

Briefing Note to All Members Full Council 30th September 2020

ITEM 9 - Petitions

Notice has been given pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13 of the intention to present a petition in the following terms:

We the undersigned request our Elected Representatives in Maidstone Borough to:

- Challenge and campaign against National Government's Housebuilding targets.

The Council has challenged National Government's Housebuilding Targets in the context of both the existing target being planned for as part of the current Local Plan Review, and the potential numbers being proposed, should the planned changes to the 'Standard Methodology' formula come into effect in their proposed form.

This challenge has included letters directly to the Secretary of State and Senior Civil Servants, responses to government consultation on both the original methodology and proposed changes to it, lobbying of MPs, meetings with Senior Civil Servants and press releases around the potential impact of both the existing number and proposed changes.

- Rethink the building of Garden Communities. They are not an appropriate planning policy for the Borough of Maidstone, especially in places like Lenham Heath, Marden and Langley as perfect examples.

The decision around which, if any, Garden Community proposals Maidstone pursues will be part of the deliberations at Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee in November of this year, when it selects a preferred spatial strategy for the Local Plan Review.

- Not accept new housebuilding levels that are unsustainable for the Borough of Maidstone.

The Council is challenging existing and proposed new Government imposed housebuilding requirements. In addition, the Council is in the process of amending the timeline for its current Local Plan Review with the explicit purpose of attempting to avoid increased housing requirements for the maximum time in order that lobbying around this issue by the Council directly, and by others, can continue.

Failure by the Council to accommodate and plan for housing targets set by Government, will result in Maidstone being exposed to the 'presumption in favour of development'. This will mean that where the Council refuses planning applications and these are subject to appeal, there will be a greatly increased likelihood that the Council's decision will be overturned by the

Planning Inspectorate and we will start to lose control of both where new development takes place and the ability to ensure that it provides the necessary infrastructure.

- Complete a full infrastructure assessment before the Local Plan Review and ensure all historical infrastructure issues are rectified across the Borough before projects commence.

Before the Local Plan Review is completed, it will be supported by a full infrastructure assessment and a viability appraisal to ensure that development proposals are viable and are able to contribute toward the necessary infrastructure.

- Be transparent and engage Parish Councils and local communities before any final decisions are made with regards to planning and new developments in the area.

The Council's commitment to the Parish Charter and to the principle of public and stakeholder consultation in the planning system remains resolute. Whilst there is a proposal to reduce the consultation period at Regulation 18b of the current Local Plan Review from 6 weeks to a minimum of 3 weeks, this relates directly to question 3 above and to the Council's attempts to ensure that it avoids, for as long as possible, any increase in the housing target currently being pursued by the government .

Notwithstanding the proposed reduction in the formal period of public consultation around Regulation 18b of the current Local Plan Review, the Council is committed to commencing work with Parish Council's and key stakeholders in the period between selection of a preferred spatial strategy and the commencement of the formal public consultation period – thereby, effectively increasing this to 6 weeks.