

National Approach to Garden Communities

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee
Lead Head of Service	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sarah Lee, Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

A document pulling together national policy and information and local information relating to New Garden Communities has been prepared. It is aimed at those promoting new garden communities to inform the evolution of their proposals. The draft document (Appendix 1) draws on national-level information and policy and supplements this with the more locally specific information from the council's Prospectus published at the time of the Call for Sites. It provides relevant information in a single place and sets out the council's expectations for this form of development.

Importantly, the draft document and this covering report re-affirm that the decision on the Local Plan Review's overall spatial strategy is a future one for the council which will be informed by evidence, statute, national guidance, public consultation, consideration of the reasonable alternative strategies, including through the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment process, and any other material considerations.

Purpose of Report

Decision.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the New Garden Communities Guidance in Appendix 1 be approved to inform the evolution of garden community proposals in the borough.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning & infrastructure Committee	5 th November 2019

National Approach to Garden Communities

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Impact on Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendation can help support the Council’s ability to achieve its corporate priority to embrace growth and enable infrastructure by setting out its expectations for proposals for new garden communities.</p>	<p>Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development</p>
<p>Cross Cutting Objectives</p>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation is Reduced and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The draft document includes specific information on heritage, health, biodiversity and environmental sustainability and so supports these three specific cross-cutting objectives.</p>	<p>Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development</p>
<p>Risk Management</p>	<p>The preparation of this document could imply or infer that the council has pre-determined that a new garden community/communities will be part of the spatial strategy for the Local Plan Review. To address this, both the covering report and the document affirm that the decision is a future one and one which will need to take account of all relevant planning considerations, including assessment of reasonable alternative strategies in line with SA/SEA requirements.</p>	<p>Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development</p>

Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Legal	The intent of this document is to pull together the principles outlined in the Government's Prospectus, the TCPA's Garden City Principles and the Council's Prospectus. It is no substitute (nor is it intended to be a substitute) for those documents. This is not planning guidance nor intended to be planning guidance. There are accordingly no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.	Russell Fitzpatrick (MKLS (Planning))
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendation does not impact on the volume of personal data held by the council.	Anna Collier Policy and Information Manager
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Anna Collier Policy and Information Manager
Public Health	The draft document will have a positive impact on the health as it includes specific information on planning for healthy communities.	Principal Planning Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendation will not have a specific impact on Crime and Disorder either positive or negative.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Procurement	The recommendation does not have any specific procurement implications.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development & Section 151 Officer

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The council is advancing its Local Plan Review. As part of the Call for Sites undertaken between February and May this year, we published a Garden Communities Prospectus to encourage the submission of new garden community proposals as part of that exercise. The prospectus responded to the National Planning Policy Framework's recognition of the role that larger scale proposals can play in places where housing needs are high¹ (like Maidstone borough). These proposals can be new settlements or a major extension to a town or village (often referred to a new garden communities).

¹ Paragraph 72

- 2.2 The Framework also underlines that such large-scale proposals should be progressed through the Local Plan process. This is the best route to ensure that the implications of a new garden community or communities, and alternative approaches, are comprehensively and transparently assessed. If a new garden community is selected for inclusion in a Local Plan, specific requirements can then be set out in policy which, once adopted, will have full weight in decision-making on planning applications.
- 2.3 **Purpose:** Such large-scale proposals take a number of years to come to fruition. Early decisions by developers and promoters of new garden community proposals could impact on the nature and quality of the proposal that is achievable on their promoted site. This means that, whilst recognising that the Local Plan Review process has some way to advance, there is benefit in the council publishing an early statement of its expectations in respect of new garden community development. This would help exert an influence on the evolution of schemes and be a public statement of the council's expectations of this type of development option.
- 2.4 **Status:** The document is intended as a positive tool to be used to influence promoters in the evolution of their proposals. The preparation of the draft document at this point does not mean that the emerging Local Plan Review will include one or more garden communities. The decision on the Plan's overall spatial strategy is a future one for the council, informed by evidence, statute, national guidance, public consultation, consideration of the reasonable alternative strategies, including through the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment process and any other material considerations. One of many influencing factors will be the need to maintain housing land supply through the plan period to achieve 5 year supply and Housing Delivery Test requirements.
- 2.5 Importantly, and as the document also makes clear, it does not over-ride the primacy of the development plan. Any planning application for a garden community submitted before the Local Plan Review is completed will be assessed against the relevant sections of the Framework and against the policies of the Development Plan, comprising the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017), the Kent Minerals & Waste Local Plan (2016) and any made neighbourhood plans for the area and any other material considerations. The document is not intended for use in the determination of planning applications. The weight that can be attributed to it is limited to its purpose as an early statement of the council's expectations for this form of development.
- 2.6 **Content:** The draft New Garden Communities document is included in Appendix 1. It brings together in a single document the **key threads** of national guidance from the Framework, the Government's own Garden Communities Prospectus (August 2018), the Town & Country Planning Association's Garden City Principles. As such, it provides a helpful distillation of national-level information although Appendix 1 is no substitute (nor is it intended to be a substitute) for those documents.
- 2.7 The national-level information is supplemented with local interpretation drawn from the council's February 2019 Prospectus. The locally important

matters that were identified in the council's Prospectus, and now replicated in this draft document, are as follows:

- Delivery of the full scope of necessary infrastructure
- Integrated and accessible transport choices, in particular walking and cycling, public transport and low emission technologies
- Exceptional connectivity through superfast broadband
- Generous amounts of green and blue infrastructure integrated into the development to help deliver biodiversity net gain, a setting for development, informal recreational space and attractive walking and cycling links
- Buildings designed with a strong focus on energy efficiency, carbon reduction and climate change mitigation
- Genuine mix of uses including employment floorspace,
- Matching the range of local housing needs in terms of affordability and tenure and also specialist needs such as housing for the elderly, Gypsy & Travellers and custom/self build.
- Responding to local character in the heart of Kent
- Reflecting and respecting the character of the natural and historic environment
- Enabling activity to be built into residents' daily lives, providing opportunities to buy and grow healthy food along and ensuring that health services are close at hand

2.8 The Committee may want to consider whether the local priorities continue to be the correct ones to highlight or whether different emphases are needed. Information on a) vision, leadership and engagement; b) legacy and stewardship and c) land value capture is included in the document's appendix.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 ***Option A: Publish the document, incorporating any amendments required by the Committee.*** This would achieve the objective of the council giving a clear steer on its expectations and priorities for this type of major development and it also helps to bring the key information together in a single document.

3.2 ***Option B: Do not publish the document.*** Not publishing the document misses an opportunity for the council to affect the evolution of proposals. There is, however, no requirement to produce it and its content has been drawn from existing national or locally produced documents.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 For the benefits outlined above, the recommended option is Option A – publish the document.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The preparation of this document could imply or infer that the council has pre-determined that a new garden community/communities will be part of the spatial strategy for the Local Plan Review. To address this, both the covering report and the document affirm that the decision is a future one and one which will need to take account of all relevant planning considerations, including the assessment of reasonable alternative strategies in line with SA/SEA requirements.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If the document is agreed (with or without amendments), it will be sent to those who submitted Garden Community proposals in the Call for Sites. The document will also be published on the website.
- 6.2 The Local Plan Review is advancing and, as stated elsewhere, has not yet reached a stage where Members can take a decision on their preferred spatial strategy. Whatever the selected strategy, the Local Plan Review will contain site-specific planning policies which will clearly set out the requirements for a site's successful development. If the Local Plan Review does include proposals for a new garden community/communities, the relevant policies may need to be quite expansive to reflect the scale and potential complexity of the proposals. Policies could draw on the themes contained in this draft document.
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7. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: New Garden Communities Guidance
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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None