

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF RECOMMENDATION OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
DOCUMENT ADVISORY GROUP**

TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

Recommendation Made: 24 February 2010

**CORE STRATEGY DPD (PRE-PUBLICATION CONSULTATION): FORMAT
AND DRAFT CONTENT**

Issue for Decision

To consider the format and draft content of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) in preparation for public consultation.

Recommendation Made

1. That the format and draft content of the Core Strategy DPD (Pre-Publication Consultation), as set out below be adopted.
 - a) Introduction to the Core Strategy
 - b) Key Influences
 - c) Spatial Portrait
 - d) Vision and Objectives
 - e) Spatial Strategy
 - f) Spatial Policies
 - g) Core Policies
 - h) The Delivery FrameworkAppendices
2. That a greater synergy be made with the Kent County Council Flood Risk Management Committee.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Group considered the report of the Assistant Director of Development and Community Strategy regarding the Core Strategy Development Plan Document ("DPD") (Pre-Publication Consultation): Format and Draft Content at their meeting on 24 February 2010.

It was proposed by a Member that contact and working with the new Kent County Council Flood Risk Management Committee would provide synergy benefits and the Group agreed this approach.

Officers were asked to ensure that Policy CS1 is extremely robust and that inward investment is crucial to ensure the correct infrastructure is in place before the regeneration of sites.

The evidence base and other preparatory work for the Core Strategy is being finalised and the draft document will be written-up over the next few months in readiness for pre-publication consultation in accordance with the Local Development Scheme (LDS) programme. This report proposes a format for the pre- publication consultation document and discusses the content for Members' consideration and agreement. Issues arising from past and impending reports and workshops should be reflected in the draft format.

When developing the structure and content of the DPD, close attention has been paid to comments made in response to the former stages of the Core Strategy programme, regulatory changes including the new Planning Policy Statement 12: creating strong, safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning (2008), the published Regional Strategy, other adopted core strategies (for best practice), and advice given in meetings with the Planning Inspectorate and Government Office for the South East (GOSE). The proposed format conforms to government advice and direction on the content of core strategies and the avoidance of repeating national and regional planning policies. Maidstone's Core Strategy will strongly focus on local issues and their resolution.

The proposed structure of the DPD is:

1. Introduction to the Core Strategy
 2. Key Influences
 3. Spatial Portrait
 4. Vision and Objectives
 5. Spatial Strategy
 6. Spatial Policies
 7. Core Policies
 8. The Delivery Framework
- Appendices.

The Introduction (section 1) will explain why Maidstone is preparing a Core Strategy and what its function is. It will set out the stages and timetable for the production of the DPD, and confirm how and when the public will be able to engage with the process. The format of the document will be explained, and the purpose of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Charging Schedule will be made clear.

The Key Influences (section 2) will explain how National and Regional strategy and policies, together with local strategies, have influenced the Core Strategy. The South East Plan, particularly policy AOSR7, Growth Point status, the designation of Maidstone as a transport hub, the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Strategic Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and the Local Transport Plan have all influenced the DPD. This is critical for demonstrating "soundness": that the plan is "justified", "effective" and "consistent with national policy" (PPS12). The chapter will include references to Core Strategy evidence base documents as well as key messages from community engagement. This section will also describe how the Sustainability Appraisal process has influenced the development of the strategy.

The Spatial Portrait (section 3) will set the scene for the borough: the County Town, the role of the rural service centres and other rural areas, acknowledgment of the borough's assets and challenges such as traffic congestion. It will identify the main issues to be addressed through the Core Strategy.

The Vision and Objectives (section 4) will lay down the Council's spatial vision for the borough and set out its spatial objectives. These will include, for example, the need for a balanced sustainable growth rate within environmental constraints; mitigation of and adaptation to meet climate change; the need to create a more sustainable and integrated transport system and address congestion; protection of the borough's assets; attraction of quality employment, education and job creation; regeneration of the town centre and suburban areas; enhancement of a green and blue infrastructure; planning for sustainable communities (for example, affordable housing, accommodation for the elderly, economic prosperity, safeguarding the countryside, provision of adequate facilities and services); and quality design standards.

The Spatial Strategy (section 5) will explain the factors that influence the spatial distribution of development. These are likely to include the targets and phasing for homes, employment land, jobs, etc.; the borough's settlement hierarchy; greenfield/brownfield balance; the balance of growth between urban and rural settlements; addressing the sequential test for development, i.e. "town centre first"; and meeting housing needs (affordable housing, local needs housing, housing for the elderly and housing mix). This section will also consider asset protection, management and enhancement (heritage, rivers and waterways, countryside, landscape, biodiversity); as well as the Council's objectives for water supply and disposal, flooding and a high quality environment. Key to the strategy will be the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and developer contributions, transport infrastructure and the creation of a green and blue network. The section will also explain how the spatial strategy will be delivered, i.e. through the Core Strategy, other DPDs or AAPs (Area Action Plans), or SPDs (Supplementary Planning Documents).

The first Core Strategy policy will appear in this section: **Policy CS1 Spatial Distribution of Development**. It will set the Council's requirements for a sustainable transport strategy, a green and blue network strategy, broad locations for quantified levels of development, strategic land allocations, and the phasing of development. It will also set the framework for the subsequent Land Allocations DPD.

The Spatial Strategy section will contain the "**Key Diagram**", which will diagrammatically illustrate the Council's core strategy.

The Core Strategy will include a number of **Spatial Policies** (section 6) that will separately cover Maidstone town centre, Maidstone urban area, Maidstone urban extension, the rural service centres and the countryside (including villages).

Policy CS2 Maidstone Town Centre will set the vision for the town centre and define its boundary. It will address issues of regeneration, movement, development capacity, and strategic allocations. The policy will set the framework for a subsequent AAP for the town centre. **Policy CS3 Maidstone Urban Area** will include the allocation and phasing of strategic housing sites. **Policy CS4 Maidstone Urban Extension** will define the broad location and capacity of the urban extension in the context of the need for a sustainable transport package, green infrastructure, and other strategic and local community facilities. The policy will address the phasing and delivery of development and will set the framework for a subsequent AAP for the detailed planning of the urban extension.

Policy CS5 Rural Service Centres will define the role and function of the rural service centres. It will confirm the development capacity of the villages and will include the allocation and phasing of strategic housing sites and community infrastructure, together with delivery mechanisms. **Policy CS6 The Countryside** will define the roles of the countryside and villages that are not designated as rural service centres. It will embrace national policies for green belts and AONBs, and will also set criteria for the protection and management of the landscape, nature conservation and biodiversity. It will address rural diversification.

Core Policies (section 7) are generic topic based policies that apply across the borough, unlike spatial policies that are applicable to specific areas. Core policies will address the design of development, sustainable construction, sustainable transport, economic development, housing need, gypsy and traveller accommodation, the green and blue network, and biodiversity.

Policy CS7 The Design of Development will set criteria to achieve quality design in both the urban and rural areas. It will focus on the distinctiveness of the borough's townscape (including its heritage) and landscape (including landscape character). This policy will provide the framework to facilitate the production of the Landscape Character Area Assessment SPD and further

Character Area Assessment SPDs. **Policy CS8 Sustainable Construction** will set criteria for the sustainable construction of developments. It will address energy efficiency and renewable energy; the supply, treatment and disposal of water; codes for sustainable homes; the impact of climate change (including air quality); and flood risk.

Policy CS9 Sustainable Transport will focus on delivering a sustainable transport package to support growth, including parking, public transport, park and ride, and railways. It will also address the issue of air quality.

Policy CS10 Economic Development will contain criteria for business, retail, leisure and tourism uses, including quality and delivery of development.

A suite of housing policies will be required to meet the borough's housing needs: **Policy CS11 Housing Mix and Density**, **Policy CS12 Affordable Housing** and **Policy CS13 Local Needs Housing in Rural Areas**. These policies will address the need for affordable housing, accommodation for the elderly and rural housing. The Affordable Housing DPD will be reviewed to take account of advice from the Planning Inspectorate, to incorporate the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment that is due to be finalised in March 2010, and to consider delivery of affordable housing in the context of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Charging Schedule and Codes for Sustainable Homes requirements. **Policy CS14 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation** will be a criterion based policy for the determination of "windfall" planning applications and will set site selection criteria for the allocation of sites through other DPDs.

Policy CS15 Green and Blue Network will set criteria for the protection, management, enhancement and access to the borough's green spaces and rivers. It will consider the function of the green wedges and review the Open Space DPD. The policy will provide a framework to prepare a green and blue network strategy and to develop the implementation of open space standards. **Policy CS16 Biodiversity** will include protection and enhancement measures, and will have close links to the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Policy CS17 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will explain the purpose of the IDP and its process. It will incorporate CIL or Tariff requirements relating to strategic and local infrastructure, and will cross reference to the Charging Schedule which explains the what/where/when/who/how of infrastructure delivery. It will also set out the critical delivery milestones and address management and risk of delivery.

The Core Strategy will contain 5 appendices:

1. Changes to the Interactive Proposals Map
2. Monitoring and performance indicators

3. A list of superseded saved policies and local development documents
4. A matrix demonstrating the relationship of the Core Strategy with the Sustainable Community Strategy
5. A list of remaining saved policies.

The Core Strategy will be influenced by its **Sustainability Appraisal** (SA). A full SA must accompany the Publication stage of the plan making process in accordance with regulations. Work on the SA has commenced and will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (November 2009).

The Council has employed consultants to host an **Interactive Proposals Map** (IPM), and links to the map will shortly be available on the website. The IPM will display saved Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan policies and adopted Local Development Documents (DPDs/SPDs), as well as providing links to endorsed Supplementary Guidance. The IPM will also define the boundaries of areas where national and regional policies apply, such as conservation areas and ancient monuments, with links to the relevant guidance. The Interactive Proposals Map replaces the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan Proposals Map (2000).

Several **background documents** will accompany the Core Strategy DPD. One will explain and fully justify the Council's preferred strategy, with consideration of the alternatives that have been rejected, and setting out clear links between Core Strategy policies and its evidence base documents. A second will identify the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Charging Schedule, and a third an Integrated Transport Strategy and Transport Hub package. In this way, the Council can achieve a succinct and focused Core Strategy document that is easily understood by the development industry and the public alike, and provide the necessary evidence to demonstrate the soundness of policies that are justified in evidence, effective in terms of deliverability and viability, and consistent with national policy.

Alternatives considered and why not Recommended

The format of the DPD and its content have evolved through consideration of:

- representations made at the Preferred Options stage of Core Strategy production
- recommendations received following meetings with the Planning Inspectorate and GOSE
- government advice to avoid repeating national and regional policy in core strategies, and to focus on local issues
- Planning Policy Statements and other guidance that give direction on the content matter of core strategies.

A number of alternative approaches to the layout of the DPD have been examined, but the format proposed in this report is considered to offer a sound structure for Independent Examination whilst remaining user friendly for the public.

There will be an opportunity to refine the format and content of the DPD as the Core Strategy is written.

Background Documents

None