

Highlights of the visit to Dartford Borough Council and key economic development and regeneration priorities:

Introduction

- Dartford is the leading authority in Kent for growth and has the benefit of being close to London.
- One of the smallest Kent Districts but the most densely populated / fastest growing.
- M25 cuts through Dartford and is one of the main problems as when there are incidents on the M25 Dartford the local road network in Dartford grinds to a halt.
- Population growth predicted to increase by 60% by 2031
- Housing completions - 530 per year to 2016. Will be 1,200 per year to 2026 then reducing.
- Certainty around growth – market confidence, 12,500 permitted homes plus 2,000 on other sites.
- Characterised by issues with transport namely A2/M25/Rail/CTRL
- Earning levels relatively high

EDC area (Ebbsfleet Garden City) is largely within Dartford and covers Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet and Swanscombe Peninsula. Not covered on tour as a separate tour planned for EDC area.

Focus for Development

- North end of the Borough and town centre
- Large sites, accessible locations with infrastructure provided in tandem
- Train stations (Dartford, Swanscombe and Stone) are a critical issue as not fit for purpose with poor access to platforms, no facilities for disabled and no footways for pedestrians
- All other infrastructure is at capacity, schools, leisure, roads.

Pipeline Projects with Expected Dates

Committed:

- St Clements Way roundabout - imminent
- A2 Bean Junction - 2021
- M25 Jct 2 improvements -Spring 2018
- Northern Gateway Primary School: Sept 2020
- Stone Lodge Secondary School: Sept 2020
- Stone Primary School: Date not yet set
- Town Centre Health Hub –2020
- Stone Health Hub -2020
- Lower Thames Crossing –2027

Uncommitted:

- Further Fastrack extensions/improvements
- Major improvements on A282 at Jct 1a,1b, 2
- Crossrail Extension to Ebbsfleet - 2030
- Darenth Valley Hospital Expansion
- CrossRail Extension subject to Business case and viability

Key Issues

- High and sustained growth
- Need to plan for longer term demand to avoid current over-subscribed service infrastructure.
- Timely delivery of infrastructure.
- DBC would like to see separation of strategic and local road networks to avoid the congestion of local roads when strategic network is overloaded. This is an unusual ask of Govt/HA who currently prefer to join up of networks to relieve congestion on strategic network.
- Modal shift – big effort required to reduce car and increase walk/cycle/bus/train
- Co-ordinate with central gov't agencies and joint work with KCC officers
- Anticipate long term demand
- Affordability still an issue for younger people
- Dartford Tunnel improvements
- A2 capacity issue

Coach Tour of Sites:

Northern Gateway Development

- Mill Pond Development - former GSK site.
- Six blocks and 330 homes. Very popular.
- Developer Weston Homes has acquired adjacent site to add 400 more units.
- Some industrial/commercial remains but long-term plan is to move it.

Bob Dunn Way

- Open land seen as an 'opportunity' by developers
- Will create traffic / transport problems at M25 J1A
- Lower Thames Crossing will not change this scenario
- Thames Estuary Green Belt and Air Quality Management Zone.

Therefore, DBC unable to support additional development:

1. Howbury Railfreight Interchange – planning refused and appeal in June. Estimated 5,000 HGV trips generated a day and 2,500 car/light goods vehicles a day.
2. Land identified in KCC Minerals & Waste Local Plan 2013 – 2030
3. Littlebrook Power Station - Logistics hub on former power station site. HA and DBC object to this also on highway capacity grounds at M25 Junction 1A

The Bridge Development

Prologis and DBC joint venture of 264 acre brownfield site:

- Nucleus business centre
- High tech manufacturing
- High quality residential – 1,500 new homes with 300 homes still to be built

M25 Junction 1a

- M25 traffic numbers is the issue not the traffic generated from new development
- Major hold ups due to tunnel operating at capacity

Crossways

- High quality landscaped business park adjacent to Dartford Bridge
- Three million sq ft with some potential to increase density in future
- Includes the former Thames Europort roll on roll off site – no longer viable. Likely to come forward for redevelopment – 850 homes, riverside site, employment, offices, housing.

A226 London Road/St Clements Junction

- Junction capacity is required to be increased
- Joint DBC/KCC/HA project funded via developer contributions and LGF funding
- St Clements Lakes, popular residential development of 1000 homes

Bluewater Retail

- Originally 150,000 sq m – now to be extended by 30,000sq m
- Eastern Quarry development site on opposite side of the dual carriage-way on the chalk spine. Tunnel proposed through to Bluewater

A2 Bean Junction

- Long term scheme to improve junction – out to consultation soon. Completion 2021/22.
- Improvements now at detailed design stage – National Infrastructure Project
- Will deal with traffic congestion from Bluewater and increase in local traffic as Eastern Quarry built out.
- New roundabout/widen overbridge/new access to A2

Stone

- Lots of potential development land but affected by being landfill sites with gasification
- Lots of pressure to permit development
- Stone Lodge site – owned by DBC. Pylons to be put underground with agreement of UKPN. Not former landfill. 2,000 homes planned.

Walking Tour:

Dartford Town Centre

- Attractive building and grounds at Acacia House being refurbished.
- Later buildings to be demolished and new dance hall provided nearby.

- Will re-connect to the high street.
- New bridges provided and riverside walk to be created to link to existing Central Park.
- Outdoor theatre, Fastrack connection, new café, refurbished Fairfield Sports Centre, new 'Victorian' bandstand, KCC refurbished library
- Market Square – public realm scheme to create shared space / event space linking parks to high street. Forms a bid to SELEP.
- Lowfield St – the former Tesco development site. New micro- brewery. New entrance to 8 storey residential square overlooking park and 540 homes and retail.
- Former Co-Op Site and DBC car park - was HCA owned. Links through to Northern Gateway. New cinema, retail, health provision, residential, restaurants. Developers lined up for 140 homes and public realm improvements

Working Lunch at the Civic Centre

Summary of short presentation: Town centre transport and public realm improvements:

- Planning for 4000 homes in the town centre and possibly 3000 more
- All within 1 mile of town centre to make town 'person centred'
- Town Centre Framework created to guide public/private investment
- Growing investor confidence
- Popularity as a place to live
- Significant residential growth
- Combination of public and private investment
- Critical mass for change

Key drivers:

- Increased population driving town centre spend
- Changing population profile
- Need for more/better facilities to draw residents in
- Leisure / food / drink offer key
- Ease of access into town centre
- Redress balance between cars and people - make more people-friendly town centre
- Quality of public spaces, enhanced historic character

Actions now:

- Commissioning design of transport and public realm
- Securing grant funding – initial £12m
- Public realm improvements aiming to lift quality of private investment
- Engagement with private sector to secure improvements to town centre offer