Maidstone Draft Economic Development Strategy 2014-2031:

Residents' Consultation

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On behalf of:

MAIDSTONE Borough Council

January 2015

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report sets out the results of a survey of 1,518 Maidstone residents undertaken by Facts International, an independent market research agency. This forms part of a range of public consultation activity undertaken around Maidstone's draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for 2014-2031[1].

The EDS is a key strategy for the Council and will impact on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the whole borough. It has been produced alongside work being undertaken on the Local Plan, which will provide a framework for development until 2031, including planning for homes, jobs, shopping, leisure and the environment as well as the infrastructure to support these[2].

Maidstone's population is forecast to grow significantly over the next 16 years and the EDS highlights the importance of maximising the economic potential of the Borough, emphasising the importance of delivering appropriate employment land and business development support in achieving this goal.

The Strategy aims to set out the key economic challenges and opportunities faced by the borough over the next 16 years and the actions needed to deliver jobs and prosperity for all[3]. However, the EDS is composed of a complex, detailed plan of action and supporting evidence, with themes and terminology designed for a "policy savvy" audience. Therefore, the intention of the consultation survey was to seek feedback on areas *related* to the key points of the Strategy, but to do this in a way that would be accessible, understandable and interesting to the average resident.

The survey questionnaire focused on gathering residents' views on the importance of different types of activity linked to the five priorities outlined in the EDS:

- **Retaining and attracting investment -** Supporting existing businesses to grow and working to attract new employers to the Borough, creating job opportunities for all residents across a range of sectors.
- **Stimulating entrepreneurship** - Creating a more entrepreneurial and innovative economy, supporting new business start-ups and those with high growth potential to move up the value chain.
- **Enhancing the town centre** - Promoting the regeneration of Maidstone town centre as a high quality retail and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work.
- **Meeting the skills needs** - Ensuring that residents are equipped with skills for work and that the skills needs of businesses are being met.
- **Improving the infrastructure** - Investing in infrastructure to drive economic growth – including the transport network and digital infrastructure.

Residents were also asked for their opinions on the idea of allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20, a key transformational action outlined in the EDS. Enabling the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations by 2031 is one of the strategy's main objectives, reflecting a desire to diversify the range of employment and businesses to be found within

[1] The public consultation period is 15th December 2014 to 6th February 2015
[2] http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-plan/what-is-the-local-plan
[3] The full draft strategy can be found at http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/council/have-your-say/current-consultations/draft-economic-development-strategy-for-2014-31

Maidstone. However, research into the supply of employment land in the borough by consultants GVA[4] suggests that this jobs target is unlikely to be delivered without intervention. Based on their assessment of potential options, the GVA report strongly advocates the allocation of a new employment site along the motorway corridor.

To allow any areas of importance to residents not covered by the EDS to be identified, survey participants were also given the opportunity to mention any other action they thought the Council should be undertaking to improve the local economy.

As well as feeding back their views via the survey, Maidstone residents have also had the opportunity to participate in an "open consultation" on the EDS via the Maidstone Borough Council website. Those interested in reviewing the strategy in more detail have been able to read the full document and/or an executive summary before leaving comments on their agreement or otherwise with key elements such as the identified challenges, SWOT analysis, vision, objectives, priorities and transformational actions. The open consultation documents were also sent as an email survey to businesses in the Borough. Responses to the web-based consultation and business survey are set out in Section 4 of this report. The Open Consultation documents are included in Annex 6.

1.2 Methodology

Approach

The survey was conducted via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). This approach enabled the views of a large number of Maidstone residents to be gathered within a short timeframe – 1,518 interviews were conducted between January 5th and January 20th 2015 – and also allowed interviews to be *targeted* so the opinions of those participating would be as representative as possible of those held across all residents in the Borough.

Quotas were imposed to ensure fair representation by age, gender and employment status. To allow results to be analysed at a ward level, at least 50 interviews were undertaken in each ward, with larger wards receiving more interviews. At the end of fieldwork, the results were weighted to produce the closest possible match to the demographic breakdown of the Maidstone population as set out in Kent County Council's (KCC's) Area Profile[5] . Details of the interviews conducted by resident group and the weighting applied are given in Annex 2.

Residents were invited to take part in the survey predominantly based on a RDD (Random Digit Dialling) approach targeted by ward. Using this approach, rather than telephone directories or other sources of "listed" numbers, gives a wider range of residents the opportunity to take part and so helps to ensure that the survey is as inclusive and representative as possible.

However, the targeted RDD approach only covers landlines. In order to increase inclusivity further and to ensure representation of younger people, mobile phone numbers were also purchased from a commercial provider[6]. A number of other strategies were also used to try to maximise the number of younger people surveyed, including interviewing in the evenings and at weekends, publicising the survey and the benefits of participating on social media, and prioritising speaking to younger people within those households called. It is typically much easier to engage older people to take part in

[4] GVA "A Qualitative Assessment of the Employment Land Supply" http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s38755/Appendix%20A%20Qualitative%20Employment%20Site%20Assessment.pdf
[5] http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/area-profiles
[6] These would have been purchased by the provider from various sources where people "opt in" to share their phone number and address e.g. websites, questionnaires etc.

research of this kind. However, as the EDS covers the next 16 years and focuses on issues such as employment and jobs, gathering feedback from younger age groups was considered particularly important in the context of this study.

Details of the total number of calls made and the outcome of these calls, including the number of refusals, are set out in Annex 1.

Questionnaire

The survey lasted 10 minutes on average and consisted of 19 questions, including both multiple choice/ scale questions and those allowing an open response. As well as being asked for their opinion on a number of areas, respondents were asked to provide information about themselves to allow comparison of results across different resident groups. The survey questionnaire is included at Annex 5.

Facts International designed the questionnaire in collaboration with Maidstone Borough Council. In light of the importance of ensuring a fair consultation and the particularly sensitive nature of the question around Junction 8 development, considerable thought was given to ensuring that questions were easy to interpret and understand and framed in such a way as to allow respondents to give an informed opinion. The CATI approach helped to ensure that accurate results were gathered, for example by allowing banks of statements to be rotated so that these were not presented to every respondent in the same order – thus ensuring that ratings have not been influenced by the location of statements within the list.

As a Market Research Society (MRS) company partner, Facts International is committed to providing accurate, unbiased research as set out in the MRS Code of Conduct. Interviewers and executives are committed to remaining wholly impartial and to conducting all research projects on a fully independent basis. More information on Facts International is given in Annex 7.

Analysis of results

On completion of fieldwork, the open ended responses given were coded into thematic areas by an experienced team of coders. Weighting was applied as outlined in Annex 2 and data was tabulated to allow calculation of statistics such as nets and means and to outline differences by resident groups with these differences tested for statistical significance[7]. These comparisons by group are drawn out throughout the report.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Section 2 explores which areas of Council activity residents would prioritise, linking these with the priorities outlined in the EDS. The section includes importance ratings given to a list of activity areas, plus analysis of spontaneous suggestions for actions the Council could undertake to improve the local economy.

Section 3 focuses on feelings towards the possibility of allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20.

Section 4 covers feedback given through the open consultation and e-mail survey of businesses

Section 5 summarises the key themes and messages emerging from the study

[7] All findings reported are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level

2.0 Residents' Priorities

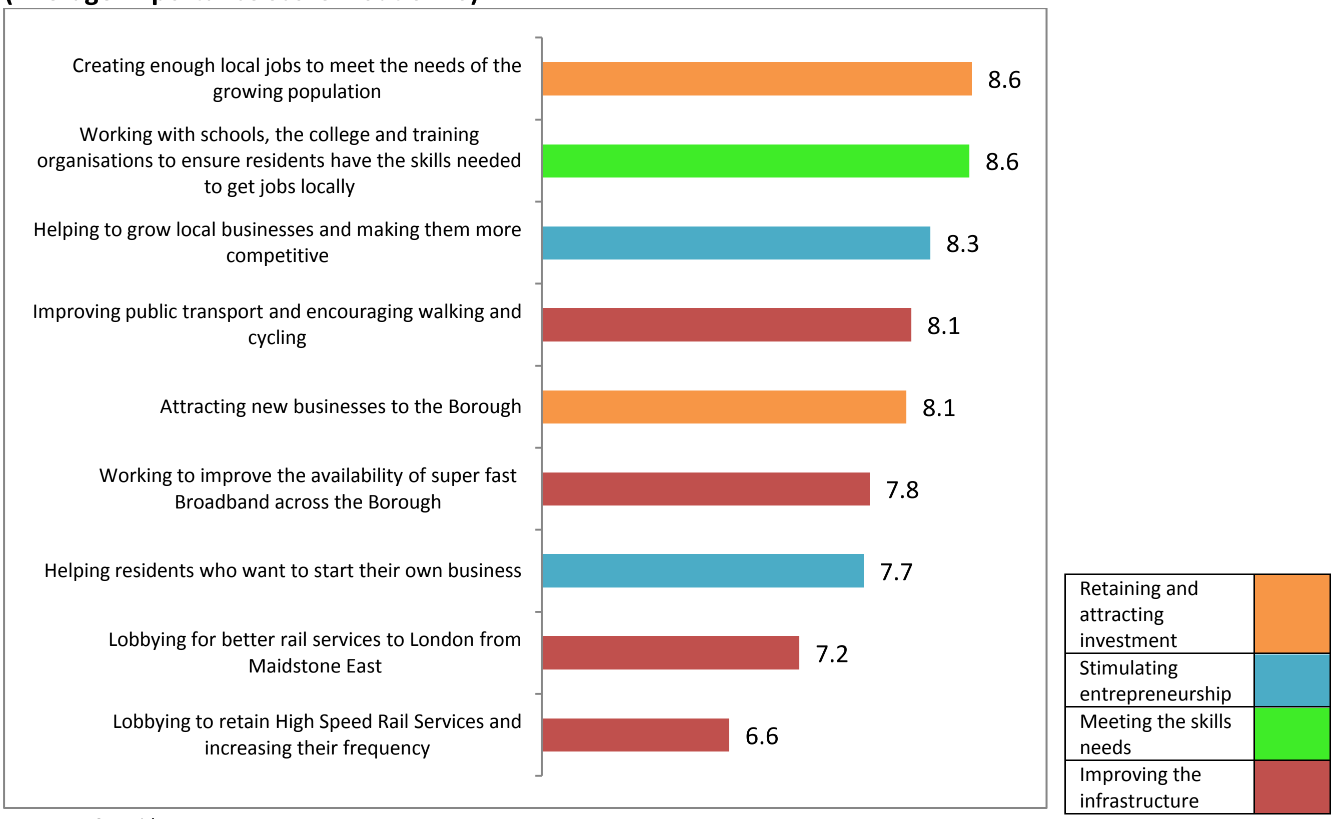
This section examines Maidstone residents' priorities in terms of Council activity to support and grow the economy, starting by looking at priorities at an overall level, then drilling down to explore the areas of most importance to different sub-groups within the Borough.

2.1 Relative Importance of EDS Priorities to Residents

Perceived importance of economic improvement activity areas

Survey participants were presented with a series of nine activity areas intended to improve Maidstone and its economy on which the Council plans to focus over the next 16 years. They were then asked to rate how important they considered each of these to be on a scale of one to ten[8].

Figure 2.1: Importance of key activity areas to Maidstone residents (Average importance score – out of 10)



Base: 1,518 Residents.

The most important areas to the Maidstone population as a whole are job creation to meet the needs of the growing population, and working to ensure that residents have the skills to get jobs

[8] As explained in Section 1.2, the statements were presented in a randomised order to avoid any bias resulting from their positioning within the list.

locally. Both receive an average score of 8.6 out of 10 and each is given an importance rating of 10 out of 10 by almost half of all residents (46% for job creation, 45% for skills)[9].

These priorities fit well together as two sides of the same equation around the supply of and demand for suitably qualified workers. They also tie in with all three of the objectives for 2031 set out in the EDS:

1. Enable the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations
2. Raise GVA per head[10] to the level of the South East
3. Raise the skills profile of Maidstone to the South East average

"They should help the youngsters regarding their prospects for work."
Female, 75+, Retired, Shepway South Ward

"They need to provide more educational opportunities for people on benefits".
Male, 35-44, Self-employed (Within Maidstone), South Ward

Residents consider helping to grow existing local businesses and making them more competitive as more important than attracting businesses to locate in the area or encouraging new business start-ups, giving this an average importance score of 8.3 out of 10 compared with 8.1 and 7.7 respectively.

"They should be helping out smaller business. They seem to emphasise bigger global companies and forget the smaller ones in the town."
Male, 25-34, Employed (outside Maidstone), High Street Ward

In terms of infrastructure, rail links to areas outside of the borough appear less important than improving local public transport and encouraging non-car options for short local journeys. Only 1 in 5 residents (20%) would give 'lobbying to retain high speed rail services and increase their frequency' an importance score of 10, compared with more than a third (35%) for 'improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling'.

"Make public transport in the town cheaper so that less cars are used."
Male, 55-64, Self-employed (Outside Maidstone), Loose Ward

Agreement with infrastructure, housing and town centre priorities

Residents were also asked to comment on a second batch of activity areas, all relating to infrastructure, housing or the town centre, by stating the degree to which they would agree or disagree with these as a priority for the Council in order to improve Maidstone.

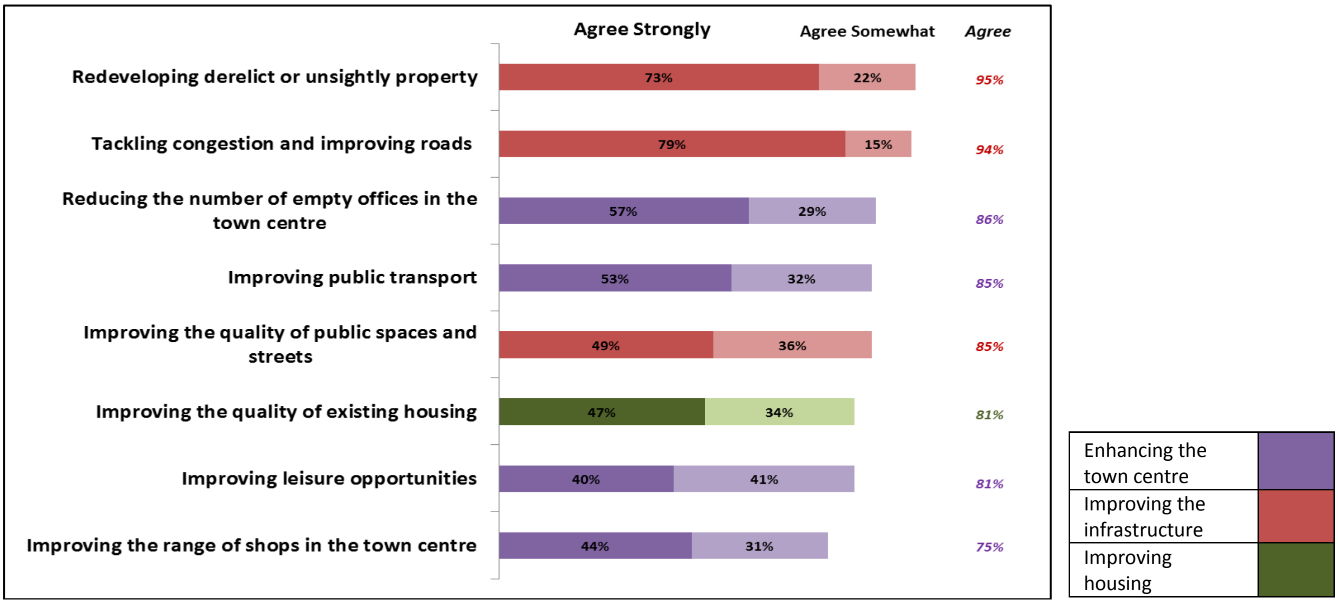
[9] The distribution of residents giving each possible mark out of 10 is almost identical for the two metrics
[10] GVA per head is a measure of the relative economic prosperity of an area, calculated by estimating the value of the economic output and dividing it by the population. If GVA per head in Maidstone were on a par with the South East it would mean that we have created more higher value, better paid jobs and our economic performance would be more in line with the rest of the South East. [Extract from the Maidstone Draft Economic Strategy 2014-2031, Shared Intelligence]

As shown in Figure 2.2, all of the areas tested received support as priorities from at least three quarters of residents, with 'redeveloping derelict or unsightly property' and 'tackling congestion and improving roads' generating almost universal agreement.

"Derelict properties should be done up to look better. Empty shops make the town look very unattractive"
Male, 35-44, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Marden and Yalding Ward

"People are being put off of Maidstone. It's a miserable driving experience, we try not to do it if we can."
Male, 55-64, Retired, Staplehurst Ward

Figure 2.2: Agreement with infrastructure, housing and town centre priorities



Base:1,518 Residents

Residents are least likely to prioritise 'improving the range of shops in the town centre' but this is nevertheless something that more than four in ten strongly agree should be a priority with only 8% disagreeing.

""Improve the quality and range of shops and make shopping in Maidstone pleasurable…"
Female, 45-54, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Coxheath and Hunton Ward

Spontaneous suggestions for action

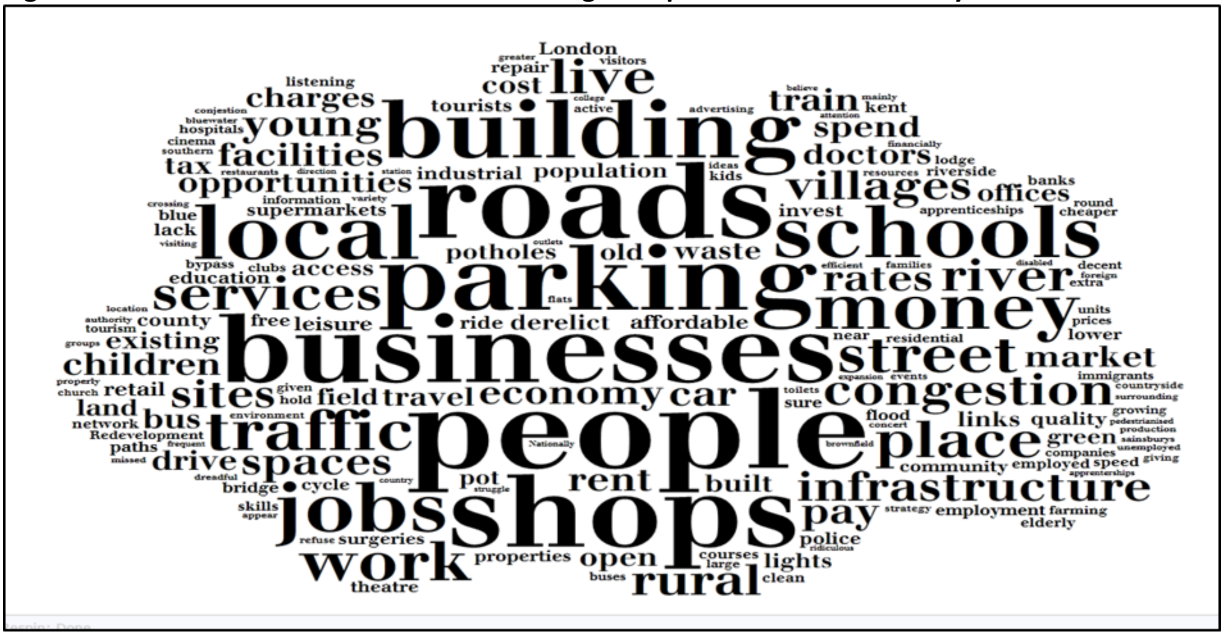
Survey respondents were given the opportunity to feed back anything else they thought the Council should be doing to improve the local economy and more than half of residents (52%) had a suggestion to make. Some residents took this opportunity to further expand on the importance to them of the priorities and action points covered earlier in the survey, while others brought out slightly different issues.

While the question did specifically mention the local *economy*, some answers given relate to more general improvements that the Council could make. However, many of these relate to the *quality of life* locally, something that the EDS highlights as having an economic impact by encouraging skilled residents to locate and stay in the borough, which will in turn prove attractive for businesses.

Therefore, only very specific suggestions with little relevance to economic policy, for example comments around rubbish collection and bins, have been excluded from the analysis of these answers[11]. Quality of life-related infrastructure suggestions, such as increasing the number of GPs or school places, have been considered as relevant and are included.

A diverse range of suggestions were put forward but certain words feature heavily across all the responses gathered. These include "people" (336 mentions), "roads" (318 mentions), "shops" (297 mentions) and "businesses" (277 mentions). The type of words used by residents to describe their suggestions for the Council are illustrated by the Word Cloud set out in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 What else should the Council be doing to improve the local economy? – Word Cloud



Base: 795 residents making a suggestion. Larger words = more mentions e.g. businesses = 277 mentions, station = 11 mentions. Some linking words have been excluded for clarity. Word cloud created via Tagxedo (http://www.tagxedo.com/app.html).

The diversity of ideas put forward can also be grouped together into themes. The most common thematic areas mentioned (those identified by more than 3% of those making a suggestion) are set out in Figure 2.4 overleaf.

[11] 40 responses (equal to 5% of suggestions) were excluded for this reason.

Figure 2.4: Thematic grouping of spontaneous suggestions for other action the Council should take to improve the local economy (Most common themes)

Theme area	% mentioning
Focus on the town centre and its appearance and bring in better shops, cafes and businesses	16%
Improve roads	14%
Create more diverse local jobs and apprenticeships, including well paid, quality jobs, not just service jobs	10%
Improve infrastructure e.g. the number of schools, doctors, supermarkets etc	10%
Reduce parking fees, more parking spaces, better use of traffic wardens and Park & Ride	9%
Improvements to public transport including cheaper fares and improvements to bus and train services	7%
Decrease congestion and avoid grid lock	7%
Build on existing sites and brown fields to maintain open, green spaces	7%
Encourage small business including offering opportunities and smaller spaces for businesses, emphasising production and industry rather than large supermarkets	7%
Reduce shop and business rates/ rents	4%
Maximise the river, improve the riverside, make the most of the new bridge	4%
Make areas look nicer, tidier and smarter	3%
Create new houses, including by converting empty offices into accommodation	3%
Offer amenities for younger people - after school clubs, playgroups	3%
Better planning/ planning permission	3%
Stop wasting money/ prioritise budgets	3%

Retaining and attracting investment	
Stimulating entrepreneurship	
Enhancing the town centre	
Improving the infrastructure	
Improving housing	
Creative/ cultural offer	
Other	

Base: 795 residents making a suggestion. Table shows theme areas mentioned by at least 3% of respondents. Multiple responses possible.

The suggestions made generally link closely with the priorities set out in the EDS, particularly "Improving the Infrastructure", with residents commonly mentioning roads, parking and transport. "Tidying up" parts of the Borough and work to make the most of the riverside area were also often identified as initiatives where more could be done. Some suggestions were made around planning and development, particularly the idea of building on brownfield, rather than greenfield sites. It should be noted that the question about additional suggestions for Council activity came after the question about development at Junction 8, and the call to build on existing sites was more common among those who would object to the development (mentioned by 13%, compared with 5% of those who would support the development and 7% of all residents).

Figure 2.5: Infrastructure suggestions – Word Cloud and quotes

Word Cloud based on 350 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

One in six residents making a suggestion for Council activity mentioned improvements relating to the town centre, including the need to improve its appearance and to bring in better quality shops, cafes and businesses. A further 4% called for a reduction in the rates and rents charged to shops and other businesses.

Figure 2.5: Town centre suggestions – Word Cloud and quotes

Word Cloud based on 129 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

Creating quality jobs (10%) and encouraging small businesses (7%) also feature among the top 10 types of activity suggested.

"Create more jobs for future generations."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Harrietsham Ward

"Jobs are the most important thing."
Male, 75+ Retired, Leeds Ward

"Quality not quantity of jobs – jobs that last"
Male, 55-64, Retired, North Downs Ward

"Encourage the right business – smaller businesses with more variety."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Loose Ward

"Support small businesses that are struggling. If there is business, there is work."
Female, 25-44, Employed (outside of Maidstone), South Ward

2.2 Differences in Priorities by Resident Group

Not all sub-groups of Maidstone residents prioritise different areas of Council activity in the same way. The Figures on pages 16-17 highlight the groups of residents for whom each of the priorities and activities explored in the survey appear to have the most and least resonance.

It is also possible to take an *overall* view of ratings and feedback given by key resident groups and this is set out below:

Young People (aged 16-24)

46 residents aged 16-24 took part in the survey and this is the age group with potentially the most to gain if the EDS vision for 2031 can be achieved. Their views on Council priorities are generally in line with the average across the Maidstone population, although they tend to see priorities around improving infrastructure as slightly less important than average and give higher than average ratings to improving leisure opportunities, public transport and the availability of super-fast Broadband. It is interesting to note that this group does not appear to differ significantly from the Maidstone population as a whole in terms of their ratings of the importance of local job creation or skills development. However, they do attach much greater importance to helping residents who want to start their own business (average importance score of 8.0 compared with 7.7 on average) and several of those leaving comments mentioned that they thought the Council should provide help for new start-ups, suggesting an interest in entrepreneurship among this group.

"Improve start up information for small businesses, which will improve the local economy."
Female, 16-24, Employed (Within Maidstone), Barming Ward

"Go to schools and colleges and educate people on starting their own business."
Male, 16-24, Student, Park Wood Ward

Carers/ homemakers

There are a number of areas that women consider more important or more of a priority than men including creating local jobs, upskilling local residents and improving public transport. However, it is among the carers/ homemakers group (91% of whom are women) that particularly high importance scores and agreement levels can be seen across almost all priority areas. This group give especially strong support to activity targeted towards local skills and jobs, giving importance scores of 9.7 for local skills development and 9.3 for local job creation (compared with averages across all Maidstone residents of 8.6 for both)[12]. More than half (54%) of the carers/ homemakers interviewed fall into the 35-44 year old age group and this interest is likely to reflect concern for children who will be growing up and joining the workforce over the 16 year period covered by the EDS. However, this may also potentially be a reflection of an interest in returning to the workforce themselves, if appropriate jobs were to be available and accessible. It is notable that the two areas where carers/ homemakers give lower than average importance scores are the two activity areas related to rail services. This supports the idea that *local* jobs are of particular interest to them, with commuting less of an option given childcare commitments. Comments made around what else the Council could do cover improvements in schools as well as other issues, but also support for those who have been out of work for some time.

"When I was a cashier, chip and pin was just coming in and people like me don't have any experience with this and smart phones and tablets. If you haven't had any experience with things like that you need courses and a support network as the job centre does not offer anything like that. If you want to do courses it costs money, and if you don't have it you can't do the courses.

Female, 35-44, Carer/homemaker, Marden & Yalding Ward

Older people

Older people are generally more likely to consider issues such as public spaces and streets and public transport as important priorities. Those over 75 in particular are especially likely to consider improving the range of shops in the town centre as important (82% agree this should be a priority, compared with 74% of all residents), perhaps reflecting difficulties travelling further afield to visit alternative shopping destinations.

Older, retired people are not significantly less likely than younger people to consider activities such as creating local jobs or upskilling local residents as important future priorities, giving comments to suggest that these actions are of interest to them, either for the good of the Borough as a whole or out of concern for their own children or grandchildren.

"It took my grandson ages to get a job when he left school. How are they meant to get experience when nobody will employ them in the first place?".

Female, 65-74, Retired, Harrietsham & Lenham Ward

"We need further development in to Maidstone – to make sure Maidstone is better and stronger".

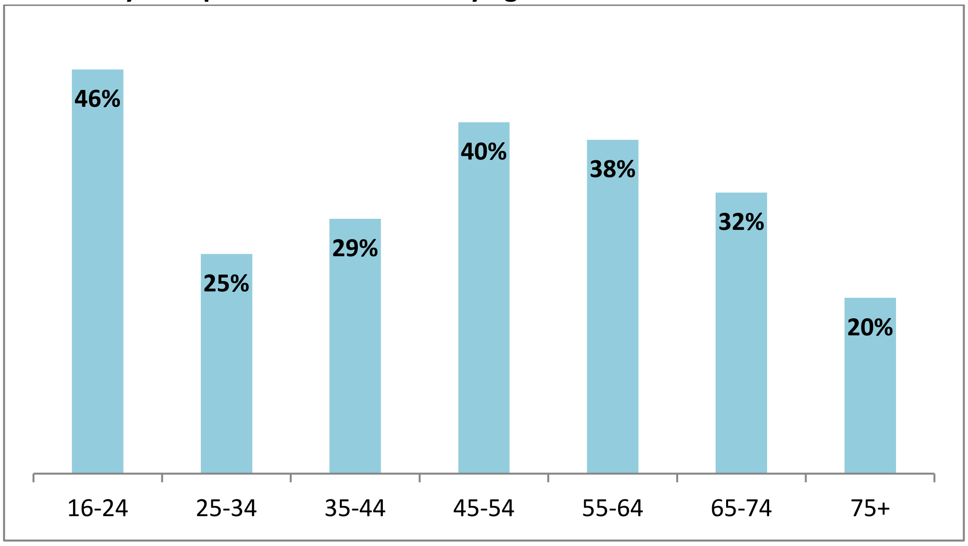
Female, 65-74, Retired, Park Wood Ward

It is interesting to note that while the importance of improving the availability of super-fast broadband is highest among young people and the middle aged (average importance rating of 8.2 among those aged 16-24 and 8.0 among 45-64 year olds), there continues to be some interest in this

[12] Although the number of carers/ homemakers interviewed is relatively small (45 respondents) these differences are statistically significant

area as a priority even among the very oldest residents. Almost a third of those aged 65+ and one in five of those aged over 75 rate this area 10 out of 10 for importance.

Figure 2.6: Proportion giving an importance rating of 10 out of 10 to 'working to improve the availability of super-fast broadband' by age



Bases: 16-24 = 46, 25-34 = 69, 35-44 = 176, 45-54 = 299, 55-64 = 339, 65-74 = 352, 75+ = 237.

Out-commuters

Around half of working residents surveyed travel outside of Maidstone to work and these individuals place less importance on almost all areas of activity than those who work locally. This makes sense as they are unlikely to be as interested in local jobs if they know they have already been able to secure employment elsewhere. They may also see improvements to infrastructure such as derelict buildings or empty offices as less relevant to them if they spend less time in the borough. As they are used to travelling, they may not consider improving Maidstone town centre as a priority if they more regularly shop in neighbouring towns or developments such as Bluewater instead.

The EDS identifies Maidstone's out commuters as a potential resource available to any new firms who are encouraged to re-locate to the borough. However, if these individuals do not have an immediate *desire* to work locally, rather than commuting out, effort may be required to attract them to alternative local employment.

Given that they tend to be better off, higher skilled workers who may potentially have the resources and inclination to start their own business, out-commuters as a group can be considered as a potential source of entrepreneurship. However, those interviewed as part of the survey placed significantly less importance on 'helping residents who want to start their own business' than individuals working within the borough (average importance score of 7.5 compared with 8.0).

Interestingly, out-commuters are not significantly more likely to see 'lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East' or 'lobbying to retain High Speed Rail Services and increasing their frequency' as priorities than the average for all residents, suggesting that many may be commuting to neighbouring areas rather than to London or travelling by road rather than rail.

The self employed

154 self-employed residents participated in the survey. While these respondents were less likely than employees to commute out of the borough to work, 3 in 10 reported working outside of Maidstone.

Results for this group do not differ significantly from those for all residents across most activity areas. As could be expected, the self-employed are more likely to attach importance to 'help for residents wanting to start their own business', giving an importance score of 7.9, compared with 7.7 across the population as a whole. They also have a greater interest in Broadband improvements (average importance score of 8.2 compared with 7.8 for all residents).

When asked what else the Council could be doing, a number of self-employed residents mentioned that they would appreciate more support for their business, including a reduction in business rates and red tape as well as better business space. It was suggested that more could be done to engage with small businesses, and it will be important to ensure that the smallest businesses, including micro-businesses and "one man bands" are not overlooked in taking forward the actions outlined in the EDS.

"Open up local authority contracts to small business and reduce red tape as far as possible".
Male, 35-44, Self-employed, Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton Ward

"Provide business space for small businesses".
Male, 35-44, Self-employed, North Downs Ward

"Reduce business rates for small businesses employing 2 or less people".
Male, 55-64, Self-employed, Headcorn Ward

Rural vs urban residents

Several areas of activity appear more important to residents in urban areas than to those living in rural parts of the borough. These include attracting new businesses (importance score of 8.2 among urban residents compared with 7.9 for rural residents) and activity around rail links (reflecting proximity to the station, urban residents give importance scores of 7.3 for 'lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East' and 6.7 for 'lobbying to retain High Speed rail services and increase their frequency' compared with 7.0 and 6.4 respectively for rural residents).

Conversely high speed Broadband appears more of a priority for those in rural areas, which may reflect relatively poor connectivity in some rural parts of the borough (rural residents give this an importance score of 8.1, while urban residents rate this as only 7.5 out of 10 in terms of importance). Certain rural wards stand out in particular with this priority receiving an importance rating of 8.5 in Marden & Yalding and Headcorn and 8.6 in Leeds. In North Downs ward, the average rating is 9.4.

Some rural residents making a suggestion for 'anything else the Council should be doing to improve the local economy' mention a desire for a greater focus on rural and farming issues.

"Look after the farmer, the rural community gets forgotten."
Female, 55-64, Retired, Marden & Yalding Ward

"I think they should be focusing more on local resources, economic and food/farming, moving towards a more sustainable borough, especially in the area of food production."
Male, 45-54, Employed, (outside of Maidstone) Heath Ward

Other differences at ward level are highlighted in Figures 2.7 and 2.8 overleaf

Figure 2.7: Type of residents considering economic improvement activity areas most and least important by demographic group and ward

	More important to:	Average importance score	Less important to:	Average importance score
Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population (Av. Importance score 8.6)	Carers/ homemakers Women Maidstone work location	9.3 8.8 8.8	Men Retired Non-Maidstone work location	8.4 8.4 8.5
	Park Wood *High Street*	*9.1* *9.0*	*North Downs*	*8.1*
Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally (Av. Importance score 8.6)	Carers/ homemakers Women Maidstone work location	9.7 8.8 8.7	Men Self-employed Non-Maidstone work location	8.4 8.4 8.4
	Allington *Downswood & Otham* *Harrietsham & Lenham*	*9.0* *9.0* *9.0*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *South* *North Downs*	*7.9* *8.3* *8.3*
Helping to grow local businesses and making them more competitive (Av. Importance score 8.3)	45-54 year olds Working within Maidstone	8.4 8.5	Age 75+ Non-Maidstone work location	8.1 8.1
	Shepway North *Downswood & Otham* *High Street*	*8.8* *8.7* *8.7*	*Boxley* *Detling & Thurnam*	*7.8* *7.8*
Improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling (Av. Importance score 8.1)	Carers/ homemakers Women 55-64 year olds Retired Not in work	8.9 8.3 8.3 8.3 8.3	16-24 year olds Men In work	7.5 7.9 8.0
	Downswood & Otham *High Street* *Harrietsham & Lenham* *Park Wood*	*8.9* *8.6* *8.5* *8.5*	*Boxley* *Headcorn* *South*	*7.7* *7.7* *7.7*
Attracting new businesses to the Borough (Av. Importance score 8.1)	"Other white background groups 65-74 year olds	8.7 8.3	16-24 year olds	7.6
	High Street *Park Wood* *Loose*	*8.7* *8.6* *8.5*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Leeds* *Marden & Yalding*	*7.5* *7.6* *7.6*
Working to improve the availability of super fast Broadband across the Borough (Av. Importance score 7.8)	Non-white ethnicities Minority ethnic groups Self-employed Carers/ homemakers Maidstone work location Rural residents	8.7 8.4 8.2 8.2 8.1 8.1	Aged 75+ Urban residents 65-74 year olds Non-Maidstone work location	6.6 7.5 7.6 7.7
	North Downs *Leeds* *Marden & Yalding* *Headcorn*	*9.4* *8.6* *8.5* *8.5*	*North* *Shepway North* *Fant* *South*	*6.9* *7.0* *7.0* *7.1*
Helping residents who want to start their own business (Av. Importance score 7.7)	Carers/ homemakers Maidstone work location	8.4 8.0	Retired Non-Maidstone work location	7.5 7.5
	Harrietsham & Lenham *Barming* *Downswood & Otham*	*8.3* *8.2* *8.2*	*Bearsted* *Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Bridge*	*7.0* *7.2* *7.2*
Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East (Av. Importance score 7.2)	Women 65-74 year olds Non-Maidstone work location Urban residents	7.4 7.4 7.3 7.3	Self-employed Men Aged 75+	6.6 6.9 6.9
	Bearsted *Heath* *Barming*	*8.3* *8.0* *7.9*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Staplehurst*	*5.2* *6.1*
Lobbying to retain High Speed Rail Services and increasing their frequency (Av. Importance score 6.6)	25-34 year olds Urban residents	6.9 6.7	Aged 75+ Rural residents	6.3 6.4
	Bearsted *Bridge* *East*	*7.2* *7.2* *7.1*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Headcorn*	*5.3* *5.4*

See Annexes 2 and 3 for sub-group bases.

Figure 2.8: Summary of differences in infrastructure, housing and town centre priorities by resident type

Redeveloping derelict or unsightly property *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 95%]		• Stronger agreement among the 65+ age group (97%) than among 16-24 year olds (89%) or 45-54 year olds (92%). • Weaker agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton and Leeds wards (both 88%). 99% agreement in Detling & Thurnam, North, Shepway South and Sutton Valance & Langley wards.
Tackling congestion and improving roads *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 94%]		• Weaker agreement among men (92%) than women (96%). • Greater agreement among the retired (96%) than among those in work (93%) but a difference between those working within Maidstone (96%) and those working outside of the Borough (90%). • Agreement among 100% of residents surveyed in Downswood & Otham, Loose and Park Wood. Weaker agreement in East ward (86%).
Reducing the number of empty offices in the town centre *(Enhancing the town centre)* [Av. Agreement level, 86%]		• Greater agreement among carers/ homemakers (96%), less among the self-employed (82%). • Greater agreement among residents of Coxheath & Hunton (93%), less among those in Marden & Yalding (74%) and East ward (75%).
Improving public transport *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 85%]		• Weaker agreement among men (82%) than women (88%). • More of a priority for 55-64 year olds (88% agree) than for 25-34 year olds (78%) and for those working within the borough (86% compared with 81%). • No difference between rural and urban residents but stronger agreement in Loose (96%) and Barming (95%) than in Coxheath & Hunton (71%) and Headcorn (72%).
Improving the quality of public spaces and streets *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 85%]		• More of a priority for those over 45 than for 16-34 year olds (87% agree compared with 80%) • More of a priority for minority ethnic groups (92% agree) • Stronger agreement in Bearsted and Barming wards (94%) and much weaker agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton (70%).
Improving the quality of existing housing *(Improving Housing)* [Av. Agreement level, 81%]		• Less of a priority for working residents than for those not in work (79% agree compared with 83%) • A difference between rural and urban residents – 79% of those in rural areas agree, compared with 81% in urban Maidstone. Highest levels of agreement in Harrietsham & Lenham (90%) and Barming (88%). Lowest agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton (70%) and Bearsted (73%).
Improving leisure opportunities *(Enhancing the town centre)* [Av. Agreement level, 81%]		• More of a priority for 16-34 year olds than those over 45 (88% agree vs. 79%). • Sees most support as a priority in North ward and Shepway South Ward (90% of residents agree).
Improving the range of shops in the town centre *(Enhancing the town centre)* [Av. Agreement level, 75%]		• Most important to the retired (79% agree), particularly those over 75 (82% agree). • Of less interest to working residents (73% agree), with important differences by work location (77% agreement for those who work within Maidstone, 68% for those who work outside). • Strongest agreement in North Ward (88%) Downswood & Otham (87%). Weakest agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton (57%).

See Annexes 2 and 3 for sub-group bases.

3.0 Feelings Towards a New Employment Site at Junction 8

A key foundation of the EDS is "*Making the most of our many economic assets, while at the same time protecting those that make Maidstone a special place*" and achieving this balance represents a particular challenge when considering the issue of employment land.

The EDS sits alongside the Local Plan, which focuses more specifically on future local development, but the EDS highlights the need for additional employment land to be found to allow Maidstone to create the additional jobs forecast to be required in line with a projected increase in the borough's population of 17,300 working age people by 2031. Consultants GVA predict that Maidstone's economy is only capable of producing between 7,800 and 14,400 jobs during this period[13], meaning a shortfall in local jobs for local people, which could lead to a greater need for out-commuting or greater unemployment. GVA conclude their Employment Site Assessment report[14] by stating *'Not all the requirement for 18 hectares of employment land can be met within the existing employment site portfolio and there is likely to be a qualitative requirement for new land to be allocated which is specifically aimed at accommodating the likely requirements of future growth sectors'* and give guidance that *'future land allocations should prioritise space along the motorway corridor to support growth of businesses that largely serve national and regional markets'.*

Therefore, **'Allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 to meet modern business needs'** represents one of four transformational actions outlined by the EDS[15].

Testing residents' reactions to this important and sensitive aspect of the EDS was considered a key element of the survey. However, it was felt to be vital that respondents gave an *informed* answer when commenting on this idea. They were therefore given some contextual information before being asked about this as follows:

"Over the next 16 years, Maidstone's population will grow by around 20%, meaning an extra 17,300 jobs will be needed for our residents. To deliver as many of these jobs as possible in the Borough, the Council will need to consider allocating land for a new business park at Junction 8 of the M20."

Residents were asked about a "business park" as it was felt that this would help respondents to understand the type of development being referred to - a mixed use site including a range of businesses of different sizes from different economic sectors - and to differentiate this from a previous plan to build a large scale warehouse and logistics business park and rail freight interchange called KIG in a similar area.

Interviewers were provided with additional information to share with respondents where necessary, allowing them to explain that the development would be a business park of about 20 hectares, considerably smaller than the KIG development previously proposed) and that it would be at the junction, not directly next to villages and close to only a few houses.

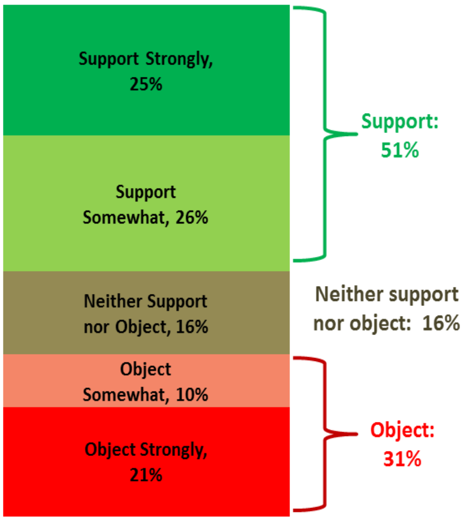
This section outlines the extent to which different groups within the Maidstone population would support or object to a new business park at Junction 8 and explores the reasons given for support or objection.

[13] 'Maidstone Draft Economic Development Strategy 2014-2031', Shared Intelligence, September 2014
[14] GVA "A Qualitative Assessment of the Employment Land Supply"
http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s38755/Appendix%20A%20Qualitative%20Employment%20Site%20Assessment.pdf
[15] The others are 'Producing and implementing a new vision for Maidstone Town Centre', 'Maximising the opportunities presented by Maidstone Medical Campus' and 'Producing and implementing a new masterplan for Eclipse Business Park'.

3.1 Levels of Support or Objection by Resident Group

As shown in Figure 3.1, just over half of all residents interviewed would support a new business park at Junction 8, just under a third would object and 1 in 6 have no opinion either way.

Figure 3.1: Levels of support and objection to the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 – All residents



Base:1,518 Residents

Unsurprisingly, the strongest factor influencing residents' level of support or objection to the potential business park described is their location within the borough, with those living in the rural areas closest to Junction 8 most likely to object. As shown in Figure 3.2, residents of Bearsted are 8 times more likely to object than those living in Barming and almost 10 times more likely to object strongly. More than half of residents would support the development in 15 out of Maidstone's 26 wards and there are only 5 wards where the proportion of residents who would support this falls below a third.

The importance of location can be further illustrated by looking at views towards a potential business park at Junction 8 on a map. Figure 3.3 on page 21 maps residents' feelings on this subject using a "sentiment score", calculated by allocating a number to each point on the support-object scale[16] and finding an average. Across all residents, the average sentiment score is 3.2 and in Park Wood it is 3.8. However, in Bearsted this score is just 1.6[17]. On the map, the darkest red signifies the greatest objection, evidenced by the lowest sentiment score. The darkest green highlights the strongest support and shades of yellow show those areas where residents' opinions are more neutral. The map emphasises the location of the strongest objections closest to Junction 8 in the rural wards to the north of the borough. In contrast, there are much higher sentiment scores, signalling greater positivity towards a new business park in the southern and town centre wards. The 5 wards where objection is strongest - Bearsted, North Downs, Leeds, Detling & Thurnam and Sutton Valence & Langley - cover a large area. However, it should be noted that these 5 wards account for just 12% of all households across Maidstone.

[16] Support strongly = 5, Support somewhat = 4, neither support nor object = 3, Object somewhat = 2, Object strongly = 1.
[17] A full list of sentiment scores by ward is set out in Annex 4.

Figure 3.2: Support and objection to the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 by Ward

Fig 3.2a: Support

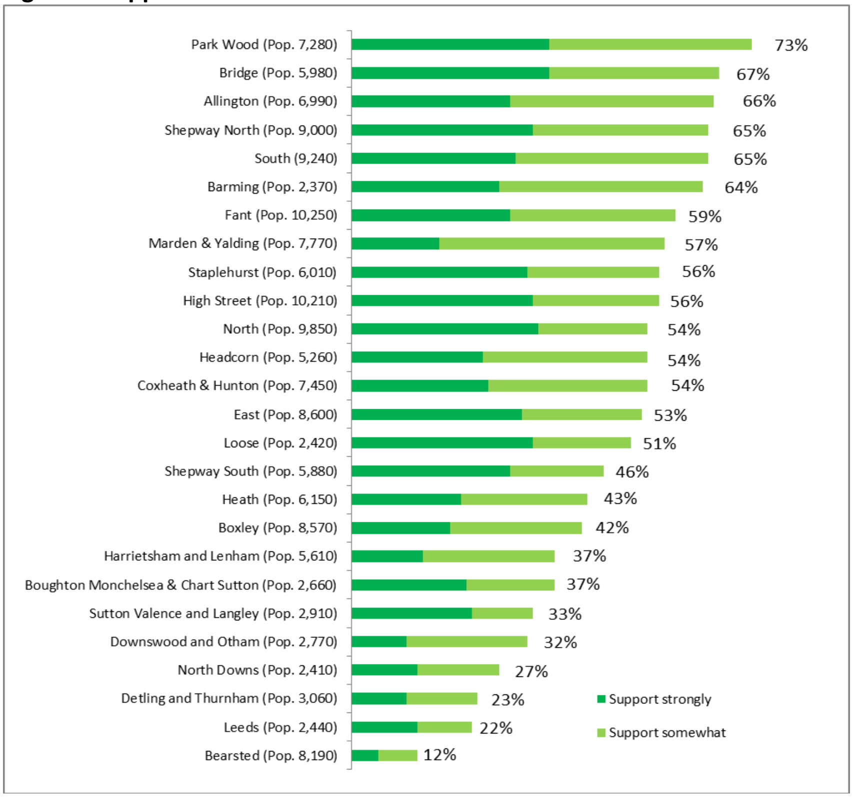
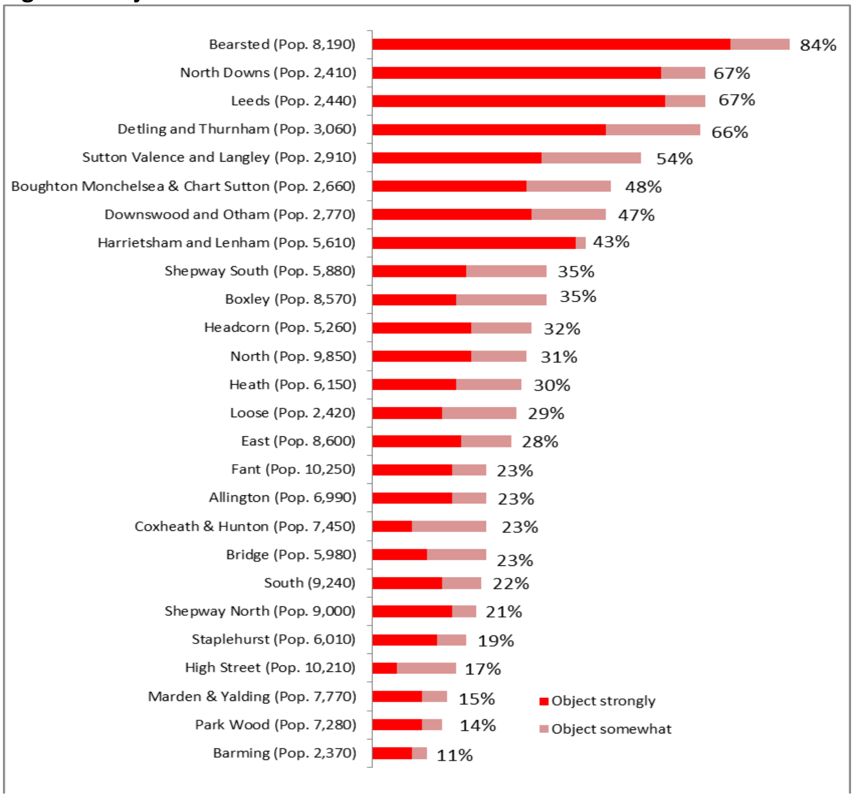


Fig 3.2b: Objection



See Annex 2 for bases by Ward. At least 50 interviews were conducted in each ward. Source for population figures = 2013 Mid Year Estimates, ONS. From KCC Area Profiles (http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/area-profiles)

Figure 3.3: Feeling towards a new business park at Junction 8 by ward based on 'sentiment scores' – Darker colour = greater level of objection

See Annex 2 for bases by Ward. At least 50 interviews were conducted in each ward. See Annex 4 for sentiment scores by ward.

As well as significant differences at ward level, attitudes towards a business park at Junction 8 differ between rural and urban residents (59% of urban residents would support compared with 41% of rural residents). This is likely to reflect the rural nature of the wards closest to where the development would be placed. Residents of rural wards to the South of Maidstone such as Staplehurst and Marden & Yalding are some of the most supportive of the potential development, with around 60% saying they would support this.

Other differences by resident group include:

- More support from **men** than **women** (57% would support compared with 46%)
- More support from **young people** compared with **older people** (59% of 16-34 year olds would support compared with 49% of those aged 45+)
- More support from **employees** than from the **retired** (53% compared with 47%)
- More support from **minority ethnic groups** than from **White British** residents (71% compared with 50%).

3.2 Reasons to Support a New Employment Site at Junction 8

As shown in Figure 3.4 on page 24, more than half of those who would strongly support the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 (and 4 in 10 of those who support somewhat) cite the need for job creation for local people as the reason behind their support for this idea.

"I think it's very important to increase working opportunities especially for the younger generation. Anything that increases revenue in the borough is a good thing. I think with opportunities such as that it has the potential to reduce crime rates, increase aspiration and reduce unemployment which are all good things."
Female, 35-44, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Fant Ward, Somewhat support

"I find that Maidstone for a county town has got very little opportunities as far as work is concerned. There are very few businesses and few work opportunities. There is more in Canterbury than in Maidstone."
Male, 74+, Retired, Bridge Ward, Support Strongly

"There are so many people out of work – any ideas to get people new jobs".
Female, 55-64, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Allington Ward, Support somewhat

Those with the strongest interest in job creation for local people are most likely to have strong support for the idea of a new business park at Junction 8. Of those who give an importance score of 9 or 10 for 'Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the local population', 30% would strongly support a new business park, compared with 20% of those giving an importance score of 6 or less.

One in five residents mention the need for this site in order to achieve more general goals around economic growth and the prosperity of the borough.

"If something is needed to support Maidstone and the economy, I'm afraid I support it. Maidstone has always been regarded as a 2nd grade town as it has such a bad image. Anything that improves it's image and the economy must be supported".
Female, 55-64, Employed (within Maidstone), Staplehurst Ward, Support Somewhat

As well as outlining why they think building a new business park *somewhere* is important, a number of respondents mentioned specific geographical advantages they consider relevant to the Junction 8 site, notably its good transport links and specifically the proximity of the M20 motorway. Some respondents suggested that creating a new business park may have "knock on" effects in terms of improvements to the road network that would have benefits more generally.

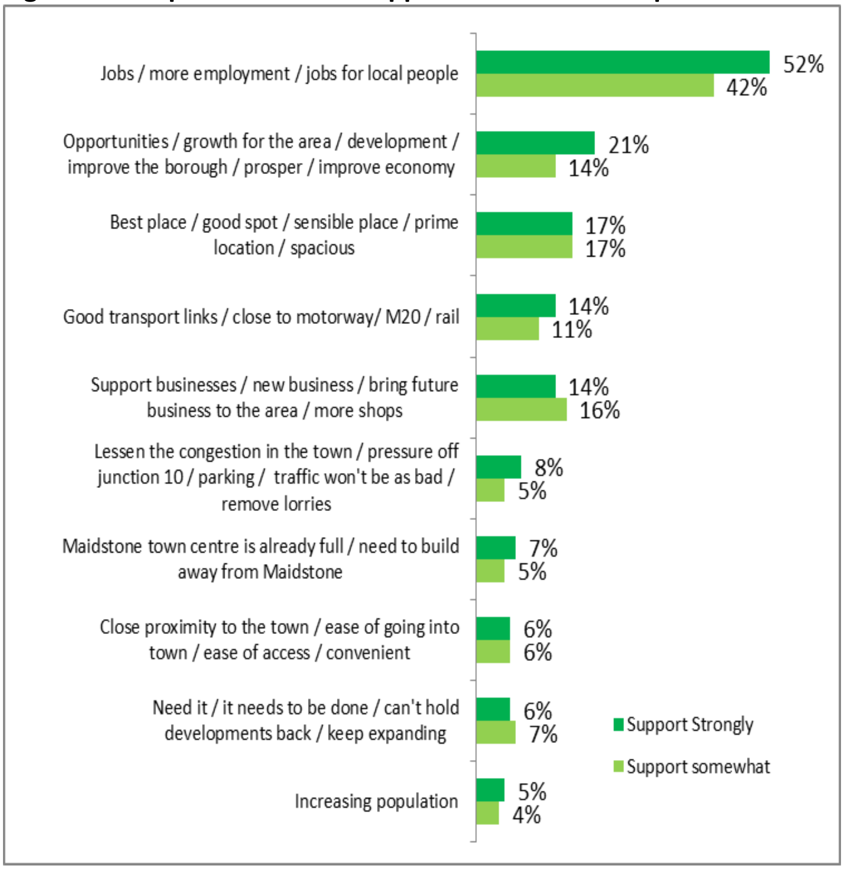
"It's a sensible place to put it… it's ordinary land that is not being used for anything special. It has transport links and is handy for residents and for people working there".
Female, 65-74, Retired, Barming Ward, Support Somewhat

"It's an area that can be developed and it's strategically placed."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Coxheath & Hunton Ward, Support Strongly

"I think its a prime location for businesses to develop there and could attract some significant operations because it has the motorway network and easy links to channel tunnel."
Male, 55-64, Employed (within Maidstone), Marden & Yalding Ward, Support Strongly

Residents supporting the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 also highlighted that this area is not a pure "green field" and that they did not believe there to be any features in the immediate vicinity that would be negatively impacted by the development of a new employment site. This location appears to have support both for being far enough away from the town centre to help reduce some of the "pressure" in terms of congestion or development space for example, but also close enough to the town to allow relatively easy access if needed.

Figure 3.4: Top 10 reasons to support a new business park at Junction 8



Bases: Support Strongly = 355 respondents, Support Somewhat = 360 respondents. Multiple responses possible. Top 10 answers shown.

Some of those saying that they would support the development "somewhat" qualified their answers by noting that while they felt a new business park was necessary they believed that this should be handled with sensitivity to the environment. Others mentioned that they would somewhat support a new site in principle, but would ideally need more information, for example on the type of businesses that would locate there. There were also some residents who said they would "somewhat" support a new business park at Junction 8, but that they saw other activity, such as improving the town centre, as a higher priority.

"It's a good idea but the planners track record so far in approving applications for the local community is poor. The council do not look at how planning applications will impact on the local community and area. Due consideration is not given to the surrounding infrastructure like roads and schools."

Male, 45-54, Employed (Outside Maidstone),Boxley Ward, Support Somewhat

Figure 3.5: Why support a new business park at Junction 8 – Word Cloud

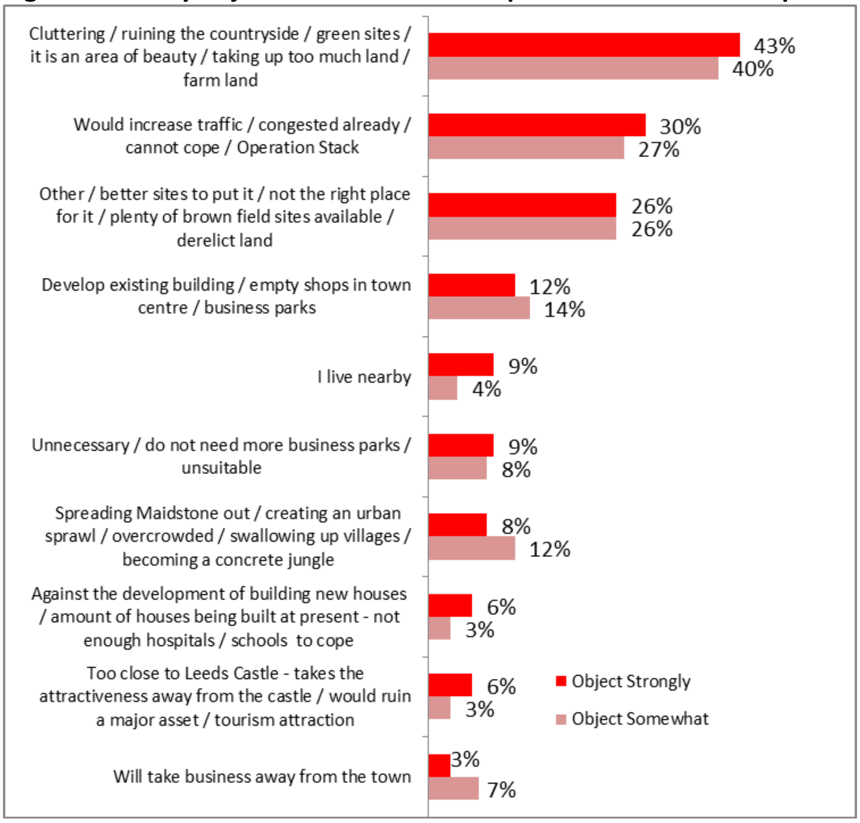
Word Cloud based on 777 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

3.3 Reasons to Object to a New Employment Site at Junction 8

Environmental concerns, particularly a feeling that this would clutter up or ruin the countryside, represent the top reason to object to a new employment site at Junction 8, mentioned by 4 in 10 of those who would object as set out in Figure 3.6. A view that Junction 8 is not the most appropriate location and concern around "urban sprawl" also feature among the top ten reasons to object to the site.

"It is entirely unnecessary to have here and the country side needs preserving. It is cluttering the countryside unnecessarily."
Male, 75+, Retired, Harrietsham & Lenham Ward, Object Strongly

Figure 3.6: Why object to a new business park at Junction 8 – Top 10 reasons



Bases: Object Strongly = 398 respondents, Object Somewhat = 166 respondents. Multiple responses possible. Top 10 answers shown.

Interestingly, given that some who would support a new business park suggest that this might help to ease traffic issues, 3 in 10 of those who would object to a development at Junction 8 cite fears around traffic and congestion[18]

"We live between Junction 7 and 8. We still get a lot of lorries which are frequently parking along this stretch and push all the traffic onto the local roads. It just makes the congestion worse. I do object strongly as far as Junction 8 is concerned. I know that the people need jobs, but there are possibly other areas that could be used."
Female, 65-74, Retired, Bearsted Ward, Object Strongly

"It is not an industrial zone. Unless road inks are improved, it will cause problems with traffic in Leeds village."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Headcorn Ward, Object Somewhat

"More congestion, more confusion. It would make it more difficult to get around. This would make congestion worse. The type of jobs produced would be minimum wage and then people can't afford housing. There would be pollution."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Sutton Valence & Langley Ward, Object Strongly

"I disagree fundamentally with building new housing or business parks in the area, although I agree that we need more jobs."
Female, 45-54, Self-employed (Outside Maidstone), Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton Ward, Object Strongly

"I live nearby" is given as a reason for objection by 4% of those who would object "somewhat" to a new business park at Junction 8 and by almost 1 in 10 of those who would object strongly. This is a much more common reason among rural residents (12%), particularly those living in Leeds (27%), Detling & Thurnam (23%) or Bearsted (20%). In contrast, some residents mention that they would

[18] 'Operation Stack' is mentioned specifically and it should be noted that during the last few days of the survey period, Operation Stack was in effect, causing severe disruption throughout Kent

support a business park at Junction 8 as this is close to their home so they would find it easy to access any new jobs created.

A number of the reasons given to object to a new business park at Junction 8 suggest that residents may need help to understand exactly what this would involve. For example, 6% of those who would object strongly mention that they are against the building of new houses. Further, 4% of those who would object feel that this plan has already being turned down, failing to differentiate the new idea for a mixed used business park from the previous KIG lorry park proposal.

"Its already been turned down in the past and its an area of natural beauty as its adjacent to the north downs."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Headcorn Ward, Object Strongly

"The KIG plan was turned down for a variety of reasons and those reasons are still valid."
Male, 55-64, Retired, Harrietsham & Lenham Ward, Object Strongly

Some of those objecting to a business park assumed that this would include some element of retail facilities and it is interesting to note that 5% of objectors feel that a new business park at Junction 8 would take business away from the town centre.

Figure 3.7: Why object to a new business park at Junction 8 – Word Cloud

Word Cloud based on 564 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

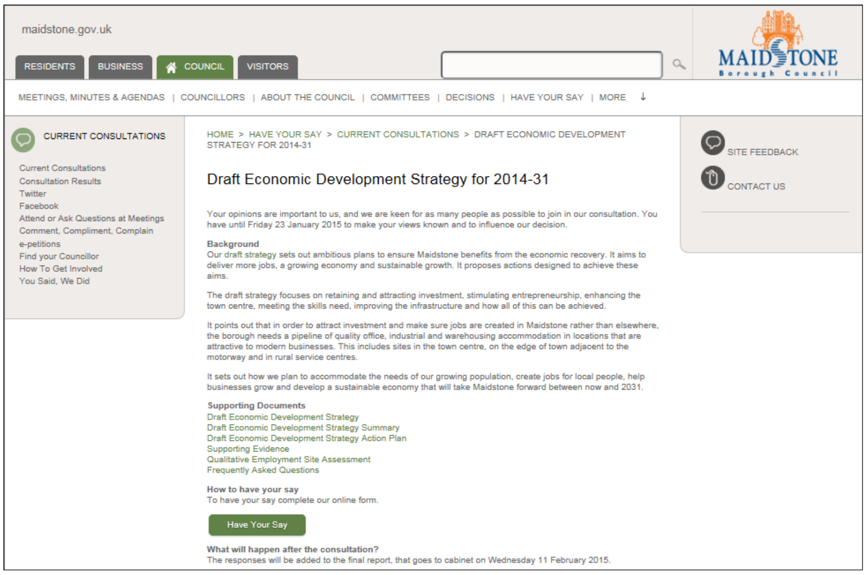
4.0 "Open Consultation" and Business Survey Results

This section sets out the results of an 'open consultation' hosted on the Council's website to allow more technical feedback on the draft EDS and the results of an email survey of businesses in the borough asking for feedback on the open consultation questions.

4.1 Background

In addition to commissioning a telephone survey, Maidstone Council provided residents with the opportunity to review and comment upon the full EDS online via the council's website. This exercise is referred to as the "open consultation" in this report. The consultation area of the website (http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/council/have-your-say/current-consultations/draft-economic-development-strategy-for-2014-31) included the full version of the EDS plus supporting documents. The consultation was publicised via a press release and social media and was promoted at a business event and Parish/Community event on January 13th 2015. The website consultation was open from Tuesday 16th December to Friday January 23rd 2015.

Figure 4.1: EDS Consultation homepage



The Council also sent out an e-mail survey to around 1,900 businesses from their business database. These businesses were encouraged to forward the survey on to others in their network, so it is estimated that around 2,000 businesses in total received this.

The open consultation and the business survey followed the same format, inviting respondents to review a summary of the draft Economic Development Strategy (as well as the full document and supporting materials if they wished) then asking a series of five scale-based questions around opinions on key points of the strategy. Following each scale-based question, residents and businesses had the opportunity to leave comments to explain and support the answer given.

It should be noted that the open consultation and business survey have captured the views of a particular sub-set of respondents, rather than being representative of the borough as a whole.

Respondents to the open consultation in particular are "self-selecting" and this also applies to a lesser extent to the email survey of businesses. Although a proactive invitation to participate was widely circulated, those with a particular interest in the issues raised would have been the most likely to read the materials and compose a response.

The open consultation received a total of 25 responses, including nine respondents giving business details and one Parish Council. Business respondents to the open consultation include two from firms with addresses outside of Maidstone and six from the construction and related industries. There are also some "overlaps" among the respondents, including one married couple, two colleagues from the same firm and two individuals based in the same building.

There were also 25 responses to the business survey, including a number of respondents from the public and voluntary sectors and six based outside of Maidstone.

One respondent participated in both the open consultation and the business survey and gave the same answers in each.

The open consultation and the business survey each attracted one respondent disagreeing to all of the scale-based questions asked and entering the same comments for multiple follow up questions. In both cases, these respondents noted that they were against over-development of the rural areas of Maidstone and that they disagreed with the EDS because they felt it was geared towards this.

Due to the relatively small number of responses submitted to both the open consultation and the business survey, these responses will be summarised in a *qualitative* manner in the remainder of this section of the report.

4.2 Challenges

Figure 4.2: 'Our Challenges' – Extract from the Economic Development Strategy summary

Maidstone today stands at a crossroads. The national economy is starting to grow after a long period of recession that affected Maidstone more adversely than its neighbours in some ways. 1,900 jobs have been lost since 2009 many of which have been in the public sector, output has grown more slowly than in Kent overall, and the town centre has slipped down the retail rankings. More residents are having to travel outside of the Borough to work compared to 2001. Earnings for Maidstone residents have been in decline since 2010 and now stand for the first time in over 10 years below the GB average. Maidstone resident earnings (2013) are the third lowest in Kent, and workplace earnings are the second lowest in Kent. It has not been all bad news though - the population has grown and is forecast to continue to grow, there has been recent private sector job growth, and more new businesses are being created and surviving than before. Investors are coming forward with new proposals that could bring significant benefits for Maidstone.

Over the lifetime of the Local Plan (2031) the working age population is forecast to grow by over 17,300 people. However it is considered by the Council's consultants, GVA, that the economy is only capable of producing between 7,800 and 14,400 jobs during the same period. This will mean more residents will need to commute out of the Borough to find work. Only if the actions proposed in this Strategy are delivered, will the upper jobs target be reached.

The majority (22 out of 25) of those who responded to the open consultation agree that the correct challenges have been highlighted in the draft EDS. The strength of this agreement varies, with an equal split between half of respondents saying they strongly agree and half saying they simply agree. Agreement is primarily driven by the belief that a stronger infrastructure will in turn result in economic growth and higher employment levels.

The situation is similar among respondents to the business survey, with 21 out of 25 respondents agreeing.

"The proposals to improve the town centre and job opportunities go hand in hand with the need to develop edge of town business hubs to increase job opportunities, encourage growth of the town's successful industries and attract new businesses. Completing development at Eclipse Park and providing new development for business at Junction 8 are key to the aims and strategies."

Open Consultation Respondent, Female, 55-64, London

"Maidstone needs stronger infrastructure to support the economic growth in the area, this in turn will increase employment in Maidstone. At present businesses and jobs appear to be going to Ashford as they already have these things in place. Maidstone is the County town of Kent and it has slipped behind other towns in the county for jobs, businesses and transport links by both road and rail."

Open Consultation Respondent, Female, 35-44, South Ward

Agreement is often diluted by a view that although the challenges outlined are correct there needs to be a more realistic and tangible approach to economic development.

"Agree but very woolly. Focus on tangible deliverables. Try benchmarking Maidstone with similar sized towns surrounding London. Try Bedford. Population, wages, no: of road bridge crossings, no. of restaurants, no. of shops, train time to London, cost of train to London, road distance, road commuting time to London etc. You would see Maidstone ranks poorly. Some of these only need money and vision to fix.
If you build it they will come....don't ignore the elephant in the room - London. Make MAIDSTONE a commuter suburb of London and workers will spend their evenings, weekends and money in Maidstone, which in turn will drive local commerce, which is a spiral attracting new companies as they will see the relative wealth and opportunities here".

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, Fant Ward

Taking this sentiment one step further, those who disagree with the challenges outlined in the EDS highlight that they do so because they feel they are unrealistic and that the Council should focus on areas they can directly influence.

"The strategy should focus on meeting challenges it can directly influence, so while the challenges identified are laudable, they are to a large degree unrealistic (failing the SMART test). They also omit more tangible challenges within the gift of stakeholders and Maidstone Borough Council in particular."

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, High Street Ward

4.3 SWOT Analysis

Figure 4.3: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) as outlined in the draft EDS

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good strategic transport links • Attractive business location opportunities around motorway junctions • High quality environment • Opportunities in the health and medical growth sectors • Significant proportions of economically active residents • High proportions of residents employed in technical and associate professional occupations • Growth in knowledge based economy sectors • Diverse and broad sectoral mix • High levels of entrepreneurship • Good school performance in GCSEs and A levels	• Poor rail connectivity to London compared to neighbouring towns • Relatively low levels of productivity • Gap between resident and workplace earnings • Low qualification profile and the gap widening with other places • High dependency on public sector employment • Low proportion of managerial level occupations • Lack of employment in key knowledge sectors • Loss of HE provision • Maidstone town centre is falling in the retail hierarchy. • Lack of suitable retail units that meet retailer requirements • An abundance of low quality secondary office space in the town centre and stagnant office market demand for secondary space • Low level of delivery of new high quality floorspace across all property types
Opportunities	**Threats**
• The working age population is forecast to grow • Strong base of entrepreneurs to further develop • Out commuting of higher skilled workers provides future business growth opportunities • To build sector strengths based around the proposed expansion of Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery and Maidstone Medical Campus • To build Higher Education capacity with a focus on health-related opportunities relating to the Maidstone Medical Campus and the University for the Creative Arts provision at Maidstone Studios • Ability to utilise the M20 and junctions of it, to attract regional and nationally focused activities. • Availability of employment sites for development at Junction 7 • To increase the attractiveness of the town centre and enhance retail and leisure offer through proposed developments	• Decreasing proportion of the population in the 30-59 age band • Major growth proposals in neighbouring local authority areas • Competition from established locations for 'value added' sectors • Global competition • Dominance of Kings Hill in the regional office market • Competition from neighbouring centres for local business seeking to expand and inward investment opportunities • Proposals for out-of-town retail developments which could threaten the town centre if poorly planned. • Limited scale market

In line with the perception that Maidstone Borough Council has correctly identified the key challenges facing the borough, the majority of respondents to both the open consultation (20 out of 25) and the business survey (21 out of 25) agree with the SWOT analysis outlined in the draft EDS. The key points drawn out in particular are:

- **Strength** - Maidstone is well placed to benefit from potential growth opportunities in new sectors such as health and out of town retail;
- **Weakness** – Maidstone is constrained by the current transport infrastructure (both road and rail network);
- **Weakness** – lack of local higher degree colleges or links with nearby universities;
- **Threat** – competition in the youth job market may mean that Maidstone is unable to attract and retain talent

Ashford is raised as an additional threat due to its own ambitious plans and comparatively simple political landscape which affords easier progression.

"The lack of local higher-degree colleges and/or established links with nearby universities is a key weakness in Maidstone and should be given greater prominence. It will not be possible to grow a knowledge-based economy without sources of trained people and teaching. The current further-education colleges are insufficient, and the draft plan shows inadequate ambition to address this weakness."

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 45-54, Boxley Ward

"You have no vision to improve rail connections to London. Maidstone has HS1 only 2 miles away and you did not encourage a station to be constructed on this fantastic infrastructure and now you never can. Maidstone should be a 30 min MAXIMUM rail commute - instead it is 49 minutes 6 times a day costing nearly £45. This will not change Maidstone in to commuter town."

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, Fant Ward

The handful of respondents who disagree with the SWOT analysis cite the following points:

- **Strength** – The development at Junction 8 is only a strength if the Council supports sites such as Waterside Park;
- **Strength** – Good school performance is not true as in reality there are high performing schools (Grammar Schools) and very poorly performing schools. This is balanced out in the figures, but not a true reflection of education in Kent as demonstrated by the lack of people going on to achieve degree level qualifications & the low qualification profile;
- **Weakness** – Lack of council support for current businesses to expand within the borough;
- **Weakness** – Poor wage growth compared with inflation;
- **Weakness** – A large increase in precarious work such as zero hour contracts;
- **Weakness** – Motorway congestion
- **Opportunity** – Proactively identify a variety of employment sites across the borough;
- **Opportunity** – Availability of employment sites for development at both junctions 7 and 8 of the M20.

"The M20 is currently at a standstill every morning and evening around Maidstone. How can any further growth possibly be accommodated unless this is addressed?".

Business Survey Respondent, Male, Creative Sector, Gillingham

4.4 Vision

Figure 4.4: Vision for Maidstone by 2031 - as outlined in the draft EDS

"A model '21st century county town, a distinctive place, known for its blend of sustainable rural and urban living, dynamic service sector-based economy, excellence in public services, and above all, quality of life."

The majority respondents to the open consultation (23 out of 25) agree with the vision as outlined in the draft EDS. Agreement is also strong, although not as overwhelming, among business survey respondents (20 out of 25 agree). The strength of this agreement among open consultation respondents is driven by a number of factors, namely:

- A feeling that it is important to improve infrastructure to maintain a better balance between rural and urban needs; better park and ride facilities, improved access to sites at motorway junctions, and better business park facilities;
- A perception that the Council would do better to focus on specific actions such as making sure the right land is available for development and meeting with local businesses to make sure their needs are met;
- Cynicism over the will and determination to make the radical changes required.

"Motorway junctions need improvements to take the pressure off of rural roads and the town centre. Maidstone needs more shops to attract people to the retail outlets in the area rather than travelling to Bluewater or Canterbury. Maidstone needs better park and ride facilities and more accessible modern business parks to attract new business to the area."
Open Consultation Respondent, Female, 35-44, South Ward

"I agree with the vision, but you will not achieve it. You are not ambitious enough to make significant structural changes. An analogy - you plan to re-sequence the traffic lights to improve congestion rather than build a new bridge and relief road over the Medway."
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, Fant Ward

The handful of open consultation respondents who disagree with the vision feel it does not go far enough and is to a degree backward looking. This is also echoed in the business survey, with some respondents finding the vision too generic and therefore uninspiring.

"For me, this doesn't go far enough. It feels like it's backwards looking with nostalgia to some hypothetically more prosperous times. What does a model 21st century county town look like? Efficient infrastructure, technologically adventurous, joined-up services (at all levels, not just public services), information rich, economically vibrant, so that people want to come to Maidstone because it's the best place to share and collaborate on ideas, thoughts, successes. "
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, South Ward

"Your vision sounds similar to every other town in Britain, and many in Kent. As such, it's not very exciting and therefore unlikely to make people excited. "
Business Survey Respondent, Male, Professional Services Sector, Ashford

Another important point of concern around the vision for business survey respondents is the reference to a "dynamic service sector-based economy", with a feeling that the contribution of other sectors can be equally valid.

"The limitation to service industry ignores the growing pressure for a diverse economy that also caters for manufacturing, storage and distribution, and the importance of tourism".
Business Survey Respondent, Business Services Sector, High Street Ward

4.5 Objectives

Figure 4.5: EDS objectives

1. **Enable the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations**
2. **Raise GVA per head to the level of the South East**
3. **Raise the skills profile of Maidstone to the South East average**

Again, the majority of both open consultation respondents (20 out of 25) and business survey respondents (22 out of 25) agree with the draft objectives as outlined. There were a number of comments made around the draft objectives, namely:

- Without a specific strategy plan this feels like a 'wish list';
- The objectives do not go far enough; why aim to be average?;
- To achieve these objectives, appropriate companies need to be encouraged to establish themselves in Maidstone through better infrastructure and facilities.

"Again, this doesn't go far enough. You're not being adventurous enough. Why *aim* to be average? (which is what the raising x to the same as the rest of the South East means)."
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, South Ward

"To achieve these criteria it is essential that the appropriate companies are encouraged to base their operations in Maidstone and as mentioned previously need the appropriate facilities and accommodation in the right strategic location to enable them to establish and grow a successful business."
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 55-64, Canterbury

Business respondents also underlined the need for skills and jobs objectives to be tackled together, given that some local firms were already experiencing skill shortages and struggling to fill roles.

Those who disagree with the objectives do so for the following reasons:

- A view there needs to be more inward investment in scientific, knowledge based and professional services sectors – in turn raising the skill levels in the Borough;
- There should be indicators of progress rather than specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

"Maidstone needs to encourage more inward investment in scientific, knowledge based sectors and in professional services. The range of sectors currently in place contain many which continue the current situation of low skill, construction, manufacturing, retail etc. You will not raise skills levels if you do not show more ambition and the value added will not increase if efforts continue along the same route as followed in the past.
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 65-74, Detling & Thurnam Ward

4.6 Priorities

Figure 4.6: EDS Priorities

1. **Retaining and attracting investment**
2. **Stimulating entrepreneurship**
3. **Enhancing the town centre**
4. **Meeting the skills needs**
5. **Improving the infrastructure**

Again, the majority of respondents to both the open consultation (22 out of 25) and business survey (22 out of 25) agree with the five priorities selected. There were a number of specific suggestions around the priorities, namely:

- Improve infrastructure and utilise access to the M20;
- Truly attract entrepreneurs by understanding their mind-set and appoint a Czar for Entrepreneurs.

There were also some more general comments on the priorities:

- Do not spread the focus too thinly, prioritise and focus on a few specific areas;
- Agreement with the principle, but there is a need to show a more sophisticated and determined approach.

4.7 Other Comments

Echoing the residents' survey, a number of business survey respondents highlight potential opportunities around the riverside area.

There was also some call for greater collaboration with the voluntary sector or with other districts on common issues; with a suggestion that as the County town, Maidstone should be leading the way.

An interesting point of view put forward in the business survey is the idea that "quality of life" issues and priorities that are important to residents do have an impact on business, and therefore on *economic* well-being. This includes the rural environment being something that attracts businesses and skilled employees to the area, the town centre being the "face" of Maidstone and the idea that issues such as parking and congestion may put employees off work in the area.

"The "quality of life" aspect should not just be stated by MBC, it should be a fundamental part of, and run right through, the economic strategy. This means retaining the open green spaces and vistas around Maidstone, which is one of the reasons I chose to locate my business here. If you turn Maidstone into a clone of Ashford and continue concreting over green spaces, we will take our company and jobs elsewhere!?"

Business Survey Respondent, Male, Business Services Sector, Shepway North Ward

"I particularly agree with the need to improve the town centre, which is an embarrassing place for Maidstone. I would never take any of our clients (many who are from overseas) into the two centres - it is a grubby, downbeat place in most parts".

Business Survey Respondent, Male, Business Services Sector, Shepway North Ward

Further over-arching messages and synergies coming out across the different themes covered in this report are explored in Section 5 overleaf.

5.0 Key Messages

The following key messages can be taken from this study:

- Maidstone residents generally appear to be **in agreement** with the priorities outlined in the EDS
- **Local jobs and skills** are of prime importance to residents, who are able to take a **long term view** of priorities for the borough
- The potential for **infrastructure and "quality of life" improvements** is particularly valued
- There is some tension between **rural and urban** priorities
- **Transport issues** are a key concern
- The survey supports the idea of an **entrepreneurial borough**

Each of these findings is explored in more detail below.

General agreement with the EDS Priorities

The consultation survey suggests that the feelings and preferences of Maidstone residents are closely aligned with the priorities outlined in the EDS. Residents give an average importance score of at least 7 out of 10 for eight of the nine EDS-related priorities put to them, and this average score is closer to at least 8 out of 10 for seven areas. Similarly, at least three quarters of residents would agree that each of the infrastructure, housing and town centre activity areas they were asked about should be prioritised and this figure rises to 95% for redeveloping derelict or unsightly property, the action gaining the highest level of support. While there are variations in the importance attached to different priorities by different types of residents, none of the priorities tested appears overly polarising and the lowest average importance rating given by any sub-group (a score of 5.2 given by residents of Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton ward to 'Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East') sits above 5 out of 10.

When given the opportunity to suggest anything further that could be done to improve the local economy, residents tended to mention activities linked to the key principles of the EDS, notably improving the town centre, enhancing the borough's infrastructure and creating a high level jobs.

While reactions to the idea of a new employment site at Junction 8 were mixed, just over half of residents said they would support this, with a further 1 in 6 having no opinion. Those who would object represent less than a third of those interviewed and are most likely to live within neighbouring wards.

Agreement with the content of the EDS also extends to responses to the open consultation and business survey, with very few respondents noting any divergence between their views and the key elements of the strategy.

Importance of local jobs and skills and long term thinking

It is fitting that the "twin" priorities of 'Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population' and 'Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally' share joint first place as the most important to Maidstone citizens. These two areas are inextricably linked and this is highlighted in the comments made by residents and respondents to the open consultation and business survey as well as in the EDS itself.

Both these areas receive an average importance rating of 8.6 out of 10 and are rated 10 out of 10 for importance by almost half of respondents. Further, a call to create more diverse, high quality local jobs, including mentions of apprenticeships, represents the third most common theme among spontaneous suggestions for additional activity to be undertaken by the Council.

The high importance attached to local job creation and skill development extends beyond those who would directly benefit from these initiatives to older, retired people. Older members of the community see these goals as worthwhile either because of the potential benefits for their own younger family members or out of concern for or pride in the borough as a whole.

Those who currently commute out of the borough to work appear less engaged with local priorities generally, and this includes interest in the creation of local jobs. If out-commuters are happy with their current situation and reluctant to move to newly created local positions, this will make upskilling of new entrants to the labour force; including young people, the unemployed and those returning to work from carer/ homemaker roles; even more important.

The importance of local employment creation to Maidstone residents is further demonstrated by the position of this consideration as the top reason to support a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20, mentioned by more than half of those who would strongly support this development. This is also an important rationale for those who would "support somewhat". Comments made by this group suggest that some see the development as a "necessary evil", with the need for job creation outweighing other concerns around environmental impact or a preference for other priorities, such as town centre regeneration, that would more immediately affect their own quality of life.

The importance of priorities such as local job creation and upskilling residents, as well as the comments made around these topics, suggest that Maidstone citizens are able to take a *long term* view when assessing the priorities they consider most important, supporting initiatives that may require planning and investment over many years, rather than just "quick fix" solutions.

Indeed, a key area where the views of those responding to the open consultation and business survey diverge from the principles of the EDS is a feeling that the strategy as a whole, and the vision in particular, is not forward-looking *enough*, lacking ambition and distinctiveness.

Value of infrastructure and "quality of life" improvements

At the same time, residents are keen that the Council takes action on infrastructure improvements, especially 'redeveloping derelict or unsightly property' and 'tackling congestion and improving roads', both of which receive almost universal agreement. The importance of infrastructure activity also comes through strongly in the comments made by residents when asked what else the Council could be doing to improve the local economy.

Improvements to infrastructure represent the type of activity that can have an immediate, tangible and visible impact for residents, meaning that it is unsurprising that they are valued. This activity is less obviously linked to economic development than work to create local jobs or upskill residents, but it will help to increase the *quality of life* that residents enjoy. This is highlighted in the EDS as a factor contributing to a successful local economy by indirectly driving economic competitiveness and as something that is important for attracting new investment. It is therefore identified as an overarching element of the EDS vision for 2031.

Infrastructure improvements can be seen as a "win win" activity, with these not only improving the lives of existing local residents but also playing a role in attracting and retaining skilled employees and high quality businesses.

Tension between rural and urban priorities

In reviewing the survey responses, a certain tension can be seen between economic goals, such as creating jobs, and quality of life factors like the borough's unique rural environment, with many residents noting that a balance needs to be struck. This echoes the EDS commitment to achieving growth sustainably without sacrificing the environmental qualities that make Maidstone a special place.

This tension is particularly evident in the views of residents in neighbouring rural wards towards the potential creation of a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20. These residents are rightly concerned about the nature of any development in this location and the impact it may have on the countryside and rural way of life that they see as a key strength of their local area.

Conversely, there is also some resistance to the idea of a new employment site at Junction 8 from urban residents who feel that more focus should be placed on improving in-town locations before looking at out of town developments. This appears to partly stem from residents drawing their own conclusions about what a new site might look like, for example imagining that this might include significant elements of retail units or housing. This group may be more receptive to the idea of a new Junction 8 employment site if given fuller information on what exactly this would entail.

There are also some other differences in the prioritisation of activities by rural and urban residents. For those living in rural areas, especially in certain wards where connectivity is a particular issue, working to improve the availability of super-fast broadband across the borough is a key priority. In contrast, urban dwellers are more likely to prioritise improvements to rail services, as well as having a greater desire to attract new businesses to the borough.

Importance of transport issues

Maidstone's transport links emerge from the survey as a key area of concern for residents. This relates particularly to congestion, especially on the M20 and town centre roads, and to parking issues. However, there does also appear to be a strong interest in improved public transport and in encouraging other car-free options.

Improvements to *local* public transport, for example bus links into the town centre, are prioritised well above lobbying for better rail links to London. It may be that to some extent this prioritisation reflects the Council having less scope to act, able only to *lobby* for improvements, rather than make these directly. However, it is likely that rail links are considered a lower priority as travelling to London represents something that is not necessarily part of the day to day life of the average Maidstone resident. This extends to those who commute out of the borough to work, for whom road links to neighbouring Kent towns appear to be a more immediate priority.

Improving rail links to the capital is highlighted by respondents to the business survey as something they would prioritise, given that they consider the current situation a constraint on growth. This may also be something that will be important in attracting new businesses to locate in the borough, suggesting that it could be considered a *strategic* concern, even if it does not feature on the everyday radar of most residents.

Transport issues play a key role in attitudes towards a potential new employment site at Junction 8 but the same concerns feature as a reason for both support and objection, depending on how the likely future impact of the site on the road network is interpreted. This suggests a need to try to ensure that secondary benefits of this kind, for example reduced pressure on roads in the town centre or improvements to the junction itself, can be achieved and that these feature in any communication about the scheme.

Evidence of Maidstone as an entrepreneurial borough

The survey findings support the idea that Maidstone is an *entrepreneurial* borough, identified as a key strength in the EDS. There appears to be particular support for the idea of trying to encourage growth from within, with helping to grow existing local businesses prioritised above attracting new businesses to the borough. A high level of importance is also attached to helping local residents who would like to start their own business and help and support for small businesses features as a key theme among spontaneous suggestions for action.

Self-employed residents surveyed suggest that they would appreciate assistance from the Council, including calling for practical measures that would help them, including access to appropriate business space and leniency on issues such as business rates and "red tape".

The findings suggest that young people may be particularly interested in entrepreneurship, with younger residents expressing an interest in start-up information, including disseminating this via schools and colleges.

APPENDICES

Annex 1: Calls made and breakdown of call outcomes

TOTAL NUMBERS DIALLED	21,419
COMPLETED INTERVIEWS	**1518**
DEFINITE APPOINTMENT	164
GENERAL APPOINTMENT	804
NO REPLY	6805
ENGAGED	300
ANSWER PHONE	2642
MODEM/FAX	69
REFUSAL	6042
COMPANY REFUSAL	34
TERMINATED	150
UNOBTAINABLE	2011
DUPLICATE	46
LANGUAGE BARRIER	34
WRONG NUMBER	183
NOT AVAILABLE IN SURVEY PERIOD	78
SCREENED - WORKING STATUS	108
SCREENED - AGE	431

Note: The automated dialler system allows "no response" outcomes, such as no reply or unobtainable numbers, to be quickly noted and moved on from, allowing interviewers to focus on numbers where a "live" respondent picks up.

Annex 2: Profile of survey respondents compared with residents' profile and weighting scheme applied

Item	Description	Achieved N	Achieved %	True Proportion N	True Proportion %		Weighted Proportion N	Weighted Proportion %	
Age	16-34	115	8%	364	24%	41%	244	16%	41%
	35-44	176	12%	258	17%		379	25%	
	45-64	638	42%	531	35%	59%	522	34%	59%
	65+	589	39%	364	24%		374	25%	
Working Status	Employed	628	41%	834	55%	66%	827	54%	66%
	Self employed	154	10%	167	11%		176	12%	
	Unemployed	27	2%	46	3%	34%	30	2%	34%
	Student	22	1%	106	7%		40	3%	
	Retired	618	41%	213	14%		379	25%	
	Homemaker/ Carer	45	3%	76	5%		47	3%	
	Other	24	2%	76	5%		21	1%	
Gender	Male	715	47%	744	49%		744	49%	
	Female	803	53%	774	51%		775	51%	
Ward	Allington Ward	59	4%	67	4%		67	4%	
	Barming Ward	53	3%	23	1%		23	1%	
	Bearsted Ward	61	4%	79	5%		79	5%	
	Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton Ward	53	3%	24	2%		24	2%	
	Boxley Ward	60	4%	76	5%		76	5%	
	Bridge Ward	58	4%	62	4%		62	4%	
	Coxheath and Hunton Ward	61	4%	70	5%		70	5%	
	Detling and Thurnham Ward	53	3%	27	2%		27	2%	
	Downswood and Otham Ward	53	3%	27	2%		27	2%	
	East Ward	63	4%	87	6%		86	6%	
	Fant Ward	67	4%	101	7%		102	7%	
	Harrietsham and Lenham Ward	59	4%	59	4%		59	4%	
	Headcorn Ward	58	4%	52	3%		52	3%	
	Heath Ward	58	4%	59	4%		59	4%	
	High Street Ward	64	4%	101	7%		102	7%	
	Leeds Ward	56	4%	23	1%		23	1%	
	Loose Ward	53	3%	24	2%		24	2%	
	Marden and Yalding Ward	61	4%	76	5%		76	5%	
	North Downs Ward	53	3%	23	1%		23	1%	
	North Ward	62	4%	88	6%		88	6%	
	Park Wood Ward	59	4%	62	4%		62	4%	
	Shepway North Ward	60	4%	79	5%		79	5%	
	Shepway South Ward	58	4%	58	4%		59	4%	
	South Ward	62	4%	91	6%		91	6%	
	Staplehurst Ward	59	4%	55	4%		55	4%	
	Sutton Valence and Langley Ward	53	3%	26	2%		26	2%	

Annex 3: Respondent Profile – Further Information

The below information on the profile of survey respondents was captured but not used for weighting:

Item	**Description**	**Achieved**	
		N	**%**
Working vs. not working	In work	782	52
	Not in work	736	48
Working location	Within Maidstone	447	57
	Outside of Maidstone	335	43
Urban vs. rural	Urban	670	44
	Rural	848	56
Ethnicity	White British	1396	92
	White Irish	5	<1
	Other white background	55	4
	White and Black Caribbean	2	<1
	White and Black African	2	<1
	Other mixed background	2	<1
	Indian	7	<1
	Pakistani	0	0
	Bangladeshi	0	0
	Other Asian background	8	1
	Black or Black British - Caribbean	2	<1
	Black or Black British - African	5	<1
	Other Black or Black British	2	<1
	Chinese	2	<1
	Other ethnic group	18	1
	Refused	12	1
Long standing illness / Disability / Infirmity	Yes	1259	83
	No	254	17
	Prefer not to say	5	<1

Annex 4: Sentiment Scores for a new business park at Junction 8 of the M20 by ward

Score = average calculated by applying values to support-object scale as follows:

Support strongly = 5, Support somewhat = 4, Neither support nor object = 3, Object somewhat = 2, Object strongly = 1.

Bearsted Ward	1.59
Leeds Ward	2.08
North Downs Ward	2.13
Detling and Thurnham Ward	2.19
Downswood and Otham Ward	2.64
Harrietsham and Lenham Ward	2.64
Sutton Valence and Langley Ward	2.66
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton Ward	2.78
Boxley Ward	3.08
Heath Ward	3.18
Shepway South Ward	3.22
Headcorn Ward	3.26
North Ward	3.36
East Ward	3.39
Loose Ward	3.41
Fant Ward	3.48
Coxheath and Hunton Ward	3.49
Marden and Yalding Ward	3.50
Allington Ward	3.56
South Ward	3.58
Staplehurst Ward	3.58
Shepway North Ward	3.60
Bridge Ward	3.68
High Street Ward	3.70
Barming Ward	3.71
Park Wood Ward	3.84

Annex 5: Residents' Survey Questionnaire

Maidstone Borough Council EDS Consultation – Final Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Good <morning / afternoon / evening>. My name is <INSERT INTERVIEWER NAME>. I am calling on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council from an independent research company called Facts International.

We would appreciate your help with a short survey about your views on Maidstone Borough Council's plans to grow the local economy, both urban and rural, and make the Borough more prosperous.

Depending on your answers, this should take around 10 minutes.

The call may be monitored or recorded for the purpose of training or quality control.

Is now a convenient time to talk?

IF "YES" START SURVEY
IF "NO" PLEASE SET AN APPOINTMENT OR, IF THE RESPONDENT DOES NOT WISH TO CONDUCT THE SURVEY, ENTER APPROPRIATE REFUSAL CODE AND THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME
IF THE CUSTOMER SAYS THEY ARE NOT FLUENT IN ENGLISH AND THEY ASK IF SOMEONE ELSE COULD TRANSLATE THE QUESTIONS ON THEIR BEHALF, THEN ALLOW THIS PERSON TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY.

QUOTAS

Ward Quotas (Strict)

Ward	Quota
Allington Ward	58
Barming Ward	53
Bearsted Ward	60
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton Ward	53
Boxley Ward	60
Bridge Ward	58
Coxheath and Hunton Ward	60
Detling and Thurnham Ward	53
Downswood and Otham Ward	53
East Ward	62
Fant Ward	64
Harrietsham and Lenham Ward	58

Headcorn Ward	56
Heath Ward	58
High Street Ward	64
Leeds Ward	53
Loose Ward	53
Marden and Yalding Ward	60
North Downs Ward	53
North Ward	62
Park Wood Ward	58
Shepway North Ward	60
Shepway South Ward	58
South Ward	62
Staplehurst Ward	58
Sutton Valence and Langley Ward	53
TOTAL	**1,500**

Demographic Monitoring Quotas

These will be set at the beginning of the survey but may be relaxed closer to completion – weighting will then be used to correct for any differences between the interviewee profile and the profile of Borough residents

Gender	Quota
Male	735
Female	765
Total	**1,500**

Age	Quota
18-34	354
35-49	416
50-64	367
65+	363
Total	**1,500**

Working Status	Quota
In work	1,005
Not working	495
Total	**1,500**

SCREENER

SAY TO ALL

To ensure that our research accurately represents the views of Maidstone residents, I firstly need to ask you a few questions about yourself

ASK ALL

S1

Could you please tell me your postcode?

Write In

S2. INTERVIEWER: PLEASE CODE THE GENDER OF THE RESPONDENT

1. Male
2. Female

ASK ALL

S3.

Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

READ OUT AS NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **18 – 24**
2. **25 – 34**
3. **35 – 44**
4. **45 - 54**
5. **55 - 64**
6. **65 - 74**
7. **75+**

ASK ALL

S4. **Which of the following best describes you? Are you…?**

READ OUT IF NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **Employed**
2. **Self-employed**
3. **Unemployed**
4. **Retired**
5. **Student**
6. **Carer/ homemaker**
7. **Other (specify)**

ASK ALL EMPLOYED AND SELF-EMPLOYED RESIDENTS (Code 1-2 at S4)

Q7. And do you work…:

READ OUT. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. Within Maidstone Borough

2. Outside of Maidstone Borough

QUESTIONS

ASK ALL

Q1

In order to improve Maidstone and its economy, the Borough Council has identified areas of activity to focus on over the next 16 years. For each activity, could you please tell me how important this is to you. Please use a scale of 1-10, where 10 is very important and 1 not at all important.

READ OUT STATEMENTS. ROTATE LIST.

- **A. Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population**
- **B. Helping to grow local businesses and making them more competitive**
- **C. Attracting new businesses to the Borough**
- **D. Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally**
- **E. Helping residents who want to start their own business**
- **F. Improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling**
- **G. Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East**
- **H. Lobbying to retain High Speed Rail Services and increasing their frequency**
- **I. Working to improve the availability of super fast Broadband across the Borough**

10 – Very Important	10
9	9
8	8
7	7
6	6
5	5
4	4
3	3
2	2
1 – Not at all important	1
Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	*11*

ASK ALL

Q2

To what extent do you agree that the Council should prioritise the following in order to improve Maidstone?

READ OUT STATEMENTS. ROTATE LIST.

- A. **Tackling congestion and improving roads**
- B. **Improving public transport**
- C. **Improving the quality of public spaces and streets**
- D. **Improving the range of shops in the town centre**
- E. **Reducing the number of empty offices in the town centre**
- F. **Redeveloping derelict or unsightly property**
- G. **Improving the quality of existing housing**
- H. **Improving leisure opportunities**

READ OUT. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **Agree strongly**

2. **Agree somewhat**
3. **Neither agree nor disagree**
4. **Disagree somewhat**
5. **Disagree strongly**
6. Don't know (Do not read out)

ASK ALL
Q3
Over the next 16 years, Maidstone's population will grow by around 20%, meaning an extra 17,300 jobs will be needed for our residents. To deliver as many of these jobs as possible in the Borough the Council believes there is a need to build a new business park at Junction 8 of the M20. To what extent would you support this idea? Would you….

READ OUT. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **Support strongly**
2. **Support somewhat**
3. **Neither support nor object**
4. **Object somewhat**
5. **Object strongly**
6. Don't know (Do not read out)

ASK ALL WHO WOULD SUPPORT A NEW SITE AT JUNCTION 8 (CODES 1-2 AT Q2)
Q4a. **Why would you support a new business park at Junction 8?**

Write in

ASK ALL WHO WOULD OBJECT TO A NEW SITE AT JUNCTION 8 (CODES 4-5 AT Q2)
Q4b. **Why would you object to a new business park at Junction 8?**

Write in

ASK ALL
Q5. **Is there anything else you think the Council should be doing to improve the local economy?**

1. No
2. Don't Know

3. Yes - Write in

SAY TO ALL
That is all the questions I have on the Councils' future activities and priorities. However, I would now like to ask some questions about yourself to allow us to compare the views of different types of residents, and to help us to ensure a range of views are represented.

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to Equal Opportunities. I can reassure you that the information you provide in this section will not be linked to any comments you make, and will not be linked to your name, address or other personal identifier. The information will be used for monitoring purposes only and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

ASK ALL

Q10. **Which ethnic group would you say you belong to?**

READ OUT AS NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **White British**
2. **White Irish**
3. **Other white background (please write in)**
4. **White and Black Caribbean**
5. **White and Black African**
6. **Other mixed background (please write in)**
7. **Indian**
8. **Pakistani**
9. **Bangladeshi**
10. **Other Asian background (please write in)**
11. **Black or Black British – Caribbean**
12. **Black or Black British – African**
13. **Other Black or Black British (please write in)**
14. **Chinese**
15. **Other ethnic group (please write in)**

ASK ALL

Q11. **Would you consider yourself to have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity?**

READ OUT IF NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say

ASK ALL WITH ILLNESS/ DISABILITY (CODE 1 AT Q11)

Q12. **And does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?**

READ OUT IF NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know/ Prefer not to say

THANK AND CLOSE

Annex 6: Open Consultation and Business Survey Materials

Economic Development Strategy Public Consultation

A public consultation on Maidstone Borough's Economic Development Strategy is taking place between Monday 15th December 2014 and Friday 6th February.

This is a key strategy for the Council and will impact on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing for the whole of the borough. It has been produced alongside the work being undertaken on the Local Plan.

Maidstone's population is forecast to grow significantly over the next 16 years. Key to this growth will be ensuring sufficient jobs are created to meet the needs of the growing population. Delivery of appropriate employment land and support to business development will be critical in achieving this aim.

The Strategy aims to set out the key economic challenges and opportunities faced by the Borough over the next 16 years and the actions needed to deliver jobs and prosperity for all.

We would welcome your comments on the strategy and have produced some key questions, which we would like you to consider within your response. We are also happy to receive any other general comments that you have on the strategy. The full Economic Development Strategy can be viewed by clicking on http://maidstoneeconomicdevelopmentstrategydraftconsultatation. A State of the Economy report has also been produced which provides a statistical analysis of how the economy has changed particularly since the recession, http://maidstonestateoftheeconomy.

How to comment:

You can comment on the documents using these methods:

by completing the online questionnaire – http://onlinequestionnnaire

by completing the attached questionnaire and sending it back to us in the pre-paid envelope by the 6th February 2015.

by emailing economicdevelopment@maidstone.gov.uk. Please make sure Maidstone Economic

Development Strategy is in the subject title.

or by writing to us at Economic Development Unit, Maidstone Borough Council…

Economic Development Strategy Summary

Our Challenges

Maidstone today stands at a crossroads. The national economy is starting to grow after a long period of recession that affected Maidstone more adversely than its neighbours in some ways. 1,900 jobs have been lost since 2009 many of which have been in the public sector, output has grown more slowly than in Kent overall, and the town centre has slipped down the retail rankings. More residents are having to travel outside of the Borough to work compared to 2001. Earnings for Maidstone residents have been in decline since 2010 and now stand for the first time in over 10 years below the GB average. Maidstone resident earnings (2013) are the third lowest in Kent, and workplace earnings are the second lowest in Kent. It has not been all bad news though - the population has grown and is forecast to continue to grow, there has been recent private sector job growth, and more new businesses are being created and surviving than before. Investors are coming forward with new proposals that could bring significant benefits for Maidstone.

Over the lifetime of the Local Plan (2031) the working age population is forecast to grow by over 17,300 people. However it is considered by the Council's consultants, GVA, that the economy is only capable of producing between 7,800 and 14,400 jobs during the same period. This will mean more residents will need to commute out of the Borough to find work. Only if the actions proposed in this Strategy are delivered, will the upper jobs target be reached.

The main strengthens, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the Maidstone economy are as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good strategic transport links • Attractive business location opportunities around motorway junctions • High quality environment • Opportunities in the health and medical growth sectors • Significant proportions of economically active residents • High proportions of residents employed in technical and associate professional occupations • Growth in knowledge based economy sectors • Diverse and broad sectoral mix • High levels of entrepreneurship • Good school performance in GCSEs and A levels	• Poor rail connectivity to London compared to neighbouring towns • Relatively low levels of productivity • Gap between resident and workplace earnings • Low qualification profile and the gap widening with other places • High dependency on public sector employment • Low proportion of managerial level occupations • Lack of employment in key knowledge sectors • Loss of HE provision • Maidstone town centre is falling in the retail hierarchy. • Lack of suitable retail units that meet retailer requirements • An abundance of low quality secondary office space in the town centre and stagnant office market demand for secondary space • Low level of delivery of new high quality floorspace across all property types

Opportunities	Threats
• The working age population is forecast to grow • Strong base of entrepreneurs to further develop • Out commuting of higher skilled workers provides future business growth opportunities • To build sector strengths based around the proposed expansion of Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery and Maidstone Medical Campus • To build Higher Education capacity with a focus on health-related opportunities relating to the Maidstone Medical Campus and the University for the Creative Arts provision at Maidstone Studios • Ability to utilise the M20 and junctions of it, to attract regional and nationally focused activities. • Availability of employment sites for development at Junction 7 • To increase the attractiveness of the town centre and enhance retail and leisure offer the through proposed developments	• Decreasing proportion of the population in the 30-59 age band • Major growth proposals in neighbouring local authority areas • Competition from established locations for 'value added' sectors • Global competition • Dominance of Kings Hill in the regional office market • Competition from neighbouring centres for local business seeking to expand and inward investment opportunities • Proposals for out-of-town retail developments which could threaten the town centre if poorly planned. • Limited scale market

The overall approach adopted in this strategy is about making the most of our many economic assets, while at the same time protecting those that make Maidstone a special place. We want to support our businesses to grow, creating jobs for all of our residents and ensuring they are equipped with the skills to maximise their potential.

Our Vision

By 2031 our vision for Maidstone is:

> *"A model '21st century county town, a distinctive place, known for its blend of sustainable rural and urban living, dynamic service sector-based economy, excellence in public services, and above all, quality of life."*

Our Objectives:

By 2031 we aim to:

4. Enable the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations
5. Raise GVA per head to the level of the South East
6. Raise the skills profile of Maidstone to the South East average

The strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision and identifies a series of priority actions to capitalise on our assets and the opportunities we have to strengthen the economy and create the right conditions for economic growth.

Our Priorities:

1. Retaining and attracting investment - We will support existing businesses to grow and also work to attract new employers to the borough, creating job opportunities for all residents across a range of sectors. A recent report produced by consultants GVA to consider whether the Borough's existing employment sites are fit for purpose and meet modern business needs concluded "for the borough to realise it's economic potential, there is a need to provide new employment land to both accommodate the scale of growth forecast but, equally importantly, to diversify the portfolio of sites to ensure different forms of demand and floorspace can be accommodated." The GVA report strongly advocates the allocation of a new employment site along the motorway corridor.

2. Stimulating entrepreneurship - We will create a more entrepreneurial and innovative economy, supporting new business start-ups and those with high growth potential to move up the value chain.

3 .Enhancing the town centre - We will promote the regeneration of Maidstone town centre as a high quality retail and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work.

4. Meeting the skills needs - We will ensure that residents are equipped with skills for work and that the skills needs of businesses are being met. We will support the expansion of the Higher Education sector to increase the number of graduates in the workforce, supporting initiatives such as the Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) and Maidstone Medical Campus, as well as the University of the Creative Arts (UCA) expansion at Maidstone Studios.

5. Improving the infrastructure - We will invest in infrastructure to drive economic growth – including the transport network and digital infrastructure.

There are a number of actions proposed to deliver the Strategy which are set out in the main document.

Our Actions:

Our key transformational actions:

1. Producing and implementing a new vision for Maidstone Town Centre.
2. Maximising the opportunities presented by Maidstone Medical Campus.
3. Allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 to meet modern business needs.
4. Producing and implementing a new masterplan for Eclipse Business Park.

We recognise that there are many partners involved in taking forward the opportunities identified and there is a clear leadership role for Maidstone Borough Council to play in coordinating, promoting and actively working with the business community to achieve the economic vision.

Questions:

1. Do you agree with that these are the correct challenges faced by the Borough?

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

2. Do you agree with the SWOT analysis

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

3. Do you agree with the vision?

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

4. Do you agree with the 3 Objectives

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

5. Do you agree with the 5 Priorities

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

6. Do you agree with the Key transformational actions proposed including the need for a new business park at Junction 8

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

8. What do you feel are the key factors needed to support good growth?

8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the Economic Development Strategy?

9. What is you name, business name (if a business) address, post code, email, telephone number.

10. Are you happy for us to keep your details and email you with news and information regarding Maidstone's growth.

Yes

No

SUBMIT

Annex 7: About Facts International

Facts International is an independent Market Research company based in Ashford, Kent. Established in 1985, the agency covers all research methodologies and provide services to high profile clients across the Private, Public and Third Sectors, abiding by the highest quality standards. Facts International is a company partner of the Market Research Society (MRS) and holds numerous quality standards. In 2011 Facts became the first research company in the UK to be awarded the prestigious Gold Investor in People award. For more information see www.facts.uk.com.