

Planning and Development

Ask for: Plan Making & Infrastructure

The Planning Policy Team
Rother District Council
Town Hall
London Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN39 3JX

Your Ref: Draft Rother Local Plan 2025-2042 Consultation

Date: 18 March 2026

Dear Planning Policy Team,

Rother District Council Regulation 18 Local Plan 2025-2042 Consultation

Thank you for inviting Ashford Borough Council to comment on Rother District Council's (RDC's) Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation.

Housing Need

The latest version of Rother's Local Plan states that the district's housing need figure calculates to 15,504 new homes over the 17-year plan period, using the standard method calculation. The Council note that this figure has risen since the previous Regulation 18 consultation in 2024. The Regulation 18 draft of the Local Plan clarifies that RDC only proposes to deliver 8,427 new dwellings over the plan period, which is approximately 54% of the district's overall housing need requirement.

Given that there is a shortfall and that it is significant, Ashford Borough Council considers that there needs to be a more detailed justification for why the draft Local Plan fails to meet the housing requirement in full. Although the Council acknowledge the challenges RDC face because of the extent of the district covered by National Landscape, in the Council's opinion it is not enough to rely on this constraint alone to justify the extent to which there is an unmet need.

The Council considers that the justification for the shortfall should be addressed in greater depth. For example, it is currently unknown whether there is any local evidence to suggest that an alternative method should be used to establish the housing need figure and whether this might result in a reduced requirement. A more detailed explanation is needed to demonstrate that RDC have explored all options to seek to rectify the shortfall. Only then can the Council fully understand the real extent of the shortfall and the potential impact on Ashford borough as a neighbouring authority.

As RDC will be aware the Council also recently consulted on a Regulation 18 draft of a new Local Plan for Ashford covering the period up to 2042. The Regulation 18 version of the emerging Local Plan highlights the Council's own challenging need (17,622 dwellings for the plan period 2024 and 2042).

Based on our emerging work and taking into account our own strategic environmental constraints (including the restrictions imposed on new residential development within the river Stour catchment due to the condition of the designated Stodmarsh lakes), it is clear that accommodating our own identified need will be extremely challenging.

Proposed Site Allocations

The Council notes the Regulation 18 Local Plan includes a number of proposed site allocations across five sub areas. Due to the location, size, and scale of the proposed sites closest to our joint boundary, the Council does not have any comments to make on any individual sites currently proposed within this latest version of the Plan.

Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople (GT&TS) Accommodation Needs

The Council support the efforts being made by RDC to seek to accommodate its GT&TS accommodation needs in full within their own administrative area.

Employment Needs

The Council support the efforts being made by RDC to seek to accommodate its employment needs in full within their own administrative area.

Maintaining Cooperation

Irrespective of the issues raised in this letter Ashford Borough Council would like to take the opportunity to express that it remains committed to working collaboratively with Rother District Council to discuss any strategic cross-boundary issues and look forward to continuing to engage to discuss respective emerging Local Plans.

The Council notes RDC's formal request for assistance to meet its unmet housing need set out in its letter dated 4 March 2026. The Council are considering this request and will respond by separate letter.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Simon Cole

Assistant Director – Planning & Development