completions and windfalls, land for 2,650 dwellings (approx. 37%) is already identified in the Borough as part of the land supply. The SHLAA has not revealed any further achievable previously developed sites. Although a major project was submitted for consideration at the Port of Sheerness, there were considerable issues associated with flood risk, access and biodiversity that had not been sufficiently developed to enable a sound strategic allocation to be made.

Table 4.3.8 Alternatives considered for the location of development

4.4 Strategy for the Sittingbourne area

4.4.1 Sittingbourne falls within the Kent Thames Gateway growth area and is also the main centre for the Borough. As such, it is the primary focus for development and concentration of higher order public services and facilities. Most services and facilities are present and there are good quality transport choices. It is suitable for the largest scale new developments and offers the opportunity to further reinforce the town's role as principal settlement in the Borough and for further improvements to the transport network. Significant progress has already been made towards delivering these objectives as a result of strategic level allocations made in the [Swale Borough Local Plan](#) (2008) and supporting [Sittingbourne Town Centre and Milton Creek DPD](#)

(2010), which are saved policies and guidance respectively. Establishing Sittingbourne as the location of choice will be led by town centre regeneration to create an enhanced range of shops, leisure facilities and public, commercial and voluntary services. Cultural activity starts from a low base, although the proposal currently at planning permission stage together with other initiatives to be brought forward as part of the town centre regeneration partnership should enhance the offer of Sittingbourne relative to other Kent towns of its size. Achievement of the regeneration proposals are likely to be subject to the prevailing economic conditions, but the planning frameworks and implementation partnerships to support it are at an advanced stage.

4.4.2 Specifically this includes, subject to referring the scheme to the Secretary of State and completion of a Section 106 Agreement, resolution to grant planning permission for a retail food store (6682m²) and associated petrol filling station, leisure and community uses and 150 dwellings at Sittingbourne Mill and Wharf sites. The Council has also resolved to grant planning permission, subject to final consultation and completion of a Section 106 Agreement for a supermarket (13,420m²) and additional A1 and A1/A3 uses on land at Milton Creek/Eurolink/Crown Quay Lane and a further 3300m² retail floorspace as an extension to the Forum shopping centre.

4.4.3 The Core Strategy identifies a series of strategic sites to support the vision and spatial strategy and reinforce its role as the main centre and offers the most sustainable way to accommodate growth. In the Sittingbourne area these are located to the north west and north east of the town and are identified for mixed use development. In terms of the provision of employment floorspace these sites are easily accessible to the strategic road network. An area of search for smaller residential allocations to the south west of the town is also proposed by the Core Strategy from sites identified by the Council's *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment*. In order to meet development needs a strategic allocation is also identified at nearby Teynham where sites well related to the village and close to a good range of services have the potential to provide for both new homes and rural jobs. The *Swale Borough Local Plan* allocation for residential development at East Hall Farm and Stones Farm to the east of the town are also retained.

linking sites by walking/cycling routes will require a co-ordinated response from all development projects in accordance with a Local Transport Strategy to be prepared in partnership with the local highway authority.

4.4.7 The vision also requires a major response to the greening of the town, including its streets and the countryside on its doorstep. A network of nature reserves, open spaces, country parks and street trees within the town's central area could be created as part of this network.

Policy ST 3

Sittingbourne Area

The Council will continue to promote the role of Sittingbourne (as defined by the Key Diagram) as the main Borough Centre and focus key strategic developments in and adjacent to the town. This will be achieved through:

1. promotion of an employment-led regeneration strategy for Sittingbourne, including transformation of the town into an attractive, competitive location with a thriving centre that residents across the Borough are proud to use;
2. new strategic allocations of land for mixed use identified at north west and north east Sittingbourne and at Teynham. Planning permission will be granted for development of these sites in accordance with Policies SA1, SA2 and SA3;
3. identifying an area of search for the Bapchild section of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road;
4. identifying an area of search in south west Sittingbourne for 130 dwellings to be allocated in a future Site Allocations DPD using sites well related to the urban framework at a scale able to create opportunities for open space, safeguard settlement separation and high quality agricultural land; and
5. maintaining the separation and distinctiveness of Sittingbourne and its satellite settlements through the protection of countryside buffer areas and careful siting and design of development.

Alternatives considered - Sittingbourne Area

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
1. Place major strategic development at alternative settlements.	There are no suitable and sustainable alternatives for siting major development other than at the main urban centre, so as to reduce the need to travel for most services and facilities and to maximise the use of regeneration opportunities. See more detailed response at Policy SA1 and SA2.

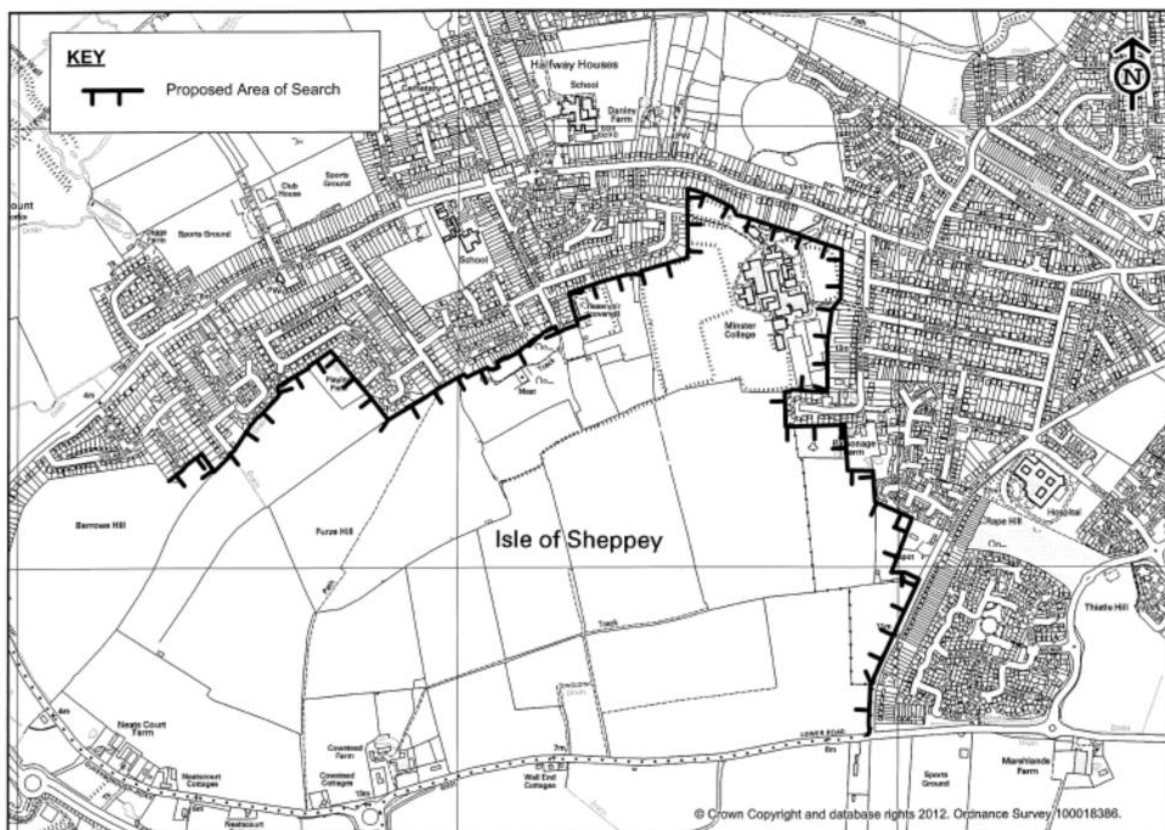
Table 4.4.1 Alternatives considered - Sittingbourne Area

4 The strategy

4.5 Strategy for the Isle of Sheppey area

4.5.1 The Isle of Sheppey comprises some 93 sq km (36 square miles) and is situated in the Thames Estuary, separated from the mainland by the Swale channel. The completion of the A249 Sheppey Crossing supplemented the old bridge crossing and has greatly improved transport links and created opportunities for the regeneration of the Island. There is also a rail link between Sittingbourne and Sheerness. The Island is a place of significant contrasts especially between the urban and industrialised west and much more rural east and therefore different policy approaches are needed.

4.5.2 Much of the Island is relatively low lying marshland and as such large areas of it are considered by the Environment Agency to be within the High Risk Flood Zone, but key areas of potential are defended and suitable for development. Extensive coastal and estuarine areas are present and subject to national and international biodiversity designations (principally bird habitats).



Map 4.5.1 South of Halfway / West Minster: Proposed Area of Search

4.5.3 The Island falls within the Thames Gateway growth area and its more accessible western end affords many regeneration opportunities. Priorities for this area have been economic regeneration and the improvement in the quality of the environment. The opportunities here relate to recently completed improvement in the highway networks, providing good links to the regional and national network. Therefore the majority of development proposed within this area is to enable the economic regeneration potential of Sheerness Port and sites along the A249 to be realised. There are other more modest new opportunities for housing development at the edges of Minster and Halfway to complement the major new economic development and offer a choice of sites as

well as providing the opportunity for improvements to the Lower Road. An Area of Search for development is indicated from sites identified by the Council's *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment*.

4.5.4 A Swale Borough Local Plan allocation at Thistle Hill/Plover Road is also retained and is likely to be a focus for new housing on the Island for some years to come.

4.5.5 In the recent past the Isle of Sheppey has seen significant amounts of new housing built without the corresponding growth in employment - a situation which now shows signs of starting to rebalance. In pursuing sustainable patterns of development, the focus of new development would be to concentrate development on previously developed land at western Sheppey (including Queenborough and Sheerness town centre). The continuing involvement of the *Homes and Communities Agency* will be vital to the regeneration of sites for mixed-used developments and environmental enhancements at the latter.

4.5.6 Sheerness has a strong industrial past with steel making and historic links with the former naval dockyard the latter now mostly within the curtilage of the modern Port of Sheerness. The Port is still a significant part of the local economy focusing on car and fresh produce imports. The Port has extensive opportunity for regeneration and diversification and the possibility of expansion to take advantage of deep water berths. This is likely to be longer term opportunity (see Policy AC 3) and subject to satisfactory mitigation measures in terms of the international biodiversity designations along the adjacent coastal area. A major opportunity is expected to come forward in the short term on Port land with the planning application for the manufacture and assembly of wind turbines for deployment in the North Sea. This is expected to create some 1720 direct jobs by 2020.

4.5.7 Sheerness town centre is the main shopping and service centre on the Island with over 200 shops. However, the High Street is identified by the [Swale Retail Assessment](#) as being at risk of decline and will come under further pressure from planning permissions recently granted for convenience superstores at Neatscourt (Queenborough) and Minster/Halfway. The town centre serves mainly the resident population and tourists during the summer months. The Swale Borough Local Plan Policy AAP4 is retained to guide development proposals which consolidate and enhance the town's role. The town nevertheless has historic assets such as Bluetown and the Dockyard conservation areas which offer considerable opportunities for sympathetic regeneration.

Queenborough and Rushenden Regeneration Areas

4.5.8 Key regeneration areas exist at Queenborough and Rushenden, which were the subject of allocations in the [Swale Borough Local Plan](#) and supporting [SPD Masterplan](#), and these are retained and carried forward.

4.5.9 This area covers 165 hectares of land and buildings on both banks of Queenborough Creek and it is identified as a major strategic opportunity for regeneration (primarily housing and employment with associated social and community provision) for the Island. It anchors existing and new investment within this part of Swale and the wider Thames Gateway. This opportunity is reflected both within the *Area Investment Framework for North Kent* and through the on-going investment made by the *Housing and Communities Agency*. Key pieces of infrastructure to open up this opportunity has been the completion of the second Swale crossing and the Rushenden Relief Road, which opened in December 2011. A major retrofit project to upgrade housing and communal spaces at Rushenden has also recently started.

4 The strategy

4.5.10 The area represents a major opportunity to regenerate the environment by the removal of industry and its traffic and the creation of new living and working environments that can enhance the waterside locations. It also offers the opportunity to create an improved physical relationship between existing and proposed developments and the important nature conservation interests bordering the site, particularly the Swale and the marshland areas to the south of Neatscourt. However, mitigation of any adverse landscape or biodiversity impacts to adjacent designated areas will be required. Queenborough Creek itself is a major asset, and opportunities will be presented to enhance existing, and introduce new, maritime activities. Parts of these areas are also within a conservation area so a high standard of development, sensitive to the historic setting, will be required. There are also opportunities to green poorly presented areas and produce landmark developments and quality public spaces. Environmental enhancement must extend though beyond the identified mixed-use sites into existing residential and business communities. To the north of the Neatscourt employment site, it will be important to ensure that a green buffer is provided to protect the amenity of existing residents. This could also act as a green corridor linking westwards to the creek.

4.5.11 The western part of the Island is dominated by the settlements of Sheerness, Queenborough and Rushenden, and Minster/Halfway. Whilst these settlements provide major opportunities for regeneration on the Island, the settlements cannot provide for all their residents' needs in terms of services and facilities within their respective settlement boundaries. Even Sheerness town centre has limited expansion and growth sites within the centre itself. With the recent proposals for new retail development at Neatscourt and Minster/Halfway, it is increasingly likely that western Sheppey will function as more of a collective entity in terms of provision for employment opportunities, services, facilities and infrastructure. That said, it is nevertheless important to maintain the separation and distinctiveness of each of the settlements and the Core Strategy policies will seek to achieve this.

4.5.12 The Island has also fulfilled a role as a traditional seaside holiday destination (particularly for Londoners), with the main commercial and leisure areas located around the north coast. Leysdown and Eastchurch Cliffs are the main focus of the Island's holiday parks. In the summer tourist season the population of the Island can increase substantially, focusing on the main facilities at Leysdown. The road network east of Minster is comparatively poor and in the absence of large scale new development at this end of the Island is unlikely to be upgraded. The eastern part of the Island is less accessible and there is limited alternatives to the private car. It offers a much more remote feel with rural and coastal landscapes and large designated areas for biodiversity, as well as being within flood risk areas. Large scale housing and economic development is therefore inappropriate. The area, nevertheless, has much potential to offer in the way of green tourism and modernisation of the traditional seaside holiday offer and this will need to be carefully managed. Core Strategy Policies DM10 and DM11 which guide and support further development proposals in this sector are located in Chapter 7.

Policy ST 4

Isle of Sheppey Area

The Council will continue to promote and support the economic regeneration of the Isle of Sheppey (as defined by the Key Diagram) by:

1. focusing development at the key sites of Queenborough and Rushenden, Sheerness Town Centre, the Port of Sheerness and Minster to deliver the relevant development strategies for those areas;
2. consolidating the retail and service role of Sheerness Town Centre and promoting developments and improvements which will add to the centre's vitality and viability;
3. supporting diversification of the Ports activities to support renewable environmental technologies;
4. identifying an area of search at the urban edges south of Halfway and west of Minster for 660 dwellings to be allocated in a future Site Allocations DPD using sites well related to the urban framework and where visual and landscape impacts can be minimised by existing topography and significant landscaping;
5. modernisation and diversification of the Island's tourism offer and promotion of rural tourism to enable the Islands coastal and wildlife assets to be discovered;
6. maintaining the separation of the settlements of Minster/Halfway, Queenborough and Sheerness;
7. making effective heritage protection and development management a priority as part of the framework for regeneration; and
8. supporting proposals to improve the learning, skills and health needs of the resident population.

Alternatives considered - Isle of Sheppey Area

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
1. Strategy for Sheppey should focus on areas where there is social deprivation and mitigating those issues.	Limiting development would limit new investment to pay for improvements in town centre, transport provision and other services and facilities, particularly given the reduction in Government funding/grants for regeneration have expired. Developer funding cannot be used to plug existing deficiencies - it can only mitigate the impacts of growth. However, the draft Core Strategy is focusing development at Queenborough-Rushenden (a deprived location), whilst development at the Port of Sheerness will enable prosperity to reach deprived communities on the Island.
2. Pursue a housing led strategy for Sheppey.	This would exacerbate deficiencies in social infrastructure on the Island as it would not provide opportunities for job creation and training for local people. This would not be a sustainable strategy. It would increase need for out commuting for employment.

4 The strategy

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	See also alternatives considered in respect of Policy ST2.
3. No strategy for Sheerness Town centre.	Likely to lead to further decline in offer of the town centre from competing out of town superstores and other centres in the Borough.
4. No strategy for Sheppey.	Ad hoc development which is likely to cause harm to the Island's natural environment. It would also increase the divide between the rest of Swale and residents on the Island in terms of deprivation.

Table 4.5.1 Alternatives considered for the Isle of Sheppey area.

4.6 Strategy for Faversham area

4.6.1 Within the Faversham area, the vision displays a different focus and scale of growth. Organic growth means gradual growth, not forced, artificial or overwhelming. The conservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environments of the town and its surrounding rural hinterland will be the primary aim in planning to meet local need.

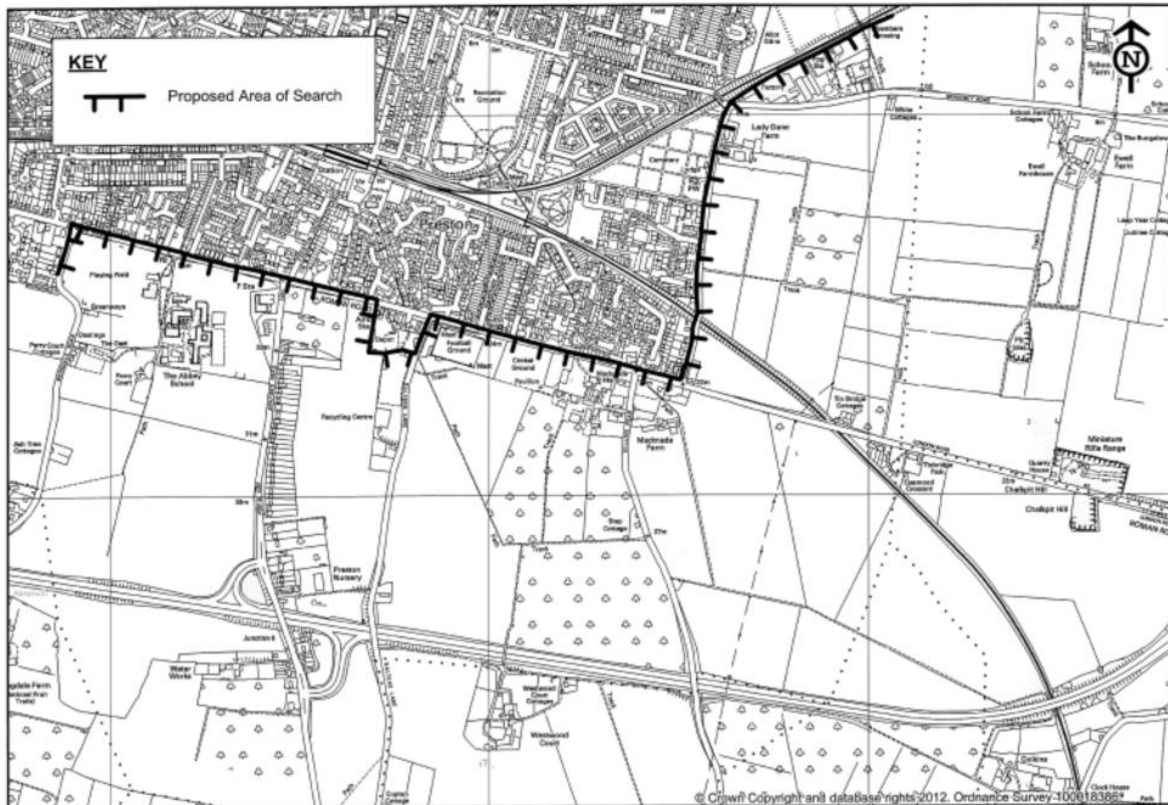
4.6.2 The town will consolidate its strengths - its range of services, compact small town character, attractive setting, and outstanding built and natural environment. These will be supported and expanded so that its role as a market town serving its rural hinterland can continue in the face of 21st Century change. New development and services will be focused in the town with flexible policies intended to ensure that supporting the market town role and diversity of land use are the primary considerations after its conservation and enhancement.

4.6.3 The town's developing tourism potential and appeal to those looking to move to the town will bring changes to the range of services in the centre. The process will be encouraged so that Faversham can form a 'triangle' of interest for visitors with nearby Canterbury and Whitstable, with an accent toward arts and culture, quality shops and facilities, and as a centre of excellence for food and drink. In so doing, this should not undermine its base of services essential to its continued market town role to serve residents and visitors.

4.6.4 There is a need to improve the range and quality of employment land to meet local needs at the town and the implementation of the existing retained employment allocations from the adopted Swale Borough Local Plan 2008 will be the Council's priority, with sites at the Oare Gravel workings and Graveney Road a preferred focus. One such site at the Western Link, is now proposed as a strategic allocation for 12,800m² of B class employment, supported by approximately 135 dwellings. This is in order to facilitate the development of the site which has not come forward for employment for some 20 years. Here, the Council will also explore the possibility of securing the land to the west of the Western Link for open space uses.

4.6.5 Whilst the existing supply of suitable employment land will need to be safeguarded and developed, other new sites will be needed to improve the quality of land available for businesses. The Core Strategy will need to signal a need for greenfield proposals to come forward at the town's edge that will allow for modest increase in both the supply and quality of employment floorspace to meet local employment needs. The policies will be flexible to enable unexpected, but small-scale high quality inward investment to gravitate to the town or its edge at suitable locations. The

[Employment Land Review](#) (2010) identified a need for a further 20,000m² of employment floorspace at Faversham and the Core Strategy will identify a strategic allocation to meet this need. An options consultation, consisting of three sites, located within an 'Area of Search' to the south east and east of the town to meet this need is presented in Chapter 6 (paragraphs 6.2.51 - 6.2.66). Only one of these sites will be taken forward and allocated. To support delivery of the chosen site, enabling housing of up to 150 dwellings is also likely to be pursued. Views are sought on three potential site options to meet these needs, at the end of the Section 6.2.



Map 4.6.1 South East and East Faversham: Proposed Area of Search

4.6.6 Despite its popularity as a place to live, the amount and type of new housing to be provided at Faversham will be limited to that necessary to support regeneration objectives without exacerbating current levels of out commuting. In terms of new land allocations, just 12% of the Borough total is proposed at the town and surrounding area. In addition to the new sites proposed to support employment, an area of the town needing regeneration is Faversham Creek, where a Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared (see Policy NP 1). Here, the main objectives are regeneration of key creekside sites, together with improvements to footpaths and public areas.

4 The strategy

Policy ST 5

Faversham Area

Within the Faversham area (as defined by the Key Diagram), an organic, employment led strategy will be pursued with the conservation of the historic and natural environment a key component. Within this context, the Borough Council will enhance the role of the market town to support its own local needs and those of the surrounding rural areas. This will be achieved by promoting development that can retain and harness local skills to achieve a greater diversity in employment and housing provision, in scale and character with Faversham and its surrounding countryside and communities. New development at Faversham must help to deliver the following spatial objectives:

1. protect the existing employment land and buildings where a local need exists;
2. provide for new employment development, as appropriate to the Faversham area, on land at the Western Link (12,000 m² and one site from the proposed Area of Search for Faversham employment, 20,000 m²);
3. provide limited new housing which is designed to be locally distinct;
4. protect and enhance the diversity of Faversham's small-scale historic character and its maritime traditions;
5. protect and enhance its surrounding countryside and landscape, both for its own sake and to maximise opportunities for tourism;
6. mitigate against the risks of flooding, particularly around the Creek;
7. avoid any significant adverse environmental impacts, and where possible, enhance the biodiversity interest of internationally designated sites for nature conservation;
8. support and diversify the services and activities, including retail and tourism, in Faversham town centre to enhance its vitality and viability and its role as a market town and service provider for the surrounding rural area; and
9. enhance Faversham Creek and creekside so that it functions as a place of special interest and activity and as a tourist hub, with strong associations with the water. The Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan will develop these objectives.

Alternatives considered - Faversham Area

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
1. Identify another development focus to Faversham.	See alternatives considered under 'Provision for Jobs and Homes' (Section 4.3).
2. Pursue a housing led Strategy for Faversham.	Housing of a larger scale than local organic growth rejected because it was not considered sustainable in terms of impact on the built and natural environments. It would also require significant greenfield site release, increase in out-commuting for employment and give rise to capacity issues at local M2 junctions for large scale development. Ultimately this would unbalance the spatial strategy which has an emphasis on

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
	regeneration at Sittingbourne and Sheppey. See also alternatives considered under 'Provision for Jobs and Homes' (Section 4.3).
3. Exclude recognition of Faversham Creek neighbourhood plan.	Rejected as the Core Strategy can be supplemented by recognised neighbourhood plans anywhere provided they are in general conformity with the Core Strategy (subject to final version of the NPPF). This would neglect a sustainably located area of the town and its conservation area that is in need of regeneration.

Table 4.6.1 Alternatives considered - Faversham Area

4.7 Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision - options for consultation

4.7.1 The Core Strategy must set a target for the overall number of pitches for gypsies and travellers in the Borough. This section presents a number of options presented for consultation. A purpose of this consultation is to bring the process of defining overall levels of new housing for gypsies and travellers closer to that for mainstream housing. Further information in support of this section can be found in Technical Paper No. 3 [Review of evidence to determine pitch number options for gypsies and travellers in Swale](#) (March 2012).

4.7.2 A draft development management policy (Policy DM 14) has also been included within this consultation document and covers the Council's approach to planning applications for gypsy and traveller sites.

4.7.3 National policy toward the provision of sites for gypsies and travellers is changing with the publication of the Government's [draft guidance](#) entitled *Planning for Traveller Sites April 2011*. It is likely that local Councils will need to set overall pitch numbers for the Borough in consultation with their local communities; these matters having been previously determined centrally by the Government. New Government guidance is expected to be finalised in the NPPF in spring 2012, but is likely to move to the setting of pitch numbers in a similar fashion to that used for mainstream housing. However, as with mainstream housing, this must be based on evidence which may include preparation of a Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment (GTAA).

4.7.4 Until the abandonment of further work on the partial review of the South East Plan for Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision in 2010, the development of an overall pitch number for the Borough was at an advanced stage. With the Core Strategy similarly well advanced, the Council cannot now produce new evidence. However, it is able to base its consultation options on available evidence that comprises:

- the 2006 [GTAA](#), prepared for North Kent Authorities (the assessment of need/demand);
- the [Swale Gypsy and Traveller Corporate Policy Site Assessment 2010](#) (the suitability, availability, achievability of known sites). This was agreed, as amended, as part of the LDF evidence base on 7th October 2010; and
- the unpublished Examination in Public Panel Report into the partial review into the South East Plan (undated).

4 The strategy

4.7.5 The Council has reviewed this evidence base in its Technical Paper which also includes its methodology for arriving at the consultation options. These are based upon assessments of need/demand and capacity/opportunity.

4.7.6 Each option includes a proposed distribution of pitches based on the areas of search as set out in the proposed Policy DM14. As a result, an assumption is built into the process that weights provision towards certain Core Strategy housing allocations and is based on such sites making on-site provision depending upon their size. The Technical Paper outlines how the pitch distribution is calculated and the housing allocations to which this approach would refer.

4.7.7 Once the Core Strategy sets a Borough based pitch target, if necessary, a Site Allocations DPD will then be prepared to identify the sites necessary to meet it. Sites would then be chosen in accordance with the criteria set out in Policy DM14.

The Proposed Consultation Options

4.7.8 The base date for pitch provision in the Borough is 1 April 2006 in common with mainstream housing provision in the Core Strategy. This means that although pitch numbers in the options are expressed for the 25 year period covered by the plan, to find out how much provision will be 'new', it is necessary to deduct the number of pitches granted permanent planning permission or judged as 'tolerated' by the Council from 1 April 2006 up until 21st September 2011. At this time, the figure amounted to 33 pitches. 'Tolerated' sites are those where there is no current intention by the Council to take enforcement action. Any updating to this data will be made before the Core Strategy is submitted for Examination.

4.7.9 Unlike mainstream housing, provision for gypsies and travellers is expressed as 'pitches'. These do not equate just to the number of caravans, but may include ancillary space and facilities associated with living there and touring from the site.

4.7.10 It should be noted that where permanent planning permission is granted for a gypsy and traveller pitch, this counts toward the overall Borough housing target of 13,500 homes. In other words, the eventual pitch number target adopted by the Council is counted as part of the overall housing target for the Borough.

4.7.11 Sometimes provision needs to be additionally made for transit sites for gypsies and travellers en route to other destinations. This is not the case in Swale because planning permission has now been granted for such a site on the borders with Canterbury district. Similarly, no provision is made for travelling show persons as no evidence is currently available on existing or future needs. There is, however, scope at an existing tolerated site at Iwade, which is likely to be sufficient to meet future needs should they arise.

4.7.12 The Council's review of evidence, as set out in the Technical Paper, produces a range of provision between 41 and 112 pitches. From each overall figure, a total of 33 pitches is deducted (this representing permanent permissions granted and tolerated sites), to give the amount needing to be found as new sites. Further information on each option is provided below.

Background to option 1

4.7.13 This is based upon the possible local capacity and availability of sites in the Borough using sites from the Council's up-dated [Swale Gypsy and Traveller Corporate Policy Site Assessment 2010](#), with the addition of sites with permanent planning permission granted and

tolerated sites. This provides a pitch target option of 41 pitches with 8 new pitches needing to be found. A strategic allocation housing site at north west Sittingbourne is identified as making this provision.

Background to option 2

4.7.14 This option is based upon the assessment of need/demand derived from the *2006 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment*. To the identified need of 62 pitches to 2011, a growth percentage (3% per annum over 20 years from 2011) has been added to deal with the future formation of new households in the travelling community. This provides a figure of 112 pitches with 79 new pitches needing to be found. A number of mainstream housing sites are identified as meeting some of this need, with the remainder from other locations judged acceptable by the Council's site assessment process and development management policy on gypsies and travellers.

Background to option 3

4.7.15 Option 1 can be viewed as representing the situation today, but does not consider future growth caused by changes in household formation as option 2 has done. By taking the pitch figures of option 1 and applying the 3% growth figure of option 2, this option produces a figure of 74 pitches with 41 new pitches needing to be found. A number of mainstream housing sites are identified as meeting some of this need, with the remainder from other locations judged acceptable by the Council's site assessment process and development management policy on gypsies and travellers.

An interim approach to site provision

4.7.16 It will take a little while to adopt a revised Core Strategy policy approach. Until this is confirmed, priority will be given to the sites that scored most favourably in the updated site assessment, with the remainder being found through windfall sites permitted in accordance with the site assessment process and development management Policy DM 14.

The Consultation Options

Alternative Option 1

Options for pitch numbers for gypsy and traveller provision in Swale.

Option	Number of pitches for Borough 2006-2031	New provision after deductions for completions and tolerated sites	Distribution
Option 1 Capacity and opportunity based number of pitches	41	8 pitches	All eight pitches on Strategic Allocation at north west Sittingbourne. Windfall sites permitted only on exception needs basis in accordance with development management policy DM14. Until adoption of Core Strategy, priority given to suitable

4 The strategy

Option	Number of pitches for Borough 2006-2031	New provision after deductions for completions and tolerated sites	Distribution
			pitches from the Corporate Policy Site Assessment and/or acceptable windfall sites assessed using the site assessment criteria and development management policy.

Table 4.7.1 Option 1 of Gypsy and Traveller consultation options

Alternative Option 2

Options for pitch numbers for gypsy and traveller provision in Swale.

Option	Number of pitches for Borough 2006-2031	New provision after deductions for completions and tolerated sites	Distribution
Option 2 Demand/need based number of pitches with forecast household growth over 20 years	112	79 pitches	Likely to apply to 11 housing sites providing a total of 47 pitches leaving 32 from sites identified by site allocation DPD and/or windfall in accordance with development management policy DM14. Until adoption of Core Strategy, priority given to suitable pitches from the Corporate Policy Site Assessment and/or acceptable windfall sites assessed using the site assessment criteria and development management policy.

Table 4.7.2 Option 2 of Gypsy and Traveller consultation options

Alternative Option 3

Options for pitch numbers for gypsy and traveller provision in Swale.

Option	Number of pitches for Borough 2006-2031	New provision after deductions for completions and tolerated sites	Distribution
Option 3 As option 1 with forecast household growth over 20 years	74	41 pitches	Likely to apply to four housing sites providing a total of 26 pitches, leaving 15 to be found by site allocation DPD and/or windfall in accordance with development management policy DM14. Until adoption of Core Strategy, priority given to suitable pitches from the Corporate Policy Site Assessment and/or acceptable windfall sites assessed using the site assessment criteria and development management policy.

Table 4.7.3 Option 3 of Gypsy and Traveller consultation options

Question 1

Other consultation issues: alternative pitch distribution

Views are sought on an alternative pitch distribution that would see the proposed Strategic Allocation (Policy SA1) at north west Sittingbourne provide at least eight pitches as the starting point for each option.

Question 2

Other consultation issues: period of supply

Given the current evidence base, whichever pitch number option is eventually selected, an approach open to the Council would be to identify pitch numbers sufficient to meet the immediate five or, perhaps, 10 year supply of land instead of a 25 year supply. The Council would commit to a review of pitch needs via a new needs assessment and address any subsequent provision either via a Core Strategy review or separate Site Allocations DPD.

4 The strategy

Question 3

Do you know of any potential gypsy and traveller sites?

Are you aware of land which may be suitable for travellers? If so, please let us know and send us further details.

How the Council will assess the consultation options

4.7.17 A separate Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken of the consultation options. This, together with the consultation responses, will inform the final decision, along with the adopted version of Government planning policy guidance on Gypsy and Traveller site provision which is expected in the forthcoming NPPF. An important matter for Swale is whether the various options will be deliverable and in this regard, evidence from landowners willing to make provision for travellers on their land would be especially relevant.

Alternatives considered - gypsy and traveller pitch provision options

Alternatives	Reasons not pursued
1. Making no provision for the Gypsy and Traveller communities.	Would result in increasing unauthorised encampments and raising tensions with both the travelling and settled communities. It would also expose travellers to poor standards of health and education provision. It may also push travellers into bricks and mortar housing which would be contrary to Government policy.
2. Not take into account the contribution from 'tolerated' sites.	These sites form part of the 'need' identified by the Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment. Where there is no intention to take enforcement action on such sites, it is entirely appropriate to treat such sites as, in effect, permanent provision.
3. Expand existing traveller sites.	Whilst some sites could be expanded, existing site occupants would not have control over the occupants of any expanded provision. This may bring in parties who are not part of the same family or ethnic grouping and could potentially raise tensions between communities. It is also likely that sites would not be delivered because owners of existing sites would not bring sufficient expansion plans forward.
4. Set pitch target in accordance with the five-year pitch need from the <i>2006 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment</i> and by a pro rata project it forward for the years 2011-2031.	This would give an option of 248 pitches, and applying the 3% figure for future household growth would give an even higher pitch number. The Council has not pursued this option as the proposed pro rata would be an artificial means to arrive at a pitch figure that would bear no relation to any need/demand or capacity/availability.

Table 4.7.4 Alternatives considered - pitch options for gypsies and travellers.