

AGENDA

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Tuesday 13 September 2016

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors D Burton (Chairman), English,
Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Munford,
Prendergast, Springett,
de Wiggondene and Wilby

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1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items

Continued Over/:

Issued on Monday 5 September 2016

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact Tessa Ware on 01622 602621**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 JULY 2016

Present: Councillor D Burton (Chairman), and
Councillors English, Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Munford,
Prendergast, Springett, de Wiggondene and Wilby

Also Present: Councillors Clark and Willis

26. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies received.

Councillor de Wiggondene was absent from the meeting.

27. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no Substitute Members.

28. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no Urgent Items.

29. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillors Clarke and Willis were present to speak on item 12.

30. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

31. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

All Members declared they had been lobbied by the North Loose Residents Association and, over the time of its preparation, all had been lobbied at on the Integrated Transport Strategy.

32. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

RESOLVED:

That items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

33. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2016

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

35. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

36. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

37. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY AND MAIDSTONE WALKING AND CYCLING STRATEGY

The Committee considered the approval of the revised versions of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) 2011-2031 and the Maidstone Walking and Cycling Strategy (W&CS) 2011-2013 for consideration by the Maidstone Joint Transport Board at its meeting on 13 July 2016.

The Committee were reminded that since the meeting of 14 June 2016, where the representations to the consultation on the ITS and W&CS were presented to the Committee, the two documents had been separated and a few minor changes made as agreed at the meeting.

It was confirmed that Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council would be working together to seek funding from the new Access Fund launched by Central Government recently to implement measures included in the ITS and the W&CS.

Paragraph 8.20 of the ITS was highlighted to the Committee and they were informed that the justification for the action to develop a Leeds/Langley bypass would be bound up in the review process of the ITS and W&CS in 2022.

Councillors Willis and Clarke addressed the Committee as Visiting Members.

It was confirmed that the W&CS made reference to, and the ITS was tied in with, the Kent County Council (KCC) draft Active Travel Strategy. It

was confirmed that any highway network interventions listed in these documents would need to go through options testing and full consultation before implementation.

Funding had been secured for the provision of further cycle parking and improvements at rail stations. Funds were also being pursued from the New Access Fund and S106 funds for cycle and pedestrian improvements to the north west of Maidstone. Detailed costings for these improvements had been included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Concerns were raised regarding the wording of paragraph 10.24 and the reference to confirmation that junction mitigation measures were possible at the A229 Loose Road/Boughton Lane/Cripple Street junction. It was felt that measures could not be implemented that would improve traffic flow at this junction without input from Kent County Highways. It was agreed the wording of this paragraph would be changed to reflect a less definite stance and remove reference to the Boughton Street development.

Concern was also raised regarding the omission of wording in the ITS expressing a commitment to work with the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum to ensure the implementation of the ITS and the W&CS together. It was agreed that this would be added to Action C5 of the ITS and the W&CS.

The Committee discussed the potential for modal shift, in particular in the rural areas not served by frequent buses. The Committee were informed that the provision of secure cycle parking at bus stops on radial routes had not been ruled out. Paragraph 10.6 of the W&CS recommended a detailed audit of the borough's walking and cycling corridors to identify missing links, gaps or barriers, including locations for new or extended cycle parking.

The Committee discussed the provision of radial cycle routes linking rural areas to bus and rail links with suitable cycle storage. The Committee was informed that the creation of the routes that would make up a radial cycle route were outlined in the Action Plan on pages 41 to 47 of the W&CS. It was agreed that Action C2 would be rewritten to include a cross reference to this and Action C6 and also change the words 'rural service centres' to rural settlements.

It was agreed to include a reference to the North Wood cycle route extension towards the Town centre to Action SEM2

RESOLVED:

That subject to the following changes, the revised draft of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy and Maidstone Walking and Cycling Strategy documents be agreed for consideration by the Maidstone Joint Transport Board at its meeting on 13 July 2016:

Paragraph 10.24 (at page 61 of the Integrated Transport Strategy) to be deleted and replace with the following paragraph:

- '10.24 – Various options were therefore considered to improve highway capacity, comprising the widening/reconfiguration of the existing signal junction as well as its replacement by a mini-roundabout. The results of the junction modelling indicate that, with the implementation of mitigation measures, proposed and committed developments in the area can be delivered with improved operating conditions for car and bus users alike on the operation of the A229 Loose Road/Boughton Lane/Cripple Street junction.'

Action C5 (at pages 29 and 52 of the Integrated Transport Strategy and page 23 of the Walking and Cycling Strategy) to be deleted and replaced with the following paragraph:

- Support the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum as a group to promote the cycling cause in the borough; in order to ensure the Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Integrated Transport Strategy provided a coherent strategy for the promotion of Active Travel in the borough.'

Voting: For – 5 Against – 0 Abstentions – 3

Action C2 (at page 15 of the Walking and Cycling Strategy) to be deleted and replaced with the following paragraph:

- 'Maintain and further develop cycle routes in rural settlements connecting local amenities and transport hubs (rail stations and bus stops where new and improved cycle parking can be provided in conjunction with Action C6) to housing.'

The Proposal to Action SEM 2 (at page 41 of the Walking and Cycling Strategy) to be deleted and replaced with the following paragraph:

- 'Loose "Greenway" – cycle route from Old Drive to Cripple Street. Potential further extension southwards to Kirkdale and to secure a northward extension towards Postley Road.'

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

38. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30pm to 7:42pm

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 JULY 2016

Present: Councillor D Burton (Chairman), and
Councillors English, Garten, Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer,
Munford, Prendergast, Mrs Ring and Wilby

Also Present: Councillors Perry

39. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Springett and de Wiggondene.

40. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was noted that Councillor Garten was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Springett and Councillor Ring was in attendance as substitute for Councillor de Wiggondene.

41. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, the update report of the Head of Planning for item 14 – Community Infrastructure Levy: Draft Charging Schedule, should be taken as an urgent item as it contained further information relating to the agenda item 14.

42. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Perry was in attendance to speak on Item 12 – Staplehurst and Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Examinations Update.

43. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

44. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

It was noted that all Members present, with the exception of Councillor Ring, had been lobbied on the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

45. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

RESOLVED:

That all items be taken in public as proposed.

46. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2016

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June had been approved at the meeting held on 6 July 2016.

47. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

48. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

49. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR NOTING

The Committee Work Programme was noted as per the papers.

It was noted that a request was made for the inclusion of an item on the revival of the Passenger Transport Operators Group be added to the Work Programme.

50. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - STAPLEHURST AND HEADCORN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATIONS UPDATE

The Project Manager, Local Plan, presented the report and updated the Committee on the position with the Staplehurst and Headcorn Neighbourhood Plans.

Councillor Perry addressed the Committee and asked that his thanks to the officers for their excellent advice and assistance be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in relation to the re-examination of the Neighbourhood Development Plans for both Staplehurst and Headcorn be noted.

51. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Project Manager, Local Plan, presented the report on the adoption of the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy as an essential component of the Local Plan evidence base.

Councillors heard that the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (G&BIS) was a high level document setting out the Council's commitment to the preservation of the environment. Appendix 1 of the report was the delivery framework setting out the parameters for the ten year open spaces plan, which was the delivery plan for Maidstone Borough Council. In terms of further planning guidance, provided it was at an appropriate time, it was possible to develop supplementary planning guidance for more detailed issues.

It was agreed an item be included on the Committee's work programme regarding the development of Supplementary Planning Documents as an interim measure for this municipal year.

It was agreed that signposting to relevant supporting documents would be included in the strategy.

It was confirmed that all parish councils were invited to attend the stakeholder workshops held in 2015. All workshops had been well attended with approximately 25-30 representatives from parish councils at each one.

The Committee heard that the G&BIS superseded the Biodiversity Strategy dated 2014.

The Committee were informed that the action plan referred to on page 135 of the strategy was to follow. It was explained that the Council's role, as well as create the Local Plan, was one of coordinating the action plans of other organisations such as the Environment Agency and Sport England. It was also confirmed that the outputs from the stakeholder workshops held in 2015 would feed in to the action plan.

It was agreed to recommend the addition of wording to the Delivery Framework, at column three of the section regarding 'Providing community involvement and opportunities for education' (bottom of page 112 of the strategy), regarding identifying funding sources for the Council's provision of parks and open spaces, as well as the development of controls, including bylaws, for open space and nature reserves to combat anti-social behaviour.

It was noted that the possible implementation of rewilding initiatives be included in the Committee's work programme.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy be adopted to include signposting and cross referencing to relevant supplementary documents annotated at every point.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions - 0

2. That the current version of the Delivery Framework be approved for implementation with the following additional words in column three, page 111/112, where it states 'Providing community involvement and opportunities for education':
 - That the Council proactively seeks new funding and other resources to support new open spaces, and;
 - That the Council brings appropriate means of control in public open spaces, including by-laws.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

52. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY: DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE

The Committee considered approving the Draft Charging Schedule, Draft Regulation 123 List and Draft Instalments Policy for consultation under Regulation 16 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended). They also considered instructing officers to commence work on the potential options for the Community Infrastructure governance and administrative arrangements.

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report and explained the urgent update outlining amendments to the report which included proposed consultation dates in the Draft Charging Schedule and amendments to the time table included in the agenda document as a result of the suggested dates.

The officer went on to explain the key purpose for the document and its relationship with the Local Plan.

The Committee were advised that Government instigated a review of the CIL but it was too early to say if there were any implications for the Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) CIL. Officers would monitor the results of the review and report back to the Committee regarding any implications on MBC's CIL.

It was pointed out that the Kent Association of Local Councils only met every three months and early engagement with them on the governance arrangements for the CIL should be considered to avoid any delay with the CIL timetable.

The Committee were informed that the figures shown on Appendix D of the report, CIL: Funding Gap Analysis (June 2016) were gathered through consultation with bus companies and through the transport evidence collected for the Local Plan and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It was explained that the figures were indicative to show there was an aggregate funding gap. The details were yet to be decided and additional strategic transport schemes could be included at a later date.

The Committee heard that schemes from the Walking and Cycling Strategy could be included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan once costed information for the schemes was available. The list of schemes in the CIL were exclusively ones potentially eligible for CIL funding not S106 funding.

Decision Made

1. That the Draft Charging Schedule, Draft Regulation 123 List and Draft Instalments Policy, as amended by the Urgent Update Report dated 12 July 2016, be approved for consultation under Regulation

16 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

2. That Officers be instructed to commence work, with timely engagement of parish councils and neighbourhood forums (where appropriate), on consideration of potential options for Community Infrastructure Levy governance and administrative arrangements.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

53. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30pm to 7:45pm



Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee Work Programme

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Democratic Services Team
E: democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the decisions to be taken by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee of Maidstone Borough Council on a rolling basis. This document will be published as updated with new decisions required to be made.

DECISIONS WHICH COMMITTEES INTEND TO MAKE IN PRIVATE

The Committee hereby gives notice that it intends to meet in private after its public meeting to consider reports and/or appendices which contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The private meeting of any Committee is open only to Committee Members, other Councillors and Council officers.

Reports and/or appendices to decisions which Committee will take at their private meetings are indicated in the list below, with the reasons for the decision being made in private. Any person is able to make representations to the Committee if he/she believes the decision should instead be made in the public part of that Committee meeting. If you want to make such representations, please email committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk. You will then be sent a response in reply to your representations. Both your

→ representations and the Committee's response will be published on the Council's website at least 5 working days before the
→ Committee meeting.

ACCESS TO COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reports to be considered at any of the Committee's public meetings will be available on the Council's website (www.maidstone.gov.uk) a minimum of 5 working days before the meeting.

HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

The Council actively encourages people to express their views on decisions it plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or to the relevant Chairman of a Committee.

Alternatively, you can submit a question or make a statement to the Committee by emailing tessaware@maidstone.gov.uk, provided it is relevant to their terms of reference. All questions or requests to make a statement at a Committee meeting must be received by 5pm one clear working day prior to the meeting.

Date of Meeting	Title of Report and Brief Summary:	Contact Officer:	Public or Private (if Private the reason why)	Content
6 July	Integrated Transport Strategy – before it goes to JTP	TBC	Public	Approval of the two strategies
12 July	Green and blue Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Framework	Chris Smith	Public	Adoption of GBIS and approval of Delivery Framework
12 July	CIL Draft Charging Schedule and Reg 123 List	Andrew Thompson	Public	Approval for consultation
12 July	Oral update on Staplehurst and Headcorn Neighbourhood Plans	Cheryl Parks	Public	
13 September	Integrated Transport Strategy and Walking and Cycling Strategy	TBC	Public	Adoption of the two strategies
13 September	Local Plan Examination hearing dates and matters	Rob Jarman/Cheryl Parks	Public	
13 September	Housing and Planning Act - Changes to National policy relating to Plan Making	Sarah Anderton?	Public	Summary update of Policy and Legislative changes and the impact on plan making including Housing and Planning Act signposting to a workshop
13 September	Annual Monitoring Report	Mark Egerton	Public	Approval of Annual Monitoring Report
13 September	Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Examiners Report and referendum	Cheryl Parks	Public	TBC dependent on receipt of report from examiner
13 September	Strategic Plan Q1 Performance Update		Public	
13 September	Q2 Budget Monitoring Report		Public	

Date of Meeting	Title of Report and Brief Summary:	Contact Officer:	Public or Private (if Private the reason why)	Content
11 October	Updated transport modelling of motorway junctions	Paul Goodenough	Public	
11 October	CIL Draft Charging Schedule and Reg 123 List	Andrew Thompson	Public	Responses to consultation; proposed changes; recommendation to Council re submission of CIL for examination
11 October	Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Examiners Report	Cheryl Parks	Public	Subject to receipt of report from examiner
11 October	Consultation response to KCC Local Transport Plan		Public	
11 October	Response to Tonbridge and Malling Regulation 18 Consultation		Public	Will come
8 November	CIL Governance structure	Andrew Thompson	Public	Approval of a governance structure and management arrangements
8 November	Local Plan examination update	Mark Egerton	Public	Update on the examination
8 November	Q2 Strategic Plan Performance Update		Public	
8 November	Q2 Budget Monitoring Report		Public	
6 December	Finance and Resources	Tay Arnold	Public	Summary update report on the wider Planning Department finance and resource position (deferred from 15/16)
6 December	MTFS – Fees and Charges		Public	
6 December	Strategic Plan 2015-2020 Refresh		Public	
10 January	Examination of the Local Plan Inspectors modifications	Mark Egerton		Update on progress with the examination and approval for consultation on any modifications requested by the Inspector
10 January	Developing Master Plans for Key Local Sites		Public	
10 January	Strategic Plan 2015-2020 Refresh		Public	
10 January	MTFS – budget proposals 2017-18		Public	

Date of Meeting	Title of Report and Brief Summary:	Contact Officer:	Public or Private (if Private the reason why)	Content
7 February	Parking Services Annual Report		Public	
7 February	Q3 Budget Monitoring Report		Public	
7 February	Q3 Strategic Plan Performance Update		Public	
14 March				
11 April	5 Year Housing Land supply		Public	
11 April	Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Built Facilities Strategy	Mark Egerton	Public	Reporting the results of the completed studies
11 April	Q4 Budget Monitoring Report		Public	
TBA		? (William)	Public	A report looking at the spatial / physical aspects of plans for the Town Centre. A report that would fall somewhere between the various reports on the Local Plan and specific proposals in relation to individual schemes. This report would be distinct from any P & R reports to obtain approval for release of funding
TBC	Planning Service Review			
TBC	Planning Support Service options			
TBC	Brunswick Street update			
TBC	Retrospective planning applications and Enforcement			Possible workshop format
TBC	Reformation of the Transport Operators Group			This is the Operators group agreed at Committee on 8 March 2016
TBC	Development of Supplementary Planning documents for the Green and Blue Infrastructure			
TB C	Implementation of rewilding initiatives			
TBC	Development of Supplementary Planning Documents for 2016/17			

TBC	Update on Park and Ride post Sittingbourne Road site closure			
TBC	Report on Committee taking part in KCC Bus Transport Select Committee – Chairman invited			
TBA	Q4 Strategic Plan performance update			
TBA	Low Emissions Strategy		Public	
Ad hoc	Neighbourhood Plans	Cheryl Parks	Public	Consultation responses; examiner reports; referendum approvals; all as required.

Committee Workshops Planned

Date	Subject	Content
Early 2017	Housing and Planning Act - Changes to National Policy in relation to Plan making	Update of Policy and Legislative changes and the impact on Plan Making including Housing and Planning Act
Early 2017	Master Plan for Lenham and Invicta Barracks	
TBA	Retrospective Planning Consent and Enforcement Workshop	

Agenda Item 13

Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee

**13 September
2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Strategic Plan Performance Update Q1 2016/17

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications
Lead Officer and Report Author	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager; Alex Munden, Performance and Business Information Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. Note the summary of performance for Quarter 1 of 2016/17 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and corporate strategies and plans.
2. Note where complete data is currently not available

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Key Performance Indicators monitor the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities as set out in the Strategic Plan 2015-20. The Performance Plan provides progress against the Council's key strategies which deliver the Council's corporate priorities.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Wider Leadership Team	19 July 2016
Policy & Resources Committee	27 July 2016
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee	13 September 2016

Strategic Plan Performance Update Q1 2016/17

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee is asked to note the progress of key strategies, plans, and performance indicators that support the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Having a comprehensive set of actions and performance indicators ensures that the Council delivers against the priorities and actions set in the Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 The Strategic Plan now has 33 Key Performance Indicators that were agreed by Committee in April 2016. This is in addition to the existing 14 plan and strategy updates.
- 2.3 Performance indicators are judged in two ways; firstly on whether performance has improved, sustained or declined, compared to the same period in the previous year. This is known as direction. Where there is no previous data, no assessment of direction can be made.
- 2.4 The second way is to look at whether an indicator has achieved the target set and is known as PI status. If an indicator has achieved or exceeded the annual target they are rated green. If the target has been missed but is within 10% of the target it will be rated amber and if the target has been missed by more than 10% it will be rated red.
- 2.5 Some indicators will show an asterisk (*) after the figure, these are provisional values that are awaiting confirmation. Data for some of the indicators were not available at the time of reporting in these cases a date has been provided of when the information is expected.
- 2.6 Contextual indicators are not targeted but are given a direction. Indicators that are not due for reporting or where there is delay in data collection are not rated against targets or given a direction.
-

3. Quarter 1 Performance Summary

- 3.1 There are 33 key performance indicators (KPIs) which were developed with Heads of Service and unit managers, and agreed by Policy & Resources Committee for 2016/17. Three of these relate to Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee.
- 3.2 Of these, 100% (2) achieved their target for quarter 1, and one indicator is information only. Two indicators also improved on their performance for the

same quarter last year. One indicator is new and does not have previous data to compare against.

RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A	Total
KPIs	2	0	0	1	3
Strategic Actions	2	1	0		3
Direction	Up	Across	Down	N/A	Total
KPIs	1	0	0	1	3

4. Performance by Priority

Priority 2: Securing a successful economy for Maidstone borough

- 4.1 The number of school journeys undertaken without a car is a new KPI. The data demonstrates a large number of pupils using sustainable ways of travelling to school. This number is lower than was recorded in quarter 1 of 2015/16, however due to the way that the data is collected it is likely some is provided late causing the number to increase over time.
- 4.2 The number of affordable homes delivered has exceeded its target of 45. 73 affordable homes were delivered in the first quarter, 19 more than the same quarter for 2015/16. There are more than 300 affordable units forecast for completion this year, many sites have progressed quicker than anticipated. It is expected the annual target for this indicator will be met if these developments are on schedule.
- 4.3 Development Management processed 100% of major applications within the agreed timescale for Quarter 1. 19 applications were determined in the quarter, with each of these being within 13 weeks, or within the agreed timescale with the developer. Extensions of time are negotiated on a significant proportion of major applications due to the complexities, and negotiations on Section 106 agreements. A protocol is being put in place to commit Legal Services and Development Management to producing decisions within a set timeframe. This should speed up processing of major applications and reduce the length of extensions.

2015/16 End of Year Data

- 4.4 This is data that was not available at the time of publishing the 2015/16 End of Year performance plan.
- 4.5 Net additional homes provided: This information could not be provided until the annual survey and data analysis took place. Analysis the data showed that 521 homes were delivered against a target of 500. This is around 20% more homes than were delivered in 2013/14 and 2014/15.
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5. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee review the performance data presented and request further information to understand previous, current, and future performance where relevant.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The key performance indicators and strategic actions are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2015-20 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives. They also cover a wide range of services and priority areas, for example waste and recycling.	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Information
Risk Management	The production of robust performance reports ensures that the view of the Council's approach to the management of risk and use of resources is not undermined and allows early action to be taken in order to mitigate the risk of not achieving targets and outcomes.	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications
Financial	Performance indicators and targets are closely linked to the allocation of resources and determining good value for money. The financial implications of any proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and associated annual budget setting process. Performance issues are highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.	Section 151 Officer
Staffing	Having a clear set of targets enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy and

	to be put in place.	Communications
Legal	None identified.	Legal Team
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None identified.	Policy & Information Officer
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None identified.	Policy and Information Manager
Community Safety	None identified.	Policy and Information Manager
Human Rights Act	None identified.	Policy and Information Manager
Procurement	None identified.	Policy and Information Manager
Asset Management	None identified.	Policy and Information Manager

7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Strategic Plan Performance Update Q1 for SPST

2016/17

Quarter 1 Performance Update



For further information about Performance Management at Maidstone Council, please contact Alex Munden, Performance Officer.

OUR VISION

That our residents live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment, with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.

OUR MISSION

Putting People First.

OUR PRIORITIES

Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all

Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough



ACTION AREAS

Providing a clean and safe environment

Encouraging good health and wellbeing

Respecting the character and heritage of our Borough

Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions

Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone

Securing improvements to the transport infrastructure of our Borough

Promoting a range of employment opportunities and skills required across our Borough

Planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs

OUR VALUES

Service



Everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a positive and professional manner.

Teamwork



Working together to achieve our objectives and goals in a way that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone in our organisation.

Responsibility



We work in an environment that encourages us to take ownership for our actions. Making the right choices and decisions that lead to a satisfactory outcome for all.

Integrity



We have the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty. We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do.

Value



Taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend.

Equality



Valuing our differences and understanding how they can contribute to a better working environment and services that are fair and easy to access.






Understanding Performance





Key to performance ratings

Performance indicators are judged in two ways; firstly on whether performance has improved, been sustained or declined, compared to the same period in the previous year. For example, 2016/17 annual performance will be compared against 2015/16 annual performance. This is known as direction. Where there is no previous data, no assessment of direction can be made.

The second way in which performance is assessed looks at whether an indicator has achieved the target set and is known as PI status. Some indicators may show an asterisk (*) after the figure, these are provisional figures that are awaiting confirmation.

Data Only indicators are not targeted but are given a direction. Indicators that are not due to be reported or where there is a delay in data collection are not rated against targets or given a direction.

RAG Rating	
	Target not achieved
	Target missed (within 10%)
	Target met
	No target to measure performance against
	Data Only

Direction	
	Performance has improved
	Performance has not changed / been sustained
	Performance has declined
	No previous performance to judge against

Strategic Actions have also been rated using the RAG Status (Red, Amber or Green). The ratings are there to provide an assessment of how well the strategy or plan is progressing.

Performance Summary

This is the annual update on Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Plan 2015-20. It sets out how we are performing against the Key Performance Indicators and Strategic actions that directly contribute to the achievement of our priorities: Keeping Maidstone an attractive place for all and securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough.

Outlined below is a summary of the ratings and direction that have been given for the annual results.

RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A	Total
KPIs	2	0	0	1	3
Strategic Actions	2	1	0		3
Direction	Up	Across	Down	N/A	Total
KPIs	2	0	0	1	3

Priority 2: Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Securing Improvements to the Transport Infrastructure for our Borough

Maidstone is strategically situated between London and the channel ports and is serviced by two motorway networks, the M20 and M2, with rail connections to central London. With regard to travelling in and around the Borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly at peak time in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges

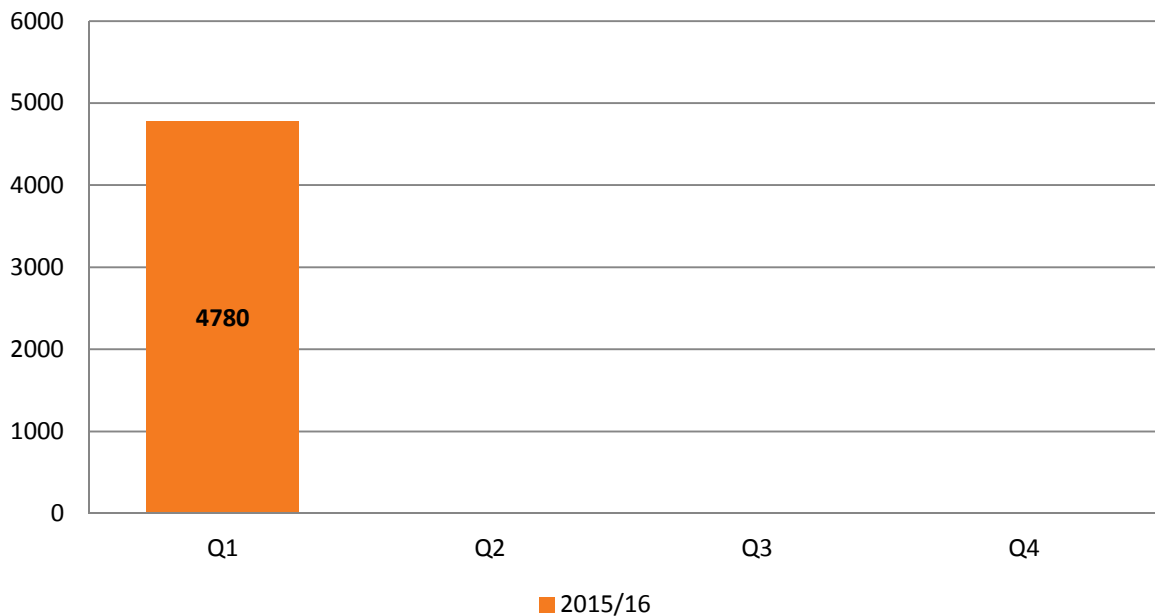
Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) Update

The Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee considered the consultation responses made to the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Walking and Cycling Strategy on 14 June. Officers also proposed some changes to both strategies in light of the responses received and additional dialogue with officers and Members at Kent County Council. The Committee agreed that a revised version of each strategy be drawn up reflecting the comments and the proposed changes and they were considered at the meeting of 6 July, before making recommendations to the Joint Transportation Board. Thereafter, the aim is for the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee to adopt both strategies into the supporting evidence for the Local Plan.

Number of school journeys undertaken without a car as part of borough wide schemes

Figures for this are published by KM Charity Team. This reflects the objectives set out in the Integrated Transport Strategy in reducing the use of unsustainable transport.

Current Value	Q1 Target	Value Vs Target	Direction	Status	Expected Outcome
4780					



Performance Comment: The quarter 1 figure for this data demonstrates a positive modal shift. A total of 4780 car journeys have been avoided through green travelling schemes for school children in quarter 1 of 2016/17. For the same period in 2015/16, the number of car journeys was reduced by 6016. Statistics for green travel increase gradually for the period as different schools and classes upload their data over time after the quarter closes. The data includes schemes such as walking bus, Active Bug, Green footsteps, and Walk-Once-a-Week.

Planning for Sufficient Homes to meet our Borough's Needs

Over the last five years, the supply of new, affordable housing within the borough has been greater than in neighbouring authorities, although still less than historic levels. 189 new affordable homes were built in the borough in 2013/14 and 163 in 2014/15. In total 413 new homes were delivered in 2014/15, of these new homes over 75% were built on land that had previously been developed.

Local Plan Update

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan and accompanying documents were submitted as planned to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on 20 May 2016. All the documents have been made available on the website, which has been updated in preparation for the forthcoming examination. An Inspector, Mr Robert Mellor, has been appointed, and his views on the matters to be examined are awaited. In the interim period, officers have been preparing for the examination alongside the appointed Programme Officer, Ms Louise St John Howe. It is anticipated that the examination hearings will commence at the beginning of October and run through until sometime in November or December.

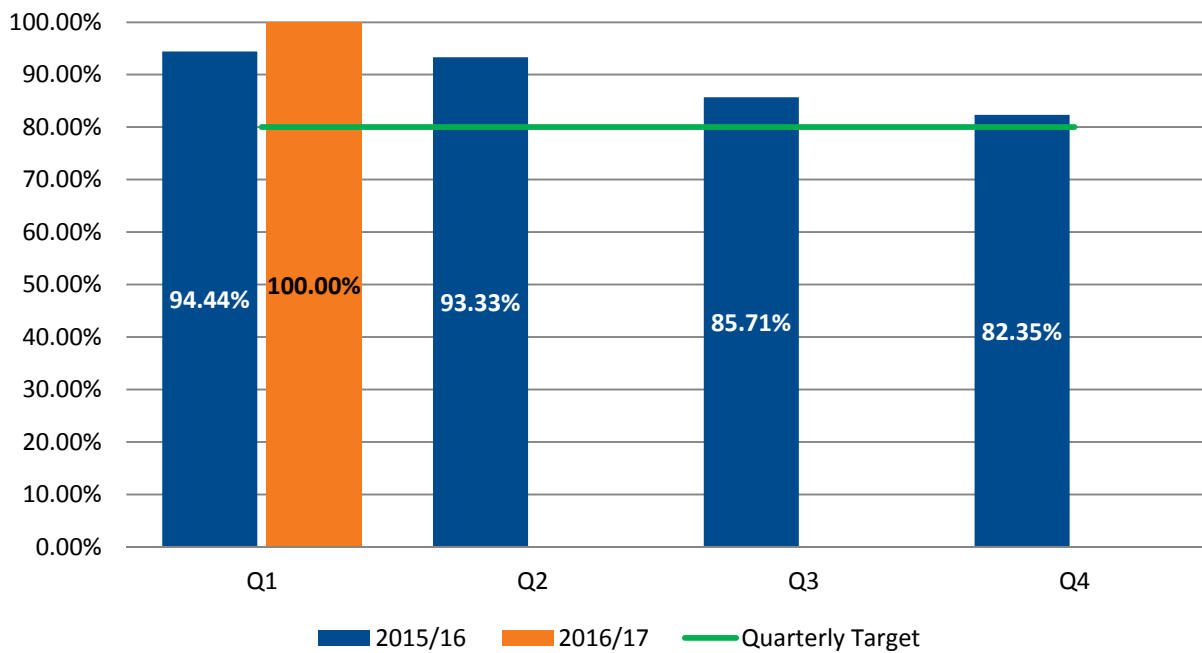
Housing Strategy Update

The Council adopted the final version of the Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020 in March 2016. Following adoption the Strategy has now moved into the delivery stage. The new Strategy has three key priority themes for the Council to address over the next four years centred around enabling the delivery of quality homes across the housing market, ensuring existing housing is safe, desirable and promotes good health and well-being and preventing homelessness and securing provision of appropriate accommodation for homeless households. The Council has made progress during the last quarter against a number of actions stated within the Strategy, in order to help achieve the three key priority themes and stated outcomes. This includes successfully agreeing terms for the purchase of a property for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households, establishing a self/custom build register and continued work on facilitating the redevelopment of Brunswick Street.

Processing of major planning applications in 13 weeks

This indicator measures the percentage of major planning applications processed within the statutory timescale of 13 weeks. This has increased importance to central government. Major developments are classified as those providing 10 or more dwellings, or on an area of 0.5 hectares or more where the number of dwellings is unknown. Major applications also include building(s) where floor space is 1000 square metres or more, or the site has an area of one hectare or more.

Current Value	Q1 Target	Value Vs Target	Direction	Status	Expected Outcome
100%	80%	+20%	↑	✔	Target will be achieved

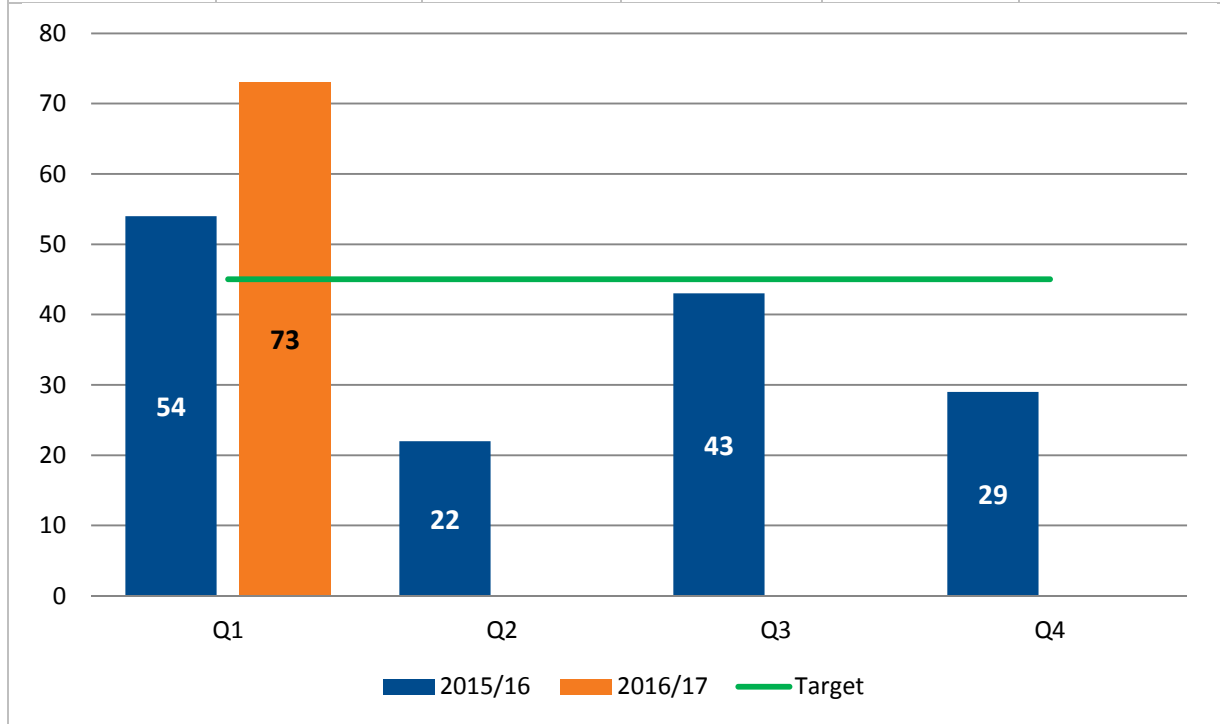


Performance Comment: The performance on majors continues to be very good and demonstrates the good working relationship between officers and developers. Extensions of time are negotiated on a significant proportion of major applications due to the complexities of the application and the requirement to negotiate on Section 106 (S106) agreements. Work has progressed with the draft S106 templates and will soon be available to download on the website, which will help speed up the processing of S106 agreements and enable developers to submit draft agreements with applications. This, together with the agreed protocol in place, (which will commit Legal Services and Development Management officers to producing initial drafts within a set timeframe) will further speed up the legal and decision making processes. This creates a more focused customer experience and delivery of much needed planning permissions.

Number of affordable homes delivered

Housing supply has not kept pace with demand. Many families are locked out of the housing market by unaffordable prices and unobtainable mortgages. Affordable dwellings include social-rented housing and intermediate housing. These can be new build or acquisitions; the figure does not take into account any losses.

Current Performance	Q1 Target	Value Vs Target	Direction	Status	Expected Outcome
73	45	+28	↑	✔	Target will be achieved



Performance Comment: The first quarter has seen a significant amount of newbuild affordable completions delivered, which has exceeded the quarterly target. There are in excess of 300 affordable units which are forecast for completion this year as many sites have progressed quicker than anticipated. It is therefore expected that we will easily exceed the target for the year.

Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	13 SEPTEMBER 2016
Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes

First Quarter Budget Monitoring 2016/17

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ellie Dunnet, Chief Accountant
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:
 That the committee:

1. Notes the revenue position at the end of the first quarter and the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position where significant variances have been identified.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:
 The budget is a statement, in financial terms, of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. It reflects the Council’s decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan. The issues raised in this report identify areas where financial performance is at variance with priority outcomes.

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	13 September 2016

First Quarter Budget Monitoring 2016/17

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the committee with an overview of the revenue budget and outturn for the first quarter of 2016/17, and highlights financial matters which may have a material impact on the medium term financial strategy or the balance sheet.
 - 1.2 As at the 30 June 2016, this committee was showing a minor adverse variance of £2,560 overall. The individual variances for each service area are detailed within **Appendix I**.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Director of Finance & Business Improvement is the Responsible Financial Officer, and has overall responsibility for budgetary control and financial management. However in practice, day to day budgetary control is delegated to service managers, with assistance and advice from their director and the finance section.
- 2.2 The medium term financial strategy for 2016/17 onwards was agreed by full Council on 2 March 2016. This report advises and updates the committee on the current position with regards to revenue expenditure against the approved budgets.
- 2.3 Attached at **Appendix I** is a table detailing the current budget and expenditure position for this Committee's services in relation to the first quarter of 2016/17, to June 2016. The appendix details net budget per cost centre for this Committee. Actual expenditure is shown to the end of June 2016 and includes accruals for goods and services received but not yet paid for.
- 2.4 The columns of the table in the Appendix show the following detail:
 - a) The cost centre description;
 - b) The value of the total budget for the year;
 - c) The amount of the budget expected to be spent by the end of June 2016;
 - d) The actual spend to that date;
 - e) The variance between expected and actual spend;
 - f) The forecast spend to year end; and
 - g) The expected significant variances at 31 March 2017.
- 2.5 **Appendix I** shows that of an annual budget of -£944,030 there was an expectation that net income of -£17,002 would be achieved in the first quarter of the year. At this point in time the budget position for this committee as a whole is a minor overspend of £2,560. However, the full year forecast indicates that there is expected to be a net underspend of

£250,000 by 31 March 2017. This is based on current assumptions around income levels from pay and display parking. While it should be noted that one car park (Mote Park) is not expected to achieve its income target this year, leaving a shortfall in the region of £50,000 by 31 March 2017, this will be offset by the performance of Lockmeadow and King Street car parks leaving an overall positive variance in this cost centre, forecast at £250,000 based on the information available to date.

- 2.6 A separate report detailing the shortfall for Mote Park car park was considered by Heritage, Culture and Leisure committee on 6 September.
- 2.7 Explanations for variances within individual cost centres which exceed or are expected to exceed £30,000 have been provided in accordance with the council's constitution.

3 AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 In considering the current position on the revenue budget at the end of June 2016 the committee can chose to note those actions and reconsider the outcomes at the end of the second quarter or it could chose to take further action.

4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The committee is requested to note the content of the report and agree on any necessary action to be taken in relation to the budget position.

5 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 This report is not expected to lead to any consultation.

6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The second quarter's budget monitoring reports will be presented to service committees for their consideration in November 2016.
- 6.2 Currently there are no matters which require a decision from this committee. Significant variances which require action to be taken will be regularly reported to this committee through later versions of this report.

7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
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Impact on Corporate Priorities	This report monitors actual activity against the revenue budget and other financial matters set by Council for the financial year. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's medium term financial strategy which is linked to the strategic plan and corporate priorities.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Risk Management	The Council has produced a balanced budget for both capital and revenue expenditure and income for 2016/17 This budget is set against a backdrop of limited resources and an difficult economic climate. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives this committee the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks. The issues set out in this report do not exhibit the level of potential risk identified in previous years.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Financial	Financial implications are the focus of this report through high level budget monitoring. The process of budget monitoring ensures that services can react quickly to potential resource problems. The process ensures that the Council is not faced by corporate financial problems that may prejudice the delivery of strategic priorities.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Staffing	The budget for staffing represents approximately 50% of the direct spend of the council and is carefully monitored. Any issues in relation to employee costs will	Director of Finance & Business Improvement

	be raised in this and future monitoring reports.	
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget this monitoring process enables the committee to remain aware of issues and the process to be taken to maintain a balanced budget for the year.	Team Leader Corporate Governance
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The budget ensures the focus of resources into areas of need as identified in the Council's strategic priorities. This monitoring report ensures that the budget is delivering services to meet those needs.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Environmental/Sustainable Development	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Community Safety	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Human Rights Act	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Procurement	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Asset Management	Resources available for asset management are contained within both revenue and capital budgets and do not represent a significant problem at this time.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement

8 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix I:** First Quarter 2016/17 Revenue Monitoring – Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

**Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
First Quarter Budget Monitoring - Full Summary to June 2016**

Cost Centre	Budget for Year	To June	Actual	Variance	Forecast	Year end Variance	Explanation
Building Regulations Chargeable	-£295,160	-£73,790	-£93,971	£20,181	-£295,160	£0	
Building Control	-£990	-£248	£836	-£1,083	-£990	£0	
Street Naming & Numbering	-£49,000	-£12,250	-£19,060	£6,810	-£49,000	£0	
Development Control Advice	-£115,000	-£27,842	-£30,078	£2,237	-£115,000	£0	
Development Control Applications	-£1,303,640	-£317,993	-£344,098	£26,106	-£1,303,640	£0	
Development Control Appeals	£119,410	£27,250	£10,303	£16,947	£119,410	£0	
Development Control Enforcement	£49,860	£105	£0	£105	£49,860	£0	
Planning Policy	£89,160	£91,665	£93,668	-£2,003	£89,160	£0	
Neighbourhood Planning	£0	£0	£1,406	-£1,406	£0	£0	
Conservation	-£11,670	-£3,895	£94	-£3,989	-£11,670	£0	
Land Charges	-£231,840	-£58,626	-£64,996	£6,370	-£231,840	£0	
Environment Improvements	£19,080	£3,560	£10,532	-£6,972	£19,080	£0	
Name Plates & Notices	£17,600	£4,400	£405	£3,995	£17,600	£0	
On Street Parking	-£284,830	-£73,658	-£73,141	-£518	-£284,830	£0	
Residents Parking	-£223,930	-£52,604	-£56,053	£3,448	-£223,930	£0	
Pay & Display Car Parks	-£1,278,940	-£196,629	-£262,906	£66,277	-£1,278,940	£0	
Non Paying Car Parks	£9,310	£7,118	£6,981	£137	£9,310	£0	
Off Street Parking - Enforcement	-£182,070	-£46,193	-£52,634	£6,442	-£182,070	£0	
Mote Park Pay & Display	-£172,560	-£47,229	-£35,568	-£11,660	-£172,560	£0	
Mote Park - Enforcement	£23,940	£5,985	£5,970	£15	£23,940	£0	
Park & Ride	£174,270	£92,565	£81,673	£10,892	-£75,730	£250,000	Lockmeadow and King Street car parks have significantly outperformed against their income targets, despite the increased income budgets which were set for 2016/17. This trend is expected to continue through to the end of 2016/17. It should be noted that the forecast incorporates a shortfall of £50,000 for Mote Park car park. This has been offset against the overall underspend in the forecast outturn.
Socially Desirable Buses	£63,780	£1,398	£1,234	£164	£63,780	£0	
Other Transport Services	-£6,800	-£2,325	£131	-£2,456	-£6,800	£0	
Development Management Section	£761,160	£189,425	£316,418	-£126,993	£761,160	£0	The is an overspend on agency staff costs which is expected to continue through to year end. This is being funded from income previously set aside.
Spatial Policy Planning Section	£481,910	£121,078	£120,393	£685	£481,910	£0	
Head of Planning and Development	£98,760	£24,615	£24,702	-£87	£98,760	£0	
Development Management Enforcement Section	£139,890	£34,973	£41,882	-£6,910	£139,890	£0	
Building Surveying Section	£349,910	£89,093	£82,219	£6,874	£349,910	£0	
Mid Kent Planning Support Service	£262,560	£64,125	£84,734	-£20,609	£262,560	£0	
Heritage Landscape and Design Section	£168,300	£42,300	£41,478	£822	£168,300	£0	
Planning Business Management	£101,020	£25,255	£25,114	£141	£101,020	£0	
Parking Services Section	£282,480	£71,370	£67,889	£3,481	£282,480	£0	
	-£944,030	-£17,002	-£14,442	-£2,560	-£1,194,030	£250,000	

Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	13 September 2016
Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes

Examination of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Cheryl Parks, Project Manager – Local Plan
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Staplehurst; Headcorn; Marden & Yalding; Sutton Valence & Langley; Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton;

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the findings of the Examiner as set out in his report;
2. That the Committee agrees to the modifications as set out in the Examiner’s report being made to the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan as submitted for examination; and
3. That the Committee agrees that the Neighbourhood Plan be taken forward, as amended, to a local referendum.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – the plan once made will form part of the development plan for the borough.

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	13 September 2016

Examination of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the findings of the appointed Examiner in relation to the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Staplehurst. The report makes recommendations based on the Examiner's report regarding modifications and a future local referendum.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Committee will be aware, following consideration of several reports in recent months relating to the NDP's for both Staplehurst and Headcorn, that the Staplehurst NDP has had a difficult journey through the examination process.
- 2.2 In July 2016, the Committee were advised¹ that the newly appointed Examiner, Mr. Derek Stebbing would be commencing a new examination of the NDP on 15 June 2016.
- 2.3 Mr. Stebbing concluded his examination in mid-July, setting out his conclusions in a draft report that was then subject to rigorous quality assurance procedures by his employer, Intelligent Plans and Examinations.
- 2.4 On 2 August 2016, MBC officers received Mr. Stebbing's final report, a copy of which is included at Appendix 1 of this report, and shared this with the Parish Council.
- 2.5 According to adopted Neighbourhood Planning Protocols, it is for this Committee to review the Examiner's report, and any suggested modifications, and to decide whether to accept those modifications and whether to move the NDP to a local referendum.

Examiner's findings

- 2.6 The scope of a NDP examination is set out in Regulations² and it is the role of the Examiner to ascertain whether the NDP meets the Basic Conditions, complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("the 2004 Act") (as amended) and finally, whether it complies with matters set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The NDP should also not contravene the European Human Rights Convention.

¹

<https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s49645/Staplehurst%20and%20Headcorn%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%20Examinations%20Update.pdf>

² Paragraph 8(1), Schedule 4B, Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

- 2.7 Amendments to the 2004 Act (s.38A and s.38B) were made by the Localism Act 2011 (Schedule 9) which provided for the production of Neighbourhood Plans. Section 38A of the 2004 Act sets out the meaning of 'Neighbourhood Development Plan' and explains who can undertake a NDP, and also the regulatory context. Section 38B explains the provision that may be made by a NDP and the limits of what can and cannot be included. Further detail followed in the aforementioned Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations").
- 2.8 In his deliberations, Mr. Stebbing has had regard to the saved policies of the adopted Maidstone Local Plan 2000, as well as other adopted Development Plan Documents, and the submitted Screening Opinion in relation to the requirement, or otherwise, for a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Additionally, he considered national policy as set out in both the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") and also reference to the application of the NPPF in the National Planning Practice Guidance ("NPPG").
- 2.9 Whilst not a statutory requirement under the Basic Conditions, Mr. Stebbing notes the preparation of the NDP in the context of the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-31. Recent updates to the NPPG advise those preparing NDPs that they must take account of the evidence supporting emerging Local Plans and support the strategic development needs as set out in the Local Plan. The positive approach to development in the NDP illustrates how the Parish Council have worked to ensure continuity with emerging Local Plan policies with the aim of 'future-proofing' their NDP.
- 2.10 One particular policy in the NDP proposes a mixed use allocation at Lodge Road, which conflicts with the stance taken in the emerging Local Plan. This is not critical for the NDP as the emerging Local Plan is yet to be examined. However, it is important to understand the potential implications for the emerging Local Plan as a result of the endorsement of the policy in the NDP by Mr Stebbing in his report. If the NDP passes a future referendum and is made, it becomes the development plan for Staplehurst and this is likely to be prior to the adoption of the emerging Local Plan. The Local Plan should align with a NDP where it is reasonable for it to do so.
- 2.11 The NDP policy relates to the whole of the Lodge Road estate, including the currently vacant land at the western end, promoting a mix of residential and employment development. This conflicts with the submission Local Plan which designates the whole area (including the vacant land at the west which had extant consent for Class B uses at submission that has subsequently lapsed) as an existing employment site for retention in employment use.
- 2.12 Officers are reviewing the implications of the Examiner's recommendations for the Local Plan. A previous appraisal of the site by officers in the SHEDLAA assessed that the vacant land had a capacity of sixty (60) dwellings with scope for additional employment floorspace in a mixed use development. However, such an allocation was not agreed by Members through either the Scrutiny or Cabinet meetings in 2014, or by a subsequent review of SHEDLAA sites undertaken by this Committee in its very first meetings in 2015.

Interim report of the previous Examiner

- 2.13 The Committee will remember that in May 2016, prior to her withdrawal, the previously appointed Examiner issued an Interim Report which highlighted two areas of concern: the SEA Screening Opinion, and the site selection process undertaken by the Parish Council.
- 2.14 Mr. Stebbing was made fully aware of both the Interim Report and the responses to it from the Parish Council and MBC prior to commencing his examination but was also asked to examine the submitted NDP and supporting materials on their own merits in the first instance, before reviewing the Interim Report and responses. He confirms in his report, at paragraph 1.10, that this is the approach he has taken.
- 2.15 In his Examiner's report, Mr. Stebbing concludes that the Screening Opinion is robust, thus disagreeing with the previous Examiner's view, and also considers the approach taken to the allocation of sites to require no change, suggesting, in paragraph 4.17, that "no modifications to the Strategic Planning narrative of the plan." Elsewhere, reference is made to representations regarding the omission of sites from the NDP to be matters for the examination of the Local Plan rather than for determination as part of the examination of the NDP.

Modifications and minor corrections

- 2.16 Similar to the process for examining Local Plans, the Examiner of a NDP has the remit to suggest modifications that should be made to ensure regulatory compliance.
- 2.17 Having had regard to representations made, including by MBC, and in testing the policies in the NDP against both the NPPF and NPPG, Mr. Stebbing has made fourteen proposed modifications, which he sets out in bold type in the main body of his Examiner's report as well as summarising these in an appendix.
- 2.18 None of the proposed modifications alter the main thrust or meaning of the policies themselves but instead express them using different language to make them both more robust and also to ensure compliance with national policy and guidance.
- 2.19 Mr. Stebbing also helpfully identifies a small number of minor corrections to rectify typing errors in the NDP which do not constitute modifications but should perhaps be taken account of in the final drafting of the NDP.

Overall conclusions

- 2.20 Overall, Mr. Stebbing concludes that the NDP, as examined, meets the procedural requirements and, subject to the modifications suggested being made, also meets the Basic Conditions and legal requirements as set out in the 2012 Regulations.

- 2.21 Mr. Stebbing recognises in his conclusion the time and effort put in by the Parish Council in preparing the NDP and rightly commends them on their efforts.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could agree to the recommendations as set out at the start of this report, namely, noting the findings of the Examiner, agreeing to his proposed modifications and moving the NDP to a local referendum.
- 3.2 The Committee could alternatively resolve to move the NDP to a referendum unchanged, and without the modifications as proposed.
- 3.3 A third option for the Committee would be to resolve to not agree to a referendum, preventing any further progress of the NDP as currently drafted.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is recommended to agree to the option set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report. The findings of the independent Examiner support the policies of the NDP, subject to the suggested modifications, in regard to national and local policy.
- 4.2 The Parish Council has carried out a thorough and detailed assessment of the development needs and goals for its Parish and a considerable amount of time and effort has been spent in developing the NDP, which is supported by both MBC Officers and Members.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Previously, the Committee has been very supportive of the concept of Neighbourhood Planning and the commitment and progress made by a number of Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums.
- 5.2 It is hoped that this continued support is noted by Parish Councils, as it clearly demonstrates the Borough Council's commitment to further encouraging Neighbourhood Planning.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Subject to the resolution of the Committee, the Parish Council will be asked to produce a final draft of the NDP accommodating both the proposed modifications and minor changes as identified by the Examiner for the purposes of a local referendum.

- 6.2 MBC Officers will liaise with colleagues in the Electoral Services team to organise the local referendum as soon as is practicable, in accordance with the prescribed Regulations³ and in discussion with the Parish Council.
- 6.3 Following the close of the poll, and the publication of the result, a further report will be brought to this Committee setting out the results, and where this is a positive result, seeking a recommendation to Council regarding the making of the NDP.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	A Neighbourhood Development Plan, once made, will be part of the Development Plan for the borough, directly impacting on the Corporate Priorities through the determination of planning applications in the plan area.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Risk Management	There are no identified risks to the Borough Council relating to this report.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Financial	The estimated costs for the Staplehurst Plan comprise elements of printing and postage (£500), consultancy support (£2,500), examination (£2,625 and £7,587) and future referendum (£4,000) totalling approx. £17,200. Once the referendum has been completed and the plan made a claim can be submitted to the next round of funding grants through LOGASNET to offset this cost.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Staffing	Officers have already notified the Electoral Services team about the progress with the Staplehurst NDP and the potential for a referendum. Once a referendum has been approved, officers will work closely with officers in the Electoral Services team to assist	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

³ The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

	in the planning of the referendum.	
Legal	Statute sets out the procedures to be followed with regard to Neighbourhood Planning. The Borough Council is obliged to follow statutory requirements.	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The needs of different groups are considered throughout the development of the plans and recognised in the supporting materials that were part of the examination.	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Plans must have regard to sustainability and the natural environment including heritage assets as part of their policies. An assessment for the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment is carried out at an early stage and repeated at key stages of the plans development. Reference is made in the examiner's report to the robustness of the assessment.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Community Safety	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Human Rights Act	The examiner concludes that no contraventions to the Human Rights Convention are apparent.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Procurement	There are no particular procurement requirements or considerations that are not already in place at this stage.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development & Mark Green, Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Report on Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2031.
 - Appendix 2: Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan (as submitted for examination)
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.



Intelligent Plans
and examinations

Report on Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2031

An Examination undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council with the support of Staplehurst Parish Council on the July 2015 Submission version of the Plan.

Independent Examiner: Derek A. Stebbing B.A. (Hons), Dip. E.P., MRTPI

Date of Report: Final Version 02 August 2016

Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, Regency Offices, 3 Portwall Lane, Bristol BS1 6NB

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan and its supporting documentation, including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the recommended policy modifications I set out in this report, the plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Staplehurst Parish Council;
- The plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Neighbourhood Plan area, the boundary of which is coterminous with the Parish boundary;
- The plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – from 2015 to 2031; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the plan, once modified, proceeds to Referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2031

- 1.1 Staplehurst is a large village and parish, situated some 10 miles south of Maidstone with the village being on the A229 road between Maidstone and Hastings. The parish has a population of over 6,000, with most retail, employment and community facilities being focused within the village. Beyond the village, the parish is rural in character, with agriculture being the predominant land use within a landscape that also contains some extensive areas of woodland.
- 1.2 The historic core of the village is focused around the High Street between Cuckold's Corner and All Saints Church. The development of the railway and Staplehurst Railway Station led to development in the late-19th Century in and around Station Road, and this extended the village northwards to the railway line. There is virtually no built development to the north of the railway line, which remains as a 'development limit' to the expansion of the village further northwards.

- 1.3 Expansion of the village in the post-war period has occurred in a series of phases both to the east and west of the High Street. The most recent phase, in the Lime Trees area, has largely occurred during the past 15 years.
- 1.4 There are also a significant number of businesses based in Staplehurst, many of which are concentrated in the commercial area immediately south of the Railway Station. The primary retail area is along the High Street in the centre of the village, which is also the focus for a number of community facilities including the health centre and library.
- 1.5 The countryside beyond the village of Staplehurst is characterised by differing landscapes. To the south-east of the village is Staplehurst Manor with a formal parkland landscape. There are some extensive areas of woodland, particularly to the south-west of the village, whilst other areas have a pattern of smaller fields and paddocks bounded by tall hedgerows.
- 1.6 The plan preparation process began in 2013 and has been informed by a series of distinct public engagement events. The plan seeks to set out a vision for the parish through until 2031 and comprises specific planning policies and objectives, grouped under six policy themes. These are all supported by a strategic village framework, indicating how new development needs to integrate with the existing village.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.7 I have been appointed as the examiner of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan by Maidstone Borough Council, with the agreement of the Staplehurst Parish Council, who are the qualifying body for the purposes of this examination.
- 1.8 I am a chartered town planner, with over 40 years of experience in planning, and have worked in both the public and private sectors. I have also served on a Government working group considering measures to improve the Local Plan system, and I have also undertaken peer reviews on behalf of the Planning Advisory Service.
- 1.9 I am independent of the qualifying body and the local authority and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the plan. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this independent examination.
- 1.10 I have had sight of an 'Interim Report' (dated 4 May, 2016) prepared by an independent examiner, who carried out an initial assessment of the plan prior to my appointment. However, as the newly (and sole) appointed examiner of this plan, I must carry out my own full and independent examination. I am neither relying on, nor bound by any previous work of the formerly appointed examiner. I must, through the consideration of the plan and relevant evidence, come to my own

independent conclusions and recommendations on compliance with the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.11 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.12 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions;
 - Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the Local Planning Authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
 - whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum; and
 - Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ('the 2012 Regulations').
- 1.13 I am not to consider any matter that does not fall within paragraph 8(1) other than the additional requirement that the plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.14 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union obligations; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.15 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the neighbourhood plan should not be likely to have a significant effect on a European Site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European Offshore Marine Site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 2007), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Development Plan for Maidstone Borough Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the saved policies from the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2000).
- 2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented.

Submitted Documents

- 2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents that I consider relevant to this examination, including those submitted which comprise:

- the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan – Submission Plan (2015-2031), dated July 2015;
- the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area and accompanying map for Staplehurst, which was approved by Maidstone Borough Council on 14 January, 2013 and which identifies the Parish of Staplehurst area as the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development plan relates;
- the Consultation Statement dated July 2015;
- the Basic Conditions Statement, dated July 2015, explaining how the proposed neighbourhood development plan meets the Basic Conditions;
- all the Representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation undertaken between 23 October and 4 December, 2015; and
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion, dated September 2015, prepared on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council for the neighbourhood plan, together with the supplementary information regarding the SEA and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening Report dated June 2016.

2.4 As noted in paragraph 1.10 above, I have also seen an 'Interim Report' (dated 4 May, 2016) prepared by a previously appointed independent examiner.

Site Visit

2.5 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 21 June, 2016 to familiarise myself with it and to visit relevant sites and areas affected by the policies.

Written Representations or Public Hearing

2.6 Following my consideration of the submitted neighbourhood plan and its accompanying documents, my site visit and consideration of the representations made during the Regulation 16 consultation period, I have dealt with this examination by Written Representations. I did not consider that a Public Hearing was necessary, as the representations and accompanying submissions have, in all cases, provided me with sufficient information to enable me to reach a conclusion on the matters concerned.

Modifications

2.7 Where necessary, I have recommended Plan Modifications (PMs) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. Within the body of the report, these are shown in **bold**

type. For ease of reference, I have also listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

3.1 I now consider the plan's compliance with the relevant procedural requirements for the preparation of neighbourhood plans.

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

3.2 Staplehurst Parish Council is the qualifying body able to lead the preparation of a neighbourhood plan, in accordance with the aims of neighbourhood planning set out in the Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF. Accordingly, this requirement is met.

3.3 The plan area is coterminous with the Staplehurst Parish Council administrative boundary. Maidstone Borough Council approved the designation of the area on 14 January, 2013. The plan relates to this area and does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area. Similarly, it does not purport to deal with any matters outside the plan area. It therefore complies with the relevant legal requirements in this regard.

The Plan Period

3.4 A neighbourhood plan must specify the period during which it is to have effect. The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan clearly states on its front cover and in its introductory section that the plan period is from 2015 to 2031.

Excluded Development

3.5 From my review of all the documents before me, the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan does not include policies or proposals that relate to any of the categories of excluded development set out in the relevant legislation.

Development and Use of Land

3.6 Policies in neighbourhood plans should only relate to the development and use of land. While supporting text can reflect the aspirations and priorities of a community, they should not be reflected as specific policies. Where I consider that a policy or part of a policy does not relate to the development and use of land, I have recommended that it be amended as a modification to the plan. Subject to these recommended modifications, this requirement is met.

Public Consultation

- 3.7 In accordance with Regulation 15 of the 2012 Regulations, the Parish Council has submitted a Consultation Statement to Maidstone Borough Council. I have considered this statement as part of this examination.
- 3.8 The consultation statement sets out the process by which the plan has been prepared (including the Regulation 14 consultation stage), taking into account the comments and views of residents, land owners, key stakeholders and other interested parties.
- 3.9 The preparation of the plan began with a Village Visioning Event held in September 2013, which was followed by a three day Design Forum held in October 2013. This culminated in the production of a concept drawing, which formed the basis for subsequent work.
- 3.10 A Draft Strategic Framework Plan with a draft set of six planning policy themes was prepared, and displayed at an exhibition in January/February 2014. A questionnaire invited comments on the draft policy themes. A further exhibition was held in March 2014, at which a full set of draft planning policies was presented, together with an analysis of the questionnaire responses. Following this event, a dedicated web-site was also established which enabled people to comment on the emerging plan at any time. Further comments were also made in writing.
- 3.11 The Consultation Statement provides a comprehensive digest of the comments that were made during these Pre-Submission stages in the preparation of the plan, together with specific responses by the Parish Council to each comment.
- 3.12 I have reviewed the scale and extent of the consultation and engagement work that was undertaken during the preparation of the plan. I am satisfied that the general approach was extensive and inclusive, and that consultation events were organised and publicised to enable as many people as possible to attend. Whilst it is not part of my examination to consider the responses that were made by the Parish Council during the preparation of the plan, I am satisfied that the Parish Council has taken full account of the comments that were received and has amended the plan, where necessary, to address those comments.
- 3.13 Following submission of the plan to Maidstone Borough Council, formal consultation under Regulation 16 of the 2012 Regulations was held between 23 October and 4 December, 2015. A total of 57 representations were made during that period, and I have considered these representations as part of this examination.
- 3.14 In summary, I consider that the public consultation and community engagement work that has been undertaken throughout the preparation of the plan has been open and transparent, and to a very thorough level. I consider that it has enabled all residents, stakeholders, land owners and

other interested parties to be able to comment upon the draft plan at the key stages in its preparation, and following its submission to Maidstone Borough Council. Accordingly, I conclude that the consultation process has met the legal requirements.

Human Rights

3.15 In the course of conducting the examination, I have not seen any evidence to suggest that the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan breaches Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). Maidstone Borough Council has raised no issues on this matter in its formal Regulation 16 consultation response on the plan, and I conclude that this legal requirement is also met.

4 Compliance with the Basic Conditions

4.1 I have approached the assessment of compliance with the Basic Conditions of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan as two main matters:

- General issues of compliance of the Plan, as a whole; and
- Specific issues of compliance of the Plan policies.

General Issues of Compliance of the Plan

Regard to National Policy and Guidance

- 4.2 The NPPF explains that a presumption in favour of sustainable development will mean that neighbourhood plans should support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans and plan positively to support local development. The NPPF is also clear that neighbourhood plans should be aligned with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. They should not promote less development than is set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies. Neighbourhood plans should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with predictability and efficiency.
- 4.3 The PPG at ID: 41-041-20140306 further advises that neighbourhood plan policies should be clear and unambiguous, and that they are concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence which reflects and responds to the context and characteristics of the area.
- 4.4 The Conditions Statement sets out the key parts of the NPPF which have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan. It notes, in particular, that "...the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan fills an economic, social and environmental role in planning positively to shape the future development and needs of the parish". I also note that, as part of the evidence base for the preparation of the plan, the Parish Council has undertaken a housing needs survey to help inform policies on housing mix and tenure in Staplehurst.

- 4.5 I also take into account the view of Maidstone Borough Council, set out within a report to the Council's Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee on 10 November, 2015, that "the Neighbourhood Plan is considered to have met the objectives of paragraph 184 of the NPPF regarding making sufficient provision for new housing, and thus meeting its contribution to the Council's objectively assessed need".
- 4.6 I am satisfied that, subject to the detailed compliance points I address in the Specific Issues section below (paragraph 4.27 onwards), the plan has been prepared having regard to current national planning policy and guidance.

Contribution to the Achievement of Sustainable Development

- 4.7 The Conditions Statement describes how the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. It notes that the plan "is a sustainable plan that incorporates employment, key services and new facilities together with a range of access and movement options that help reduce the need to travel". It goes on to state that "the Parish Council believes that this neighbourhood plan supports the needs of the wider community by addressing the social, economic and environmental aspects of village life".
- 4.8 I have reviewed the plan in this context. I note, in particular, that the eight vision points for the plan, which were established through the consultation and engagement work undertaken during the plan's early stages of preparation, reflect the aims and objectives of achieving sustainable development. These vision points have been carried through into the specific policy themes within the plan. By way of examples, I note that the Parish-wide theme is to "create an integrated set of neighbourhood planning policies that support sustainable development across the whole of Staplehurst parish", whilst the Community theme is to "ensure that housing development brings an appropriate level of investment into community infrastructure".
- 4.9 Most of the policy themes are then developed into a series of planning policies. I consider the detailed drafting of these policies below, but as a general overview I consider that they do contribute, individually and collectively, to the fundamental objective of seeking to achieve sustainable patterns of development. I am therefore satisfied that subject to the detailed points and associated modifications in the Specific Issues section below, the plan does fulfil its important role in contributing to sustainable development.

General Conformity with the Strategic Policies of the Development Plan

- 4.10 The Borough Council considers that the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan, but that it is inconsistent with a number of non-strategic adopted policies. However, in view of the requirement for general conformity only with the strategic policies of the adopted plan, I am limited in the extent to which I can address any points relating to these inconsistencies, unless they raise a substantive issue in relation to another Basic Condition(s). With regard to the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan, I agree with the Borough Council's view that the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with those policies. In my assessment, I find nothing in the Neighbourhood Plan that would lead me to a different conclusion.
- 4.11 Whilst it is not a statutory requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan to be in general conformity with an emerging plan, I am clear that the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan has also been prepared in the context of the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031, which has now been submitted for examination under section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
- 4.12 The Conditions Statement reflects guidance in the PPG, stating, inter alia, that "...in order to future-proof a neighbourhood plan, those preparing the plan should ensure, through close dialogue with the borough council, that the plan is appropriately in line with up to date evidence of any strategic needs identified for the area and takes account of the strategic priorities of the emerging local plan." It goes on to state that "...the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan has aligned itself with the Maidstone Borough Local Plan consultation (Regulation 18) version (March 2014) in order to be as up to date as possible." The Borough Council's assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan in the context of the emerging Local Plan is set out at paragraphs 2.24-2.26 of the above-mentioned report dated 10 November, 2015. I note, in particular, the Borough Council's comment that "...it is regarded as broadly in line with the vision of the local plan which sees the role of Staplehurst as a rural service centre being reinforced by directing suitable development and supporting infrastructure".
- 4.13 I have also taken into account other representations that have been made to the plan during the Regulation 16 Consultation, a number of which cite a failure of the plan to acknowledge the housing need identified in the Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), and that the plan should make further allocations of land for housing to meet this need. It is also stated in a number of representations that the Borough Council presently cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing land, and that additional allocations of housing land are necessary in that situation. It is further suggested in some representations that the

examination of the Neighbourhood Plan be postponed or put on hold pending the outcome and adoption of the Local Plan.

- 4.14 I have given careful consideration to these points, and to other representations that seek to draw a distinction between the neighbourhood plan and the emerging Local Plan. In the majority of cases, I note that those parties proposing the additional allocations of land and specific sites for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area have made the appropriate submissions and representations to the Borough Council through, for example, their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) two 'calls for sites', and by making representations at the formal consultation stages of the Local Plan.
- 4.15 The latest consultation version of the Local Plan (March 2016) itself describes, at paragraphs 6.2-6.5, the methodology and process by which the allocation of development sites has been undertaken by the Borough Council.
- 4.16 These are points which in my assessment are, quite properly, matters which remain to be tested at the Local Plan examination. The PPG at ID: 41-009-20160211 indicates a neighbourhood plan can be prepared and adopted before or at the same time as an emerging Local Plan. Furthermore, the requirement of the Basic Conditions is that the neighbourhood plan "must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area". In this case, as noted above, the relevant development plan is the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan, 2000, and specifically its saved policies. I am satisfied that the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan is in general conformity with that Plan, which concurs with the view of the Borough Council. I see no case to postpone or put this examination in abeyance pending the future examination of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031, and that the strategic issues being raised in representations to this plan are all matters that fall within the purview of the Inspector appointed to examine the Local Plan.
- 4.17 For that reason, I recommend no modifications to the Strategic Planning narrative of the plan, which is contained at Section 4 of the document. I note that the plan is accurate as at the date of its submission (July 2015), with regard to its narrative regarding the emerging Local Plan but that the Local Plan has, as noted previously, been submitted for examination.

Compatibility with (and absence of breach of) European Union (EU) Obligations

- 4.18 A neighbourhood plan must be compatible with EU obligations, as transposed into domestic legislation, in order to be legally compliant. Principal EU obligations that may potentially be of relevance include Directives 2001/42/EC (Strategic Environmental Assessment); 2011/92/EU (Environmental Impact Assessment); 92/43/EEC (Habitats);

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2009/147/EC (Wild Birds); 2008/98/EC (Waste); 2008/50/EC (Air Quality) and 2000/60/EC (Water).

(i) Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.19 Directive 2001/42/EC, often referred to as the SEA Directive, relates to the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, and is of relevance to this plan. Similarly, Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (referred to as the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives respectively) aim to protect and improve Europe's most important habitats and species and can also be germane.
- 4.20 Maidstone Borough Council screened the plan for the need for a SEA and/or a HRA, and received responses from the statutory consultees (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England). The Screening Opinion for the plan is set out in a document dated September 2015, prepared on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council, and I have considered this document as part of this examination. I have also considered the additional information prepared by Maidstone Borough Council and Staplehurst Parish Council (in June 2016 and July 2016 respectively).
- 4.21 I have further noted the Interim Report dated 4 May, 2016 prepared by a previous examiner of this plan. That Interim Report draws reference, in relation to a representation by Gladman Developments (Representation Ref. 15), to a possible concern over the robustness of the site allocations methodology undertaken as part of the preparation of the plan. This concern is on the basis that the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 has not yet reached a stage whereby its policies and supporting evidence have been considered at an examination (the position at the time the representation was made), and that it is inappropriate for the neighbourhood plan, and particularly that part relating to site allocations, to only place reliance on supporting evidence to demonstrate its compatibility with EU obligations.
- 4.22 I have considered this matter in depth, and it is of course necessary to restate in this particular context that a neighbourhood plan "can be prepared and adopted before or at the same time as an emerging Local Plan" (as per para 4.16 above). I have noted the additional information prepared by Maidstone Borough Council and Staplehurst Parish Council. I draw particular reference to the Borough Council's statement that "the Screening Report makes independent judgements concerning the need for a SEA and likely significant effects on the environment based on a range of local factors including the scale of housing development and other proposals and policies in the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan; the spatial

extent of the effects of the plan; the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected by the plan and certainly does not rely on the SEA for the emerging Maidstone Local Plan 2014.” Furthermore, I note the Parish Council’s comments that it has sought, throughout the preparation of the plan, to work collaboratively with the Borough Council on emerging Local Plan development allocations in the plan area, notably the sites at Hen and Duckhurst Farm to the north-west of the village, and Fishers Farm to the north-east.

4.23 Taking all documents into consideration, including the representations submitted to the plan, I conclude that the Screening Opinion for the plan is robust, has been based on the correct methodology for the SEA process and has made an accurate assessment of the likely significant environmental effects arising from the plan’s policies and proposals. I am satisfied that it has been undertaken separately from the equivalent SEA process for the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan. I have also taken into account the responses made to the Screening Opinion by the statutory consultees, none of which request that the plan be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment and/or a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

4.24 Accordingly, from all that I have seen on this issue, I accept the conclusion (set out at Section 7 of the Screening Opinion report) that a SEA and HRA is not required for the plan. Whilst I am aware of the preliminary concerns raised in the Interim Report, I have reached this view from my own independent scrutiny of the evidence as the appointed examiner. I disagree with the concerns expressed in the Interim Report, and I have therefore disregarded those concerns in reaching my conclusions, as set out in this report, on the examination of the plan.

(ii) Habitats Regulations Assessment

4.25 As noted above, and having considered the Screening Opinion report and particularly the response of Natural England, I am satisfied that the plan does not need a HRA. There are no designated European sites or European Offshore Marine Sites within the plan area, the nearest sites being the North Downs Woodlands SAC to the west of Staplehurst and Queendown Warren SAC to the north of Maidstone, and I agree with the assessment set out in the Screening Opinion that there will be no significant effects upon those areas arising from developments proposed in the plan.

4.26 In conclusion on this main issue, I therefore consider that the plan is compatible with the relevant EU obligations. The additional Basic Condition in Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations is also met. I am further mindful that the PPG at ID: 11-031-20150209 establishes that the ultimate responsibility of determining whether a draft neighbourhood plan meets EU obligations is placed on the local authority, and from

examination of the documentation I have no reason to disagree with Maidstone Borough Council's assessment on this issue.

Specific Issues of Compliance of Plan Policies

4.27 I turn now to consider detailed matters relating to the drafting of the planning policies in the plan. In addressing this issue, I have taken into account the Borough Council's view that there are certain inconsistencies with saved Policies ENV28, ENV44, ENV45, ED2, R1, R2 and R10 of the adopted Local Plan, together with other representations concerning the policies in the plan.

Sections 1- 3 of the Plan

4.28 Sections 1 (Maintaining And Enhancing The Village Character), 2 (Planning For The Future) and 3 (Meeting The Conditions) of the plan describe the aims and ambitions of the plan, the context for its preparation and how it seeks to meet the Basic Conditions. These sections of the plan are generally in the form of a narrative, supported by photographic images and diagrams. Nothing in each of these sections is, in my assessment, either controversial or would prevent the plan meeting the Basic Conditions.

Parish-wide Policies PW1-PW4

4.29 Policy PW1 – I am not satisfied that this policy is appropriately drafted as an effective planning policy, and that it presently takes the form of a statement of intent. In this context, and in the case of other policies in the plan, I consider that it is insufficiently clear regarding its land use planning purposes and therefore failing to be in compliance with national guidance as set out in the PPG. The plan itself notes that Policy PW1 will act as a "hook" or a starting point for a series of infrastructure projects to be developed further. These projects are listed at paragraphs 7.10-7.16 of the plan and include, for example, investment in the primary school and rationalisation of parking provision in the village heart. However, in order to meet the Basic Condition of having regard to national policies and advice contained in the guidance issued by the Secretary of State, I recommend as a modification that the policy should be redrafted as follows:

"POLICY PW1 PROPOSALS FOR NEW AND IMPROVED COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES IN THE PLAN AREA, INCLUDING THE PROJECTS LISTED AT PARAGRAPHS 7.10-7.16, WILL BE SUPPORTED SUBJECT TO THOSE PROPOSALS MEETING THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS PLAN AND BEING COMPATIBLE WITH OTHER PLANNING POLICIES IN THE PLAN". (PM1)

- 4.30 Policy PW2 – The Borough Council consider that this policy, which addresses development in the countryside beyond the extended village envelope, is not in general conformity with Local Plan Policies ENV28, ENV44 and ENV45 and would in my view preclude the operation of those policies. Whilst I appreciate that the policy as drafted is quite restrictive, and could possibly preclude development that is entirely appropriate for a rural area, I also recognise the plan’s desire to restrict new development in the countryside, and to protect and enhance the natural environment. However, as drafted I consider that the policy fails to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. I therefore recommend as a modification that the policy should be deleted in its current form, and that it be replaced as follows:

“POLICY PW2 PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BEYOND THE EXTENDED VILLAGE ENVELOPE WILL BE ASSESSED IN TERMS OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT UPON THE VISUAL SETTING AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, THE POTENTIAL IMPACT UPON THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE AREA AND OTHER RELEVANT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS, SUCH AS THE IMPACT OF TRAFFIC AND NOISE. PROPOSALS WHICH FAIL TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THESE IMPACTS CAN BE SATISFACTORILY ADDRESSED WILL NOT BE SUPPORTED”. (PM2)

- 4.31 Policies PW3 and PW4 – I do not consider that any modifications to these policies are necessary. They have due regard to national policy, noting in particular the references to the NPPF in the supporting text to Policy PW4.

Community Theme Policies C1-C6

- 4.32 There are six policies in this section of the plan, which address various aspects of the community infrastructure in the plan area. In assessing the drafting of these policies, I am concerned that they potentially embrace elements that fall beyond the scope of land use policies, and that they encompass the provision and quality of services within the facilities. Service provision is not a direct land use consideration, often being the responsibility of providers, such as Kent County Council, under other legislation, but the development of new and improved facilities is clearly a land use function. Therefore, in order that these policies are directly concerned with the development and use of land, I recommend a series of modifications, as set out below.

- 4.33 Policy C1 – I consider that this policy should be redrafted as follows:

POLICY C1 – “MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING, INCLUDING ITS EXTENSION IF NECESSARY, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY”. (PM3)

4.34 Policy C2 – I consider that this policy should be redrafted as follows:

POLICY C2 – “MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ITS FACILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR EXTENSION IF NECESSARY, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY”. (PM4)

4.35 Policy C3 – I consider that this policy should be redrafted, as follows:

POLICY C3 - “MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE YOUTH CLUB BUILDING AND ITS FACILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR EXTENSION IF NECESSARY, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY”. (PM5)

4.36 Policy C4 – I consider that this policy should be redrafted as follows:

POLICY C4 - “MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE HEALTH CENTRE BUILDING AND ITS FACILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR EXTENSION IF NECESSARY, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY”. (PM6)

4.37 Policy C5 – I consider that this policy should be redrafted as follows:

POLICY C5 – “MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE JUBILEE FIELD SPORTS AND RECREATION SITE, INCLUDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND IMPROVED FACILITIES AT THE SITE”. (PM7)

4.38 Policy C6 – I consider that this policy should be redrafted as follows:

POLICY C6 – “SUPPORT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLAGE CENTRE SITE, RETAINING IMPORTANT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF THE EXISTING BUILDING IF APPROPRIATE, TO PROVIDE NEW AND IMPROVED COMMUNITY CENTRE FACILITIES”. (PM8)

4.39 I do not consider that any modifications are necessary to the supporting text of these policies to meet the Basic Conditions. The text helpfully articulates the vision and objectives of the plan for each of the above-mentioned facilities to the necessary level of detail.

Access and Movement Theme

4.40 There are no land use policies under this theme, and the plan lists a series of objectives for improving traffic circulation, footpaths, cycleways and public transport across the plan area. This is the correct approach, in my assessment, as the statutory responsibility for the provision of highways and transportation infrastructure largely rests with other bodies such as Kent County Council, under other legislation. Accordingly, I do not recommend any modifications to this section of the plan.

Village Heart Theme Policy VH1

- 4.41 This policy reflects the objectives of the plan to strengthen the focal centre of the village, which is at the centre of the High Street, and contains the Village Centre, the Public Library, the Health Centre, the Primary School and a parade of shops. The policy is supported by illustrative material showing how this focal point could be improved. After my consideration of this section of the plan, I recommend no modifications to the supporting text of the policy, but I do recommend a modification to the text of the policy to ensure that its land use purpose is made clear, as follows:

POLICY VH1 – “SUPPORT THE RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE EXISTING RETAIL AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES IN THE VILLAGE HEART, INCLUDING IMPROVEMENTS WHERE NECESSARY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF USERS OF THOSE FACILITIES”. (PM9)

Gateways Theme Policy GW1

- 4.42 This policy reflects the objectives of the plan to improve the function and visual qualities of the land around the railway station and other approaches to village from the east, west and south. The policy is supported by illustrative material, including sketches and photographs showing how improvements could be made to those approaches.
- 4.43 Maidstone Borough Council consider that Policy GW1 and its supporting text is not in general conformity with Local Plan Policies ED2, R1, R2 and R10, in particular by not seeking to sufficiently protect the existing High Street Local Centre for retailing. I have also considered other representations, including those by landowners and other parties with interests in sites in the area.
- 4.44 During my site visit, I spent some time to make a detailed assessment of the area around the railway station. Bearing in mind that the railway station is a busy gateway to the village of Staplehurst, and other nearby villages, I do agree with the objectives of the plan that its surrounding environment would benefit considerably from improvements, and especially public realm improvements to the front of the station. I also consider that a decked car park to serve the railway station is a realistic way of reducing the amount of surface car parking in the area. There is an opportunity, in my assessment, to secure those improvements through the development of under-used land in the vicinity of the station, negotiated as part of any Section 106 agreements linked to any planning permissions granted within the area. Clearly, this approach will need the support of Maidstone Borough Council.
- 4.45 I consider that Policy GW1 does not fully comply with the Basic Condition to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and I therefore recommend as a modification that the policy be redrafted as follows:

POLICY GW1 – “THE REDEVELOPMENT OF SITES IN THE RAILWAY STATION AREA WILL BE SUPPORTED, WHERE SUCH PROPOSALS CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY WOULD LEAD TO IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC REALM IN THE AREA AND ENHANCE THE VISUAL APPROACH TO THE VILLAGE FROM THE NORTH. PROPOSALS FOR NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING ANY RETAIL FLOORSPACE, WILL BE ASSESSED IN TERMS OF ANY POTENTIAL IMPACT UPON EXISTING RETAIL PROVISION IN THE HIGH STREET LOCAL CENTRE”. (PM10)

Edges Theme Policy E1

- 4.46 This policy reflects the plan’s objective to identify and strengthen green edges to the village of Staplehurst, and to encourage public access to the countryside beyond. The policy is directed at ensuring that all new development sites on the edge of the village should integrate positive planting and recreational routes along their boundaries to help define a long term edge to the village.
- 4.47 I am satisfied that the policy, as drafted, reflects the objectives of the plan, and I make no recommendations to modify the policy. However, as an optional modification the interpretation of this policy by developers, residents and other interested parties could be helped by the inclusion of a sketch diagram, similar to those included within the Housing Theme, to illustrate how a green edge could be strengthened. I do not consider that this policy should be used to interpret or designate a defined development boundary for the village of Staplehurst. I have examined the plan and this policy on the basis of its theme of strengthening specific green edges and to encourage public access to the countryside beyond, as noted above.

Housing Theme Policies H1-H6

- 4.48 The Housing Theme in the plan seeks to ensure that the mix and tenure of new housing responds to local needs, whilst also being designed to reflect the local landscape and village setting. I have assessed each of the policies in this Theme, together with the representations made in respect of the policies and supporting text.
- 4.49 Policy H1 – In my assessment of this policy, I have also noted the representation which states that the policy has failed to take sufficient regard to paragraphs 59 and 60 of the NPPF. In my view, the policy has regard to national policy and it does not seek to impose design standards or styles. In this context, I note paragraph 13.10 states that “Policy H1 does not exclude innovation or modern and contemporary architecture”. I recommend no modifications to this policy.
- 4.50 Policy H2 – As drafted, this policy is unclear particularly in its use of the phrase “...fit for modern living”. The house-building industry must comply

with the Building Regulations, which are regularly updated to reflect technical advances. It is also unrealistic, as stated in paragraph 13.12, to require all new housing to meet "Lifetime Homes" standards, and the normal expectation is that a proportion of new housing should meet those standards. I consider that this policy, and parts of its supporting text are too onerous, having regard to national policy and guidance, and should be redrafted with the following recommended modifications:

POLICY H2 – "NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD INCORPORATE, WHERE POSSIBLE, DESIGN FEATURES TO PROMOTE ENERGY AND WATER EFFICIENCY, ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE ELDERLY AND THOSE WITH RESTRICTED MOBILITY AND FLEXIBLE SPACES THAT WOULD SUPPORT WORKING FROM HOME".

Paragraph 13.11 – delete the words "requires all" in the 1st line, and replace with "encourages".

Paragraph 13.11 – delete the phrase "must all be considered" in the 7th line, and replace with "will be encouraged".

Paragraph 13.12 – delete the paragraph, and replace with "New housing should seek to promote the efficient use of water and energy, and accessibility for the elderly and those with restricted mobility. Other features, including flexible internal space to support working from home, will be encouraged". (PM11)

- 4.51 Policy H3 – I consider that the policy as drafted is satisfactory, but that parts of the supporting text should be modified to better reflect national and local policy for new housing, as follows:

Paragraph 13.13 – delete the second sentence.

Paragraph 13.15 – delete the word "must" in the 1st line, and replace with "should".

Paragraph 13.15 – delete the word "must" in the 4th line, and replace with "should". (PM12)

- 4.52 Policy H4 – this policy specifically addresses the proposed development of up to 250 dwellings at the Hen and Duckhurst Farm site to the north-west of the village. I have considered the representations submitted by the parties promoting the development of this site, and in particular to the concerns expressed regarding the illustrative masterplan shown on page 52 of the plan, together with other representations by other parties including the Kent Wildlife Trust. I also note the concerns expressed by Southern Water in relation to this policy, in that it does not comply fully with national policy and guidance.

- 4.53 In my overall assessment, I consider that Policy H4 does requires two modifications in order to meet the Basic Condition requirement to have regard to national policies and advice, and accordingly I therefore recommend the following modifications:

POLICY H4

Amend criterion 5) to read as below:

“5) The masterplan should incorporate a green infrastructure strategy, which designates sufficient space within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS implementation plan”.

Add additional criterion 8) as below:

“8) The development makes provision for an adequate sewerage connection and for the protection of existing sewers on the site or their diversion, in accordance with the requirements of Southern Water.” (PM13)

- 4.54 I have considered the supporting text, and am satisfied that it provides a reasoned justification for the various key requirements of the policy. However, as an informative, and having taken note of the representations submitted, I do consider that the text would benefit from a reference to the fact that the preservation of the settings of the Grade II Listed Buildings at Hen and Duckhurst Farm is an important priority of Maidstone Borough Council. With regard to the illustrative masterplan on page 52 of the plan, I am clear that, as stated, “it is a preliminary design sketch only”, and reflects the views and comments received during the earlier stages of the preparation of this plan. I note that the prospective developers have prepared a different, and more recent, masterplan. It is not my role as examiner to substitute this more recent masterplan into the neighbourhood plan, and would expect this to be the subject of future consultation as part of the planning application process for the site. I also note that Maidstone Borough Council, as local planning authority, has not drawn my attention to any issues or concerns with Policy H4 and its supporting material.
- 4.55 Policy H5 – this policy specifically addresses the proposed development of up to 400 dwellings at the Fishers Farm site to the north-east of the village. The policy is drafted and presented in a very similar style to Policy H4, again with a supporting illustrative masterplan. I have considered the representations submitted by the parties promoting the development of the site, together with other representations concerning the site, again including concerns expressed by Southern Water regarding compliance with national policy and guidance.

- 4.56 In my assessment, I consider that three modifications are necessary to the text of Policy H5 in order to meet the Basic Condition requirement to have regard to national policies and advice, and accordingly I therefore recommend the following modifications:

POLICY H5

Amend criterion 4) to read as below:

"4) The masterplan should include a green infrastructure strategy, which designates sufficient space within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS implementation plan. Space should also be designated for informal recreation and children's play as part of the green infrastructure strategy."

Add additional criteria 7) and 8) as follows:

"7) The development makes provision for an adequate sewerage connection and for the protection of existing sewers on the site or their diversion, in accordance with the requirements of Southern Water."

"8) The layout of the proposed development should be designated to take into account the proximity of the Staplehurst Wastewater Treatment Works to the north of the site, in order to safeguard residential amenities from potential smell and pollution." (PM14)

- 4.57 I have considered the supporting text to this policy, and am satisfied that no modifications are needed to that text which meets the requirements of the Basic Conditions.
- 4.58 Policy H6 – this policy relates to land at Lodge Road, and includes the existing established employment area to the west of the railway station, together with further land that lies east of the residential allocation at Hen and Duckhurst Farm (see Policy H4). The plan promotes the potential extension of the Lodge Road employment area by a possible mixed-use residential and employment area, which could be linked in due course to the residential development at Hen and Duckhurst Farm. The policy is again supported by an illustrative sketch layout. The quantum of possible new employment floorspace and residential units is not stated in the plan (although a representation on behalf of the landowner's states in the region of 7,700 sq.m. of employment floorspace and 100 dwellings).
- 4.59 I have considered the representations submitted in respect of this policy, and notably those on behalf of the landowners. I note that there is a conflict regarding the preferred use of this land between the Neighbourhood Plan and the adopted Local Plan Policy ED2 (Retention of Employment Sites). The Borough Council state that Policy H6 is not in

general conformity with the adopted Local Plan for that reason. The adopted Local Plan dates from 2000, and pre-dates the decision to allocate land at Hen and Duckhurst Farm for residential development.

- 4.60 In my assessment, there is a realistic opportunity to provide a link between the Hen and Duckhurst Farm site and the Lodge Road area, and this would be of significant benefit for people travelling to/from the railway station. I also consider that it is realistic to consider that the land covered by Policy H6 does represent a good opportunity to secure a mixed-use development possibly with an emphasis on flexible Class B1 floorspace, suitable for start-up and small businesses. Accordingly, as it still allows for employment usage, I do not recommend any modifications to Policy H6 or its supporting text, which I consider to be satisfactory, and based upon a key objective of the Plan (Objective 12).
- 4.61 I turn now to consider a representation which states that a further Housing Policy should be included in the plan concerning Land North of Henhurst Farm. It is my understanding that this site is included within the emerging Local Plan as a proposed Housing allocation (Ref. H1 (51)) for approximately 60 dwellings. It is the case that to satisfy the Basic Conditions, the plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan. As I have already noted elsewhere in this report, the development plan in this case is the adopted Maidstone Borough Local Plan, 2000 and its saved policies, and not the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031. Therefore, whilst the Land North of Henhurst Farm is identified in the emerging Local Plan, I cannot consider it in the context of the adopted development plan. I note that the plan makes no reference to the emerging site allocation, and that Maidstone Borough Council has not drawn it to my attention as an issue within their representations to the neighbourhood plan. It is therefore a matter which will need to be addressed by the appointed Inspector examining the submitted Local Plan. Should the allocation be approved as part of that examination, it would be sensible for it to be addressed in a future review of the Neighbourhood Plan. Guidance in this regard has recently been updated (19 May 2016) in the PPG at ID: 41-084-20160519 to ID: 41-086-20160519.

Suggested Corrections

- 4.62 I have noted a small number of minor errors in the Plan, which would benefit from correction as follows:
- Paragraph 1.2 – 2nd line: should read “...A SET OF PLANNING **POLICIES**”
- Paragraph 3.2 – 3rd line: should read “Localism Act **2011**...”
- Paragraph 3.3 - 1st line: should read “..production **of** neighbourhood plans..”
- Paragraph 3.28 – 6th line: should read “in the **Neighbourhood Planning**”

Paragraph 13.11 – delete the word “waster” in the 6th line, and replace with “**waste**”.

Paragraph 13.14 – insert the word “**the**” before “adopted” in the 8th line.

Paragraph 13.15 – delete the word “aging” in the 2nd line, and replace with “**ageing**”

- 4.63 There is also an erroneous reference in paragraph 7.2 to three parish-wide policies. Given the relevant policies are PW1 - PW4, paragraph 7.2 should be revised to state that, “The neighbourhood plan therefore contains **four** overarching parish-wide policies...”, and that paragraph 7.3 should be revised to state, “These **four** parish-wide policies...”. The parish-wide policies are intended to be relevant to the whole of the parish and the corresponding plan area, and apply to all proposed developments. They are therefore of considerable importance, and will be used to assess planning applications.
- 4.64 These are put forward as suggested corrections only and do not constitute plan modifications.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. It has focused on the main issues set out and described in Section 4 of this report, and during my assessment I have had regard to all the representations that were made during the Regulation 16 consultation stage, and to the documents and evidence submitted as part of the submission of the plan.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and supporting text to ensure the plan meets fully all the relevant legal requirements and Basic Conditions. Subject to these modifications, I consider that that the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan complies with the legal requirements set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 and I therefore recommend that the plan, once modified, should proceed to a Referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the Referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the plan relates. The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan as modified has no policy or proposals

which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the Referendum to extend beyond the plan boundary.

- 5.4 I therefore consider that the boundary for the purposes of a future referendum on the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan shall be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan area for the plan, as approved by Maidstone Borough Council on 14 January, 2013.
- 5.5 Accordingly, I therefore recommend to Maidstone Borough Council that, subject to the modifications proposed in this report, the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan can proceed to a referendum.
- 5.6 It is evident that a considerable amount of time and effort has been committed to the development and production of this plan and I commend all those who have been involved. It should prove to be a useful tool for future planning and change in Staplehurst over the coming years.

Derek Stebbing

Derek Stebbing
Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed Modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modifications
PM1	25	POLICY PW1: PROPOSALS FOR NEW AND IMPROVED COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES IN THE PLAN AREA, INCLUDING THE PROJECTS LISTED AT PARAGRAPHS 7.10-7.16, WILL BE SUPPORTED SUBJECT TO THOSE PROPOSALS MEETING THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS PLAN AND BEING COMPATIBLE WITH OTHER PLANNING POLICIES IN THE PLAN.
PM2	26	POLICY PW2: PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BEYOND THE EXTENDED VILLAGE ENVELOPE WILL BE ASSESSED IN TERMS OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT UPON THE VISUAL SETTING AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, THE POTENTIAL IMPACT UPON THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE AREA AND OTHER RELEVANT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS, SUCH AS THE IMPACT OF TRAFFIC AND NOISE. PROPOSALS WHICH FAIL TO DEMONSTRATE THESE IMPACTS CAN BE SATISFACTORILY ADDRESSED WILL NOT BE SUPPORTED.
PM3	29	POLICY C1: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING, INCLUDING ITS EXTENSION IF NECESSARY, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.
PM4	30	POLICY C2: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ITS FACILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR EXTENSION, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.
PM5	30	POLICY C3: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE YOUTH CLUB BUILDING AND ITS FACILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR EXTENSION IF NECESSARY, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.
PM6	31	POLICY C4: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE HEALTH CENTRE BUILDING AND ITS

		FACILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR EXTENSION IF NECESSARY, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.
PM7	31	POLICY C5: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE JUBILEE FIELD SPORTS AND RECREATION SITE, INCLUDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND IMPROVED FACILITIES AT THE SITE.
PM8	32	POLICY C6: SUPPORT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLAGE CENTRE SITE, RETAINING IMPORTANT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF THE EXISTING BUILDING IF APPROPRIATE, TO PROVIDE NEW AND IMPROVED COMMUNITY CENTRE FACILITIES.
PM9	39	POLICY VH1: SUPPORT THE RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE EXISTING RETAIL AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES IN THE VILLAGE HEART, INCLUDING IMPROVEMENTS WHERE NECESSARY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF USERS OF THOSE FACILITIES.
PM10	42	POLICY GW1: THE REDEVELOPMENT OF SITES IN THE RAILWAY STATION AREA WILL BE SUPPORTED, WHERE SUCH PROPOSALS CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY WOULD LEAD TO IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC REALM IN THE AREA AND ENHANCE THE VISUAL APPROACH TO THE VILLAGE FROM THE NORTH. PROPOSALS FOR NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING ANY RETAIL FLOORSPACE, WILL BE ASSESSED IN TERMS OF ANY POTENTIAL IMPACT UPON EXISTING RETAIL PROVISION IN THE HIGH STREET LOCAL CENTRE.
PM11	49	POLICY H2: NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD INCORPORATE, WHERE POSSIBLE, DESIGN FEATURES TO PROMOTE ENERGY AND WATER EFFICIENCY, ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE ELDERLY AND THOSE WITH RESTRICTED MOBILITY AND FLEXIBLE SPACES THAT WOULD SUPPORT WORKING FROM HOME.

		<p>Paragraph 13.11 – delete the words “requires all” in the 1st line, and replace with “encourages”.</p> <p>Paragraph 13.11 – delete the phrase “must all be considered” in the 7th line, and replace with “will be encouraged”.</p> <p>Paragraph 13.12 – delete the paragraph, and replace with “New housing should seek to promote the efficient use of water and energy, and accessibility for the elderly and those with restricted mobility. Other features, including flexible internal space to support working from home, will be encouraged”.</p>
PM12	49	<p>Paragraph 13.13 – delete the second sentence.</p> <p>Paragraph 13.15 – delete the word “must” in the 1st line, and replace with “should”.</p> <p>Paragraph 13.15 – delete the word “must” in the 4th line, and replace with “should”.</p>
PM13	50	<p>POLICY H4: Amend criterion 5) to read as below: “5) The masterplan should incorporate a green infrastructure strategy, which designates sufficient space within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS implementation plan.”</p> <p>Add additional criterion 8) as below: “8) The development makes provision for an adequate sewerage connection and for the protection of existing sewers on the site or their diversion, in accordance with the requirements of Southern Water.”</p>
PM14	53 & 54	<p>POLICY H5: Amend criterion 4) to read as below: “4) The masterplan should include a green infrastructure strategy, which designates sufficient space within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological</p>

		<p>requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS implementation plan. Space should also be designated for informal recreation and children’s play as part of the green infrastructure strategy.”</p> <p>Add additional criteria 7) and 8) as follows: “7) The development makes provision for an adequate sewerage connection and for the protection of existing sewers on the site or their diversion, in accordance with the requirements of Southern Water.” “8) The layout of the proposed development should be designated to take into account the proximity of the Staplehurst Wastewater Treatment works to the north of the site, in order to safeguard residential amenities from potential smell and pollution.”</p>
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Examiner’s suggested optional modification for clarity

Edges Theme Policy E1: the interpretation of this policy by developers, residents and other interested parties could be helped by the inclusion of a sketch diagram, similar to those included within the Housing Theme, to illustrate how a green edge could be strengthened.

Suggested Corrections

Paragraph 1.2 – 2nd line: should read “...A SET OF PLANNING POLICIES”

Paragraph 3.2 – 3rd line: should read “Localism Act 2011...”

Paragraph 3.3 - 1st line: should read “..production of neighbourhood plans..”

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STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

SUBMISSION PLAN 2015 — 2031
JULY 2015

**Staplehurst
Parish
Council**

**STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
REGULATION 16 (SUBMISSION PLAN)**
July 2015



This plan has been prepared by:

**Staplehurst Parish Council, The Parish Office, Village
Centre, High Street, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BJ.**

Digital copies of this document can be downloaded from:

**www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk
www.maidstone.gov.uk**



Please send all comments and responses to:

**Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House,
King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ.**

BUILDING A STAPLEHURST FIT FOR THE FUTURE PLAN PERIOD 2015 — 2031





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**Richard Eastham | FERIA Urbanism | www.feria-urbanism.eu
+ 44 (0) 7816 299 909 | + 44 (0) 1202 548 676**

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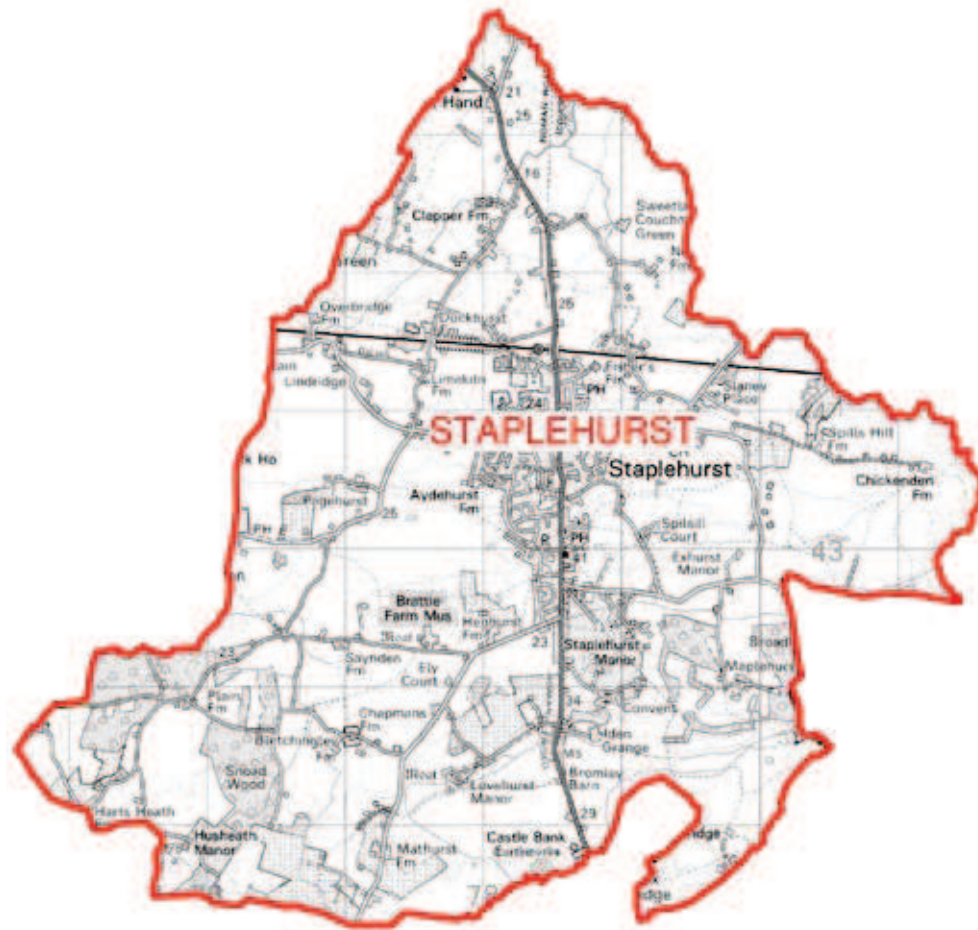
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Next Steps



MAINTAINING + ENHANCING THE VILLAGE CHARACTER



Neighbourhood Plan Boundary This boundary is contiguous with the parish boundary and therefore the plan policies apply to the whole parish. The neighbourhood plan boundary was formally approved by Maidstone Borough Council 14th January 2013.

1.1 THIS SUBMISSION PLAN HAS BEEN PREPARED BY STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL ON BEHALF OF THOSE THAT LIVE AND WORK WITHIN THE PARISH OF STAPLEHURST.

1.2 THE PLAN SETS OUT A VISION FOR THE PARISH THROUGH UNTIL 2031 AND IS SUPPORTED BY A SET OF PLANNING POLICES AND A SERIES OF SPECIFIC PROJECTS. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING REGULATIONS, THIS PLAN HAS BEEN PREPARED THROUGH EXTENSIVE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION.

1.3 The community engagement process has informed the plan's primary aims and ambitions. The plan must therefore:

- Coordinate all new development proposals
- As far as is possible, provide certainty regarding the future of the parish
- Describe the necessary additional community infrastructure required to support a growing village
- Strengthen and enhance the historic village heart
- Improve choice over access and movement
- Introduce high quality architecture
- Ensure the feel of a village community is retained
- Support more retail opportunities
- Support continued investment in education
- Make walking and cycling easier and safer
- Create a happy and fulfilling place.

1.4 This neighbourhood plan comprises specific planning policies and objectives, all grouped under six policy themes. These are all supported by a strategic village framework, indicating how new development needs to integrate with the existing village. This plan has all has been informed by a series of distinct public engagement events, each using a wide range of different public consultation techniques.



Residents work together to decide how best to describe their community and their place.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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2.1 Staplehurst Parish Council recognises the need to plan for the future. There is much value in preparing plans and policies that anticipate changes to village life to help ensure an appropriate and coordinated response. Change is inevitable but how the village responds to this change is what matters.

2.2 This neighbourhood plan represents the first opportunity in the history of Staplehurst for the community to create a legally binding, statutory plan that explains how new developments must integrate with the existing village; sets out the expected quality of design for new development and also links housing growth to investment in new village infrastructure, including improved community facilities.

ALL PLACES ARE EITHER GROWING OR DECLINING. NOTHING STAYS THE SAME.

2.3 There has been a settlement near All Saints church, Staplehurst since about 1000 AD and the village lies on the Roman Road from Maidstone to Hastings, now the A229. The road between Marden and Headcorn crosses the A229 in the centre to create a crossroads, known as Cuckold's Corner.

2.4 Most development was confined to areas along this road until a number of residential areas were built, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s and to the east and west of the main A229 road. The parish covers an extensive area of countryside, mostly devoted to farming and industries related to agriculture, and there is a significant rural population in the parish, including traveller communities.

2.5 Although the railway station is next to the A229, it is some distance from the church so that the built up area of the village now extends nearly two kilometres from the station in the north to just south of Pinnock Lane. The station serves a wider catchment than just the parish and much of the vehicle traffic heading to the station brings people that live outside the parish. Although many people travel out of the parish to work (and a smaller number commute in), the community has large areas of dedicated employment land in the north west of the village adjacent to the station and sustains a large number of voluntary organisations providing a diverse range of activities and services. In addition to children growing up in the village, there are also a significant number of retired people, many living in retirement and care homes.



These images of Station Road (left) and Cuckold's Corner (right) reveal the significant changes that the village has undergone in the last century.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

2.6 The community engagement event in September 2013 revealed that a primary concern of the community was regarding the impact of housing growth on the character of the village. This reflected the findings of the Staplehurst Housing Survey 2010 (report by Tessa O’Sullivan, Rural Housing Enabler with support from Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group and Maidstone Borough Council) that highlighted a widespread concern about new developments within the parish. Key findings included:

- 454 (64%) respondents indicated that they could not support more housing development in Staplehurst
- 601 (85%) respondents felt that the current infrastructure would not support more housing, with the most frequent comments relating to access and movement, and retail and the inadequacies of both.

2.7 Of the respondents who said they would support more development, 157 (22%) felt that affordable housing for people with a connection to the parish was needed.



Village Visioning Event September 2013

2.8 Further analysis found that the need for affordable housing was fairly evenly spread between single people, couples and families.

2.9 Given this background research, the neighbourhood plan seeks to directly address the deficiencies in infrastructure (especially foul and surface water drainage, community facilities, retail, access and movement) and the need for some affordable housing to meet specific needs.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN VISION

2.10 In response to this anxiety about new development in the village, combined with a recognition that some new affordable housing is desirable, the neighbourhood plan has been prepared with the express vision of:

1. Maintaining and enhancing the rural character of Staplehurst village, its immediate setting and the wider parish.
2. Coordinating all new development so that it contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and essential services for all members of the community.
3. Creating a robust yet flexible access and movement network appropriate for all modes of travel and for current and future populations.
4. Using land and resources efficiently so that new developments have a reduced demand for energy and move towards carbon neutrality.
5. Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the whole built environment and the wider countryside.
6. Enforcing the quality of new development through use of materials, details and inclusive design that responds to context.
7. Ensuring that land made available for development will be developed in such a way as to improve people’s quality of life, for both new and existing residents.
8. Delivering the community infrastructure necessary to support a growing village in the 21st Century.

2.11 Finally, the neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with Maidstone Borough Council’s adopted Local Plan (2000) and its emerging Local Plan, as represented by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 — without such general conformity the neighbourhood plan cannot be adopted as a statutory planning document.



Effective community consultation is a key part of meeting the basic conditions necessary for a robust neighbourhood plan.

MEETING THE CONDITIONS

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3.1 This neighbourhood plan must meet certain basic conditions before they can come into force. It will be checked by the local planning authority and be tested by independent examination before going to referendum. The plan needs to accord with the Neighbourhood Plans (General) Regulations 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework and Maidstone Borough Council planning policies.

3.2 The neighbourhood plan does not simply repeat the local or national planning policies. The Localism Act 2012 enables communities to create a plan that reflects the needs of the local population and future residents. A collaborative approach, led by Staplehurst Parish Council and involving local residents and other interest groups, including developers and neighbouring communities, has created a plan that broadly reflects local aspirations.

GENERAL CONFORMITY

3.3 The planning context for the production neighbourhood plans are set out in the Localism Act 2011, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. For a neighbourhood plan to be approved, it must demonstrate that it:

- is in compliance with national planning policy as set out by the NPPF
- contributes to sustainable development
- is in general conformity with the spatial policies of the development plan for the local area
- is compatible with European policies
- reflects best practice in terms of quality urban design and sustainable planning principles.

3.4 The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan also:

- contains a mix of uses that meets the need of the local community
- has been developed through widespread local consultation
- has general support from the residents of Staplehurst
- has general support of the various land owners/developers on whose land new development is being proposed
- provides development that will add to the village without unnecessarily infringing upon protected countryside
- creates a welcoming environment for residents, tourists and business interests alike
- promotes sustainable development through a holistic approach to development in the village
- enhances pedestrian and cycle routes in the village
- encourages a strong village economy through extra retail and employment opportunities to support the local jobs and reduce the need to travel.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.5 This neighbourhood plan is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which has been taken into consideration at all stages of the plan's development.

3.6 Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the NPPF make clear that neighbourhood plans need to take the policies in the NPPF into account and that these policies are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, alongside local documents such as the Local Plan and neighbourhood plans.

3.7 Paragraph 16 of the NPPF states that neighbourhoods should develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development and that neighbourhoods plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.

3.8 Staplehurst Parish Council considers that this neighbourhood plan supports both of these objectives. The range of policies in this neighbourhood plan both addresses the strategic growth agenda in the Maidstone Local Plan and helps shape and support development in response to the local context.

3.9 Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that neighbourhood plans should include a policy on economic growth in the rural areas. This neighbourhood plan contains such a policy, PW1. Paragraph 58 of the NPPF requires neighbourhood plans to include policies that encourage good design in their areas and this is met through neighbourhood plan policies H1 and H2.

3.10 Paragraphs 150 — 157 of the NPPF set out how development plans should be aspirational but practical and should spatially address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This neighbourhood plan has been generated to address all of these aspects while remaining flexible in order to respond to change in the parish.



Three Day Design Forum October 2013

3.11 Paragraphs 183 — 185 of the NPPF provide some general guidance on the production of neighbourhood plans in addition to the requirements of paragraph 16. In particular, paragraph 184 makes it clear that “... neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than is set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies”.

3.12 This neighbourhood plan accepts the principle of development within the housing allocations as set out in the (Regulation 18) draft Local Plan and it is therefore considered to meet the objectives of paragraph 184 of the NPPF. It should also be noted that paragraph 185 of the NPPF states that once approved, the policies in the neighbourhood plan will take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood.

3.13 Staplehurst Parish Council acknowledges that there is no up to date and adopted Local Plan in place at Maidstone Borough Council. It therefore wishes to move quickly, but thoroughly, towards the adoption of this neighbourhood plan in order to give the community that lives and works in the parish the certainty and control it needs over its future.

SUSTAINABILITY

3.14 Paragraphs 7 and 14 of the NPPF identify the components of sustainable development, and how planning applications and Local Plans can meet these requirements. It is considered that the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan fills an economic, social and environmental role in planning positively to shape the future development and needs of the parish. In addition, the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the policies set out in the emerging Maidstone Local Plan. This neighbourhood plan has been produced with the requirements of paragraph 14 of the NPPF in mind.

3.15 The policies in the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan have been produced in general conformity with the strategic policies of the emerging Maidstone Local Plan. These Local Plan policies have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in line with the relevant European directives. The policies in the neighbourhood plan therefore supplement and help to implement these strategic policies. They are therefore considered sustainable in line with these regulations.

3.16 This neighbourhood plan is a sustainable plan that incorporates employment, key services and new facilities together with a range of access and movement options that help reduce the need to travel.

3.17 As part of the evidence base for the preparation of the neighbourhood plan, the parish council has undertaken a housing needs survey to understand local need to inform an appropriate mix of house types and tenures in Staplehurst. It has also held collaborative design and planning workshops to determine the most appropriate locations for new development that can contribute to the overall sustainability of the village while minimising any negative impact upon attractive areas of countryside.

RURAL SERVICE CENTRE

3.18 This neighbourhood plan positively supports development by accepting the village's strategic role as a designated Rural Service Centre (RSC). The parish council acknowledges that Policy SP3 in the draft Maidstone Borough Council (Regulation 18) Local Plan designates Staplehurst a Rural Service Centre — that is, a larger rural settlement deemed suitable by MBC for additional houses.

3.19 This neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the policy themes and growth agenda as set out by Maidstone Borough Council. In this respect, the parish council firmly believes it meets the general conformity test for neighbourhood planning with respect to the borough or district level planning policies.

3.20 Staplehurst Parish Council recognises the importance of new development and the significant role the village can play in accommodating this development as a designated Rural Service Centre. This neighbourhood plan gives the community in Staplehurst the control and confidence it needs to help it develop as a prosperous and attractive Kentish village.

SUPPORTING NEW DEVELOPMENT

3.21 This plan supports new development in a sustainable way. Development is located and designed so as to create a compact and balanced settlement that enhances connections across the village. This will help create a sustainable settlement that will connect residential neighbourhoods with services through the increased use of non-car modes of travel. The sites identified for development are informed by their immediate context. This is a direct response to paragraph 47 of the NPPF on delivering high quality homes in a rural environment; this plan identifies key sites in the village that reflect locations suitable for the long term success of the village.



This neighbourhood plan contains an assessment of the qualities that make Staplehurst special.

06 BEST PRACTICE IN RURAL DESIGN

3.22 To ensure that the design and layouts of new development are appropriate to the village, the plan encourages high quality design and sustainable planning based on an assessment of the positive qualities of the existing village. This plan seeks to integrate new development with the necessary social and physical infrastructure. Paragraphs 47 — 55 in the NPPF expect the delivery of high quality homes to match appropriate housing needs through sensitively designed new places. This plan indicates appropriate housing sites in the context of the wider village. In terms of design, a positive relationship between existing built areas and the new will be critical to the successful assimilation of new development.

3.23 The selection of the indicated development sites has been based on striking the right balance between the need for more housing and the protection of the countryside environment. Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states that new developments “... will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term”. The parish council considers this draft plan to be a long-term strategy that will enhance the village through high quality architectural form and layout.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

3.24 The parish council believes that this neighbourhood plan supports the needs of the wider community by addressing the social, economic and environmental aspects of village life. This has been expressed through the identification of new areas of housing, new retail opportunities, together with a sustainable access and movement network across the village. The specific policy themes within the plan will benefit all elements of the community.

EFFECTIVE LOCAL CONSULTATION

3.25 As set out in Section 14 (a) of the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations, consultation on the plan and the plan-making process must be brought to the attention of the people who live or work in the village. Staplehurst Parish Council has ensured that this is a plan that reflects local opinions and local needs. To ensure that public engagement and consultation were effective, input from the community has been sought at every stage and has been invaluable to the production of the plan. Throughout the process, members of the community have been able to shape discussions and form dialogues with fellow residents, with land owners and with other interest groups. The result has been that different groups have been able to find shared outcomes.

3.26 There has been a series of consultation and engagement events that have directly influenced the drafting of the plan. All consultation material relating to these events (e.g. slideshows, reports and posters) have been published online during the plan preparation.

3.27 Please see the accompanying Consultation Statement for full details on the consultation process undertaken as part of the preparation of this neighbourhood plan. Please see the accompanying Conditions Statements for more details on how the neighbourhood plan meets the required conditions.

BROAD LOCAL SUPPORT

3.28 From the outset, Staplehurst Parish Council has tried to ensure that a broad cross-section of the local community has been involved in the plan-making process. The consultation and engagement process has been open and transparent and interest groups such as land owners, local developers and school representatives have all been included in the process. All these groups are considered appropriate consultation bodies to include, as defined in the neighbourhood planning (General) Regulations Schedule 1.

3.29 This approach towards finding shared solutions to resolve issues in the village has the support from the various interest groups and from those on whose land development is being proposed. It is hoped that this support for the process will also translate into support for this draft plan.

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ESTABLISHING THE OVERALL VISION

3.30 The results of the local consultation and the parallel work to ensure the plan meets the basic conditions have been combined to establish an shared vision, bringing the plan in line with paragraph 183 of the NPPF. This vision is expressed in the form of eight key vision points. These points have structured the neighbourhood plan and informed the development of the individual policies and objectives.



These are the six policy themes that sit below a set of parish-wide planning policies. Together, they all ensure the plan can meet the vision and objectives.

HOW HAVE THE PLANNING POLICIES + OBJECTIVES BEEN INFORMED BY THE VISION?

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN VISION POINTS

PRINCIPAL POLICY THEMES DEVELOPED TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

1	Maintaining and enhancing the rural character of Staplehurst village, its immediate setting and the wider parish.	PW	C	AM	VH	E	GW	H
2	Coordinating all new development so that it contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and essential services for the whole community.	PW	C	AM	VH	E	GW	H
3	Creating a robust yet flexible access and movement network appropriate for all modes of travel and for current and future populations.	PW	AM	GW	H			
4	Using land and resources efficiently so that new developments have a reduced demand for energy and move towards carbon neutrality	PW	C	AM	GW	H		
5	Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the whole built environment and the wider countryside.	PW	C	VH	GW	H		
6	Enforcing the quality of new development through use of materials, details and inclusive design that responds to context.	PW	C	AM	VH	E	GW	H
7	Ensuring that land made available for development will be developed in such a way as to improve people's quality of life, for both new and existing residents.	PW	C	AM	VH	E	GW	H
8	Delivering the community infrastructure necessary to support a growing village in the 21 st Century.	PW	C	AM	VH	GW	H	

Policies + Objectives Table This table sets out how the planning policy themes of the neighbourhood plan link back to the eight vision points established through the consultation and engagement work. See pages 24 to 58 for a full description of each policy theme and the individual policies and objectives contained within.



Even historic places have been planned through deliberate decisions taken over the years, contributing to what is often seen as organic growth. This neighbourhood plan aims to continue this proven tradition of creating a planned settlement.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

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4.1 A critical role of the neighbourhood plan is to provide a coordinated vision for the future of the village. This will make sure that individual development sites contribute in an effective and appropriate way to an overall vision. Without such coordination there is a risk of fragmented or piecemeal development.

4.2 To better understand how new development should respond to the local context, an assessment of the village's activities, uses, street patterns, character and form has been undertaken, together with an appreciation of the landscape setting. This assessment is set out in a series of diagrams that help inform a strategic framework plan that will guide Staplehurst over the coming years.

LIFE + ACTIVITY

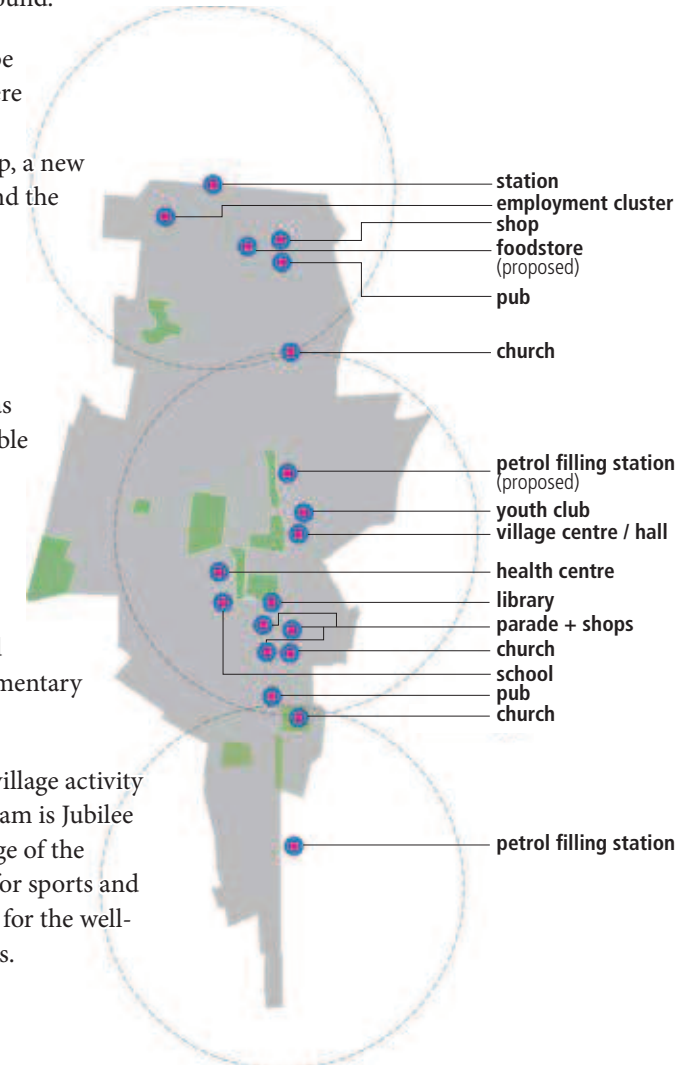
The essential village services and facilities

4.3 The distribution of the village's essential services and facilities is very much skewed towards the village heart, reflecting the historic origins of Staplehurst. This is where the Village Centre, youth club, health centre, parade of shops, school and three churches can be found.

4.4 Other services can be found to the north, where there is another pub, a local convenience shop, a new foodstore (proposed) and the railway station. To the south, there is a petrol filling station.

4.5 The village can therefore be described as comprising three walkable "neighbourhoods" (i.e. north, central and south), each of around one kilometre across. The plan seeks to further define these and ensure they are complementary with one another.

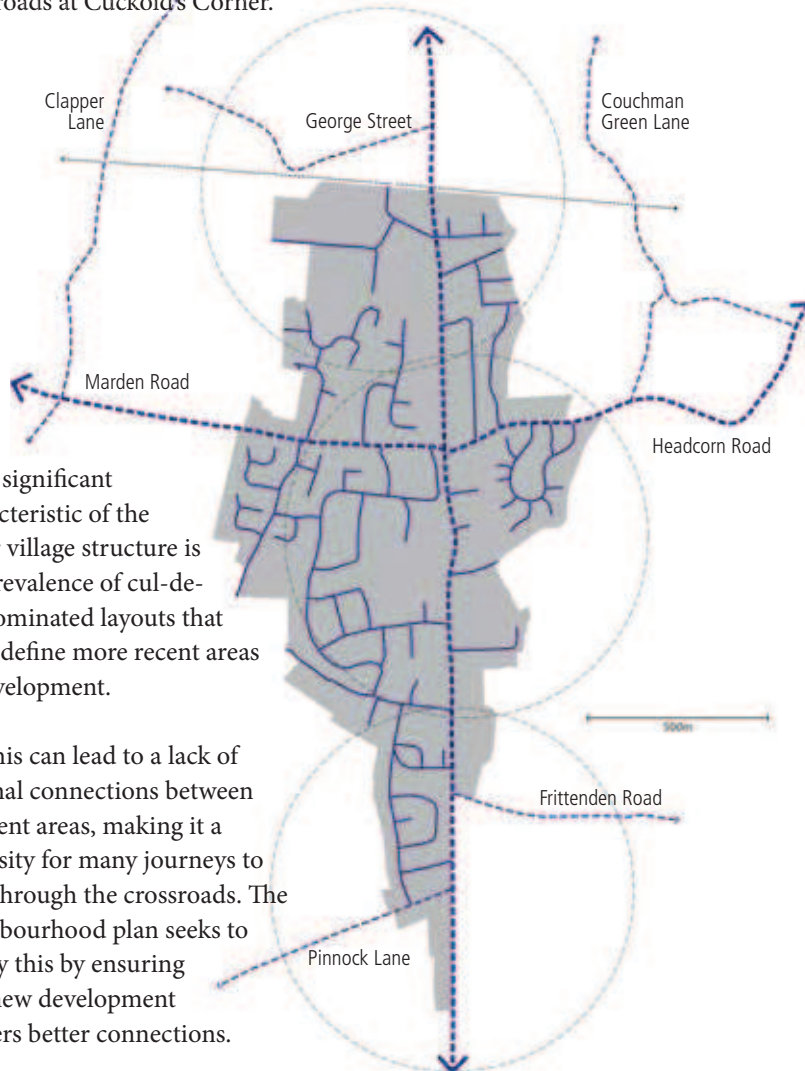
4.6 A vital location for village activity not shown on this diagram is Jubilee Field, on the eastern edge of the village. This is a centre for sports and recreation and essential for the well-being of village residents.



STREET STRUCTURE

The historic street pattern informs movement choices

4.7 The structure of the village is very much defined by its historic street pattern, formed around a crossroads at Cuckold's Corner.



4.8 A significant characteristic of the wider village structure is the prevalence of cul-de-sac dominated layouts that often define more recent areas of development.

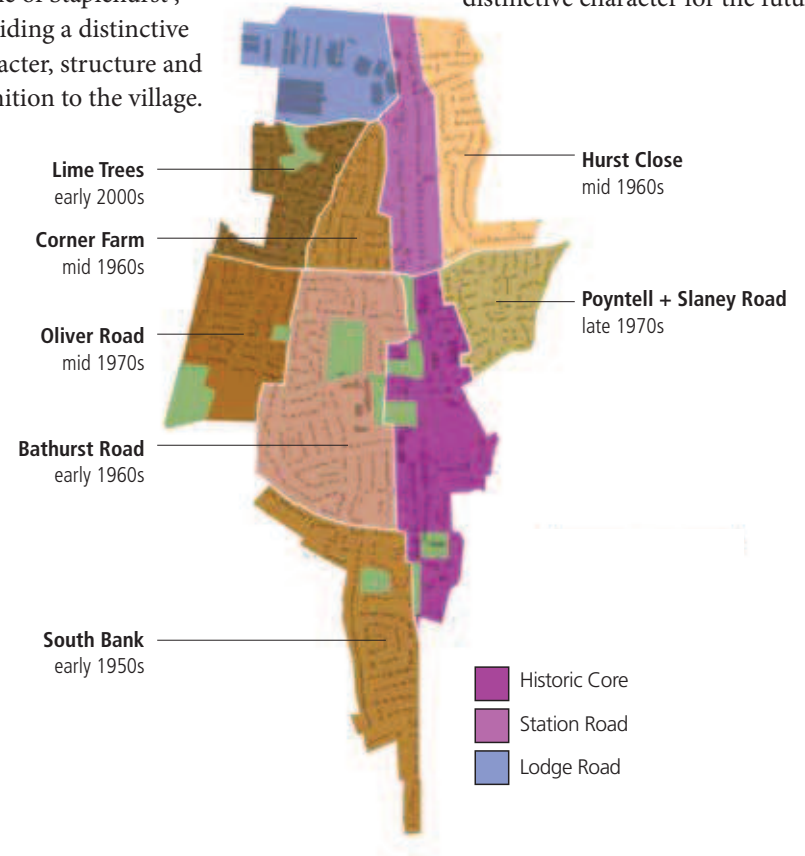
4.9 This can lead to a lack of internal connections between different areas, making it a necessity for many journeys to pass through the crossroads. The neighbourhood plan seeks to rectify this by ensuring that new development delivers better connections.

CHARACTER AREAS

The different land uses and building layouts

4.10 The historic heart of the village is located between the crossroads and the All Saints Church on top of the hill. To the north, lies the Station Road character area of brick villas fronting the road. These two areas contain most of the village's essential services and facilities and can be described as the "spine of Staplehurst", providing a distinctive character, structure and definition to the village.

4.11 Attached to this spine, are various areas of predominantly residential development. These are the neighbourhoods that provide good homes for the residents of Staplehurst. New developments need to be of a high quality design that will also add new residential and mixed-use areas of distinctive character for the future.



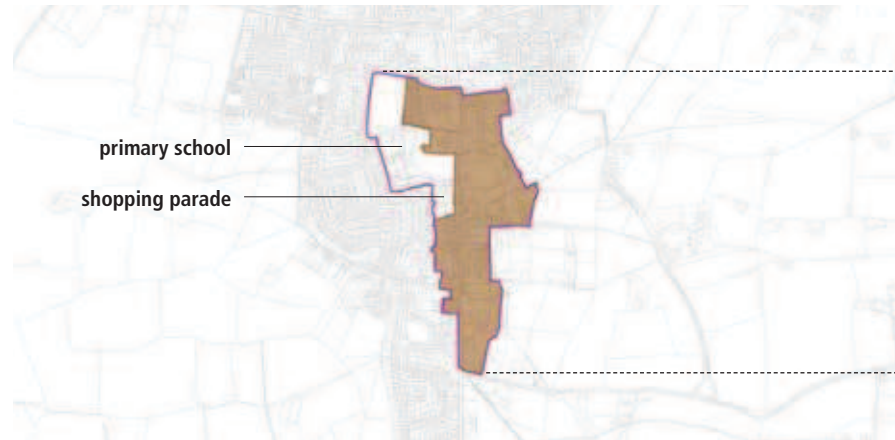
CONSERVATION AREA + VILLAGE HEART

The village core

4.12 There is widespread support from within the community for creating a stronger village heart. The cluster of uses in and around the High Street that support the social and community life of Staplehurst is vital for a growing village.

4.13 All ages and all activities can be found in this one part of Staplehurst. Primary school children and their parents, the elderly and teenagers. Football games, book reading, grocery shopping, pub meals and local Kentish beer. Taken together, these “people, places and activities” are what makes village life special. This village heart is defined by the purple boundary line shown below.

4.14 Maidstone Borough Council has 41 conservation areas that cover areas of special architectural or historic interest. One of these is in Staplehurst, shown by the brown shaded area below. Of the features in the village heart, only the school and shopping parade are not in the Conservation Area.

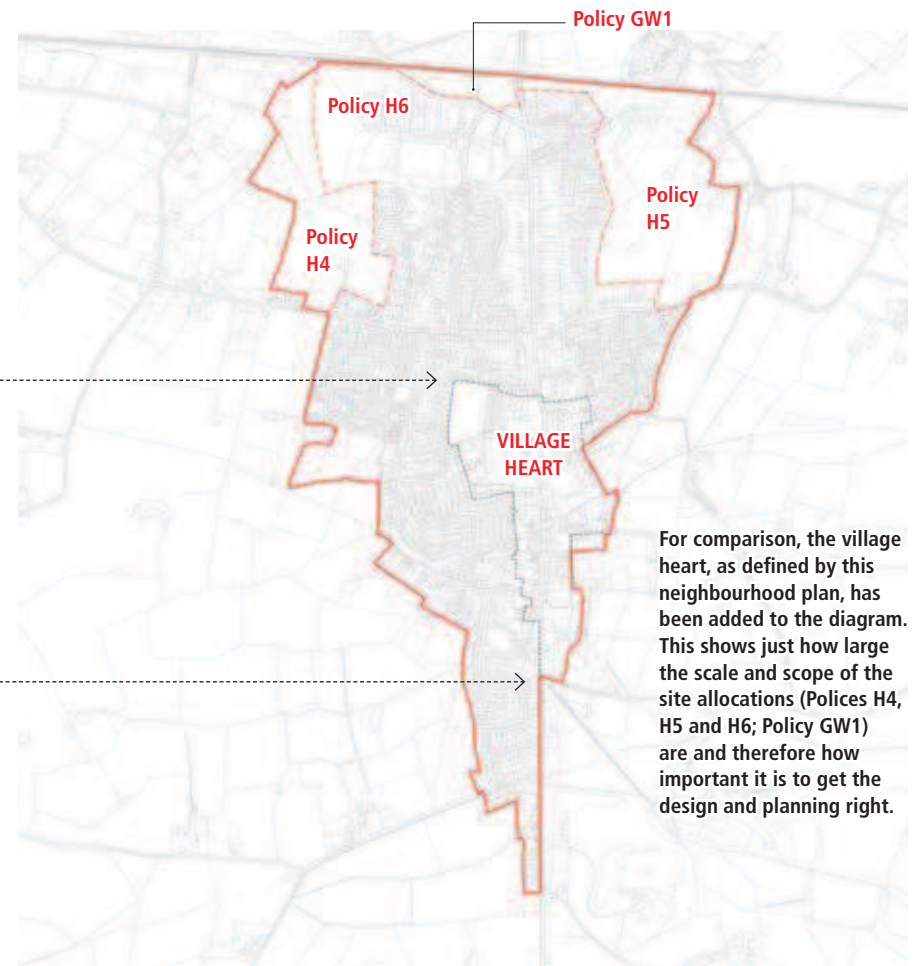


4.15 There is no “Article 4 Direction” for the Staplehurst Conservation Area. Under this direction, any work that changes the external appearance of a building, or affects its grounds may require planning permission from the Borough Council.

LIMITS OF BUILT FORM

The new village envelope

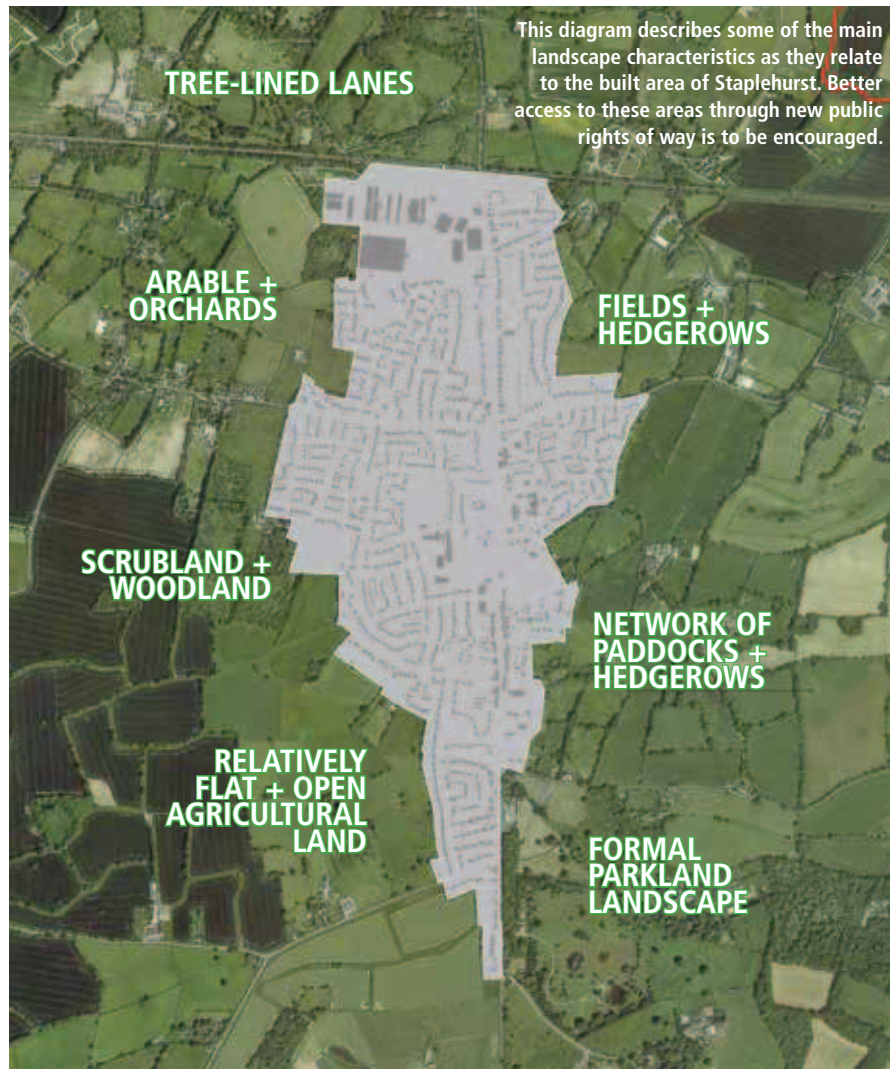
4.16 The inclusion of two housing allocations on the east and west of the village means the village envelope will increase. The diagram below shows a new village envelope for the neighbourhood plan period to 2031, indicated by the solid red line. The previous boundary is shown by the dotted red lines for the locations only where it was not contiguous with the new envelope line.



RURAL CHARACTER

How the countryside informs the village setting

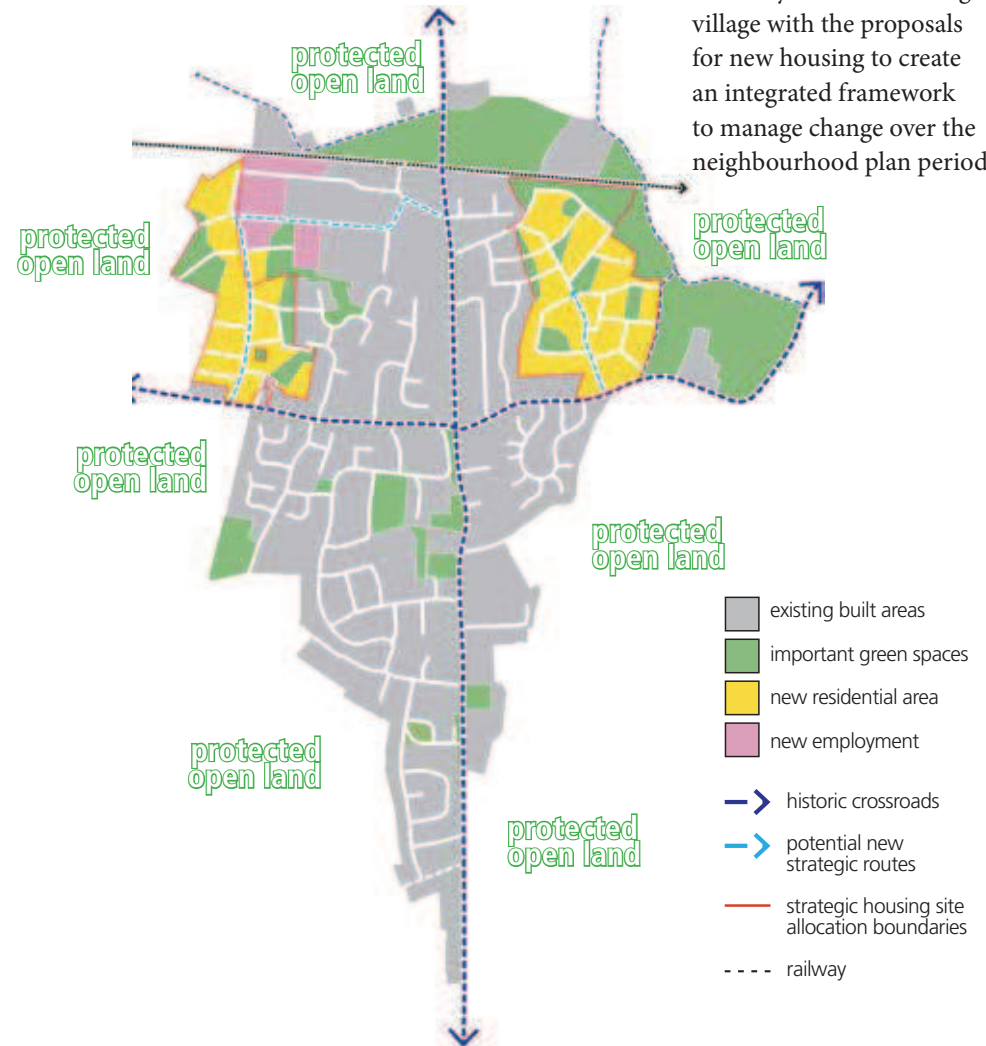
4.17 The immediate rural area comprises different areas of character. Their relationship with the built form of the village gives a particular sense of place.



FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM

Bringing It All Together

4.18 This plan brings together the analysis of the existing village with the proposals for new housing to create an integrated framework to manage change over the neighbourhood plan period.



CONCEPT DRAWING + FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM

4.19 A principal aim of the plan-making process, in particular the consultation and engagement events, has been to ensure a strategic approach is taken at all times. Individual development sites have been assessed within the context of the whole village and wider parish to test how they can contribute to the bigger picture.

4.20 The concept drawing that emerged from the three day design forum has provided a sound basis for moving forward with the neighbourhood plan preparation. This drawing was tested at consultation events in January, February and March 2014, and through a questionnaire, and a majority of respondents (57% of respondents) supported it as a basis for future work.

4.21 The framework diagram (page 19) is based on refinements to the three day concept drawing and brings together the existing built areas with the potential areas for new homes and new employment. The framework diagram shows how the two housing allocations need to be sensitively but effectively integrated with the existing fabric of the village. This requires the landowners and developers to think strategically by looking beyond their red line allocation boundaries. This is necessary to ensure that the early phases of development do not prejudice the longer term objectives of the overall vision for a connected and integrated village.

THE MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

4.22 Policy SP3 in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 designates Staplehurst a Rural Service Centre — that is, a larger rural settlement with a range of existing facilities and transport links making it suitable for additional houses.

4.23 These new homes are allocated in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 Appendix A Housing Allocations to the east and west of the A229. Policy H1(36) is the housing allocation shown by the red line to the west of the village. According to Maidstone Borough Council calculations, this can accommodate up to 250 new homes. Policy H1(37) is the housing allocation shown by the red line to the east of the village and, according to Maidstone Borough Council calculations, this can accommodate up to 400 new homes. This is a total of up to 650 new homes over the plan period, based on Maidstone Borough Council housing number calculations for the capacity of each site.

4.24 The neighbourhood plan framework diagram looks beyond these two red lines to test how these two allocations will need to be integrated with the rest of the village. This is something this neighbourhood plan must do as the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan does not address this integration issue.

PLANNING POLICIES + KEY AREAS OF CHANGE





White timber cladding is a feature of the high street and should be reserved for use on prominent buildings.

VILLAGE CHARACTER

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5.1 What makes the historic heart of Staplehurst distinctive? The way the buildings frame and enclose space contributes significantly to the sense of place. Special buildings, such as the pub, are located on corners to create small but memorable landmarks. New developments in Staplehurst can and should take inspiration from the village heart.

5.2 New housing should be influenced by the traditional character and style of the village, referencing the local context through high quality materials and styles appropriate to the place. The aim for all new developments should be to leave a positive architectural legacy and to add to the character of the village. This does not exclude innovative modern or contemporary architecture and this will be encouraged where appropriate.



High Street, Staplehurst Buildings linked together in a terraced row help enclose the space and define the street's form. The roof line has a distinct rhythm created by chimneys, towers and visible gable ends. Most building lines are on the back of footway with no private front garden spaces.



The King's Head Pub This taller building located on a corner plot on higher ground helps create a distinctive local landmark. The pub rises to three storeys with a steeply pitched roof. The built form comprises several different blocks with a modulated building line, stepping back from the footway on occasions to define doorways and entrances.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS FROM STAPLEHURST

5.3 These particular architectural details have been selected as they represent some of the more effective building and design techniques that help add to the character and quality of the parish. The fact these examples have primarily been drawn from the older parts of the village does not mean more recent developments in Staplehurst are poor quality. Rather that the distinctive sense of place evident in the historic heart is what the community admire most about where they live. New development proposals must learn from this and look to incorporate techniques such as this, where appropriate. See also the Staplehurst Village Design Statement (April 2005) that remains a valid document and a source of useful guidance for all new development.



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02



03



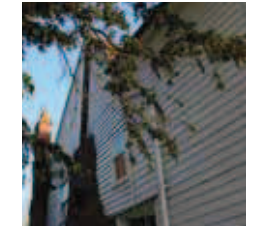
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14

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- 01 Simple but traditional Palladian-style housing provides the sense of importance and quality to some of the properties in Staplehurst.
- 02 Careful and deliberate use of colour helps to identify and pronounce the characteristics of the building. In this example brick, coloured window frames, traditional tall roofing all contrast with the white rendered walls.
- 03 The use of double bays on the ground creates flexible spaces that help allow a building to change use from residential to retail/cafe.
- 04 Careful use of brick, timber and tile cladding on buildings creates a Kentish village aesthetic and creates a sense of a strong and robust buildings.
- 05 Structural elements standing proud and on show (e.g. external timber trusses and joists) can accentuate a building's longevity.
- 06 Buildings positioned side-on to main streets can help mitigate traffic impacts and also allow for deliberate orientation in relation to the sun.
- 07 Traditional lapped-timber cladding can be accurately reproduced using modern materials for a longer lifespan.

- 08 Low rise mature hedging provides clear and defensible boundaries but does not obstruct the view of the fine architecture behind it.
- 09 Medieval stonework of the All Saints church needs to be celebrated and welcoming to not only visitors but villagers too.
- 10 Traditional fencing and shrub-planted borders used to separate private gardens from public streets or roads.
- 11 Maintaining the traditional look of the village pubs is important; there must be resistance against any modern or corporate identities being applied to their external appearances through branding or signage.
- 12 Half-timbered elevations on an arts and crafts style house, with a distinctive tall chimney feature.
- 13 Mature planting vegetation within private gardens softens the street scene and adds distinctive rural qualities to some buildings in the village.
- 14 The terraced row of houses at Cross-At-Hand represents a high density form of development appropriate to a village or rural setting.

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Throughout the process, residents have been encouraged to share their ideas through facilitated discussions.

PLANNING POLICIES

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6.1 In order to achieve the ambitions of the neighbourhood plan, a robust set of planning policies has been written. These set out what development can and cannot do, where it should be located and how the existing parts of the parish will benefit from new investment related to the new development.

6.2 The neighbourhood plan polices must be in “general conformity” with the Maidstone local plan and with national and European planning policy. General conformity means they do not have to be exactly the same and it is encouraged that they add more detail and more local knowledge to make the plan as responsive as possible to local people.

7.1 PARISH-WIDE THEME (Policy Code PW)

“Create an integrated set of neighbourhood planning policies that support sustainable development objectives across the whole of Staplehurst parish”

Policy Theme Background

7.2 While many of the planning policies deal with issues in and around the village of Staplehurst, this neighbourhood plan needs to deal with the whole parish. The neighbourhood plan therefore contains three overarching parish-wide policies that apply to all six of the policy themes that sit beneath them.

7.3 These three parish-wide policies are considered to be relevant to the whole parish and apply equally to all developments, be these community infrastructure (such as a new community hall or new shops), new homes, a new school site or new footpaths and countryside access.

7.4 The parish-wide policies deal with the need to achieve the right level of investment in utilities and infrastructure for a growing village; the need to protect the countryside and biodiversity; the need to support a strong local economy with access to jobs and employment opportunities and the need to support renewable energy technologies in the right locations.

POLICY PW1

THE INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED THROUGH THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Policy Supporting Text

7.5 Staplehurst will inevitably experience growth over the next decade or more. This can only happen if the right level of investment is made in improvements to the infrastructure at the right time. Delivery of infrastructure need not all be ‘up-front’ but current and forecasted infrastructure shortfalls must be independently evaluated and a full mitigation plan must be supplied by the developer before large-scale housing applications can be approved. Investment in the necessary infrastructure to improve the streets and roads network and to address drainage issues, applies to all new development sites, be they residential, community or employment focused.

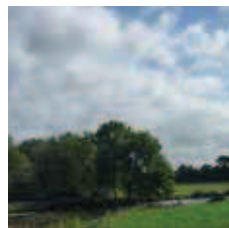
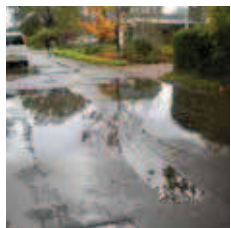
7.6 Access + Movement Future changes to the street and road network need to acknowledge the rural character of the village; encourage more choice of routes throughout the village to help reduce traffic congestion at peak times on the A229 and Marden and Headcorn Roads. Changes to the streets and roads improvements must encourage greater use of other modes of transport, including walking and cycling throughout the village, to make them a safer and more viable option. Better links between the east and west and the north and south of the village will help reduce congestion and promote healthier lifestyles through active travel modes.

7.7 Drainage Infrastructure Staplehurst has experienced a number of incidents of surface water flooding, both from public foul water sewers and rainwater drains, in recent years. Further development must incorporate robust measures to avoid making the situation worse, and if possible, ameliorate the problems that exist at present time. The integration of proven and effective techniques, including the selective use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) where shown to be appropriate, will be essential through a number of interventions to prevent further flooding. Best practice guidance indicates a number of means to positively reduce the risk of flooding in Staplehurst, including use of permeable surfaces, on-site attenuation systems and the inclusion of specially designed landscape into all new development.

7.8 Policy PW1 is linked to a set of specific projects identified through the neighbourhood plan process. Policy PW1 will act as “hook” or a starting point for these projects to be developed further. The projects may require further feasibility work, perhaps outside the scope of the neighbourhood plan, to establish how they can be funded and delivered.

7.9 While community consultation confirmed a new Village Centre building as the main project, this order of priority should not been seen as fixed or definitive but more as an overall indication of preference. The list needs to be treated as flexible if it is to be responsive to different funding opportunities.

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Flooding on Chapel Lane (far left) and open countryside north of the village (left).

POLICY PW4

NEW DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN STAPLEHURST MUST HAVE REGARD TO THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND THE HERITAGE THAT IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LANDSCAPE. LARGE DEVELOPMENTS (i.e. OVER 0.5 HECTARE) SHOULD BE SUITABLY INFORMED AND MAY NEED AN APPROPRIATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SURVEY.

Policy Supporting Text

7.21 Staplehurst has a rich and diverse heritage and has been an area favored for occupation and farming since the prehistoric period. There are some major route-ways traversing Staplehurst parish, some of which date back to the Roman period and possibly before, relating to the Iron Age and later use of the Weald’s rich resources. Staplehurst itself is one of Kent’s post medieval market towns, serving the medieval and post medieval farm and horticultural holdings in the surrounding area. Some of this heritage is identified in the Kent Historic Environment Record (held at Kent County Council) as designated and un-designated heritage assets. However, heritage is an integral part of the landscape. It is reflected as sites and the surrounds of sites but it is also the pattern of fields, route-ways and clusters of houses and farms. Understanding the heritage of an area includes understanding the landscape as a whole.

7.22 New developments within Staplehurst need to have regard to the historic environment and consultation with the Heritage Team at Kent County Council is advisable. There should also be regard to NPPF Section 12 on the historic environment and to Local Plans policies. Large developments (i.e. over 0.5 hectare) should be suitably informed and may need an appropriate archaeological desk based assessment and historic landscape survey. NPPF encourages “the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring” and that wherever possible, opportunities should be identified “to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.”

COMMUNITY THEME (Policy Code C)

“Ensure that housing development brings an appropriate level of investment into community infrastructure”

Policy Theme Background

8.1 New housing development in Staplehurst over the coming years should seek to bring with it financial investment in community infrastructure. This includes the village hall, the school, the library, the shops and services, the railway station, children’s play areas, footpaths, bus and rail services, countryside access and all the other services and facilities that make working and living in Staplehurst the positive experience it is. A growing village needs the level and quality of the associated community infrastructure to be expanded and improved to meet the needs of its residents and workers.

8.2 Planning permission for new housing will come with conditions attached that require the developer concerned to make an appropriate financial contribution to the village. This is known as “planning gain” and is an established planning procedure in the UK.

8.3 The difference in areas with an adopted neighbourhood plan is that the community, through the plan, can directly influence and prioritise the areas of village infrastructure it feels are in most need of investment. Early ideas include investment in the “Village Heart” area and also around the station in the north, including a possible new bridge over the tracks. The neighbourhood plan can also set out a long term plan to link housing growth to levels of community investment. Furthermore, a parish with an adopted neighbourhood plan will receive 25% of the revenues from the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be charged by Maidstone Borough Council arising from the development that a parish chooses to accept in its plan area. Parishes without a neighbourhood plan, but where CIL is charged, will receive just 15%.

POLICY C 1

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE LIBRARY SITE TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.4 The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan supports the continued investment in the local library site. The library is located at the heart of the village in proximity to other local services that are equally important to the community. The library provides a vital service to village life and the surrounding rural areas.

8.5 The library supports the local community cohesion and supports education and learning for all age groups. Investment here must aim to maintain and enhance the library as a modern, flexible space offering the right range of services, including internet connections and an appropriate range of up-to-date books, that will allow the library to continue to connect communities within Staplehurst village and the wider parish.

8.6 The neighbourhood plan identifies this as a key service to be protected, maintained and enhanced. Through the planning obligations linked to future development in Staplehurst, an appropriate level of funding will be directed towards the library service to ensure it will meet the needs of a growing village.

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The library is a vital resource in the heart of the village.



Policies C1, C2, C3, C4 and C6 Location of community facilities to be maintained and enhanced shown by the red lines. The "village heart" (see page 41) is shown by the black dotted line.

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POLICY C2

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE PRIMARY SCHOOL SERVICES TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.7 The primary school is a vital asset to Staplehurst village, the wider parish and beyond. The relatively central location of the school ensures direct access for much of the local community. It also lies in close proximity to the other services and facilities in the heart of the village. The planned future growth of Staplehurst will put the primary school under increased pressure to provide additional school places to children living in Staplehurst. Therefore, investment in the primary school to help it meet this demand is vital to ensure that it can continue to provide an excellent start in life for those growing up in the village.

8.8 Continued engagement will be required between Staplehurst Parish Council, Maidstone Borough Council, the school governors and Kent County Council to ensure this investment is delivered in a timely manner and at the appropriate level.



The primary school is a vital village service and will be under increasing pressure as the village grows.

POLICY C3

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE YOUTH CLUB PROVISION TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.9 Investment in youth facilities (including the youth club building and youth services delivered by the voluntary sector) in Staplehurst is necessary and required to ensure a balanced and happy community. The neighbourhood plan aims to maintain and enhance all local services that are used by its young residents.

8.10 A range of youth facilities is needed for different demographics within the under-18 population in Staplehurst, from pre-school children to independent teenagers. The current youth groups are popular and well-attended; the planned growth of the village means funding must be secured to ensure these services continue to meet the needs of the growing young population. Better youth facilities could be incorporated into a new Village Centre and this needs to be considered as part of any feasibility study.



Youth club facilities are currently in the heart of the village, adjacent to the Village Centre.

POLICY C4

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE HEALTH CENTRE SERVICES TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.11 Demand placed on the excellent health facilities in the centre of the village is certain to increase following village expansion. Residents of all ages need access to high quality, local care. In order to ensure that the health care provision is maintained and enhanced for the current and future residents, a higher level of investment is needed. The current health centre is located in the heart of the village, in proximity to other vital village services.

8.12 The neighbourhood plan supports further investment into this single site, rather than into new satellite centres, to ensure the best quality service for its residents. The relatively central location makes it accessible to the majority of local residents and allows for “linked trips” as those attending the health centre can also perhaps drop children off at school or attend events in the Village Centre as part of the same journey.



The health centre provides excellent care for current residents but it will need more investment as the village expands.

POLICY C5

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE FACILITIES AT JUBILEE FIELD AS THE VILLAGE’S CENTRE FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

Policy Supporting Text

8.13 The process of engagement developing the Staplehurst neighbourhood plan has highlighted the need for enhanced sports and recreational facilities in the village. The Jubilee Field site, on the eastern edge of the village with access to wide open sports pitches, is considered to be the best location for further investment. There is currently a lack of indoor sports facilities within the parish (e.g. a high ceiling sports hall, performance space or similar) with most residents having to travel outside of the village to use such a space.

8.14 The Jubilee Field site has the capacity to accommodate new indoor and outdoor sports facilities for the current and future populations of Staplehurst. Through the planning obligations linked to future development in Staplehurst, an appropriate level of funding will be directed towards the sports and recreation facilities to ensure it will meet the needs of a growing village. These funds may be matched with grants from national agencies, sports federations and national governing bodies.

8.15 Investment in facilities at Jubilee Field must be complementary to investment within the “village heart” and not place both sites and their respective facilities in a competitive situation with one another.



Jubilee Field will remain the focus for outdoor recreational facilities.



Policy C5 Location of the Jubilee Field where facilities to be maintained and enhanced.

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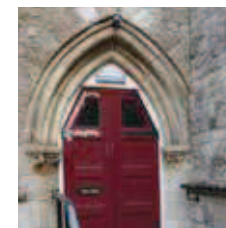
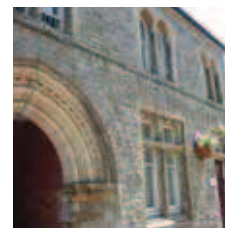
POLICY C6

REDEVELOP THE 'VILLAGE CENTRE' SITE TO CREATE A NEW, MORE EFFICIENT COMMUNITY CENTRE BUILDING TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.16 The current Village Centre building was the village school from 1873 to 1987 and now serves the parish in a variety of ways. It provides space for clubs, societies and groups across the parish, as well as hosting the parish office. However, demand in the area is greater than the supply that can be provided by the current building. Moreover, the building is in need of repair and has significant running costs due to its inefficient heating and lighting systems. The building needs to be made fit for the current and future residents of the village. The engagement events as part of the neighbourhood planning process highlighted this as a critical issue for the village.

8.17 The majority feeling amongst residents was that the existing location of the Village Centre must be retained. This location is also within walking distance of the existing parade of shops in the centre of the village, allowing further linked trips between existing community facilities. The facility forms a key component of the cluster of facilities that comprise the village heart and it has relatively easy access directly off the high street. This location also gives it a prominence to “passing trade” and a new building here will have the opportunity to become a “shop window” or showcase for the range of village activities, subject to the right building configuration and design.



The current building might survive in a renovated or modified state but the location of the new Village Centre should be on the same site, right in the heart of the village.

8.18 Discussions were held as part of the neighbourhood planning process about whether or not to demolish, refurbish or rebuild. There was a general feeling that it would be a shame to demolish the entire building. The handsome stonework of the facade, the articulation of the main elevation and main structural elements could all be worth retaining. A creative architectural brief, that requires the skillful blending of the old and the new together to form a more modern building fit for the future, could be prepared. A more modern building, but with retained heritage elements, could generate a revenue stream for the village through function hire (e.g. weddings).

8.19 However, a cleared site could offer more flexibility to the design, and perhaps be more economically viable as it will not have the added restoration costs associated with the retention of heritage elements already on site. A cleared site may also allow fresh thinking as regards site layout and access arrangements, to create more useable outdoor spaces and allow for striking, modern design that is nevertheless sympathetic to the village context.

8.20 A decision on exactly how to proceed with this project — that is, retain, refurbish, convert, modify or demolish and rebuild — can only be taken following more thorough cost-benefit analysis outside the scope of this plan. Whatever the preferred approach will be, it must deliver a multi-purpose building of special architectural merit right in the heart of the village.

8.21 Investment in facilities at the Village Centre must be complementary to investment within the Jubilee Field and not place both sites in a competitive situation with one another.

ACCESS + MOVEMENT THEME

“Reduce pressure on the crossroads by ensuring alternative access routes; develop a better connected series of village streets”

Policy Theme Background

9.1 The work undertaken so far on the neighbourhood plan has revealed a weakness in the current design and layout of Staplehurst in that “all roads lead to the crossroads”. This means that many journeys through and around the village will pass through the Cuckcold’s Corner simply because other route options do not exist. See street structure diagram, page 17.

9.2 Therefore, new developments must seek to create alternative routes between:

- 1) different areas within the village; and,
- 2) outlying areas of the parish and the village.

9.3 This will allow people access to their homes and other destinations in Staplehurst without necessarily passing through the crossroads. Creating alternative routes will give people a greater choice of movement and reduce the pressure on the crossroads.

9.4 At the three day design forum in October 2013, minor modifications were suggested to ease traffic flows through the crossroads. These modifications are likely to be affordable, environmentally sensitive and reduce queuing times (see drawings on pages 49, 50, 60 and 61 in the Three-Day Design Forum report for more details).

9.5 Any design intervention at the crossroads must be combined with improvements to the street network across the village to encourage greater levels of walking and cycling, helping to reduce dependence on the car for short trips.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 01

There is a need to safeguard access points for new railway bridge crossings to the west of the current high street bridge link.

This can be achieved by ensuring that the layout of all new developments does not prevent the delivery of a new bridge link in future, either in this plan period or future plan periods.

9.6 New and enhanced access points over the railway to the west of the current A229 road bridge will provide an alternative to the current limited number of routes. A new bridge crossing will be important if the growing village is to have the better connectivity it requires for the future.

9.7 The primary function of this link will be to provide attractive, safe and convenient access for existing and new residents that live and work in the area to the west of the village. The secondary function will be to alleviate traffic levels along the main road (A229) by providing an alternative route for local traffic, reducing the impact of new development on the A229 crossroads.

9.8 The safeguarding of these access points, and routes to them, is therefore vital to the formation of more sustainable access and movement links across the village. The layout of future development adjacent to these access points must acknowledge this requirement by delivering residential and employment layouts that provide clear and direct connections to the safeguarded sites.

9.9 The precise location and scale of the crossing will be determined through further design and feasibility work. However, it is envisaged that the bridge will be a low impact, small-scale bridge or crossing suitable for local traffic only. Not only will a bridge of this type be more affordable to deliver but it will also deter or even prevent larger vehicles (e.g. HGVs) and high speed or high volumes of traffic. Instead, the bridge will provide local access for local residents using private cars, helping to reduce the impact of new traffic movements on the A229. Bridges should also be accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.

9.10 The financing of a new railway crossing could be through a combination of funding from Kent County Council and Network Rail. There may also be a role for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements to help finance the new crossing. The delivery of the new railway crossing could be triggered by specific phasing of the adjacent development.

9.11 However, the precise nature of the funding and timing will be determined through a specific project agreement. In the first instance, the neighbourhood plan seeks to ensure that development plans and proposals secure the ability to deliver a new link through responsive and flexible housing layouts that do not prejudice the ability to deliver the link at a later date.

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Further detailed design work is required to understand exactly how and where a new rail bridge crossing could be delivered.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 02

Ensure the network of footpaths and footways throughout the village is safe, convenient and comfortable, with wider footways where necessary.

9.12 The network of the existing footpaths and footways throughout Staplehurst does not always allow for safe and convenient access. In many places, they are too narrow to be used comfortably. In other places, there are historical features of merit, such as the listed steps by Vine House, that add special character to the village but further frustrate easy movement.

9.13 To encourage more people to walk, the existing and future footpaths around the village need to be generous, well-surfaced, safe and well-connected. In the centre of the village, particularly around the crossroads, many existing footpaths could be widened to make walking more comfortable. The dominance of the through road is further emphasised by narrow footpaths that do not allow convenient access around the village and these can be widened to give greater priority to pedestrians. In heritage areas where features such as steps cannot be moved, alternative measures must be introduced, such as ramps or pavement build-outs, to help overcome the barriers to movement that steps can present.

9.14 With space for car parking limited within the historic part of the village, especially around the parade of shops, the school, health centre, library and Village Centre, an increase in the numbers of people walking will go some way to ease the pressure on giving over more land to car parking.



Pavement widths adjacent to Cuckold's Corner are inadequate and must be made wider through highways improvements.

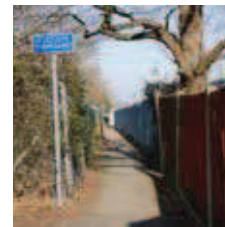
Neighbourhood Plan Objective 03

The proposed layout for new development sites must deliver a series of connected streets and lanes that will ensure a choice of routes for new and existing residents.

9.15 Future development proposals for residential sites must be based on a series of well-connected streets and lanes that provide genuine movement choices for new and existing residents. The design and nature of these new streets and lanes must be informed by the existing positive characteristics of the village.

9.16 Residential development sites must avoid layouts dominated by wide, fast roads and many cul-de-sac streets as these frustrate movement choices and lead to additional car traffic. Instead, a well-designed hierarchy of street types must be used to create flexible layouts that respond to wide variety of activities, including car parking, children's play, walking and cycling and help foster a sense of community and well-being amongst the people that live there.

9.17 New streets and lanes must also be effectively "plugged into" the edges of the existing village so as to integrate new and existing communities with minimal disturbance and disruption. Feelings or perceptions of a series of disconnected neighbourhoods must be minimised through sensitive integration of new and existing areas.



Unwelcoming pedestrian "cut-throughs" need to be avoided in new developments in favour of a well-connected street network.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 04

Create a series of on-street and off-street cycling routes that are safe, convenient and comfortable and will encourage people to cycle for short trips in and around the village.

9.18 The creation of new connected layouts comprising safe streets and lanes will also need to create streets safe for cycling. In certain areas, segregated or dedicated cycling infrastructure may be required, for example, at key junctions or around the school. These measures will help raise the level of utility cycling (e.g. riding to work, the shops or to school). Good quality cycle infrastructure will give cyclists the space they need to ride safely on the roads and keep the pavement space for pedestrians. Facilities that are to be shared between pedestrians and cyclists must be avoided if at all possible within the built-up part of the village.

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9.19 Meanwhile, Staplehurst is surrounded by attractive open green space and areas. The creation of off-street recreational cycling routes will enhance existing access and connections between the built-up village and the green spaces beyond. These routes need to be convenient, accessible and enjoyable if they are to help encourage cycling as a recreational activity which in turn, may help raise levels of utility cycling. Such off-road routes through the countryside can often be safely and successfully shared between walkers and cyclists. Regular access to green open space has a significant positive impact upon an individual's mental health and access to the countryside setting of Staplehurst must be promoted by well-connected accessible cycle routes.



Quality provision for cycling needs to be incorporated into all new developments.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 05

Create better and more frequent pedestrian crossings, including along the A229 as the road passes through the village.

9.20 The A229 carries a combination of through-traffic and local traffic. It is also a vital walking route between the heart of the village and residential areas. Better and more frequent pedestrian crossings at specific points (i.e. Railway Tavern, Village Centre and Pinnock Lane) will be required to provide safer and more convenient access between where people live and where people want to get to.

9.21 In line with the aims of other policies in the plan, these interventions will help encourage more local trips to be made on foot. With limited space for car parking within the historic part of the village, especially around the parade of shops, the school, health centre, library and Village Centre, an increase in the numbers of people walking will go some way to ease the pressure on giving more land over to car parking. Being able to cross the main road safely and more conveniently will support this.

9.22 There is also a need for new dedicated crossing points along the Marden Road and the Headcorn Road, the precise sites to be identified.



There is a generously wide pedestrian crossing point adjacent to the parade of shops but similar provision is lacking elsewhere.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 06

Improvements to the Marden Road – Headcorn Road – Station Road – High Street crossroads, to ease traffic flow and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists while retaining the village character that is special to Staplehurst.

9.23 The crossroads marks a historic location within the village and provides a distinct rural identity to Staplehurst. The magnificent row of horse chestnut trees, the small green space, the Martyr’s Monument, the right angled turns in the street and the handsome residences all combine to provide an attractive village scene.

9.24 However, the levels of traffic currently using the crossroads, combined with the relative narrowness of the carriageway and the turning lanes can lead to congestion and tailbacks during peak hours. Relatively minor and affordable interventions are therefore sought at the crossroads area to help ease traffic flows and remove the likelihood of tailbacks and long waiting queues during peak hours.

9.25 These interventions could include widening and or realignment of the footpaths and footways; realignment and/or remarking of the right turn lanes to provide more generous passing room for through traffic; a better setting for the monument (that is currently on the north west corner of the crossroads and can remain there); thinning of hedge rows to make more of the village green open space on the south west corner of the junction; tree maintenance to lift the crowns and provide a more visible location for village welcome signs and directional arrows.

9.26 The crossroads is about more than just moving cars across and through the village; it marks an historic place and is part of the rural fabric of Staplehurst. This special character will be maintained. Careful and considerate design must deliver both a better village scene, an enhanced sense of place and also help ease movement and travel patterns.



Could a new footway to the west of the chestnut trees release land to help deliver a more generous right turn lane to help avoid tailbacks?

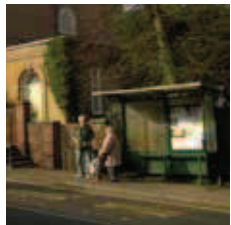
Neighbourhood Plan Objective 07

Improvements to bus services and bus waiting facilities.

9.27 With more people living and working in the village, investment in the bus services and bus waiting facilities (e.g. shelters, stops, real time information systems, a dedicated bus stop for the railway station etc.) will be required. Existing shelters must to be upgraded where appropriate, new stops and shelters installed along new routes and support for more frequent services to the most popular destinations will be sought.

9.28 The design and layout of new areas of housing must be able to accommodate new bus routes so that future residents will not be too far away from a bus stop. If the bus service is to offer a viable alternative to the private car, then it needs to be accessible, reliable and affordable to all that live and work in Staplehurst.

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Better bus shelters should be installed across the village.

VILLAGE HEART THEME (Policy Code VH)

“Strengthen the focal heart of the village around the Village Centre, Library, Health Centre, Primary School and Parade of Shops”

Policy Theme Background

10.1 The historic heart of Staplehurst contains the cluster of uses and activities that make the village a special place to live and work. There are the community activities at the Village Centre (that includes the parish office) the library and the churches. There is also the commercial activity at the parade of shops, a variety of shops on the opposite side of the road, a cafe and the pub. Together, all these uses give life and vitality to the village. The central area of the village also has Conservation Area status, awarded by Maidstone Borough Council and contains many high quality buildings

10.2 The three day design forum revealed a widespread desire to strengthen and enhance this cluster of uses rather than locate new community facilities elsewhere. Investment must aim to expand the facilities where necessary and deliver better connections between each of the uses to make them easier to access. Several of the buildings can also be made more attractive and visible to passers-by especially the Village Centre and the Parade. Options for the redevelopment or demolition and rebuild of the Village Centre remain under consideration.

10.3 The cluster of facilities at Jubilee Field, on the eastern edge of the village, will also be maintained and enhanced. This location is considered less accessible than the village heart and so will have a greater emphasis on outdoor recreation, sports facilities and uses that need large areas of open space. The result will be an area that complements the uses in the village heart.

POLICY VH1

EXISTING RETAIL AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES IN THE VILLAGE HEART TO BE RETAINED AND ENHANCED TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

10.4 With a growing village and with new housing sites identified on the outer edges of the current village, some distance from the existing retail offer, it will be necessary to provide a greater range of shops and services in closer proximity to its resident population if the village is to have a sustainable future. Without this, many residents will choose to leave the village, often by car, in order to obtain groceries and other regular items of shopping.

10.5 Existing parade of shops on the High Street, and other retail facilities in the village heart, are to be protected and enhanced. As the historic heart of the village, this area has been identified by residents as an important commercial area for both now and into the future. This plan supports continued investment in local retail and associated services in this location. As this site is well-connected to existing residential areas, it must provide high quality and convenient shops and services to a local catchment that can arrive on foot and by bicycle, as well as to a wider catchment from further afield.

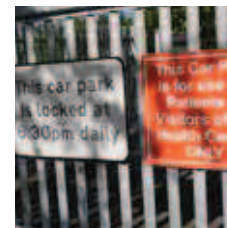


Policy VH1 Location of the existing retail and ancillary facilities to be maintained and enhance.

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The existing retail cluster around the parade of shops needs to be retained and enhanced.



Parking in and around the parade of shops needs to be rationalised with a better management regime and more appropriate waiting times.

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Neighbourhood Plan Objective 08

Ensure better and more connected routes between the library, primary school, health centre, village centre, youth club and church through safe, comfortable and convenient walking routes.

10.6 The library, primary school, Village Centre, youth club, health centre and churches provide many of the essential services integral to the quality of life in Staplehurst. The close proximity of these services can be further enhanced through better connections between them. There is potential to be sought for an increased number of “linked trips” in which the car is parked once followed by a series of different short journeys on foot between the different areas of activity.

10.7 The existing footpaths between these focal areas are not always suitable for all residents in the village, in particular for those that use wheelchairs or those that find walking on uneven surfaces difficult. Footpaths must be widened where possible and more pedestrian crossings at particular points will allow greater movement in an east-west direction across the village, connecting up the cluster of facilities in the village heart. See also Objective 05.



Neighbourhood Plan Objective 09

Rationalisation of parking provision at the health centre, parade of shops and library area to ensure convenient and appropriate levels of car parking.

10.8 The library, primary school, Village Centre, parade of shops, health centre, youth club and church all have their own car parking and drop-off arrangements to different degrees. Space is at a premium in this part of the village and it is unlikely that any significant amount of new land will come forward for additional car parking, if indeed that is desirable. Instead, a review of the waiting time restrictions, the opportunity for shared spaces, joint management and for the realignment of existing car parks to make them more efficient must be explored.

The Village Heart Policy VH1

10.9 There is widespread support from within the community for creating a stronger village heart. The cluster of uses in and around the High Street that support the social and community life of Staplehurst is vital for a growing village.

10.10 Policy DM20.1(vii) of the Maidstone local plan seeks to retain and enhance these facilities but the neighbourhood plan policies need to go further by explaining how these facilities work together and what is needed to support them into the future.

10.11 Policy VH1 required a series of actions and individual projects, each linked to other policies within the neighbourhood plan. Fragile and delicate parts of a village, such as the historic heart of Staplehurst, need to be nurtured and cared for. They have survived for many years and are very flexible but need to be looked after.

1. Improvements to the crossroads to make walking and cycling easier. These measures should also reveal the potential of the village green, provide a better setting to the monument and ease traffic flows.

3. Continued support and investment for the primary school. There is a need to identify room for expansion.

5. Investment in the library, health centre and parade of shops, especially in the public realm. Rationalisation of the parking spaces and parking regime is also required.

2. Redevelop the site of the Village Centre (by demolition, rebuild, conversion or refurbishment; to be decided) to create a community hall fit for purpose and a "shop window" for village life and activities.

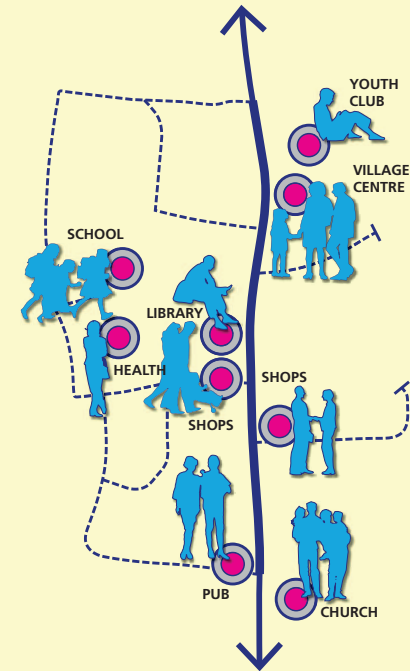
4. Make the street easier to cross to help support shops on both sides of the street.



WHY IS THE VILLAGE HEART SO SPECIAL?

10.12 All ages and all activities can be found in this one part of Staplehurst. Primary school children and their parents, the elderly and teenagers. Football games, book reading, grocery shopping, pub meals and local Kentish beer.

10.13 Taken together, these "people, places and activities" are what makes village life special. This diagram (below) tries to capture all these activities and the physical links that bind them. How can these links be made stronger for the future? And what new activities for the 21st Century can be added to the village heart mix?



GATEWAYS THEME (Policy Code GW)

“Improve the function and visual qualities of the land around the station; ensure other approaches to the village are visually appealing”

Policy Theme Background

11.1 There are many parts of Staplehurst that have a strong visual identity and are attractive places to be. For example, in the southern half of the village, there is a positive relationship between the buildings and the wider countryside, with strong visual connections between the two. Also, there is an attractive cluster of heritage buildings around the Conservation Area. However, the approach from the railway station is dominated by surface car parks and areas of scrappy under-utilised land. The area lacks a positive identity and fails to create a welcoming gateway to Staplehurst for those arriving by train.

11.2 As first impressions go, it could be much better, yet the station is a prize asset and one of the criteria required for Staplehurst being given Rural Service Centre status by the Maidstone Borough Council.

11.3 Yet the area has great potential. The railway station is a daily destination for regular commuters and this to and fro movement can add life to the area if utilised in the right way. Rationalisation of the car parking, from all being surface level to a multi-deck arrangement, can maintain car parking availability but free up land for more productive uses.

11.4 New commercial activity around the station, like small business units, shops or services and cafés all focused around a new market square could provide the positive new welcome that Staplehurst deserves. The scale of development here will be constrained to ensure the protection and on-going viability of the existing retail centre in the village heart (see Policy VH1).

POLICY GW1

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE STATION AREA TO CREATE A POSITIVE NEW APPROACH TO THE VILLAGE FOR THOSE ARRIVING BY TRAIN AND BY ROAD FROM THE NORTH; INCLUDING A NEW LANDSCAPED CIVIC SPACE AND SMALL-SCALE RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

Policy Supporting Text

11.5 The plan-making process identified a clear need to improve the space around the station area. As a whole, the under-utilised nature of the area, dominated by surface car parking, leaves a poor impression on both first time visitors and regular users of this part of the village. However, the presence of the station and the recently constructed new factory for DK Holdings shows the area has good commercial and economic opportunities and these can be leveraged to deliver a better public realm.

Better Public Realm

11.6 The existing entrance area around the station building is currently in a neglected condition and required improvements to the layout, including a rationalisation of the surface car parking, landscape works, materials, lighting and seating could deliver significant enhancements in the form of a civic space (a high quality “market square”) marking a key gateway to the village. A well-designed civic space of this type could provide better car parking facilities, as well as a shared space that on weekends could accommodate social activities for the community, such as markets or festival events.

11.7 To deliver the new civic space, a certain proportion of the existing surface car parking could be decked on a new multi-level car park structure. This decked car park will release land adjacent to the station to allow for more creative uses that will socially and culturally enrich the village experience. This decked structure could maintain a net neutral level of car parking (if desired) but could also allow for extra car parking spaces to be delivered on site.

Retail Investment

11.8 Economic activity could be enhanced through the creation of small-scale retail and commercial units around the edge of the new civic space that could trade off the regular footfall in the area. The station area is close to the two large areas of land to the east and the west of the village identified as being able to accommodate the majority of the new housing growth. This makes it an accessible location by walking and cycling to new residents and therefore a sustainable location for new retail and associated services.

11.9 The southern part of the site is already has planning permission for a new food store and other parts of the station environs could provide further retail units or associated services. The site's proximity to the railway station means there are excellent opportunities for retail and business spaces to trade off the footfall generated by the station.

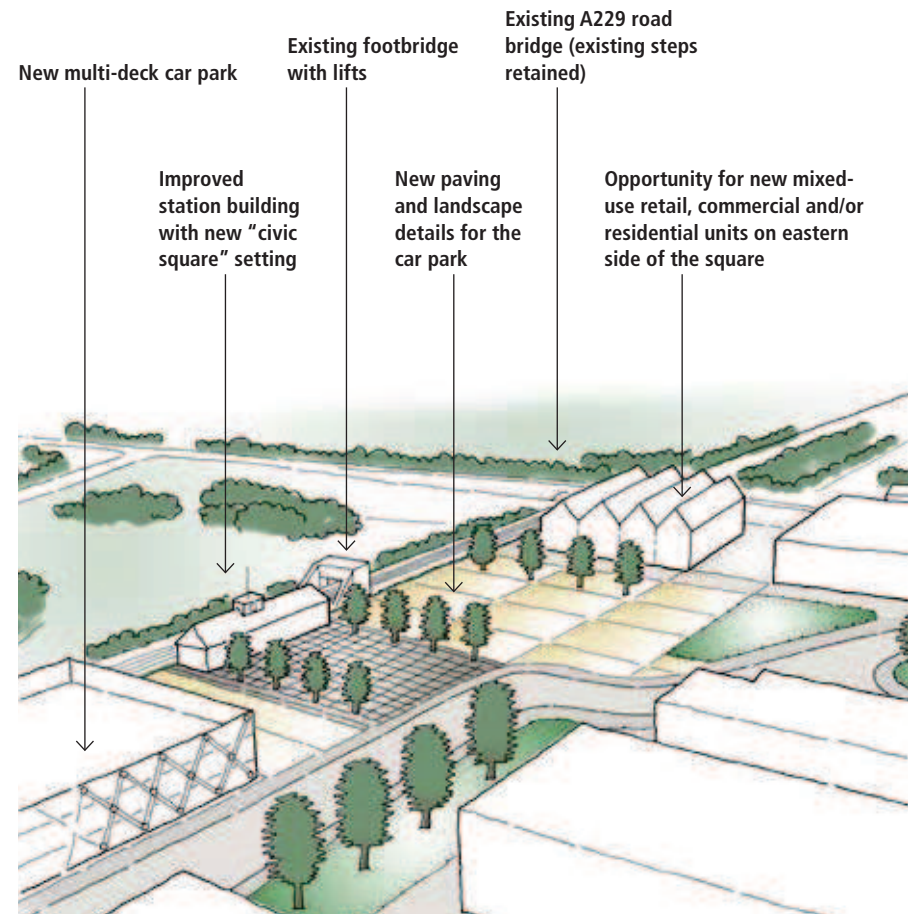
11.10 Maidstone Borough Council granted planning permission for the food store in March 2013 and therefore this neighbourhood plan has been prepared on the basis that additional retail provision in the area identified around the station will be in conformity with Maidstone Borough Local Plan policies designed to protect existing retail areas.

Conclusions

11.11 This area has the potential to provide a new civic space (e.g. a village “market square”) together with small-scale retail and other commercial opportunities. The station area is an important gateway entrance to the village through which a large number of people pass every day. This plan policy has a very high level of support from the local community and implementation will be a key part of the delivery of the Rural Service Centre concept.

Illustrative Sketch Policy GW1

11.12 The area around the railway station has the potential to provide a new civic space (e.g. a village “market square”). Small-scale retail and commercial units could locate around the edge of the space, trading off the regular footfall in the area. To deliver the new civic space, a certain proportion of the existing surface car parking could be decked on a new multi-level car park structure. This decked car park will release land adjacent to the station to allow for more creative uses, such as markets or festivals, to enrich the village experience.



Illustrative Layout Policy GW1

11.13 Policy DM13 of the draft Maidstone local plan sets out a strategy for sustainable transport that includes rail travel. Furthermore, one of the criteria for Staplehurst being designated a RSC was the presence of a mainline railway station so it does not seem unreasonable to seek greater investment in the station in return for the housing numbers being allocated in Staplehurst.

11.14 Policy GW1 of this neighbourhood plan expands on the relevant Local Plan policies by requiring a redevelopment that creates a positive new approach to the village; including a new landscaped civic space and small-scale retail and commercial opportunities around the station.

11.15 Set out here is a concept for the station area based on the sketch scheme generated at the three day design forum in October 2013. Relocating a proportion of the existing surface car park into a decked structure will release land that can be landscaped into a small-scale, attractive market square.

11.16 This space will still be able to accommodate parked cars but will also be able to host events and other activities, especially at weekends when demand for parking spaces at the station is often lower than during the working week.

11.17 While the village has excellent green open spaces, such as Surrenden Field and Jubilee Field, it currently lacks a purpose built market square or other similar dedicated hard space that can be used for markets or other small temporary events. Such places can go a long way to giving a village a positive sense of identity as well as being a venue for functions and events that can bring the community together.

11.18 For the formal red line boundary drawing of this site, please see the diagram on page 45.



This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.

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Location of the station area to be redeveloped (Policy GW1).

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Neighbourhood Plan Objective 10

Safeguard the green and rural feel to the approach to Staplehurst from the south.

11.19 The approach to the village from the south is important as it helps to define and identify Staplehurst as a village set within countryside. The close proximity of the village's built elements with the surrounding countryside gives this approach a distinctive rural feel.

11.20 This neighbourhood plan aims to protect this by supporting the larger development allocations in the northern part of the village; any small-scale infill development in the southern part of Staplehurst must be sensitive to its environment. The density, size and design of any small-scale infill development must be appropriate to the context and help safeguard the rural nature of the southerly approach.



The approach to the village from the south is characterised by strong green edges. This needs to be maintained and enhanced.

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Neighbourhood Plan Objective 11

Create defined and welcoming gateways to the village when approached from the west, via the Marden Road and from the east, via the Headcorn Road.

11.21 The gateways in and out of the village along the Marden Road and Headcorn Road are very important in helping to define the extent of the village. They require distinctive features to mark the entrance to the village and to define the village as separate from the surrounding countryside. New junctions along these east and west routes to allow access to new areas of housing must be sensitive and small-scale in keeping with the village qualities and characteristics.

11.22 Large traffic-engineering solutions (e.g. roundabouts with visually intrusive traffic management paraphernalia such as chevron boards and white paint) must be avoided and more sensitive junction designs introduced instead. This approach does not necessarily exclude roundabouts, but their design needs to be responsive to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and also be aesthetically appropriate to a village setting.



Positive new gateways to the village need to be introduced as part of new developments to the east and the west.

EDGES THEME (Policy Code E)

“Identify and strengthen specific green edges to deliver a long-term edge to the village; and improve public access to the countryside beyond”

Policy Theme Background

12.1 An understandable concern of many residents in Staplehurst is where and when will expansion stop? What will prevent the village growing even more than already planned? In response to this, the neighbourhood plan is looking to define new edges to Staplehurst that will become permanent boundaries to the village.

12.2 The village edges need to be designed in a way that will provide a sense of enclosure to the village, prevent unchecked sprawl and ensure that new areas of homes can positively respond to the landscape. New housing clusters also need to be the right scale and in the right location and not be large anonymous housing estates.

12.3 The new village edges must also encourage public access to the countryside beyond. Many residents value living close to some of the most attractive countryside in England but easy access can be frustrated through blocked footpaths or private ownerships. Opening up more land around the new edges of Staplehurst to create highly-valued recreational routes will be one way to ensure the new village edges have a sense of permanence and will reassure village residents that growth will not continue ever outwards.

POLICY E1

ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT SITES ON THE EDGE SHOULD INTEGRATE POSITIVE PLANTING AND RECREATIONAL ROUTES ALONG THEIR BOUNDARIES AND WITHIN THEIR LAYOUTS TO HELP DEFINE A LONG TERM EDGE TO THE VILLAGE AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS ON THE EXISTING VILLAGE EDGE.

Policy Supporting Text

12.4 In order to prevent planned housing developments from unchecked further expansion, the integration of green spaces and recreational routes along the boundaries of development sites should seek to provide clearly defined edges. The integration of green spaces immediately to the east and west of the new developments, using new public rights of way and recreational spaces, must be incorporated into any new designs. These will help connect the new housing layouts to the countryside beyond and connected layouts will allow existing residents better access too. The formation of clearly defined edges will provide natural boundaries to help fix housing growth over the long term. The questionnaires returned as part of the consultation events suggested what could be incorporated into the village edges and these include:

- agriculture
- circular footpaths
- woodland
- cycleways
- allotments
- fitness trails
- wetlands
- sports
- low density villas

12.5 Developers working up more detailed designs for housing allocations are directed to this list of ideas to help inform the edge conditions of new areas of housing. Furthermore, new developments must be designed in a sensitive way to respond to the needs and requirements of existing village residents who live on what is currently the outer edge of Staplehurst.

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HOUSING THEME (Policy Code H)

“Ensure the mix of new housing responds to local needs and local demands in terms of prices, sizes and tenures; ensure that new housing designs are high quality and respond appropriately to the Kentish context”

Policy Theme Background

13.1 It is inevitable that Staplehurst will be required to accommodate new homes over the coming years. Therefore, the neighbourhood plan is being prepared on the basis that a substantial number of new houses will be built. The Maidstone Borough Council (Regulation 18) Local Plan suggests 650 new homes could be built in Staplehurst between now and 2031.

13.2 Policy SP3 in the draft Maidstone Borough Council local plan designates Staplehurst a Rural Service Centre — that is a large settlement suitable for additional houses. Policy H1(36) is a housing allocation to the west of the village. This is for 250 new homes on land known as Hen and Duckhurst Farm. Policy H1(37) is a housing allocation to the east of the village and this is for 400 new homes on land known as Fishers Farm. Although the draft housing numbers have now been published, best practice in planning for an expanding village advises that a plan created by “designing to numbers” does not always deliver the right quality of environment.

13.3 Instead, the plans must be “place-led” – that is, the plan must respond in a positive manner to the local landscape, the local context and the existing village setting. Although no final decisions have been taken about the sites, the results of the three day design forum in October 2013 suggested that much of the new housing will be situated on the eastern and western flanks of the village and almost all of it north of the crossroads. The Maidstone Borough Council housing allocations reflect these broad locations.

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13.4 How can housing in these locations be designed in a way that best responds to local factors? New areas of housing need to create special places that are architecturally distinctive and will become cherished by those that live there and the wider village residents. All developers will be required to use the village character assessment (page 22) and the Staplehurst Village Design Statement (2005) to inform the design of all house types and site layouts. It is not the role of the neighbourhood plan to provide detailed design guidance for how sites should be developed but it does provide clear advice on the design principles that must underpin any future proposals.

13.5 All future planning applications must be developed through consultation with the communities that live immediately adjacent to the site and with the wider community too. A variety of drawings and reports need to be produced that will give confidence that development can be achieved in the most effective and successful way possible.

13.6 The precise mix of housing must respond to local needs in terms of size of each property, the price, the amount of land around it and the mix of tenure (i.e. whether houses are for sale or for rent). Regard for the findings of the Staplehurst Housing Survey 2010 (report by Tessa O’Sullivan, Rural Housing Enabler with support from Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group and Maidstone Borough Council) will be essential.

13.7 Finally, Maidstone Borough Council has made a commitment to renew efforts to engage with foul water utility providers and other organisations with responsibility for managing water, including surface water, in the borough concerning future infrastructure provision both to respond to the current concerns and issues arising from consideration of the housing needs in the future, particularly for Headcorn and Staplehurst.

POLICY H1

THE DESIGN OF NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD BE PRINCIPALLY INFORMED BY THE TRADITIONAL FORM, LAYOUT, CHARACTER AND STYLE OF THE VILLAGE’S VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE.

Policy Supporting Text

13.8 Any new housing development must be shaped and influenced by the traditional character and style of the village. The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan requires all new developments to reference the local context and demonstrate the use of high quality materials and styles appropriate to the place. See village character assessment on pages 22 — 23.

13.9 For example, any small-scale in-fill developments that may come forward in the south of the village must be sensitive to the rural and more historic nature of the village, by reflecting the character of housing in proximity to countryside. New housing within the larger allocations to the east and west of the village may be required to develop their own distinctive characters, to add to the overall variety and mix to be found within the village. The aim for all new developments must be for them to leave a positive architectural legacy, to be sensitive to their local context and environment and add to the positive character of the village.

13.10 Policy H1 does not exclude innovation or modern and contemporary architecture. Such designs are encouraged across the parish. Where appropriate, architects and designers are encouraged to create new designs that reflect both the local context and the current technology and materials of the era within which they will be built.



The variety and quality of architecture in the village, both the modern and the more established, are to be celebrated and new development should leave a positive legacy.

POLICY H2

ALL NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS WILL COMPRISE HOUSE TYPES FIT FOR MODERN LIVING.

Policy Supporting Text

13.11 The neighbourhood plan requires all future housing development to support modern lifestyles through innovative design. These will include reducing energy costs through meeting high design standards as well as internal space standards and layouts that will encourage working from home. Design details, such as the ability to receive parcels securely when not at home, storage of several bicycles, flexible use of garage and garden spaces and the effective storage of waster and recycling bins must all be considered.

13.12 All housing should seek to meet “Lifetime Homes” standards to ensure properties are sustainable and can be easily adapted to meet the needs of an changing population. The development of one-storey dwellings, appropriate for an elderly population and those with restricted mobility, must be considered across all new development sites. All housing designs must also promote efficient use of water, electricity and energy. The introduction of on-site generation technology, smart meters and other measures to reduce energy consumption is necessary across all housing sites.



Are the house types most recently constructed in Staplehurst still suitable for modern lifestyles? What innovations should be included for the future?

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POLICY H3

A RANGE OF APPROPRIATE TENURES AND SIZES OF NEW PROPERTIES TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS AND DEMANDS WILL BE DELIVERED.

Policy Supporting Text

13.13 The type, tenure and size of future housing must reflect the local needs and demands of Staplehurst. New housing development must aim to meet housing need in the area, rather than attract incomers in the first instance.

13.14 Affordable Housing Staplehurst Parish Council has carried out a housing needs survey (2010) which identifies a modest local demand for affordable housing. This plan therefore supports some key worker and shared ownership housing to allow children of local families to remain in the area. Developers and local housing associations must therefore provide affordable housing that prioritises local residents’ needs and ensures a distribution of units across both individual developments and the whole village and parish. Affordable housing delivery during the plan period needs to be in conformity with adopted Affordable Housing Development Plan Document (2006) prepared by Maidstone Borough Council.

13.15 Responsive Housing Future homes must be designed for a changing population. This may involve family homes and homes for an aging population to provide a good social mix, supporting social cohesion and independent living. The size of new developments must also be reflective of local needs. The station in Staplehurst is an important feature of the village, which already attracts working-age adults with families to the village. Therefore an adequate amount of family-sized houses must be built as well as providing for smaller units and innovative hybrid housing that can respond to modern lifestyles. For example, small-size private-rented apartments, perhaps designed in the form of a courtyard development sympathetic to the rural context, could be built within walking distance of the station. Such housing types may be suitable for young professionals who have grown up in Staplehurst, now need regular access to London but wish to live in affordable accommodation within their home village.

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POLICY H4*

DEVELOP LAND AT HEN AND DUCKHURST FARM FOR UP TO 250 HOUSING UNITS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING PLANNING AND DESIGN CRITERIA:

- 1) **Developers must provide an overall site master plan that shows a robust long term plan demonstrating how the land within the red line allocation can eventually be linked to the Lodge Road employment land to the north and east of the site.**
- 2) **Design details of a through-route, or “spine street”, that will be capable of safely taking two-way traffic between the Marden Road and Lodge Road are required. This street needs to be fronted by high quality architecture and be planted with appropriate tree species to create a beautiful and verdant boulevard street that helps establish a distinctive sense of place. The street needs to be accessible and safe for all modes of travel.**
- 3) **The overall site master plan must also safeguard access point(s) to a future railway bridge crossing. The precise design and location of the new crossing to be determined through further design and feasibility work.**

- 4) **Proposals must demonstrate how new developments can be successfully integrated with the existing village while respecting the privacy, well-being and quality of life of residents currently living on the western edge of Staplehurst. Specific attention is needed with regard to points of access and existing views of open countryside.**
- 5) **Sufficient space is to be included within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS implementation plan.**
- 6) **The site master plan needs to integrate positive planting and recreational routes along the boundaries to help define a long term edge to the village.**
- 7) **The inclusion of high quality play spaces and recreational areas to be integrated into the development.**

** Link to Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 Appendix A Housing Allocations H1(36) - Hen and Duckhurst Farm.*

Policy Supporting Text

13.16 Future development to the west of the village must be complementary to the adjacent existing housing. It needs to be sensitive of the current situation while also successfully integrating with the wider village. New housing layouts should sensitively include the provision for a street network that will provide a choice of movements, both from the Marden Road to the south and from Lodge Road from the north. Which of these two connections is opened up first needs to be subject to a detailed phasing plan but both access points will be needed over the longer term. A new street capable of successfully accommodating through traffic needs to link the northern and southern access points.

13.17 The new layout should also successfully connect with the adjacent area of housing, with details of the nature of these links (e.g. vehicular, pedestrian, cyclist etc) to be the subject of detailed studies to be undertaken by the developer in cooperation with the local community and the parish council.

13.18 A feasible overall concept plan for the entire housing and employment areas will be required from developers prior to any implementation of early phases. Proposed housing and employment layouts must also ensure a new street to the north can be achieved over the longer term, connecting to a new railway bridge crossing. The timing and funding of this bridge link is still to be decided but in the first instance, the layout must not prejudice its future delivery.

13.19 New housing in this area should include strong, green landscape features along the future street network. Developers will be required to use the village character assessment (page 22) and the Staplehurst Village Design Statement (2005) to inform the design of all house types and site layouts.

13.20 Dwellings on the western edge should be afforded views across open countryside. The integration of existing public rights of way and the planting of a green edge will add a strong and natural edge to the village. See Policy E1. To mitigate the impacts of flooding in the village, a further investigation is needed into how an attenuation pond system could be established. This could be integrated into an attractive green space for community use with an essential role in flood mitigation.

13.21 It is not the role of the neighbourhood plan to provide detailed design guidance for how this site should be developed but Policy H4 provides clear advice on the design principles that must underpin any future proposals. Future planning applications must be developed through consultation with the communities that live immediately adjacent to the site and with the wider community too. A variety of drawings and reports need to be produced that will give confidence that development can be achieved in the most effective and successful way possible.

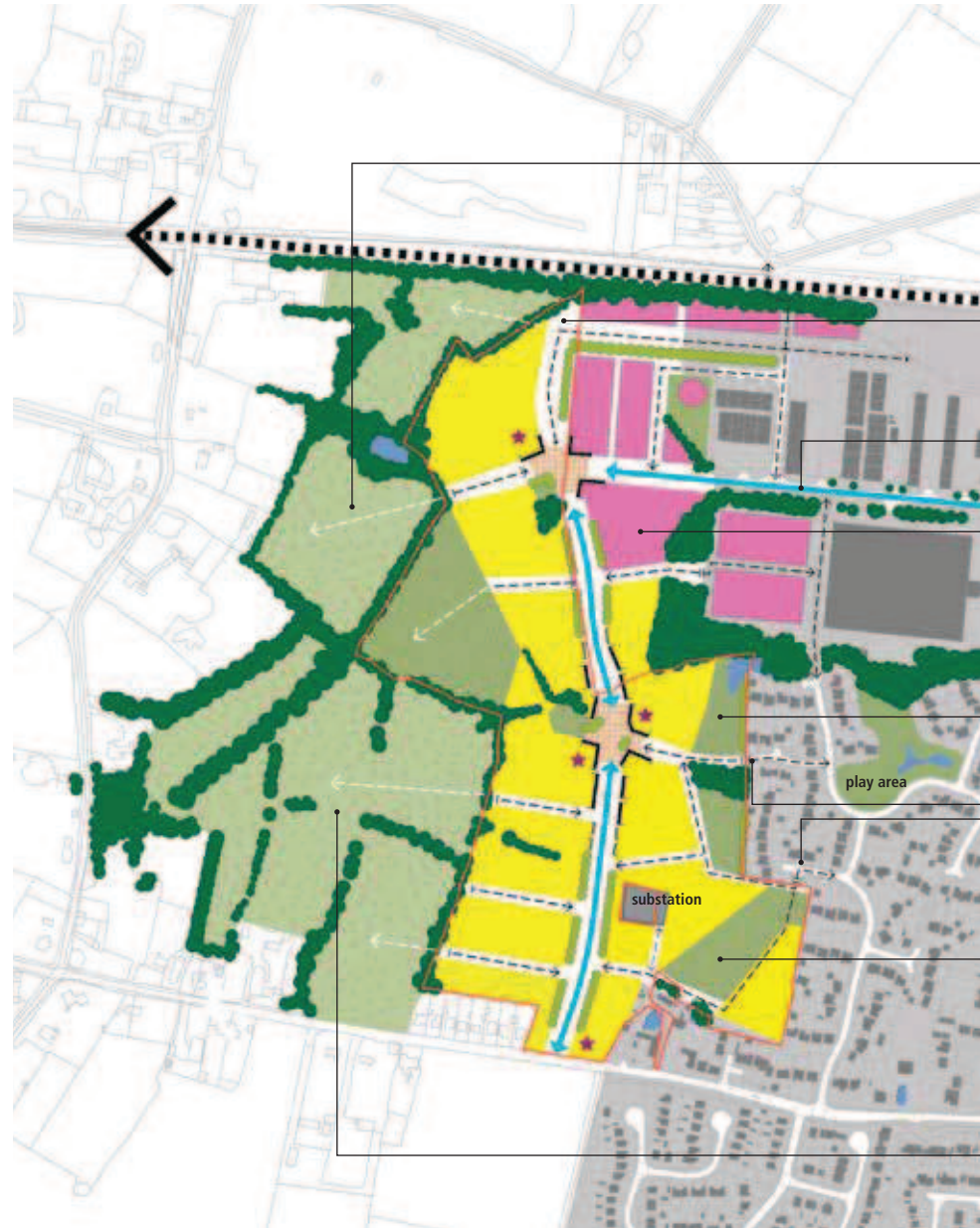
13.22 There is a need for a historic landscape survey and historic landscape character assessment to inform the layout and master plan design and ensure important historic landscape features and heritage assets are suitably preserved and integrated into the new development. Prior to detailed designs, an appropriate archaeological assessment should be undertaken to identify any archaeological constraints or enhancements and to ensure suitable archaeological mitigation.

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Some existing residents have views of the Oast Houses near to the Marden Road (far left) Can these views be retained? The site needs to be connected to Lodge Road (left).

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Illustrative Layout Policy H4

KEY

- Potential new residential areas
 - Potential new employment areas
 - Open green space
 - New proposed planting
 - Existing planting to be maintained and strengthened
 - Accessible countryside beyond the site development
 - Existing development
 - Potential new civic spaces to provide positive character at street junctions
 - Strong built edges to define the street
 - Opportunity to introduce a new landmark architectural feature
 - Local links
 - Strategic links
- NORTH

Ensure good access to open countryside beyond the development site to the west.

Safeguard opportunity for new bridge crossing of the railway. Precise location and nature of the bridge to be determined.

Link between new development and Lodge Road required to provide access to the station and the wider network.

Integrate new employment land effectively through the creation of a transition zone

Edge design to respond to the needs and requirements of existing village residents

Pedestrian and cycle links needed here between existing development and new areas of housing to integrate communities. Width of links to be suitable for emergency vehicles.

Opportunity to keep land open to maintain existing view from existing development to Oast Houses at farm complex.

Ensure good access to open countryside beyond the development site to the west.

Policy H4 Illustrative design and planning principles for development of land west of the village.

This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.



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Policy H4 Location of the land for housing at Hen and Duckhurst Farm.

POLICY H5*

DEVELOP LAND AT FISHERS FARM FOR UP TO 400 HOUSING UNITS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING PLANNING AND DESIGN CRITERIA:

- 1) Developers must provide an overall site master plan that shows a robust long term plan demonstrating how the land within the red line allocation can be linked to Sweetlands/Pile Lane and the wider countryside to the east of Staplehurst.**
- 2) Design details of a connected series of streets across the development will be required, showing how the whole site can be successfully connected to the existing network at Headcorn Road and Sweetlands/Pile Lane.**
- 3) Proposals must demonstrate how new developments can be successfully integrated with the existing village while respecting the privacy, well-being and quality of life of residents currently living on the eastern edge of Staplehurst. Specific attention is needed with regard to points of access and existing views of open countryside.**
- 4) Sufficient space is to be included within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SUDs implementation plan. Space is needed for informal recreation and children’s play.**

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** Link to Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 Appendix A Housing Allocations H1(37) - Fishers Farm, Fishers Road, Staplehurst.*

5) The site master plan needs to integrate positive planting and recreational routes along the boundaries to help define a long term edge to the village.

6) The inclusion of high quality play spaces and recreational areas to be integrated into the development.

Policy Supporting Text

13.23 This is the larger of the two housing allocations. As with the smaller allocation to the west, development here must be complementary to the adjacent existing housing. It needs to be sensitive of the current situation while also successfully integrating with the wider village.

13.24 Access from the south via the Headcorn Road is likely to be a main entry and exit point but due to the very restricted access opportunities via Fishers Road and Newlyn Drive/Hurst Close, a link is required to the east to connect with Sweetlands/Pile Lane. Without such a link, there is a risk that the site will be developed as a cul-de-sac, with a single point of access from the Headcorn Road, placing unnecessary pressure on the Headcorn Road and the Cuckold's Corner crossroads. A feasible and tested overall concept plan for the entire housing allocation is required from the developers prior to any planning permission for the implementation of early phases.

13.25 Given the relatively large size of this allocation, an overall concept plan will be required showing how different areas of character could be developed, using different densities and building types. For example, higher density developments could be located along the strategic routes while lower density forms could be located towards the outer edges. Higher density areas within the centre of the site can be offset by careful integration of green open spaces to create greens, play spaces and important social and community spaces for new and existing residents. The relatively close proximity to nearby facilities, including Jubilee Field to the south east and the railway station to the west, should be capitalised on with good walking and cycling routes to encourage easy and safe access by non-car modes.

13.26 The design must creatively incorporate much of the existing ecology and landscape and should maintain well-developed green edge adjacent to Pile Lane, the dog track and the Jubilee Field.

13.27 Development in the southern part of the allocation, adjacent to the Headcorn Road should have a strong edge built, set back behind a landscape belt. This will provide a positive new edge to the village approach, combining built form with natural features. The design of this southern edge needs to create a welcoming edge to Staplehurst to those arriving from the east. Development of the northern part of the allocation should look to integrate existing farm buildings and built structures at Fishers Farm. The incorporation of older building into a new development can add character and value if delivered in an appropriate way.

13.28 It is not the role of the neighbourhood plan to provide detailed design guidance for how this site should be developed but Policy H5 provides clear advice on the design principles that must underpin any future proposals. Future planning applications must be developed through consultation with the communities that live immediately adjacent to the site and with the wider community too. A variety of drawings and reports needs to be produced that will give confidence that development can be achieved in the most effective and successful way possible.

13.29 There is a need for a historic landscape survey and historic landscape character assessment to inform the layout and master plan design and ensure important historic landscape features and heritage assets are suitably preserved and integrated into the new development. Prior to detailed designs, an appropriate archaeological assessment should be undertaken to identify any archaeological constraints or enhancements and to ensure suitable archaeological mitigation.

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How can potential negative impacts on existing adjacent residents be designed out? This area also marks the transition between the village and open countryside (left) and new development needs to acknowledge this significant location through its design.

KEY

- Potential new residential areas
- Potential new employment areas
- Open green space
- New proposed planting
- Existing planting to be maintained and strengthened
- Accessible countryside beyond the site development
- Existing development
- Potential new civic spaces to provide positive character at street junctions
- Strong built edges to define the street
- Opportunity to introduce a new landmark architectural feature
- Local links
- Strategic links

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This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.

Illustrative Layout Policy H5

- Access to east via Couchman Green Lane to allow movement to and from the site without travelling through the village
- Ensure good access to open countryside beyond the development site to the east.
- Pedestrian and cycle links needed here between existing development and new areas of housing to integrate communities. Width of links to be suitable for emergency vehicles.
- Edge design to respond to the needs and requirements of existing village residents
- Links needed to land beyond the village via Pile Lane and out towards the east
- Access from south via Headcorn Road, with welcoming gateway feature



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Policy H5 Illustrative design and planning principles for development of land east of the village.



Policy H5 Location of the land for housing at Fishers Farm.

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POLICY H6

PROTECT THE EXISTING EMPLOYMENT FACILITIES AT LODGE ROAD AND ENHANCE AND EXPAND THE AREA AS A MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL AND EMPLOYMENT AREA SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- 1) Protection of existing businesses and operations.**
- 2) No net loss of employment floor space site.**
- 3) Developers must provide an overall site master plan to demonstrate how mixed-use residential and employment land within the red line allocation can be linked to residential land to the west and south west of the site allocation.**

Policy Supporting Text

13.30 There is an opportunity to expand the existing employment cluster at Lodge Road through new development immediately to the west and north of the existing industrial and employment units. New buildings here need not necessarily reflect the current building typologies but instead could be smaller-scale and more rural in their design (e.g. two or three storey courtyard schemes). These new units could also include a significant amount of residential use, such as small apartments in the upper floors. Development of this type could help form a “transition zone” between the existing employment buildings to the east and the new residential area to the west at Hen and Duckhurst Farm.



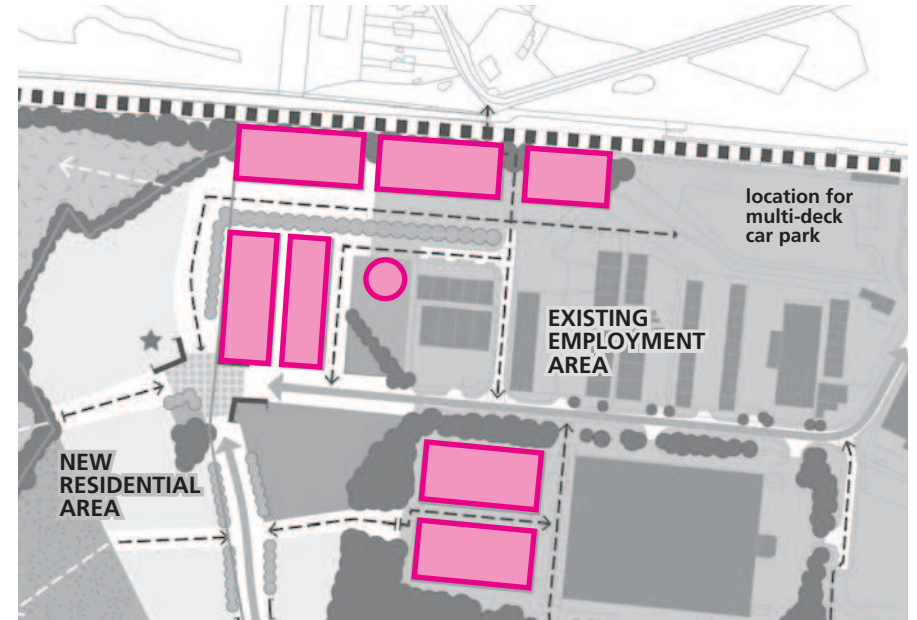
The Lodge Road employment area is a vital asset to the parish.



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Policy H6 Location of the land for employment and housing.

Illustrative Layout Policy H6



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This plan shows an illustrative layout for the land that lies between the existing employment area and the new allocated residential area. The blocks shown in pink could be developed as rural courtyard employment areas, similar to those shown in the photographs (page 58).

This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.

Clockwise from top left:

- Ashford, Kent
- Moulton St Mary, Norfolk
- Parkway Farm, Dorset
- Poundbury, Dorset
- Hallastson, Herefordshire
- Cuckfield, Sussex
- Priston, Somerset
- Parkway Farm, Dorset



Neighbourhood Plan Objective 12

Support for a strong local economy with good access to jobs and employment opportunities.

13.31 While it is recognised that Staplehurst is an important village for rail commuters travelling to London there is also a need to strengthen and support a local economy that is not reliant on people leaving the village to work. The village already accommodates many local firms and employers in the Lodge Road industrial area and this is of great value to the local economy.

13.32 Other employment opportunities can be found in the village heart, comprising the library, primary school, Village Centre, parade of shops, youth club, health centre and church. Further investment in the parade could create more workshop or small office spaces, either above the shops or immediately behind in new courtyard-style developments. The neighbourhood plan will also support farm diversification in outlying areas of the parish, such as small-scale sensitive employment developments (e.g. courtyard schemes) and tourist accommodation.

13.33 Further new employment uses could be generated adjacent to the station as part of the investment in new public realm. It is encouraged that land to the east of the station is safeguarded for small workshop, small-scale retail or office uses. These spaces could be flexible units to help support small and emerging business, as well as existing home-workers in the parish.



The station and its immediate surroundings have been identified for future investment.

PLAN MONITORING

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14.1 Monitoring is an essential and continuous part of the plan-making process. The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan will be monitored by Maidstone Borough Council to assess whether it is supporting and delivering the aims of the Local Plan strategy.

14.2 The monitoring indicators identified are a mix of relevant indicators drawn from a number of sources including the National Planning Policy Framework, indicators identified in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and local indicators identified in respect of key policies of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

14.3 The key indicators for the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan will be on delivery of community infrastructure, employment, housing and positive environmental change.

14.4 General Delivery Indicators

- Development on allocated and sites with planning permission.
- Percentage of completions on previously developed land, including planning permissions implemented involving planning condition(s) for remediation.

14.5 Employment Indicators

- Changes (up or down) in the number of companies/businesses (no. of VAT registered) located in the area
- Employment land lost or gained compared to other uses

14.6 Housing Indicators

- The number of dwelling completions that are provided relative to the Council's estimated provision
- Change in the total number of households
- Average densities on permitted housing sites
- Affordable housing completions

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14.7 Environmental Indicators

- Levels of new open space provided, especially natural/semi-natural green space.
- Change to number of buildings on national and local lists of buildings at risk.
- The amount of open space/facility established by type relative to the standard.
- The number of permissions granted and implemented for renewable and low-carbon schemes and their expected levels of generation.
- The number of planning permissions granted for residential development in flood risk areas contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency.
- The number of developments which use sustainable drainage systems.
- The number of applications which do not receive approval for water supply and wastewater connection from the appropriate water company.
- Waste water treatment capacity.
- The amount of new habitat created, especially natural/semi-natural green space.
- Any monitoring undertaken of Kent Biodiversity Action Plan, including habitats created.

NEXT STEPS

15.1 This is the Submission Plan and has been submitted to Maidstone Borough Council for a six week consultation period.

15.2 Please send your views and opinions to Maidstone Borough Council before the end of the six week consultation period.

15.3 Once the consultation period is closed, Maidstone Borough Council will gather together all comments received during the consultation period and present them to an independent planning inspector, appointed to examine the plan. Should the independent planning inspector find the neighbourhood plan to be sound, then it will go forward to be the subject of a referendum, to be voted upon by the residents living within the Staplehurst Parish boundary.

15.4 Parish contacts for further information:

- **Mr. Mick Westwood, Clerk to the Parish Council**
- **Mr. Rory Silkin, Chairman of Staplehurst Parish Council**

The Parish Office, Village Centre, High Street, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BJ.

SUPPORTING REPORTS

Basic Conditions Statement
July 2015

Consultation Statement
July 2015

Exhibition Posters
November 2014

Regulation 14 Plan
June 2014

Exhibition Posters
June 2014

Exhibition Slide Show
June 2014

Results of the Questionnaire
March 2014

Exhibition Posters
January 2014

Results of the Three Day Design Forum
October 2013

Results of the Village Visioning Event
September 2013

RELEVANT WEBLINKS

Staplehurst Parish Council
<http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/default.aspx>

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

Maidstone Strategic Policy Framework 2015
http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/60907/Strategic-Policy-Framework.pdf.

Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment Final Report January 2014
http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/44656/Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-2014.pdf

Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Regulation 18) Consultation 2014
<http://dynamic.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2018.pdf>

Maidstone Borough Conservation Areas
<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/business/planning/landscape,-heritage-and-design/conservation-areas>

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**STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
REGULATION 16 (SUBMISSION PLAN)**

July 2015



This plan has been prepared by:

**Staplehurst Parish Council, The Parish Office, Village
Centre, High Street, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BJ.**

Digital copies of this document can be downloaded from:

**www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk
www.maidstone.gov.uk**



Please send all comments and responses to:

**Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House,
King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ.**

Agenda Item 16

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

**13 September
2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Local Plan Examination Update

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Cheryl Parks, Project Manager- Local Plan
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the update provided in relation to the forthcoming Local Plan examination hearings.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – The Local Plan, once adopted, will provide a strategic planning framework for all types of development in the borough to 2031, as well as securing employment opportunities and improvements to supporting infrastructure, including public transport.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	13 September 2016

Local Plan Examination Update

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is an informative report designed to update the Committee on arrangements made since the submission of the draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 20 May 2016.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Committee will be aware that the draft Local Plan was agreed for Publication and thereafter Submission at the meeting of Council on 25 January 2016. A successful 'Publication' consultation was held between 5 February and 18 March 2016 with nearly 600 individual comments made.
- 2.2 On 18 April 2016, this Committee considered a report summarising the key issues and approved a schedule of minor proposed changes to be submitted alongside the draft Local Plan and evidence base.
- 2.3 The draft Local Plan was duly submitted, as scheduled, early on the morning of 20 May 2016.

Programme Officer

- 2.4 Prior to submission of the draft Local Plan, officers sought expressions of interest and subsequently interviewed candidates for the position of Programme Officer from a list of suitably qualified persons provided by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). After a successful selection process, Louise St. John Howe was appointed.
- 2.5 The role of the Programme Officer is to work on behalf of the Secretary of State's Inspector, organising and managing the administrative and procedural matters of the Examination process. The Programme Officer is independent and whilst being employed by the Council, should have played no part in the production of the draft Local Plan to be examined.
- 2.6 Since her appointment, Mrs. St. John Howe has been working closely with the Local Plan Project Manager to collate information relating to respondents to the consultation, their comments and their wish to be present at the hearings. She has also been the main point of contact for the public in relation to the forthcoming Examination.

The Inspector

- 2.7 Shortly after the submission of the draft Local Plan, Mr. Robert Mellor BSC DIPTRP DIPDBE DMS MRICS MRTPI from the Planning Inspectorate was appointed by the Secretary of State. His task is to consider the soundness of the draft Local Plan, based on the criteria set out in paragraph 182 of the

National Planning Policy Framework. Mr. Mellor has most recently been the appointed Inspector for the Eastbourne Employment Land Local Plan.

Examination Hearings

- 2.8 The Council has now been notified by the Inspector of his intended timetable for the Examination hearings and the topic areas that will be discussed at each session. The hearings schedule is included in Appendix 1 of this report. Thanks to the generous flexibility of Officers from other teams, Spatial Policy Officers have been able to secure the use of the Town Hall Chamber for all of the hearings, which provides a central, easily accessible venue which will be familiar to the majority of attendees.
- 2.9 Hearings are scheduled to commence on Tuesday 4 October at 10:00am and conclude on Thursday 1 December. There are fifteen scheduled hearing days with two additional full days and two additional half-days held as reserve dates.
- 2.10 The Inspector has given detailed consideration to the representations made during the Publication consultation in February and March 2016, as well as reviewing the evidence base, and has used these to produce a list of attendees for each session. Anyone the Inspector wishes to hear from will be contacted by the Programme Officer and invited to take part.

Publicity

- 2.11 To facilitate understanding of the processes by the public and to ensure that all interested parties are kept up-to-date, the Local Plan web pages on the Council's website have been updated to reflect the forthcoming Examination, with dedicated pages for the Examination, the evidence, and other updates. The pages are kept under regular review by both the Programme Officer and the Local Plan Project Manager and updated with any information or correspondence between the Council and the Inspector.
- 2.12 In addition, information relating to the hearing sessions has been placed in a Public Notice in the Kent Messenger (print edition 5 August 2016) as well as in the Borough Update segment of the Downs Mail. All those on the Local Plan Consultee Database who have requested to be kept updated have also been notified by newsletter of the latest information.

Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions

- 2.13 Matters, Issues and Questions for the first six hearing sessions were received from the Inspector in the week commencing 8 August. The Inspector has set out a number of questions relating to matters raised by representors across different topic areas of the draft Local Plan.
- 2.14 The questions will require written responses to be provided by 15 September and will be published on the Council website alongside information relating to the hearings. Officers have begun looking at the questions and putting together responses.

- 2.15 All those invited to attend the hearing sessions have also been provided a copy of the Matters, Issues and Questions by the Programme Officer so that they can prepare any responses they wish to make available to the Inspector.
- 2.16 Also provided to all representors is a Procedural Guidance Note which sets out information for the public on how the Examination will proceed, and what will be the mechanisms for hearing representors' views during the hearings.
- 2.17 The remaining Matters, Issues and Questions (relating to the later scheduled hearings) will be completed by the Inspector and provided to the Council in the next couple of weeks for responses to be completed.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 This report is intended as an update only and is not seeking any decision; as such, the only option proposed is to note the content of the report.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As set out in 3.1, above, the Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Officers will continue to liaise with the Programme Officer in regard to detailed planning of the hearing sessions and will work to address the Matters, Issues and Questions raised by the Inspector.
- 5.2 Officers are actively progressing discussions with a number of statutory consultees following their Publication representations with the aim of agreeing Statements of Common Ground in advance of the Examination hearings.
- 5.3 Further update reports relating to the draft Local Plan Examination are scheduled in the work programme for the Committee at its November 2016 and January 2017 meetings, at which time progress with the hearings and other relevant issues will be presented.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate	The Local Plan is one of the key strategies that will promote	Rob Jarman, Head of

Priorities	delivery of the Council's Vision, Mission, Priorities and Objectives as set out in the Strategic Plan.	Planning and Development
Risk Management	There is a small risk relating to the outcome of the Local Plan examination, however officers are confident that the supporting evidence for the Local Plan justifies the approach. The mandate of Council was sought prior to submission.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Financial	The Local Plan examination will be a big item of expenditure this financial year. A detailed profile of projected costs has been drawn up and will be closely scrutinised and monitored. Securing the use of the Town Hall as opposed to an external venue has been helpful in keeping estimated expenditure lower than initial budget forecasts.	Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The Spatial Policy Team is sufficiently staffed to manage the examination. A detailed plan has been prepared in relation to presenting topics at the examination, making use of officers from Development Management, and also limited use of specialist consultants to defend key pieces of work.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Legal	The services of specialist planning counsel have been retained to support the Examination. There has been regular input from both MKLS and counsel during the production of the draft Local Plan.	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid-Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An EQIA was undertaken to support the Publication of the Local Plan, and this will be reviewed prior to the commencement of the examination. Any specific needs of those wishing to take	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager

	part in the process will be accommodated wherever possible.	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The Local Plan is founded on the principles of sustainability and sustainable development, and this is a golden thread that runs through the plan and supporting evidence. Specific evidence relating to environmental matters supports the Local Plan and is available as part of the evidence library.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Community Safety	There are no specific impacts or issues.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Human Rights Act	There are no specific impacts or issues.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Procurement	All procurement regulations have been met and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules followed in the preparatory work for the Local Plan and its evidence.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development & Mark Green, Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	There are no specific impacts or issues.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

7. REPORT APPENDICES

There are none

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Examination - Draft Programme (D)			
Week 1			
Tues 4 Oct 2016	10:00-13:00		Inspector's Opening Statement Council's Opening Statement Legal & Procedural Matters
	14:00-17:00	Session 1A Session 1B	Housing Needs (1)
Wed 5 Oct 2016	10:00-13:00	Session 2A	Housing Needs (2)
	14:00-17:00	Session 2B	Housing Policies DM11-DM15
Thur 6 Oct 2016	10:00-13:00	Session 3A	Transport Modelling Seminar
	14:00-17:00	Session 3B	Alternative Strategic Development
Week 2			
Tues 11 Oct 2016	10:00-17:00	Session 4	Environmental Constraints
Wed 12 Oct 2016	10.00-13.00	Session 5A	Housing Supply Overview
	14.00-17.00	Session 5B	SE Maidstone Strategic Development
Thur 13 Oct 2016	10:00-13:00	Session 6A	Maidstone & 'Other Urban Area' Housing
	14:00-17:00	Session 6B	Larger Villages Housing Development
Fri 14 Oct 2016	10:00-13:00		Reserve
Week 3			
Tues 8 Nov 2016	10:00-13:00	Session 7A	Rural Service Centres
	14:00-17:00	Session 7B	Smaller Villages & The Countryside
Wed 9 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00	Session 8	Employment Policies & Allocations
Thur 10 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00	Session 9	Retail and Mixed Development
Week 4			
Tues 15 Nov 2016	10:00-13:00	Session 10A	Yalding Reps & Similar Issues
	14:00-17:00	Session 10B	Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople
Wed 16 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00	Session 11	Development Management Policies
Thur 17 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00	Session 12	Transport and Infrastructure
Fri 18 Nov 2016	10:00-13:00		Reserve
Week 5			
Tues 22 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00		Reserve
Wed 23 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00		Reserve
Week 6			
Tues 29 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00	Session 13	Alternative Sites
Wed 30 Nov 2016	10:00-17:00	Session 14	Alternative Sites
Thur 1 Dec 2016	10:00-13:00	Session 15A	Implementation & Monitoring
	14:00-17:00	Session 15B	Closing Session

The Programme may be subject to changes which will be published on the Examination website: <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-plan/examination>

* Finishing times are estimated. When 2 sessions are programmed on the same day, the start of the 2nd session may be postponed if it proves necessary to extend the 1st session into the afternoon.

Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transportation Committee	13 September 2016
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Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	YES
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Authority Monitoring Report 2015/16

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transport Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Stuart Watson, Planning Officer, Spatial Policy
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The Committee approves the Authority Monitoring Report 2015/16 attached at Appendix one to this report for publication on the Council’s website.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
The Authority Monitoring Report focuses on monitoring those indicators that help to illustrate the key features of the borough and also reports on the monitoring of policies in the submitted Local Plan.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transport Committee	13/09/2016

Authority Monitoring Report (2015/16)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report considers the findings of the Maidstone Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) 2015/16 attached to this report at Appendix one.
 - 1.2 Members are recommended to approve the AMR 2015/16 for publication on the Borough Council's website.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The AMR is prepared in accordance with Regulation 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ("the Regulations"). It is also a corporate document not exclusive to planning, highlighting a number of important matters such as deprivation, crime, and housing delivery.
- 2.2 This is the first Maidstone AMR in three years due to resourcing issues being redirected to producing the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 ("the draft Local Plan") for submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, which took place on 20 May 2016.
- 2.3 Maidstone's AMR 2015/16 has been structured differently to previous AMRs to reflect the submitted draft Local Plan and the key monitoring indicators contained within it. Where possible, data from the years 2011/12 to 2015/16 has been used to monitor changes and to reflect the first 5 years of the submitted draft Local Plan.
- 2.4 The AMR 2015/16 focuses on monitoring indicators that help to illustrate the key features of the borough and monitors policies set out within the submitted draft Local Plan. The AMR comprises:
 - An introduction to the Authority Monitoring Report
 - A Maidstone Profile which demonstrates the wider demographic, social, economic and environmental characteristics of the borough;
 - Development plan progress which includes a review of the Local Development Scheme (LDS), Neighbourhood Development Plans, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Duty to Cooperate and the adoption of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan
 - Local Plan performance, monitoring the policies set out in the submitted draft Local Plan. The key indicators monitored in AMR focus on Housing Delivery, Affordable Housing, Nursing and Residential Care Homes, Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, Housing Density, Quality Design, Economic Delivery, Recreational Open Space, Transport and Air Quality, Built and Natural Environment and Local Services and Infrastructure.
 - A glossary of terms

- 2.5 The AMR draws on a wide range of data from the following sources:
- The 2011 census and updates
 - The Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Government's Neighbourhood statistics website
 - The Environment Agency
 - Historic England
 - MBC's Spatial Policy department, the wider Planning department and GIS (Geographical Information Systems) department.

- 2.6 The Key findings from AMR:

Maidstone Profile

- 2.7 Maidstone's population in mid-2015 was estimated as 164,499 persons made up of 51% females and 49% males. The largest age groups are 40-44, 45-49 and 50-54 which make up 22% of the total population. In the ten years to 2013/14 the average total net migration of persons moving to the borough was 1,317 per year.
- 2.8 There are 68,040 dwellings in Maidstone borough and the average household size is 2.4 people. Between 2011 and 2015, the total number of house sales increased from 1,997 to 2,692 dwellings, an increase of 45%. Between 2011 and 2015 there has been a 39% fall in vacant dwellings in Maidstone. Vacant dwellings make up 1.49% of total dwelling stock.
- 2.9 From the resident population of Maidstone, associate professional & technical workers (18%) are the largest employment group followed by administrative and secretarial workers (14%), which is a reflection of the County Town's key role as an administrative centre.
- 2.10 30,693 economically active people live and work within the borough. There is a high proportion of workers commuting out to Tonbridge and Malling and all London metropolitan boroughs. Medway has a high proportion of persons commuting to work in Maidstone.
- 2.11 Maidstone's education results in 2013/14 showed a greater percentage of students gaining 5 or more GCSE subjects at grades A* to C compared to county, regional and national results. The school year 2013/14 saw education reforms including the move towards end of course exams, downgrading of course work and schools not being able to repeatedly enter candidates resitting exams. This may account for the significant fall in students gaining 5 or more GCSE subjects at grades A* to C grades (excluding Mathematics and English).
- 2.12 36% of Maidstone residents over the age of 16 years have a degree or above. This is the largest proportion of residents with qualifications obtained. The smallest proportion (6%) have no formal qualifications.
- 2.13 Maidstone has a consistently lower unemployment rate (3.8%) than the Kent average (5.0%) and was comparable to the South East (3.7%) but was lower than the national average (4.9%) in April 2016.

- 2.14 Between 2014 and 2015 Maidstone did not follow regional and national increases in crime statistics but reported a small fall (0.31%). The percentage of domestic burglaries fell by (17.08%), with an increase in Robbery (18.62%) and Violence without injury (15.29%).
- 2.15 The Maidstone urban wards of Park Wood, Shepway South and High Street contain the highest levels of deprivation in the borough and rank in the top 10% in Kent and the South East. Park Wood ward is also in the top 10% most deprived wards nationally.
- 2.16 Four of Maidstone's most picturesque parks have been awarded Green Flag Status: Mote Park, Whatman Park, Cobtree Park and Clare Park. Three Local Nature Reserves are planned for Fant Wildlife Area, Sandling Park/Cuckoo Wood and Cross Keys, Bearsted.

Development Plan Progress

- 2.17 The Borough Council is meeting its timetable for plan production set out in the LDS 2015. The draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 was submitted to the Secretary of State on 20 May 2016 for public examination, which is due to commence in October 2016.
- 2.18 The Borough Council currently has one adopted Neighbourhood Plan which forms part of its Development Plan: the North Loose Neighbourhood Plan. Two further Neighbourhood Plans are currently at examination: Staplehurst has received examiner's findings and Headcorn's findings are anticipated at the end of September.
- 2.19 The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030 has completed its statutory stages of public consultation and independent examination, and was adopted on 14 July 2016. It now forms part of Maidstone's Development Plan.
- 2.20 Consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy was carried out in Spring 2014. The consultation on the CIL Draft Charging Schedule will commence on Friday 5 August 2016 for six weeks, closing on 16 September 2016.
- 2.21 Maidstone Borough Council submitted a Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement to support the draft Local Plan in its Examination in Public.

Local Plan Performance

- 2.22 The Borough Council is meeting its objectively assessed needs for housing and, as at 1 April 2016, it has a five-year supply of readily available housing sites;
- 2.23 Affordable housing is being secured in accordance with the draft Local Plan policies but completion rates are low this year, in part due to the loss of affordable housing on a redeveloped housing association sites and the completion of a number of prior notification conversions that do not attract affordable housing contributions;

- 2.24 An additional 13.19ha of open space has been secured through planning permissions granted during the monitoring period;
- 2.25 There has been some progress delivering new employment floorspace on allocated sites: outline consent has been granted for the Maidstone Medical Campus and new premises have been completed on one of the allocated sites in Marden;
- 2.26 Retail monitoring shows good rates of delivery of comparison floorspace, and that there is also an adequate pipeline supply of convenience floorspace already permitted to respond to demand as it arises;
- 2.27 There has been an increase in the extent of the indicative flood plain, and a refresh of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is underway;
- 2.28 The North Loose Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made', and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan has been adopted, so both documents form part of the Borough Council's Development Plan;
- 2.29 Consultation on the CIL Draft Charging Schedule commenced on Friday 5 August 2016 for six weeks.
- 2.30 Five schemes within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) have progressed, these include:
- Provision of a bridge gyratory bypass through Fairmeadow to reduce congestion in the Town Centre.
 - Improvements to the existing towpath on the eastern and western banks of the River Medway.
 - Improvements to Maidstone East Rail Station forecourt and ticket office, together with improvements to the public realm at the northern end of Week Street.
 - Provision of a new roundabout to provide access to site H1 (5) Langley Park, situated off the A274.
 - Provision of new 2FE primary school on site H1 (5) Langley Park, Maidstone

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option A:** The Committee could opt to approve the AMR 2015/16 for publication on the Borough Council's website.
- 3.2 **Option B:** The Committee, conversely, could resolve not to approve the AMR 2015/16 for publication on the Borough Council's website
- 3.3 **Option C:** The Committee could resolve to defer approval of the AMR 2015/16 pending amendments and reconsideration at a future meeting.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Option A is recommended.

The guidance on preparing Annual Monitoring Reports has been withdrawn and the duty to submit the document to the Secretary of State has been removed. However under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the Borough Council is still required to produce a monitoring report for local people on locally determined issues.

The AMR 2015/16 reports on the monitoring framework for the submitted draft Local Plan policies. The submitted draft Local Plan monitoring framework ensures the delivery of the amount and type of development required whilst also protecting and enhancing the aspects of the historic and natural environment that contribute to the form and character of the borough.

An up-to-date AMR will likely be considered as part of the examination of the draft Local Plan which is scheduled to commence in October 2016

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

5.1 Following approval of the Committee, the AMR 2015/16 will be published on the Borough Council's website.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Authority Monitoring Report focuses on monitoring those indicators that help to illustrate the key features of the borough and also reports on the monitoring of policies in the submitted Local Plan.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Risk Management	Completing the requirement to produce a monitoring report for local people on locally determined issues	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Financial	None	Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

Staffing	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Legal	None	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Community Safety	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Human Rights Act	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Procurement	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development & Mark Green, Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Authority Monitoring Report 2015/16

**This document is produced by
Maidstone Borough Council**

All enquiries should be addressed to:

**Spatial Policy Team
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House
King Street
Maidstone
Kent ME15 6JQ**

**Telephone: 01622 602639
Email: ldf@maidstone.gov.uk**

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Introduction

1.1 The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for Maidstone provides a framework with which to monitor and review the effectiveness of local plan policies that address local issues over the monitoring period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

1.2 The borough's adopted development plan comprises saved policies from the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan (2000), the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, Affordable Housing and Open Space Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Neighbourhood Development Plans. These documents are available to view and download from the Council's website. The Council has been preparing a new local plan and, following several stages of public consultation, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan was submitted on 20 May 2016 in preparation for public examination. This document is called the **Submission Plan** in the AMR. Once adopted, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan will supersede the saved policies of the 2000 local plan and the two DPDs for affordable housing and open space.

1.3 The AMR includes a profile of Maidstone, which focuses on the broader and more descriptive character of the borough: its demographic, economic, social and environmental structure. The report often includes a series of data so that changes over time can be understood. It reviews the progress of the development plan against the timetable for plan making set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme, and reports on the progress of the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans. The AMR contains a section on the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan; an outline of the progress of the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy; and an update on the requirement for continued collaboration with partners over strategic cross-boundary issues through the 'duty to cooperate'. The performance of local plan policies is monitored in accordance with the key monitoring indicators of the Submission Plan. A glossary of terms is included to assist the reader.

1.4 A series of topic papers accompanied the Submission Plan, which contain further statistical detail and analysis in support of the plan policies. These documents are cross-referenced in the AMR:

- Housing
- Employment and Retail
- Gypsy & Traveller and Travelling Showpeople.
- Transport

1.5 The Spatial Strategy topic paper contains information on the evolution of the Submission Plan's strategy.

1.6 Some of the key points highlighted in this year's AMR include:

- The Council is meeting its objectively assessed needs for housing and, as at 1 April 2016, it has a five-year supply of readily available housing sites;
- Affordable housing is being secured in accordance with Submission Plan policies but completion rates are low this year, in part due to the loss of affordable housing on a redeveloped housing association site and the completion of a number of prior notification conversions that do not attract affordable housing contributions;

- An additional 13.19ha of open space has been secured through permissions granted during the monitoring period;
- There has been some progress delivering new employment floorspace on allocated sites: outline consent has been granted for the Maidstone Medical Campus and new premises have been completed on one of the allocated sites in Marden;
- Retail monitoring shows good rates of delivery of comparison floorspace, and that there is also an adequate pipeline supply of convenience floorspace already permitted to respond to demand as it arises;
- There has been an increase in the extent of the indicative flood plain, and a refresh of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is underway;
- Progress has been made on five of the critical/essential infrastructure schemes identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
- The North Loose Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made', and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan has been adopted, so both documents form part of the Council's development plan; and
- Consultation on the CIL Draft Charging Schedule commenced on Friday 5 August 2016 for six weeks.

Maidstone Profile

2.1 The Maidstone profile indicators reveal the broader descriptive character of the borough in terms of the demographic, economic, social and environmental characteristics of Maidstone. The following section includes statistical data and commentary, illustrating historic trends where data is available. The profile indicators focus on the key characteristics of the area and local issues, setting the scene for planning the future growth of the borough.

2.2 The demographic structure contains data on population and migration. The economic structure reviews house prices and sales, earnings and commuting patterns. The social profile includes education achievements, crime statistics and data on areas of deprivation. The built and natural environment section highlights the borough's assets and constraints.

Demographic Structure

Population

2.3 Maidstone's population in mid 2015 was estimated as 164,499 persons compared to 143,353 in 2005, an estimated rise of 21,146 or 14.8%. In 2015 the estimated population was made up of 51% females and 49% males. The largest age groups in 2015, 40-44, 45-49 and 50-54 make up 22% of the total population. The percentage of males and females are generally equal up to the age of 70 with the proportion of males decreasing from the age of 75. Comparisons between 2005 and 2015 show that in both years the proportion of persons drop in the age range 20-24 and that the highest proportion of residents has changed from 35-39 in 2005 to 45-49 in 2015 (Figure 2.1).

2.4 In the ten years to 2013/14 the average total net migration inflow per year was 1,317 people. Total migration fell considerably in the year 2011/12, but by the year 2013/14 total migration was higher than the previous peak in 2006/07 with internal migration making up the greater proportion at 55% (compared to only 38% in 2006/07). There has been fluctuations in both international and internal migration levels with record highs and lows. In recent years net internal migration has been higher than international migration (Figure 2.2).

2 . Maidstone Profile

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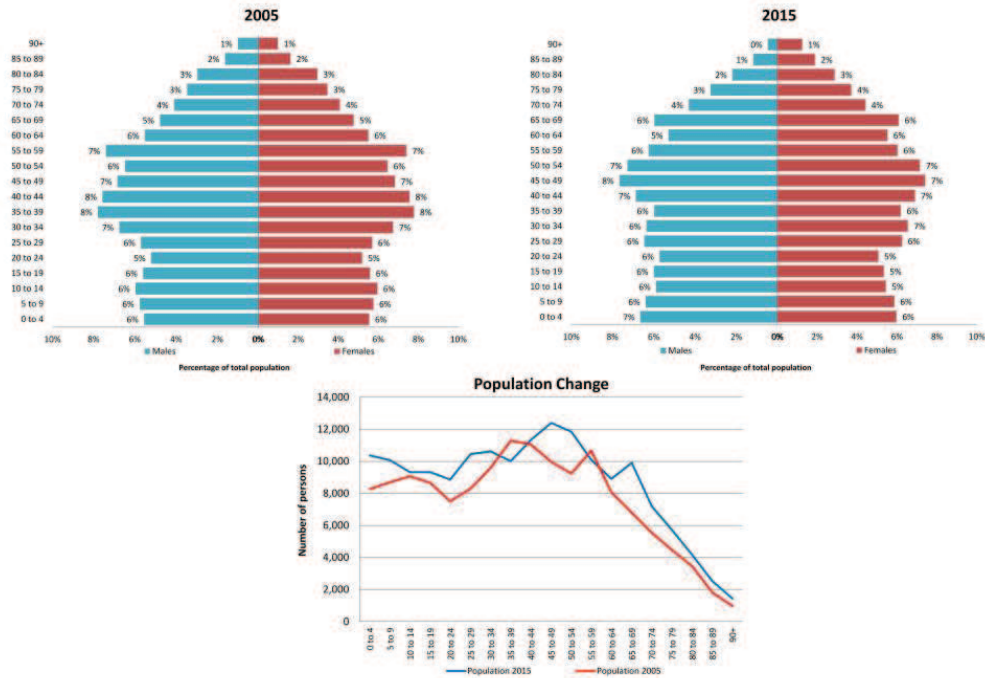


Figure 2.1 Population of Maidstone Borough 2005 & 2015 (source: ONS 2005 & 2015 ward population estimates for England and Wales (experimental statistics))

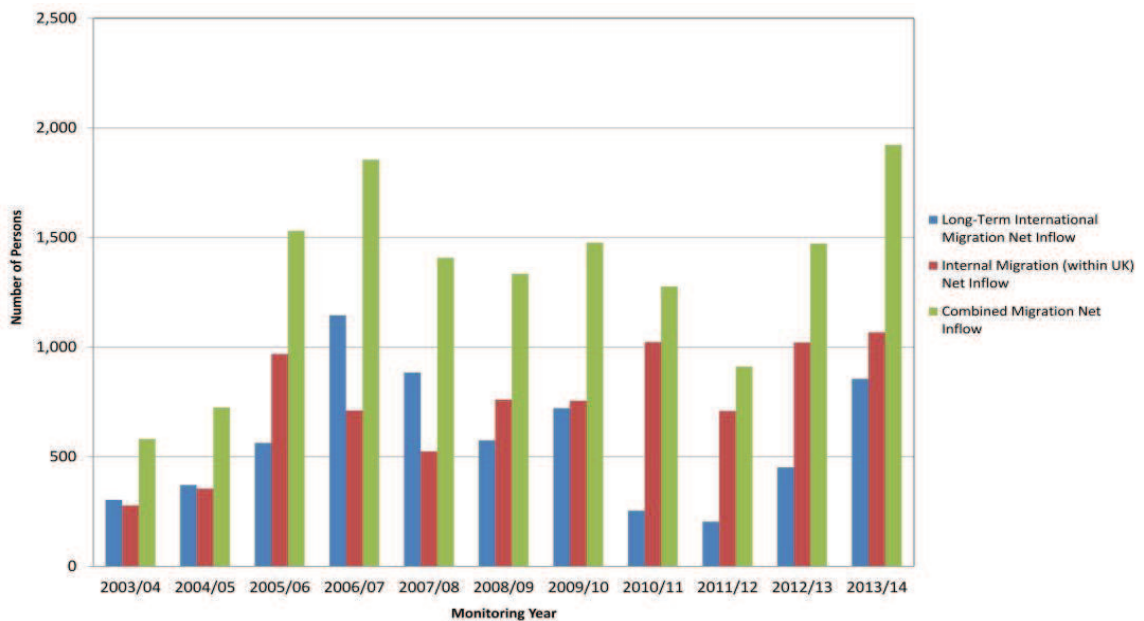


Figure 2.2 Maidstone Borough Council International and internal migration (source: ONS Migration Indicators August 2015)

Economic Structure

Housing stock, prices and sales

2.5 There are 68,040 dwellings in Maidstone Borough. The average household size is 2.4 people, which is comparable to household sizes across the county, the region and nationally.

2.6 House prices rose steeply in Maidstone until 2007, particularly for detached dwellings. In 2008/09 prices fell sharply and after a brief recovery fell again in 2011 (Figure 2.3). This is a reflection of the national economic recession in the UK, which affected the British banking sector and the availability of mortgages. Since 2011 house prices in Maidstone have been steadily climbing and, after 8, years are now higher than the peak of 2007.

2.7 Between 2011 and 2015, the total number of house sales increased from 1,997 to 2,692 dwellings, respectively: a 45% increase. Semi detached house sales have fallen from a peak of 33% of sales in 2012 to 29% of sales in 2015 against an increase in proportion of sales for terraced dwellings and flats/maisonettes (Figure 2.4).

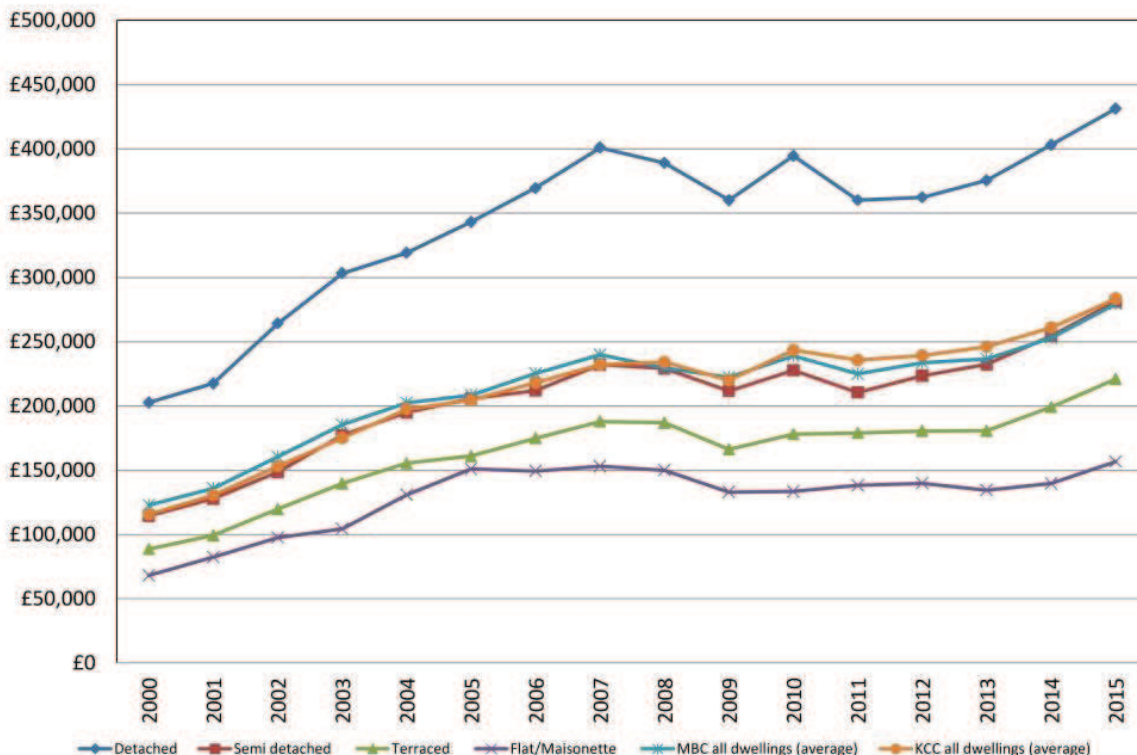


Figure 2.3 Maidstone annual house price change (source: KCC House prices & transactions bulletin 2015)

2 . Maidstone Profile

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	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Maidstone	-5.91	3.92	1.20	6.95	10.47
Kent (including Medway)	-3.16	2.63	3.01	6.54	9.29
South East	-1.64	1.78	2.66	6.23	7.84

Table 2.1 All dwellings annual house price % change (source: KCC House prices & transactions bulletin 2015)

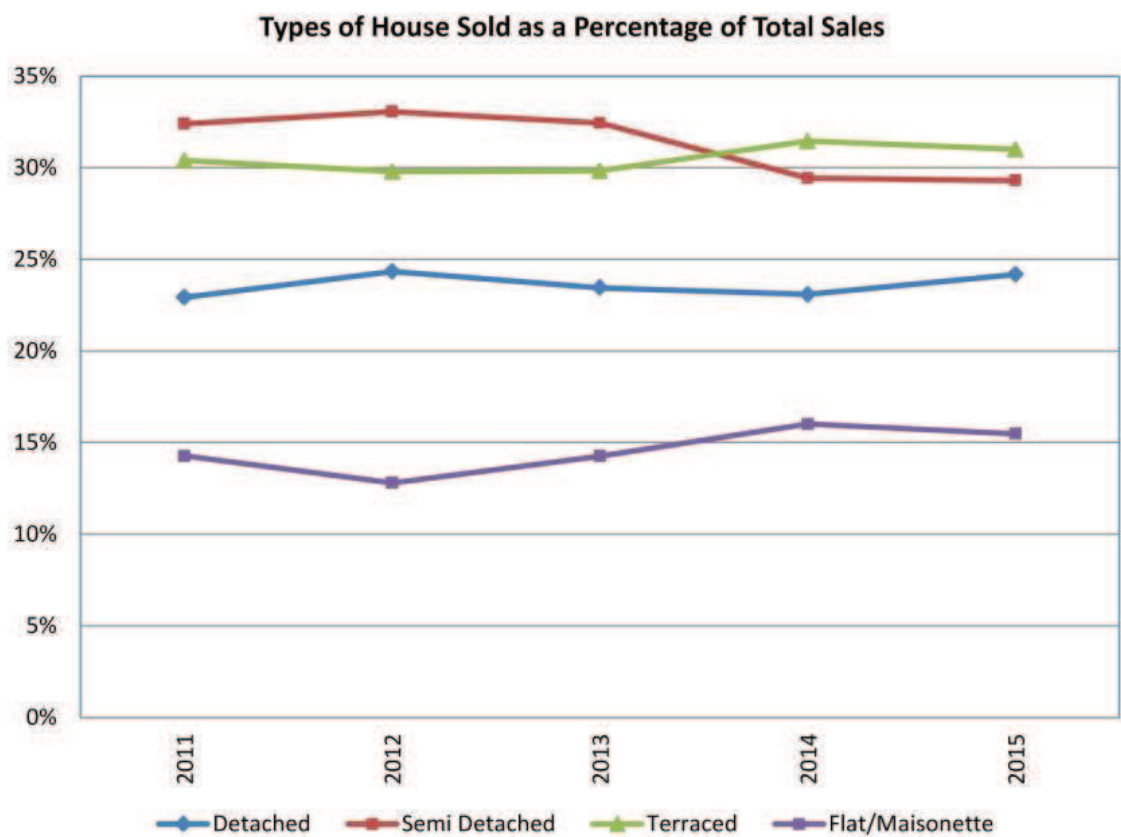


Figure 2.4 Maidstone types of house sold as a percentage of total house sales (source: KCC House Prices and Transactions Bulletin 2015)

Vacant dwellings

2.8 There has been a 39% fall in vacant dwellings in Maidstone between 2011 and 2015, a trend reflected in Kent and Medway (Table 2.2). Vacant dwellings in Maidstone make up 1.49% of total dwelling stock (68,040 homes), which is lower than Kent and Medway: 2.41% of total dwelling stock (762,620 homes). The number of households on the housing register in Maidstone has decreased by 1,982 between the years 2011 and 2015, a fall of 58% which is considerably higher than Kent and Medway 15%, this fall is principally due to the Council implementing a new Allocation Scheme from 1 April 2013. Unlike previous versions of the Allocation Scheme there are now qualifying entry requirements that applicants must meet in order to be accepted onto the register' (Table 2.3).

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Maidstone	1,583	1,401	1,239	1,112	1,017
Kent (including Medway)	23,331	22,490	20,015	18,781	18,380

Table 2.2 Vacant dwellings (source: KCC Vacant and Empty Dwellings bulletin 2015)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011-2015 % change
Maidstone	3,442	3,674	3,151	1,288	1,460	58%
Kent (including Medway)	45,102	49,126	55,423	37,890	38,529	15%

Table 2.3 Number of households on the housing register (waiting list) dates from 1 April (source: KCC Housing Register 2014/15)

Employment by occupation, earnings and commuting patterns

2.9 Figure 2.5 shows that associate professional & technical workers (resident population) are the largest employment group for Maidstone (18%) followed by administrative and secretarial workers (14%), which is a reflection of the County Town's key role as an administrative centre. The Council strives to maintain a balance of job opportunities within the borough, reflected through the policies of the Submission Plan and the Maidstone Economic Development Strategy.

2.10 Maidstone Borough has a low wage economy: there is a disparity between residence earnings and work place earnings (Figure 2.6). Wages are higher for the economically active population who live in Maidstone and commute out to work in London and other locations compared to those who work in the borough. Maidstone has an internal commuting flow of 30,693 economically active people who are living and working within the borough. The figures exclude persons who usually work from home or have no fixed place of work.

2 . Maidstone Profile

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2.11 Table 2.4 shows net commuting patterns between Maidstone and London, and the seven local authority areas with which Maidstone has the highest levels of commuting flows. From the seven local authority areas, 49% of the total commuting flow are workers coming into Maidstone Borough. There is a high proportion of workers commuting out to Tonbridge and Malling (58%) and all London metropolitan boroughs (83%). Medway has the highest proportion of workers commuting into Maidstone (65%). These patterns reflect Maidstone's strong transport links with the M20 motorway junctions 5,6,7 and 8, three railways lines across the borough and good public transport links with the Medway Towns.

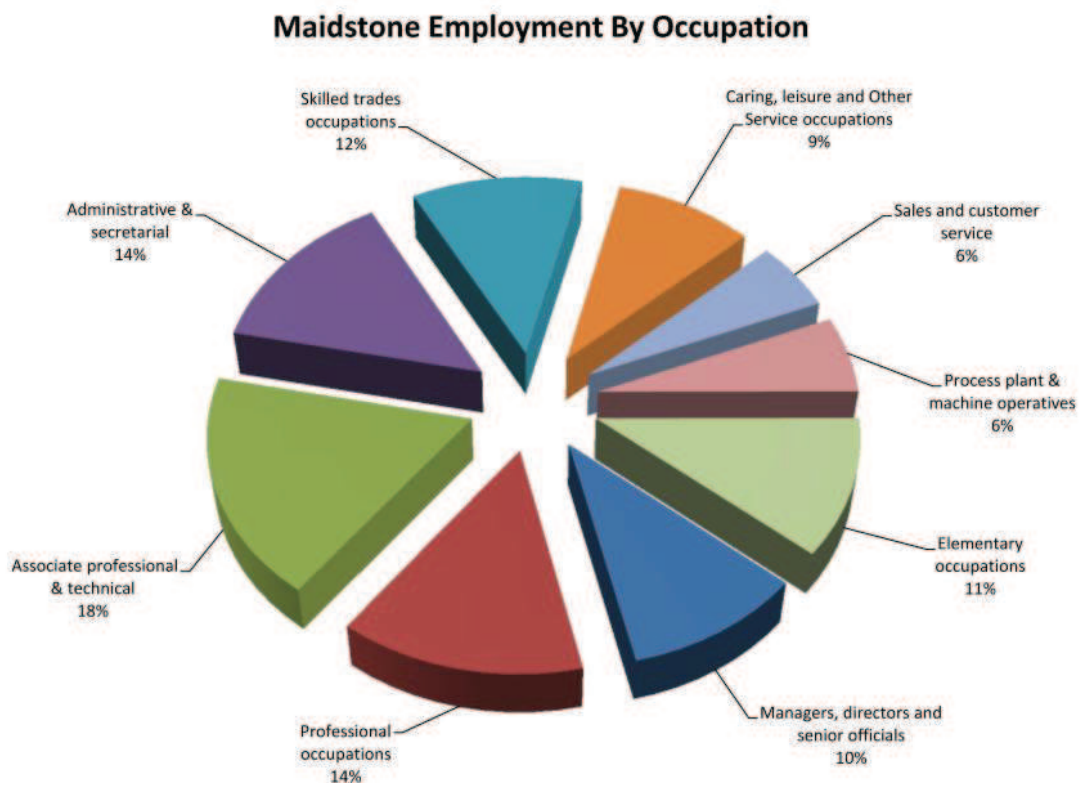


Figure 2.5 Employment by occupation 2015 (source: NOMIS 2016)



Figure 2.6 Workplace and residence-based earnings 2015 (source: NOMIS 2016)

Local Authority	Commuting in	Commuting out	Net commuting flow
Tonbridge and Malling	5,471	7,479	- 2,008
Medway	7,578	4,165	3,413
Swale	3,190	1,533	1,657
Ashford	2,882	1,636	1,246
Tunbridge Wells	1,838	2,671	- 833
Canterbury	1,090	517	573
Gravesham	901	569	332
London	1,491	7,325	- 5,834
Total	24,441	25,895	- 1,454

Table 2.4 Maidstone commuting flows (source: NOMIS census data 2011)

Social Profile

Education

2.12 The latest data available for Maidstone's education results is set out in Tables 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and Figure 2.7. The achievements overall show:

- A greater percentage of students gaining 5 or more subjects at grades A* to C compared to county, regional and national results;
- A significant fall in students gaining 5 or more A* to C grades (excluding mathematics and English) for Maidstone in 2013/14 compared to previous years, a trend reflected across Kent, the South East and England (this year saw sweeping main stream reforms and the toughening up of qualifications);
- Maidstone has had a higher level of young people entering and achieving English Baccalaureate compared to the county, the region and nationally;
- A significant increase of students in Maidstone who have entered and not achieved English Baccalaureate (27%), compared to Kent (15%), the South East (14%) and England (15%);
- A downward trend in the percentage of students in Maidstone achieving 2 or more passes at A Level, a trend that is reflected across Kent, the South East and England; and
- 36% of Maidstone residents over the age of 16 years have a degree or above.

	Maidstone Borough			Kent (including Medway)			South East			England		
	5+ A*-C Inc	5+ A*-C Exc	5+ A-G	5+ A*-C Inc	5+ A*-C Exc	5+ A-G	5+ A*-C Inc	5+ A*-C Exc	5+ A-G	5+ A*-C Inc	5+ A*-C Exc	5+ A-G
September 2013 to August 2014	62.8%	69.5%	94.9%	58.0%	64.7%	93.2%	58.9%	67.3%	93.8%	56.6%	65.6%	93.4%
September 2012 to August 2013	67.3%	90.9%	97.0%	62.3%	83.0%	96.0%	62.5%	82.4%	95.8%	60.6%	83.0%	95.8%
September 2011 to August 2012	66.4%	89.8%	96.5%	61.0%	86.4%	96.0%	60.2%	82.0%	95.8%	58.8%	83.0%	95.7%
September 2011 to August 2010	63.2%	88.1%	95.9%	59.2%	82.6%	95.2%	59.6%	79.3%	95.4%	58.2%	80.5%	95.2%
September 2010 to August 2009	61.1%	85.6%	95.0%	56.4%	79.1%	94.8%	57.5%	75.8%	95.1%	55.0%	76.4%	94.8%

Table 2.5 GCSE and equivalent results for young people achieving 5+ A*-C and 5+ A*-G (source: Government Neighbourhood Statistics 2016)

	Maidstone		Kent (including Medway)		South East		England	
	Entering	Achieving	Entering	Achieving	Entering	Achieving	Entering	Achieving
September 2013 to August 2014	58.3%	30.9%	41.1%	25.9%	39.9%	26.2%	38.7%	24.2%
September 2012 to August 2013	43.0%	29.7%	35.8%	24.4%	36.2%	24.5%	35.5%	22.8%
September 2011 to August 2012	25.9%	22.5%	27.7%	21.2%	27.7%	20.0%	23.1%	16.2%
September 2010 to August 2011	24.3%	19.9%	25.8%	19.9%	26.3%	19.2%	21.6%	15.4%
September 2009 to August 2010	25.8%	21.4%	25.5%	20.1%	27.1%	19.4%	21.4%	14.8%

Table 2.6 Young people entering and achieving English Bacculaureate (source: Government Neighbourhood Statistics 2016)

	Maidstone Borough	Kent (including Medway)	South East	England
September 2013 to August 2014	89.1%	87.8%	90.4%	89.8%
September 2012 to August 2013	93.1%	90.8%	92.3%	91.7%
September 2011 to August 2012	94.4%	92.0%	93.2%	93.1%
September 2010 to August 2011	95.6%	91.9%	93.8%	93.6%
September 2009 to August 2010	96.2%	92.5%	95.1%	94.8%

Table 2.7 GCE/Applied GCE A/AS and equivalent examination results - students achieving 2 or more passes of A Level (referenced by location of student residence) (source: Government Neighbourhood Statistics 2016)

Maidstone Residents Highest Qualification Obtained

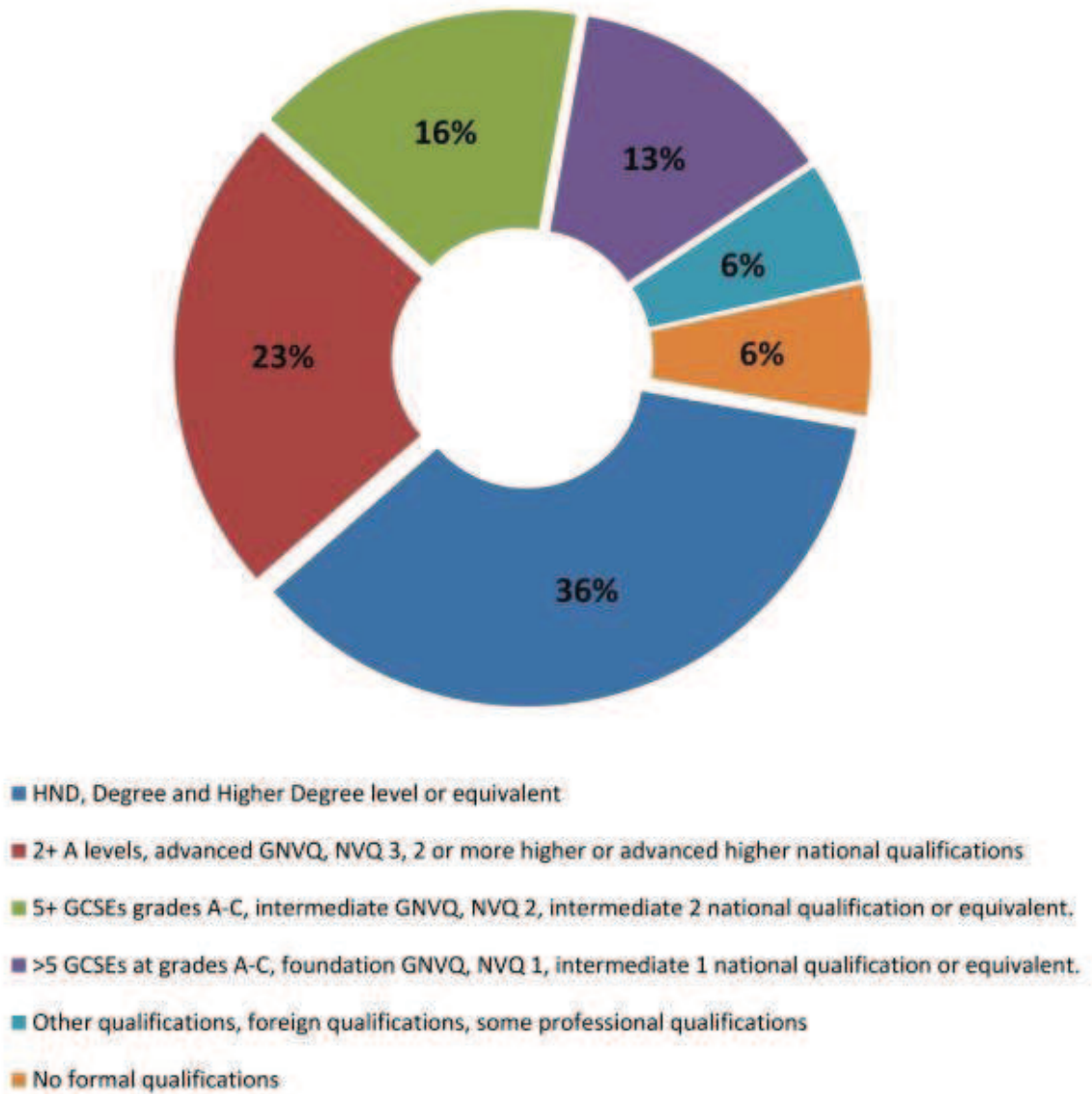


Figure 2.7 Maidstone residents highest qualification obtained (source: ONS annual population survey 2015)

Benefit claimants and unemployment

2.13 The percentage of people claiming benefits⁽¹⁾ in Maidstone is comparable to the South East but is lower than in Kent and Great Britain (Table 2.8). Maidstone has a consistently lower unemployment rate than the Kent average (Table 2.9). In April 2016, Maidstone's unemployment rate was comparable to the South East (3.7%) but was lower than the national average (4.9%). Youth (18-24 year old) unemployment in Maidstone is 2.2%, lower than the Kent (2.5%) and national (2.7%) averages.

	Maidstone Borough	Kent (including Medway)	South East	Great Britain
Number of benefit claimants April 2016	1,215	18,824	59,440	732,835
% Rate benefit claimants	1.2	1.7	1.1	1.8
No. Change since 2015	-30	-485	-4,170	-52,010
% Change since 2015	-2.4	-2.6	-6.6	-6.6

Table 2.8 Benefit claimants (source: KCC 2016, figures taken from the NOMIS Claimant Count)

Estimates of total unemployment (%)	April 2011 to March 2012	April 2012 to March 2013	April 2013 to March 2014	April 2014 to March 2015	March 2015 to April 2016
Maidstone	5.4	6.7	5.6	5.0	3.8
Kent	7.3	7.6	6.8	5.7	5.0

Table 2.9 Levels of unemployment (source: ONS estimated year average 2016)

1 Some benefits are available to those who work and live on low income, and to those who are unemployed

Free school meals

2.14 The percentage of pupils in Maidstone qualifying for free school meals in primary and secondary education is lower than in Kent and England, but higher than the Kent average in special needs schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals has decreased between 2014 and 2016 for each category of pupil across Maidstone, Kent and England (Table 2.10).

	Maidstone Borough			Kent (excluding Medway)			England		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Primary	11.8%	10.9%	10.1%	14.7%	13.7%	12.5%	19.2%	17.0%	15.6%
Secondary	8.0%	8.1%	8.0%	12.1%	11.7%	10.8%	16.3%	14.6%	13.9%
Special Needs	37.6%	36.5%	32.7%	33.0%	33.7%	32.3%	38.8%	37.2%	36.7%
Overall	10.6%	10.2%	9.6%	13.8%	13.2%	12.1%	18.2%	16.3%	15.2%

Table 2.10 Percentage of statutory aged pupils eligible for free schools meals at January 2014 to January 2016 (source: KCC 2016)

Crime

2.15 Crime statistics are reported annually from the 1 January to 31 December. The definition of each type of offence is shown below:

- Domestic burglaries include burglaries in all inhabited dwellings, including inhabited caravans, houseboats and holiday homes, as well as sheds and garages connected to the main dwelling (for example, by a connecting door).
- A robbery is an incident or offence in which force or the threat of force is used either during or immediately prior to a theft or attempted theft.
- Vehicle offences cover private and commercial vehicles and comprises theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle, aggravated vehicle taking, theft from a vehicle and interfering with a motor vehicle.
- Violence with injury includes all incidents of wounding, assault with injury and robbery which resulted in injury.
- Violence without injury includes all incidents of assault without injury.

2.16 Between 2014 and 2015 Maidstone and Kent did not follow regional and national increases in crime statistics but reported a small fall. The Council addresses local crime and disorder through the Safer Maidstone Partnership, and the Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-18 is a rolling five year document which highlights how to tackle community safety issues that matter to the local community.

Offence type	Maidstone Borough			Kent (including Medway)	South East	England and Wales
	2014	2015	% change	% change	% change	% change
Domestic burglary	1,837	1,523	-17.08	-16.48	-11.05	-5.38
Robbery	247	293	18.62	-6.04	-2.14	-7.47
Vehicle offences	2,805	2,828	0.82	-2.29	-4.62	-1.33
Violence with injury	4,266	4,473	4.85	3.10	25.24	15.88
Violence without injury	5,044	5,815	15.29	13.77	33.72	35.10
All reported crime	37,378	37,262	-0.31	-1.00	6.74	5.26

Table 2.11 Crime statistics 2014 to 2015 (source: ONS 2015)

Homeless households

2.17 Table 2.12 demonstrates there are 7.9 times as many homeless households in Maidstone in the reporting year 2014/15 than in there was in 2010/11, this is significantly higher than Kent (1.4 times) and England (1.2 times).

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Maidstone	27	189	198	155	213
Kent (including Medway)	1,152	1,133	1,333	1,268	1,659
England	44,160	50,290	53,550	52,200	54,205

Table 2.12 Homeless households (source: KCC Homeless Bulletin 2015 Q4)

Areas of multiple deprivation

2.18 The Maidstone urban wards of Park Wood, Shepway South and High Street contain the highest levels of deprivation in the borough and rank in the top 10% in Kent and the South East (Table 2.13 and Figure 2.8)⁽²⁾. Park Wood ward is also in the top 10% most deprived wards nationally. Although pockets of the urban wards of North (004F) and Shepway North (013C) do not fall within the top 10% in Kent, they are the 6th and 7th most deprived wards in Maidstone.

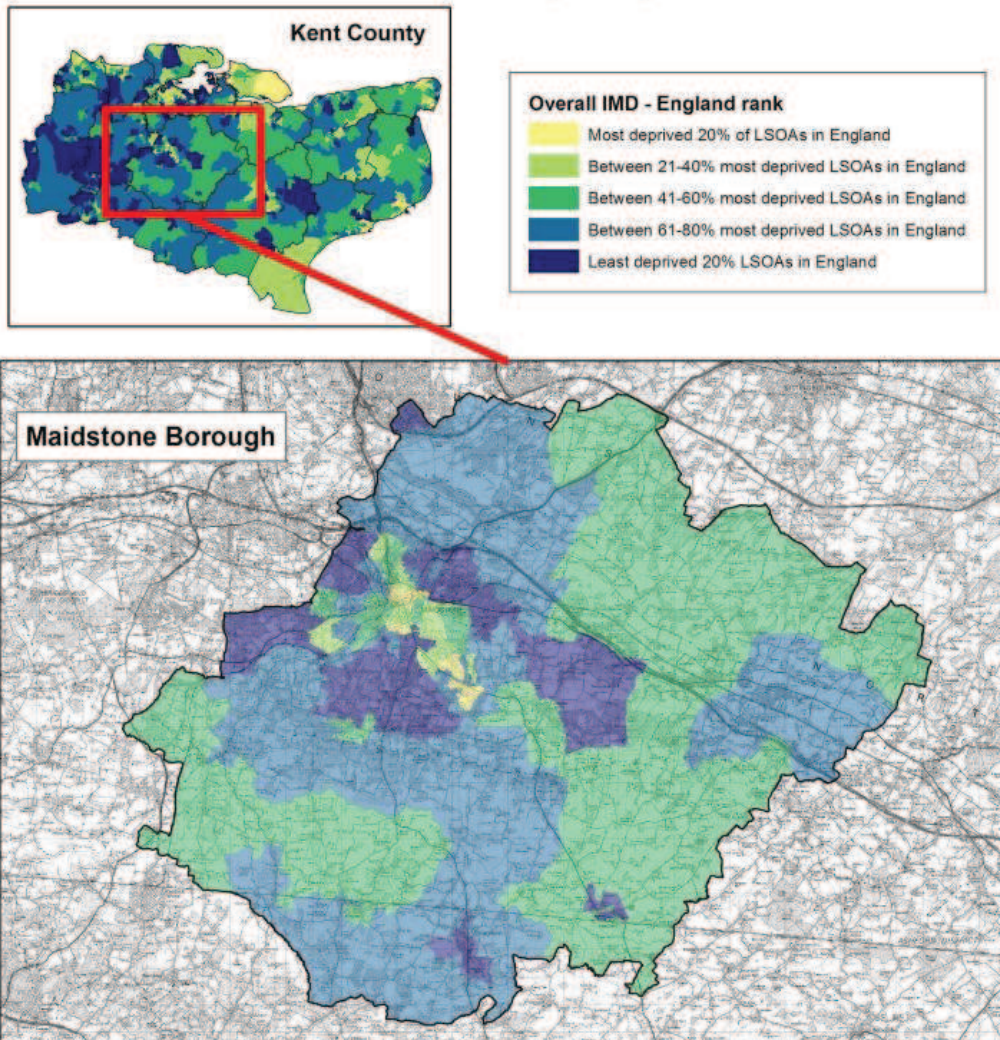
2.19 The Maidstone Community Strategy 2009 - 2020 *Your community, our priority* was refreshed in July 2013, and set out three new priorities focusing on troubled families (community budgets), tackling worklessness and poverty, and local environmental improvements. The strategy, which can be viewed on the Council's website, has seven long term outcomes that Maidstone Borough Council aspires to achieve through a partnership approach.

Wards	Kent Rank	Top 10%	South East Rank	Top 10%	National Rank	Top 10%
Park Wood (013A)	30	Yes	86	Yes	1,979	Yes
Park Wood (013B)	45	Yes	137	Yes	2,857	Yes
Shepway South (013D)	61	Yes	198	Yes	3,768	No
Shepway South (013E)	67	Yes	212	Yes	3,928	No
High Street (009C)	77	Yes	249	Yes	4,490	No

Table 2.13 Maidstone wards ranking in the 10% most deprived lower super output areas. (source: KCC Business Intelligence Statistical Bulletin 2015)

² A rank of 1 indicates the most deprived ward

National rank of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Maidstone based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010



Maidstone is ranked 217th out of 326 authorities in England. A rank of 1 is the most deprived. This places Maidstone in England's least deprived half of authorities.

Park Wood has the highest level of deprivation in Maidstone, followed by High Street and Shepway South.

Maidstone LSOAs	Number	%
Within England's top 20% most deprived	6	6.5%
Within South East's top 20% most deprived	15	16.3%
Within Kent's top 20% most deprived	10	10.9%

Out of a total of 92 LSOAs

Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010, Communities and Local Government (CLG)
 Produced by Research & Intelligence, Kent County Council
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Figure 2.8 County rank (excluding Medway) of lower super output areas in Maidstone borough based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (source: KCC)

Built and Natural Environment

2.20 Maidstone Borough has a range of designated heritage assets, including a large number of historically Listed Buildings and 41 Conservation Areas, of which six are located in or adjacent to the urban area (Table 2.14).

2.21 Four of Maidstone’s most picturesque parks have been awarded Green Flag Status: Mote Park, Whatman Park, Cobtree Park and Clare Park. The award recognises the best green spaces in England and Wales, and is a sign to the public that the green space offers the best possible standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent facilities.

2.22 Maidstone benefits from a substantial rural hinterland of high landscape and environmental quality, much of which is protected by national and local designations (Table 2.15). The borough's environmental assets, together with the constraints of the floodplain, are illustrated in Map 2.1.

2.23 There are three formally adopted Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in the borough: Vinters Valley Park, Boxley Warren and River Len. LNRs are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally, and they offer people opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. Additional Reserves are planned for Fant Wildlife Area and Cross Keys, Bearsted. Sandling Park/Cuckoo Wood offers further potential for designation as an LNR.

2.24 The quality and protection of the built and natural environment are important considerations for the Council.

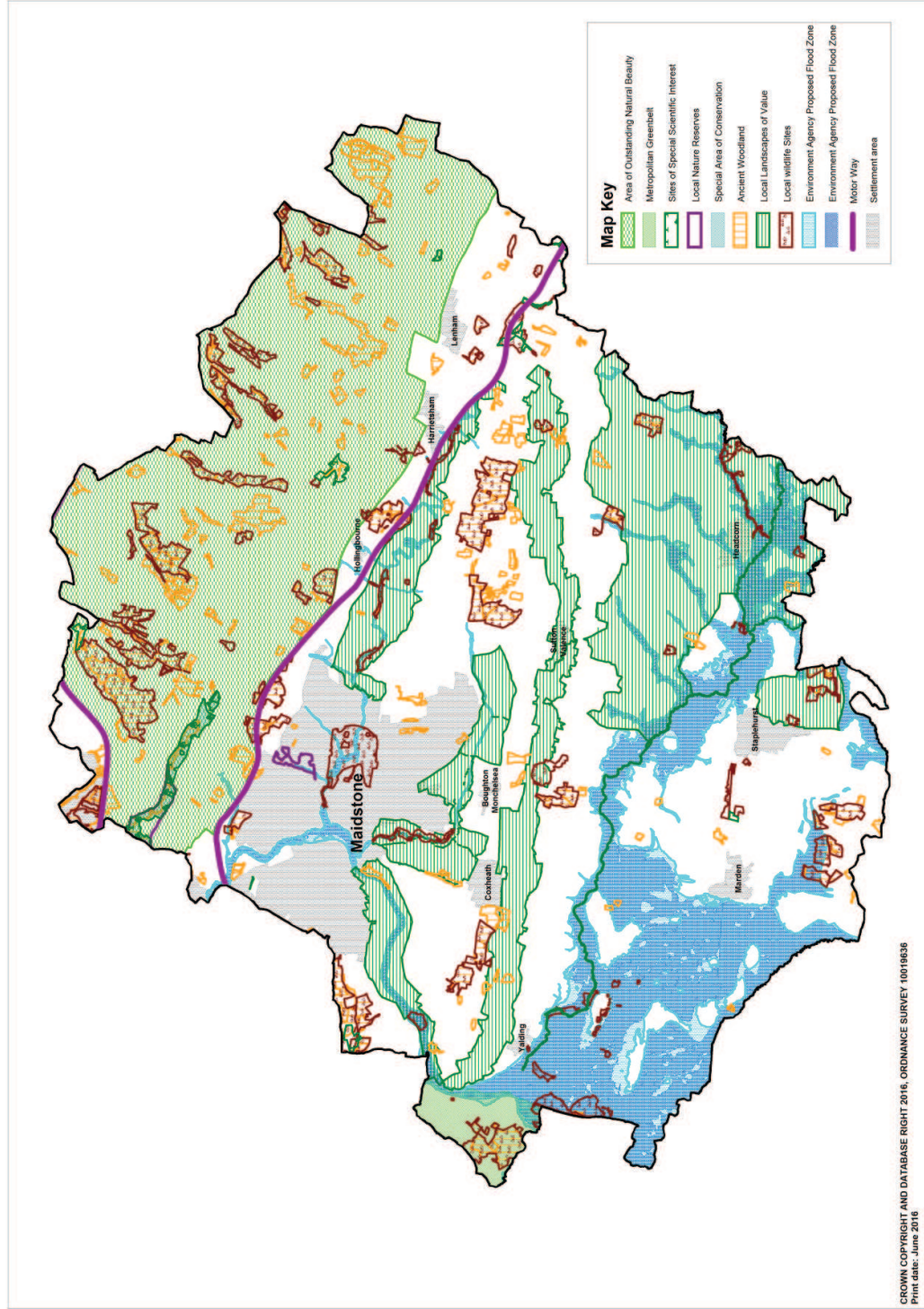
Built Environment Assets	Numbers
Conservation Areas	41
Listed Buildings	2,022
Grade I	43
Grade II*	106
Grade II	1,879
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	26
Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest	5
Important Historic Parks and Gardens	9

Table 2.14 Assets of the built environment (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

Natural Environment Assets and Constraints	km ²	km ²	%	Number
Total Area of Borough		391.88		
Metropolitan Green Belt		5.27	1.34	
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty		106.8	27.25	
Indicative Floodplain		66.45	16.95	
- flood zone 3	41.39			
- flood zone 2	25.05			
Landscapes of Local Value		75.58	19.29	5
Ancient Woodland (semi-natural and replanted)		28.29	7.22	
Special Area of Conservation		1.36	0.35	1
Sites of Special Scientific Interest		4.92	1.25	9
Local Wildlife Sites (formerly Sites of Nature Conservation Interest)		22.20	5.58	58
Roadside Verges of Nature Conservation Interest				34
Local Nature Reserves				3

Table 2.15 Key assets and constraints of the natural environment (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

2 . Maidstone Profile



Map 2.1 Maidstone Borough environmental assets and constraints (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

Local Development Scheme

Review of the Local Development Scheme

3.1 The Maidstone Local Development Scheme (LDS) identifies the range of local plan documents the Council will produce between 2014 and 2017, together with a work programme for the various stages of document preparation. The latest revision to the LDS, which was approved by Council, came into effect on 9 December 2015, and a copy of the Scheme can be viewed and downloaded from the website. The LDS explains how the Council will manage the preparation of documents, the timescale within which they will be produced, how documents are resourced, and the main risks to the production timetable. The LDS ensures that the local planning policy framework is kept up-to-date and that the community is actively involved in the process. Delivery of the programme is monitored through the Authority Monitoring Report, which highlights the need to review the LDS if required.

3.2 The Council is meeting its timetable for plan production set out in the LDS 2015: the Maidstone Borough Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 20 May 2016 for public examination, which is due to commence in October 2016. In addition to monitoring currently adopted policies, the policies from the Submission Plan are monitored under the key monitoring indicators set out in this AMR.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

3.3 There has been considerable interest in neighbourhood planning in the borough. Maidstone's extensive rural hinterland, development pressure and the very active nature of a large number of the borough's parish councils has led to a significant uptake of the process. This has resulted in greater community involvement in the planning process, allowing local people the chance to shape their local area and have a greater say in planning decisions. Since the introduction of neighbourhood development plans (also known as neighbourhood plans), 13 neighbourhood areas have been formally designated, the earliest being Broomfield & Kingswood in October 2012 and the most recent being Bearsted in December 2015. A number of parish councils and one neighbourhood forum (North Loose) are actively engaged in the plan making process. Detailed information on the progress of neighbourhood plans is held on the relevant pages of the Council's website.

3.4 There are a number of planning stages that must be completed in order to satisfy the regulations before a plan can be formally adopted (or 'made') including at least two rounds of public consultation, an independent examination and a local referendum. The Council currently has one made plan which forms part of its development plan: the North Loose Neighbourhood Plan was passed by a local referendum in November 2015 with 95% of voters in favour. Following the positive referendum outcome the plan was formally made by the Council on 13 April 2016. Two further neighbourhood plans are currently at examination: Staplehurst and Headcorn, with the Inspector's report expected during July or August 2016.

3.5 The Government has signalled its clear intention to further encourage neighbourhood planning through the provisions set out in the Housing and Planning Act (2016), recent amendments and updates to the National Planning Practice Guidance, and by the announcement of a forthcoming Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill. More rigorous timetables and deadlines for the neighbourhood planning process are being proposed, which will need to be monitored in future monitoring reports once the relevant legislation is enacted.

Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan

3.6 The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which is prepared by Kent County Council, sets out a vision and strategy for mineral provision and waste management in Kent up to the year 2030. The plan also contains a number of development management policies for evaluating minerals and waste planning applications. The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030 has completed its statutory stages of public consultation and independent examination, and was adopted on 14 July 2016. The plan now forms part of Maidstone's development plan which guides the decision making process for land uses and development proposals.

Community Infrastructure Levy

3.7 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a per square metre charge payable on almost all new development which creates net additional floorspace (calculated on gross internal area). The charge can be differentiated by geographical area, and by development type, and must be based on viability evidence. The purpose of the charge is to provide a funding source which will help to deliver necessary infrastructure to accommodate new development across the borough. This necessary infrastructure is identified within the Submission Plan and the accompanying Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Some types of development, notably affordable housing, self-build housing and charitable uses, are exempt from being charged the CIL.

3.8 Following consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule in spring 2014, the publication of the Draft Charging Schedule for consultation is the next stage in the process of introducing the CIL in Maidstone. Although the timescales for subsequent stages of CIL examination and adoption are dependent upon those of the Submission Plan examination, the overall objective is to introduce the CIL Charging Schedule in a timely manner following adoption of the Submission Plan. The consultation on the CIL Draft Charging Schedule will commence on Friday 5 August 2016 for six weeks, closing on 16 September 2016.

Duty to Cooperate

3.9 The 'duty to cooperate' places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with certain organisations in order to maximise the effectiveness of local plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. It is not a duty to agree, but every effort should be made to resolve any outstanding strategic cross boundary matters before local plans are submitted for examination. Local planning authorities must demonstrate how they have complied with the duty at the independent examination of their local plans.

3.10 Maidstone Borough Council submitted a Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement to support the Maidstone Borough Local Plan at submission stage. The statement contains a summary of duty to cooperate matters and engagements with groups that were involved in the local plan process. The document can be viewed on the Council's website.

3.11 The duty to cooperate is an ongoing process, and future engagements with relevant groups will be recorded in the monitoring report.

Local Plan Performance

4.1 Key monitoring indicators (KMI) enable the Council to understand the progress being made towards its local plan objectives and targets. The KMIs focus on the quantitative and qualitative delivery of homes and economic development, including supporting infrastructure, provision of recreational open space, and the protection and enhancement of the built and natural environment. The indicators are carried forward from the Submission Plan.

KMI 1 Housing Delivery

Key Monitoring Indicator 1

Performance indicator: Actual housing development completed compared with the housing trajectory.

Related policies: SS1; H1; H1(1) – H1(68); H2; H2(1) – H2(3); RMX1; RMX1(1) – RMX1(4); DM9; DM10; DM35; DM38; DM39

Targets:

Number of dwellings			
2011-2016	2017-2021	2022-2026	2027-2031
4,640	4,640	4,640	4,640

Retain a 5 year supply of housing land throughout the plan period.

4.2 The Housing Topic Paper 2016, demonstrates how the Council will meet its objectively assessed housing need of 18,560 homes over the plan period 2011 to 2031⁽³⁾. This figure has been adopted by the Council as its housing target. The Topic Paper contains detail on the methodology used and the sites that contribute towards housing land supply. Table 4.1 breaks down the various elements of supply and Figure 4.1 illustrates how the target is delivered over the 20-year housing trajectory.

4.3 For the past five years a total of 2,860 dwellings have been completed which represents a shortfall of 1,780 dwellings against the five year target of 4,640 dwellings. The Council's five-year housing land supply calculation demonstrates that this shortfall will be delivered over the next five years 2017 to 2021.

4.4 The Housing Topic Paper also sets out the methodology used to calculate the Council's five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and identifies the sites contributing towards supply. Table 4.2 demonstrates a surplus of 155 dwellings which represents 5.12 years' worth of housing land supply at the base date of 1 April 2016.

3 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (June 2015 Update)

4.5 Table 4.3 shows the progress of allocated housing sites as at 1 April 2016, and demonstrates their timely delivery. Of the total number of dwellings on allocated sites (8,666 units), 45% have an approved planning permission or a permission that has been granted subject to the signing of a S106 legal agreement⁽⁴⁾. A further 26% of dwellings are on sites where a planning application has been submitted but is yet to be determined. Only 29% of all allocated dwellings are on sites where an application is awaited.

	Housing land supply 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2031	Dwellings (net)	Dwellings (net)
1	Objectively assessed housing need/ Local Plan housing target		18,560
2	Completed dwellings 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2016	2,860	
3	Extant planning permissions as at 1 April 2016 (including a non-implementation discount)	5,475	
4	Local Plan allocated sites (balance of Regulation 19 Local Plan allocations not included in line 3 above)	5,600	
5	Local Plan broad locations for future housing development	3,790	
6	Windfall sites contribution	1,600	
7	Total housing land supply		19,325
8	Housing land surplus 2011/2031		765

Table 4.1 Meeting objectively assessed housing need (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

4 . Local Plan Performance

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		Dwellings (net)
1	Requirement 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2021 928 dwellings p.a. x 10 years	9,280
2	Number of dwellings completed 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2016	(2,860)
3	Residual requirement 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021 (line 1 - line 2)	6,420
4	5% buffer against potential non-delivery (5% of 6,420)	321
5	Total requirement 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021 (line 3 + line 4)	6,741
6	Total land supply 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021	6,896
7	Surplus in delivery 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021 (line 5 - line 6)	155

Table 4.2 Five-year housing land supply at 1 April 2016 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

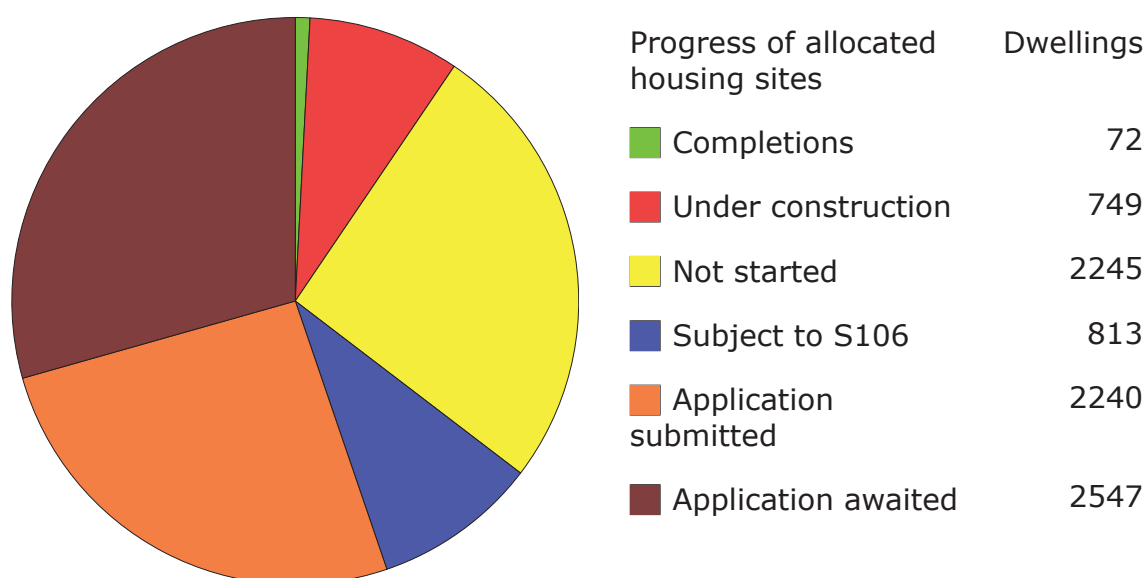


Table 4.3

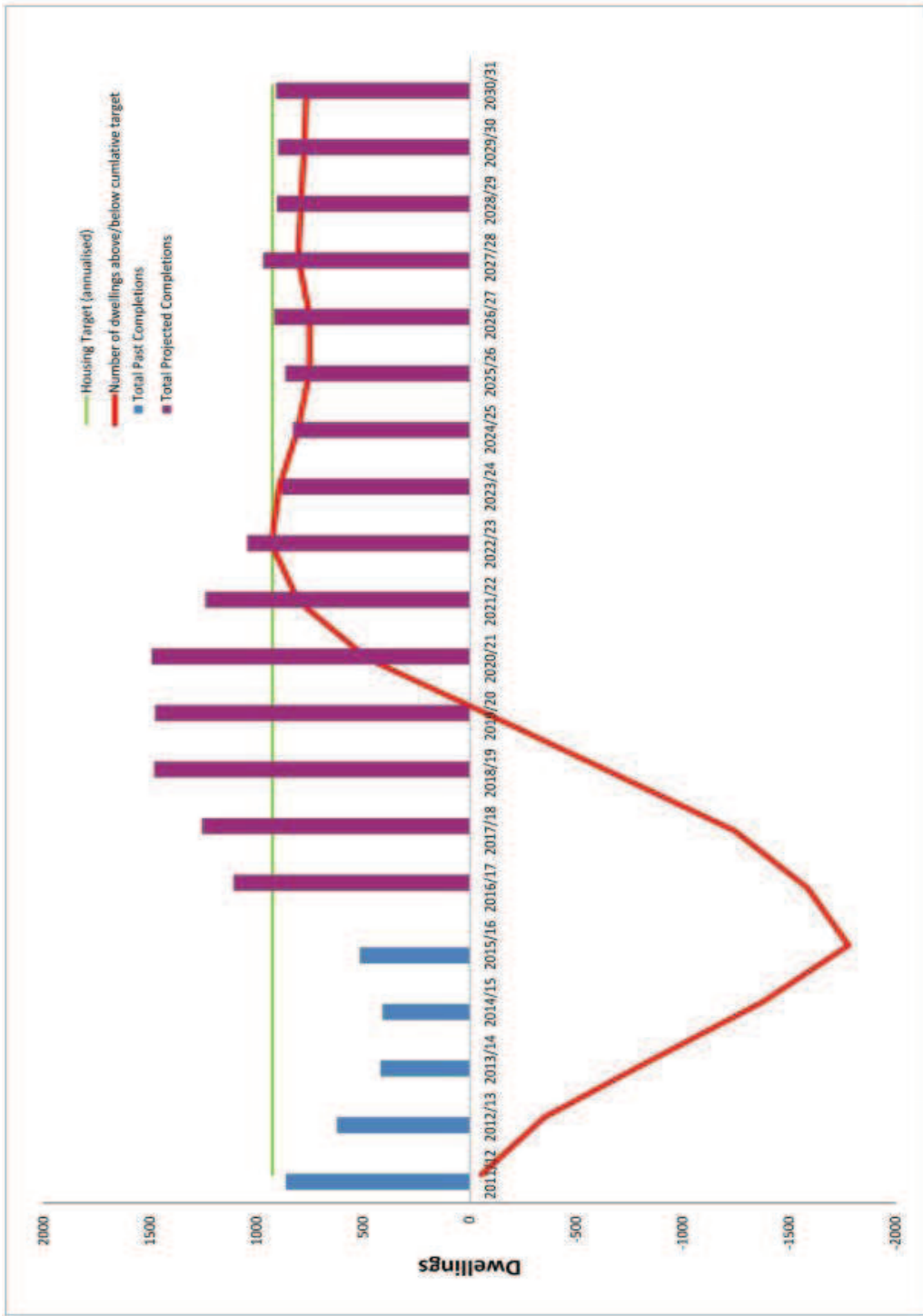


Figure 4.1 Housing Trajectory 2011/13 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

KMI 2 Affordable Housing Delivery

Key Monitoring Indicator 2

Performance indicators: Affordable housing development completed as a percentage of total dwellings completed; and affordable housing development permitted as a percentage of total dwellings permitted.

Related policies: DM13; DM14

Target:

Number of affordable homes as a percentage of all dwellings completed and permitted	
Maidstone urban area	30%
Policy H1(11) Springfield, Royal Engineers Road	20%
Countryside, rural service centres and larger villages	40%

4.6 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Update 2015) identifies an affordable housing need for the borough of 5,800 dwellings from 2013 to 2031 (322 dwellings per annum over 18 years). The Housing Topic Paper 2016 demonstrates how this need will be met. Table 4.4 sets out the Council's current affordable housing land supply, the balance being met through the actions of the registered providers of social housing and the private sector.

4.7 Table 4.5 shows the percentage of affordable housing delivered over the past five years. Completion rates fluctuate according to market conditions and construction rates for property types. Often the affordable housing element of a larger site is associated with a particular phase of the development, so affordable units are not built evenly over the construction period. During 2015/16, the proportion of completed affordable housing units was low (27%), partially due to the loss of affordable housing arising from the redevelopment of housing association homes at Wallis Avenue, and the completion of a number of prior notification conversions which do not attract affordable housing contributions.

4.8 To measure the success of the Council's emerging affordable housing policy, it is helpful to monitor the number of affordable housing units secured on qualifying sites⁽⁵⁾ that have gained planning permission in the monitoring year (Table 4.6). In the urban area, 25% affordable housing was secured against a 30% target because of contributions towards off-site affordable housing and site viability. In the rural areas, 37% affordable housing was secured against a target of 40%, due to a Coxheath scheme that included the provision of care units as part of the proposal.

5 A qualifying site is a site of 5+ dwellings, excluding sites which do not attract affordable housing contributions (e.g. prior notification conversions and 100% affordable housing)

4.9 The emerging affordable housing policy has an indicative target for tenure: 70% social rent and 30% shared ownership. Of the total number of affordable dwellings completed in 2015/16, 74% were affordable rented housing (there was no social rented housing) and 26% provided for intermediate housing (shared ownership and/or intermediate rent).

Affordable housing land supply 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2031	Dwellings (net)	Dwellings (net)
Objectively assessed affordable housing need		5,800
Completed affordable dwellings 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2016	491	
Contribution from extant planning permissions as at 1 April 2016 (including a non-implementation discount)	1,471	
Contribution from Local Plan allocated sites	1,800	
Contribution from Local Plan broad locations for housing development	1,182	
Windfall sites contribution (large sites of 5+ dwellings only)	306	
Contribution from local needs housing (exception sites)	100	
Total affordable housing land supply		5,350

Table 4.4 Delivery of affordable housing 2013 to 2031 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total dwelling completions	873	630	423	413	521
Affordable housing completions	380	183	189	163	139
Affordable housing completions as a proportion of total completions	44%	29%	45%	39%	27%

Table 4.5 Affordable housing completions as a proportion of total completions (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

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Area	% target	Total dwellings permitted from qualifying sites	Total number of affordable homes secured	%
Maidstone Urban	30%	996	250	25%
Policy H1(11) Springfield, Royal Engineers Road	20%	246	49	20%
Countryside, rural service centres and larger villages	40%	1,070	398	37%

Table 4.6 Number of affordable homes secured against Policy DM13 targets 2015/16
(source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

KMI 3 Delivery of Nursing and Residential Care Homes**Key Monitoring Indicator 3**

Performance indicator: Actual new nursing and residential care home accommodation completed as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Related policies: DM15

Target:

Nursing and residential care home bedspaces			
2011-2016	2017-2021	2022-2026	2027-2031
245	245	245	245

4.10 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Update 2015) identifies a need for a total of 980 registered care bedspaces over the plan period 2011 to 2031 (49 bedspaces per annum). Table 4.7 shows the Council's current position in meeting this need (all figures are net of losses of bedspaces). The Council has made good progress against this target, and has an eight year supply of registered care homes bedspaces (980/49 bedspaces per annum).

Care homes bedspaces 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2031	Bedspaces (net)	Bedspaces (net)
Objectively assessed need		980
Completed bedspaces 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2016	42	
Bedspaces under construction at 1 April 2016	31	
Bedspaces on extant planning permissions at 1 April 2016	316	
Total supply of bedspaces at 1 April 2016		389

Table 4.7 Registered care homes - bedspaces (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

KMI 4 Delivery of pitches and plots for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Key Monitoring Indicator 4

Performance indicator: Actual Gypsies and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots provided compared with the need identified in the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment.

Related policies: DM16; GT1; GT1(1) - GT1(16)

Targets:

Gypsy and Traveller pitches			
2011-2016	2017-2021	2022-2026	2027-2031
105	25	27	30

Travelling Showpeople plots			
2011-2016	2017-2021	2022-2026	2027-2031
7	1	1	2

4.11 There is an identified need in Maidstone⁽⁶⁾ for 187 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and 11 plots for Travelling Showpeople over the local plan period 2011 to 2031. The methodology for calculating the supply of pitches and plots is contained in the Gypsy & Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Topic Paper 2016.

4.12 Table 4.8 sets out the Council's current position in meeting this need. Through the implementation of policies GT1 and DM16, supply will continue to come forward on sites which are as yet unidentified so the need for pitches will be met by the end of the local plan period. Table 4.9 demonstrates the Council is maintaining a five-year supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches: there is 5.6 years' worth of pitches.

4.13 The need for Travelling Showpeople plots is generated by the households on just two occupied sites, which can best be addressed through the development management process.

	Pitches	
Pitch requirement (2011-2031)		187
Permanent consents granted (01/10/2011 - 13/05/2016)	92	
Local Plan allocations Policy GT1	41	
Public pitch turnover (1.4 per annum for 15 years)	21	
Total supply of pitches at 1 April 2016		154

Table 4.8 Pitch supply from consents, allocations and public pitch turnover (2011-31)
(source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

		Pitches
1	Pitch requirement 1 October 2011 to 31 March 2021 (10 years) (105+25)	130
2	No of permanent pitches consented 1 October 2011 to 31 March 2016	89
3	Residual requirement 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021 (line 1 - line 2)	41
4	5% buffer brought forward from later in the plan period	2
5	Total requirement 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021 (line 3 + line)	43
6	Total pitch supply 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021 (41 pitches allocated sites + 5x1.4 = 7 pitch turnover on public sites)	48

Table 4.9 Five-year supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches at 1 April 2016 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

KMI 5 Housing Density

Key Monitoring Indicator 5

Performance indicator: Actual densities achieved on allocated and windfall sites compared with the densities set out in the local plan.

Related policies: DM12; H1(1) – H1(68); H2; H2(1) – H2(3); RMX1; RMX1(1) – RMX1(4)

Target:

Delivery of allocated sites at the indicative density in the site policy and windfall sites at densities set within Policy DM12.

4.14 Allocated sites in the Submission Plan have been granted planning permission in accordance with the indicative densities set out in the individual site policies. Table 4.10 shows that the average densities of windfall sites permitted within the monitoring year accord with the provisions of policy DM12 of the Submission Plan.

Area	Target density (dwellings per ha)	Average density (dwellings per ha)
Sites within and close to the town centre	45-170	238
Sites adjacent to the urban area	35	74
Sites within and adjacent to Rural. service centres and Larger villages	30	34
Other rural sites	30	47

Table 4.10 Average density of large (5+ units) windfall sites 2015/16 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

KMI 6 Quality Design

Key Monitoring Indicator 6

Performance indicator: Delivery of site allocations in accordance with specified policy criteria for design.

Related policies: DM1; DM34; H1(1) – H1(68); H2; H2(1) – H2(3); RMX1; RMX1(1) – RMX1(4)

Target:

Delivery of site allocations in accordance with specified policy criteria for design.

4.15 Design quality on local plan site allocations will be continually monitored through the planning decision and appeal processes. During the current monitoring year, no planning applications for allocated sites in the Submission Plan have been allowed on appeal following a refusal on grounds of design quality.

KMI 7 Economic Development Delivery

Key Monitoring Indicator 7

Performance indicator: Actual economic development and retail floorspace completed compared with the local plan target.

Related policies: SS1; SP1 – SP10; RMX1; RMX1(1) – RMX1(4); EMP1; EMP(1) – EMP(5); DM20; DM21; DM35; DM39; DM41; DM44

Targets:

Office (m ²)			
2014-2016	2017-2021	2022-2026	2027-2031
2,823	7,059	7,059	7,059

Industry (m ²)			
2014-2016	2017-2021	2022-2026	2027-2031
- 1,838	- 4,588	- 4,588	- 4,588

Warehouse (m ²)			
2014-2016	2017-2021	2022-2026	2027-2031
764	1,912	1,912	1,912

Retail (m ²)				
	2016	2021	2026	2031
Comparison (cumulative)	5,550	12,400	18,800	23,700
Convenience (cumulative)	3,700	4,400	5,250	6,100

Office, industry and warehousing

4.16 The net requirement for additional Class B employment floorspace (2014-31) is set out in the Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Forecast 2014, which quantifies the scale and nature of future economic growth in the borough and translates this into a land requirement in hectares for Class B uses, i.e. for offices, industry and warehousing/storage. The Submission Plan seeks to ensure that the need for additional land will be met through the specific land allocations.

4.17 The Submission Plan also designates existing industrial estates and business parks as Economic Development Areas which are suitable for, and should be retained for, Class B uses. These areas will play the primary role in supporting economic development and growth by offering attractive and available opportunities for the retention and expansion of existing occupiers, as well as helping to secure new inward investment.

4.18 The targets for offices, industrial and warehousing in Key Monitoring Indicator 7 annualise the net requirements and presents these annualised figures in phases to the end of the plan period (excluding the floorspace at Maidstone Medical Campus). In fact, new employment land is highly unlikely to be delivered in such a consistent rate over the plan period but the approach provides some guideline against which delivery can be monitored over the plan period.

4.19 Table 4.11 shows the actual progress of the allocated employment sites as at 1 April 2016 and reveals that, in addition to the outline consent for the Maidstone Medical Campus, some 4,300m² of additional floorspace for a local, expanding firm is nearing completion at the Wheelbarrow Industrial Estate in Marden. There is clear developer interest in the allocation at Woodcut Farm, albeit that an outline planning application on this site has recently been refused permission.

Site allocation	Floorspace	Progress at 1 April 2016
EMP1(1) Mote Road, Maidstone	Up to 8,000m ² B1a	No current planning application.
EMP1(2) Barradale Farm, Headcorn	5,500m ² B1,B2,B8	No current planning application.
EMP1(3) Land south of Claygate, Marden	6,800m ² B1, B2,B8	No current planning application.
EMP1(4) Land at Wheelbarrow Estate, Marden	14,500m ² B1,B2,B8	Development of 4,307m ² B2 floorspace is under construction in the northern portion of the allocated site (MA/14/4058). The remaining site area of 1.9ha could deliver in the order of 7,600- 9,500m ² of Class B floorspace.
EMP1(5) Woodcut Farm, Bearsted, Maidstone	Up to 49,000m ² B1, B2, B8	Current outline planning application for 47,750m ² mixed Class B floorspace (MA/15/503288) ⁽⁷⁾
RMX1(4) Syngenta, Yalding	Up to 8,600m ² B1,B2	No current planning application.
RMX1(1) Newnham Park, Maidstone	100,000m ² of medical related uses	Outline planning consent granted for 98,000m ² of medical related uses (MA/13/1163).

Table 4.11 Progress of employment allocations as at 1 April 2016 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

Retail

4.20 The assessment of future capacity for both comparison and convenience retail floorspace is provided by the Maidstone Retail Capacity Study 2013, which quantifies retail capacity in terms of additional net sales area floorspace (2012-2031). The phased requirements are set out in in Key Monitoring Indicator 7. These requirements will be met through the granting of consents and through the delivery of new retail floorspace on sites allocated in the Submission Plan. These allocated sites will deliver in the order of 10,390m² of additional net sales floorspace. Tables 4.12 and 4.13 show retail floorspace completions for the past two years and consents at 1 April 2016. Table 4.14 shows the progress of allocated retail sites at the snapshot date of 1 April 2016.

7 Subsequently refused at Planning Committee 30 June 2016

4.21 The Retail Capacity Study presents the retail floorspace forecast for the borough in 5 year tranches. This helps to illustrate the rate at which the demand for additional retail floorspace is expected to transpire and provides a useful guideline to monitor progress. For comparison floorspace, the Capacity Study findings indicate a demand for some 5,550m² of comparison floorspace arising in the period to 1 April 2016. The completion of the new Next retail store has delivered a substantial proportion of this expected floorspace requirement (3,320sqm net sales).

4.22 The forecast requirement for convenience floorspace for the same interim period is 3,700m². There are sufficient planning consents in the pipeline to deliver, and indeed exceed, this figure as demand arises. Sainsburys at Staplehurst (1,784m² net sales), the foodstore plus additional retail units at Langley Park, Sutton Road (1,254m²) and, potentially, the large scale scheme at Baltic Wharf, St Peters Street, Maidstone (3,716 m²).

	Convenience		Comparison	
	Gross floorspace	Net sales area	Gross floorspace	Net sales area
Gain m ²	781	557	7,202	4,556

Table 4.12 Retail floorspace completions 2013/14 and 2015/16 (source Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

	Convenience		Comparison		Unspecified	
	Gross floorspace	Net sales area	Gross floorspace	Net sales area	Gross floorspace	Net sales area
Gain m ²	14,267	7,977	527	448	1,219	1,036

Table 4.13 Retail floorspace with consent at 1 April 2016 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

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Site allocation	Floorspace	Net additional sales	Progress at 1 April 2016
RMX1(1) Newnham Park, Bearsted Road, Maidstone (additional)	700m ²	700m ²	No current planning application.
RMX1(2) Maidstone East and former Royal Mail sorting office	10,000m ²	8,500m ²	Subject of planning application (14/ 500483/OUT) for redevelopment to provide a new railway station , foodstore (8,293 m ² GIA) and non-food retail units (4,364m ² GIA) and commuter car parking. The application is not currently being progressed.
RMX1(3) King Street car park and former AMF Bowling site, Maidstone	1,400m ²	1,190m ²	The eastern part of the site has planning consent for a sheltered housing scheme which is under construction. The western part of the site is currently a surface level car park in the ownership of the Council. As the car park is well used, it is not being actively marketed for development at this point in time but will be kept under review.

Table 4.14 Progress of retail allocations (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

KMI 8 Recreational Open Space**Key Monitoring Indicator 8**

Performance indicator: Actual publicly accessible open space provided compared with the Local Plan allocations.

Related policies: OS1; SP1 – SP10; RMX1(1); RMX1(4); EMP1(4); DM22

Target:

Delivery of quantity of open space required on allocated housing sites and as allocated in Policy OS1.

4.23 The open space allocations included under policy OS1 of the Submission Plan, together with the open space requirements of individual site allocation policies, have been secured through planning permissions granted in the monitoring period. This amounts to an additional 13.19ha of open space.

4.24 Where it has not been possible to provide for open space requirements entirely within the boundary of allocated housing sites, contributions towards open space have been secured to fund off-site provision or improvements to existing areas of open space. During the monitoring period £598,252 has been secured through Section 106 agreements.

KMI 9 Transport and Air Quality

Key Monitoring Indicator 9

Performance indicators: Delivery of transport air quality initiatives and changes in air quality in Air Quality Management Areas.

Related policies: DM24 - DM26; DM5

Targets:

Delivery of transport schemes listed within the Integrated Transport Strategy and those proposals required in association with developing allocated sites.

100% of applications to submit a travel plan in accordance with the threshold levels set by Kent County Council's Guidance on Transport Assessments and Travel Plans.

100% of applications which are likely to have a negative impact on air quality within or adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area to provide an Emissions Statement identifying how these emissions will be minimised and mitigated.

100% of applications in or affecting Air Quality Management Areas or of a sufficient scale to impact local communities incorporate mitigation measures which are locationally specific and proportionate to the likely impact.

4.25 The delivery of transport schemes listed within the Integrated Transport Strategy, together with other infrastructure associated with the delivery of allocated development sites, will be monitored through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Schemes where progress has been made during the monitoring year are set out under Key Monitoring Indicator 11 (Local Services and Infrastructure). During the monitoring year, no planning applications have been allowed on appeal that were refused on the grounds of submitted travel plans or air quality.

KMI 10 Built and Natural Environment**Key Monitoring Indicator 10**

Performance indicator: The retention of designated assets.

Related policies: DM1; DM3; DM16; DM30; DM34

Targets:

No loss of listed buildings, historic parks and gardens, scheduled ancient monuments, ancient woodlands, veteran trees, or sites of archaeological interest.

No reduction in the extent of Conservation Areas due to insensitive development.

No housing development permitted in areas liable to flood where contrary to Environment Agency recommendations.

4.26 Tables 2.14 and 2.15 of this report will be used as a benchmark for monitoring future changes in the number and extent of Maidstone's abundant built and environmental assets.

4.27 There has been an increase in the extent of the indicative flood plain (from 54.47km² to 66.44km²), the flood plain now covering 16.95% of the borough (an increase from 13.85%). This is due to updated flood risk modelling for the River Medway catchment areas by the Environment Agency and, as a consequence, the Council is refreshing its Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

4.28 The Environment Agency objected to 22 planning applications during 2015/16 on grounds of flood defence:

- 1 application was withdrawn;
- 1 application was permitted and the EA objection was withdrawn following satisfactory mitigation measures;
- 1 application was permitted contrary to EA objection following a proposed scheme to raise floor levels by 600mm;
- 7 applications were refused - the grounds for refusals on 6 of these applications included flood risk; and
- 12 of the applications remain undetermined.

4.29 The Environmental Agency objected to one application on water quality grounds during 2015/16, and this application remains undetermined.

KMI 11 Local Services and Infrastructure

Key Monitoring Indicator 11

Performance indicators: The number of shops and community uses within designated District and Local Centres, and delivery of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Related policies: DM18; DM23; IDP1

Targets:

No change in the number of shops and community uses within designated District and Local Centres.

Delivery of each of the identified schemes within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan on schedule.

4.30 The Council seeks to maintain and enhance the existing retail function and supporting community uses in the district and local retail centres designated in the Submission Plan. In the two reporting years 2014 to 2016 there has been a net gain of one retail unit, The Boughton Physiotherapy Practice, Boughton Parade, Loose Road, Maidstone and no change in community uses across all district and local centres.

4.31 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) identifies the borough's infrastructure requirements including social, physical and green infrastructure. Importantly, the IDP includes information relating to the timing, costings, funding, importance and risks associated with the delivery of infrastructure projects, and is updated on an annual basis to support the local plan. Table 4.17 identifies the schemes where progress has been achieved.

IDP Item	Service and Issue	Output	Scheme Status	Timescale for delivery	Local Plan Importance to strategy	Risk to delivery
HTTC1	Highway improvements	Provision of a bridge gyratory bypass through Fairmeadow to reduce congestion in the Town Centre.	Works commenced in February 2016.	Short term	Critical	Low
HTTC10	Pedestrian and cycle environment	Improvements to the existing towpath on the eastern and western banks of the River Medway.	Draft designs and costings developed. Detailed design work now underway and construction anticipated in summer 2016.	Short term	Essential	Low
HTTC11	Public transport and pedestrian environment	Improvements to Maidstone East Rail Station forecourt and ticket office, together with improvements to the public realm at the northern end of Week Street.	Funding secured and scheme expected to be delivered in 2016/17.	Short term	Essential	Moderate
HTSE5	Highway improvements	Provision of a new roundabout to provide access to site H1 (5)	Delivered as part of the Langley Park development. Works completed.	N/A	Critical	N/A

IDP Item	Service and Issue	Output	Scheme Status	Timescale for delivery	Local Plan Importance to strategy	Risk to delivery
EDM3	Primary Education	Provision of a new 2FE primary school on site H1 (5) Langley Park, Maidstone	Identified in the Commissioning Plan for delivery by 2016-17. Works under construction and opening planned September 2016.	Short term	Critical	Moderate

Table 4.15 Progress of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Schemes 2015/16 (source: Maidstone Borough Council 2016)

Glossary

Acronym	Term	Description
-	Affordable Housing	Affordable housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. (Source: NPPF glossary)
AMR	Authority Monitoring Report	The Monitoring Report provides a framework with which to monitor and review the effectiveness of local plans and policies.
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy	The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of the area. It came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.
	Community Strategy	The Community Strategy is produced by a partnership of the local public, private, voluntary and community sector with the aim of improving the social, environmental and economic well being of their areas. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan is the strategic, spatial representation of the Community Strategy 2009 - 2020 <i>Your community, our priority</i> , refreshed in 2013.
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government	The Department of Communities and Local Government work to move decision-making power from central government to local councils. This helps put communities in charge of planning, increases accountability and helps citizens to see how their money is being spent. They work on housing, the UK economy, local government, planning and building, public safety and emergencies, community and society.
-	Development Plan	In accordance with legislation all planning applications should normally be determined in accordance with Development Plan policies. This includes adopted local plans and neighbourhood plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
DPD	Development Plan Document	A DPD is a spatial planning document that is subject to independent examination. Under new regulations, DPDs are now known as local plans.
EA	Environment Agency	The Environment Agency is the leading public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales, with particular responsibilities for river, flooding and pollution (www.environment-agency.gov.uk).
-	Gross Internal Floorspace	The entire area inside the external walls of a building and includes corridors, lifts, plant rooms,

Acronym	Term	Description
		mezzanines, services accommodation e.g. toilets but excludes internal walls.
-	Index of Multiple Deprivation	The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 provides a relative measure of deprivation at small area level across England. Areas are ranked from least deprived to most deprived on seven different dimensions of deprivation and an overall composite measure of multiple deprivation. The domains used in the indices of deprivation 2010 are: income deprivation; employment deprivation; health deprivation and disability; education deprivation; crime deprivation; barriers to housing and services deprivation; and living environment deprivation.
KCC	Kent County Council	The county planning and highway authority, responsible for producing the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans and the County's local planning policy framework.
LDS	Local Development Scheme	The LDS is a business programme or timetable listing the documents the Council will produce under the local planning policy framework, and explaining how documents will be prepared and when they will be published.
LNR	Local Nature Reserves	Local nature reserves are formally designated areas for both people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. They offer people special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it (www.naturalengland.org.uk).
	Local Plan	The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by a local authority in consultation with the community. The local plan for Maidstone includes DPDs adopted under the Act and saved policies. These will be superseded by the the Maidstone Borough Local Plan once it is adopted in 2015. The local plan does not include SPDs or supplementary guidance, although these documents are material considerations in development management decisions.
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area	This is the name for Lower Layer Super Output Areas used for census outputs. In England and Wales Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a geographical hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics. Unlike electoral wards, the SOA layers are of consistent size across the country and will not be subject to regular boundary change. Lower Layer SOAs have a minimum population of 1,000 and are used as the building blocks for Middle Layer SOAs (www.ons.gov.uk).
MBC	Maidstone Borough Council	The local planning authority responsible for producing the local planning policy framework.

Acronym	Term	Description
-	Net Tradeable Floorspace	Sales space which customers have access to (excluding areas such as storage).
ONS	Office for National Statistics	The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the executive office of the UK Statistics Authority, a non-ministerial department which reports directly to Parliament. ONS is the UK Government's single largest statistical producer and is responsible for the production of a wide range of economic and social statistics (www.ons.gov.uk).
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement	The SCI specifies how the community and stakeholders will be involved in the process of preparing local planning policy documents.
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment	The purpose of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitable location and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period. (Source: NPPF)
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment	A Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assesses the local planning authority's full objectively assessed housing needs and affordable housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document	An SPD provides further detail to policies set out in local plans. SPDs are a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan or the local plan.
	Submission Plan	The Maidstone Borough Local Plan submitted on 20 May 2016 to the Secretary of State for independent examination.
-	Unidentified Sites or Windfall Sites	Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the local plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available. (Source: NPPF glossary)

**Strategic Planning,
Sustainability & Transportation
Committee**

**13 September
2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Integrated Transport Strategy, and Walking & Cycling Strategy

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Paul Goodenough, Transport Planner, Spatial Policy
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All Wards

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee approves the recommendations of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board of 13 July 2016;
2. That the Committee adopt the Integrated Transport Strategy (as appended to this report); and
3. That the Committee adopt the Walking & Cycling Strategy (as appended to this report)

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough -

The Integrated Transport Strategy and the Walking and Cycling Strategy play a key role in delivering a package of sustainable transport measures in support of the allocations set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the need to mitigate the transport impact of planned development and deliver modal shift away from reliance on the use of the private car with other potential benefits such as improved public transport networks and improved air quality.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	13 September 2016

Integrated Transport Strategy, and Walking & Cycling Strategy

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report considers revised versions of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) 2011-2031 and the Maidstone Walking and Cycling Strategy (WCS) 2011-2031. These versions reflect minor changes agreed by Maidstone Borough Council's SPS&T Committee on 6 July 2016. Copies of the documents are attached to this report at Appendices One and Two respectively.
- 1.2 Members are recommended to:
- Approve the recommendations made by the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board on 13 July 2016;
 - Adopt the Integrated Transport Strategy (as appended to this report); and
 - Adopt the Walking & Cycling Strategy (as appended to this report).

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Section 80 of the Local Transport Act 2008 gives local authorities, acting jointly, the power to review the effectiveness and efficiency of transport within their area and to propose their own arrangements to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport. Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council cooperated to prepare a joint document for public consultation for local transport provision in 2012.
- 2.2 This joint Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) was first published for public consultation in August 2012. It aimed to set out the future for transport in Maidstone until 2026, identifying objectives for transport provision and a proposed action plan to address the requirements for the new development proposed by the Maidstone Core Strategy at that stage.
- 2.3 The draft ITS has evolved alongside the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan and covers the same period to 2031. It has been presented at various SPS&T and JTB meetings and Appendices One and Two are consistent with the most recent recommendations of the 13 July 2016 JTB. The Strategy was also considered by the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board (JTB) and approved for consultation by Maidstone Borough Council's SPS&T Committee. The public consultation took place between 5 February 2016 and 18 March 2016.
- 2.4 The draft ITS sets out a package of sustainable transport interventions, comprising highway capacity, public transport and walking and cycling improvements, which provide appropriate mitigation in support and as part

of the evidence base for allocations in the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan which was submitted for examination on 20 May 2016.

- 2.5 As a result of continuing discussions with KCC, the principal change from the consultation version was that the draft ITS and the draft Walking and Cycling Strategy were split into two separate documents. Appropriate amendments were made to each document to reflect the consultation responses and the other discussions that had taken place. At this time there are a significant number of interventions in the ITS that are agreed by both MBC and KCC, however there are similarly issues and matters which remain in disagreement notably regarding mitigation for the period post-2022. For the period between 2022 and 2031 KCC officers have recommended further modelling, strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability appraisals.
- 2.6 These revised documents were reported to and considered by Maidstone Borough Council's SPS&T Committee on 6 July 2016. Furthermore, the SPS&T Committee was recommended to approve the revised documents for consideration by the JTB on 13 July 2016. This was agreed subject to minor changes. Revised documents reflecting these further changes are attached at Appendices One and Two to this report respectively.
- 2.7 However, as a result of continuing discussions with KCC the latest revised documents were not subsequently reviewed by the JTB on 13 July 2016 as envisaged. Instead a joint report was presented by the KCC Head of Transportation and the MBC Head of Planning and Development which updated Members with respect to the 7 December 2015 resolution, and proposed a joint Integrated Transport Strategy which could be submitted to the Secretary of State in time for examination in public. The document is attached at Appendix Three to this report.
- 2.8 Paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of that document identified transport interventions from the draft ITS. These are also referred to in Appendix B to that document (appended to this report as Appendix Four). These included a package of highway improvement schemes agreed by the JTB at its meeting on 7 December 2015, and largely aligned with those agreed by the SPS&T Committee. The Local Plan submitted for examination included a number of those junctions, and there is £8.9m allocated through the Local Growth Fund (LGF) to deliver junction improvements. Furthermore, paragraph 4.2 of Appendix Three identified the potential ITS adjustments which had been discussed.
- 2.9 The document recommended that the JTB approve the transport interventions in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5, together with the firmer commitment to work together in relation to paragraph 4.2, as forming the basis of the transport strategy. This was resolved subject to the amendment to the wording of recommendation 5.1, that it be changed from 'with a firmer commitment to work together in relation to paragraph 4.2', to read 'with a firm commitment to the items identified in paragraph 4.2'.
- 2.10 It was also resolved by the JTB that the matter be referred to both the KCC Cabinet Member for Transport and MBC's SPS&T Committee for approval,

with this report being the mechanism for the seeking of an approval by the SPS&T Committee.

- 2.11 Without a coherent strategy for the delivery of the identified mitigation measures, the level of impact of Local Plan growth on the transport network is likely to be unacceptably adverse and the Examination Inspector may find the Local Plan to be unsound as a consequence. The draft ITS is therefore an important piece of evidence for the Local Plan.
- 2.12 It is therefore essential that the ITS is adopted, as a single MBC document in the first instance but, further to the JTB resolution of 13 July 2016, MBC will continue to work with KCC towards its joint adoption. It is also essential that the Walking and Cycling Strategy is adopted by the Council, as this provides the evidence base for the walking and cycling actions within the ITS and will be a material consideration in development management and spatial planning decisions.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Members could choose to 'do nothing', i.e. not to approve the recommendation of the Joint Transportation Board nor to approve the adoption of the ITS and the Walking and Cycling Strategy. The resulting outcome would in effect be a decision to not proceed to publish a final version of the ITS. If this was the case, there would not be a supporting document to the Maidstone Borough Local Plan setting out the Council's approach to sustainable transport interventions providing appropriate mitigation in support of and as part of the evidence base for the allocations in the Local Plan.
- 3.2 Members could choose to note the recommendation of the Joint Transportation Board but choose not to accept the consequentially recommended modifications to the ITS. Members could then approve the adoption of the ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy as per the versions presented in Appendices One and Two. However, the unilateral adoption of these document versions may preclude the joint adoption of the ITS by the Borough Council and County Council at a later date.
- 3.3 The final option is for Members to approve the recommendation of the Joint Transportation Board, agree the consequentially recommended modifications to the ITS and adopt it and the Walking and Cycling Strategy (as modified from Appendices One and Two to this report). This will ensure that the ITS is sufficiently robust with its fundamental elements jointly approved by the Borough Council and County Council, facilitating the joint adoption of the ITS at a later date. The ITS will then provide strong supporting evidence of appropriate mitigation and sustainable transport interventions in support of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The final option set out in paragraph 3.3 above is the one recommended to Members as this will ensure that the ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy are robust and will assist in the delivery of appropriate mitigation and sustainable transport interventions in support of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 If Members approve the JTB recommendation and adopt the ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy, the next step will be to publish these documents as part of the evidence base supporting the Local Plan.
- 5.2 The final MBC adopted versions of both documents will then be reported to a future meeting of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board recommending that the relevant KCC Cabinet Member also approves the documents for adoption.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Integrated Transport Strategy and the Walking & Cycling Strategy play a key role in delivering a package of sustainable transport measures in support of the allocations set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the need to mitigate the transport impact of planned development and deliver modal shift away from reliance on the use of the private car with other potential benefits such as improved public transport networks and improved air quality.	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Risk Management	The ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy are part of the evidence base supporting the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, showing a package of sustainable transport alongside other infrastructure	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development

	interventions in support of the allocations in the Local Plan and to support planned growth.	
Financial	No specific financial implications arise from the consideration of this report.	Head of Finance and Resources & Finance Team
Staffing	Specialist transport consultants have been engaged to assist in the delivery of the strategies, funded though the existing agreed budget.	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Legal	No specific implications arise from the consideration of this report. The ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy have been produced as part of the robust evidence base for the Local Plan.	Kate Jardine Team Leader Planning Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy that tackle transport challenges through a combination of modes will take into account the needs of all groups including those without access to a car. An alternative strategy reliant on highway improvements will not promote equal access to employment, services and social opportunities and is likely to lead to increased social exclusion amongst lower income groups in particular.	Anna Collier Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The promotion of the ITS and the Walking and Cycling Strategy to promote sustainable travel where possible will encourage a reduction in single occupancy car travel and in turn a reduction in congestion and carbon emissions relative to a 'do minimum' situation. An alternative strategy reliant solely on highway interventions is likely to generate more traffic than the additional capacity provided increasing carbon and congestion.	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Community Safety	No specific implications arise from the consideration of this	Rob Jarman: Head of

	report.	Planning & Development
Human Rights Act	No specific implications arise from the consideration of this report.	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Procurement	Consultants are used to prepare specialist or technical evidence to support the Local Plan and are appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development & Head of Finance and Resources
Asset Management	No specific implications arise from the consideration of this report.	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development

7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-2031
- Appendix 2: Maidstone Walking & Cycling Strategy 2011-2031
- Appendix 3: Maidstone Joint Transportation Board 13 July 2016: Report of the KCC Head of Transportation and MBC Head of Planning and Development – Integrated Transport Strategy
- Appendix 4: ITS Interventions Table

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Introduction

1.1 The Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) assesses the principal existing and future challenges affecting the transport network, including taking account of jobs and housing growth, and recognises that the populations of the urban area and dispersed villages bring different challenges and solutions. It sets out a vision and objectives, and identifies a detailed programme of interventions to support the measures and interventions set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan for all modes of transport consistent with national and local planning policies including the Kent County Council Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) 2011-2016.

1.2 The ITS has been updated to take into account the comments and suggestions received on the draft strategy as part of the public consultation held during February and March 2016. It has also been updated to summarise the findings of the most recent modelling undertaken using the Maidstone VISUM strategic highway network model.

1.3 The ITS comprises five main sections:

- Transport challenges
- Policy context
- Vision and objectives,
- Strategic priorities
- Action plans

1.4 The ITS is inter-alia, an integral component of the Local Plan evidence base and is a key Local Plan document. Both documents need to be aligned. As with the Local Plan itself, to ensure an up-to-date ITS is maintained, a review of the ITS will commence by 2022.

Transport challenges

1.5 Maidstone's transport network has come under increasing strain in recent years, principally on account of the growing demand for travel generally. A deliverable transport strategy should seek to address these challenges and should have an emphasis on the promotion of sustainable transport in line with national and local priorities. It should contain, a balanced package of appropriate highway and sustainable transport interventions that provide mitigation in support of the allocated housing and employment growth envisaged by the Local Plan.

1.6 Sustainable modes should be encouraged where feasible and the benefits of shifting trips from single occupancy car use to sustainable modes are manifold and recognised and promoted by the Government. Examples of these include improved air quality, a healthier population, attractive, safe and secure public spaces, and reduced environmental impacts.

1.7 Challenges are identified for highways, including congestion caused by increased car usage, and public transport provision, which is inadequate and under-used. Impediments to increased walking and cycling are identified, and the role of parking is seen as essential to provide the context for transport policies.

Policy context

1.8 The policy context for the ITS is provided by Department for Transport and Kent County Council policies that include LTP3 2011-2016 as well as local Borough Council policies such as the adopted Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000 and the submitted Maidstone Borough Local Plan and other initiatives. Increasingly, joint initiatives with neighbouring authorities on issues like air quality, countryside and rail access and neighbourhood plans will influence transport policy.

Vision and objectives

1.9 The transport vision for the borough is 'Realising Maidstone's sustainable future; connecting communities and supporting a growing economy' and this leads to the formulation of five objectives for the Strategy:

- Enhancing and encouraging sustainable travel choices
- Enhancement of strategic transport links to, from and within Maidstone town.
- Ensure the transport system supports the growth projected by Maidstone's Local Plan.
- Reducing the air quality impacts of transport.
- Ensure the transport network considers the needs of all users, providing equal accessibility by removing barriers to use.

Strategic priorities

1.10 To achieve the strategic objectives, the ITS seeks to:

- Reduce demand for travel
- Change travel behaviour
- Promote modal shift
- Improve network efficiency

1.11 Examples from best-practice experience elsewhere are identified, indicating what has been achieved in local authorities throughout the country.

Action plans

1.12 Action plans for each mode of travel are summarised initially, and further more detailed treatment of interventions describes the range of policy actions which may be implemented. A separate Walking and Cycling Strategy has been the result of joint work with Kent County Council (KCC), and priority highways improvement schemes are identified which are subject to ongoing negotiation with developers and the highway authority.

1.13 The ITS identifies targets to monitor the progress of actions so that it is a 'living strategy' which is flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances. It will form the basis of continuing discussions and negotiations with the full range of stakeholders involved in the provision of transport throughout the borough.

2.1 The ITS covers the area of Maidstone Borough which includes the urban area of Maidstone; Rural Service Centres and villages. It provides the overview and justification for the detailed transport infrastructure requirements and interventions set out in the submitted Maidstone Borough Local Plan and which are also identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

2.2 Maidstone Borough faces a number of transport challenges and the ITS is needed to provide a framework for transport planning and decision making in the Borough which places an emphasis on addressing these issues through long term sustainable development of the transport network. This should ensure that future development can be accommodated without significant detriment to existing conditions whilst seeking to enhance economic, social and environmental well-being.

2.3 The ITS assesses the principal existing and future challenges affecting the transport network, including taking account of jobs and housing growth, and recognises that the populations of the urban area and dispersed villages bring different challenges and solutions. The ITS provides a framework and programme of schemes and interventions to support the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, taking account of the committed and predicted levels of growth in homes and jobs and detailing the transport infrastructure and services necessary to support and deliver this growth. It considers all modes of transport used for trips on main routes and the rail network. It sets out a vision and identifies a detailed programme of interventions consistent with national and local transport and planning policies to help achieve the vision by 2031.

Transport Challenges

3.1 Maidstone is a dynamic borough, set within both an urban and a rural context, which has a vital role to play in the significant growth expected in the South East over the next two decades. The borough currently has a population of 155,143⁽¹⁾, which is evenly split between the County Town and its rural hinterland, including the five Rural Service Centres (RSCs) of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst. Whilst the town's main function is as a centre for business, retail and administration; the rural economy is characterised by pockets of manufacturing, horticulture and farming. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan seeks to meet in full the identified objectively assessed need of 18,560 dwellings and the creation of almost 14,500 jobs in the plan period from 2011 -2031.

3.2 Maidstone's transport network has come under increasing strain in recent years, principally on account of the configuration of its road and rail networks and the growing demand for travel generally. In order for the borough to have an emphasis on sustainable transport access in line with national priorities and to accommodate the level of housing and employment growth envisaged by the Local Plan, a comprehensive and deliverable transport strategy must be in place to address these challenges.

3.3 The geography of the borough means that sustainable modes are a more feasible option in some locations and for some journeys than for others. The benefits of shifting trips from single occupancy car use to sustainable modes are manifold and recognised and promoted by Central Government. Examples of these include improved air quality; a healthier population and attractive, safe and secure public spaces.

3.4 Specific issues for action are identified for each mode below.

Highways

Overview

3.5 Maidstone has an extensive highway network which provides direct links both within the borough and to neighbouring areas including Ashford, the Medway Towns, Tunbridge Wells and London. Four north-south and east-west 'A' roads pass through the town centre and numerous 'B' roads run in concentric rings around the town, providing local links to the rural parts of the borough. Maidstone also enjoys good connections to the motorway network, including direct access to four junctions of the M20, (junctions 5, 6, 7 & 8).

3.6 In peak periods, parts of the road network operate at or near capacity⁽²⁾ and, especially to the south of the borough, people find it difficult to access the services they need due to the lack of transport options available to

1 Usual resident population as per 2011 Census

2 A20 / Coldharbour Lane junction; A249 / Bearsted Road junction; Bearsted Road / New Cut Road junction; Dual Carriageway between A249 and New Cut Road junctions; A20 Ashford Road / Willington Street; A229/A274 / Wheatsheaf junction; A274 / Wallis Avenue junction; A26 Fountain Lane junction

them. Congestion is caused by road traffic outgrowing capacity. The amount of road traffic is a consequence of the reliance placed on the private car and population and job growth (and their relative locations).

3.7 In terms of the reliance placed on the private car, a summary of Journey to Work Census data is shown below:

Mode	Count	%
Work at home	4,705	4.2%
Underground / Tram	120	0.1%
Train	5,257	4.6%
Bus / Coach	2,945	2.6%
Taxi	222	0.2%
Motorcycle / Scooter	538	0.5%
Car Driver	50,131	44.3%
Car Passenger	3,819	3.4%
Bicycle	935	0.8%
On Foot	9,023	8.0%
Other	395	0.3%
Not in Work	35,141	31.0%

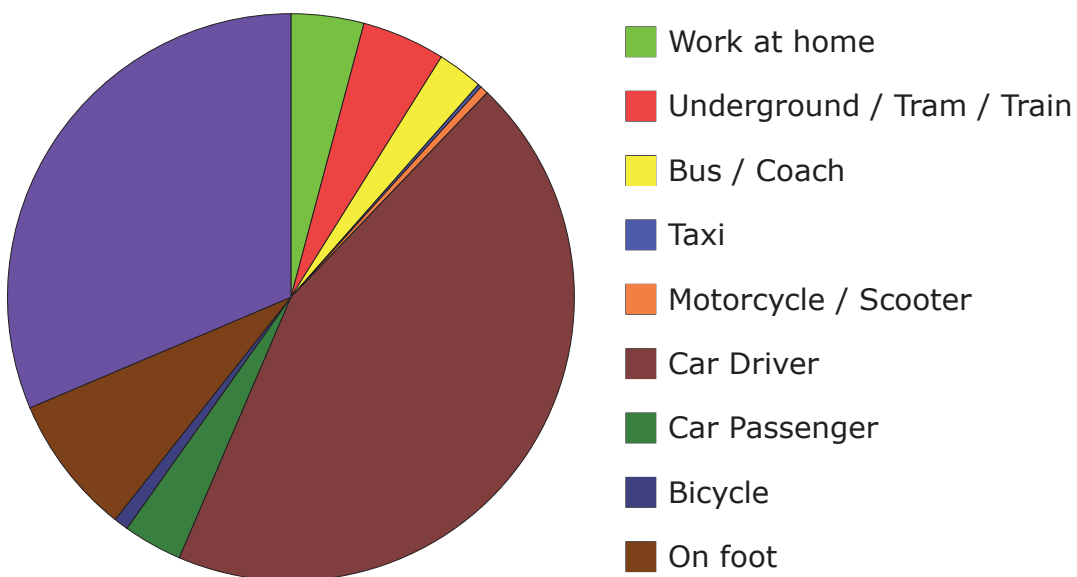


Table 3.1

3.8 In terms of growth in the period from 2011-2031, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan provides for 18,560 new homes together with employment growth of almost 14,500 jobs within the borough. The impact on the transport network of these developments needs careful and considered management ensuring the transport systems in place are appropriate, and additional mitigation measures are implemented where required.

3.9 The implications of growth and the ITS on the borough's highway network have been tested by using the Maidstone VISUM strategic highway network model to assess alternative transport infrastructure scenarios and their impacts in terms of travel time and distance. The VISUM model is a strategic highways model in which increases in walking and cycling are reflected in an estimation of the number of car trips which may be removed from the road network due to changes in modal share across these areas. Although VISUM can model bus service changes, in assessing the attractiveness of these services it does not take into account bus capacity issues, nor can it model bus priority measures.

3.10 As a strategic model VISUM is unsuited to assessing individual junction capacity, or to assess the impacts of proposed infrastructure improvements at those junctions and more detailed modelling is required for such junctions. Therefore, to provide the necessary detailed assessment of impact on specific junctions, the Council has commissioned a series of detailed junction capacity assessments within the urban area and at the Rural Service Centres and in addition, transport assessments submitted alongside planning applications, which have assessed cumulative impact of proposals and identified appropriate and justified mitigation measures as required have also been taken-into account.

3.11 It should also be noted that the impact of junction improvements outside the Maidstone urban area cordoned for the VISUM model are not included in the above scenarios.

3.12 Furthermore, M20 Junctions 5 to 8 are not modelled in detail within the VISUM model. Localised junction modelling is being undertaken during summer 2016 to assess the capacity of these junctions and potential impacts on the Strategic Road Network (SRN).

3.13 Through the development of the Local Plan a number of VISUM modelling scenarios and transport interventions have been evolved and tested (see Chapter 10).

3.14 Congestion presents a cost to the economy in terms of lost time and environmental degradation and associated health costs resulting from poor air quality and inactivity. However it is widely acknowledged across the industry

that this problem cannot be solved by simply providing more road capacity as in the absence of alternative choices and demand restricting measures, traffic is expected to outgrow capacity.⁽³⁾

3.15 High traffic levels and congestion are also associated with poor air quality. Maidstone Borough Council operates two automatic monitoring stations, one situated at a roadside site, and one at a rural background location. The station at Miller House adjacent at the junction of Mote Road/Knightrider Street and Upper and Lower Stone Street has recently been relocated from the A229 Bridges Gyratory area and measures NO₂ and PM₁₀ and is next to a main road, within the Air Quality Management Area. The rural background site in Detling is outside the AQMA and also measures NO₂ and PM₁₀. Maidstone Borough Council also monitors annual mean NO₂ concentrations through some 54 passive diffusion tubes located across the borough. The most recent 2014 data shows the Bridge Gyratory town centre automatic monitoring site exceeding the annual objectives for NO₂ but not the hourly NO₂ objective. The 2014 results from the passive diffusion tubes also show fifteen sites exceeding the annual mean objective of 40µg/m³. There are three sites in Upper Stone Street exceeding 60µg/m³, which is an indication of a potential exceedence of the 1-hour mean NO₂ objective. The Maidstone urban area is designated as an Air Quality Management Area. Both the Air Quality Management Area and Air Quality Action Plan will be reviewed in 2016.

3.16 There are points on the highways network where there are safety issues and a poor record of crashes/collisions. Plans identifying collisions involving pedestrians and/or cyclists in Maidstone town and the borough as a whole are included in the separate Walking and Cycling Strategy.

The Issues:

- Maidstone has very high levels of car ownership and usage. 84% of households in the borough have at least 1 car, compared with 80% across Kent and 74% in England
- Low average vehicle occupancy figures
- Heavy reliance on a small number of key junctions; in particular the singular river crossing point in Maidstone's town centre where the A20, A26 and A229 all meet
- Congestion on the network, particularly at peak periods
- Accident blackspots
- Poor air quality in particular areas
- The vulnerability of the M20 Motorway during cross-Channel disruption ("Operation Stack")

3 Goodwin, P (2004) The Economic Costs of Road Traffic Congestion. A Discussion Paper Published by the Rail Freight Group. ESRC Transport Studies Unit, University College London

3 . Transport Challenges



- High-demand schools with very large catchment areas resulting in high car use for the 'school-run'

Walking

Overview

3.17 The benefits of walking are numerous, but often under-appreciated – increased physical activity, improved health, livelier town centres, a more vibrant economy are just some of the varied benefits active lifestyles can bring. Above all a shift to walking has the potential of addressing (peak hour) congestion in the borough.

3.18 The 2011 Census shows that 15% of trips to work in Maidstone are 2km or less in distance, and yet walking as a mode share is less than 8%, which offers great potential for increasing walking, provided the infrastructure and environment is right. Similarly, walking trips to school at peak times offer opportunities to reduce car travel.

The Issues:

- Relatively low levels of walking trips to work and school
- Busy roads act as barriers around the town centre, segregating the residential areas from the core (known as severance). The current gyratory system to cross the River Medway is complicated for pedestrians to navigate, acting as a barrier for walking trips. Furthermore, the subways provided are unpleasant and poorly maintained.
- Provision of safe, convenient, pleasant pedestrian routes is not universally available given the dominance of the car in most of the built up parts of the borough.

Cycling

Overview

3.19 Undertaking a four mile commute to and from work by bicycle rather than by car reduces congestion, brings numerous health benefits and saves half a tonne of Carbon Dioxide a year <http://bikeweek.org.uk/save-cash-burn-calories-cut-carbon/>.

3.20 The borough currently has a number of cycle routes that link the town centre to the suburban areas including National Cycle Network route (NCR17) which provides an 11 mile commuter link between Maidstone and the Medway towns; however connections within the town and further afield are incomplete and limited and there is a lack of cycle parking at key destinations.

The Issues:

- Low cycle mode share - 0.8% of Maidstone residents cycle to work according to the Office for National Statistics

- Limited and disjointed cycle routes into the town centre, with very few off-road options
- Limited cycle parking at key locations
- Provision of safe cycle routes to schools, colleges, employment and retail areas.

Public Transport

Overview

3.21 Experience across the UK has shown that bus services of sufficient quality and frequency have the potential to capture a significant proportion of short- and medium-distance trips and to make a strong contribution to the alleviation of peak-time congestion in urban areas. Maidstone has a well-established bus network provided principally by Arriva, together with a number of smaller independent operators. The network is centred on Maidstone town centre and combines high frequency routes serving the suburban estates and longer distance services providing connections to many of the outlying villages and neighbouring towns.

3.22 Three railway lines cross Maidstone Borough, serving a total of 14 stations. The operator of the vast majority of rail services in the area is the South Eastern Franchise holder, Southeastern. The franchise was let by the Department for Transport in 2006 for an initial six year period, which has subsequently been extended to 2018. The principal rail route serving Maidstone town is the London Victoria to Ashford International line (also referred to as the Maidstone East Line), which includes stations at Maidstone East, Bearsted, Hollingbourne, Harrietsham and Lenham, with an average journey time to London of an hour. Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden have frequent services to London with similar journey times. There is a limited three morning and three return evening limited-stop service on the Medway Valley Line that connects with HS1 to St Pancras International. Thameslink Services are due to be extended to serve Maidstone East from 2018 with a daytime frequency of two trains per hour currently planned.

The Issues:

- Maidstone has three town centre rail stations, but poor inter-urban connections, especially compared with nearby towns in Kent.
- The town's rail stations and bus station are not generally well connected to each other, making for a poor interchange experience.
- Very few bus priority measures – such as bus lanes – exist within the borough, providing no advantage for bus journeys.
- Lack of payment options. Most buses only accept cash payment, and in some cases it is not possible to buy a return before 9am.

- Lack of live departure board information at most bus stops, and limited use of effective smartphone applications including ticket purchasing.
- Service frequencies beyond the urban core are not convenient for most users.
- The town's main bus interchange located at The Mall Chequers Shopping Centre is neither fit for purpose nor user-friendly. It is not well lit or ventilated and is threatening in character being essentially a tunnel under the Centre linking King Street and Romney Place.

Parking

Overview

3.23 The provision of an adequate supply of well-located and reasonably priced car parking is essential to support the borough's retail economy, to provide a means of access to areas where alternative travel modes are limited or unavailable, and to ensure that mobility impaired persons are able to access key education, employment and leisure opportunities. The supply of car parking also drives demand for limited road space and can therefore contribute to traffic congestion and poor air quality, as well as making more sustainable modes of travel less attractive. Therefore it is crucial that an over-provision of parking is avoided, particularly in and around Maidstone town centre.

The Issues:

- Only a very small portion of parking available in Maidstone is under direct council control. As a consequence, it is difficult to apply a uniform parking policy when the vast majority of spaces are under private ownership.
- Parking is relatively cheap and plentiful compared with similar sized towns elsewhere.
- Lots of the town's parking consists of small allocations of spaces (50 or less), meaning that they fill up quickly and create additional circulatory traffic of vehicles searching for alternative spaces.

4.1 This section briefly outlines the current policy context within which the ITS has been developed and identifies how it can contribute to the delivery of their key objectives.

National Policy Context

4.2 The Department for Transport (DfT)'s stated vision is for: "A transport system that is an engine for economic growth, but one that is also greener and safer and improves quality of life in our communities."⁽⁴⁾

4.3 The DfT is working towards delivering a number of priorities in line with this vision, which includes the following; "Encourage sustainable local travel: - Encourage sustainable local travel and economic growth by making public transport (including light rail) and cycling and walking more attractive and effective, promoting lower carbon transport and tackling local road congestion."

4.4 This vision has been carried forward into the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2012, which replaced the previous suite of Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy Guidance notes and certain Circular Guidance. The NPPF emphasises the importance of rebalancing the transport system in favour of sustainable transport modes, whilst encouraging local authorities to plan proactively for the transport infrastructure necessary to support the growth of ports, airports and other major generators of travel demand.

4.5 The NPPF recommends that Transport Assessments and Travel Plans should accompany applications for developments that generate significant amounts of movement, although it recognises that the opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.

4.6 This advice is reinforced in the National Planning Practice Guidance published in 2014, which gives more detailed guidance on how to approach the assessment of the transport implications in the preparation of new local plans.

How the ITS contributes:

- Implementing strategies to rebalance the transport system in favour of sustainable transport modes
- Clear transport requirements to be considered to support growth

4 <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/networks/ges/assistant/what-we-do/dft> (accessed 16th Oct 2015)

Kent County Council

Vision for Kent 2012-2022 (5)

4.7 The Vision for Kent is a countywide strategy for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Kent’s communities. It has been written around three major ambitions, which are to:-

1. Grow the economy by supporting businesses to be successful, including improvements to the transport network and the provision of high-speed broadband;
2. Tackle disadvantage by fostering aspiration rather than dependency, including the provision of comprehensive, reliable and affordable public transport services providing access to education and employment opportunities; and
3. Put the citizen in control by involving people in making decisions and working with them to design services that meet their needs and suit them, including the continued provision of KCC’s Member Highway Fund and support for community bus and rail schemes.

How the ITS contributes:

- Implementing strategies to rebalance the transport system in favour of sustainable transport modes
- Clear transport requirements to be considered to support growth

Growth without Gridlock: a Transport Delivery Plan for Kent⁽⁶⁾

4.8 Growth without Gridlock outlines KCC’s high level vision for the transport network needed in Kent to support planned growth in housing and employment over the next 20 years. It responds to the economic and regeneration pressures outlined in the County Council’s Framework for Regeneration and identifies how transport interventions can contribute to their alleviation. The strategy requests greater transport funding and delivery powers for local transport authorities and calls upon the Government to progress those schemes of regional and national importance, including a Lower Thames Crossing, a long-term solution to Operation Stack and a scheme of Foreign Lorry Road User Charging.

How the ITS contributes:

- Implementing strategies to address congestion on the network
- Supporting the need for to find a long term solution to Operation Stack

Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for Kent 2011-2016⁽⁷⁾

5 Kent Forum (2012), Vision for Kent 2012-2022

6 KCC (2010), Growth without Gridlock - A Transport Delivery Plan for Kent

7 KCC (2011), Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-16

4.9 KCC's strategic approach for Kent's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), covering the period 2011 to 2016, was to develop five LTP3 themes aligned to the previous government's national transport goals. These themes are:-

- a. Growth Without Gridlock
- b. A Safer and Healthier County
- c. Supporting Independence
- d. Tackling a Changing Climate
- e. Enjoying Life in Kent

4.10 The LTP3 makes specific reference to Maidstone (Chapter 8 – The Implementation Plan for Growth without Gridlock): "The Maidstone Transport Strategy, and hence the County Council's Integrated Transport Programme for 2011 – 2016, will be driven by the desire to preserve and enhance the accessibility of Maidstone town centre by sustainable means. The proposed level of development will be underlined by a package containing a number of traffic measures including the enhanced provision and priority of bus services through the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership involving the County and Borough Councils along with the town's principal bus operator."

How the ITS contributes:

- Implementing strategies to address congestion on the network, improve safety, improve air quality and encourage sustainable transport; all of which can contribute to better, healthier, lifestyles for the borough's population.

Active Travel Strategy

4.11 In conjunction with stakeholders across the County, KCC has been developing an Active Travel Strategy for the promotion of physically active means of transport as part of its 'vision for making cycling and walking the preferred option for residents taking short journeys or as part of longer journeys that include public transport'⁽⁸⁾

4.12 The draft strategy defines Active Travel as walking or cycling as a means of transport in order to get to a particular destination such as work, the shops or to visit friends. It does not cover walking and cycling done purely for pleasure, for health reasons, or simply walking the dog. Active Travel can apply to a complete journey or part of a journey.

4.13 The draft strategy seeks to demonstrate how KCC will build on the existing network of cycle and walking routes in the County to maximise their use and to promote increased walking and cycling in a population with a growing reliance on cars. The aim is to promote a range of infrastructure and behaviour change projects via an implementation plan that will be finalised once the Strategy has been adopted.

4.14 How the ITS contributes:

- Implementing strategies to encourage sustainable transport, including the Active Travel modes of walking and cycling

Maidstone Borough Council

Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000⁽⁹⁾

4.15 This is the adopted Local Plan for Maidstone. The saved policies within it contain inter-alia, policy T2, which seeks to secure measures to aid bus and hackney carriage access on identified bus and hackney carriage corridors (the main radial routes into Maidstone Town Centre). Such measures to include dedicated bus lanes, bus priority at junctions, priority within traffic management schemes and enhanced waiting and access facilities and information systems for passengers including people with disabilities.

Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020 ⁽¹⁰⁾

4.16 MBC's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) sets the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for Maidstone in a way which respects the need for sustainable development. The SCS acknowledges that congestion in the borough has become an increasing problem and that the overriding aim of an integrated transport strategy must be to provide genuine transport choice to the area's residents, businesses and visitors. These driving principles are reflected in the three priorities for Maidstone outlined in the SCS:-

- For Maidstone to have a growing economy;
- For Maidstone to be a decent place to live; and
- Corporate and customer excellence.

Strategic Plan 2015-2020

4.17 The Strategic Plan updates the Sustainable Community Strategy and restates "Our Vision" as "That our residents live in decent houses, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks": and "Our Mission" as "Putting People First". This leads to two priorities as follows:

- PRIORITY 1 - Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- PRIORITY 2 - Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

How the ITS contributes:

- All the actions of the ITS support the priorities outlined above through improvements to the transport network

Maidstone Borough Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.18 The Local Plan was submitted for examination on 20 May 2016. It outlines and contains proposals for detailed junction mitigation measures and other sustainable transport interventions in support of the allocated development sites included in the Local Plan. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) submitted as

⁹ [Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000 saved policies](#)

¹⁰ [Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020](#)

part of the evidence base for the Local Plan sets out the funding sources and delivery timescales for the transport and highway interventions outlined in the Local Plan.

How the ITS contributes:

- All the actions of the ITS support the allocated sites in the Local Plan through the proposed improvements to the transport network through specific highway or sustainable transport interventions.

Other Plans and Policies

4.19 The ITS is also aligned to a number of other local plans and policies including:

KCC's Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan⁽¹¹⁾

4.20 The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan sets a number of objectives especially for sustainable transport:

Priority walking objectives include:

- Make promoted routes as accessible as possible and promote them to a wide audience.
- Ensure new developments encourage and provide for walking and cycling, including links to the wider countryside.
- Widen the audience for walking, including under-represented groups.
- Officers will proactively seek opportunities to improve the accessibility of the network, following consultation with local landowners and parishes.

Priority cycling objectives include:

- Support increasing cycling for everyday journeys, including seeking improvements to routes serving transport hubs, large employers and schools, and connecting cycling networks.
- Deliver a continued increase of traffic-free routes and a better connected network to support the development of tourism, family and recreational cycling.

Priority equestrian objectives include:

- Continue to improve equestrian infrastructure and develop new routes in target areas identified by riders.

Rail Action Plan for Kent KCC (2011), Rail Action Plan for Kent⁽¹²⁾

11 KCC (2007), Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2013-2017

12 KCC (2011), Rail Action Plan for Kent

4.21 The Rail Action Plan for Kent (RAPK) formed the basis of KCC's response to the DfT's consultation on the new Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) in 2014.

MBC's Air Quality Action Plan⁽¹³⁾

4.22 Initially the Council considered declaring AQMAs at the Fountain Lane/Tonbridge Road junction, the Well Road/Boxley Road junction and at the Loose Road/Sutton Road junction in Maidstone town based on the potential exceedances. Following extensive consultation, the Council decided to declare an urban area wide AQMA. The Council adopted the Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan in December 2010 setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives. The Borough Council regularly reviews and assesses air quality in the borough to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. It is anticipated that both the AQMA and the Air Quality Action Plan will be reviewed in 2016.

Low Emissions Strategy

4.23 The Borough Council has also commenced preparation of a Low Emissions Strategy (LES). It has been subject to initial public consultation.⁽¹⁴⁾ The responses to the consultation and the next steps to be taken in its preparation and adoption are currently being considered.

4.24 Air quality is a key issue in the Maidstone urban area and by promoting the use of sustainable transport modes the ITS will contribute towards reducing pollution and emissions. Similarly the future LES is likely to propose the possible introduction of emission control standards for public transport vehicles and taxis and the promotion of low emission vehicles and infrastructure and identify the increasing potential for electrically powered vehicles for possible inclusion in Council policy.

Neighbourhood Plans

4.25 Neighbourhood Plans are developed by parish councils and neighbourhood forums working in partnership with MBC. These set out planning policies for development and the use of land in a local area. Once adopted, a neighbourhood plan becomes part of the development plan for the area. This means that the plan has weight when decisions are made on planning applications. Transport matters can form part of these plans.

Transport Strategies for Adjoining Authorities

4.26 A number of adjoining authorities have prepared transport strategies to address existing transport issues and support future development. Some of the proposals identified in these strategies potentially affect Maidstone Borough.

4.27 The Tunbridge Wells Transport Strategy⁽¹⁵⁾ identifies the following in its Implementation Plan:

13 MBC (2010), Maidstone Town Air Quality Action Plan

14 [MBC \(2015\) Low Emissions Strategy](#)

15 TWBC (2015), Tunbridge Wells Borough Development Plan - Transport Strategy 2015-2016.

- Work with all operators and KCC to improve the timing and interaction of buses with train services, including Service 5 at Staplehurst Station;
- Lobby for improved service frequency on the Medway Valley Line.

4.28 The Swale Transportation Strategy⁽¹⁶⁾ is currently in draft but identifies existing peak period congestion at M20 Junction 5, for which a short term improvement has been identified but a more comprehensive solution will be required in the longer term. This will affect traffic flows on the A249 corridor linking with M20 Junction 7.

4.29 The Ashford Cycling Strategy⁽¹⁷⁾ contributes to the objectives of the older Transport Strategy for Ashford⁽¹⁸⁾ i.e. to achieve a significant shift away from car use by maximising use of public transport, walking and cycling. Both documents are focused on the town of Ashford itself, but the Cycling Strategy states that the extension of cycle routes into rural areas will be considered in future revisions of the Strategy. The Borough Council will support the development of cross-boundary transport proposals as part of its duty to cooperate.

4.30 The Tonbridge and Malling Cycling Strategy 2014-2019⁽¹⁹⁾ identifies a number of cycle route improvements which would improve access to Maidstone. These include a link from Aylesford; the filling in gaps on the A20 London Road to form a continuous route from West Malling; and a link from Kings Hill via Canon Lane, Teston Lane and North Pole Road.

4.31 One of the key transport objectives in the Medway Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2026⁽²⁰⁾ is to improve public transport and a number of the actions require partnership working with neighbouring authorities as well as operators. These include the development of sub-regional bus services and improved ticketing and fares initiatives, such as investigating the introduction of Smartcard technology.

4.32 Another of Medway's Local Transport Plan objectives is encouraging active travel and improving health. Paragraph 5.21 of the Medway Cycling Action Plan⁽²¹⁾ states that Medway Council will work with KCC to develop routes that cross local authority boundaries, such as along the Medway Valley to Maidstone.

16 KCC (2014), Swale Transportation Strategy Draft 2014-2031.

17 ABC (2010), Ashford Cycling Strategy 2011-2016

18 KCC/Ashford's Future (2006), The Transport Strategy for Ashford

19 KCC (2014), Tonbridge and Malling Cycling Strategy 2014-2019

20 Medway Council (2011), Local Transport Plan 2011-2016

21 Medway Council (2016), Medway's Cycling Action Plan 2016/18

5.1 In the context of the transport challenges for Maidstone Borough and national and local transport policies, the following vision has been developed.

5.2 In brief the vision is *Realising Maidstone's sustainable future; connecting communities and supporting a growing economy.*

By 2031, Maidstone town and its surrounding area will be well known for its efficient, sustainable and accessible transport system which will support a thriving and attractive county town, and provide efficient and effective links with the surrounding villages, countryside and beyond. More and more people will walk, cycle and use public transport and this will help reduce car traffic on radial routes from the town and support the continued growth of the area while protecting its distinctive character and environment.

New routes will be developed for walking, cycling and public transport which will link up communities, employment, services and facilities and alternatives to the private car will be promoted. Information about sustainable transport options will be readily available and new technology will make this easy to access.

New and improved high quality bus routes will link Maidstone town centre with community and local transport hubs which will become the location for local enterprise centres where services will be supplemented with high speed broadband. Enhanced railway services will link the borough with the capital and surrounding urban areas, offering a wide range of employment, commercial and leisure opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors.

Strategic Objectives

5.3 In order to achieve this vision, five key objectives have been developed which may be summarised as:

Objective 1: Enhancing and encouraging sustainable travel choices including:

- A. The development, maintenance and enhancement of walking and cycling provision, through network improvements and encouraging uptake amongst the population;
- B. The development, maintenance and enhancement of public transport provision, including Park and Ride, encouraging uptake amongst the population;
- C. Promotion and education regarding walking, cycling and public transport travel options;
- D. Ensuring that the provision of parking is fair and proportionate, considering the needs of all users, whilst also encouraging sustainable travel choices; and
- E. Place sustainable travel options at the heart of all new developments within Maidstone, to ensure a fully integrated network that puts pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the centre of any transport proposals.

Objective 2: The enhancement of strategic transport links to, from and within Maidstone town.

Objective 3: Ensure the transport system supports the growth projected by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

Objective 4: Reducing the air quality impacts of transport.

Objective 5: Ensure the transport network considers the needs of all users, providing equal accessibility by removing barriers to use.

6.1 In order to achieve these objectives, it will be necessary to focus on a number of key inter-related strategic priorities which will lead to specific interventions in all modes of transport.

Reduce demand for travel

6.2 In order to allow an improved transport network to accommodate existing and proposed development, and play its part in seeking to reduce the air quality impacts, a key priority for the strategy is to reduce the need to travel where possible, especially by private vehicle. The creation of sustainable communities, where people can live, work and access facilities without needing to travel long distances, is an overarching aim of the strategy and this will be pursued through the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and land use planning policies.

6.3 Significant advances in technology mean that the opportunities to work from home are increasing so that people may not need to travel to a workplace on a regular basis in the future with benefits in reducing congestion. This may be encouraged by the provision of superfast broadband, especially to rural communities and this should be a priority for partnerships between public agencies, providers and local businesses. This provision may be supplemented by the establishment of local enterprise hubs which offer the opportunity for local small businesses to support each other and provide complementary activities and services.

Changing travel behaviour

6.4 The objective of enhancing and encouraging sustainable travel choices will assist in changing travel behaviour. The inexorable increase in car usage leading to congestion and the further deterioration in environmental conditions are not sustainable and require changes in behaviour by individuals and institutions. A holistic approach is needed to promote alternatives to private car usage and the encouragement of walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

6.5 'Door to Door: A strategy for improving sustainable transport integration' ⁽²²⁾ was published by the DfT in March 2013. It seeks to promote the use of sustainable transport for the entire 'door-to-door' journey, with the aim of making it as convenient and straightforward to make a door-to-door journey by public transport, by cycle or on foot or by a combination of these different means as by private transport.

6.6 This ITS is in accordance with this strategy in that appropriate interventions are set-out that seek overall to improve the sustainable journey experience, through e.g. improved information about journey options to enable proper planning, improved and integrated connections at all stages of the journey, a convenient and affordable ticketing framework for an entire journey and safe and comfortable transport facilities to encourage users.

Promote modal shift

6.7 The implications of changing behaviour are that people shift from using the private car for the majority of journeys towards using more sustainable modes of transport where possible and appropriate. The private car continues to be the primary means of transport in the rural areas but relatively minor shifts in mode can make a significant difference in terms of congestion particularly with regard to trips to the urban area for work and leisure.

6.8 Experience elsewhere has demonstrated that significant changes to behaviour can be achieved where bus and rail services are enhanced by additional routes, real time information and new and improved interchange facilities.

6.9 In Poole, the number of journeys by bus has almost doubled from 5.3 million in 2004/2005 to 10.2 million in 2014/2015⁽²³⁾. The key to this success has been the Quality Bus Partnership comprising the major operators and the authorities of Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset. The authorities have, with Department for Transport funding, invested in infrastructure (high quality shelters, real-time passenger information and bus priority) whilst the bus operators have increased frequencies and invested £2.7 million in new low floor buses with luxury seating, CCTV and smartcard ticketing. These improvements have attracted new passengers for whom the bus is a mode of choice, and has led to a flourishing commercial bus network.

6.10 Similar changes to travel behaviour have been seen in Brighton & Hove, where a package of measures including flexible multi-trip ticketing, network simplification/branding, extensive bus priority, increased frequencies on busy routes and improvements to passenger facilities saw bus patronage increase from 30.2 million journeys in 2001 to 41.1million in 2009/10.

6.11 Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester were designated by the Department for Transport as Sustainable Travel Towns where a programme of measures was implemented between 2004 and 2009, intended to reduce car use. These are medium-sized (all with populations of 140,000 or smaller) free-standing towns, comparable with Maidstone. Detailed before/after travel surveys of over 4,000 residents in each town gave the following key results.⁽²⁴⁾

- Car driver trips fell by 9% per person, and car driver distance by 5-7%, compared with a fall of about 1% in medium-sized urban areas nationally during the same period;
- Bus trips per person grew by between 10% and 22% in the three towns, compared with a national fall of 0.5% in medium-sized towns;

23 Eurotransport Magazine, Volume 13, Issue 5 (2015), Increasing bus patronage through partnership working and RTPI

24 Sloman, L. et al (2010), The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns: Summary Report for Department for Transport.

- Cycling trips per person grew by between 26% and 30% in the three towns, compared to a decline elsewhere; and
- Walking trips per person grew by between 10% and 13% in the three towns compared to a national decline.

6.12 During the same period, six Cycling Demonstration Towns were also designated (Aylesbury, Brighton & Hove, Darlington, Derby, Exeter and Lancaster with Morecambe). Evaluation indicated a 27% increase in cycling across all six towns between 2005 and 2009, with the proportion of adults undertaking any cycling increasing by 14%. In schools involved in the 'Bike It' programme, the proportion of pupils cycling to school on a regular basis increased by 126%.⁽²⁵⁾

Improve network efficiency

6.13 In order to achieve the objectives of enhancing strategic transport links to, from and within Maidstone town and ensuring the transport system supports the growth projected by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, improvements should also be made to the existing transport network, including major new investment on links where appropriate. The strategy incorporates a programme of road and junction improvements.

25 [DfT/Cycling for England 2010: 'Lift Off for Cycling' Headline results](#)

7.1 Key to improving transport conditions in Maidstone Borough is the full involvement of all the stakeholders in providing and utilising transport modes and services. As well as the highway authority (KCC) and the Borough Council, key players are the bus operators, the rail company, interest groups promoting walking and cycling, Parish Councils and community groups.

Roles and Responsibilities

Highways England

7.2 Motorways and trunk roads in England are the responsibility of Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency). The M20 Motorway passes through the borough connecting the Channel Ports to the M25 London Orbital Motorway and beyond. There are four motorway junctions (5-8) on the M20 within the borough. The M2 Motorway also passes through the north of the borough area and three junctions (3-5) are situated just outside the borough boundary but are readily accessible from within the borough.

Kent County Council

7.3 Kent County Council (KCC) is the local highway authority for Kent and is responsible for the management and maintenance of all adopted roads in the county other than motorways and trunk roads. KCC is also the local transport authority for Kent and actively promotes alternatives to car-based travel to improve the accessibility, sustainability and efficiency of the highway network.

7.4 KCC's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) covers the period 2011 to 2016 and further Local Transport Plans will be produced over the period of the ITS. It is the intention that the Local Transport Plan will assist the implementation of the Integrated Transport Strategy.

Maidstone Borough Council

7.5 The Borough Council also has delegated responsibility for Civil Parking Enforcement under the Traffic Management Act 2004, Park and Ride services, street cleaning, the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles, the provision of bus shelters and the monitoring of air quality and implementation of an Air Quality Action Plan.

Bus Operators

7.6 Approximately 80% of bus services in Kent are operated on a wholly commercial basis by local operators and neither the Borough Council nor the County Council plays a direct role in their provision. However, MBC and KCC have signed a Quality Bus Partnership Agreement with the borough's principal commercial bus operator, Arriva, which commits all parties to invest jointly in local bus services and supporting infrastructure. The remaining 20% of services are classified as 'socially necessary' and are procured by KCC to provide access to essential services.

7.7 Discussions with the significant bus operators in Maidstone are identifying future service enhancements, new routes and operating improvements which will increase the attractiveness of bus travel in both the urban and rural areas.

The strategy anticipates the rail service improvements which are planned for Maidstone, including Thameslink, and the introduction of policies in the submitted Maidstone Borough Local Plan to promote walking and cycling and alternatives to the use of the private car.

Rail Operator

7.8 Maidstone's rail services are operated as part of the Integrated Kent Franchise, which is specified and led by the Department for Transport (DfT). The franchise is currently held by Southeastern, and this was recently extended until 2018. The process for awarding a new franchise from 2018 onwards commences in late 2016.

Funding Sources

7.9 A key challenge for the ITS will be to ensure that its actions are achievable within the funding that is likely to be available over time. Anticipated funding sources include:

- **Funding from development** – the ITS supports committed and planned growth and so funding from development will be critically important to help deliver the strategy. Section 106 funding will be used to deliver site specific infrastructure and to improve and mitigate the impacts of growth proposals. In the medium to longer term, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be used to fund the key infrastructure related to growth.
- **Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF)** – established in 2015/16, transport funding for the SLGF has been top sliced from central government Local Transport Plan funding for small schemes and for local major scheme funding. Local Enterprise Partnerships are required to submit bids for SLGF funding for schemes across all areas related to growth, including education and skills, community infrastructure and drainage, in addition to transport.
- **Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding** – KCC receives LTP funding for small scale transport improvements. However, the level of funding has reduced as money has been top sliced into the SLGF. For 2015/16 to 2017/18, the available Integrated Transport block funding will total £6.8 million per annum for the entire county.

Prioritisation and Delivery

7.10 The Maidstone Borough Local Plan seeks to deliver 18,560 homes and a quantum of employment and retail development in the period 2011 to 2031. The ITS seeks to support the Local Plan with appropriate interventions to mitigate the planned growth. The impact of the growth has been modelled using VISUM, which as indicated previously provides a strategic level overview, supported by detailed junction capacity modelling and specific modelling in transport assessments accompanying planning applications within which the cumulative impact of planned growth has been assessed.

7.11 This modelling has identified key mitigation and interventions, be it junction capacity improvements or improvements to public transport and its infrastructure. This mitigation is clearly set out in this ITS, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the IDP. Current work on junction improvements serves to evidence that with some 9,000 homes delivered or in the pipeline, the impacts can and will be mitigated. The Borough Council and KCC are already working together and delivering schemes.

7.12 Coupled with some 3,790 units planned for broad locations in the borough at the end of the plan period, and potentially 1,600 units as 'windfalls', this leaves a total of approximately 4,250 remaining units requiring infrastructure in the short to medium term. Further junction capacity modelling work has been undertaken in respect of the broad locations to demonstrate again, that appropriate mitigation can be provided to offset the impact of planned development in the latter part of the plan period to 2031.

7.13 It will be necessary to ensure an up-to-date ITS is maintained, therefore, a review will commence by 2022 alongside that of the Local Plan.

8.1 The ITS leads to action plans for all modes of transport which will be reviewed and rolled forward on a regular basis. It is important that the interventions are aligned with the sequence of development proposed in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

8.2 The Action Plans to achieve the strategic objectives and priorities are set out below.

8.3 The proposed delivery of the necessary transport infrastructure to support the Local Plan in line with this strategy is indicated in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP also indicates the sources of funding which will include S106, CIL when it is introduced, and other funding sources such as the LEP Growth Fund.

8.4 S106 funds are triggered at various stages of the development process and are largely controlled by the proposed developers' construction schedules, within the time constraints of the planning permission granted. Specific infrastructure provision may be financed in advance of development from other sources and the ITS identifies local highways, walking and cycling provision and public transport actions which may attract funds from various sources.

8.5 The chart below outlines the actions to be taken in order to deliver the objectives of this strategy. These actions have been categorised by mode, but an integrated approach is required to tackle Maidstone's transport issues with success reliant on the actions being implemented in conjunction with each other.

8.6 Actions will be phased so that they will be implemented over the short, medium or long term. These actions will be crucial to ensuring that Maidstone functions effectively both as the County Town of Kent and as a regionally important transport hub.

8.7 The ITS actions are summarised below, followed by full details of each action:

Number	Area	Action Description
H1	Highways	Targeted implementation of highway improvements at key strategic locations to relieve congestion and to aid public transport.
H2	Highways	Maintain and develop Maidstone's Intelligent Transport Systems and the proactive sharing of real time traffic and transport information with road users to manage congestion.
H3	Highways	Facilitate and promote the expansion of the County Hall Car-Club service to meet any identified increase in demand on an annual basis.
H4	Highways	Actively promote and encourage car sharing initiatives
H5	Highways	Ensure road safety education continues to be provided for across the borough.

Number	Area	Action Description
H6	Highways	Installation of additional electric charging points and the promotion of electric car use.

Number	Area	Action Description
P1	Parking	Introduce and adhere to Parking Standards.
P2	Parking	Optimise long stay parking charges to extract maximum value from parking charges, whilst controlling demand through a 50% increase in long-stay charges by 2031.
P3	Parking	Maintain the current level of parking space provision in the town centre.
P4	Parking	Improve parking enforcement on highways to reduce the impact of obstruction on bus reliability

Number	Area	Action Description
UL/Zero Emissions 1	Ultra-Low and Zero Emissions Vehicles	Encourage the provision of suitable infrastructure for Ultra-low and Zero emissions vehicles throughout the borough

Number	Area	Action Description
PT1	Public Transport	Provide bus priority measures on strategic routes linking the town centre to residential developments and key local amenities.
PT2	Public Transport	Facilitate an improvement of bus services to ensure a good frequency of service is provided on all radial routes to the town centre within the Maidstone Urban Area.
PT3	Public Transport	Increase the proportion of school children using the bus to get to school.
PT4	Public Transport	Continue to engage with and facilitate Statutory Quality Bus Partnership schemes in Maidstone.

Number	Area	Action Description
PT5	Public Transport	Improve rail station access for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired.
PT6	Public Transport	Improve the frequency and quality of bus services between Maidstone town centre, M20 Junction 7 and Sittingbourne/Faversham
PT7	Public Transport	Provision of a North West Maidstone Bus Loop
PT8	Public Transport	Promote the provision of high quality bus services from the Rural Service Centres and investigate using rail stations for interchange facilities
PT9	Public Transport	Lobby Government and Train Operating Companies (TOCs) for improved rail services to Maidstone including the restoration of direct services to London Bridge and Cannon Street
PT10	Public Transport	Investigate the potential for further rail halts at Tovil, Teston and Allington
PT11	Public Transport	Improve bus facilities at Maidstone East and Maidstone West train stations to maximise interchange capabilities.
PT12	Public Transport	Improve interchange facilities at Staplehurst rail station
PT13	Public Transport	Work towards an improved bus station in Maidstone town centre.
PT14	Public Transport	Better information and marketing of public transport options including

Number	Area	Action Description
W1	Walking	Provision of accessible pedestrian routes for all users.
W2	Walking	Improve pedestrian accessibility across the River Medway in Maidstone town centre.
W3	Walking	Implement public realm improvement schemes within the town centre, such that pedestrian access is the primary mode within the central core of Maidstone.

Number	Area	Action Description
W4	Walking	Identify priority areas for implementation of safety improvements to reduce road traffic collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists.
W5	Walking	Actively encourage and promote walk-to-school initiatives.
W6	Walking	Improve street signage with better pedestrian wayfinding and a reduction in footway clutter.

Number	Area	Action Description
C1	Cycling	Maintain and further develop a strategic cycle network, connecting the town centre to key facilities and residential areas.
C2	Cycling	Maintain and further develop cycle routes in Rural Service Centres, connecting local amenities and transport hubs (rail stations and bus stops) to housing.
C3	Cycling	MBC and KCC to work with partners to ensure the regular maintenance of all cycle tracks within the borough.
C4	Cycling	(a) All Year 6 children will have access to Level 1 and 2 Bikeability training, and children in Year 7-9 will have access to Level 3 training. (b) Adult cycle training will continue to be offered, through initiatives including workplace travel planning.
C5	Cycling	Support the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum as a group to promote the cycling cause in the borough.
C6	Cycling	Improve cycle security and parking at all key transport hubs and public amenities (including schools, healthcare facilities and retail locations).
C7	Cycling	Encourage employers to incorporate cycling into Workplace Travel Plans.
C8	Cycling	Promote cycling in schools through School Travel Plans.
C9	Cycling	Ensure all cycle routes are fully advertised and signposted within the borough.

Number	Area	Action Description
C10	Cycling	Revise and update the "Explore Maidstone Walking and Cycling Map" to extend coverage to the wider borough and indicate destinations in neighbouring local authorities. Map to be available both electronically and in paper format.
C11	Cycling	Standardise and clarify the requirements of planning applications with respect to the provision of walking and cycling facilities, to promote the use of these active travel modes.
C12	Cycling	MBC, KCC and the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum to identify opportunities to establish local cycling events.
C13	Cycling	MBC and KCC to identify locations throughout the cycle network where new automatic cycle counters should be installed to enable a detailed analysis of usage. Installation to proceed as resources allow, but each new cycle infrastructure proposal will be assessed to see if an additional counter should be added to augment the data gathering process.

Highways

8.8 The Actions:

Action H1: Targeted implementation of highway improvements at key strategic locations to relieve congestion

8.9 Through the identification and enhancement of key strategic junctions, congestion on the road network can be reduced. Regardless of development a number of the town's junctions are subject to high levels of congestion in the morning and evening peaks.

8.10 The key junctions and proposed interventions are set out in the table below. The funding sources are also referenced in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Maidstone Borough Council together with Kent County Council and Highways England will work together to secure the early delivery of these improvements within the next three years, primarily through S106 agreements and potential Growth Fund applications. The Borough Council and KCC are also actively exploring whether existing LGF1 funding can be used to 'pump-prime' and bring forward any of the planned intervention and mitigation schemes.

Area	Junction	Aim	Intervention	IDP Reference
Maidstone Town Centre	Town Centre Bridges Gytratory A229/A20/A26	Capacity improvements.	New northbound link to bypass the gytratory.	LEP Local Growth Fund and MBC Contribution (New Homes Bonus)
Maidstone Urban Area – M20 Junction 7 Strategic Area	A249 Bearsted Road roundabout and Bearsted Road/New Cut Junction	Capacity improvements.	Signalisation of New Cut roundabout. Provision of a new signal pedestrian crossing and combined foot/cycle	Provided under 13/1163.
	Dual carriageway between A249 and New Cut Junctions	Capacity improvements.	Additional carriageway/ revised junction arrangements.	Provided in connection with Newnham Court.
240	M20/Junction7	Capacity improvements	Signalisation of roundabout, widening of coast bound off-slip and creation of new signal controlled pedestrian route through junction.	Provided under 13/1163.
	M2 Junction 5 Improvement	Capacity improvements.		13/1163 - £44.7k
Maidstone Urban Area – South East Maidstone Strategic Area	A229/A274 Wheatsheaf junction	Capacity improvements.	Works to improve capacity at the junction	14/503167 - Proportion of £108k also split between Loose Rd/Boughton Lane & approaches to TC.

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Area	Junction	Aim	Intervention	IDP Reference
	A229/Armstrong Road	Capacity improvements.	Works on the approaches to the Town Centre between the W heatsheaf junction and the bridge gyratory traffic signal junctions.	14/503167 - Proportion of £108k also split between Loose Rd/Boughton Lane & approaches to TC.
241	A274 Willington Street junction	Junction capacity improvements.		13/1149 - £180k 13/1523 -£30k 13/0951 £55.8k
	A274 Wallis Avenue junction	Junction capacity improvements.		13/1149 - £180k 13/1523 -£30k 13/0951 £55.8k
	A274 Corridor	Bus journey time reliability.	Bus priority measures: Incorporating measures from the Willington Street junction to the W heatsheaf junction, together with bus infrastructure improvements	13/1149 - £1.8m 13/1523 - £300k 13/0951 - £558k
	A229 Loose Road/Cripple Street/Boughton Lane junction	Junction capacity improvements		

Area	Junction	Aim	Intervention	IDP Reference
Maidstone Urban Area – North West Strategic Area	A20/Coldharbour Lane junction	Capacity improvements.	Junction capacity and signals/left hand turn lane off A20 to M20 junction 5 link road.	13/1702 - £338K split between A20/Coldharbour & A26/Fountain Lane. 13/1749 -£676K. 14/501209 - £189k 14/500412 - £29.4k split between A26/Fountain Lane & Coldharbour
	A20/M20 Junction 5	Junction capacity and signals		14/501209 £12k (Towards J5 improvements on the M20)
	A20/M20 Junction 5	Capacity improvements	Interim improvement to M20 J5 roundabout including white lining scheme	13/1702 - £21.5k 13/1749 - £43K
	A20/B2246 Hermitage Lane junction	Junction capacity improvements		
	A26/Fountain Lane /Hermitage Lane junctions	Capacity improvements.	Changes to accommodate right turn vehicles within the junction introduction of MOVA and pedestrian sensing.	13/1702 - £338K split between A20/Coldharbour & A26/Fountain Lane.

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Area	Junction	Aim	Intervention	IDP Reference
				13/1702 - £96.2k 13/1749 - £200k 14/500412 - £29.4k split between A26/Fountain Lane & Coldharbour
Invicta Park Road Location	Improvements to Royal Engineers Road/Springfield/Invicta Park roundabout	Capacity improvements	Partial signalisation	
Rural Areas	A229 Linton Crossroads	Capacity improvements.	Works on junction approaches.	14/0566 - £108k
	A20 Harrietsham	Works to improve safety and pedestrian/cycle access		14/0828 - £399k
	A274 North Street/Kings Road Headcorn	Capacity improvements.	Signalisation	
	Oak Lane and junction of Oak Lane and Wheeler Street Headcorn	Safety improvements.	Junction improvements and new footway	S278 under 13/1943

Area	Junction	Aim	Intervention	IDP Reference
	Highway schemes associated with Lenham area	Capacity/safety improvements.	Improvements to junctions at A20/Ham Lane, A20/Old Ashford Road and Maidstone Road/HighStreet/Faversham Road/Old Ashford Road	
	A229 Station Road/High St/Headcorn Rd and Marden Rd Staplehurst	Junction capacity improvements		
	Hampstead Lane/Maidstone Rd Junction	Capacity improvements.	Provision of right turn lane on Hampstead Lane	

Action H2: Maintain and develop Maidstone’s Intelligent Transport Systems and the proactive sharing of real time traffic and transport information with road users to manage congestion

8.11 KCC is committed to building on the success of the Maidstone Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) system to continue enabling the County and Borough Councils to maximise the capacity of the existing road network and to respond proactively to incidents. In doing so, both Councils will seek to make use of new and emerging technology to share real-time traffic and travel information with road users and facilitate informed journey choices. KCC will also continue to work closely with Highways England to ensure that the management of the strategic and local road networks is fully integrated.

Action H3: Facilitate and promote the expansion of the County Hall Car Club service to encourage an increase in demand on an annual basis

8.12 MBC currently includes two pool cars and two pool bikes – which can be reserved for use by any member of staff. Usage of these vehicles is low relative to similar schemes elsewhere in the UK. However, utilisation of Zipcar amongst KCC staff is encouraging, and recent acquisition of electric vehicles has proven popular. KCC are looking to procure additional contract services to enhance this scheme in due course.

Action H4: Actively promote and encourage car sharing initiatives

8.13 Maidstone has one of the highest rates of single occupancy car use in the county with 52% of vehicle trips having only single occupants. In order to lower this rate and to incentivise higher car occupancy KCC manages ‘kentjourneyshare’; a free web-based service which links drivers, passengers, walkers, cyclists and taxi users who make similar journeys and encourages them to share their trip.

8.14 Additionally, KCC manages the ‘New Ways 2 Work’ scheme (of which MBC is a founding member) which is a collaborative partnership of Kent businesses, local authorities, transport providers and other organisations for encouraging sustainable travel choices. This scheme essentially promotes sensible and efficient use of vehicles and road space to enable traffic to keep moving. This will be maintained indefinitely and can be accessed at <http://newways2work.org.uk>

Action H5: Ensure road safety education continues to be provided for across the borough

8.15 Improving road user behaviour continues to be the main priority within KCC's approach to further reducing road casualties. The priority concerns and challenges that have been identified through the analysis of crash and casualty data and wider research findings are: speed, road user impairment, and anti-social values. KCC published a Road Casualty Reduction Strategy in 2014 for the period 2014-2020.⁽²⁶⁾

8.16 For the period 2014-2020, KCC has therefore committed to preparing a three-year rolling programme of activities that uses the individual and combined effects of education, training and publicity in an intelligence-led manner. Crash data and research findings will be used to guide priorities, to identify key target groups and to determine the most effective ways of communicating with them.

8.17 Kent County Council will lead collective partnership working through the Kent and Medway Casualty Reduction Group (CaRe Group) to improve road user behaviour through public education activities including publicity campaigns, public engagement projects and public relations strategies.

Action H6: Installation of additional electric charging points and the promotion of electric car use

8.18 There are 2 units currently installed outside Sessions House (one is serving the car club, one is available for public use), 2 units in Invicta House car park available to the public at weekends, one unit at Maidstone Leisure Centre and two units have been installed in the MBC car park. In addition, there is also one charging point installed at the KCC Aylesford Highway Depot, although this is mainly for use by KCC employees.

8.19 There are also several additional points on or close to the motorway network (including a model specific fast-charge facility at Eclipse Park close to M20 Junction 7) and at some local hotels, but KCC/MBC have not been involved in these installations. MBC will work closely with KCC to expand the number of electric charging points across the borough through the life of this Strategy.

Future Strategic Interventions

8.20 As part of the review of the ITS and the Maidstone Borough Local Plan that will commence by 2022 the Council will in conjunction with KCC examine the evidence and justification for future strategic interventions on the highway network.

Parking

8.21 The Actions:

Action P1: Introduce Parking Standards to ensure a means by which development can ensure an appropriate amount of parking is provided and reduce the overall demand for car parking

8.22 The new Parking Standards will ensure that the needs of car users are adequately met but also that the agreed level of provision does not undermine more sustainable modes of travel where these are readily available. However, where there is no alternative to use of the private car, the Standards will enable a fair and appropriate amount of parking to be provided. The Standards will also provide for developments' cycle and powered two wheeler (PTW) parking requirements, as well as ensuring that they incorporate electric vehicle charging infrastructure where appropriate.

Action P2: Optimise long stay parking charges to extract maximum value from parking charges, whilst controlling demand through a 50% increase in long-stay charges by 2031

8.23 This action will look to review the pricing structure for car-parks in Maidstone town centre through the introduction of dynamic car-park charging and the use of improved information to assist drivers with the overall aim of raising long-stay car parking charges by 50% by 2031.

8.24 A key problem with the current situation is that the town centre has a number of relatively small car parks in the inner town centre core and relatively little information (other than the King Street car-park which is just identified as open or closed) as to whether they are at capacity. This is in contrast to the Fremlin Walk car-park, the two Mall car-parks and Lockmeadow car-park which are included on electronic boards on key radial routes into the town centre and their remaining capacity displayed.

8.25 This leads to traffic circulating the town centre in the search for parking spaces adding to overall congestion and general issues with air quality.

8.26 The town centre parking and pricing strategy moving forward will therefore, seek to encourage long-stay parking into the larger car-parks on the edge of the town centre (e.g. Sittingbourne Road/Vinters Road and Mote Road) and to improve the provision and reliability of roadside driver information (including routing) showing available capacity in all publicly accessible off-street town centre car-parks. This will require additional technology in each of the car-parks to more closely monitor patronage to enable roadside information to be updated.

8.27 A review of existing parking provision in the town centre will take place to establish what measures might be introduced to encourage long-stay parking into the larger edge-of-centre car parks and to establish whether there is any scope for rationalisation of existing provision. This is linked to action P3 below.

8.28 As part of this overall strategy the impact of the closure of the Sittingbourne Road Park & Ride site that occurred in early 2016 will need to be monitored closely.

8.29 The pricing strategy should be flexible enough to promote and support a corresponding increase in bus service frequencies to respond and to assist in encouraging modal shift towards public transport, cycling and walking to further reduce reliance on the use of the private car by 2031.

Action P3: Optimise the level of parking space provision in the town centre.

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8.30 There is currently a very high level of parking provision within Maidstone town centre. It is proposed that there should be no net increase in the quantum of parking available in the town over the period of this strategy as a means of discouraging car use from current and new developments. The town centre parking supply will be kept under review to make the best use of available land and associated income streams.

Action P4: Improve parking enforcement on highways to reduce the impact of obstruction on bus reliability

8.31 Recent discussions with Arriva the largest bus operator in the borough have highlighted the significant impact of highway obstruction on bus operations and reliability. This applies to the other operating companies as well. Enhanced enforcement of existing parking restrictions on bus routes by MBC will assist all bus operators to maintain timetable schedules.

8.32 The situation will be kept under review and if enhanced enforcement of the existing parking restrictions proves to be insufficient to maintain reliable bus operations, the feasibility of other interventions, for example 'Red Routes' which are already used in large cities elsewhere in the UK, will be investigated.

Ultra-Low/Zero Emissions Vehicles

8.33 The Actions

Action UL/Zero Emissions1: Encourage the provision of suitable infrastructure for ultra-low and zero emissions vehicles throughout the borough.

8.34 In relation to the encouragement of the use of vehicles with zero or ultra-low emissions a two pronged process will be required. Firstly adopted Parking Standards for new development will require appropriate charging points to be made available or for pre-wiring to be put in place to enable easier and less costly retro-fitting. Secondly, incentives such as discounted or free parking can be introduced to encourage the use of ultra-low or zero emissions vehicles for journeys into the town centre.

8.35 On 17 December 2015, the Government announced an extension to the existing plug-in car-grant beyond the existing notified February 2016 date, to at least the end of March 2018. The maximum subsidy has been lowered from £5000 to £4500 and two grant rates will be introduced from 1 March 2016 to focus financial support on the 'greenest' vehicles:

- Category 1 vehicles with a zero emission range of over 70 miles will benefit from the maximum £4500 grant.
- Category 2 and 3 vehicles with a shorter zero emission range (petrol/diesel hybrid vehicles) will benefit from a grant of £2500.
- A price-cap of £60,000 has also been introduced for category 2 and 3 vehicles; vehicles priced above this level will not receive a grant whereas Category 1 vehicles above this level will remain eligible for the full £4500 grant.

8.36 Importantly, the Government has also announced it will continue to provide a £500 grant to Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) users towards having a charging point installed at their home (estimated to be approximately 50% of the cost).

8.37 During the life of the ITS and Local Plan the technology surrounding vehicles will change, for example, the current limited use of Hydrogen fuel-cell powered vehicles is likely to increase as more models come to the market.

8.38 Technology already exists to enable the manufacture of hydrogen through electrolysis (and power can be provided by renewable sources) to service fuel-cell cars for a reduced cost compared to a conventional hydrogen filling station to which fuel is delivered. An example of this approach constructed by Honda in Swindon opened in 2014 and is also used to fuel some of Swindon Council's vehicles.

8.39 The Council should seek to accommodate, in an appropriate location, the provision of a publicly accessible hydrogen filling station within the borough.

Public Transport

8.40 The Actions:

Action PT1: Provide bus priority measures on strategic routes linking the town centre to residential developments and key local amenities

8.41 Bus priority measures are vital to delivering a network that encourages public transport use, through ensuring journey times can compete with private car use. Allowing buses to bypass key areas of congestion through the use of junction priority measures, provides passengers with a clear advantage, while also contributing to improved air quality through less congested bus journey times. Key areas identified for bus priority measures include:

- Sutton Road, Northbound, between Willington Street and Wheatsheaf Junction: This would make a significant contribution to improving the speed and reliability of buses operating on this busy corridor and would directly serve the South East Maidstone strategic housing allocation proposed in the Local Plan. Proposals include:

- i. The incorporation of bus priority measures into the capacity improvement schemes for the junction of Willington Street/Wallis Avenue and the A274 Sutton Road.
 - ii. Limited widening at the St Saviours Road junction by lengthening the left turn flare lane and a relocation of the bus stop and making it left turn only with an exception for buses going straight ahead.
 - iii. Relocation of the bus stops at the end of Mangravet Avenue as these are not well related to pedestrian crossing movements or the existing population at Grove/Road Mangravet Avenue.
 - iv. Bus pre-signal on the in-bound approach to the Wheatsheaf junction on Sutton Road.
- Bus only link between the proposed Langley Park Farm and Rumwood Green developments (Local Plan sites H1(5) and H1(10)) to maximise bus service penetration of new residential developments to the south of the A274.
 - Romney Place bus lane: Romney Place is not designed as a major through route and its heavy use during peak periods causes significant congestion on Lower Stone Street delaying buses seeking to access The Mall Chequers Bus Station. It also causes hazards to pedestrians seeking to cross Romney Place at its junction with Lower Stone Street. The implementation of an eastbound bus lane, in place of the existing carriageway lane, will ease congestion and improve access times for buses routing along this road to the bus station, while also positively impacting on air quality.
 - Installation of bus activated traffic signals at junctions to significantly improve bus journey times with little or no impact on general traffic. Key locations are:
 1. Earl Street/Fairmeadow.
 2. Fairmeadow/St Faith's Street.
 3. A229 Royal Engineers Way/Chatham Road - reintroduction of bus activation at the southbound bus only right turn signals from the A229.

Action PT2: Facilitate an improvement of bus services to ensure a good frequency of service provided by high quality buses is provided on all radial routes to the town centre within the Maidstone Urban Area

8.42 Ensuring a frequent bus service encourages public transport use, improving passenger perceptions of the convenience and robustness of using buses, through essentially allowing more flexibility in their use of the service. The frequency needs to be regular enough to prevent the timetabling acting as a deterrent to passenger use. The improvements in passenger numbers driven through frequency improvements has been seen on existing bus routes in Maidstone which have seen patronage increase with frequency enhancements. The following routes and frequencies should be provided (at a minimum in the peak hours):

- A20 London Road – 7-8 minute frequency (Currently at this frequency).

- A274 Sutton Road – 6-7 minute frequency; Currently 8 minutes on part; to be expanded when housing schemes progress and to be combined with the bus priority measures outlined in PT1.
- A229 Royal Engineers Way (to and from the Medway Towns) - 10 minute frequency (currently Service 101 (Sapphire standard) is on a 12 minute frequency).
- A26 Tonbridge Road – 7-8 minute frequency (currently 10 minutes. Work with service providers to upgrade service to Sapphire standard (or equivalent) and explore the possibility of extending the 6X service (Maidstone-Pembury Hospital Route) into Maidstone Town Centre.
- A229 Loose Road – 10 minute frequency. Potential to increase frequency of 89 service from Coxheath from every 20 to every 15 mins. Potential to increase service 5 from Staplehurst to a half-hour frequency.
- A249 Sittingbourne Road (to and from Sittingbourne/Faversham) – 15 minute frequency coupled with the promotion and an increase in frequency of services 333 and 334 from Sittingbourne and Faversham. Work with the service providers to upgrade service to Sapphire standard (or equivalent).
- A20 Ashford Road – 20 minute frequency

Action PT3: Increase the proportion of school children using the bus to get to school

8.43 Travel to and from schools creates significant pressure on the highway network, which requires intervention to encourage alternative travel arrangements to car drop-off and pick-up. KCC currently provides the following bus passes, to encourage and promote bus travel among young people:

- Young Persons Travel Pass - provides travel on almost all public bus services in Kent for an annual fee of £270 (from September 2016) for young people living in the county who are in academic years 7 to 11. Families with more than two children can get a third or fourth pass free on application.
- 16+ Travel Card - provides subsidised bus travel for 16-19 year olds continuing with education or vocational training. The card costs up to £400 per annum.

8.44 These need to remain in place to continue to manage school travel patterns, reducing the congestion caused by travel to and from schools.

Action PT4: Continue to engage with and facilitate statutory Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) schemes in Maidstone

8.45 The QBP was set up to improve and facilitate communication and decision making regarding bus service provision in the Maidstone area. Attendance by representatives from KCC, HE, MBC and bus operators allows collaborative discussion of any bus related matters and MBC will continue to engage with this group. The promotion of the use of S106 agreements for bus service improvements, including subsidisation of services, improvements to signage and the provision of bus shelters will be a key input into this group as will ensuring that operators continue to upgrade fleets to less polluting and fuel efficient models. The scope to promote and further develop flexible ticketing products, including integrated bus/rail ticketing, will be also be investigated through the QBP.

8.46 Via the QBP bus operators will also be encouraged to engage with existing Transport User Groups from across the Borough to discuss issues.

Action PT5: Improve rail station access for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired

8.47 Rail stations need to be accessible by all modes of transport, including by the mobility impaired. Suitable walking and cycling routes between local housing and the stations are required. The stations themselves require sufficient car parking to meet demand without actively encouraging car access over more sustainable modes. Basic cycle parking should be provided as a minimum, with significant secure provision at key strategic rail stations. The following locations have been identified as priorities for station access improvements:

- Barming Station – Enhanced pedestrian and cycle access required to link the station with existing and proposed development in the local area and hospital. In particular the provision of the pedestrian crossing near the station is required to ensure a safe pedestrian route across the busy Hermitage Lane to the station and a direct pedestrian and cycle access from Hermitage Land and Allington to the London-bound platform.
- Staplehurst - A new pedestrian and cycle link between the railway station and the residential area to the south of the Lodge Road Industrial Estate, with improvements to the ease and quality of bus/rail interchange within the vicinity of the railway station.
- Harrietsham Station - New pedestrian and cycle link between Harrietsham Primary School and Harrietsham railway station.
- Marden Station - Provision of a new shelter, additional seats, CCTV, lighting and cycle parking.
- East Farleigh, Harrietsham, Hollingbourne, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden, Maidstone Barracks, Maidstone West and Yalding Stations do not have step-free access to each platform. The Council will work with Network Rail and the Train Operating Company to secure such access to enable all passengers to be able to 'turn-up and-go' without the need for prior appointment.

Action PT6: Improve the frequency and quality of bus services between Maidstone town centre, M20 Junction 7 and Sittingbourne/Faversham

8.48 The Council will seek through appropriate s106 obligations to secure the improved frequency and quality of bus services between Maidstone town centre and the M20 Junction 7 area and onwards to Sittingbourne/Faversham, and vice versa. This will require the provision of three additional buses/drivers to ensure a minimum 15 minute daytime service frequency between the M20 Junction 7 area and the town centre, thus increasing daytime frequencies to Faversham and Sittingbourne to every 30 minutes respectively. The increased frequency of evening and weekend bus services will also be sought.

8.49 Funding for the enhancement should be provided for five years. The Council will work with and encourage the bus operator to upgrade the service between Sittingbourne and Faversham to a 'Sapphire' standard of service or equivalent (which should include dedicated drivers, upgraded seating, the availability of free Wi-Fi and at-seat charging facilities). Improvement to the existing signalised junctions at New Cut Road/A20 Ashford Road and A20 Ashford Road/Square Hill by upgrading signals and/or their control systems will also be secured.

Action PT7: Provision of a North West Maidstone Bus Loop

8.50 The Council will seek through appropriate s106 obligations to secure funding for five years for the operation of a 'bus-loop' service in north west Maidstone connecting Maidstone Hospital and the new housing sites on or adjacent to Hermitage Lane and London Road to Maidstone town centre along London Road via a bus gate on Howard Drive Allington. This is likely to be achieved by the extension of existing hourly service 19 westwards beyond the town centre to Palace Wood and Maidstone Hospital and the re-routing of service 60 which currently runs along London Road to Hermitage Lane via Coldharbour Roundabout.

Action PT8: Promote the provision of high quality bus services from the Rural Service Centres including interchange facilities at rail stations

8.51 A key objective for the strategy is the promotion of alternatives to private vehicle commuting into Maidstone through the provision of high quality fast bus services from the Rural Service Centres and major villages.

8.52 Opportunities for bus facilities should be provided at village railway stations to increase interchange capability and the attractiveness of using public transport as part of the 'door-to-door' integrated approach envisaged by the DfT. It is acknowledged that some of the southern rail stations in the borough are used as railheads serving a wider area to which people travel to for onward commuting. The ITS will seek to ensure that travel to the rail stations is less reliant on private means of transport.

8.53 Opportunities will also be sought through appropriate s106 obligations for increases to the frequency and extent of bus services from the RSC's to enable improvements to such services to be initially established with the aim of ensuring longer-term viability after the support period finishes and as planned development is delivered. Such measures will also seek to ensure that there are viable and sustainable alternatives to reliance on private means of transport.

Action PT9: Lobby Government and Train Operating Companies (TOCs) for improved rail services to the Maidstone urban area

8.54 Southeastern operates train services in the Kent region including Maidstone. At the end of 2014 Southeastern had their existing rail franchise extended to June 2018. This extension included the provision of better services to Maidstone by the addition of direct Maidstone East to London Blackfriars services. Whilst a small improvement, previous connections to Cannon Street and London Bridge have still been lost, and the frequency of service to Blackfriars is poor.

8.55 High Speed 1, by which Southeastern serves many Kent towns into and out of St Pancras International via Ebbsfleet, in most cases does not benefit Maidstone. It is now possible to travel from Ashford to London in less than 40 minutes, whereas Maidstone East to Victoria still generally takes more than 1 hour, even though Ashford is many miles further from London than Maidstone. A limited three AM peak journeys to London from Maidstone West along the Medway Valley Line to HS1 via Strood with three return PM peak journeys from London has however, been operating successfully and has increased patronage of the Medway Valley Line significantly.

8.56 To correct this imbalance, in the run up to the re-franchising, MBC will review rail services and in conjunction with KCC, passenger groups and the Kent Community Rail Partnership, lobby the government for enhancements to Maidstone services in the new franchise timetable.

- MBC will seek the restoration of direct AM and PM Peak weekday Charing Cross, Cannon Street and London Bridge services
- MBC will seek the expansion of the current limited Medway Valley Line HS1 service to an all day service.
- The extensive upgrade work, as part of the Thameslink programme, also provides an opportunity to lobby for the new franchise to require the continuation of planned improved connections to the capital via Blackfriars from the Thameslink Services that will commence serving Maidstone East with a two train per hour AM and PM peak service and a more limited off-peak service from 2018.
- MBC will also lobby for a reduced service time from Maidstone East to Victoria as part of the new franchise agreement.

8.57 Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden are served by half hourly services to Charing Cross and due to the speed of these services, some commuters from the Maidstone urban area use these stations in preference to those located in

the town. The Council will lobby the DfT and Train Operating Company to ensure that there is no reduction in the speed or frequency of services from these stations as an integral requirement of the new franchise when awarded.

8.58 Transport for London (TfL) has proposed to take control of rail services which operate mostly or wholly within Greater London as re-franchising takes place. The Council has made its views known to the DfT and TfL through a consultation exercise in early 2016 and will continue to lobby to ensure that the developing proposals are not to the detriment of rail services within Maidstone Borough.

8.59 The possibility of the re-introduction of a direct Maidstone to Gatwick Airport service which ceased some years ago should also be assessed.

Action PT10: Investigate the potential for further rail halts at Tovil, Teston and Allington

8.60 In line with the increase in rail traffic, the potential for the provision of extra rail halts should be investigated. Discussions with rail operators and user groups should identify how such provision may be made, and how it can be funded.

Action PT11: Improve bus facilities at Maidstone East and Maidstone West rail stations to maximise interchange capabilities

8.61 Improvements are necessary to improve the bus interchange capabilities at both Maidstone East and Maidstone West stations to provide for new or enhanced bus services from outside the Maidstone urban area to terminate. Bus facilities should be incorporated into redevelopment plans for these major town centre locations.

Action PT12: Improve interchange facilities at Staplehurst rail station

8.62 The Council is currently working with Southeastern, KCC and bus service providers to secure significant improvements to the existing interchange facilities at Staplehurst rail station to increase the number of buses directly serving the facility, as well as improved pedestrian/cycle linkages on Station Approach. Early designs and cost estimates have been produced which will be further refined and developed as funding is secured from appropriate s106 obligations.

Action PT13: Work towards an improved bus station in Maidstone town centre

8.63 The Council is currently working with Capital and Regional, the landowners of The Mall Chequers Shopping Centre, KCC and bus service providers to secure significant improvements to the existing bus station to improve the passenger experience and operational efficiency. Early designs and cost estimates have been produced which will be further refined and developed as funding is secured.

8.64 In the longer term, The Mall Chequers Shopping Centre and adjoining land, where the current bus interchange facility is located, is earmarked for potential redevelopment towards the latter end of the Local Plan period. As part of the regeneration of the site and area, the Council will work with the Centre's owners (and other land owners that may be affected) together with the public transport operators to secure the provision of a new bus interchange facility that is more accessible, user-friendly and fit-for purpose in the light of the desire for improved bus service provision and patronage across the borough.

Action PT14: Better information and marketing of public transport options and improved signage

8.65 Work with KCC, neighbouring authorities, bus/rail operators and user groups (including the Kent Community Rail Partnership) to implement an integrated, cohesive approach to the provision of public transport information and marketing, including:

- Real time bus information
- Journey planning apps
- Maintaining informative, up to date websites
- Improved signage between train stations in Maidstone
- Improving the availability and ease of use of on-line/mobile app ticket purchasing
- Promote and further develop the availability of flexible ticketing products in general, including integrated bus/rail ticketing.

Walking

The Actions:

- More detailed treatment of the walking actions are presented in the separate Walking and Cycling Strategy.

Action W1: Provision of accessible pedestrian routes for all users

8.66 The pedestrian network should provide equal access for all users. Achieving this outcome will require the removal of physical obstacles and the introduction of more accessible elements to the pedestrian environment including dropped kerbs, tactile paving and wide footways. Step free access should be provided for all key routes, making use of ramps and lifts as appropriate.

Action W2: Improve pedestrian access across the River Medway in Maidstone town centre

8.67 The provision of better pedestrian routes across the Medway would encourage walking between the different areas of the town centre and local housing developments. Enhancing the ability for pedestrians to easily traverse the river improves the connectivity of the town centre, not only encouraging walking but contributing to economic benefits through better accessibility between businesses and retail outlets on either side of the river. The Council is working with KCC on the Bridges Gyrotory scheme to ensure that pedestrian (and cycle) access across the river is not compromised.

8.68 The pedestrian bridge connecting Maidstone East and Maidstone Barracks Station has recently undergone refurbishment to improve the pedestrian environment. Further areas for improvement include:

- Continuing to develop the River Medway towpath to improve both the pedestrian and cyclist experience; and
- Investigation of the benefits of building a pedestrian bridge to improve connectivity over the River Medway between Earl Street and St Peter's Street.

Action W3: Implement public realm improvement schemes within the town centre, such that pedestrian access is the primary mode within the central core of Maidstone

8.69 One of the most important ways of making streets more attractive is to reduce the dominance of vehicles. This can be achieved by restricting traffic, slowing it down and making drivers more aware of other road users by changing the carriageway/pavement distinction to a 'shared space', where no user has priority. Ideally, people should be able to walk wherever they want to, by the most direct route, with as little conflict with traffic as possible.

8.70 Accessible and attractive town centre streets not only enhance the pedestrian experience, but through encouraging pedestrian movement, public realm improvements can make a vital contribution to the regeneration of the commercial centre. MBC has recently successfully completed its High Street Public Realm Scheme, which has revitalised the High Street and now supports future growth in nearby businesses. Building on this success, MBC also has aspirations to upgrade the upper half of Week Street (further towards Maidstone East Station) and Gabriel's Hill.

Action W4: Identify priority areas for implementation of safety improvements to reduce traffic collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists

8.71 Personal injury collision data will be reviewed to identify significant clusters of collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists and to analyse the main causes of these collisions. This review will be used to develop a priority list of locations (e.g. road junctions, pedestrian crossing locations) where safety improvements are required. These could include the upgrading of pedestrian facilities and speed control measures such as the introduction of 20mph limits.

Action W5: Actively encourage and promote walk to school initiatives

8.72 MBC is a sponsor of the KM Charity Group 'Walk to School' which seeks to encourage more parents and children to walk to school. Across the County since its inception, the Charity has resulted in:

- 40,000 children and families being involved;
- 600,000 green journeys annually; and
- 250,000 school run car journeys removed.

8.73 As school induced traffic has a significant impact on the road network during peak times, schemes such as these contribute greatly to managing traffic congestion.

8.74 Since January 2013 some 62,128 cars have been removed from the road in Maidstone Borough as a result of this initiative.⁽²⁷⁾, but there is clearly more that can be done as no Maidstone schools appear in the top five.

8.75 MBC will appoint a school travel plan champion to work with schools on investigating the potential scope and functions of School Travel Plans which would seek amongst other issues to further reduce the number of car trips undertaking the "school run". The potential benefits of staggered school opening/closing times will also be investigated through the School Travel Plan process.

Action W6: Improve street signage with better pedestrian wayfinding and a reduction in footway clutter

8.76 Numerous columns for street signs and street furniture can prevent the free flow of pedestrian movement and create hazards and unnecessary barriers. There is scope to rationalise street signage and street furniture to reduce the number of columns and general street clutter to provide more footway space.

8.77 Efficient wayfinding can encourage walking and cycling through providing people with the information they need to navigate the town successfully, and understand the journey times between locations. Having clearly branded, consistent, wayfinding throughout the town not only provides information and reassurance to those less familiar with the area, but also adds to the overall experience of the public realm.

Cycling

The Actions:

8.78 More detailed treatment of the cycling actions are presented in the separate Walking and Cycling Strategy.

Action C1: Maintain and further develop a strategic cycle network, connecting the town centre to key facilities and residential areas

8.79 Maidstone should have a comprehensive, safe, cycle network in order to facilitate and encourage cycle journeys. At present the borough has a number of cycle routes focused on the urban area, however these are often disjointed with limited off road options. Delivering a strong strategic cycle network requires:

- Maintenance and enhancement of existing cycle infrastructure. Reviewing cycle routes and links already in place ensuring:
 - Existing gaps in the network are addressed, providing safe and continuous linkages to known destinations e.g. The Oakwood Park Education Campus.
 - Routes are unimpeded by street furniture, pavement parking and other obstructions
 - Routes are maintained clearing cycle ways of hazardous defects and overgrown vegetation
 - Appropriate signage is in place to clearly identify cycle routes
- Development of new strategic cycle routes to and from the town centre from key residential and employment sites encouraging cycling as a commuting option. Key strategic links required to further enhance Maidstone's cycle network include:
 - i. The South East Cycle Link, developing a route into Maidstone from Langley along the Loose Valley to connect with the Loose Greenway Scheme that is being progressed.
 - ii. The River Medway Towpath Scheme from Barming Bridge to Allington (together with links at key points along this route from either side of the River Medway)

- iii. B2246 Hermitage Lane Cycle Lane.
 - iv. A route linking Kings Hill to Maidstone Town Centre along North Pole Road, North Street, South Street Barming, through to Rectory Lane and Fant Farm to Upper Fant Road Maidstone.
 - v. Reviewing Traffic Regulation Orders to examine whether cycles can be better accommodated on parts of the existing highway network; e.g. across Barming and Tovil footbridges and along Week Street (out of shopping hours).
- Enhancement of leisure cycle facilities and routes, to further encourage cycling as a leisure pursuit. Providing appropriate cycle facilities at key recreation areas, including a Pump Track in a cycle accessible location or other recreational cycle facility including Mote Park, with a specific focus on improving the riverside paths and routes along the Medway. Longer term possibilities include:
 - i. extension of the Medway Towpath Scheme from Barming Bridge to Yalding;
 - ii. a signposted route from Lenham to Headcorn, Staplehurst, Marden, Laddingford and Yalding across the southern part of the borough;
 - iii. a signposted route across the North Downs from the Stockbury valley/Hucking to Wichling/Otterden with connections to Swale and Lenham.

Action C2: Maintain and further develop cycle routes in Rural Service Centres, connecting local amenities and transport hubs (rail stations and bus stops) to housing.

8.80 The borough has a number of Rural Service Centres, and cycling facilities within these are variable. Local communities should have the following facilities in place to encourage cycling for short localised trips;

- Cycle routes to schools
- Cycle routes to railway stations
- Cycle parking provision at schools, railway stations and bus stops (where frequent interurban services are available/planned)
- Cycle parking provision at key local amenities (e.g. health care, retail and recreation sites)

8.81 The following specific local cycle improvements have been identified to be addressed:

- Harrietsham: implementation of a cycle route between the primary school and rail station;
- Staplehurst: implementation of a cycle route connecting the rail station to the residential area to the south of the Lodge Road Industrial Estate;
- Staplehurst: provision of cycle parking at the village shops;
- Headcorn: shelter for cycle parking provided at the railway station;
- Hollingbourne: provision of cycle parking at the station;
- Marden: additional cycle parking provision at the railway station;
- Bearsted: additional cycle parking provision at the railway station;
- Maidstone Hospital: additional cycle parking;
- Maidstone West: additional cycle parking provision at the railway station.
- Cycle parking should be provided in urban shopping parades e.g. Beverley Road, Queens Road crossroads, Barming and Loose Road shopping parade.

Action C3: MBC and KCC to work with partners to ensure the regular maintenance of all cycle tracks within the borough.

Action C4:

- a. All Year 6 children will have access to Level 1 and 2 Bikeability training, and children in Years 7-9 will have access to Level 3 training.
- b. Adult cycle training will continue to be offered, through initiatives including workplace travel planning.

Action C5: Support the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum as a group to promote the cycling cause in the borough.

8.82 In January 2015 the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum was re-launched providing an arena to discuss local cycling issues. Continued support and involvement in the forum provides valuable insight into local cyclist's perspectives and issues, which can feed into making informed decisions regarding the development of Maidstone's cycle infrastructure.

8.83 The forum also actively promotes cycling through building a strong cycling community hosting regular events that encourage cycling across the borough, and raising awareness of the existing and emerging cycle facilities.

Action C6: Improved cycle security and parking at all key transport hubs and public amenities (including schools, healthcare facilities and retail locations)

8.84 Sufficient secure cycle parking is essential if people are to be motivated to cycle. The type of parking provided should be considered in relation to the user profiles; in short stay locations simple Sheffield stands can provide a convenient means for cyclist to park up, however in locations where it is likely cycles will be left for long time periods more sheltered parking or lockers can be more appropriate.

Action C7: Encourage employers to incorporate cycling into Workplace Travel Plans

8.85 Currently 0.8% of Maidstone residents cycle to work according to the Office for National Statistics. Travel plans provide an opportunity to improve levels of cycling by improving cycling facilities at employment locations. KCC currently offers advice and support to business, schools and other organisations on travel planning, advocating not just the wider transportation, but also the business benefits of implementing travel plans. Such plans are encouraged as they can include commitment to improving cycling facilities including secure parking, bike lockers and shower facilities; all of which help make cycling a realistic commuting option for employees.

Action C8: Promote cycling in schools through School Travel Plans.

8.86 Getting children involved in cycling and providing education on safe cycling is important in developing a longer term cycling culture within the borough.

8.87 The council will look to encourage and promote cycle education in schools including, Bikeability, and national standard cycle training provided at a local level by KCC and school games organisations at primary and secondary schools across Kent. Aimed at children in year 4 and above, the courses give children the skills to make safer choices when cycling and to enjoy the freedom of riding a bike. Bikeability courses are also available for adults. Nationally, over 1.7million people have benefited from the training.

8.88 The potential benefits of staggered school opening/closing times will be investigated through the School Travel Plan process, which by managing the volume of 'school run' vehicular traffic may contribute towards improved cycle safety.

Action C9: Ensure all cycle routes are fully advertised and signposted within the borough.

Action C10: Revise and update the "Explore Maidstone Walking and Cycling Map" to extend coverage to the wider borough and indicate destinations in neighbouring local authorities. Map to be available both electronically and in paper format.

Action C11: Standardise and clarify the requirements of planning applications with respect to the provision of walking and cycling facilities, to promote the use of these active travel modes.

Action C12: MBC, KCC and the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum to identify opportunities to establish local cycling events.

Action C13: MBC and KCC to identify locations throughout the cycle network where new automatic cycle counters should be installed to enable a detailed analysis of usage. Installation to proceed as resources allow, but each new cycle infrastructure proposal will be assessed to see if an additional counter should be added to augment the data gathering process.

9.1 The purpose of any strategy is to have a means of achieving desired results. However, given the complexities and scale of the issues this strategy deals with it is often difficult to identify if the desired results are being achieved.

9.2 The table below identifies targets to monitor the progress of the ITS in achieving its objective. In setting these targets, every effort has been made to ensure they are both realistic but also ambitious, ensuring the best possible level of service is provided to those living within the borough with the indicative funding levels.

Target	Description
1	To increase walking mode share in Maidstone from 8% of all work trips to more than 10% of all work trips by 2021 and 12% by 2031.
2	To increase cycling mode share in Maidstone from 0.8% to more than 2% of all work trips by 2021 and 3% by 2031.
3	To increase public transport mode share in Maidstone from 7.3% to more than 10% of all work trips by 2021 and 12% by 2031.
4	To decrease car driver mode share in Maidstone from 44.3% of all work trips to below 40% by 2021 and below 37% by 2031.
5	To undertake a full and independent review of Maidstone's Park and Ride provision, issue and act upon recommendations by 2017.
6	To double the number of electric charging points in Maidstone by 2021 and to double again by 2031.

9.3 Data to monitor the above will be sourced from traffic management updates; school and workplace travel plans; future census data; and bus patronage data from bus operators. Future footfall and traffic surveys conducted by KCC will also provide important interim data to monitor how progress is being made towards the general aims and objectives of the ITS.

9.4 The Borough and County Councils will also need to assess whether there are any implications for the borough's transport network arising from projects with wider impacts such as the new Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) in 2018 or the potential Lower Thames Crossing project.

9.5 The latter is still at a relatively early stage. Highways England is, however, currently evaluating two potential route corridors (the area adjacent to the existing Dartford crossings and to the east of Gravesend). Formal public consultation on the potential route options took place in early 2016. If accepted as a scheme, subject to funding and the necessary consents (as a significant piece of National Infrastructure), works may commence in 2020/2021 with a potential opening in 2025. However, the route options did not incorporate earlier proposals to upgrade the A229 link between the M20 and M2. These were discounted on cost and environmental grounds. As such, the potential impact of the Lower Thames Crossing project on the borough is considered to be relatively minor.

9.6 At this stage, potential strategic projects and interventions have not been justified taking account of the implementation of sustainable transport policies but may be considered as the ITS is reviewed in conjunction with the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

9.7 The ITS is designed to be a living strategy, one that is flexible and can adapt to changing circumstances. To this end, it will be subject to monitoring and review which will align with the work to monitor and review the Local Plan once that is adopted. The first major review is therefore scheduled to commence by 2022, although the monitoring work will clearly commence prior to then to inform the review process.

10.1 The implications of the ITS on the borough's highway network have been tested by using the Maidstone VISUM strategic highway network model to assess alternative transport infrastructure scenarios and their impacts in terms of travel time and distance.

10.2 The Maidstone VISUM model is a strategic highways model which is best suited to modelling highways improvements. It can, however, identify how trips can transfer between car and public transport; how vehicle trips may be reassigned across the network; and it can highlight locations where travel time delay may be experienced as a result of constrained highway capacity. It can model bus service changes, but in assessing the attractiveness of these services it is unable to take into account bus capacity issues; furthermore it is unable to model bus priority measures. Increases in walking and cycling can only be reflected in an estimation of the number of car trips which may be removed from the road network due to changes in mode share. Furthermore, as a strategic model VISUM is unsuited to assessing individual junction capacity, or to assessing the impacts of proposed infrastructure improvements at those junctions.

Modelling Scenarios

10.3 The VISUM model was first developed by JMP Consultants Ltd for MBC in 2007/8 to help assess the impact of the Kent International Gateway proposal and the previous Core Strategy preferred option for new development. It was updated in 2011 for a previous version of the ITS and a report prepared in April 2012 which assessed the current and future demand for travel in the Maidstone Core Strategy.

10.4 Just over 10,000 new houses were input into the model (significantly fewer than the current objectively assessed need) and four options were tested; Option 1 being the reference case, Options 2 and 3 including various road and public transport assumptions, and Option 4 modelling the provision of the South East Maidstone Strategic Link (SEMSL). The results are presented in the JMP Report dated 12 April 2012 (Maidstone Integrated Parking Strategy Research) and it was concluded that, although SEMSL had strong potential for handling traffic from the south and east of Maidstone, there was overcapacity on key routes and it was unlikely to reduce traffic congestion on the scale that was initially anticipated and offered lower value for money than Options 2 and 3.

10.5 The present version of the VISUM model was updated in 2014 to take account of revised proposals for the Local Plan and to update baseline conditions.

10.6 Certain ITS actions have been tested in various new Do Something (DS) scenarios which identify the changes in impact on the highway network which may be achieved if the actions are implemented during the plan-period. A final DS scenario has been run with the objectively assessed need for housing numbers and an agreed programme of highway and transport improvements. It has two variants, DS4a and DS4b, the former including a South East Maidstone Strategic Link (SEMSL). All other highway and transport improvements are identical in both variants.

10.7 Both scenarios incorporate the provision of the housing, commercial and retail activity proposed in the Local Plan for the plan period to 2031 as follows:

- 18,560 residential units
- 151,000 m² of employment space
- 12,100 m² of retail space

2031 Do Minimum (DM)

10.8 A base case scenario known as Do Minimum (DM) provides the benchmark for understanding the predicted overall impact of the ITS on travel demand and network conditions in Maidstone in the plan period (to 2031) from a base case established in 2014 without any significant highways interventions, except the proposed Bridge Gyratory scheme in Maidstone town centre, or any other transport interventions. This scenario has been re-run with the objectively assessed need for housing included, for a true reflection of the DM impacts.

2031 Do Something (DS4)

10.9 A series of Do Something (DS) scenarios (DS1-DS4) model a range of highway improvements agreed with KCC and certain sustainable transport initiatives in the ITS, although it was not possible to model all of these initiatives in VISUM. The agreed highway junction mitigations incorporated in the model runs, in addition to the Bridges Gyratory scheme are:

- A20/ Coldharbour Lane Junction
- A249/Bearsted Road roundabout
- Bearsted Road/New Cut junction
- Dual carriageway between A249 and New Cut junctions
- A20 Ashford Road/Willington Street
- A229/A274 Wheatsheaf Junction
- A274/Wallis Avenue Junction
- A26 Fountain Lane Junction

10.10 For DS4a and DS4b different modelling assumptions from DS2 and DS3 were included for the sustainable transport assumptions as follows:

- typical 10 minute bus frequency on radial corridors;
- discounting of walk/cycle trips to be based on a distance threshold of 5km within the town centre; and
- 50% increase in long-stay parking charges.

Strategic modelling results

10.11 Previous scenarios tested by VISUM were a highways based option (DS1), a sustainable transport option (DS2) and a hybrid scenario (DS3). These did not model the emerging Local Plan objectively assessed need for housing and so do not provide a true forecast of network conditions in 2031. Consideration of the model results is therefore focused on scenarios DS4a and DS4b.

10.12 The results for the DM scenario indicate an increase in network travel time during the AM peak of 33% in 2031 relative to the 2014 baseline, from 8,250 to 11,000 hours. For scenario DS4a (with SEMSL), the network travel time during the AM peak is increased to 9,300 hours in 2031. This represents an increase of 6% relative to the 2014 baseline, but a reduction of 15.5% relative to the 2031 DM scenario. For scenario DS4b (without SEMSL), the network travel time during the AM peak is increased to 9,800 hours in 2031, a reduction of 11% relative to the 2031 DM scenario. The journey time reduction achieved with scenario DS4a relative to DS4b is 4.5%.

10.13 The modest journey time saving for DS4a relative to DS4b is reflected in the published VISUM traffic flow outputs for the two scenarios ⁽²⁸⁾. These suggest that the reassignment of traffic from the urban area with SEMSL in place is limited. For example the forecast two-way AM peak traffic flow on the A229 Loose Road north of the Wheatsheaf junction in the year 2031 is 3,000 vehicles for DS4a, compared with 3,200 for DS4b. On Willington Street (North), the equivalent flows for the two scenarios are 2,300 for DS4a and 2,400 vehicles for DS4b.

10.14 Forecast travel times from VISUM for the year 2031 have been published for eight road corridors. On the A274 Sutton Road, the predicted AM peak inbound travel time is 12 minutes 26 seconds for DS4a compared with 13 minutes 38 seconds for DS4b. The predicted AM peak outbound travel time is 11 minutes 7 seconds for DS4a and 11 minutes 53 seconds for DS4b. The forecast travel time savings of approximately one minute with SEMSL in place cannot be regarded as significant when considered in the context of the variations in traffic conditions that can typically be expected to occur on a day-to-day basis.

10.15 The VISUM outputs for DS4a and DS4b do not, therefore, conclusively demonstrate the beneficial impacts of SEMSL upon congestion. All other transport interventions are identical for both scenarios. The outputs for scenario DS4b demonstrate a level of impact on the highway network with Local Plan growth which, following mitigation with a balanced package of highway, public transport and walking/cycling improvements, cannot be regarded as severe in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Localised junction modelling

10.16 As noted above, VISUM is a strategic highway model and as such is unsuited to the assessment of individual junction capacity. Accordingly, more useful modelling relating to additional junction capacity assessments have been undertaken using the LinSig, ARCADY and PICADY modelling software packages for specific locations around the borough which have been identified as being potentially sensitive to future traffic flow changes.

A274 Sutton Road

10.17 The A274 Sutton Road and A229 Loose Road already experience traffic congestion, particularly at peak times, largely due to the capacity of the signalised junctions. Linsig models have been built for the four signalised junctions on the A274/A229 corridor, namely:

- A229/Armstrong Road/Park Way;
- A229/A274/Cranbourne Avenue;
- A274/St Saviour's Road; and
- A274/Wallis Avenue/Willington Street.

10.18 With no changes to the existing highway infrastructure, background growth in traffic flows combined with additional traffic associated with new developments on the corridor will make congestion worse, both in duration and intensity (i.e. longer periods of queuing and much longer queues).

10.19 The package of priority highway capacity improvements referred to in paragraph 10.7 above has been developed to mitigate the impacts of increased traffic flows arising from planned development in the emerging Local Plan. To complement these capacity improvements for general traffic, bus priority proposals have been developed (described in Action PT1) which will protect buses from residual queues and delays, contributing to quick and reliable bus services toward Maidstone town centre, with largely continuous bus priority between Wallis Avenue and Armstrong Road.

10.20 The impacts of the highway capacity improvements, together with the bus priority proposals, have been tested using the Linsig models. The model outputs confirm that the bus priority proposals will not affect capacity for general traffic, nor increase queues or delays for other road users.

A229 Loose Road

10.21 Work is ongoing with KCC to identify and secure highway capacity improvements (Action H1) on the A229 Loose Road from its junction with Upper Stone Street/Sheals Crescent to its junction with Boughton Lane/Cripple Street.

10.22 At the A229 Loose Road/A274 Sutton Road "Wheatsheaf" junction, works identified by KCC involve making Cranborne Avenue entry only from the junction, which would enable an additional 340 vehicles per hour to pass through the junction and mitigate the impact of development currently proposed. Other identified capacity improvements involve the alteration of lane markings at Loose Road / Upper Stone Street / Sheal's Crescent junction; works at Loose Road / Armstrong Road / Park Way; and the relocation and/or removal of bus stops to allow traffic to pass in both directions when a bus is stationary.

10.23 In light of the now quashed Inspector's appeal decision (APP/U2235/A/14/2227839) in relation to application 13/2197 for 220 housing units on land at Boughton Lane (Local Plan site H1(29)), a study was

commissioned ⁽²⁹⁾ to consider possible capacity improvement measures at the A229 Loose Road / Boughton Lane / Cripple Street signalised junction, which already experiences traffic congestion. No highway mitigation measures had previously been identified for this site in support of the Local Plan housing allocation.

10.24 Various options were therefore considered to improve highway capacity, comprising the widening/reconfiguration of the existing signal junction as well as its replacement by a mini-roundabout. The results of the junction modelling confirm that, with the implementation of mitigation measures, the Boughton Lane residential development and other proposed and committed developments in the area can be delivered with a net positive impact on the operation of the A229 Loose Road / Boughton Lane / Cripple Street junction. This would improve operating conditions for car and bus users alike.

A229 Royal Engineers Way

10.25 As the Local Plan identifies Invicta Park Barracks as a broad location for housing growth towards the end of the Plan period (post 2026), a study was commissioned ⁽³⁰⁾ to consider the capacity at the roundabout junction of the A229 Royal Engineers Road which serves the existing Barracks. ARCADY modelling shows that the existing roundabout is forecast to operate above capacity in 2031, with or without housing development on the Barracks site.

10.26 LinSig modelling demonstrates that partial signalisation of the roundabout would successfully mitigate the impacts of Local Plan development and expected background growth, with queueing reduced to below existing levels.

Rural Service Centre junction modelling

10.27 Modelling undertaken within Lenham, Headcorn, Staplehurst and Coxheath indicates that key junctions within these RSCs and Larger Villages will continue to operate satisfactorily in future years, taking into account the additional traffic generated by Local Plan development sites, with mitigation measures implemented where necessary.

29 Mott MacDonald (2016), A229 / Boughton Lane Junction Review.

30 Mott MacDonald (2016), Invicta, Maidstone - Junction Review.

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Introduction

1.1 This Walking and Cycling Strategy provides the evidence base for walking actions W1 to W6 and cycling actions C1 to C13 in the Transport Action Plan set out in the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 – 2031 (hereafter referred to as the ITS). It brings together policies and related actions to promote walking and cycling and the delivery of related infrastructure in Maidstone Borough, with the aim of increasing the proportion of journeys made by these active travel modes. Furthermore, the Strategy provides a basis for making bids for improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure in Maidstone through the Local Enterprise Partnership (Local Growth Fund) and other transport funding awarded to Kent County Council (KCC) by the Department for Transport. The Strategy will be a material consideration in development management and spatial planning decisions, and will help to secure support for walking and cycling from other possible funding streams, e.g. developer funding via s106 obligations and CIL together with public/private partnerships between MBC, KCC and public transport operators to improve facilities.

1.2 The emphasis of the Strategy has been on identifying the improvements required to deliver a comprehensive and well-connected cycle network (rather than focusing in detail on pedestrian-only facilities), which will help to make both cycling and walking more attractive alternatives for journeys within the borough. The Strategy has been drafted by MBC with support from the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum and KCC. The document will act as a tool to assist in the delivery of the Transport Vision for Maidstone and in support of four of the five main ITS objectives as follows;

Objective 1: Enhancing and encouraging sustainable travel choices including:

A: The development, maintenance and enhancement of walking and cycling provision, through network improvements and encouraging uptake amongst the population;

C: Promotion and education regarding walking, cycling and public transport travel options;

E: Place sustainable travel options at the heart of all new developments within Maidstone, to ensure a fully integrated network that puts pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the centre of any transport proposals.

Objective 2: The enhancement of strategic transport links to, from and within Maidstone town.

Objective 3: Ensure the transport system supports the growth projected by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

Objective 4: Reducing the air quality impacts of transport.

Objective 5: Ensure the transport network considers the needs of all users, providing equal accessibility by removing barriers to use.

1.3 The overarching aim of the Walking and Cycling Strategy is, in addition to supporting the Transport Vision for Maidstone, to provide a framework for delivery of the Department for Transport's Cycling Delivery Plan⁽¹⁾ (draft published October 2014) at the local level. Our local vision supports the national vision, i.e. that:

Walking and cycling become the natural choices for shorter journeys in Maidstone Borough – or as part of a longer journey – regardless of age, gender, fitness level or income.

1.4 The Strategy is aligned with the Submitted Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the Integrated Transport Strategy and is supported by the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy which promotes the use of urban green space and Public Rights of Way for active travel. In facilitating the use of non-motorised transport it also contributes to the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy, Air Quality Action Plan, Adopted and draft Neighbourhood Plans and KCC Environmental Strategy.

1.5 The Walking and Cycling Strategy encourages active travel and identifies the shared commitment of MBC and KCC to provide an enhanced network for these modes. It acknowledges that, in particular, levels of cycling in Maidstone are low at present and that whilst the borough has some cycle routes which link Maidstone town centre with the surrounding suburban areas; these are often incomplete or require upgrading. In the rural areas of the borough there are very few designated safer routes for cyclists. There is a lack of cycle parking facilities at some key destinations.

1.6 The benefits which can be derived from promoting walking and cycling as low cost, efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport for people of varying ages and abilities are wide ranging. These include not just their contribution towards improved mental and physical wellbeing amongst local residents, but also their positive impact on the efficient and reliable operation of the local highway network, and helping to realise a better environment for everyone through reduced air pollution and carbon dioxide emissions. The Strategy identifies a range of measures and interventions to make walking and cycling a more attractive proposition in all areas of the borough, and especially for shorter journeys.

1.7 It is recognised that the Strategy's focus is on the Maidstone Urban area. This is where most people live, where most new development will take place in the coming years and where the infilling of gaps in cycle facilities will make the greatest contribution towards achieving modal shift from private car journeys. However, there is also merit in developing longer distance cycle routes to encourage inter-urban travel and cycle tourism and so the identification of opportunities for improving cycle linkages into neighbouring authorities has been

1 Department for Transport, Draft Cycling Delivery Plan, October 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cycling-delivery-plan-informal-consultation>

another focus of this Strategy. It is intended to complement the measures and interventions identified in the cycle strategies prepared by neighbouring authorities in conjunction with KCC.



National and Local Policy Overview

2.1 This Strategy is informed by a range of national and local policies and strategies. This chapter briefly outlines the current policy context within which the Strategy has been prepared.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.2 The NPPF ⁽²⁾ sets out in broad terms the approach that local authorities should follow in preparing land use and transport plans, to which this Walking and Cycling Strategy is aligned. In particular, para 17 of the NPPF states that a core principle is that planning should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. Developments should be located where the need to travel will be minimised (para 34) and designed so that 'priority is given to pedestrian and cycle movements', with 'safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians'.

National Walking and Cycling Policy Overview

2.3 The All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group published the Get Britain Cycling ⁽³⁾ report in 2013. This marked the outcome of an inquiry which was informed by Members from both Houses of Parliament. The report aims to enable more people across the UK to take up cycling, to cycle more often and to cycle more safely. It seeks to identify the obstacles that must be overcome to achieve these objectives and suggests measures to be undertaken by central and local government, as well as the wider business and third sectors. Recommendations are numerous and divided into five broad topics:-

- A new priority for investing public funds - including the creation of a cycling budget of at least £10 per person per year, increasing to £20.
- Redesigning our roads, streets and communities - including a statutory requirement for developments to be designed for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Safe driving and safe speed limits - including the extension of locally determined speed limits.
- Training and education - including the provision of cycle training for people of all ages and backgrounds
- Political leadership - including the provision of a cross-departmental Cycling Action Plan.

2.4 The DfT published a draft Cycling Delivery Plan in 2014. The document identifies the ambition of Government to do more to encourage people across England to cycle. The Government wants to see hundreds of thousands more people taking advantage of the benefits of cycling and walking. The Cycling Delivery Plan is a 10 year plan for England and recognises that a step change in cycling cannot be achieved overnight; this requires strong leadership, commitment and long term planning for incremental change that develops an environment in which cycling is the norm. A subsequent commitment has been set in the

2 Department for Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

3 <http://allpartycycling.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/get-britain-cycling1.pdf>

Infrastructure Act (2015) which requires Government to prepare a national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. The resultant Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy was published by the DfT in March 2016. There is a new 'Access' fund for sustainable travel building on the legacy of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and supporting growth in cycling and walking, with £580 million (£80 million revenue and £500 million capital) being provided to the year 2020.

2.5 The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) produced guidance in November 2012 (PHG41) ⁽⁴⁾; on Local Measures to Promote Walking and Cycling as Forms of Travel or Recreation which has been taken into account within this strategy.

Local Walking and Cycling Policy Overview

2.6 The third Local Transport Plan for Kent (2011-16) sets out Kent County Council (KCC)'s policies and delivery plans for the management and improvement of the local transport network. It has five principal themes, all of which include walking and cycling as an aspect; 'Growth Without Gridlock', 'A Safer and Healthier County', 'Supporting Independence', 'Tackling a Changing Climate' and 'Enjoying Life in Kent'. The Plan seeks to support housing and employment growth whilst managing the County's highways and Public Rights of Way, many of which include cycle routes. The Plan supports active travel and the development of cycling as a transport mode.

2.7 The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan (2013-2017) is KCC's strategy to increase usage and enjoyment of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and improve access to green spaces in Kent. The County's extensive network of paths is a great asset which can be developed further to provide infrastructure for cyclists as well as pedestrians in both urban and rural areas.

2.8 KCC is also preparing an Active Travel Strategy, a draft of which was published for consultation in May 2016. The Strategy has one overarching ambition, to 'Make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent.' The objectives and implementation of the Active Travel Strategy will closely support the aims and objectives of this Walking and Cycling Strategy as well as the ITS.

2.9 The Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), for which this Walking and Cycling Strategy provides the evidence base for measures supporting active travel modes, sets out the vision for transport in the borough between 2011 and 2031. The ITS seeks to achieve this vision through addressing existing transport problems in a holistic manner, encouraging a modal shift from the private car and identifying the transport solutions necessary to support the development aspirations of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan over the same period. The enhancement of cycling and walking provision is one of the key ITS priorities.

4 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Walking and Cycling: Local Measures to Promote Walking and Cycling as Forms of Travel or Recreation, November 2012, <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph41>

2.10 This Strategy is also supported by the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy which promotes the use of urban green space and Public Rights of Way for active travel. In facilitating the use of non-motorised transport it also contributes to the objectives of the following strategies/action plans:

- Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020 (July 2013)
- Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan (2010)
- Climate Change Framework 2011-2016
- Adopted Neighbourhood Plan for North Loose
- Draft Neighbourhood Plans for Boughton Monchelsea, Boxley, Broomfield and Kingswood, Coxheath, Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Loose Parish, Marden, Staplehurst and Sutton Valence
- Kent Environment Strategy – A Strategy for Environment, Health & Economy: Consultation Draft (July 2015)

The Benefits of Walking and Cycling

3.1 Walking and cycling are low cost, efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of travel. The benefits which can be derived from promoting these modes for people of a variety of ages and abilities are wide ranging. These can be broadly grouped into economic, health and social benefits. This chapter discusses each of these in turn.

Economic Benefits

3.2 Active travel modes benefit the economy through encouraging local trade, due to the increasing number of people travelling on local streets and routes. In urban areas they can improve the efficiency of the transport network through reducing congestion, and in turn, the air pollution that is generated by vehicular traffic. In short, active travel modes have the potential to make a major contribution to supporting the borough's high streets, making them quieter, cleaner, more liveable and more prosperous.

3.3 Kent's visitor economy is reported to be worth £3.4bn according to research commissioned by Visit Kent, with 57 million visitors per year. Over 5 million of these visitors are estimated to be enticed by the County's cycling attractions. Maidstone Borough itself attracts over 4 million visitors per year, spending more than £250 million in the local economy. A Destination Management Plan was produced for the Borough Council in 2015⁽⁵⁾. One of its priorities is to make the River Medway an attraction in its own right and promote its use as a green corridor for cyclists and walkers, alongside the development of other themed cycling/walking trails in Maidstone Borough.

3.4 Existing leisure cycling opportunities in the borough include Mote Park, which is a short distance from Maidstone town centre via National Cycle Route 17 (NCR17). NCR17 provides a signed cycle route between Rochester and Ashford via Maidstone along a mixture of quiet lanes and traffic-free sections. From Mote Park, cyclists can cycle northeast to meet the Pilgrims Cycle Trail which connects Rochester Cathedral to Canterbury Cathedral through the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. North of Maidstone town centre, NCR17 climbs Blue Bell Hill before cutting across the countryside to arrive in Rochester by the River Medway and Cathedral. Further information about these opportunities is available from the Explore Kent website

3.5 There are a number of local cycling clubs, including the San Fairy Ann Cycling Club (with more than 500 members) and MCC Offroad which organise and participate in numerous cycling events in the Maidstone area and further afield.

3.6 Cycling is reported to be worth £2.9bn per annum to the UK economy, with the average cyclist contributing £230 per annum through activities including bicycle retail and related employment.⁽⁶⁾

Health Benefits

5 Maidstone Destination Management Plan, July 2015.

6 London School of Economics, The British Cycling Economy: 'Gross Cycling Product' Report, August 2011, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/380637/1/BritishCyclingEconomy.pdf>

3 . The Benefits of Walking and Cycling

3.7 The role of active travel modes in helping to create liveable towns and cities and promoting improved health/social inclusion is now becoming widely recognised by all tiers of government and health authorities. The link between transport, physical activity and health has been highlighted by the British Medical Association (BMA) ⁽⁷⁾ and warnings about the health consequences of an increasingly sedentary society are widely reported. It has been estimated that the cost of transport-related physical inactivity in England totals £9.8 billion per year. This is in addition to the estimated £2.5 billion annual healthcare cost of treating obesity.

3.8 The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) identifies that the health benefits associated with active travel, include:

- improved mental health and wellbeing;
- improved physical fitness; and
- the prevention of chronic diseases and health conditions, which include coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer and obesity.

3.9 Both cycling and walking are effective ways of increasing and integrating levels of physical activity into everyday life. Many people have yet to experience the benefits of regular cycling, especially for local journeys. In the UK 67% of trips by all modes are less than five miles (well within an hour's cycle ride in an urban area), and 38% are less than two miles ⁽⁸⁾, or within 40 minutes on foot. Therefore cycling is a potential mode for many of these trips.

3.10 Walking and cycling isochrones for the Maidstone urban area are presented in technical documents at the end of this strategy. These show that the vast majority of the Maidstone urban area is within the 5000m (5km) threshold for trips by cycle and a significant proportion of the Maidstone urban area is within the 2000m (2km) threshold for trips on foot. This demonstrates the huge latent potential for increasing the proportion of trips made by walking and cycling.

3.11 A recent study by the DfT into the value for money of the Cycle City Ambition Grant and the Cycling in National Parks Grant found that the combined Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of each of these funding streams was 5.5:1, which was considered to represent very high value for money. Around 60% of these benefits were accounted for by improved physical fitness, with much of the remainder being associated with journey quality and congestion relief ⁽⁹⁾.

3.12 Walking and cycling in urban areas can improve air quality through reducing congestion, and the air pollution that is generated by motor traffic, which represents the majority of air pollutants in Maidstone Borough. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was designated in 2001 which covers the

7 British Medical Association, Healthy Transport = Healthy Lives, July 2012, <http://bma.org.uk/transport>

8 Department for Transport, National Travel Survey 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2013>

9 Department for Transport, Value for Money Assessment for Cycling Grants, August 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/348943/vfm-assessment-of-cycling-grants.pdf

entire urban conurbation of Maidstone. Within the AQMA, the automatic air quality monitoring station at the A229 (Bridge Gyratory) recorded a mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) of 46.9µg/m³ in the year 2014⁽¹⁰⁾, above the maximum annual mean of 40µg/m³ as required by national air quality regulations. Of the 65 other (non-automatic) monitoring sites across the borough, fifteen sites exceeded the maximum annual mean in the year 2014.

3.13 The above results highlight air quality concerns in the vicinity of main roads in the borough. Poor air quality affects health, contributing towards cardiovascular disease and respiratory illness, adding further to NHS costs. It has been reported that air pollution reduces life expectancy by 7-8 months, which has the equivalent UK economic impact of £20 billion per year.⁽¹¹⁾ The potential for walking and cycling in Maidstone Borough to help increase life expectancy and decrease the economic impact of air pollution generated by vehicular traffic is therefore evident.

Social Benefits

3.14 Both walking and cycling are activities which can be fun and provide an opportunity for social interaction, unlike single occupancy car journeys. They enable a better appreciation of the borough's urban and rural environment. Cycling provides access to routes and locations which are often too far for many to walk. Bicycles can coexist well with other users in residential streets and town centres, unlike the severance effect which can be caused by busy motor traffic routes.

3.15 As well as enabling exercise and recreation, cycling can also be a faster option for short journeys in congested urban environments. It is also a low cost transport option and therefore accessible to most people, promoting social inclusion. By reducing or removing the costs of car ownership, cycling when effectively linked with the public transport network has the potential to be an attractive option for young people in particular, giving them independence and increasing their ability to access education, training, employment, leisure and healthcare opportunities further afield.

10 Bureau Veritas, Maidstone Borough Council Updating and Screening Assessment Report, December 2015, http://www.kentair.org.uk/documents/Maidstone_USA_2015_final_issued.pdf

11 Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, July 2007, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69336/pb12654-air-quality-strategy-vol1-070712.pdf

Walking and Cycling in Maidstone Borough Today

Existing Cycle Network

4.1 The borough's existing cycle network links the town centre to most suburban areas and community facilities, including several schools, Maidstone East railway station and Mote Park. National Cycle Network route 17 (NCR17) provides an 11 mile leisure/commuter link (approximately half off-carriageway) between Maidstone and Rochester. Via Mote Park, Weaving Street and Hockers Lane, NCR17 connects to the Pilgrims Cycle Trail at Detling in the North Downs. At present, NCR17 connects with NCR1 (Inverness to Dover) in Rochester and ends in Ashford, but KCC has plans to extend the network by connecting to NCR2 (Dover to St Austell) on the South Coast.

4.2 Maidstone has a Regional Route 12 (RR12) which originates in the town centre and extends along the A20 London Road into Tonbridge and Malling. A section of the route within Maidstone Borough is traffic free and provides good linkages to local schools in the residential area of Allington. In addition, Regional Route 19 (RR19) connects the A249 Bearsted Road (in the vicinity of the Hilton Hotel) to the town centre via Hampton Road and Snowdon Avenue/Vinters Road along Union Street to Week Street.

4.3 Cycle parking facilities are provided at locations within the Maidstone town centre shopping area, as well as cycle stands at Maidstone East and West railway stations and at the Gateway, KCC Sessions House and Invicta House. In addition, cycle lockers are available at Maidstone East railway station. Outside the town centre, some neighbourhood shopping areas are provided with cycle stands and Bearsted, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst railway stations have well-used cycle parking facilities.

4.4 Existing walking and cycling routes and facilities within the Maidstone urban area are illustrated in the Maidstone Walking and Cycling Map published by Explore Kent in 2012. Explore Kent (<http://explorekent.org>) is currently producing webpages for all Kent towns (including Maidstone) which will communicate cycling information including route maps. The Maidstone Walking and Cycling Map will also be added to the Borough Council and Visit Maidstone websites.

4.5 There are a number of issues which currently constrain the attractiveness of walking and cycling within Maidstone Borough:

- **Accessibility** – in many areas the pedestrian network does not currently provide equal access for all users. Dropped kerbs and tactile paving to assist the mobility and visually impaired may be unavailable, and the width of footways may in some cases be too narrow (whether in terms of their actual width, or their usable width due to the presence of sign columns or street furniture) to enable their use by wheelchairs and mobility scooters for example. Some routes are stepped without having a ramped alternative. In some locations topography is also likely to be a constraint.
- **Connectivity** – Linkages from west to east Maidstone via the town centre are limited, although the situation has recently improved with the refurbishment of the pedestrian bridge connecting Maidstone East and

Maidstone Barracks railway stations. Subways are often flooded due to inadequate drainage systems and maintenance. To the south of the town centre there are currently no designated cycle routes in Tovil and Loose, although there are bridleways to the east of the latter. Similarly there are no designated cycle routes in Fant, to the west of the town centre. Safer routes for cyclists to Maidstone West railway station and from the east to the schools and college at Oakwood Park are currently absent.

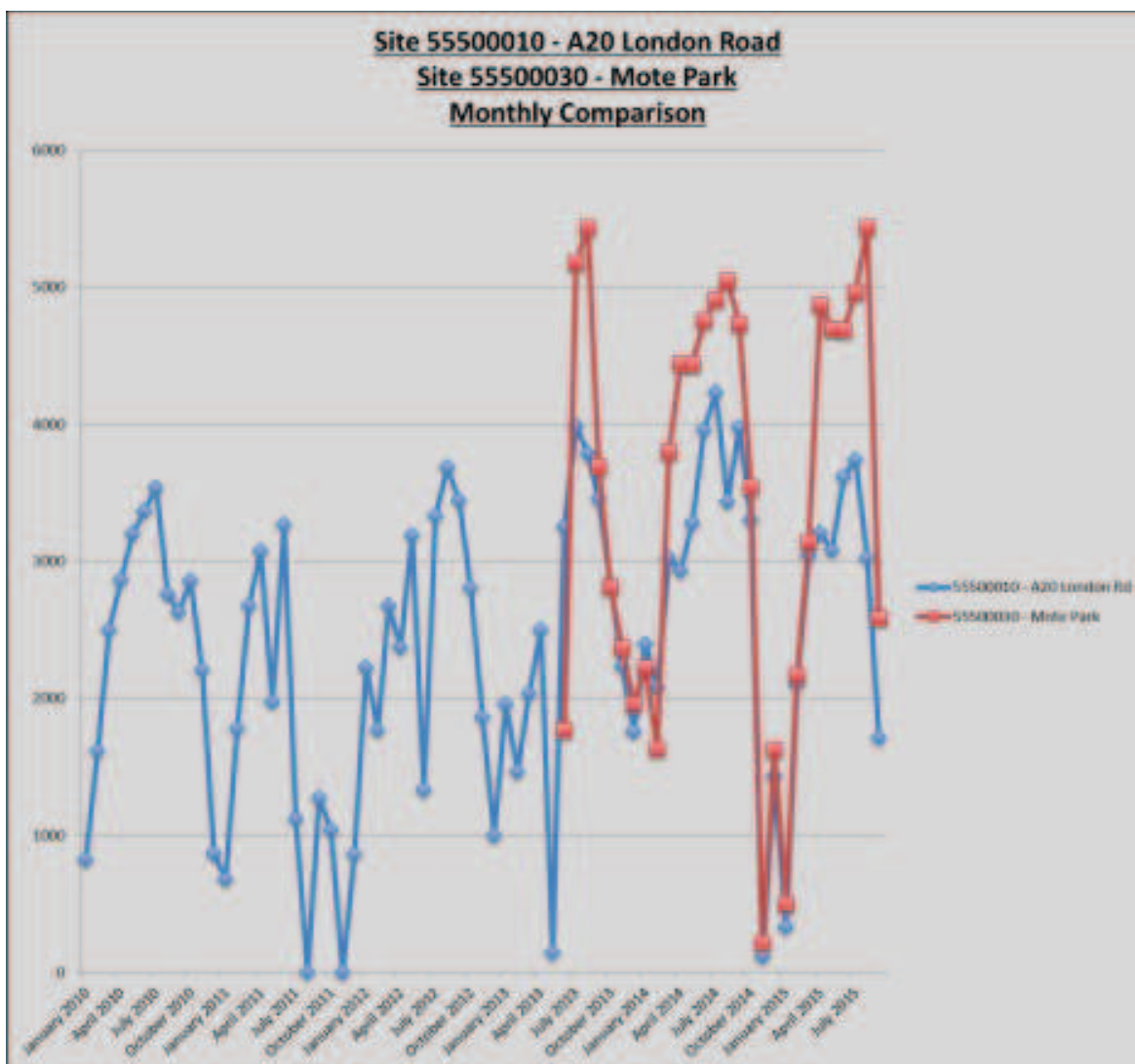
- **Safety** – safety concerns are frequently a barrier to people choosing to walk or cycle for some journeys. There are few traffic free cycle paths in the borough and new cyclists may lack the confidence to share road space with motor traffic. Walking and cycling routes lack lighting and natural surveillance, this may be another deterrent to the use of these modes. In winter, resources may enable the gritting of the most well used pedestrian and cycle routes. Funding for fault repairs and maintenance of cycle and pedestrian routes must be prioritised to enable the busiest routes to continue to be safe to use.
- **Secure cycle parking** – although considerable progress has been made in recent years, the availability of secure and safe cycle parking at key locations such as shopping areas and railway stations can be limited.

Existing Cycling Activity

4.6 DfT provides year on year monitoring of cycling trips across Kent from inner urban cordons and automatic traffic counts. KCC currently has only two fixed off-highway cycle counters for Maidstone, one on the A20 outside the Kent Police traffic headquarters, and the other in Mote Park, on NCR17, which was purchased and installed in 2013. More counters are needed at strategic locations to monitor trip data. This will help gauge the success of future improvements to the walking and cycling network.

4.7 Monthly data for the two fixed cycle counters covering the period from January 2010 to September 2015 is presented overleaf. This suggests that the rate of cycling has remained reasonably consistent over the period, although there is much variability from month to month which could be explained by the following:

- The relatively small number of cyclists crossing the counters;
- Lower levels of cycling in the winter months; and
- Battery problems with the counters may mean some cycling activity was not recorded. The counters are solar powered, but the batteries do not always correctly charge.



4.8 Cycle to work data from the 2011 Census indicates that only 0.8% of adults (935 people) usually cycle to work from homes in Maidstone Borough. DfT Annual Average Daily Flow data ⁽¹²⁾ for the years 2000 to 2014 have been analysed for automated traffic count sites on the key radial routes into the Maidstone urban area. For each radial route, the graphs presented at the end of the strategy identify the average number of cyclists passing the count sites each day and the percentage of all vehicles that these represent. Although this data records on-highway cycle flows only and not movements on parallel shared use footways, it nevertheless provides a useful baseline against which to measure the success of this Strategy.

4.9 Another potential source of useful baseline data is the number of children walking or cycling to school, which can be recorded through School Travel Plans. The reported modal share for all schools completing pupil travel surveys in Maidstone Borough is presented in the table below ⁽¹³⁾.

12 Source: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts/>
 13 Source: KCC School Travel Planning team

Mode of Travel to School	2013	2014	2015
Walk	33.0%	40.1%	41.2%
Cycle	2.5%	1.3%	3.4%
Bus	31.6%	16.4%	17.5%
Rail	4.4%	3.2%	0.8%
Car (shared)	3.5%	5.8%	2.1%
Car (alone)	24.6%	30.1%	29.4%
Other	0.4%	3.1%	5.6%
Number of schools submitting completed surveys	12	23	18

4.10 Given that not all schools repeat their surveys on an annual basis, the above data should be treated with some caution. However, KCC's school travel planning team indicate that there are a total of 20 schools in Maidstone Borough which have conducted two or more pupil travel surveys since 2007. Travel survey data collated by KCC will be reviewed on an annual basis to identify positive/negative trends in walking and cycling levels at each school and the potential explanatory factors.

Existing Walking Activity

4.11 KCC's Public Rights of Way (PROW) team has fixed walking counters on two footpaths in the Borough. One is path KB22 which connects Cripple Street with Old Drive to the south. The other is path KB11 which is the River Medway towpath between East Farleigh and Upper Fant. The data, not unreasonably, suggests that there are higher levels of walking activity in the summer months.

Improving the Walking and Cycling Network

5.1 As outlined in chapter 9 of the ITS, the Council’s targets for active modes are to:

- Increase the walking mode share of all work trips made by Borough residents from 8% in 2011 to more than 10% of all work trips by 2021 and more than 12% by 2031.
- Increase the cycling mode share of all work trips made by Borough residents from 0.8% in 2011 to more than 2% of all work trips by 2021 and more than 3% by 2031

5.2 This Walking and Cycling Strategy identifies four main objectives to achieve these targets:

1. *Creating new links* – seeking new opportunities to extend routes to more people;
2. *Maintenance of the cycle route network* – looking after what we already have, and improving it;
3. *Creating a safer environment for walkers and cyclists* – designing safer routes and providing road safety education for motorists and non-motorised users alike; and
4. *Spreading the word* – raising awareness of existing and emerging facilities available to walkers and cyclists.

5.3 In terms of creating new cycling links within the borough, which will also benefit walkers, proposals will be developed subject to available funding with the following strategic long-term aims in mind:

- “Filling in of the gaps” to create a **fully integrated urban cycle network**, with radial routes joined across the town centre. Key destinations (e.g. schools, colleges, hospitals, shopping centres, visitor attractions) and new housing and employment sites will be integrated into the cycle network.
- The creation of an **orbital walking and cycling route** around the Maidstone urban area, linking to the town centre via radial routes. This would be delivered through the designation of cycle routes along quiet lanes as well as the upgrading of existing footways alongside distributor roads and, where possible, footpath networks to provide cycle linkages. The following areas in particular are identified for intervention:
 - i. To the southeast of the town, between Langley and Loose, incorporating Boughton Monchelsea;
 - ii. To the south, within the Loose Valley Conservation Area and Hayle Park;
 - iii. To the west, within the Medway Valley and on Hermitage Lane (linking with Barming railway station);

- iv. To the north, from Hermitage Lane to Sandling via Allington Lock; and
- v. To the east, via the A20 Ashford Road.
- The creation of **cycle routes from rural service centres and smaller settlements to transport hubs** (where new/improved cycle parking will be provided), along a mixture of quiet lanes and segregated shared use footways, such as:
 - i. To rural railway stations (Headcorn, Staplehurst, Marden, Yalding, East Farleigh, Hollingbourne, Harrietsham, Lenham); and
 - ii. To bus stops on corridors where frequent interurban services are available or are planned as part of the ITS (e.g. A26 Tonbridge Road, A249 Sittingbourne Road).
- The creation of a **rural circular cycle route** (which could potentially be branded as a “Maidstone Ring” or similar) to encourage leisure cycling and exploration of the Borough’s rural attractions. This would complement the existing NCR17/Pilgrims Cycle Trail and improve connectivity between rural service centres by cycle.

5.4 Where the upgrading of existing public footpaths to provide cycle linkages is feasible in rural areas, consideration will be given to their conversion to bridleway status (rather than to cycle tracks) where appropriate and where a need has been identified, so that they can be used by equestrians as well as walkers and cyclists.

5.5 The above principles, and the guidance gratefully received from the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum, have informed the development of the detailed Action Plan presented in section 10. These detailed actions feed into the high level Transport Action Plan presented in Chapter 8 of the ITS. In respect of the cycle network the ITS actions are:

Action W1: Provision of accessible pedestrian routes for all users.

Action W2: Improve pedestrian accessibility across the River Medway in Maidstone town centre.

Action W3: Implement public realm improvement schemes within the town centre, such that pedestrian access is the primary mode within the central core of Maidstone.

Action C1: Maintain and further develop a strategic cycle network, connecting the town centre to key facilities and residential areas.

Action C2: Maintain and further develop cycle routes in rural service centres, connecting local amenities and transport hubs (rail stations and bus stops) to housing.

5.6 The objectives of network maintenance, creating a safer cycling environment and spreading the word are explored further in later parts of the strategy.

Maintenance of the Walking and Cycling Network

6.1 Unless new and existing walking and cycling facilities are maintained to an appropriate standard they will quickly fall into disrepair and will not be used. In residential areas, regular street cleaning may keep footways running parallel to motor traffic routes clear of debris, and surface defects may be promptly identified and repaired. However, the maintenance regime for off-carriageway routes, due to issues such as access and pressures on limited funding, is likely to be less extensive.

6.2 Cycle routes require specific maintenance, including the regular cleansing of gullies and kerb lines as well as the cutting back of vegetation to preserve available width and sight lines. Surface defects should be repaired before they become a hazard. Road accident debris such as glass and overgrown vegetation can present hazards to cyclists, resulting in punctured tyres, compromised route alignments or obstacles, all of which could risk the safety of a cyclist and put them in conflict with other road users.

6.3 KCC has primary responsibility for the co-ordination of highways and Public Rights of Way maintenance. It works with third party landowners including MBC, where required, to achieve maintenance objectives. KCC's maintenance programme is determined on the basis of information from regular inspections, annual surveys using specialist equipment, and reports from councillors, parish councils, community groups, user groups and residents. Road surfaces are surveyed by KCC Highway Inspectors in a manner which takes into account the needs of cyclists; for example, by giving appropriate attention to the two metre strip alongside the kerb line where most cyclists ride. In constructing and maintaining cycle routes, the County Council refers to guidance outlined in TRL Application Guide AG26 (Version 2)⁽¹⁴⁾.

6.4 All KCC Highways maintained off-carriageway routes are maintained to set criteria including surface vegetation cuts twice per year on the most well used routes if there is funding available. Maintenance of these routes is led by Maidstone's District Manager with support from the Cycling Transport Planner. The maintenance of the National Cycle Network routes within Maidstone is supported by Sustrans Rangers. They help to maintain the cycle network in a number of ways, including placing temporary signs, reporting faults, undertaking small-scale vegetation clearance and organising work days for more ambitious maintenance projects.

Action C3: MBC and KCC to work with partners to ensure the regular maintenance of all cycle tracks within the borough.

14 TRL, Footways and Cycle Route Design: Construction and Maintenance Guide, 2003, <http://trl.co.uk/reportspublications/trl-reports/report/?reportid=6180>

Safer Walking and Cycling

Cycle Training

7.1 National Standard Cycle Training (Bikeability) is provided across Kent by KCC and local School Games Partnerships. The training courses are structured for primary and secondary age school children, with training subsidised by the DfT for those in Years 5 to 9. The courses give children the skills to make safer choices when cycling and to enjoy the freedom of riding a bike. Bikeability courses are booked directly by schools.

7.2 Bikeability comprises three levels of competency-based cycle training. Level 1 is aimed at the basic bicycle control skills that are required to cycle safely in any environment. Level 2 is delivered on quiet roads and teaches participants the skills necessary to take a basic on-road journey and includes a variety of junctions. Level 3 tackles busy traffic situations and complex junctions. Importantly, participants must demonstrate competence at each level before they progress to the next.

7.3 Adult cycle training courses are also available. Corporate, group and individual training courses can be arranged and further information is available on KCC's website⁽¹⁵⁾



Action C4(a): Year 6 children will have access to Level 1 and 2 Bikeability training, and children in Years 7 to 9 will have access to Level 3 training.

Action C4(b): Adult cycle training will continue to be offered.

Road Safety

7.4 A key barrier to the use of active travel modes are people’s concerns about road safety. Traffic free, segregated cycle routes are not available in all parts of the borough. Footways can be narrow or absent and lighting is not always available which can make walking an intimidating experience after dark.

7.5 KCC undertake regular road safety campaigns targeted at different road user groups. For example the “Share the Road Safely” ⁽¹⁶⁾ campaign seeks to promote a better understanding amongst all road users of the challenges faced by others, be they pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, car drivers or HGV drivers. The objective is for road users to be better able to anticipate hazards.

7.6 Plots of Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) involving pedestrians and cyclists are included at the end of the strategy.

7.7 These data plots will be reviewed in detail to identify significant clusters of PICs involving non-motorised users and to analyse the main causes of these collisions. This review will be used to develop a priority list of locations (e.g. road junctions, pedestrian crossing locations) where the upgrading of pedestrian and cycle facilities is required.

7.8 This priority list will be developed with reference to KCC’s Road Casualty Reduction Strategy 2014-2020 ⁽¹⁷⁾ which identifies initiatives to improve safety along routes as a whole. Its objective is to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) in road crashes by 33% compared to those recorded in Kent during the year 2010.

Action W4: Identify priority areas for implementation of safety improvements to reduce road traffic collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists.

16 <http://www.kentroadsafety.info/oneroadforall/>

17 <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-safety/road-casualty-reduction-strategy>

Promoting Walking and Cycling in Maidstone Borough

8.1 The Council recognises that providing new walking and cycling routes alone will not dramatically increase the use of active travel modes in the borough. Action to create a pro-active travel culture is needed in a range of areas which include land use and transport planning, regeneration, leisure, health and education. Promotion of walking and cycling will not only involve improved engineering measures and safety but also training, publicity and raising awareness amongst a range of different audiences.

Walking and Cycling Route Mapping

8.2 First and foremost, KCC and MBC's websites need to be kept updated to enable local residents and visitors to access the latest information on walking and cycling routes and facilities. The Maidstone walking and cycling map should be updated and made available both electronically and in paper format, with copies distributed to the visitor information centre, tourist attractions, hotels, large employers and schools.

Wayfinding

8.3 Efficient wayfinding can encourage walking and cycling through providing people with the information they need to navigate the town successfully, and understand the journey times between locations. Having clearly branded, consistent, wayfinding throughout the Maidstone central area not only provides information and reassurance to those less familiar with the area, but also adds to the overall experience of the public realm. All cycle routes throughout the borough should be fully signposted for the benefit of new cyclists and those who are unfamiliar with the area.

Travel Planning

8.4 As well as walking, cycling should form a key component of school and workplace Travel Plans and local clubs and cycle shops could help to promote cycling within the borough through active promotion and use of the local network. Travel Plans will be encouraged as they can include commitment to improving cycling facilities like secure parking, bicycle lockers or the provision of shower facilities for large employers. Guidance for schools and businesses on preparing their own travel plans is provided at www.jambusterstpms.co.uk and www.kentsmartertravel.co.uk respectively.

8.5 With respect to school travel planning specifically, MBC is a sponsor of the KM Charity Group 'Walk to School' which seeks to encourage more parents and children to walk to school. KM and KCC jointly run walking buses and the 'Walk on Wednesday' scheme. Across the County since its inception, the Charity has resulted in:



- 40,000 children and families being involved;
- 600,000 green journeys annually; and
- 250,000 school run car journeys removed.

8.6 KCC also runs a 'Small Steps' programme which is aimed at Year 2 and teaches pupils to be 'Brilliant Pedestrians'

8.7 Schemes such as the above contribute greatly to reducing traffic congestion. These achievements will be built on via the appointment of a "school travel plan champion" within MBC to work with schools and KCC to further reduce car trips undertaking the "school run".

8.8 A number of Maidstone Borough Council's Civic Enforcement Officers, who have received training through KCC, are now equipped with and use cycles as part of their daily work routine within the urban area.

Walking and Cycling Events

8.9 Successful recent initiatives include:

- **Sky Ride Local** – this programme provides free guided cycle rides for all ages and abilities throughout the UK, including rides in Maidstone Borough. These have been delivered since 2012 by KCC Highways (lead partner), Kent Sport, the KCC Public Health team and MBC's community



team in partnership with British Cycling. Many rides have been linked to Shepway Community Centre and the Fusion Healthy Living Centre at Park Wood. They are led by qualified staff and benefit from wider promotion via www.goskyride.com. Funding has been secured to deliver further Sky Rides Local, Ride Social and Breeze rides in Kent during 2016.



- **Ride Social** – this programme is intended to keep people cycling beyond the Sky Ride Local schedule of rides, assisting Public Health meet targets in reaching inactive people and producing more cycling commuters.
- **Breeze** – this British Cycling programme is targeted at women (young children are also allowed). With the support of Kent Sport a dedicated KCC co-ordinator has been appointed, encouraging new ride “Champions”.
- **Cycle Healthy, Cycle Happy** - this scheme is supported by MBC and run through three GP surgeries in the town (<http://www.communitycycleworks.co.uk/cycle-healthy/>)

8.10 In addition other opportunities to establish cycling events will be investigated, such as during National Bike Week each June and National Cycle to Work Day each September.

Promoting Walking and Cycling Through the Planning Process

8.11 It is important that the requirements of planning applications are standardised and clarified so that cycling can be promoted through the development management process. In particular it is essential that new residential properties and other developments (such as employment, retail, healthcare and educational uses) provide secure cycle parking/storage areas close to the building entrance/exit. In respect of residential properties, for example, although a cycle locked in a shed at the end of a garden is stored within the curtilage of the property as required by the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006: SPG4 Vehicle Parking Standards ⁽¹⁸⁾, it is less likely to be used than one stored close to the front door. The provision of secure cycle storage should be managed via the development management process in the same way as car parking is managed. Equally important is the provision of attractive pedestrian and cycle routes within and surrounding new developments, with good natural surveillance and crossing facilities to integrate with the surrounding neighbourhood. The Kent Design Guide ⁽¹⁹⁾ provides detailed guidance regarding the design of streets for pedestrians and cyclists.

Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum

8.12 With the support of KCC’s Cycling Transport Planner, the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum was re-established in 2015. The Forum brings together Members and officers from the Council, representatives of organisations with an interest

18 http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/8594/Kent-and-Medway-Structure-Plan-2006-SPG4-Vehicle-Parking-Standards.pdf
 19 <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/regeneration-policies/kent-design-guide>

in cycling and interested members of the public. Its goal is to “help create a cycle-friendly culture in Maidstone, where residents and visitors of all ages and abilities choose to cycle regularly for those shorter journeys they do not make on foot.”

8.13 The Forum has completed a number of cycle related research tasks since its original establishment, and has recently provided assistance with the assessment of existing cycling routes in the borough, highlighting missing links, as well as identifying potential new strategic routes.

Action W5: Actively encourage and promote walk to school initiatives.

Action W6: Improve street signage with better pedestrian wayfinding and a reduction in footway clutter.

Action C5: Support the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum as a group to promote the cycling cause in the borough.

Action C6: Improve cycle security and parking at all key transport hubs and public amenities (including schools, healthcare facilities and retail locations).

Action C7: Encourage employers to incorporate cycling into Workplace Travel Plans.

Action C8: Promote cycling in schools through School Travel Plans.

Action C9: Ensure all cycle routes are fully advertised and signposted within the borough.

Action C10: Revise and update the “Explore Maidstone Walking and Cycling Map” to extend coverage to the wider borough and indicate destinations in neighbouring local authorities. Map to be available both electronically and in paper format.

Action C11: Standardise and clarify the requirements of planning applications with respect to the provision of walking and cycling facilities, to promote the use of these active travel modes.

Monitoring the Walking and Cycling Strategy

9.1 This Strategy will be regularly monitored alongside the ITS.

9.2 Monitoring should take several forms including continuous automatic counters on walking and cycling routes and detailed user surveys. This will enable a detailed database to be established which in turn can inform economic appraisals and health impact assessments in the borough.

9.3 Details of the walking and cycling modal share targets are presented in Chapter 11 of the ITS. Progress against the ITS targets will be monitored using future census data, but walking and cycling activity will be analysed on a more regular basis using the above data sources. It is envisaged that the Walking and Cycling Strategy itself will be updated every five years, with the first update scheduled in 2021.

Action C13: MBC and KCC to identify locations throughout the cycle network where new automatic walk/cycle counters should be installed to enable a detailed analysis of usage. Installation to proceed as resources allow, but each new walking/cycling infrastructure proposal will be assessed to see if an additional counter should be added to augment the data gathering process.

10.1 Proposed Development of the Walking and Cycling Network

10.2 If the aims set out in this strategy are to be achieved then the schemes chosen must create a network that appeals to both existing and potential pedestrians and cyclists.

10.3 Planning and prioritisation of the development of the walking and cycling network in Maidstone Borough has been undertaken with input from the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum. Proposals have been sifted on the grounds of likely technical and political deliverability. Recommended interventions have been identified and the Action Plan overleaf splits these into the following geographical areas:

- Maidstone Town Centre
- North West Maidstone
- South West Maidstone
- North East Maidstone
- South East Maidstone
- Rural Maidstone Borough

10.4 The technical documents at the end of the strategy contain three maps illustrating the recommended infrastructure interventions, one covering Maidstone town centre, the second covering the Maidstone urban area and the third the wider borough. These are described in the accompanying Action Plan, together with an indicative timetable for their implementation, potential funding sources and delivery partners.

10.5 As this is a strategy, it should be noted that the proposals are indicative only and that their implementation will be dependent upon negotiation with existing landowners, securing the necessary funding and the completion of satisfactory feasibility design, detailed design and public consultation exercises at the appropriate stage.

10.6 In the first instance, however, it is recommended that a detailed audit of the borough's walking and cycling corridors is undertaken to identify missing links, gaps or barriers, including locations for new or extended cycle parking. The recommended infrastructure interventions will then be refined accordingly. For example, a similar exercise has recently been undertaken by Sustrans on behalf of Medway Council. It is suggested that an indicative budget of £15,000 could be allocated for this task, with the DfT's new Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund being the most likely funding source.

10.7 This Walking and Cycling Strategy is a living strategy, one that is flexible and can adapt to changing circumstances. In particular, emerging Neighbourhood Plans, developed by parish councils in working partnership with MBC, can provide a more local emphasis on the walking and cycling improvements required in rural areas. Furthermore, ongoing engagement with the Maidstone Cycling Campaign

Forum will take place to review progress in implementing the Action Plan. Where appropriate, actions will be refined or new interventions identified which will inform future iterations of the Strategy.

10.8 The improvements identified within the Neighbourhood Plans and through ongoing engagement with the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum will be incorporated within an updated Walking and Cycling Action Plan as appropriate as part of the monitoring and review process for the Strategy.

Action C14: MBC and KCC to commission a detailed audit of the borough's walking and cycling corridors to refine the infrastructure interventions recommended in the Action Plan.

Maidstone Town Centre

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
MTC1	Widening of existing Wat Tyler Way shared use footway	Footway widening on east side of Wat Tyler Way between Ashford Road and Chancery Lane, amended carriageway markings (reduced lane widths).	Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years	CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding	KCC MBC
MTC2	Upgraded crossing facilities on A249 Sittingbourne Road at Union Street/Vintners Road junction.	Signage, upgrading of controlled crossing to toucan standard, widening of footway alongside Sittingbourne Road, surfacing				CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding	KCC MBC

<p>MTC3</p>	<p>Improved cycle connectivity between High Street and Lockmeadow.</p>	<p>Package of measures to improve cycle facilities between High Street and Barker Road. Signage, upgrading of Bishops Way controlled crossing, expansion of cycle/pedestrian waiting areas, relocation of lamp columns/street furniture, cycle facilities on Barker Road, surfacing. Installation of cycle shelter/stands at Lockmeadow. Some measures to be delivered as part of Maidstone Bridges Gyrotory remodelling, other measures as part of action MTC9.</p>			<p>LEP Local Growth Fund MBC New Homes Bonus</p>	<p>KCC MBC</p>
<p>MTC4</p>	<p>Enable cycling between College Road and Brunswick Street.</p>	<p>Upgrade existing footpath link between A229 Hayle Road and Brunswick Street. Install toucan crossing on A229 Hayle Road to facilitate cycle access to and from College Road. Amended Right of Way Order required, signage, surfacing.</p>			<p>CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding</p>	<p>KCC MBC</p>

MTC5	<p>Package of measures to improve pedestrian environment and public realm along Week Street, incorporating appropriate access for cyclists.</p>	<p>Allow cycle access to Week Street:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) at all times between Station Road and Union Street (contraflow required); 2) from 8pm to 8am between Union Street and High Street (subject to review). <p>Cycle parking facilities to be provided within improved public realm. Amended Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) required, signage on entries to pedestrian priority zone, contraflow road markings, surfacing (to indicate cycle route).</p>			<p>CIL MBC Capital Programme</p>	<p>KCC MBC Town Centre Partnership</p>
MTC6	<p>Package of measures to improve linkages between River Medway and Week Street, including pedestrianisation of Earl Street.</p>	<p>Pedestrianisation of Earl Street between Pudding Lane and Week Street should be designed to maintain access for cyclists. Cycle parking facilities to be provided within improved public realm. Linkages with MTC13.</p>			<p>CIL</p>	<p>KCC MBC Town Centre Partnership</p>

MTC7	New cycle route between Week Street (NCN17) and Medway Valley towpath, serving Kent History & Library Centre.	Signage, footway widening on Stacey Street and Fairmeadow, new direct shared use footway from James Whatman Way to Fairmeadow, existing crossing facilities to south of A229/James Whatman Way roundabout to be upgraded to toucan standard.				CIL S106	KCC MBC
MTC8	Upgrade existing footway across River Medway between Maidstone Barracks (Buckland Hill) and Maidstone East (Station Road) for shared pedestrian/cycle use.	Signage (to indicate shared use of path, but with priority to pedestrians).				CIL S106 DfT Integrated Transport block funding	KCC MBC
MTC9	Medway Valley Towpath	Towpath improvements and making of Cycle Tracks Order to create a cycle route between Allington Lock and East Farleigh. In the longer term, this route to be extended as per RMB7 to the				LEP (Local Sustainable Transport Fund) MBC (New Homes Bonus)	KCC MBC

MTC10	Scotney Gardens – Whatman Park towpath	Medway Towns and Tonbridge.	On west side of River Medway, new section of towpath and improvements to existing towpath.				S106	KCC MBC
MTC11	Wayfinding Strategy – package of measures to introduce themed trails and quarters in the town centre to improve legibility.	Medway Towns and Tonbridge.	Additional signage to benefit pedestrians and cyclists within town centre. Monoliths and finger posts at key locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barracks, East, West rail stations • Outside shopping centres/main shopping streets • Outside major attractions (e.g. museum, theatre) 				CIL DfT Sustainable Travel “Access” Fund	KCC MBC Town Centre Partnership South Eastern Rail Franchisee Network Rail Bus Operators
MTC12	Public realm improvements on King Street between Wyke Manor Road and existing bus station access.	Medway Towns and Tonbridge.	Footpath improvements, cycle facilities. Upgraded crossing facilities at junction with Church Street.				CIL S106 (Church Street crossing improvements)	KCC MBC Town Centre Partnership

							Bus Operators
MTC13	New River Medway pedestrian/cycle crossing	Provision of shared use pedestrian/cycle footbridge linking St Peter's Street and Earl Street.				CIL LEP Local Growth Fund	KCC MBC Town Centre Partnership
MTC14	New cycle parking facilities at Maidstone West railway station.	Funding secured for the installation of five cycle stands (accommodating 10 cycles) with shelter, together with CCTV				LEP (Local Sustainable Transport Fund)	MBC South Eastern Rail Franchisee KCC

North West Maidstone

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
			Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years		
NWM1	Footway widening on north side of A20 London Road between Castle Road and Grace Avenue to create two-way cycle path.	Signage, surfacing, reconfiguration of Grace Avenue eastbound bus stop layby.				CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding	KCC MBC
305							
NWM2	Upgraded crossing facilities at Castle Road/London Road junction.	Install controlled crossing facilities on all arms. Dropped kerbs, tactile paving, signage.				CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding	KCC MBC
NWM3	Create new cycle route between	Signage, footway improvements				CIL	KCC

NWM4	Newbury Avenue and Sandling via Allington Lock, providing low vehicle traffic route to Museum of Kent Life.	(widening, dropped kerbs, tactile paving) between Forstal Road and Sandling.			DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding	MBC
306	Cycle route on east side of Hermitage Lane, linking Barming rail station (TMBC) with traffic free cycle path to Queen's Road (Cherry Orchard).	Footway widening, signage, dropped kerbs, tactile paving.			S106 CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding	KCC TMBC MBC South Eastern Rail Franchisee
NWM5	Cycle route between Giddyhorn Lane and Hermitage Lane. Continuation to Oakwood Park/Road.	Surface existing footpath and upgrade to bridleway status. Signage and lighting.			S106 CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding	KCC MBC

South West Maidstone

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
SWM1	<p>Creation of cycle route from Barming to Kings Hill via North Pole Road. Proposals will be developed through engagement with Parish Councils and public consultation, but potential options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of reduced speed limit and cycle-friendly traffic calming measures. • The introduction of one-way through motor traffic with a short length of cycle contraflow lane in the 	<p>Dependent upon intervention pursued, but could include Traffic Regulation Order for lower speed limit/one way vehicle movement, Stopping Up Order, bollards, signage. Link with Medway Valley Towpath (MTC9) via North Street and South Street.</p>	Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years	<p>CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding</p>	<p>TMBC KCC MBC</p>

307

SWM2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> middle section of North Pole Road. Closure to through motor traffic through the installation of physical bollards in the middle section of North Pole Road. 					
308	<p>Creation of cycle route from Medway Valley towpath (Unicomes Lane) to Hackney Road and westwards to South Street. This would provide an alternative cycle route during floods at East Farleigh.</p>	<p>Signage, upgrade existing footpaths to bridleway status, vegetation clearance (e.g. east of Farleigh Lane).</p>			<p>CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund DfT Integrated Transport block funding</p>	<p>KCC MBC</p>
SWM3	<p>Upgrading of new footpath on east side of Dean Street linking public footpaths KB14 and KB15 to bridleway status.</p>	<p>Signage, upgrade to bridleway status, dropped kerbs/crossing facilities</p>	<p>Medium</p>		<p>CIL s106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund</p>	<p>KCC MBC</p>

	DfT Integrated Transport block funding							
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North East Maidstone

Appendix A . Walking and Cycling Action Plan

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
			Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years		
NEM1	Package of highway improvements between Bearsted and New Cut Roundabouts.	Provision of new toucan crossing and combined foot/cycle way between the Bearsted and New Cut roundabouts as part of dual carriageway works.				S106	KCC MBC
310							
NEM2	Package of highway improvements at M20 Junction 7.	As part of Junction 7 signalisation, creation of a new signal controlled pedestrian route through the gyratory				S106	Highways England KCC MBC
NEM3	Cycle friendly traffic management measures on	Feasibility study required but potential measures include:				CIL Integrated Transport block funding	KCC MBC

311	Sandling Lane/ Penenden Heath Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in speed limit from 40mph to 30mph • Vertical/horizontal traffic calming • Footway widening to facilitate shared pedestrian/cycle use • Improved connectivity with pedestrian/cycle facilities on Bearsted Road (NEM1) 										MBC South Eastern Rail Franchisee KCC	LEP (Local Sustainable Transport Fund)	S106/S278	MBC
NEM4	New cycle parking facilities at Bearsted railway station.	Funding secured for installation of four cycle stands accommodating eight cycles, and CCTV													
NEM5	Package of improvement	In conjunction with pedestrian													

	<p>measures on the A20 Ashford Road between New Cut Road and Woodcut Farm</p>	<p>refuges and bus stops outside site EMP1(5), improvements to north side footway to facilitate shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, to connect with existing advisory cycle routes in Bearsted.</p>				<p>CIL LEP (Local Sustainable Transport Fund)</p>	<p>KCC</p>
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South East Maidstone

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Timescale for Delivery	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
SEM1	Creation of a cycle route from Sutton Road (Local Plan site H1(10) to The Quarries via Brishing Lane and Brishing Road (these are existing advisory cycle routes). This would connect with an existing advisory cycle route to Loose and the proposed Loose "Greenway".	Signage, surfacing.	Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years	S106	Developers KCC MBC
SEM2	Loose "Greenway" – cycle route from Old Drive to Cripple Street. Potential further extension southwards to Kirkdale.	Signage, surfacing, widening, existing footpaths upgraded to bridleway status.				LEP Local Growth Fund	KCC MBC Loose Parish Council
SEM3	Eastwards extension of Sutton Road cycle routes	Signage, surfacing, lighting, toucan				S106	KCC MBC

	to provide sustainable transport access to housing sites H1(7), (8), (9) and (10).	crossing(s) on A274 to connect housing sites to north and south of road and to connect with existing cycle routes through Shepway/Park Wood.				
SEM4	Crossing facilities on A274 to connect housing site H1(7) to the north with site H1(10) to the south.	Dropped kerbs, tactile paving, Toucan signage. Toucan crossing anticipated but details subject to agreement with KCC.	S106	KCC MBC		
SEM5 4	Crossing facilities on A274 north of Horseshoes Lane junction to provide sustainable transport access to amenities on housing site H1(10) for residents of Langley/Langley Heath.	Dropped kerbs, tactile paving, Toucan signage. Toucan crossing anticipated but details subject to agreement with KCC.	S106	KCC MBC		

Rural Maidstone Borough

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
			Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years			
RMB1	Creation of cycle route from Maidstone to Headcorn (and beyond to Biddenden)	Signage, quiet unclassified roads, some on-street cycle lanes/segregated cycle track (A274).					CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Ashford DC Sustrans
315								
RMB2	Creation of cycle route from Maidstone to Staplehurst (and beyond to Cranbrook)	Signage, quiet unclassified roads, some on-street cycle lanes/segregated cycle track (A229).					CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Tunbridge Wells DC Sustrans

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
RMB3	Creation of cycle route from Maidstone to Marden via Coxheath	Signage, quiet unclassified roads, some on-street cycle lanes/segregated cycle track.	Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years	CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Sustrans
RMB4	Creation of cycle route from Medway Valley towpath to Paddock Wood via Laddingford	Signage, quiet unclassified roads.				CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Tunbridge Wells DC Sustrans

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
			Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years			
RMB5	Creation of cycle route from Maidstone to Sittingbourne via A249 and quiet lanes	Signage, segregated shared use footways, possible toucan crossings.					CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC Highways England MBC Swale BC Sustrans
317								
RMB6	Creation of cycle route from Maidstone to Harrietsham/Lenham via A20.	Signage, segregated shared use footways, possible toucan crossings.					CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Sustrans

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
		Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years			
RMB7	Creation of Maidstone – Tonbridge cycle route via Medway Valley	Extension of action MTC8. From Allington Lock northwards and Barming Bridge southwards. Signage, anticipated mixture of riverside towpath, segregated cycle track and quiet unclassified roads. Interaction of cyclists with existing agricultural activities such as cattle grazing will need to be carefully mitigated.				CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	Landowners KCC MBC Tonbridge & Malling BC Medway Council Sustrans Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
RMB8	Creation of rural circular cycle route linking Rural	Signage, some segregated cycle track, on-street cycle lanes.				CIL DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Swale BC

319	<p>Service Centres and other smaller settlements, e.g. Bredhurst, Wichling, Lenham (via Swale), Headcorn, Staplehurst (via TWDC), Marden, Yalding and via River Medway to Maidstone.</p>	<p>Potential scope for route branding/marketing of attractions en route to stimulate leisure cycling/tourism, in addition to use by commuting cyclists accessing public transport hubs.</p>				MBC	<p>Tunbridge Wells DC Parishes Private Sector Sustrans</p>
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Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
		Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years			
RMB9	Coxheath Sustainable Transport Package	Further work is required to determine specific interventions. An audit of pedestrian/cycle accessibility to key infrastructure (e.g. bus stops, schools, shopping areas) is required. Potential interventions could include measures identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the need for a new footway link from site H1 (45) to Mill Lane, Coxheath has already been				CIL S106	KCC MBC Coxheath Parish Council

RMB10	Harrietsham Sustainable Transport Package	identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.				
321	<p>Initial work has been undertaken to identify a package of interventions, including the outline design of pedestrian crossing improvements and speed reduction measures on the A20. Other potential interventions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle route between railway station and primary school • Additional cycle parking at railway station • Footway enhancements 				<p>CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund</p>	<p>KCC MBC South Eastern Rail Franchisee Harrietsham Parish Council</p>

323		<p>Neighbourhood Plan. However, the need for crossing improvements at A274 Wheeler Street and a footway link from site EMP1(4) to the A274 has already been identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. In addition funding has been secured for the installation of a shelter over the existing cycle stands at the railway station.</p>					
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Appendix A . Walking and Cycling Action Plan

Action	Proposal	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Type of Infrastructure Required	Potential Funding Sources	Delivery Partners
			Short term <5 years	Medium term 5 - 10 years	Long term >10 years		
RMB12	Hollingbourne - Cycle Parking	Funding has been secured for the installation of five cycle stands and CCTV at the railway station.				Local Enterprise Partnership (LSTF)	South Eastern Rail Franchisee KCC MBC
RMB13 RMB14	Lenham Sustainable Transport Package	Further work is required to determine specific interventions. An audit of pedestrian/cycle accessibility to key infrastructure (e.g. public transport stops, schools, shopping areas) is required. Potential interventions could include				CIL S106 DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Lenham Parish Council

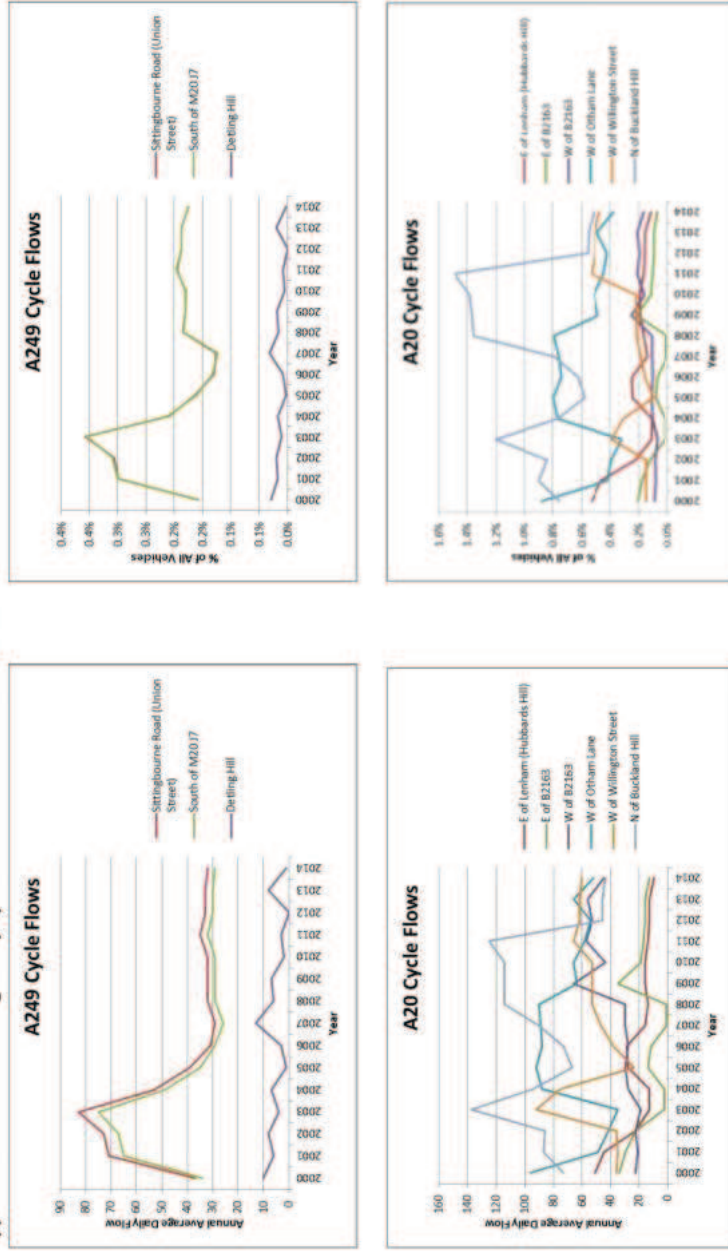
326		<p>measures identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan has already identified the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading of the Goudhurst Road zebra crossing to a pelican crossing • New pedestrian crossing on Church Green • Traffic calming measures <p>In addition funding has been secured for the installation of 10 cycle stands and a shelter at the railway station.</p>					
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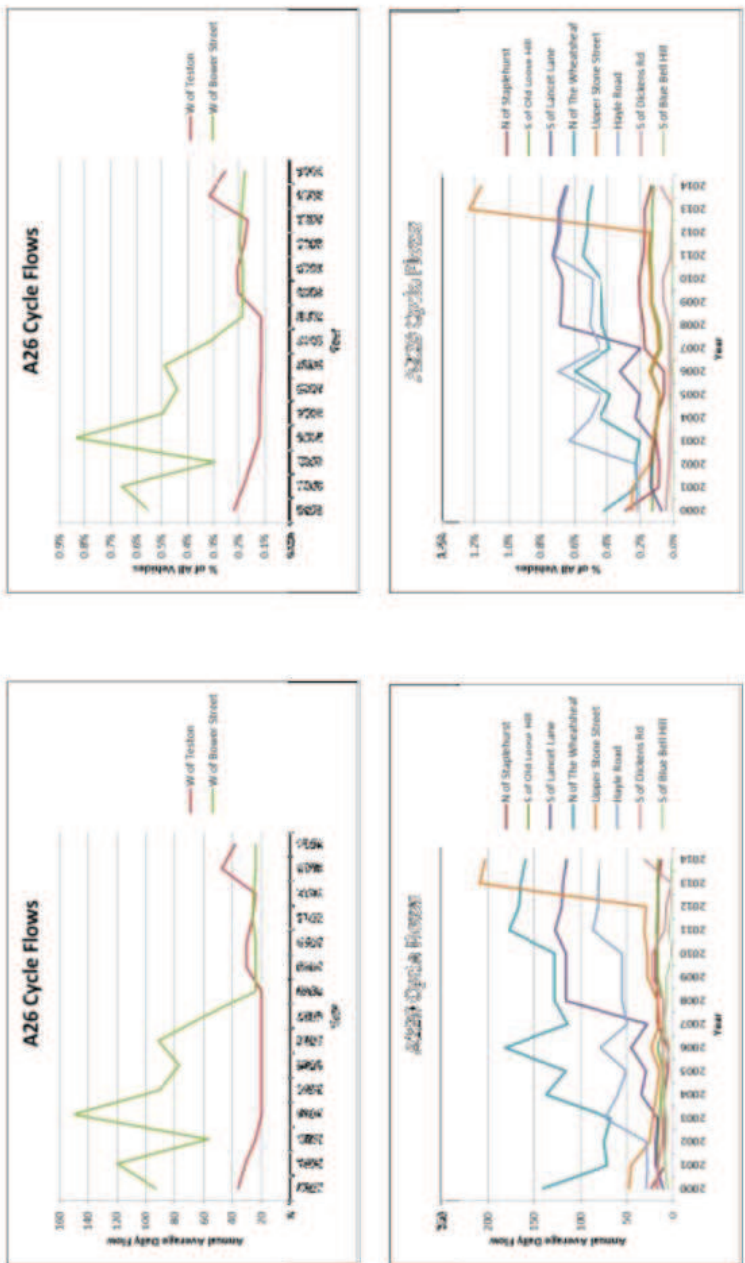
RMB15	Staplehurst Sustainable Transport Package	Further work is required to determine specific interventions. An audit of pedestrian/cycle accessibility to key infrastructure (e.g. public transport stops, schools, shopping areas) is required. Potential interventions could include measures identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, proposals are currently being developed at the railway station to:				CIL S106 South Eastern Rail Franchisee DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC Staplehurst Parish Council South Eastern Rail Franchisee Bus Operators
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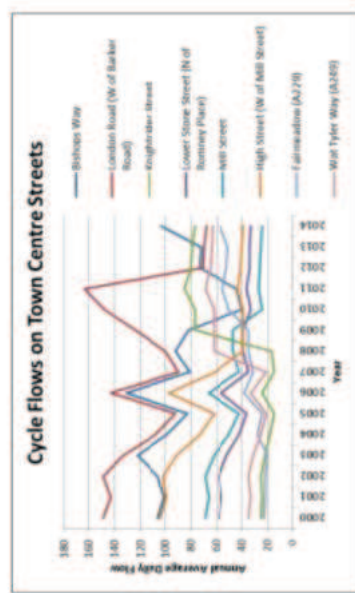
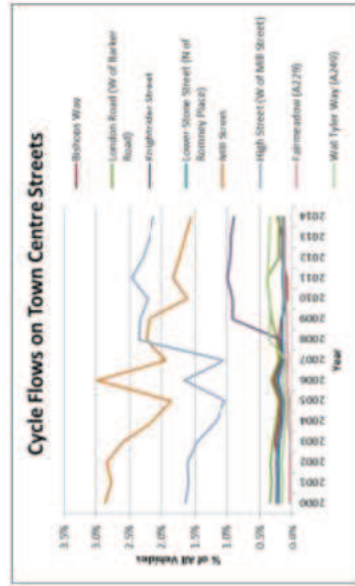
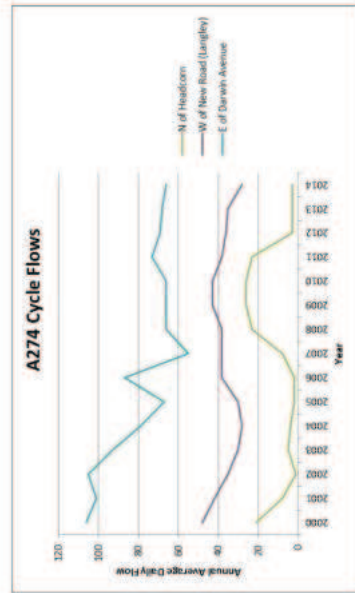
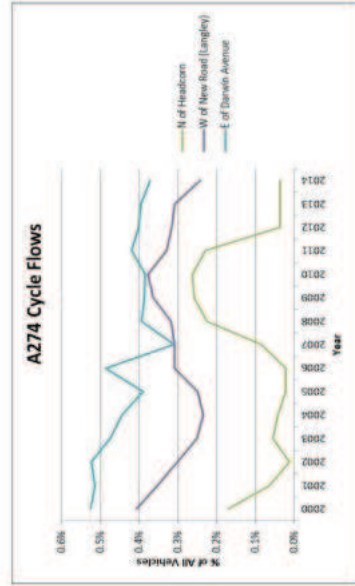
RMB16	Yalding Sustainable Transport Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional cycle parking • Enhance footway and crossing facilities on Station Approach. 				
328	Further work is required to determine specific interventions. An audit of pedestrian/cycle accessibility to key infrastructure (e.g. public transport stops, schools, shopping areas) is required. Potential interventions could include measures identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. Measures could include the				CIL S106 South Eastern Rail Franchisee DfT Sustainable Travel "Access" Fund	KCC MBC South Eastern Rail Franchisee Yalding Parish Council

					provision of cycle parking to encourage the use of proposed new rural cycle routes (RMB4, RMB7, RMB8).		
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Appendix B: Annual Average Daily Cycle Flows & Modal Share – Maidstone Radial Routes









Legend

- 1000
- 2000
- 5000
- Located
- ?● Unlocated

333



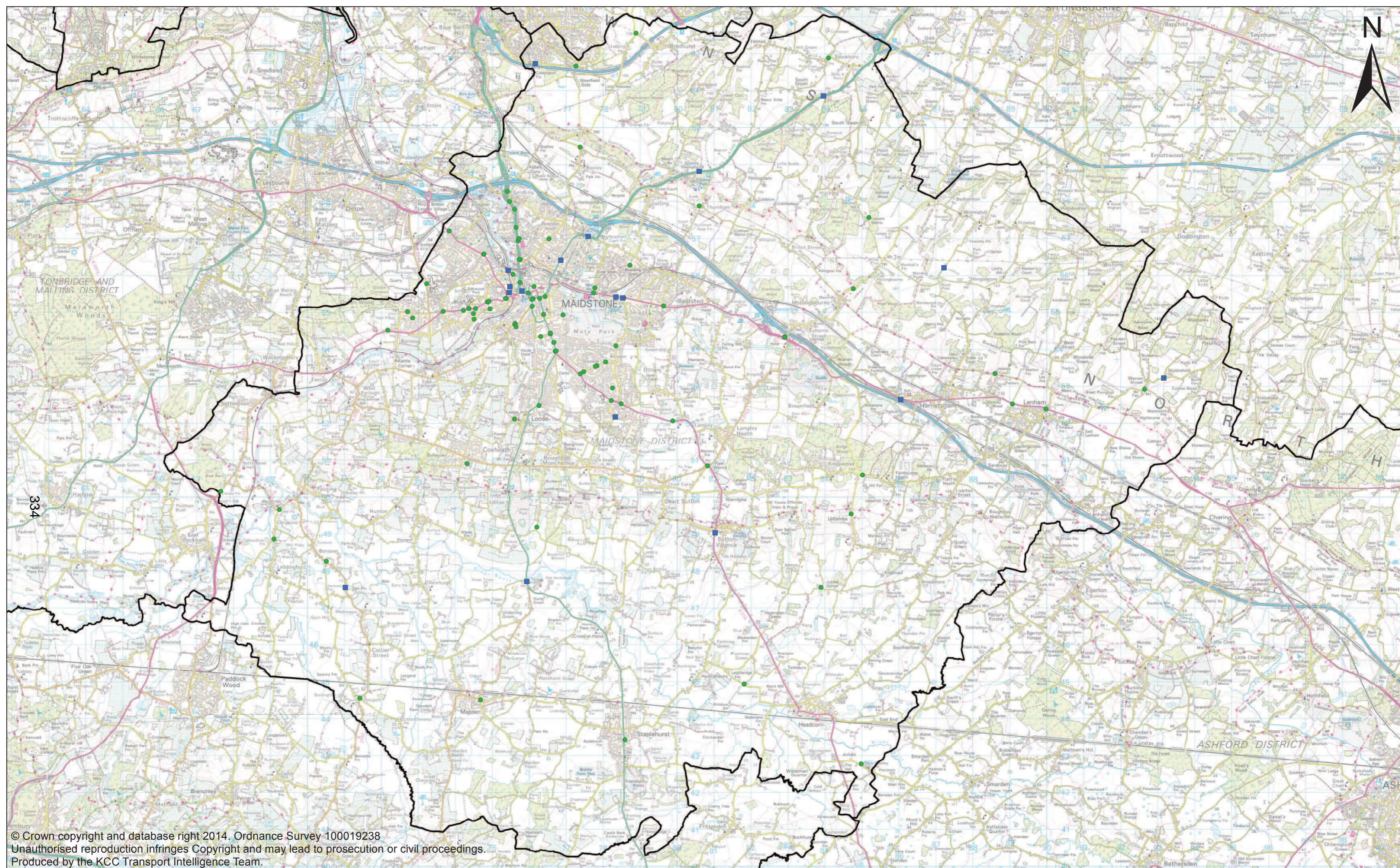
Project:
Maidstone

Drawing Name:
**Maidstone Distance Contour
OS Meridian 2 Layer
Network Analysis**

Drawn: WA	Checked: HM	Approved: TH
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Orig. Size: ISO A3	Scale: NTS
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Drawing Number: 001	Rev: A
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Maidstone District Pedal Cycle Collisions

(01.07.2012 to 30.06.2015)

Note: There were no fatal pedal cycle collisions recorded during this period

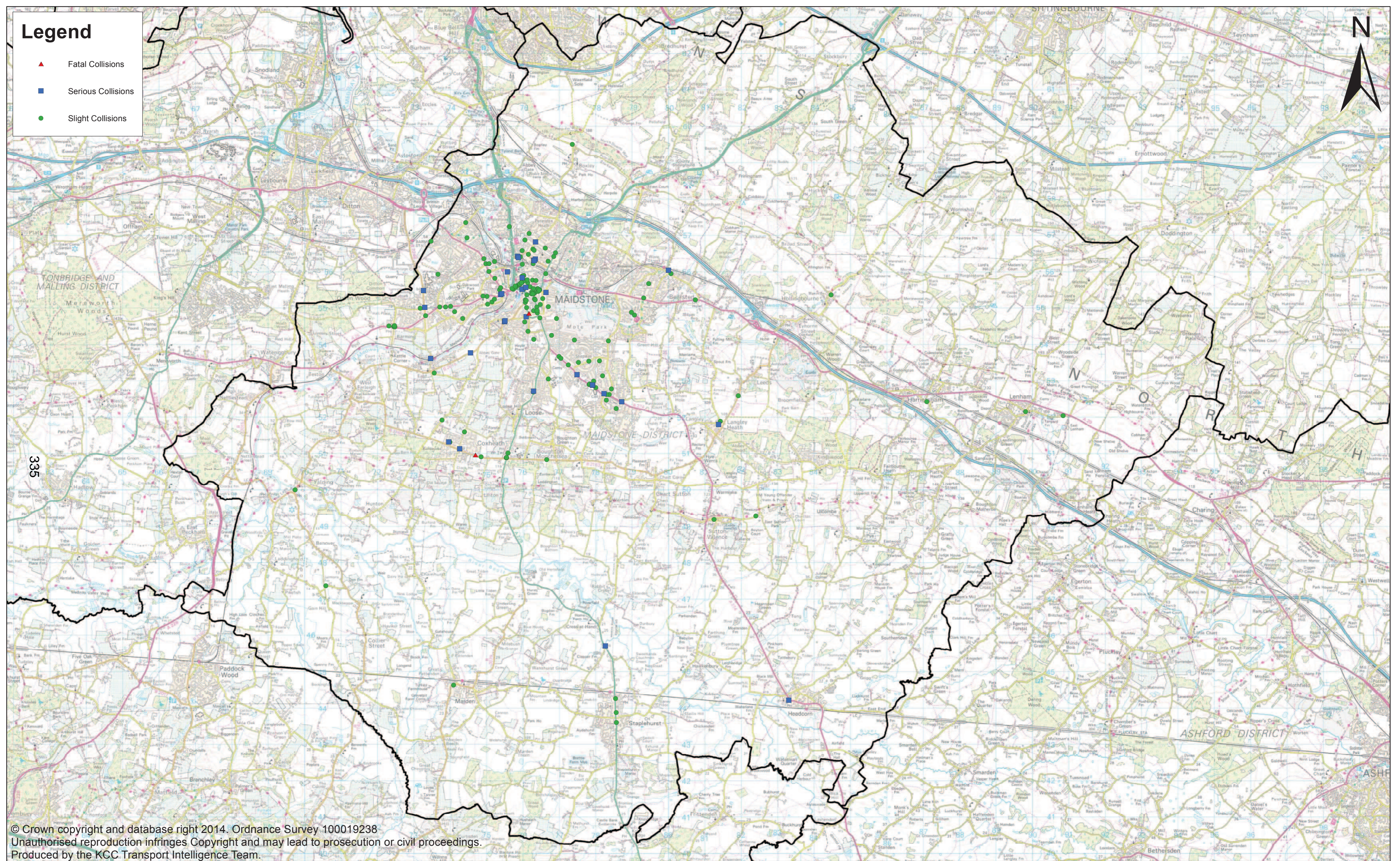
Legend

- Serious Collisions
- Slight Collisions

Kent County Council
 kent.gov.uk

Legend

- ▲ Fatal Collisions
- Serious Collisions
- Slight Collisions

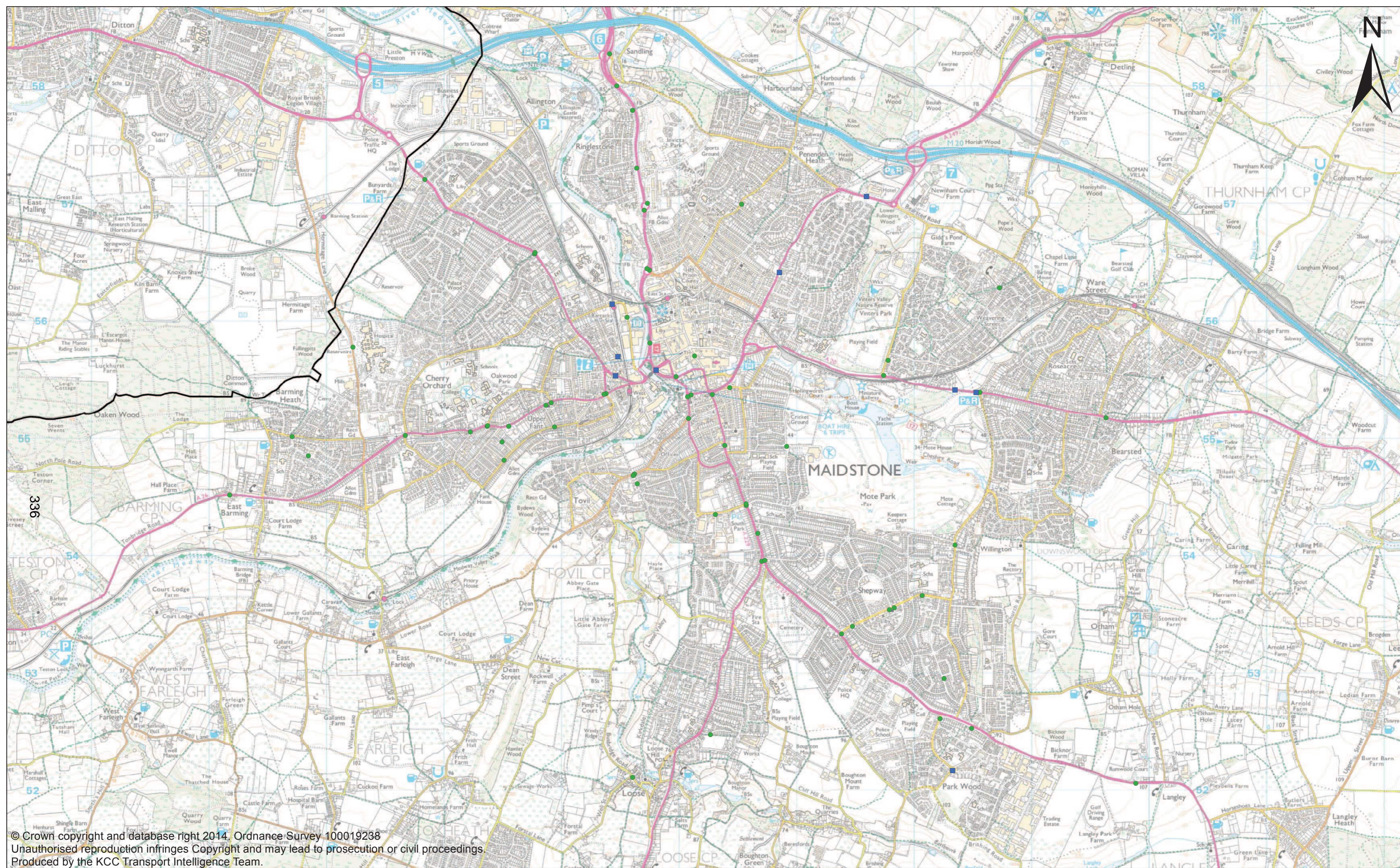


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Maidstone District Pedestrian Collisions

(01.07.2012 to 30.06.2015)





Maidstone Pedal Cycle Collisions

(01.07.2012 to 30.06.2015)

Note: There were no fatal pedal cycle collisions recorded during this period

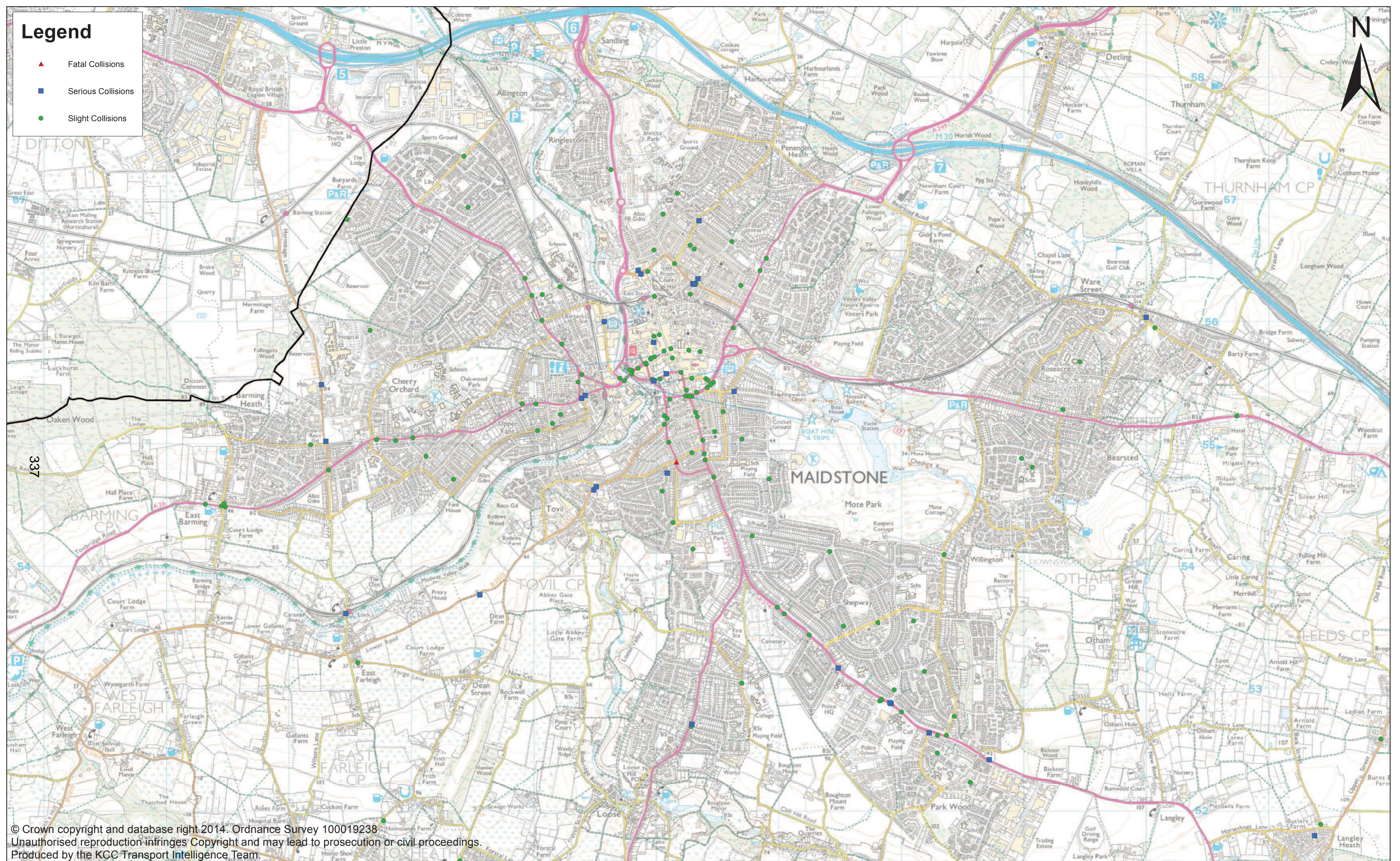
Legend

- Serious Collisions
- Slight Collisions

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Legend

- ▲ Fatal Collisions
- Serious Collisions
- Slight Collisions



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Maidstone Pedestrian Collisions

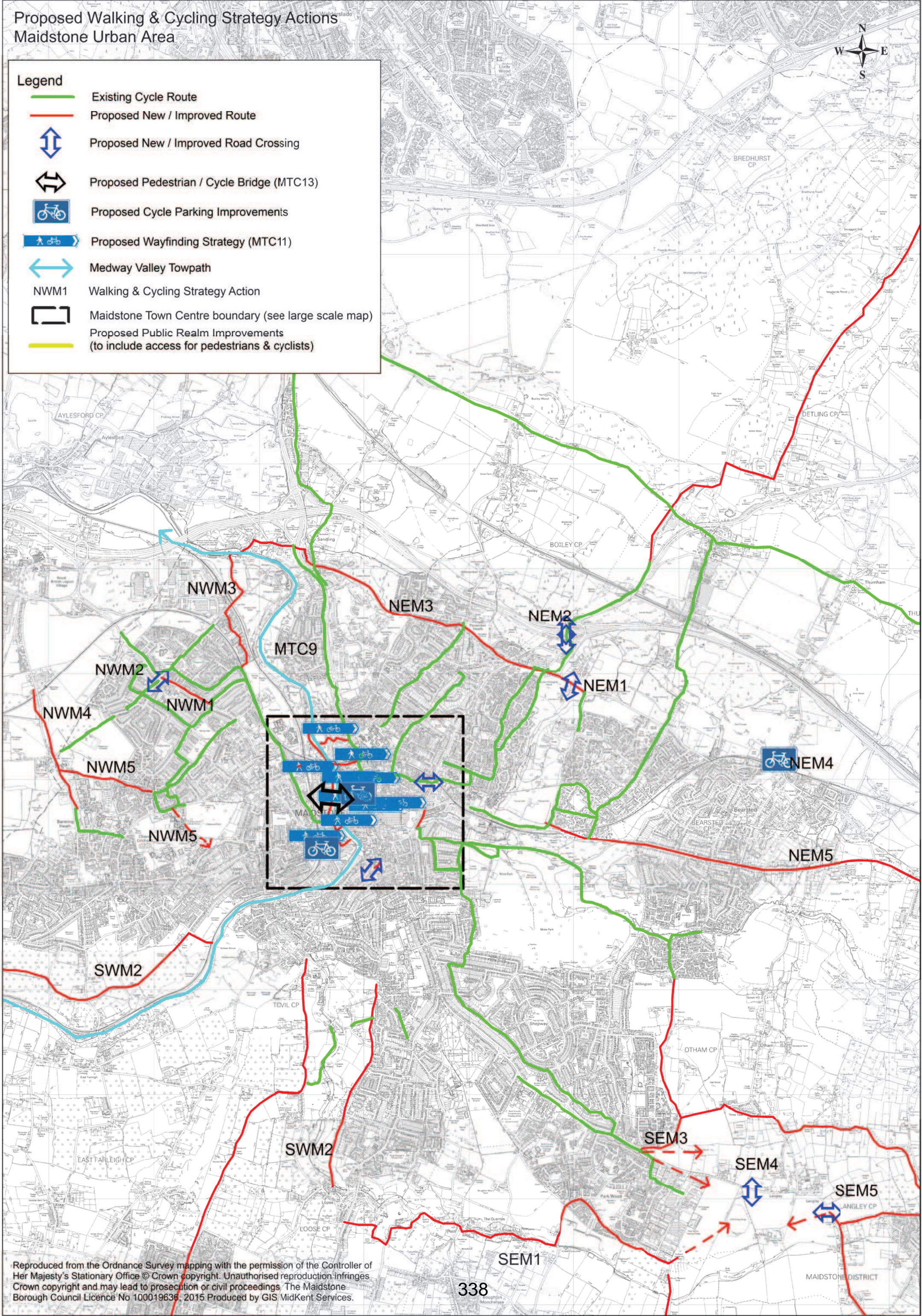
(01.07.2012 to 30.06.2015)



Proposed Walking & Cycling Strategy Actions Maidstone Urban Area

Legend

-  Existing Cycle Route
-  Proposed New / Improved Route
-  Proposed New / Improved Road Crossing
-  Proposed Pedestrian / Cycle Bridge (MTC13)
-  Proposed Cycle Parking Improvements
-  Proposed Wayfinding Strategy (MTC11)
-  Medway Valley Towpath
- NWM1 Walking & Cycling Strategy Action
-  Maidstone Town Centre boundary (see large scale map)
-  Proposed Public Realm Improvements (to include access for pedestrians & cyclists)

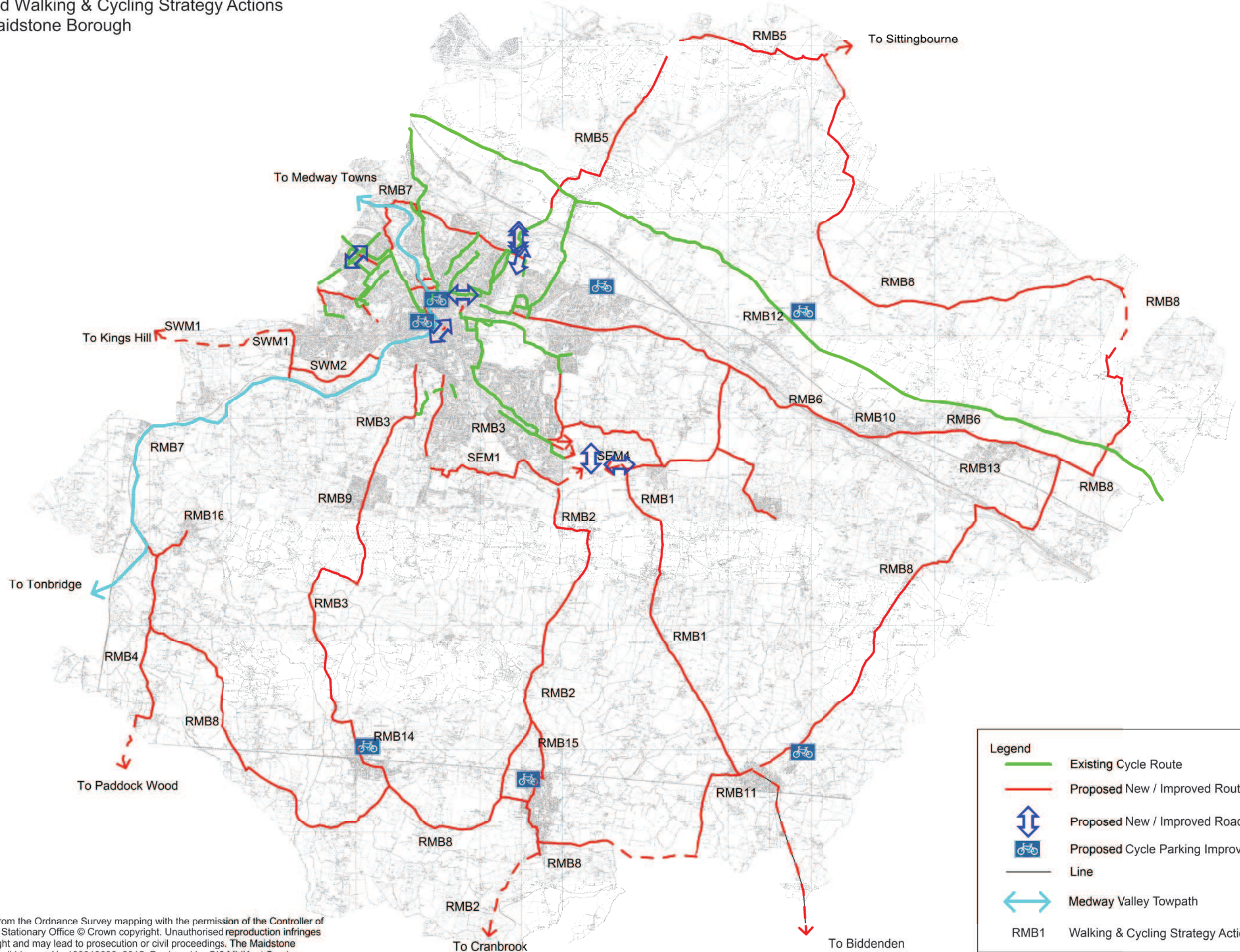


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Proposed Walking & Cycling Strategy Actions
Rural Maidstone Borough



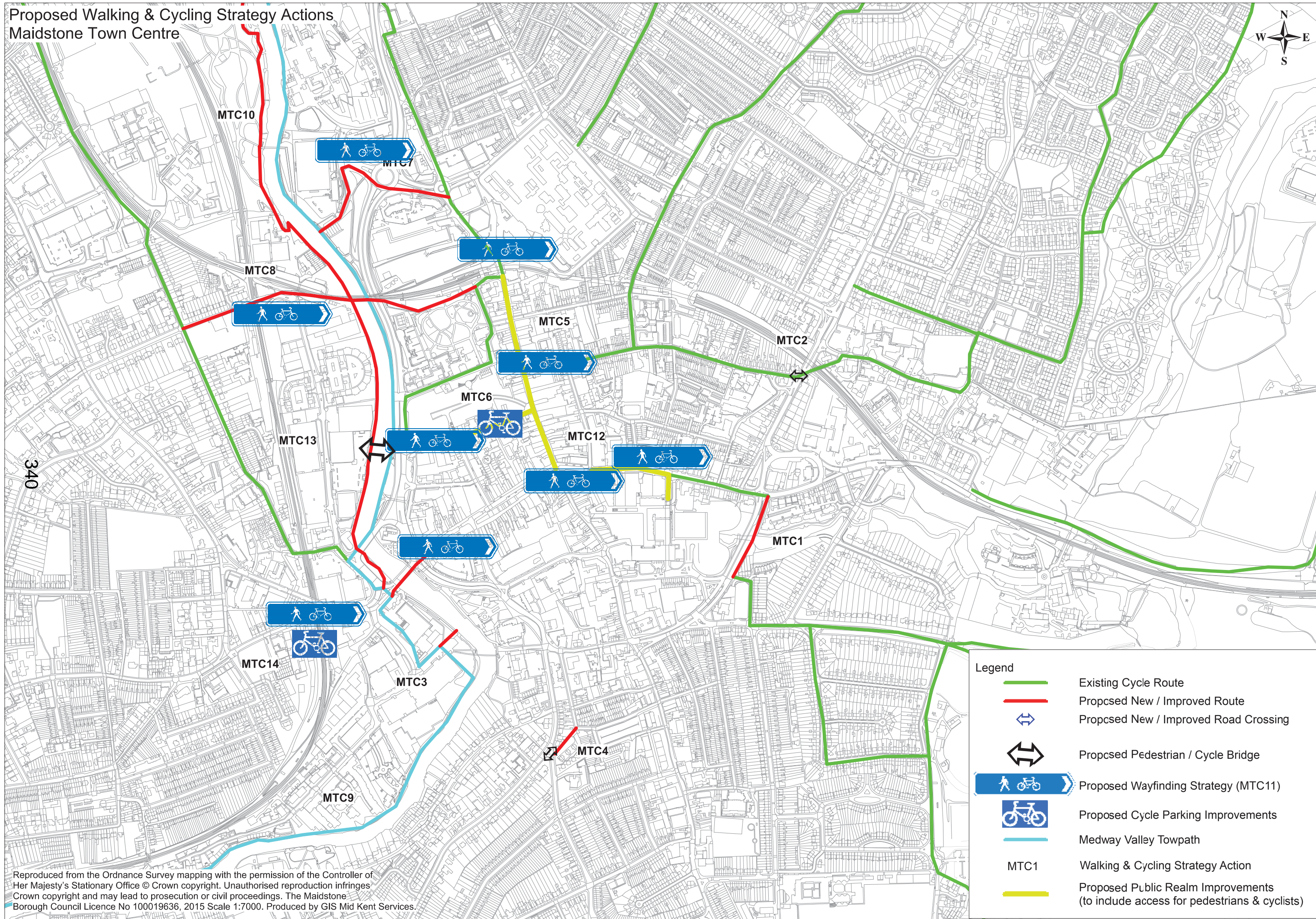
339



Legend	
	Existing Cycle Route
	Proposed New / Improved Route
	Proposed New / Improved Road Crossing
	Proposed Cycle Parking Improvements
	Line
	Medway Valley Towpath
RMB1	Walking & Cycling Strategy Action

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Proposed Walking & Cycling Strategy Actions
Maidstone Town Centre



Legend	
	Existing Cycle Route
	Proposed New / Improved Route
	Proposed New / Improved Road Crossing
	Proposed Pedestrian / Cycle Bridge
	Proposed Wayfinding Strategy (MTC11)
	Proposed Cycle Parking Improvements
	Medway Valley Towpath
	Walking & Cycling Strategy Action
	Proposed Public Realm Improvements (to include access for pedestrians & cyclists)

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T
By: Tim Read – K
R
Date: 13 July 2016
Subject: Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy
Classification: For Information and Discussion

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Maidstone Borough Council has undertaken a public consultation on the Regulation 19 Maidstone Local Plan, which has invited comments on whether the plan complies with legal requirements and meets the tests of soundness. The consultation closed at 5pm on 18th March 2016. The plan was subsequently considered by Maidstone Council's Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee and submitted for Examination on 20th May 2016. The Plan covers the period from 2011 to 2031 but, to ensure an up-to-date planning policy framework is maintained a review of the Plan will commence by 2022.
- 1.2 The suite of documents made available for comments as part of the consultation included a draft Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), which is intended to identify the transport interventions necessary to support planned growth over the period to 2031.
- 1.3 Kent County Council, in its capacity as local Highway Authority, raised objections to the draft ITS as part of its response to the Regulation 19 consultation. The objections highlighted how the ITS should accord with the resolution made by this Board on 7th December 2015 regarding the initial implementation of a strategy covering the period to 2022, as part of ensuring that it is founded on a package of transport improvements that have been agreed by the County Council.
- 1.4 The representations made in response to the Regulation 19 consultation were reported to the 18th April SPS&T committee. These included objections from KCC to both the draft Local Plan and Integrated Transport Strategy. There was also an objection from Highways England. The local Plan and associated documents were submitted to the Secretary of State on the 20th May but this did not include the ITS. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to update Members with respect to the resolution made on 7th December 2015 and, moreover, to propose a joint Integrated Transport Strategy which can be submitted to the Secretary of State in time for examination in public.

2. Background

- 2.1 At a previous meeting of this Board on 7th December 2015, Members resolved:

" We agree in the absence of an agreed transport strategy and in light of the evidence presented to this Board demonstrating Maidstone's significant highway capacity constraints, this Board recommends that a transport strategy be taken forward urgently by the Borough and County Councils covering the period of the Local Plan, with a further review completed in 2022.

The aim of this strategy will be to mitigate the transport impact of future growth, in the first instance up to 2022. The strategy should comprise of the key highway schemes and public transport improvements agreed by the Board, and further traffic modelling will be required to identify its impact. It is proposed that the £8.9 million growth fund monies identified for transport be used to accelerate the delivery of these improvements. Existing developer contributions may then be used to support further measures.

The agreed transport strategy should also develop the justification for a relief road between the A20 to the A274 (the Leeds and Langley Relief Road), along with a preferred route, in order to allow testing with other strategic transport options and identify all source of potential funding to enable the schemes to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.”

- 2.2 The traffic modelling referred to within the resolution was undertaken by consultants Amey, who are jointly commissioned by the County Council and Borough Council, in order to identify how implementation of the strategy could impact upon highway network performance. The Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) needs to take into account the broad network-wide picture.
- 2.3 The assumptions applied in modelling analysis and the associated results were presented at the meeting of this board on 22nd February 2016. A summary of the assumptions and results, set against the previously modelled '2014 base' and '2031 Do Something 4b' scenarios, is presented in Appendix A.
- 2.4 Since the JTB meeting on 7th December 2015, the Borough Council's Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport (SPS&T) Committee, on 13th January 2016, agreed to present the draft Local Plan to Full Council for agreement and Regulation 19 consultation. This was subsequently agreed by Full Council and the draft Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in May. The draft Local Plan contained transport policies and included a number of specific detailed highway improvements including the package of highway improvement schemes previously considered and supported by the JTB (see below and in Appendix B):
- A20/M20 Junction 5
 - A229/A274 Wheatsheaf
 - A20/Willington Street
 - A274/Willington Street and A274/Wallis Avenue
 - A20/Hermitage Lane
 - A20/Coldharbour Lane
 - A249 Bearsted Road and Bearsted Road/New Cut
 - A26/Fountain Lane
 - The removal of a previously proposed park and ride site at Linton and an existing park and ride site at M20 J7 (which had been in the previous draft).

The draft plan also acknowledged the Bridges Gyrotory scheme which is already being implemented.

- 2.5 The 'Do Something' model runs also included the following strategy components (also referred to in Appendix B):-
- A typical 10 minute bus frequency.
 - The discounting of walk/cycle trips to be based on a distance threshold of 5km within the town centre.
 - A 50% increase in long-stay parking charges.
- 2.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes reference to planning for the longer term (preferably a 15-year time horizon), the need for plans to be kept up to date and for review in response to changing circumstances. At paragraph 157, the NPPF states that "each local planning authority should produce a Local Plan for its area. This can be reviewed in whole or in part to respond flexibly to changing circumstances".
- 2.7 The draft ITS covers the same period as the Local Plan (i.e. 2011-2031). Although not governed by the NPPF, the same principles of planning for the longer term, being kept up-to-date and review in response to changing circumstances apply.

3 Highways England

- 3.1 Highways England objected at the Regulation 19 consultation stage of the Local Plan in that they consider that insufficient modelling of the motorway network has been undertaken with specific criticism of the VISUM modelling relating to the original 2001 baseline traffic surveys and the lack of detailed modelling of the motorway junctions.
- 3.2 As a result of this objection, joint KCC/MBC meetings have taken place with Highways England and an agreed way forward has been found. This has resulted in Mott MacDonald being commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council to undertake detailed transport modelling of all 4 motorway junctions.

4 Proposed ITS Modifications

- 4.1 Further discussions between the Borough Council and County Council have taken place to identify how the draft ITS included in the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation could be modified to the satisfaction of both authorities.
- 4.2 The following potential adjustments have been discussed:

- The ITS will be re-appraised in the future as part of the first review of the Local Plan to commence by 2022. The primary purpose of this exercise would be to identify any additional transport interventions to further support the Local Plan. The approach will be to
 - Establish, at the review point, whether additional highways mitigation is required;
 - Establish what the options for mitigation are;
 - Undertake a full appraisal of the options. Any options assessment would require, amongst other things, a technical evaluation including Sustainability Appraisal(s) and Strategic Environmental Assessment(s).

Further explanation and amplifications of the intentions regarding a potential South East Maidstone Strategic Link (Leeds-Langley Relief Road) scheme will be provided by Kent County Council. This will highlight how:

- Kent County Council has begun work to establish the justification for and delivery of such a project;
- Traffic Modelling has shown a link between the A20 and A274 would have a beneficial impact upon traffic levels in the congested south and south-east sector of the urban area; and
- The Borough and County Councils will work together to develop the detailed case, including full traffic and environmental impact studies, a preferred route and funding methods. This is reflected in paragraph 17.125 of the draft Local Plan.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 It is recommended that the transport interventions identified in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5, together with the firmer commitment to work together in relation to paragraph 4.2 are approved by Members as forming the basis of the transport strategy.
- 5.2 This matter be referred to both the KCC Cabinet Member for Transport and MBC's SPST Committee for approval.

2.4 The 'Do Something' model runs accounted for the transport strategy components previously agreed by the board, with the exception of the South East Maidstone Strategic Link (Leeds Langley Relief Road) as this would require delivery over a longer timescale. The strategy components included are:

The package of highway improvement schemes

These are secured through policy DM24 of the Local Plan and are also set out in the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

• Bridges Gyratory	Para 17.124 (page 245) of MBLP reg19 document Draft ITS (page 43) IDP (page 21)
• A20/M20 Junction 5	MBLP Reg 19 (page 246) Draft ITS (pages 44 & 45) IDP (page 32)
• A229/A274 Wheatsheaf	MBLP Reg 19 (page 246) Draft ITS (page 43) IDP (page 29)
• A20/Willington Street	MBLP Reg 19 (page 246) IDP (page 35)
• A274/Willington Street and A274/Wallis Avenue	MBLP Reg 19 (page 246) Draft ITS (page 44) IDP (page 32)
• A20/Hermitage Lane	Draft ITS (Page 45) IDP (page 33)
• A20/Coldharbour Lane	MBLP Reg 19 (page 246) Draft ITS (page 44) IDP (page 32)
• A249 Bearsted Road and Bearsted Road/New Cut	MBLP Reg 19 (pages 245 and 246) Draft ITS (page 43) IDP (page 26)
• A26/Fountain Lane	MBLP Reg 19 (page 246) Draft ITS (page 43) IDP (page 33)

Other measures

Public transport improvements are secured through policies DM24 & DM25 in the Local Plan, the ITS and also the IDP.

Walking and cycling measures are secured through policy DM24 of the Local Plan as well as the ITS and IDP.

• A typical 10 minute bus frequency	MBLP Reg 19 (page 248) Draft ITS Action PT2 (pages 324 and 325) IDP (page 27) ref HTJ75 IDP (page 30) ref HTSE9
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	<p>IDP (page 37) ref HTC3 IDP (page 44) ref HTB1</p> <p>These provisions are more aspirational than the figures used for the modelling and seek to reflect the targets set out on page 50 of the draft ITS. Many radial routes currently operate at or above this frequency.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The discounting of walk/cycle trips to be based on a distance threshold of 5km within the town centre 	<p>A figure used for modelling purposes seeking to reflect intra-urban journeys with the Maidstone urban area</p> <p>Targets for increased walking and cycling modal shares are set out on page 50 of the draft ITS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 50% increase in long-stay parking charges 	<p>Paras. 17.129 and 17.130 of MBLP Reg 19 (pages 246 and 247) Draft ITS (pages 39 and 40)</p> <p>(Both talk about a refreshed Town Centre Parking Strategy to provide disincentives to the use of long-term parking in the town centre but not at the expense of shoppers or visitors.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The removal of park and ride sites at Linton and M20 J7 	<p>This reflects the published MBLP reg19 2016</p>