

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

8 November 2016

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

Yes

Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Examination

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

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The Committee is asked to note the progress with the examination of Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – a 'made' plan will form part of the Development Plan for Maidstone and will be used in the determining of planning applications for the plan area.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	8 November 2016

Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Examination

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The primary purpose of this report is to update the Committee in regard to the current status of the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan examination.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Committee will be aware of the difficult history of the examination of this Neighbourhood Plan as this has been reported on a number of occasions in recent months.
- 2.2 The Examiner appointed to restart the halted examination, Mr Jeremy Edge, was of the opinion that, given the volume of consultation responses and the diversity of issues that gave concern, it would be beneficial to hold a hearing to discuss the Neighbourhood Plan, the issues and to allow a number of different parties to respond.
- 2.3 The holding of a hearing is a relatively unusual occurrence with the majority of Neighbourhood Plan examinations being undertaken by written representations only.
- 2.4 The hearing was scheduled on Tuesday 18 October in Headcorn Village Hall, commencing at 10:00am. Three representatives from the Borough Council were in attendance along with three from the Parish Council and Steering Group, a representative from Kent County Council Education, representatives from Southern Water, and a number of developers and agents.
- 2.5 The hearing considered matters relating to a number of topics ranging from the Shared Vision, to Local Green Space, Housing, Water Management, and Gypsy and Travellers. There was also a large number of local residents in attendance throughout the day, even into the evening when the session ran late, illustrating the depth of local support for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.6 Debate throughout the day and questions posed by the Examiner (Appendix A) provided a helpful starting point for the consideration of the issues. The Parish Council and Steering Group were keen to see the Neighbourhood Plan progress, and yet also understood when the Examiner expressed concerns in relation to the submitted plan policies and conformity with national policy.
- 2.7 Toward the end of the hearing, there was a lengthy discussion in an attempt to address those areas where there were major differences between the Borough and Parish Councils, and to try to reach some common ground. In the majority of instances, this was successful, although the Gypsy and Traveller matter could not be agreed upon and was referred back to the Examiner to adjudicate in his report.

- 2.8 Following the conclusion of the hearing, the Examiner advised that he will need approximately three to four weeks to reach his conclusions on whether the Neighbourhood Plan is suitable to go to referendum as it is, or whether further modifications are required. Given the significant changes suggested and agreed during the hearing, it is highly likely that a further round of consultation will need to take place before any referendum can be held.
- 2.9 Once the Examiner’s findings are published, a further report will be brought to the Committee for consideration, outlining the Examiner’s findings.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and to note that a future report will be brought to the Committee once the Examiner publishes his findings.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is requested to note the report as set out at 3.1.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been reported to the Committee on a number of previous occasions. Any discussion or recommendations have been noted and taken on board.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Subject to the Examiner’s findings, a further report will be brought making recommendations about the next steps. This could be seeking approval for a further consultation, modifications or referendum, depending on the outcomes of the examination.
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7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	A Neighbourhood Development Plan, once made will be part of the Development Plan for Maidstone, directly impacting the Corporate	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

	Priorities through its consideration when determining planning applications in the plan area.	
Risk Management	There have been considerable concerns raised in relation to the content and policies in the Plan. The Examiner will consider whether the plan is appropriate and legally compliant.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Financial	The cost of the Examination can be covered within the existing funds available.	Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The Examination Hearing was covered by existing staff and has no wider implications.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Legal	There are no legal implications arising from this report.	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning) Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The needs of different groups should be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Parish Council during the evolution of the plan. Any issues in relation to this will be considered by the Examiner.	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The plan should have regard to sustainability and the natural environment as part of its evolution. The approach will be tested as part of the examination of the plan.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Community Safety	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Human Rights Act	The Plan's consideration of the Gypsy & Traveller Community and restriction on allocation of sites to meet need is a potentially difficult issue which the Examiner will need to consider. If the Plan is not considered to be legally compliant it will not be	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

	successful at Examination.	
Procurement	There are no further procurement considerations at this time.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development & Mark Green, Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A: Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Hearing Agenda and Questions.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none