

Bexley Local Development Scheme 2025

March 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004 (as amended) requires local planning authorities (LPAs) to prepare, maintain, and make available to the public a local development scheme (LDS). An LDS is the programme for the production of the Council's development plan documents. It enables those with an interest in the plan-making process to understand which documents are to be prepared for the district and at what stages they will be able to participate.
- 1.2. An LDS must specify:
 - The local development documents that are to be development plan documents (e.g. a local plan) that, when prepared, will comprise part of the development plan for the area
 - The subject matter and geographical area to which each development plan document is to relate
 - Which development plan documents (if any) are to be prepared jointly with other LPAs
 - The timetable for the preparation and revision of the development plan documents
- 1.3. Section 19 of the PCPA requires development plan documents to be prepared in accordance with the LDS. As such, progress made against the LDS will be monitored annually in the Bexley Local Plan Monitoring Report (the 'authority monitoring report' or 'AMR'). Up-to-date and accessible reporting on the LDS in an LPA's AMR is an important way in which LPAs can keep local communities and interested parties informed of plan making activity.
- 1.4. LPAs are also encouraged to include details of other documents that form (or will form) part of the development plan for the area. Information on the preparation of other local development documents, such as supplementary planning documents (SPDs), and/or a review of extant planning guidance, can be included to bring this to the attention of persons living or working in their area.
- 1.5. The purpose of the LDS is to:
 - Inform the local community and other stakeholders such as key delivery bodies, landowners and developers about the way the local plan will be prepared for the area
 - Let everyone with an interest in planning for Bexley know what documents will make up the local plan and the timetable for their preparation
 - Let people know when they can get involved in influencing or commenting on these documents
 - Establish the Council's priorities for local plan preparation and enable work programmes for the preparation of the documents to be set
- 1.6. So that it is kept up to date, a local planning authority must revise its LDS at a time it considers appropriate, (or as otherwise directed to do so by the Secretary of State). The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) has asked LPAs to review and update their LDSs no later than 6 March 2025 in light of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF indicates that provisions for the revised plan-making system will come into place in 2025 and relate to the system provided for under the Levelling up and Regeneration (LUR) Act 2023.

- 1.7. The Bexley LDS 2025 was brought into effect by the Council on 22 March 2025. This LDS has been prepared under the new plan making system, in advance of secondary legislation, using the latest information in the public domain about the expected timeline for plan making under the new system.
- 1.8. This LDS is a hybrid document in that existing legislation, guidance, and data standards still apply where they have not been replaced. It considers the NPPF 2024 and new legislation in the review of the current Bexley Local Plan and in the preparation of a new local plan, and includes content on Bexley's supplementary planning documents (rather than supplementary plans).
- 1.9. The plan making content and timetable will subsequently be updated to include relevant details of the new system when confirmed. This LDS therefore sets out an 'interim' timetable that will be subject to review when details of the new system are published.

2. Bexley's planning framework

- 2.1. Table 1 below sets out the current planning framework for London Borough of Bexley

Framework hierarchy	Relevant document
National planning policy and guidance	National planning policy for waste (NPPW) October 2014 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 Planning policy for traveller sites (PPTS) December 2024 Planning practice guidance (PPG) National design guide
Regional planning policy, guidance, and CIL	The London Plan 2021 London Plan Guidance (LPG) Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks (OAPFs) Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (MCIL) Charging Schedule Monitoring the London Plan
Local planning policy and guidance, CIL and other relevant planning documents	Bexley Local Plan 2023 There are currently no neighbourhood plans in Bexley Supplementary planning documents and guidance Conservation and heritage guidance Biodiversity and geodiversity guidance Article 4 Directions Borough Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Monitoring the Local Plan Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register Brownfield Land Register

Table 1: Planning framework for London Borough of Bexley

National policy and guidance

- 2.2. Local plans must be consistent with national policy and should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF. The NPPF is also capable of being a

material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Local plans should not repeat national planning policy. The Secretary of State has indicated that national policies for development management will be published for consultation in 2025, and this will affect the scope of a new local plan for Bexley. MHCLG also produces national planning guidance, including a design guide.

Regional policy and guidance

- 2.3. The Mayor of London produces a spatial development strategy (known as the London Plan). The current version of the London Plan was adopted in 2021. The London Plan forms part of the Development Plan for each of the London local planning authorities, and is used to assess planning applications. London boroughs' local plans must be in general conformity with the London Plan.
- 2.4. The Mayor of London has begun a new London Plan, with the following published timetable:
- High level document – Towards a London Plan (expected March 2025)
 - Draft London Plan consultation (by March 2026)
 - Examination process (2026 – 2027)
 - Adoption (2027)
- 2.5. The Mayor also has a number of London Plan Guidance (LPG) documents that provide further detail on policies set out in the London Plan. The Mayor adopted a new Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (MCIL2) in April 2019, which superseded the previous MCIL1.

Local policy and guidance

- 2.6. The Bexley Local Plan, which was adopted on 26 April 2023, sits alongside the London Plan as the Development Plan for Bexley and is a comprehensive policy document that contains strategic and non-strategic policies and site allocations for residential and residential-led mixed-use development. Bexley is a waste planning authority and minerals planning authority, and the Bexley Local Plan includes policies that provide the framework for decisions to be taken on these matters.
- 2.7. The Bexley Local Plan is less than two years old, and the Council is currently at the start of the review process – the 'monitoring' stage. The changes to national planning policy and legislative planning reforms, including those not yet in force, are a trigger to assess the plan against these as they happen, to test the consistency of the current local plan with the revised NPPF, and to respond to planning reforms as they are put in place. In addition, the Bexley Local Plan will need to be reviewed against general conformity with the new London Plan as that document progresses.
- 2.8. In this light, the Council is progressing with new studies that will allow the current local plan to continue to be relevant as national and regional policy is revised, particularly with regards to housing supply. This includes engaging and collaborating with the GLA as it prepares evidence for the new London Plan and carrying out a full review of Bexley's designated Metropolitan Green Belt, which is mandated by government. This assessment, which will be carried out by the Council, could contribute to additional housing capacity within Bexley's defined sustainable development locations if needed.
- 2.9. An interim timetable for the review of the current Bexley Local Plan, and the preparation of a new local plan, is outlined in Table 2. The first three years of the timetable - the 'review' part - will focus on continued monitoring of the current Bexley Local Plan and the preparation of studies (e.g. the

assessment of Bexley's green belt, which is mandated by government) to ensure that the current plan remains relevant in light of national planning policy changes and the strategic policies of a new London Plan; and, initiate the scoping and early participation stage, including a call for sites, which includes the four months' notice of the start of plan making (which is the commencement of the 30-month plan preparation timeframe through to adoption).

- 2.10. The form and content of the timetable, and any further matters, are subject to change as the Secretary of State issues regulations that are necessary for some parts of the planning reforms to come into effect. Therefore, this LDS will be kept under review and updated accordingly.
- 2.11. Supplementary planning documents are used to provide further guidance on planning policies. They do not form part of the Development Plan for Bexley, but are material considerations in the determination of planning applications. The outcomes of the review of extant SPD are set out in Table 3. Details of SPDs currently in production are provided in Table 4, which is the preparation of Parts 2 and 3 of Bexley's Design Guide SPD. Part 1 (Design Principles) of the SPD was adopted in January 2025. Part 3 of the Design Guide SPD will form the evidence for the local design code for the borough that will be incorporated into a new local plan.

Statement of community involvement

- 2.12. The Council adopted its current Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in July 2019. The SCI sets out how people can become involved in strategic and planning implementation in Bexley.

Neighbourhood planning

- 2.13. Neighbourhood planning was introduced to enable local communities to take ownership of the planning and development in their area. If local residents and/or businesses think that their area may have scope to accommodate additional development over and above what is set out in the Bexley Local Plan, or that it should be provided in a different way, then they should consider forming a Neighbourhood Forum and producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

3. Plan-making

- 3.1 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), published on 12 December 2024 (amended on 7 February 2025 for corrections and clarity), sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The framework was revised in response to the Proposed reforms to the NPPF and other changes to the planning system consultation, replacing the previous NPPF (December 2023). The government's planning practice guidance sections on Plan making and Housing supply and delivery were updated at the same time to support the revised framework.
- 3.2 Chapter 3 of the NPPF – Plan-making – states that succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area. This includes addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities and providing a platform for local people to shape their surroundings. Local plan documents must be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence that is adequate and proportionate.

- 3.3 The development plan for an area comprises the combination of strategic and nonstrategic policies that are in force at a particular time. Local planning authorities can, where relevant, prepare one local plan combining policies on minerals, waste and other planning matters.
- 3.4 Local plans are examined to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether they are 'sound.' Paragraph 36 of the NPPF sets out information on what constitutes a 'sound' plan.

Duty to cooperate

- 3.5 When preparing local plan documents, the Council has a legal duty to cooperate, set out in the Localism Act 2011 and section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
- 3.6 This duty is with neighbouring and other relevant local planning authorities, the Mayor of London as the Greater London Authority, and other prescribed authorities and agencies when plan-making. This means working constructively, actively and on an on-going basis on strategic issues having a significant impact on at least two planning areas, and preparing and maintaining statements of common ground to document this.
- 3.7 A statement of common ground forms part of the evidence required to demonstrate that a local planning authority has complied with the duty to cooperate. It is a way of demonstrating at a Local Plan examination that the plan is deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working across local authority boundaries. The Council will prepare statements of common ground where appropriate and in accordance with national planning practice guidance.
- 3.8 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) the prescribed agencies/bodies with whom the Council has a legal duty to cooperate are as follows:
- Integrated Care Board/NHS England
 - Historic England
 - Local Enterprise Partnership (London Enterprise Partnership)
 - Local Nature Partnership (All London Green Grid Local Nature Partnership)
 - Natural England
 - The Civil Aviation Authority
 - The Environment Agency
 - The Marine Management Organisation
 - The Mayor of London
 - The Office of Rail Regulation
 - Transport for London (TfL) and other relevant Highways Authorities

Reviewing the Bexley Local Plan 2023

- 3.9 The procedure for preparation and review of local plan documents is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Reviews at least every five years are a legal requirement for all local plans. The review must be completed and findings published no later

than five years from the date of adoption of the local plan, and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy.

- 3.10 Therefore, this new LDS sets out a timetable for the review of the Bexley Local Plan, which must be completed by 25 April 2028. It is likely that this review will determine that a new local plan for the borough will need to be prepared, given the plan making reforms that are being put in place by the government and progress on the review of the London Plan. From 26 April 2028, when the Bexley Local Plan is five years old, a new local plan will be prepared. This preparation will follow the 30-month timeframe set out in Chapter 2 of the July 2023 [Consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms](#). The government has confirmed its commitment to the 30 month plan timeframe in its [response to the consultation](#).

Local Plan Timetable

- 3.11 The new local plan will be a single **development plan document** that is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and in general conformity with the London Plan.

Matters that the authority's local plan for their area is to deal with

- 3.12 The local plan will contain:
- strategic policies to guide the growth and development of the borough over the plan period and beyond;
 - development management policies that are used on a day-to-day basis to determine general planning applications (where needed locally, subject to the government's national development management policies); and
 - spatial/site specific policies including site design codes.

The geographical area to which the authority's local plan is to relate

- 3.13 The geographical area to which the local plan relates is the entirety of London Borough of Bexley's administrative area.
- 3.14 The policies will be represented spatially on a borough-wide policies map.

Key stages	Main tasks	Timetable
Assessing the current Bexley Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment of local plan policies against revised NPPF • review of planning framework at national and regional level and identification of changes that may affect the consistency/general conformity and scope of local plan policies • preparation of studies and assessments to support the continued relevance of the local plan within a new planning framework (e.g. Bexley Green Belt review, which is mandated by government) 	<p>March 2025 to March 2027</p> <p>This time period should include the publication of secondary legislation that brings planning reforms into force; the publication of National Development Management Policies; and, publication of a new London Plan. These need to be finalised in advance of the scoping of a new local plan</p>

Key stages	Main tasks	Timetable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continued monitoring of local plan policies to ensure that they are contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in Bexley, particularly with regards to housing delivery and economic development review of local plan timetable 	
Scoping and early participation for a new local plan for Bexley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consideration of appropriate scope of a new local plan based on the findings from the monitoring stage scoping of sustainability appraisal invite early participation on matters that might shape the direction of the plan and sustainability appraisal objectives invite submissions for development sites through a formal call for sites assessment of existing local plan evidence and emerging London Plan evidence to determine gaps identification of monitoring requirements review of local plan timetable submission of project initiation document (first 'gateway' advisory assessment) the planning authority gives four months' notice of the start of plan-making 	<p>April 2027 to March 2028</p> <p>The four months' notice period sits at the end of this stage to coincide with the start of the 30-month plan-making stage</p>
Start of 30-month plan-making stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confirm evidence requirements spatial strategy development engagement with Members on the plan's vision and spatial strategy undertake visioning about the future of the area – first formal six week public consultation 	<p>April 2028 – March 2029</p> <p>The six week public consultation is likely to take place midway through this stage</p>
Plan production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepare new/update existing evidence to demonstrate soundness of the plan drafting the plan second 'gateway' advisory assessment 	<p>April 2028 – March 2030</p> <p>The plan production stage overlaps the stages on either side (and includes the two public consultation events)</p>
Engagement, proposing changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communities, statutory bodies and other stakeholders able to comment on the draft plan – second formal six week public consultation 	<p>April 2029 – February 2030</p> <p>The six week public consultation is likely to take place midway through this stage</p>

Key stages	Main tasks	Timetable
'Stop/Go' (third 'gateway' assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> checks that the plan is ready to proceed to examination, ensure legal and procedural compliance, monitor and track progress review of local plan timetable 	<p>February – March 2030</p> <p>It is anticipated that this stage could take four to six weeks</p>
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Council submits the plan for examination 	March 2030
Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State hears evidence from invited parties to inform their consideration of the soundness of the Local Plan the Council receives the Inspector's report, which may contain minor modifications that will need to be incorporated before adoption 	April – September 2030
Finalise and adopt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Bexley Local Plan is finalised, and the Council adopts the digital plan plan monitoring (linking back to the start of the process) 	October 2030

Table 2: Bexley Local Plan review timetable

Supplementary planning document review timetable

3.15 The previous Bexley LDS, in place up through adoption of the Bexley Local Plan in April 2023, included a review of extant SPDs and the actions from this review have now been implemented.

3.16 For this new LDS, the Council has undertaken a follow-up review of all remaining extant SPDs in the context of the adopted Bexley Local Plan and recently adopted Design Guide Part 1 (Design Principles) SPD, and actions identified from this review are set out in Table 3.

Planning guidance (new and extant)	Actions from previous review	Actions from this review	By when
Design Guide Part 1 (Design Principles) SPD	N/A	Retain as this SPD, and subsequent parts, support Local Plan policies and provide local design coding	N/A
Affordable Housing SPD 2006 (updated 2012)	Document has been reviewed against Local Plan policies	SPD will be removed, and new affordable housing guidance (if needed) included in a revised Planning Obligations Guidance SPD	March 2025

Planning guidance (new and extant)	Actions from previous review	Actions from this review	By when
Bexleyheath Civic Offices Planning Brief 2007	Document will be retained until the site is redeveloped	The planning brief can be removed as this development site has been built out	March 2025
Lamorbey Planning Brief 2008 (updated 2012)	Document will be retained until the site is redeveloped	The planning brief can be removed as this development site has been built out	March 2025
Planning Obligations Guidance SPD 2008	Document has been reviewed against Local Plan policies	The SPD should be revised (including for affordable housing) to provide guidance for Local Plan policies	December 2025
Bexleyheath Improvement Development Framework and Bexleyheath Night Vision 2009	Documents to be replaced by the Bexleyheath Town Centre Masterplan if appropriate	Document will be revised to ensure it conforms to the adopted Bexley Local Plan and will be replaced when the Design Guide Part 3 (Site Design Codes) is adopted	June 2025/ April 2027
Crayford Strategy and Action Plan 2005	Document to be replaced by the Local Plan and Bexley Riverside OAPF	Document will be revised to ensure it conforms to the adopted Bexley Local Plan and will be replaced when the Design Guide Part 3 (Site Design Codes) is adopted	June 2025/ April 2027
Erith Western Gateway SPD 2012	Document to be replaced by the Local Plan and Bexley Riverside OAPF	Document will be revised to ensure it conforms to the adopted Bexley Local Plan and will be replaced when the Design Guide Part 3 (Site Design Codes) is adopted	June 2025/ April 2027
Crayford Town Centre: A residential design code 2008	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD when all parts of the SPD are adopted	April 2027
Crayford Town Centre: Design and identity guide 2008	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD when all parts of the SPD are adopted	April 2027
Sustainable design and construction guide SPD 2007	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD when all parts of the SPD are adopted	April 2027
UDP Design and Development Control Guidelines 2004: 2: Extensions to houses 3: Residential conversions 4: Accessible design	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD	Document to be replaced by the Design Guide SPD when all parts of the SPD are adopted	April 2027

Planning guidance (new and extant)	Actions from previous review	Actions from this review	By when
5: Highways considerations 7: Shopfronts and advertisements 8: Industrial/ commercial developments			

Table 3: Extant Bexley supplementary planning documents and how and when they may be revised or replaced

3.17 In addition, changes to national planning policy and legislation will affect further SPD production, in that only SPDs that were already in preparation when planning reforms were put in place can continue to be prepared. In this respect, it is Parts 2 and 3 of the Design Guide SPD that will continue to be produced and these are reflected in Table 4 below.

Document	scope	timetable
Design Guide Part 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Alterations and Extensions – guidance for householders on extensions and alterations to existing residential buildings Small Sites – guidance for development on sites 0.25 hectares and below Area Types – guidance on specific development types common across Bexley, for example town centres and high streets, riverside development, and industrial land Technical Handbook – detailed, specialist information and standards required across all planning applications, with information provided on highways and transport, waste management, ecology and biodiversity, and play space provision 	Consultation for these is anticipated for October 2025, with adoption in April 2026
Design Guide Part 3 (Site Design Codes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> design guidance for areas of the borough undergoing, or anticipated to undergo, significant change 	Consultation for this is anticipated for October 2026, with adoption in April 2027

Table 4: Production of supplementary planning documents already in preparation

4. Managing the local plan process

Staff and resources

- 4.1 London Borough of Bexley's Strategic Planning Division take the lead on producing development planning documents (e.g. the local plan), the majority of planning guidance, and most evidence base studies that support the review of the current local plan and the preparation of a new local plan.
- 4.2 The Division will be supported by other teams within the Housing and Strategic Planning Department and the wider Council. When needed, specialist external consultants may be used, especially for technical background evidence base studies.

- 4.3 The timetable for the review and preparation of local plan production is dependent upon necessary resources being available as and when required.

Governance

- 4.4 The timeframe necessary to comply with [London Borough of Bexley's process for decision-making](#), including special committee meetings where necessary, has been factored into the timetable set out for the review of a current local plan and the preparation of a new local plan.

Risk assessment

- 4.5 The main risk associated with the LDS programme would be a deviation from the timetable, which could delay the adoption of planning documents. In this respect, the following potential risks are likely to have an impact on the local plan's programme timetable:

- continuity of funding and staffing in light of constraints on the Council's resources
- unplanned and unforeseen work arising, which requires prompt attention from limited staff resources
- significant issues arising through the Duty to Cooperate – unresolved strategic matters raised by other local authorities and relevant statutory bodies that may impact on the plan's delivery, resulting in a potential need to revisit proposals
- additional unforeseen requirements to support the plan process (such as the preparation of new evidence base documents and further statutory consultation) which may necessitate the need for specialist information and expertise unavailable in-house, requiring engagement of specialist external input at a time when resources are very constrained
- time required for consideration and decision-making within the Council, with stakeholders and the public generally, particularly where there is considerable interest in policy areas
- events such as local, London mayoral and national elections
- changes to national or regional planning policy and planning practice guidance
- Planning Inspectorate resources and timetabling; and,
- legal or other challenges, such as intervention by the Secretary of State or judicial review

- 4.6 The Council will closely monitor progress on the work programme and seek to manage these risks in order to adhere to the timetable set out in this LDS.

Monitoring and review

- 4.7 The LDS will be subject to annual monitoring, through the AMR, to ensure that the timetables contained within it are being met. Subject to changes proposed through planning reforms, the local plan timetable will be required to be revised at set milestones and regular intervals. As a fallback, this would be at least every six months. Where the review indicates otherwise, the Strategic Planning Division will determine the actions necessary to bring the document back into line with the published programme. If a significant variance cannot be overcome, the LDS will need to be revised accordingly to ensure it remains up to date.