

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT ADVISORY GROUP**

**8 DECEMBER 2008**

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Report prepared by Louise Lynds & Sue Whiteside**

**1. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2007/08**

**1.1 Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To consider the submission of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to the Secretary of State, in accordance with Regulation 48 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004.

**1.2 Recommendation of Assistant Director of Development and Community Services**

1.2.1 That the AMR (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) be considered.

1.2.2 That the Local Development Document Advisory Group refers the report to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration with a recommendation to approve the AMR for submission to the Secretary of State.

**1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

1.3.1 The production of an AMR is required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The AMR covers the policy monitoring period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March and the calendar year of progress of the Local Development Scheme to date. The report must be submitted to the Secretary of State by 31<sup>st</sup> December each year, and the submission date is a recorded milestone that has an impact on housing and planning delivery grant if it is not met.

1.3.2 The AMR must assess whether policies and related targets or milestones in local development documents have been met and, if not, what progress is being made to address this. The attached report is structured as follows.

- Contextual Indicators demonstrate the wider social, environmental and economic characteristics of the Borough.
- Core Output Indicators are defined through national policy guidance and the indicators must be collected on a consistent timeframe.

These indicators were revised by Communities and Local Government in July 2008. The guidance for the existing indicators has been updated, two completely new indicators introduced and seven indicators have been removed. The majority of the new/revised indicators have been successfully monitored in this AMR. However for some indicators methodologies need to be refined and new data collected. National Indicators 154 (net additional dwellings for the reporting year), NI 155 (gross affordable housing completions) and NI 159 (net additional dwellings for future years) are monitored by Core Indicators H2b, H5 and H2c respectively.

- Local Output Indicators address policies not covered by Core Output Indicators. Prior to the adoption of the Core Strategy, local indicators are defined by a selection of saved policies from the adopted Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan (2000), as amended by the Secretary of State's Direction of 28 September 2007.
- A review of the Local Development Scheme (LDS), which must assess the progress of the timetable for the production of local development documents and identify any changes proposed to next year's programme. If the Council has failed to meet any of its milestones, the AMR should explain why.

1.3.3 The Council has been monitoring specific data for a number of years, notably for housing and employment policies. The setting up of new databases for the collection of data in these areas and others during 2008/09 has enabled the Council to provide additional information in this year's AMR for total amount of floorspace for 'town centre' uses and net additional gypsy and traveller pitches. This year's AMR has also compared the results of the 2008 footfall survey with previous surveys. The 2007/08 AMR includes the Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2007 and graphs showing commuting by occupation and industrial sector. The AMR will inevitably expand further over time as more monitoring systems are set up and existing systems are improved. With this fourth AMR that looks across an increasingly comprehensive set of indicators it is becoming possible to identify trends.

1.3.4 Key findings of the core output indicators in the AMR demonstrate a net gain of employment floorspace overall. For 2007/08, the amount of new employment floorspace on previously developed land totals 97%, and the percentage of new dwellings completed on brownfield sites totals 87%.

1.3.5 Maidstone can meet 99% of its housing requirement to deliver 10,080 dwellings between 2006 and 2026 as set out in the draft South East Plan. In the longer term the planned growth figures will be refined through the Core Strategy and other land allocation Development Plan

Documents to ensure targets are met. The housing trajectory includes an estimated yield from the areas of search for residential development identified in the Core Strategy. In the short term, the Council can demonstrate a 6.8 year housing land supply without taking into account any allowance for windfall sites, which produced over 360 units in 2007/08. The total housing land supply also excludes adopted local plan Greenfield allocations that were not released for development following the results of the 2002 Urban Capacity Study. Therefore, it is still not necessary to consider releasing Greenfield allocations for development.

- 1.3.6 Maidstone continues to make best use of its available land: 84.47% of dwellings were constructed at densities in excess of 30 units per hectare and 51.68% above 50 units per hectare. This is a reflection of the high number of flats built on urban brownfield sites that have been released in recent years so, as greenfield sites come forward in the medium to long term, average densities are likely to be lower.
- 1.3.7 The AMR monitors planning consents determined under both the former local plan policy that sought 25% affordable housing on sites of 25units/1 hectare and above, and also for the Council's adopted policy (AH1) that seeks 40% on sites of 15 units/0.5 hectare or greater. Consents under the former policy yielded at least 25% affordable units, whilst those subject to current policy secured 53% affordable dwellings. Consequently, both policy targets have been met in 2007/08. Policy AH1 requires 60% socially rented units from the total number of affordable dwellings. During 2007/08 only 19% of the affordable units completed were for social rent. This is because the completed dwellings were granted in accordance with the former local plan policy that did not require a minimum percentage for social rent.
- 1.3.8 The AMR also demonstrates that policy objectives have been met in other areas, such as enhancing the Riverside Zone of Special Townscape, protection of the AONB and constraints on replacement dwellings in the countryside.
- 1.3.9 Since 2007 unemployment in Maidstone has increased. House prices have risen 6% from 2006/07 to 2007/08 compared to 8% between 2005/06 and 2006/07.
- 1.3.10The review of the Local Development Scheme (2007) demonstrates that the majority of targets and milestones were not met during the calendar year of 2008, the slippage relating to the production of the Core Strategy DPD. The Council was unable to submit the document in October 2007, and consequently could not meet Examination and Adoption milestones in 2008. The implications of a Core Strategy representation at Preferred Options stage, seeking the allocation of land for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at Hollingbourne,

had to be fully assessed before the Council could proceed to Independent Examination. The public will be re-consulted on the Core Strategy in 2009 under new plan making regulations once a decision on whether to include the proposal in the Core Strategy has been made.

1.3.11 The delay to the LDS programme affected the production of other DPDs set out in the approved LDS, namely the Land Allocations and Implementation DPD, which was due to be published for public consultation (Preferred Options) in March 2008.

1.3.12 It is worth noting that the Council has fully utilised this time to undertake a considerable amount of further work to support the evidence base for the Core Strategy, in order to respond to representations received at Preferred Options stage and also to address requirements for additional material to support Core Strategies set by new government legislation published this year. These measures will greatly improve the robustness of the evidence base supporting a sound Core Strategy at Independent Examination.

1.3.13 During 2008, the Council has also progressed two Character Area Assessment SPDs that are nearing adoption, and the Residential Extensions SPD that is currently subject to public consultation until 19<sup>th</sup> December.

1.3.14 Furthermore, at the meeting of this Group on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008, Members considered the Council's priorities for the publication of future LDF documents, which were subsequently confirmed by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration. The purpose of this early debate was to establish an agreed approach towards DPD publication, and also to facilitate a speedier production of the LDS review once a decision on the SRFI allocation has been made.

1.3.15 The Core Strategy DPD remains the Council's focus for 2009, but an early Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Allocations DPD will be produced in advance of the Core Strategy, to respond to local priorities and the need to provide accommodation for this sector of the community. An Urban Regeneration Action Area Plan (AAP) for the town centre and defined urban areas will follow the Core Strategy programme, and the Land Allocations DPD will follow the AAP. This approach will be examined in much more detail during the revision of the LDS, but it is a realistic option because strategic and other land allocations will be made through the Core Strategy, the Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Allocations DPD and the Urban Regeneration AAP. However, the Council will need to ensure it can demonstrate a continuing robust 5-year housing land supply until new greenfield land allocations are adopted. The Land Allocations DPD would therefore address the

balance of site allocations for housing, employment, retail, community facilities, etc, and would define landscape designations.

1.3.16 In addition to the proposed four DPD/AAP publications, the production of a number of SPDs will be confirmed through the LDS review: Kent Design Guide, Interim Planning Tariff, Access for Disabled People, Air Quality, Urban Extension, Landscape Character Area Assessment (toolkit), final Planning Tariff, and a Parking Strategy. Subject to staff resources and in the context of competing priorities for the preparation of SPDs, consideration will also be given to the production of further Character Area Assessment SPDs.

1.3.17 The plan making element of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) is now dependent on meeting milestones for the Core Strategy DPD, together with DPDs that allocate land for more than 2,000 dwellings. Additional funding is available for demonstrating a 5-year housing land supply, and for the completion of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and Strategic Housing Market Assessments. The Council currently has 6.8 years of housing land supply against its 20-year target of 10,080 dwellings (reducing to 6.1 years if targets are increased to 11,080 through the South East Plan consultation process). Both the Housing Land Availability and Housing Market Assessments for Maidstone will be completed in 2009.

1.3.18 Whilst the delay to completing the Core Strategy programme impacted on the Council's ability to secure HPDG in 2008, the risk of proceeding to Independent Examination without giving full consideration to the SRFI representation would have carried its own financial implications if the Core Strategy was found unsound and would have had a much greater impact on the Core Strategy timetable.

#### Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.3.19 The submission of the AMR is a defined milestone of the Local Development Scheme and if the Council does not meet a December submission, there could be financial penalties through the housing and planning delivery grant system.

#### 1.4 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.4.1 The AMR monitors the success of a range of policies that will have an impact on corporate objectives.

#### 1.5 Risk Management

1.5.1 The LDS section of the AMR (chapter 5) draws attention to the particular risks for the LDS programme. There are a number of considerations that will be crucial if the Council is to keep track with

the revised timetable in 2008. These include securing support for the Council's approach to setting its LDS programme from GOSE, the preparation of a sound evidence base, the ability of consultants to deliver reports within set timeframes, continued full officer staffing levels, and the diversion of officer time away from the plan making process to undertake other projects or react to developer proposals. These risks will require careful management.

## 1.6 Other Implications

### 1.6.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	-
4.	Social Inclusion	X
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	X
6.	Community Safety	X
7.	Human Rights Act	-
8.	Procurement	-

## 1.7 Financial

1.7.1 There will be general costs involved in the production of the AMR, such as printing, but these can be accommodated within the LDF budget. Meeting the milestones set in the Local Development Scheme has implications for the receipt of housing and planning delivery grant.

## 1.8 Staffing

1.8.1 These can be accommodated within the existing staff structure.

## 1.9 Social Inclusion

1.9.1 Social inclusion is inherent in the policies that are the subject of monitoring in the document.

## 1.10 Environmental/Sustainable Development

1.10.1 When assessing the implementation of policies, the AMR must have regard to the effects on social, environmental and economic objectives, which are the key indicators in defining sustainability.

1.11 Community Safety

1.11.1 Community safety is inherent in the policies that are the subject of monitoring in the document.

1.12 Background Documents

1.12.1 Local Development Scheme (2007)

[http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/070329\\_LDS%20March%202007.pdf](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/070329_LDS%20March%202007.pdf)

**NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED**

Is this a Key Decision?    Yes                          No   

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an Urgent Key Decision?    Yes                          No