APPENDIX 6

EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MAIDSTONE CORE STRATEGY

13 SEPTEMBER 2010

4 Vision and Objectives

Spatial Vision

4.1   The council's vision for the borough, set out in its sustainable community strategy and strategic plan, seeks prosperity and vibrancy for Maidstone's urban and rural communities whilst retaining and enhancing the borough's distinctive history, landscape and character. The vision for Maidstone's Economic Development Strategy seeks to create a model 21st century county town as a distinctive place known for, amongst other things, a dynamic service sector based economy.

4.2   The Core Strategy determines the spatial expression of the council's vision for the borough. The DPD sets out the "why, what, where, when and how" for a development strategy to deliver the spatial vision and objectives; the need for planned growth and regeneration together with supporting infrastructure, within the context of protecting the borough's built and environmental assets; the scale of that development, general locations and timing, and necessary delivery mechanisms.

4.3   The borough has a complex set of characteristics that require distinctive planning strategies to achieve the Core Strategy vision, in order to face the challenges of the 21st century and specifically the period to 2026.

4.4   By 2026, prosperity will be achieved through sustainable economic growth across the borough, supported by the creation of high quality employment opportunities, the regeneration of key sites, investment in the town centre, and access improvements.

4.5   There will be a first class traditional town centre in Maidstone, maintaining its place as one of the premier town centre offers in the region, by creating a distinctive, accessible, safe and high quality environment for the community to live, work and shop. The town centre will be transformed by encouraging a wide range of new development including shops, business, residential development, cultural and tourism facilities, education and enhanced public spaces.

4.6   There will be an emphasis on sustainable transport access improvements to the town centre through an integrated approach to transport strategy, to promote the role of Maidstone's urban area as a transport hub with national and regional links. By 2026, the general location of growth will help bring about a step change in the use of public transport and other sustainable means of travel, coupled with restraints on parking where this will not prejudice economic growth, together with the creation of new and improved cycle and pedestrian networks.

4.7   The urban area of Maidstone will be revitalised throughout with the regeneration of key commercial and residential sites and areas of existing social and environmental problems, and by improving links to surrounding areas that will create better access to jobs and other facilities.

4.8   A high quality green and blue infrastructure that forms the setting of the urban area and creates suitable access to the surrounding countryside will be developed. This will protect and enhance the borough's rich natural heritage and wildlife with a special emphasis on rivers and local landscape character.

4.9 For the first part of the delivery of the plan, the focus of development across the borough will be on brownfield land in the urban area, extending in the latter part to greenfield land adjacent to Maidstone's urban area. Growth will be led by the timely provision of strategic and local infrastructure, including quality green spaces, sustainable transportation and utilities, as well as a full range of social and leisure facilities.

4.10 By 2026 major new development will be laid out in a manner that reduces the need to travel and is designed as an exemplar of low energy consumption and minimal carbon and other emissions.

4.11 To protect the special character of the countryside and to provide for needs in rural areas, the role of the rural service centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst will be reinforced as the focus of additional limited housing development, supported by necessary infrastructure and enabling local choice. All new development will be mixed and well integrated with the existing settlements and will maintain the character and identity of villages.

4.12 Development in smaller rural settlements and the countryside will be tightly restricted to local needs housing, rural economic diversification and meeting community needs. The separate identity and unique character of individually distinct villages and the urban area will be maintained. Robust landscape protection policies will be developed to safeguard the borough's locally significant and cherished landscape.

4.13 Prosperity will be created by strengthening the borough's employment, retail and leisure offers, which should exceed the growth in population with the creation of additional jobs so that more and better jobs are provided locally. New jobs will be located where existing infrastructure and new investment in transport and other infrastructure underpins growth.

4.14 There will be a better mix and balance of housing in the borough, achieved through the provision of an adequate number, range and mix of housing, including affordable housing, accommodation for the elderly, local needs housing at rural settlements, and sites for gypsy and traveller communities based on an assessment of local need.

4.15 The phasing, density and location of development will ensure the best use of previously developed land and buildings to help regenerate urban areas, and minimise the necessary release of greenfield land in total, and will make best use of a finite resource in a manner that protects and enhances the borough's best built and natural heritage, including its rivers and water bodies.

4.16 Development throughout the borough will be of a high quality, utilising designs that respond to the distinctive local character of areas. The design of new development will incorporate sustainability principles, and will take into account the impact of climate change.

4.17 Sustained development growth throughout the period will be maintained by ensuring an appropriate supply of suitable development sites. Demanding but realistic expectations of development to contribute to the type of accommodation required to meet needs (including affordable housing) will be

carefully balanced with a tariff for development contributions and the introduction of development incentive-grants from government to fund necessary strategic and local infrastructure. Good design quality and sustainable construction standards of at least national standards will apply.

Spatial vision

By 2026 Maidstone will be a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community benefiting from an exceptional and unique urban and rural environment.

The Core Strategy will help in delivering sustainable growth and regeneration while protecting and enhancing the borough's built and natural assets. Regeneration will be prioritised and delivered at the urban area of the county town first to make best use of brownfield land, so the release of greenfield sites, well related to existing urban areas, will be phased after 2016. Development will be led by a sustainable and integrated transport strategy, together with necessary strategic and local infrastructure.

The establishment of a multi-functional green and blue network of open spaces, rivers and water courses will safeguard biodiversity and define the urban character of Maidstone while offering access to the countryside, which will be valued in its own right. The character and identity of all rural settlements will be maintained by directing suitable development and supporting infrastructure to the rural service centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst.

Employment skills will be expanded to meet an improved and varied range of local jobs, and there will be a better balanced housing market to meet the community's needs. Development will be of high quality design, and constructed in a sustainable manner to respond to climate change and protect the environment and biodiversity.

Spatial Objectives

4.18   A number of spatial objectives have been identified to ensure the Core Strategy vision is achieved. The effectiveness of these objectives will be monitored, and performance indicators are included in each section of the DPD.

Spatial objectives

a. To provide for xxxxx new homes and xxxxx new jobs, primarily in skilled employment uses, in the borough alongside developing learning opportunities.

b. To focus new development at Maidstone urban area with:

*   90% of new housing built within and adjacent to the urban area of Maidstone, appropriate sustainable greenfield development being well located to the existing urban area
*   The aim of providing 60% of new housing across the plan period on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings
*   New employment allocations in Maidstone town centre strictly coordinated and targeted with opportunities on the most suitable greenfield sites only.

c. To transform the offer, vitality and viability of Maidstone town centre, including office, retail, further and higher education, leisure and tourism functions, together with a significant enhancement to the built and natural environment.

d. To create sustainable, innovative and well designed new neighbourhoods of sufficient scale to achieve good levels of local services, green space, development mix, and strategic infrastructure in a timely manner, as well as creating opportunities for local power generation.

e. To consolidate the roles of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst as rural service centres with successful village centres, as the focus of the network of rural settlements, with retained services and regenerated employment sites.

f. To support new housing in the borough's smaller villages that meets local need and is of a design, scale, character, tenure and location appropriate to the settlement, and supports the retention of services and facilities.

g. To safeguard and maintain the ==unique== character of the district's landscapes, ==including== the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ==and distinctive local landscapes==, whilst facilitating the economic and social well-being of these areas including the diversification of the rural economy.

h. To respect and enhance the character, extent and biodiversity of green spaces and the aquatic environment within and around built areas, together with the linkages between the spaces.

i. To ensure that new development takes account of the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and improve air quality by locating development to minimise energy use; to promote travel patterns that reduce the need to travel by car; to develop a greater choice of sustainable transport measures, particularly in the urban area; to support water and energy efficiency measures in existing development; and to encourage renewable energy sources and sustainable drainage solutions in new development.

j. To ensure that a new development is designed to a high quality and makes a positive contribution to the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated, including the protection of the built and natural heritage and its biodiversity.

k. To provide for the type of future housing that meets the changing needs of the borough's population, including provision for an ageing population and family housing, affordable housing at x%, and accommodation that meets the ==local== needs of the gypsy and traveller community.

l. To ensure that key infrastructure and service improvements needed to support delivery of Core Strategy objectives and policies are brought forward in a co-ordinated and timely manner, and that new development makes an appropriate contribution towards any improvements required as a result of such new development.