

*Chapter One*

**INTRODUCTION**

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## INTRODUCTION

### DOVER DISTRICT

**1.01** The District (Figure 1.1) covers an area of 319 sq.km. (123 sq. miles) in East Kent and, at its closest, is only some 34 km. (21 miles) from France. About two thirds of the District's 102,316 residents<sup>1</sup> live in the two coastal towns of Dover and Deal. The rest live in Sandwich and other small settlements scattered throughout the large rural area. Most of the countryside and the 32 km. (20 mile) coastline are protected by important landscape and nature conservation designations. The countryside is also good farming country with a high proportion of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The District also contains a rich archaeological heritage, and has over 2,800 listed buildings and 57 conservation areas.

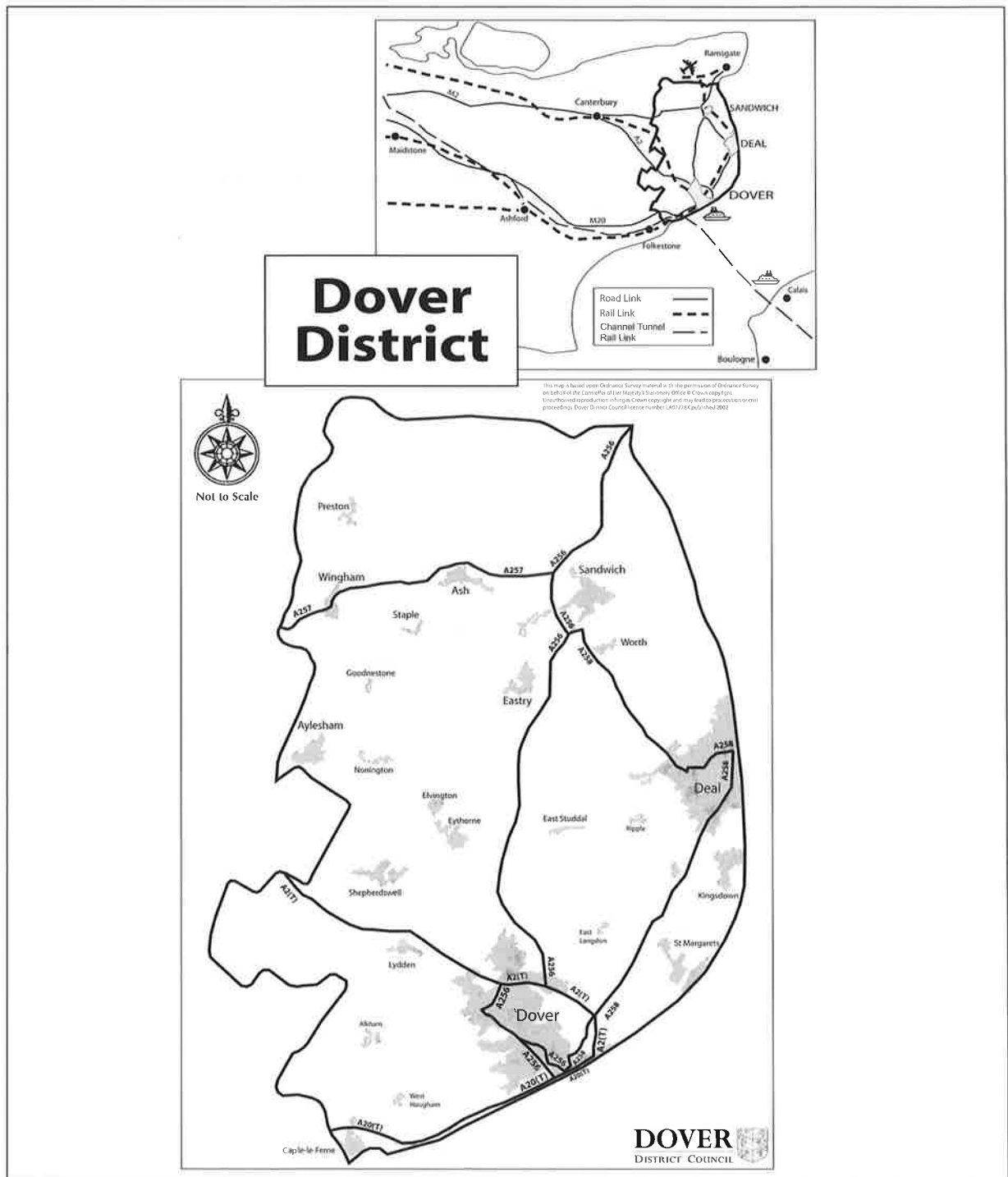


Figure 1.1 Dover District

**1.02 Dover** is internationally renowned both as the gateway to Britain and the Continent, and for its White Cliffs coastline. These images reflect the town's importance as a port (it handles more passengers and freight vehicles than any other port in Europe) and its past military role. The town's exceptional archaeological and historical importance is reflected in the discovery of a bronze age boat and major Roman remains, and in Dover Castle and an extensive network of fortifications dating from the Napoleonic era onwards.



*Dover, gateway to the continent*

**1.03 Today, Deal** combines the characteristics of a commuter town with those of a quiet seaside, fishing and holiday resort. Its relative isolation from the main road network gives it an air of quiet detachment, which belies its past as one of the great maritime towns of England. In historic terms, the town is noted for its town plan, water-front, Tudor castles, and Georgian and early Victorian buildings. In 1996, the Royal Marines School of Music relocated to Portsmouth, so bringing a longstanding connection with the town to a close.



*Deal seafront*

**1.04** The essential rural character of the rest of the District was partly transformed in the early part of the last Century with the exploitation of coal reserves. In the 1920s, plans were drawn up by Sir Patrick Abercrombie to build several new settlements to house miners and their families in the newly established East Kent Coalfield. The largest of these was at **Aylesham**, though his grand scheme was never completed. The Coalfield finally closed in 1989.

**1.05** Although these mining settlements and colliery sites undoubtedly influenced the physical, economic and social character of East Kent, large parts of the District have remained unaffected by it. As a result, most of the District is made up of small settlements set in an attractive rural landscape. The largest rural settlement is the small historic town and Cinque Port of **Sandwich**, which is one of the most complete medieval towns in England, recognised internationally and rightly considered the 'jewel in the District's crown'.



*The medieval centre of Sandwich*

## **A NEW PLAN FOR THE DISTRICT**

**1.06** This is a time of continuing local concern as the adverse impact of the Channel Tunnel and Single European Market on the District's economy gather pace, and implications of defence cuts are realised. In addition, pressures for development in the countryside remain unabated. These issues are not new but the way in which they ought to be tackled has undergone a fundamental change.

**1.07** Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992), it has been widely accepted that rising pollution levels and using up the Earth's limited resources cannot continue indefinitely. New ways of considering how and where future development should take place are needed if, at a local level, the problems of global warming are to be tackled. The Government has undertaken a major review of planning policy so that, in future, development is sustainable. This has meant taking on board some very new concerns and the Dover District Local Plan (the Plan) is, therefore, very different from any previous plan produced by the Council.

**1.08** Although a statutory requirement, the Council welcomes the opportunity to prepare its first local plan for the whole District. The Plan will cover the period to 2006 and:-

- (a) brings together planning policies into one document;
- (b) replaces the Dover and Western Parishes Local Plan, the Deal Draft Local Plan, the Sandwich Informal Local Plan for Conservation<sup>2</sup>, the St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe Informal Local Plan and the Kent Countryside Local Plan; and
- (c) gives full local plan coverage to some areas for the first time.

## **THE LOCAL PLAN**

**1.09** A local plan considers the issues and opportunities facing a District. It then sets out the Council's views on how the District should develop over a specific time and the means by which this will be achieved. In preparing a local plan, the Council must consult local people and take their opinions into account, so giving them a chance to influence the way in which their area changes.

**1.10** The District Council must also take account of national, regional and County planning policies. For example, national policy is mainly set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) which are a major influence on the Plan. Those published since 1992 have taken on board Government policy towards sustainable development. In addition, the Kent Structure Plan, which is prepared by the County Council, takes account of the new issues of sustainable development and the need to conserve energy, as well as the continuing effects of the Single European Market and Channel Tunnel on the economic prospects for different parts of the County. The Local Plan is based on the policies of the Kent Structure Plan 1996.

**1.11 The Plan has been drawn up by Dover District Council (the Council). It consists of the Written Statement, which sets out and explains the Council's proposals and policies, and the Proposals Map, which shows where they apply. The Plan covers a wide range of issues and it is often the case that several policies are relevant to a proposed development. Therefore, it is important that the Plan is read as a whole - rather than treating policies in isolation. Where practicable, cross referencing between policies has been used where this makes the Plan easier to read. However, absence of cross references does not mean that other policies of the Plan do not apply. Furthermore, where a policy has a list of criteria, these are all to be satisfied unless the contrary is clearly stated.**

**1.12** Some policies in the Plan refer to 'supplementary planning guidance' (SPG). This guidance provides detailed information on the implementation of certain policies and aims to help those preparing planning applications. Although not part of the Plan, SPG may be taken into account as a 'material consideration' in considering a planning application. More weight will be attached to the guidance if it has been the subject of public consultation.

**1.13** The Plan, together with the Structure Plan, Waste Local Plan and Minerals Local Plan, will make up the 'development plan'. Should there be a conflict between the policies of this Plan and the Structure Plan, this Plan will prevail unless the County Council has stated that the Plan is not in general conformity with the Structure Plan. In the case of a conflict between the Plan and a waste or minerals local plan, the most recently adopted plan will take precedence.

## **HOW THE PLAN WILL BE REALISED**

**1.14** The Plan will be implemented by a variety of public and private agencies either singly or in combination. This will include:-

- (a) direct action and promotion by the District Council, which may include joint ventures with the private sector;
- (b) action by the County Council and other public bodies;
- (c) investment by private service companies such as gas and water;
- (d) private sector investment; and
- (e) the use of the District Council's powers to enter into various legal agreements with landowners.

**1.15** The Council will also use its powers to control development. Planning law now gives primacy to the development plan as follows:-

“Where, in making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”. (Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

**1.16** This means that, in general, permission will be granted if planning applications accord with policies in the Plan and, conversely, planning applications will not be approved if the proposed development would conflict. However, there may be material considerations which lead to the Plan being set aside. Such considerations might include new Government advice, a review of the Structure Plan or changed circumstances in the District since the Plan was adopted. Therefore, the importance and weight given to the Plan will depend on whether its policies are clear, up-to-date and relevant.

**1.17** Given the Act's built-in flexibility, the Plan's policies are written to reflect normal circumstances. Consequently, the Plan's policies do not contain the word 'normally'.

**1.18** The Plan will be reviewed to make sure it is still relevant and, if necessary, amended. No particular date has been set for a review as this will depend very much upon how quickly circumstances change. However, good practice suggests that, in addition to annual monitoring, there should be a review at least once every five years and it is the Council's intention to carry out the first review of the Plan within this period.

## **FINDING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE CHAPTERS**

**1.19** Chapter 2 sets out the Plan's overall strategy, which includes aims, objectives and a development framework. Chapters 3-13 consider details of individual land use topics. Chapter 14 sets out the major development proposals for the expansion of Aylesham, while Chapter 15 covers other sites in the District needing special policies. The final chapter tests the policies and proposals contained in the Plan against its aims and objectives, and describes the targets against which the performance of the Plan will be judged. Technical terms are defined in the glossary. Where reference is made to 'the Census' this refers to the Census of Population 1991. References to the Census of Employment are always written in full.

## **REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup>*Census of Population 1991*

<sup>2</sup>*The Deal and Sandwich Plans were originally titled "District" plans. However, changed Regulations require that only plans covering the whole District Council area can be called District plans and, therefore, these two plans have been re-named "local" plans.*