

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 15 September 2010

CORE STRATEGY HOUSING TARGETS AND DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Issue for Decision

Following revocation of the South East Plan and the abolition of regionally set housing provisions, to set housing targets and confirm employment targets for the borough, and to agree an approach towards the distribution of development in the Core Strategy.

Decision Made

1. That the three options 1-3, as outlined in sections 1.3 E and F of the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment, be agreed as the basis for the further more detailed testing outlined in the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment, without any preconceptions, in order to identify the most suitable housing target for the borough.
2. That all of the options plan for the balance of housing necessary after the existing development pipeline of 5,800 dwellings is completed, to achieve total housing target figures of:-

Option 1 – 8,200 dwellings;
Option 2 – 10,080 dwellings; and
Option 3 – 11,000 dwellings

The spatial distribution that needs to be objectively considered and tested for each option should be a dispersal model and a strategic development area.

3. That the methodology and approach to testing each of the housing options should be that outlined in Diagram A and Section 1.3 of the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment be endorsed with the addition of the specific amendments to Appendix A of the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment as highlighted by the Leisure and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Committee, namely
 - The diagram of methodology and approach be reformatted to depict priorities, such as by using a pyramid shape;
 - The environmental capacity and land availability be listed separately in the diagram to ensure that environmental capacity was not overlooked;

- The Local Development Document Advisory Group's spatial planning exercise be included in the diagram;
 - A broader geographical context be considered to include Maidstone's relationship with travel to work areas;
 - Less emphasis be placed on historical evidence, more emphasis given to infrastructure and place shaping, including an emphasis on regeneration; and
 - Higher and lower density dispersal patterns be applied to all three options.
4. That further work is undertaken on the weighting of the various elements; particular attention being paid to the economic and environmental factors, but considered within the context of the need for, and likelihood of, supporting housing and transportation infrastructure.
 5. That any option considered should have an emphasis on incentivising regeneration and renewal.
 6. That a further report be presented to the Cabinet on 10 November 2010.

Reasons for Decision

The evolution of the Core Strategy to date

The LDF Core Strategy has been in preparation over a considerable period of time; extensive evidence has been gathered and public consultation conducted and these matters thoroughly considered by the Advisory Group. An 'issues and options' public consultation in 2006 was followed by the preparation of and public consultation upon, a 'preferred options' document in early 2007. Further development of the draft plan was then halted later that year until August 2009 whilst the Council determined the representation made to the Core Strategy and the planning application submitted for the Kent International Gateway.

Meantime the Council bid for and was awarded Growth Point status with the requirement for the LDF Core Strategy to provide for a rate of development equivalent to 10,080 dwellings over the plan period. The Council also adopted various other relevant strategies including the Sustainable Community Strategy and Economic Development Strategy, all consistent with this and with which, the Core Strategy should be prepared with regard to. Subsequently the Regional Strategy (South East Plan) was published by Government in 2008 with a Maidstone Borough housing target of 11,080 additional dwellings over the plan period 2006-26.

However, as reported at the 26 July meeting of LDDAG, on 6 July 2010 the new Government revoked the Regional Strategies and advised local authorities to proceed with preparing LDF Core Strategies on the basis of their own local determination of suitable housing targets.

Since August 2009 much of the evidence base on which the draft plan has been prepared has been updated or published, much of it underpinned by the need to achieve a housing target of 11,080 additional dwellings. Members have had briefings on much of this evidence and this contributed

directly to the successive drafts of the plan considered by LDDAG over the last 5-6 months. In February, June and July the content of the plan, the 'spatial vision', 'spatial objectives' and 'core policies' were all considered. However, LDDAG have yet to reconsider the housing target figure and consequential effects on spatial distribution in the light of the revocation of the Regional Strategy.

Opportunity to set a district housing target

Setting of the housing target must be done on the basis of clear and sound evidence that will withstand scrutiny at independent examination into the Core Strategy. It is important that the target forms an integral part of the plan strategy and is not considered in isolation from the Vision and Objectives that the plan seeks to achieve. For instance the right balance must be struck between housing and employment targets, the spatial distribution strategy must be capable of delivering these targets and the target must be sufficiently ambitious to deliver the aspirations of the vision and objectives of the draft plan. In the event of significant change to the target these and other aspects of the plan may need to be revised significantly too.

Previously, housing targets were primarily determined at a strategic level, principally by Counties and other first tier authorities engaging with the regional planning body and in turn, the regional body with government; individual Boroughs and other second tier authorities had relatively little input to methodology and techniques of population, household and economic forecasting nor the national and regional scale policy debates that resulted, other than making representations alongside all other interest groups on the output figures. Districts such as Maidstone have not previously been empowered to determine their own housing targets and Government advice, best practice and regulations do not yet exist to indicate how this should be done. The Council now faces both a great challenge and opportunity to determine its own target in a robust manner.

Methodology for setting a housing target

- While all local planning authorities in England have this same opportunity few have to act as quickly as Maidstone, which has a pressing need to update the saved Local Plan policies and which was about to publish a draft Core Strategy based on the Regional Strategy just as it was revoked. Officers have been liaising with colleagues across Kent and beyond to 'compare notes' and method and are working with KCC research and intelligence group who have expertise in population and economic projections to develop an approach.

An overview of the approach adopted is represented by a diagram illustrating an iterative evidence based approach to determining housing targets – as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment. Each aspect is explained in more detail in the headed sections A – K below.

It is clear that Members require extensive sound evidence to inform their decision making around all the realistic options available; not all aspects of this have been completed in the time available so far. Some verbal update on the ongoing work will be possible at the meeting, but whilst a

clear picture of the likely key options for decision is emerging and confidently informs this report, it is not possible in certain respects, to make a firm recommendation at this time. Where this is the case a clear note is made. The recommendations at 1.2 above seek endorsement of the approach adopted and the agreement of key emerging options as the basis for more detailed consideration before final recommendations to Cabinet are made.

The explanations below refer to the draft 'spatial vision' and 'spatial objectives' for the draft Core Strategy previously considered by the Advisory Group, as well as to some of the background evidence that that has been reported previously.

To reiterate, it is vital that the options for the housing target figure and consequential effects for the spatial distribution strategy are not considered in isolation but as an integral part of the vision and objective the plan is seeking to achieve. To assist Members, an extract of the vision and objectives of the draft Core Strategy is attached at Appendix B to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment.

Methodology and considerations

A. Meeting population and housing need

Previously, projections of the change in population and households, and therefore the need for more dwellings were determined at strategic level, providing district level targets of additional dwelling numbers.

Projections of change in population and household numbers are anchored on the 2001 Census with precise projection forecasts made on the basis of broad trend based or policy based assumptions about future behaviours; thus wide variations between different projections of apparently precise figures are not uncommon. Concerns over the veracity of previous projections has led to joint work with KCC research and intelligence team to: (a) review previous trends in population and housing growth in Maidstone and the previous projections made to identify the most accurate 'control' point for making new projections; (b) to prepare a range of projections using different trend based assumptions of net migration; and to compare these with (c) alternative population projections assuming 10,000 or 11,000 additional dwellings are built. Comparison of these projections will help identify the level of additional dwelling targets required. Initial results should be available for verbal report at the meeting and will be analysed before the meeting of 25 October.

The dwellings requirement figure indicated by these projections does not necessarily determine the target but can be adjusted to achieve policy objectives or otherwise relate with the other factors A-K indicated in the diagram at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment published in March 2010 considered the need for additional affordable and market housing, the types of housing needed and stock condition. It identified a need for 1,081 affordable homes per annum. The Assessment suggested that 38% of all housing built over the whole of the plan period (using a target of 11,080

dwellings) represented a balanced market option to meet need. Clearly, if the housing target is reduced then less affordable housing will be built or if a higher target is set, outstanding housing need might be addressed more quickly.

The policy response to the needs evidenced in the SHMA will also influence the provision of the right size and type of dwellings in all sectors of the housing market. A comprehensive approach is required, including in the affordable stock the requirement for: 76% social rent/24% intermediate; 45% 1-2 bedroom/55% 3-4 bedroom.

Local needs housing in rural areas is an important aspiration in meeting housing need and this influences decisions on the spatial distribution of housing made in the Core Strategy.

Underneath the 1,081pa figure, the SHMA also identifies different groups of need: those in the private rented sector who are willing and able to pay more than 25% of their income on housing (280pa); and those in private rented housing on local housing benefit support (460pa). (It is not sustainable and is poor value for public money for large numbers of households to be in private rented housing on housing benefit.) The remainder of 341pa are in acute housing need. The effects of insufficient housing are various; rising numbers on housing revenue support, homelessness, repossessions, various health and wellbeing effects, and poor cost effectiveness of measures taken in response.

More widely, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) estimates national population growth to be around 65million by 2020 with almost 12 million below 30 years of age. Many of these will be first time buyers squeezed by lack of mortgage credit and lack of housing supply – nationally a housing market structural imbalance. Furthermore, the poor quality of some of the housing stock requires further replacement dwellings to be built although these will not be net dwelling additions.

The Core Strategy Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives considered previously (extract included at Appendix B to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment) stress the need for adequate number and mix of housing (para 4.13 and 4.18 k). However, the council's aspirations to meet housing need also need to be balanced with competing aspirations, including for providing strategic and local infrastructure from new development and safeguarding environment.

B. Policy aspirations and drivers for prosperity

There are a number of council strategy aspirations for improving the economy and prosperity of the borough that can be delivered through the LDF and in particular the Core Strategy. These help form the context for setting the strategy for development and can indicate a policy driven case for adjusting the housing need target indicated by population change as above. The council's prosperity agenda aims to:

- Achieve a step change in prosperity, and to ensure Maidstone establishes a role that complements rather than competes with the growth areas in Kent Thameside, Ashford and East Kent

- Redress an imbalance in employment growth in that past job creation rates in Maidstone which are below south east growth rates.
- Introduce a quantitative and qualitative step change in local employment, including by the creation of local higher skilled jobs opportunities, to half out-commuting from some 38%
- Maintain and enhance Maidstone's role as the County town and premier shopping centre
- Regeneration of areas of deprivation and sites in the town centre
- Provision of integrated development of employment and housing with sustainable infrastructure for place shaping and to attract investment into the borough.
- Key elements of the strategy include – shifting the balance of local employment from non-B Class shops and services and B8 warehousing towards higher skilled B1 and some B2 Class uses; developing strong sector specialism, promotion of new further and higher education facilities, investment in transport access, and ensuring a suitable supply of sites to support this.

Clearly, economic prosperity is not increased simply by increasing population / resident workforce supply and a range of measures are required to increase demand for local employment. The jobs target is based on a Gross Value Added growth rate rather than dwellings or labour supply. However, a higher housing target will increase labour supply and will increase local demand for goods and services. In general terms, inadequate labour supply can be a major constraining factor to economic growth. Further work is in hand to assess past performance compared to other factors.

Economic prosperity and growth underpins the demand for housing through the impact on household incomes and migration. Similarly, the economy affects household formation and housing demand. The gap between local wages and house prices is clearly of concern to residents; overall a good housing balance supports long term economic growth prospects.

Literature reviews confirm that an area's offer of good housing locations (and a mix of relevant facilities) will attract higher and intermediate social economic groups which are vital to developing/maintaining a robust resident labour supply and therefore improving the prosperity of the local economy.

The Spatial Vision stresses the aspiration of sustainable economic growth and regeneration, strengthening the boroughs retail and leisure offers, creation of high quality employment and regeneration and encouraging a wide range of new development including shops and businesses (see Appendix B to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment).

The overall aspiration of the Economic Development Strategy and Sustainable Community Strategy is for 10,000 additional jobs.

Demographic patterns mean that 10,000 additional dwellings would produce less than 10,000 additions to the workforce so the achievement of this target will also need a significant increase in inward commuting for work and a significant decrease in outward commuting, however, the contribution of the growth in the resident employee workforce will be a significant factor.

With the Regional Strategy evidence base and a target of 11,080 dwellings this aspiration appeared achievable. Detailed ongoing work with the KCC research and intelligence unit will refine new estimates of resident workforce growth associated with differing options for dwelling growth levels, and help indicate the realism of the policy aspiration to achieve 10,000 new jobs and the other measures necessary to achieve this or any future revision to this target. Further information and recommendations in this respect will be made in the 25 October report.

C. Past housing figures and trends

In the process to determine development targets, it is important to consider past building rates, which can give an indication of future trends and also the realism of the future options being considered. In the 19-year period between 1991 and 2010 a total of 10,130 units have been constructed across the borough, which translates to an annual average rate of 533 dwellings.

There are wide variations over individual years but over the period 1991 to 2000 annual rate averaged 513; over the past 10 years (2000 to 2010), the annual average completion rate increases to 626 dwellings; and for the past 5 years (2005 to 2010) construction rates have been even higher at 697 dwellings p.a. Furthermore, despite the recession, Maidstone constructed 581 units during the year ending March 2010.

Period	No. of years	Annual dwelling construction rates
1991 to 2010	19	533
1991 to 2000	9	513
2000 to 2010	10	626
2005 to 2010	5	697
2009 to 2010	1	581

Further work is in hand to consider significant changes in the net migration rates into/out of Maidstone as part of population change over these periods.

If taking forward these trends based on past completion rates and taking into account the number of units that have been constructed in the period 2006 to 2010 (2,728 units), the outcome for the period 2006 to 2026 would be:

- For a 5-year trend rate - 13,900 dwellings
- For a 10-year trend rate - 12,750 dwellings
- For a 19-year trend rate - 11,250 dwellings.

D. Past policy targets

For comparison, it is helpful to consider the plan-led housing targets that have been based on previous population forecasting but adjusted to meet planning policy strategies. The KCC submission to the South East Plan was below past trend rates and reflected a policy of seeking lower house building targets in total in the southeast, and then directing growth in Kent to the Kent Thameside and Ashford and East Kent growth areas. The MBC submission in fact reflected past long term trend building rates and which equated to an up lift on the RPG9 regional plan. The adopted South East Plan figure reflects the then governments policy of significantly increasing housebuilding in England and the southeast in particular to support economic growth.

Former South East Plan	Housing target 2006 to 2026	Annual dwelling target
KCC submission to examination	8,200	410
MBC submission to examination + new growth point target	10,080	504
Former South East Plan target	11,080	554

E. Commitments and completions:

In setting a housing target for 2006 to 2026, the number of dwellings that have already been built since 2006 plus outstanding planning permissions must be taken into account. It is also prudent to build in a 10% contingency figure after deducting the completed dwellings from the target, to address the possibility that not all planning consents within the plan period will be built and to allow some flexibility in the delivery of local housing targets. This approach will help to meet the tests of soundness which will be applied to the Core Strategy at examination and is provided for in the provision figures set out below.

Between April 2006 and March 2010 2,728 dwellings were built and at April 2010 there were 3,077 dwellings with an outstanding planning consent, representing a total housing land supply of some 5,800 dwellings of the total target already in hand. Plan strategy now needs to be focussed on this balance.

At this stage it is recommended that 3 options for housing targets are further tested in detail. First, a target of 8,200 representing County's submission to the former south east plan examination in December 2005. Second, the target of 10,080 which identified by this Council and was the basis for Maidstone securing Growth Point status and funding. The third target for testing should be 11,000 which approximates to the adopted Regional Plan target and the long term trend in Maidstone's housing growth. When accounting for completions and outstanding planning consents, the residual balance or target for each option is set out below.

Option	Plan period target 2006 to 2026	Residual target 2010 to 2026	Annual dwelling rate 2010 to	Annual dwelling rate 2016 to
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			2016 ¹	2026
1	8,200	2,942	513	294
2	10,080	5,010	513	501
3	11,000	6,022	569	569

F. Environmental capacity and land availability

Members are aware of the environmental and policy factors that constrain the growth of the borough and the need for measures to mitigate the impact of development. The council's evidence base has addressed, for example, issues of flooding have been assessed in detail in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, water supply and sewage in the Water Cycle Strategy, landscape sensitivity and quality in the ongoing Landscape Character Strategy, built and natural heritage, habitat and bio-diversity with reference to appropriate evidence bases that are maintained and updated and augmented by specialist bodies.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), taking account of these constraints, 'rejected' many sites and 'accepted' sites potentially capable of supplying some 16,300 units of housing land in the borough. After excluding the known development pipeline, this provided for over 10,700 potential new sites. However, some of the 'accepted' sites will be found more suitable than others for some form of development once more detailed assessments are complete. Further work is in hand, but initial analysis by officers has broadly categorised sites into three groups: (a) those with few constraints, (b) those with more constraints, and (c) those with many. Under different options more all sites in category (a) and more in (b) or possibly (c) would be required.

These are only informed assumptions at this stage to help appraisal of the different housing target options. It must be stressed, however, that any sites identified for this testing are not recommendations for allocating development to sites, and nor is there any presumption that such sites would be released for development.

With the range of targets identified in section E above, it is not necessary to 'urgently' allocate strategic housing sites in the Core Strategy because the scale of recent building rates and planning permissions means the council can readily maintain and plan for a rolling 5-year supply of housing land supply. Sites will need to be identified in due course in a land Allocations DPD or successor Local Plan. However, a target significantly higher than 11,000 would present a challenge to demonstrating a five year supply.

The scale and delivery rate within the plan period for a potential urban extension – referred to as the 'strategic development area' - are in the region of 2,500 and 3,500 dwellings, dependent on the planning policy objectives. However, looking beyond 2026, the total capacity of a mixed use urban extension could be 5,000 to 6,000 dwellings to achieve a maximum benefit of a properly planned new community with new supporting infrastructure.

¹ Years 2010-2016 include commitments of 3077 (513 p.a.)

Realistically, with existing housing commitments Option 1 (8,200 dwellings) is too small a target to support a strategic development area and a dispersed spatial pattern of development would be the only realistic pattern. Conversely, it appears that option 3 (11,000 dwellings) could only be delivered with significant reliance on a strategic development area, although a combination of an single larger urban extension and development on some of the more suitable dispersed greenfield sites at the urban periphery and rural service centres is achievable. Option 2 (10,080) can be accommodated with a dispersed pattern of development, although this approach would require the use of the more constrained and less suitable sites in category (b) above.

Options 2 or 3 could deliver a strategic development area with very little development elsewhere, but could be a high risk strategy, is less flexible or potentially deliverable in a period of economic uncertainty, and is likely to be challenged by some developers with sites of equal potential but located elsewhere. Option 2 could not allocate enough dwellings for a properly planned new community in addition to dispersal.

The realistic shortlisted options emerging as most suitable for further testing are:

Option 1 - 8,200 dwellings

The option could result in retail, office and housing development in Maidstone town centre with limited additional housing development dispersed within the built up area of the town and at the edge of the town and villages. The option would not include a strategic development area. After allowing for the existing development pipeline of 5,800, mostly on urban brownfield sites, plan making would focus on a residual of 2,942 to mostly greenfield sites.

Option 2 – 10,080 dwellings

The option could result in greater demand for retail, office and housing development in Maidstone town centre and some housing development within the built up area of the town. In addition to the housing pipeline as in Option 1, plan making would focus around the edge of Maidstone town the majority of new housing development for 5,010 dwellings to be concentrated in larger pockets of approximately 100 – 600 units on greenfield sites around the edge of the urban area. There would be a need for greenfield sites for employment development at the edge of Maidstone town and the villages. In addition, this option would result in the greatest amount of development at the villages and the greatest dispersal of development. The option would not include a strategic development area.

Option 3 – 11,000 dwellings

The option will result in the greatest level of demand for retail, office and housing development in Maidstone town centre and some housing development within the built up area of the town. After the existing housing pipeline as in Options 1 and 2, plan making would focus on the further 6,022 dwellings around Maidstone town where the majority of housing development

together with some employment opportunities would be located in a mixed use new strategic development area at the edge of the town together with some larger pockets of housing around the edge of the urban area. There may be scope to expand the strategic development area beyond the plan period in order to maximise the benefits of sustainable development. There would be a need for greenfield sites for employment development at the edge of Maidstone town. This option would also result in some additional development at the villages.

The recommendations at 1.2 of the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment sought endorsement of these key options for further testing and the identification of any further options that should be considered in greater detail. Further evidence assessing the shortlisted options will be presented at the 25 October meeting.

G. Infrastructure capacity

Consultations with stakeholders in respect of existing infrastructure capacity and the need for new infrastructure were well advanced but focussed on the original housing target of 11,080 using a SDA and a more dispersed alternative pattern of development. Providers have now been requested to respond to alternative growth target options and spatial distributions and many of the necessary responses are not yet available. Further information will be available for the 25 October meeting, including on further transport modelling and resultant infrastructure assessments that are underway.

Initial indications are that infrastructure costs for a specific target number of dwellings, whether provided in a SDA with new significant new infrastructure or a dispersed pattern and utilising more existing infrastructure in different locations but encountering a wider number of shortcomings to be resolved, are not greatly dissimilar. However, the new options involve three target levels and a critical issue will be that of the transport implications and necessary sustainable transport infrastructure.

Transport modelling work on further alternative patterns and targets is not yet completed but issues are clearly emerging. A SDA concentrates traffic growth on certain sectors whereas a dispersed pattern increases flows across the outer-traffic model cordon throughout the town. These lead to requirement for differing sets of measures and costs and impacts that need to be compared. The required transport strategy will provide for the preferred approach and therefore cannot be finalised at this time.

Further updates will be possible in October and a full report on infrastructure matters in November. One particular uncertainty is the funding of necessary infrastructure identified; new Government intentions signalled in the Planning Green Paper for a 'development incentive' or New Homes Bonus scheme based on grant matching Council tax income are now unclear and no further information is available yet on the intended reforms to the system of Community Infrastructure Levy or s106 based

planning tariffs. The strength of the housing market and developers / landowners ability to contribute will also have significant effect.

The ability to deliver the necessary infrastructure associated with the three key options for housing targets and spatial distribution is likely to be a very significant factor to decision making; at this point in time it is not possible to make full recommendations to Members in this respect. Further information will be available for 25 October and most likely, further still after the Government's Spending Review in the Autumn.

H. Place Making

Alongside the setting of Maidstone's quantitative housing targets, decisions must be made about the distribution of development. Options include that of reliance on the creation of a single large strategic development area to accommodate the vast majority of development in a new mixed use community, or a very dispersed pattern of development, or a combination of the two.

A dispersed development pattern can exploit the capacity of existing infrastructure, potentially offer investment into enhancing the capacity of existing infrastructure, spread negative impacts more 'thinly', and help absorb new residents into existing communities. Dispersal spreads the risk of development sites not coming forward as planned, and it creates flexibility in the phasing of the release of sites to achieve objectives. However, transport modelling of the greater resulting trip generation and are yet to be fully modelled. Further, this approach would create the need to develop all identified sites at the edge of Maidstone urban area and a greater amount of development would need to be directed to the rural service centres and smaller villages. There is no strategy looking beyond 2026.

The planning of a new community has a number of advantages, particularly in terms of co-ordinating the provision of physical, social and green infrastructure. The economies of scale present more scope for shared local infrastructure, it offers the greatest opportunity for exemplar and visionary masterplanning to create a new community development, and also provides potential for development and a transportation strategy that looks beyond 2026 to future planning and transport needs. The promotion of a 'new place' can help attract investment in housing and new employment opportunities as well as facilitate more sustainable patterns of travel, reduce trip generation rates and facilitate community scale sustainable green and blue strategy, energy and waste schemes. Infrastructure can be viewed in new ways as demonstrated at 'The Bridge' in Dartford where new education, health and community facilities are coordinated in one integrated development with share facilities.

A combination of the two approaches would mitigate risk of development sites not coming forward as planned. The approach would create the opportunity to develop a well integrated, coordinated and sustainable community and to develop it at a slower rate for flexibility; and would not require the need to develop all the identified potential sites at the edge of Maidstone urban area in one go or require such significant quantities for housing in the rural service centres.

One important point of detail is the densities of development assumed in the option testing. The SHLAA assessments and subsequent work applied specific site density assumptions based on site circumstances but averaging 45 dwellings to the hectare but a minimum of 30/ha reflecting the previous PPS3 minimum requirement of 30/ha. PPS3 was recently amended to remove this minimum standard but the land take calculations used for the Core Strategy continue with these assumptions at this time. Clearly, if the density standards are reduced then more land will be required. Members are requested to express any comment on this approach now as it underpins all the option testing. Whether to set a minimum density is an issue Members will need to return to in consideration of the relevant Core Policy.

The recommendations at paragraph 1.2 seek agreement to the spatial distributions options (including assumptions on housing density) as the basis of further testing and for members to identify any further combinations they wish to see assessed in similar detail.

I. (Initial draft) Sustainability Appraisal

Having deliberated the potential options for setting housing targets together with the distribution of development, the sustainability of the 3 options set out above can be tested with further objectivity by reference to the Sustainability Framework adopted for all the Maidstone LDF documents.

Members will recall approving the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for the Core Strategy in December 2009. The scoping report sets a framework against which Core Strategy policies and objectives can be assessed. The 3 options are being appraised against 18 sustainable objectives derived from the scoping report (attached as Appendix C to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment). The results will be colour coded so that green indicates the option would likely meet the sustainability objective, amber that it partially meets the objective, and red that it does not significantly contribute to meeting the objective. This cannot be completed as yet a identified above but patterns are emerging.

Option 1 (8,200 dispersed) does not appear to be a sustainable development option. It appears (subject to further detailed assessment) to not cater for the natural growth of the borough nor established trends in migration, it would mean a shortfall in necessary housing and a reduced supply of affordable housing, and would not support the council's wider objectives of prosperity and regeneration, employment growth, and would secure the least funding for infrastructure.

Option 2 (10,080 dispersed) appears closer to meet natural growth in population but not migration trends (subject to further testing). It would appear to generate investment in new social and green infrastructure. Less affordable housing would be provided than option 3. This option could be likely to meet the council's employment aspirations (subject to further testing, to be confirmed), and to some extent support the prosperity agenda and regeneration. However, this option would result in the greatest amount of development at the edge of Maidstone urban area and the villages and category more constrained sites and would result in

trips of greater length. There would be little opportunity for a focused approach to sustainable transport measures. The option could perform poorly in terms of air pollution and the emission of greenhouse gases.

Option 3 (11,000 strategic development area with some dispersal) appears to meet the needs of the natural growth of the borough and much of recent migration trends, provides for the highest number of affordable homes, and supports the council's economic development strategy. This like Option 2 would help to deliver the prosperity agenda and would be a catalyst for the regeneration of certain areas of deprivation but comparison of the two in this respect is ongoing. This option could support a new community adjacent to the urban area with a focused approach to sustainable transport measures, and would provide opportunities for a well designed and integrated sustainable development.

J. Risks

There will be a number of risks associated with any set housing targets and agreed development strategy. The prime risks include:

- The potential for ongoing legal challenge to the Government's action to revoke the Regional Plans, this could mean the reintroduction of the previous targets.
- The viability and deliverability of development
- The availability of Government funding streams and mechanisms for development contributions for necessary supporting infrastructure
- Ensuring targets and the distribution of development are based on sound methodology evidence to withstand challenge at examination – Maidstone appears to be one of the earlier authorities to be taking this challenge on.

K. Localism and the local agenda

It is critical that the council's housing and employment targets, together with its strategy for distributing development, are based on sound evidence, but also very important are the views of residents and businesses. It may be that with the expectations of the new 'localism agenda' accompanied by the lack of clear explanation of the 'development incentive' New Home Bonus scheme from government, that it is increasing hard to make the case for necessary development to local communities.

Public consultation on the Core Strategy will be one means of inviting comment on the strategy, but the council has already engaged with stakeholders and the public, bringing together local views through the production of various documents and holding of stakeholder events:

- Sustainable community strategy
- Strategic plan
- Economic development strategy
- Core Strategy evidence base and stakeholder workshops
- Town centre management
- Parish councils
- Developers and agents
- Service providers.

At the meeting, recommendations from the Local Development Document Advisory Group and the Leisure and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Committee were circulated and these recommendations were taken into consideration when making this decision.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

A number of alternative options have been considered above. The three options appear realistic options to focus to enable Members and the public a clear set of options to consider.

Background Papers

*Maidstone Borough Council Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report
(November 2009)*

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 24 September 2010
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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 15 September 2010

CORE STRATEGY: GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PITCH TARGET

Issue for Decision

To consider targets for Gypsy and Traveller pitches and for Travelling Showpeople for inclusion in the Core Strategy

Decision Made

1. That the timeframe for the Gypsy and Traveller pitch target be 2006 to 2016.
2. That the approach, as set out in the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment, to the setting of a numerical target for Gypsy and Traveller pitches for inclusion in the Core Strategy be endorsed.
3. That no specific numerical target be set for Travelling Showpeople plots in the Core Strategy and that any local need for additional plots be addressed through the development control process using the criteria in Core Strategy Policy CS14 when adopted.
4. That Kent County Council be encouraged to lead the process of the identification and delivery of appropriate transit sites in the county.
5. That the Council lobbies Members of Parliament, the Local Government Association and the Local Government Rural Forum in relation to the special circumstances regarding the gypsy and traveler provision prevailing in the Borough to inform and influence national guidance and, in particular, to allow local planning authorities to adopt local housing need policies relating to this policy area.
6. That policies on gypsy and traveler provision should take into consideration the need for appropriately balanced communities which are both integrated and sustainable, and the prevention of harm to the countryside caused by ribboned development of caravan sites and similar or related development.
7. That the Cabinet discusses the resources required for funding a public site and that this may required a significant capital sum and therefore could impact on the capital programme be noted.

8. That reference be made in the Core Strategy about how gypsy and traveler pitch needs will be reviewed beyond 2016.
9. That the Leisure and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-
 - i) Be informed who the third party reviewers are once it is known; and
 - ii) Maintains a watching brief on developing a local needs housing policy to include gypsy and travelers once legal advice has been received.

Reasons for Decision

Background

With the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy, a local target for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller pitches must be set. The target will be included in Core Strategy Policy CS14 which sets out the overall strategy for provision and the criteria for assessing windfall planning applications.

Regarding travellers' needs, a letter dated 6th July 2010 from the Communities and Local Government department confirms that 'local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand and for bringing forward land in DPDs. They should continue to do this in line with current policy'. The letter goes on to suggest that Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) are a good starting point for this work although local authorities 'are not bound by them'.

Notwithstanding this national change, some particular and local issues are relevant as a specific borough target is considered. Firstly, the abolition of targets being set in Regional Spatial Strategies does not mean that there will be no further need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. With a target figure set too low, the trend for unauthorised development followed by retrospective planning applications on unsuitable sites is likely to continue, in particular as long as Circular 01/06 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites' remains extant which is supportive of ensuring the need for pitches is met, including in rural locations where conventional housing is strictly controlled. The Government has announced its intention to revoke the Circular, it has not confirmed when this will happen. Appeal decisions have pointed to a lack of available alternative authorised pitches in the borough, including public pitches. Councils are also under the statutory obligation to ensure suitable housing is available for Gypsies and Travellers (s225 of the Housing Act) and have other statutory duties in respect of homelessness and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. There is also a duty on local authorities to promote race equality. A reasoned and reasonable target which can be supported through the Examination of the Core Strategy will provide the basis for planned pitch provision in the borough in the future.

Timeframe

The South East Plan Partial Review would have provided target figures for Gypsy and Traveller pitches and for Travelling Showpeople plots for the 10 year period from April 2006 to 2016.

Members could now decide to set a target for the full Core Strategy period to 2026 however the assumptions from the West Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (05/06) will become less robust over a longer timeframe. Also the national framework for planning for Gypsy needs may change in due course and the Council may wish to adapt its approach in response.

On this basis it was recommended that the target be set to 2016, with the opportunity for a future review based on updated evidence for the 2016-26 period.

Factors influencing the Gypsy and Traveller pitch target

Circular 01/06 lists some information sources, in addition to GTAAs, for authorities to use in assessing the required level of provision namely incidents of unauthorised encampments, numbers and outcomes of planning applications and appeals, occupancy, plot turnover and waiting lists for public sites, the status of existing authorised private sites including those with temporary and personal consents and unoccupied sites and caravan count data to give a picture of numbers and historic trends .

To establish a target based on the local need for pitches, it is proposed that the following aspects are assessed:

- a. Historic picture
- b. The findings of the West Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2005/6)
- c. The position since the GTAA was completed
- d. Future local needs for 2011-16

Historic picture: The borough is one in which Gypsies and Travellers have historically resided. The borough has the highest number of existing authorised pitches in the region with provision mostly on small, privately owned sites.

This historic pattern originated in particular because of Gypsies and Travellers seasonal employment in agriculture, particularly hop and fruit picking. Whilst Gypsies continue to have family links to the area, the traditional employment links are now substantially less significant as working patterns have changed. Circular 01/06 states that "there is a need to provide sites, including transit sites, in locations that meet the current working patterns of Gypsies and Travellers. In view of the changes in their work patterns these may not be the same areas they have located in or frequented in the past" (paragraph 18). The revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies means however that there is no higher tier framework to achieve a redistribution of provision and opportunity.

West Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA): The West Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provided an assessment of pitch needs arising locally taking account of the backlog of need, including from unauthorised sites, and that arising in the period to 2011 due to household growth. It concludes that there is a gross need for 47 pitches in the borough for the 5 year period 2006 to 2011 which, when supply factors are taken into account, translates into a

net need for 32 additional pitches. Table 1(paragraph 0) includes the gross need figure at line 1. The supply of pitches is accounted for separately in Table 2 (paragraph 0).

The numerical need measured in the GTAA includes within it the figure of 15 new local households that will form during the period 2006 to 2011 and assumes that each new household will require an additional pitch. In reality, a proportion of these new households will share pitches as some will form couples and move in together. It is therefore recommended that a rate of 0.75 be applied to the household growth figure, the same rate as used by the Kent and Medway authorities in the Advice they submitted to SEERA for the South East Plan Partial Review, to avoid over-estimating the need for pitches. This factor results in a reduction in the gross need figure included in the GTAA by some 3 pitches as shown in line 2 of Table 1 (Calculation: $15 \times 0.75 = 12$, then $15 - 12 = 3$ pitches).

The GTAA tried to identify Gypsy households living in bricks and mortar accommodation to survey in order that their needs could be encompassed in the findings. This process proved difficult as such households tend not to publicise their Gypsy status with the result that only 29 such households across the whole GTAA area were interviewed. The GTAA concluded that it was not possible to make a realistic estimate of the needs arising from housed Gypsies and Travellers and excluded this source of need from the final assessment. This may be regarded a significant shortcoming of the GTAA process, particularly as any such households are living in lawful housing, possibly because of the lack of site-based accommodation, rather than choosing to live on unauthorised sites.

The picture of the needs arising from the source is currently unclear. It may be significant but it is unquantified and the evidential basis on which to make a numerical allowance for this factor is absent. Any allowance made would be to a large extent arbitrary and consequently has been excluded from the assessment at this stage.

Position since the GTAA was completed: In reaching the net figure of 32 additional pitches, the GTAA assumed that there would be a supply of 15 pitches over the 5 years on the MBC-owned sites through households moving into permanent housing. In fact the supply rate has been substantially below this; only 3 genuine vacancies have occurred since April 2006. This supply of 3 pitches is accounted for in line 9 of Table 2.

The existence of unauthorised sites is an indicator of need and the current position is that there are 28 unauthorised mobiles on unauthorised sites in the borough (based on an average from the last three caravan counts). The GTAA took full account of the level of unauthorised provision at the time of the survey in reaching its findings. No further account is taken of the unauthorised sites that have arisen since the GTAA was undertaken (Table 1, line 4).

Future local needs (2011-16): As for conventional housing the target should allow for the natural growth of the local population for the 2011-16 period. Applying the GTAA annual household growth rate of 2.7% results in a household growth figure of 22 households for the 2011 to 2016 period. After the allowance for pitch sharing, the number of pitches

needed to accommodate the new local families is 17 as shown in line 5 of Table 1 (Calculation: $22 \times 0.75 = 17$).

Additionally, the GTAA did not take any account of sites with temporary consents which were treated as authorised sites for the purposes of the GTAA. The need arising from these lawful sites as the consents lapse is not factored into the GTAA need figure. 34 mobiles currently have temporary consents which will lapse before the end of 2016 and this is accounted for at line 6 of Table 1.

Table1: local needs summary

Needs 2006 – 2011 (pitches)			
1. GTAA (gross need)		47	
2. Minus allowance for pitch sharing by newly forming households		-3	
3. Allowance for needs arising from 'bricks and mortar'		0	
4. Allowance for unauthorised pitches post-GTAA		0	
Needs 2011 – 2016 (pitches)			
5. Household growth (incl. allowance for pitch sharing)	17		
6. Expiration of temporary consents	34		
	Gross local need	95	

Supply of pitches

An understanding of pitch supply provides context for the needs assessment above.

Pitches granted permanent consent since 1st April 2006 contribute towards the meeting the target to be set in the Core Strategy. Permanent consents have been granted for some 32 pitches to date. Additionally the personal, permanent consents that have been granted for a further 10 pitches can be judged to be meeting a current local need albeit that these pitches will not be available to meet wider needs in the future (lines 7 & 8 of Table 2).

Allowance can also be made for future pitch turnover on the two MBC-owned sites but at a more realistic rate than that assumed in the GTAA. Based on past performance, it is estimated that 3 pitches will become available during the 2011-16 period (line 10 of Table 2).

Finally, there are 4 private authorised pitches in the borough which have been vacant for at least 12 months and which may be available to meet local needs (line 11 of Table 2).

Table 2: identified supply summary

Identified supply 2006 – 2016 (pitches)	
7. Non-personal permanent consents granted to date	32
8. Personal permanent consents granted to date	10
9. Achieved pitch vacancies on MBC sites (2006 to date)	3
10. Estimate of MBC pitch vacancy (2011 – 16)	3
11. Vacant private pitches	4
	Identified supply
	52

Table 3: net position

Net position	
Gross local need	95
minus identified supply	-52
minus new public site(s)	-15
Net position	28
Registered applications/appeals (pipeline)	38
Renewal of temporary consents due to expire (potential max)	34

Table 3 sets out the net position taking account of need and identified supply. Additionally, account is taken of the potential for a further 15 pitches on a new public site(s). Funding for such a site(s) is being pursued through arrangements in the emerging Core Strategy affordable housing policy whereby a proportion of section 106 contributions would be ring-fenced for public pitch provision and through bidding approaches to the Homes and Communities Agency. The Government has announced that, as for conventional housing, new authorised traveller sites will attract development incentive payments through the New House Bonus scheme.

The 'residual' requirement of 28 pitches (95-52-15) could be met through the granting of some of the applications/appeals already in the pipeline (up to 38 pitches) and/or the granting of some permanent consents on sites with temporary consents which will expire before 2016. Subject to Members' decisions on these matters, there could be little (or no) numerical requirement for wholly new sites to be identified through the DPD process.

Members' views are sought on the approach to setting a local target for Gypsies and Travellers.

3rd Party Review

There is currently no established methodology or common practice guiding how a local pitch target should be set. In view of this, it is considered prudent for the factors and approach set out to be reviewed by an external body or individual ahead of a final decision on the target being made. The review will provide external feedback on the robustness and comprehensiveness of the approach.

The feedback from this review, along with Members' comments from the current cycle of meetings, can inform the subsequent report to Members on this matter.

Travelling Showpeople

In contrast to Gypsies and Travellers, there has been little historic demand for Travelling Showpeople plots in the borough. There are two existing sites in the Borough near Detling and Marden and a further apparently vacant site near Headcorn.

The need for further Travelling Showpeople plots was assessed through the North and West Kent Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (2007) which covered 9 authority areas including this borough. Through this process two of the ten Travelling Showpeople households in the borough were interviewed and neither household identified a need for further plots in the period to 2011. Unfortunately the response rate achieved in the study was insufficient to enable the statistically valid 'grossing up' of the findings, either for the Study area as a whole or for the borough individually. The existence of need for additional plots to 2011 or indeed to 2016 is unclear based on the available evidence.

A way forward would be to apply a standard growth rate to the known number of households in the borough. The Guild of Travelling Showmen's submissions to the Partial Review of the South East Plan proposed a household growth rate of 2.5%. Applying this growth rate cumulatively from 2006/7 would result in a target of 2 additional plots for the period to 2016.

An alternative approach would be to deal with demand from local Travelling Showpeople as it arises using the criteria in Core Strategy Policy CS14 to assess planning applications. This approach would not provide a clear indication of the Council's view of the 'right' level of provision but would avoid the allocation of plots for which there is no local demand. On balance, this approach is recommended.

Transit Sites

Transit sites provide shorter-term accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers who are actively travelling. The issue of transit sites was addressed in the Advice that the Kent and Medway authorities prepared for submission to SEERA for the South East Plan Partial Review. This Advice, which was based in particular on the pattern of unauthorised encampments in the county, did not identify Maidstone borough as a location for transit site(s) for the period to 2016. Local assessment therefore does not point to a need to make specific provision for a transit site.

It was recommended that Kent County Council be encouraged to progress the planning and implementation of appropriate transit sites across the County.

At the meeting, recommendations from the Local Development Document Advisory Group and the Leisure and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Committee were circulated and their recommendations were considered and have been incorporated in the decision made above.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

Members could have decided not to set a target for Gypsies and Travellers in the Core Strategy, or to defer setting a target. In response, the CLG letter of 6th July gives the clear expectation that authorities will set local targets. Furthermore, Gypsy site provision is a significant local issue in the borough and as such a clear statement of the Council's assessment of a

reasonable scale of pitch provision, and to subject this to public consultation, will provide greater clarity than the status quo.

Background Papers

West Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2005/6)
North & West Kent Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (2007)
Circular 01/06 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites'
Circular 04/07 'Planning for Travelling Showpeople'

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: **24 September 2010**

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 15 September 2010

WASTE AND RECYCLING STRATEGY 2010-2015

Issue for Decision

To consider the options available to the Council for the improvement to waste and recycling services in order to meet waste reduction and recycling targets and increase the cost efficiency of the services.

Decision Made

1. That the Waste and Recycling Strategy 2010-2015, as attached at Appendix A to the Report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services be adopted.
2. That, subject to confirmation of the enabling funding being provided, the implementation of borough-wide weekly food waste collection alongside fortnightly residual waste and recycling collections as detailed in Appendix B to the Report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services be agreed.
3. That the Policy and Procedure Statement for the new service as included in Appendix C to the Report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services be agreed.
4. That additional changes to the waste and recycling service be considered to identify potential savings in line with the 2011/12 Budget Strategy;

Reasons for Decision

The Best Value Review carried out in December 2009 recommended that the Council prepare and adopt a Waste and Recycling Strategy that was based on the waste hierarchy. The aim of this is to ensure that the most cost effective and environmentally friendly options for both residents and the Council are prioritised that meet the recycling targets that have been set by government and EU legislation.

The Waste and Recycling Strategy (attached at Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services), identifies the vision and sets out the Council's objectives for the next 5 years, including increasing the amount of household waste recycled or composted to 50% by 2015 (slightly above the national target of 45%) and reducing total household waste arisings by 10% by 2015 (compared

with 2005-10 average). The implementation of borough-wide weekly food waste collections alongside fortnightly residual waste collections is projected to achieve a recycling rate of 45%. Measures to increase participation in the mixed dry recycling service and additional recycling through the local recycling sites should increase the recycling rate further to 50% by 2015.

There is still a need in the present financial climate to be realistic about what can be achieved within existing resources. Therefore the objective to meet any additional costs of operating the service through efficiency improvements has been included within this strategy. However, in order to deliver the new service, start up costs and some limited ongoing financial support will be needed. WRAP has agreed to significantly increase its capital support and additional funding is being sought from the Kent Waste Partnership.

This Strategy supports the objectives of the Kent Waste Strategy, the 'Vision for Kent' Kent's Community Strategy, the Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough of Maidstone as well as the Council's medium term plans (Strategic Plan 2009-12 and Medium Term Financial Plan).

Following the principles of the waste hierarchy, waste prevention and minimisation offer the Council the most significant benefits, both environmentally and financially. The production of less waste reduces the need for transportation as well as the requirements for treatment or disposal. This improves the efficiency of the service, reduces contract costs and contributes to the Council's carbon reduction target.

The Strategy does not neglect the importance of reuse and recycling. These remain key priorities for the Council especially with regard to reuse opportunities for the bulky collection service, offering weekly food waste collections and increasing recycling through local recycling sites.

On the wider agenda, the strategy reflects European and National objectives with regard to waste and recycling and recognises that the Secretary for State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has launched a review of waste policies. This follows the announcement of the government's ambition for a "zero waste economy" and the purpose for the review is to look at waste policy and waste management in England to ensure that it supports the deliverability of this ambition. Maidstone's waste and recycling strategy supports the overall aims of a zero waste economy, through the prioritisation of waste reduction measures and focus on waste prevention wherever possible. The review is currently calling for evidence from local authorities, individuals and organisations. The Council will be replying within the timetable for response.

Options Appraisal

As part of the Best Value Review and subsequent development of the waste and recycling strategy, four options have been identified. These are:

- (i) Retain existing service

- (ii) Implement fortnightly residual waste collections whilst retaining existing recycling services
- (iii) Implement borough-wide weekly food waste collections alongside fortnightly residual waste collections and the existing recycling services
- (iv) Introduce a weekly food waste and fortnightly residual waste trial to 7000 households

The full appraisal of these options is included at Appendix D to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services.

Option two, the implementation of fortnightly residual waste collections whilst retaining existing recycling services represents the best option financially for the council, offering significant savings and reducing the cost per household of the service.

However, only option three would enable the Council to reach the national recycling target of 45% by 2015. It is expected that increases in participation in the recycling collection and additional services offered through the bring sites would ensure the Council reaches a recycling rate of 50% for little additional cost.

At present there is a significant opportunity to obtain investment that will meet the costs of the implementation and operation of the new service.

Following informal discussions with the Cabinet Member and Shadow Cabinet Member for the Environment, implementation of borough-wide food waste collections alongside fortnightly residual waste collections offers a publicly acceptable option for maximising recycling and managing Maidstone's waste. However it is accepted that this option does not provide the Council with any savings and therefore in the current financial climate it is important that service costs are reviewed as part of the Best Value Review action plan and the current collection arrangements are challenged.

Also as part of the Best Value Review, the implementation plan was considered by the Environment and Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the comments made were reflected in the final plan. This included discussions regarding fortnightly residual waste collections and the provision of a weekly food waste collection.

The strategy recognises the benefits of alternate week collections, through reducing waste arisings and significantly increasing recycling, but reflects that this alone would not meet recycling targets and therefore proposes a combination of weekly food and alternate week collections of residual waste and recycling. This will raise recycling levels to 45% by 2015 and when combined with efforts to improve participation rates and improved "bring" collection systems will aim to reach 50% recycling by 2015. The continued weekly collection of food waste provides a continued high quality collection system which the public will be able to support.

Households would be provided with a 5 litre kitchen caddy, initial supply of compostable liners and a 23 litre external caddy for the collection of cooked and uncooked food.

The collections would be made weekly by a small specialist vehicle and the waste will be taken to a local in-vessel compost facility.

Special consideration will need to be given to those households who currently have a sack collection as it is likely that they would have to remain on a weekly refuse collection. Some properties with communal refuse collections will also retain their current collection frequency as it will not be feasible to provide sufficient bins due to storage limitations. The Policy and Procedure Statement (attached at Appendix B to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services) has been prepared to take into account the implementation of weekly food waste collections and fortnightly refuse collections. It includes criteria for the provision of larger refuse bins as well as the policy regarding those remaining on weekly refuse collections. This also includes additional help for those experiencing difficulties reducing their waste or with the food waste collections. Information regarding the problems experienced will be gathered from residents in order to identify specific solutions which will meet their needs.

The proposed implementation plan for the introduction of this service is included at Appendix C to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services.

The strategy also considers other ways to increase recycling operations through improvement to bring sites including specific targets for glass.

The implementation of the mixed dry recycling collections has been very successful with participation rates in excess of 80% in some areas. However the monthly performance data shows that the tonnage collected appears to be reaching a plateau. Therefore new methods of engagement along with service improvements will be needed to improve the Council's performance.

The Waste and Recycling Strategy also proposes to maintain the comprehensive communications and education campaign which currently promotes the "Love Food Hate Waste" campaign, home composting and other waste prevention messages. Use of Mosaic will help identify and target key messages to individuals and the local press will be actively engaged to ensure that the true benefits of the new scheme are realised.

For the majority of households the recycling week would remain unchanged and the alternate week would become the refuse collection week. This means that half of the borough will have their refuse collection one week and the other half will have their refuse collection on the following week. This will limit the disruption to the existing recycling service.

Financial Implications

There are significant set up costs for the new service in order to provide caddies and bins. These are estimated at £355,000. It is anticipated that this will be funded through grants from WRAP and from Kent Waste Partnership.

The estimated costs of operating the new service will be close to cost neutral although some limited ongoing funding may be required from the Kent Waste Partnership. Discussions are ongoing with officers from both organisations. Final costs and funding arrangements will be concluded in the next few weeks. This will mean that the Council will need to identify alternative savings in order to meet the agreed Budget Strategy Savings for 2011/12.

The introduction of a food waste service is not the most cost effective option for the council and the cost per household of the service would remain high. As part of the Best Value Review, efficiency savings have already been implemented and further options identified. It is important that the costs of the core service be reviewed in the context of the Best Value Review to see if further savings can be found.

Maximisation of recyclate income has also been identified as part of the waste strategy and therefore ongoing discussions will be held with Kent County Council in order to identify any opportunities to increase the income generated from waste recycling in Maidstone.

Communications and Engagement

The Communications Strategy will include the provision of information through direct mail and face-to-face activities such as roadshows and public meetings. One-to-one advice would also be available to address individuals' concerns about reducing their waste.

Engagement work should start immediately and will continue past the start of the scheme. This would be followed with specific information immediately prior to the implementation of the service change in January 2011.

The current recycling calendar expires in October 2010 and therefore a new calendar will be issued to identify recycling and refuse collection weeks. A supporting leaflet will be supplied with the calendar to provide residents with all necessary information, promote recycling and reuse and provide contact information.

Participation monitoring of the recycling service would also be carried out prior to the introduction of fortnightly collections and then again following the implementation of the service change. This would be used to focus resources on areas where recycling participation remains low or contamination issues are high.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The Council could decide not to adopt a Waste and Recycling Strategy and focus on maintaining existing services. This approach has been adopted in the past and has resulted in inefficient services which do not provide value for money. It could also result in uninformed decisions being taken in the future which do not support the overall objectives of the Council, Kent Waste Strategy and Sustainable Community Strategies for both the county of Kent and the Maidstone borough.

Alternatively, the Waste and Recycling Strategy could prioritise recycling rather than waste prevention and minimisation. This is likely to be the most expensive option, with the requirement for considerable investment to provide additional services and increase the amount of waste sent for recycling. The food waste collections without fortnightly refuse collections would incur an additional revenue cost of approximately £650,000.

As above the Council could retain weekly refuse collections however this would result in food waste collections being financially unviable. Weekly refuse collections do not promote waste reduction and recycling so the council's performance in these areas would be unlikely to improve resulting in failure to meet the Council's targets.

It would be possible to adopt a strategy which provided the most cost effective solution, i.e. fortnightly residual waste collections and ignore government recycling targets which are not mandatory. However the inward investment provides an opportunity to increase the quality of the service and recycling rate at limited cost.

It was not recommended that the Council change the fleet to introduce split-bodied vehicles for the co-collection of refuse and recycling on the same week as this would incur considerable contract costs, including additional relocation costs for the existing vehicles. This could be considered for the new waste collection contract in 2013 and could significantly reduce operational costs.

The Council could decide to move to alternate weekly collections only. However such arrangements would not meet the recycling targets set by government.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report for Best Value Review of Waste and Recycling – Options Appraisal – 11 November 2009
Defra waste review document August 2010.

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 24 September 2010
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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 15 September 2010

CORE STRATEGY - PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Issue for Decision

To consider some important potential implications following the Regional Strategy being revoked and significant changes to the plan making system to be introduced to parliament by the new Government in the "Localism Bill"; and steps the Council might take to maximise the opportunities this offers and mitigate the delaying effect of these changes, to ensure the prompt and proper advancement of the Maidstone Core Strategy and other LDF documents to meet the Council's requirements.

Decision Made

That the LDF Core Strategy process be advanced to public consultation at the earliest opportunity, consistent with having proper regard to the opportunities now presented to the Council in the development of the Core Strategy.

Reasons for Decision

On 26 July 2010, the Local Development Document Advisory Group "LDDAG" considered the report of the Head of Spatial Planning.

The new Government has signalled intention to radically change the planning system². The details of the new system are as yet unclear but on 6 July the Secretary of State Revoked the Regional Strategies and the Government's Chief Planner issued advice on some of the immediate issues that arise from this announcement. The advice is short and clear in the form of questions and answers and is attached in full at Appendix A.

Little further comment on this is necessary, it is clear (Q&A No.5) that LPAs "should continue to develop LDF Core Strategies...reflecting local peoples aspirations and decisions on important issues...", and furthermore, (Q&A No.7) that where DPDs are being prepared, LPAs may decide to review or revise their emerging policies in the light of the revocation, whilst ensuring that the requirements for soundness and other policy requirements under current legislation are met.

² Coalition Government Manifesto, and Open Source Planning and Control Shift – Conservative Green Papers

Some authorities have decided to halt work on their LDFs until the situation is clarified. In Maidstone this would not be appropriate because:

- The strategy of the Local Plan is now over 10 years old, a clear sense of direction needs to be communicated to developers and communities. This will provide essential strategy context for further LDF documents or, just as important, guide the new style local plans when and if they are introduced.
- Policy gaps have opened up as parts of the Local Plan could not be “saved”, as the Kent and Medway Structure Plan was revoked, and further gaps will open up as the South East Plan is revoked. PPSs and the planned NPSs are also likely to be greatly scaled back in the future.
- Members’ aspirations to adopt new guidance to respond to current circumstances reveal a further shortfall in the coverage of policy and guidance – notably for a prioritised list of SPDs.

None of these shortfalls can be addressed until a Core Strategy is significantly progressed.

On this basis, urgent work is in hand to review and revise aspects of the draft plan that is being prepared. This includes: a review the appropriate housing target and the implications of any change on strategy; to consider a locally derived local Gypsy and Traveller figure; a review the gaps that are created as the South East Plan is revoked; and the likely future methods of future infrastructure funding including developer contributions and tariff levy, new development incentives and reductions in mainstream government funding.

Not all these matters are appropriate for inclusion in a Core Strategy and will be for other future policy documents, but the Core Strategy must anticipate and provide the necessary basis of these.

It is important to progress this assessment further before the Spatial Strategy and key target figures to be included in the Plan are put into the public domain. It is anticipated that this may mean further Member consideration before the Core Strategy is released for public consultation, slightly later in the autumn. The scope to catch-up lost time will be evaluated. Any options and the financial resource implications will be presented for consideration in due course.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The Core Strategy programme could continue relying on all the current targets and the regional strategy but this would likely lead to an unsupported draft plan being generated, greatly increased risk of challenge and potentially abortive work and cost.

Rather than release the plan in sections, the process could have been delayed until a whole draft was ready, however, this would have led to increased delay.

Alternatively, the Core Strategy programme could be frozen until the government's new plan making proposals are in place. This action is not recommended because it would exacerbate the Council's position of having gaps in its policy framework when determining planning applications and other problems considered above.

Background Papers

Maidstone draft Core Strategy - Preferred options report Jan 2007

<p>Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 24 September 2010</p>
