

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

SESSION 1B – HOUSING NEEDS

This statement is made by Richard Greenwood, Chairman of Lenham Parish Council, and is supported by Lenham Neighbourhood Plan Group

Qn1.17 If the past supply included high density flatted development in Maidstone, as suggested, has the supply of available land been reduced as claimed, or would this source of supply be replaced by conversions of offices and other redevelopment in the town centre such that the supply will be maintained or increased?

We do not think the Local Plan makes enough allowance for changes in retail environment which will free up additional house development space. There are major changes in the retail environment due to increased internet shopping therefore MBC ought to adhere to a strict brownfield sites first policy over the plan period. The Chequers Shopping Centre struggles already to fill the retail units and further out of town shopping (Next, Newnham Court) will have detrimental effects on shops in the town centre.

Qn1.22 How does the assessment of housing needs relate to the anticipated number of jobs and to commuting patterns into and out of Maidstone Borough?

The housing needs for the Maidstone Borough, as per the draft plan 2011 – 2031, is for the provision of at least 18,560 houses. The figure of up to 1745 houses for Lenham is therefore 9.4% of MBC's total indicated requirements.

Lenham is on the eastern boundary of MBC and on the western boundary of Ashford Borough. Maidstone is 7 miles and Ashford is 8 miles away. Most people now do not live close to where they work and the two major employers in Lenham have a very low percentage of workers who live in the Lenham area. By having 1745 homes in Lenham, the village would become a dormitory village for Maidstone, Ashford, Faversham, Sittingbourne and the Medway Towns.

In the case of Lenham our Housing Needs Survey indicates a need for approximately 100 houses over the whole period of the plan.

If 100 homes were taken up by residents this would give a balance of 1645 houses against 1745 houses in total. The 1645 houses occupied by non-local people would create a totally unbalanced village as a very high percentage would need to travel away from Lenham to a place of employment.

Qnl.1.23 Why would the windfall allowance affect the calculation of housing needs?

Windfall allowance is independent of housing need. It should however reduce the number of sites, which the council allocates at the moment.

Qnl.1.24 What is the basis of the claim that ‘Local Needs’ account for only 25% of the Objective Assessment of Housing Needs?

Lenham Parish Council instigated a Lenham Housing Survey which was published in August 2016. The document shows on P.3 (see appendix A) that 1533 survey questionnaires were distributed and 29% were completed and returned. If the figure for affordable and open market homes are taken (see appendix A), the total is 60 homes, plus an estimate from the 71% of the unreturned surveys, a figure of homes needed is just over 100, which means that only 5.7% of the 1745 homes would be required by local people. The Local Plan proposal would therefore mean for Lenham an inward migration to absorb 94.3% of the new housing stock.

Qnl.1.25 What are the implications for Maidstone of the latest Household projections?

We cannot comment on the implications for Maidstone as a whole but in the case of Lenham building 1745 houses here and more than doubling the size of the village will give major problems on its infrastructure particularly roads and drainage and therefore is not practical.

Dated 13th September 2016

Lenham Housing Needs Survey

August 2016

Tessa O’Sullivan – Rural Housing Enabler

APPENDIX A

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) undertook a parish wide survey to establish the type, size and tenure of housing that residents of the parish might need now or in the future. This report provides overall information as well as analysis of housing needs.

A survey was posted to every household within the parish in June 2016. 1533 surveys were distributed with 459 surveys being returned, representing a 29% response rate.

Analysis of the returned survey forms identified that 84% of respondents are owner occupiers. 62% of respondents have lived in the parish for over 10 years.

High property prices and a predominance of privately owned homes means that some local people are unable to afford a home within the parish. At the time of writing the report the cheapest 2 bedroom property for sale in the parish was a terraced house for £195,000; to afford to buy this house, a deposit of approximately £29,250 would be required and an income of £47,357. The Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee Scheme may assist some local people if they cannot raise a sufficient deposit but their income will need to be higher in order to afford repayments. To afford to rent privately an income of approximately £31,800 would be required to afford the cheapest property found available to rent in the parish which was a 2 bed maisonette for £795 pcm.

Overall, a need for up to 29 affordable homes, for the following local households was identified:

- 15 single people
- 6 couples
- 8 families
- 5 of these households are older people that want to downsize//move to more suitable housing

- 25 currently live in the parish of Lenham and 4 live outside but have local connections

Our analysis has also identified a need for 31 open market homes, for the following local households:

- 10 single people
- 14 couples
- 7 families
- 23 of these households are older people that want to downsize/move to more suitable housing
- All 31 households currently live in the parish of Lenham

APPENDIX B

Rural Kent – Action with Communities

For full report contact:

tessa.osullivan@ruralkent.org

keith.harrison@ruralkent.org

Dated 13th September 2016