

**This document is produced by
Maidstone Borough Council**

**This Local Development Scheme comes into effect on 13
March 2013 and replaces all previous versions of the
Scheme**

All enquiries should be addressed to:

**Spatial Policy
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House
King Street
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 6JQ**

**Telephone: 01622 602000
Email: LDF@maidstone.gov.uk**

1 Introduction to the Local Development Scheme	1
What is the Local Development Scheme?	1
The Development Plan	1
The Local Plan	2
2 Challenges for Maidstone	4
3 The Local Development Scheme	6
Review of the Local Development Scheme 2012-2015	6
Local Development Scheme 2013-2015	8
Monitoring and Review	9
4 Risk Management	10
5 Document Project Plan	11
Maidstone Borough Local Plan	11
6 Glossary of Terms	13

What is the Local Development Scheme?

1.1 The **Local Development Scheme** (LDS) is a project plan that sets the timetable for the production of Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan, and it explains how the Council will resource and manage the preparation of documents. It includes a risk assessment of events that might impact on the programme, together with an explanation of how the Council will deal with those risks. The scheme needs to ensure that the Local Plan is put into place systematically, that it is kept up to date, and that the community is actively involved in the process. The LDS makes the planning authority more accountable, and it offers the wider community some certainty about when and how it can engage in the plan making process.

1.2 The LDS includes a programme for the preparation of local plans, which are subject to sustainability appraisal and public examination. There is no duty to include a timetable for the production of supplementary planning documents (SPD) but, in order to provide clarity for the public, the Council has identified key SPDs that are a priority to support the delivery of local plan policies.

1.3 The Local Development Scheme 2013-2015:

- Contains a brief profile of Maidstone Borough
- Reviews the progress of the Local Development Scheme (2012-2015)
- Sets out the amended programme for 2013 to 2015
- Assesses the risks to the new programme and explains how the risks will be managed
- Contains individual project plans for each local plan contained in the scheme
- Includes a glossary of terms and acronyms used throughout this document to assist the reader.

The Development Plan

1.4 The **Development Plan** is central to the planning system and is needed to guide the decision making process for land uses and development proposals. The development plan includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans, and regional strategies until such time as they are revoked under the Localism Act 2011.

1.5 The development plan for Maidstone comprises a number of local and strategic documents: the South East Plan, which is the regional spatial strategy; adopted development plan documents (DPD), which are now called local plans; saved policies from the adopted Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan; and saved policies from the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans that are prepared by Kent County Council.

- South East Plan (May 2009)
 - Affordable Housing DPD (December 2006)
 - Open Space DPD (December 2006)
 - Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan Saved Policies (September 2007)
 - Kent Minerals Local Plans Saved Policies (May 1986, December 1993 & December 1997)
 - Kent Waste Local Plan Saved Policies (March 1998)
-

1.6 The South East Plan remains part of the development plan until such time as regional strategies are abolished in accordance with the Localism Act. The Affordable Housing and Open Space DPDs, together with the saved policies of the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan, will eventually be superseded by policies contained in adopted new local plans. The programme for the preparation of these documents is set out in this LDS. The minerals and waste local plans will be replaced under the Kent Minerals and Waste Development Framework.

The Local Plan

1.7 The Local Plan is the plan for the future development of Maidstone and it forms part of the borough's development plan. It can contain a single document or a series of local plans. Maidstone's local plan currently includes previously adopted development plan documents and saved policies from the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan, all of which will eventually be superseded by an emerging new local plan. Local plans outline the key development objectives of the local planning policy framework. Their production is dependent on community and stakeholder involvement, public consultation, sustainability appraisal and independent examination. The principal local plan must set out the spatial vision, objectives and key policies for the delivery of the framework, and plays a key part in delivering the spatial objectives of the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Plan.

1.8 The **Policies Map** is a map of the borough which illustrates areas of protection and site specific proposals set out in the Local Plan. Maidstone has an interactive policies map that can be accessed through its website.

1.9 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) expand or add detail to local plan policies and are prepared with stakeholder and public participation and engagement. They are not subject to sustainability appraisal or examination because the local plan policy they support will have gone through this process. SPDs are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, but they do not form part of the development plan or the Local Plan. Adopted Supplementary Guidance that meets the disciplines of SPD production will also be a material consideration in decision making processes.

1.10 In addition to the Local Development Scheme, the **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** and **Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR)** are a crucial part of the plan making system. The SCI explains how and when local communities and stakeholders will become involved in the preparation of documents. Annual monitoring reports measure the success of local plan objectives, targets and adopted policies.



1.11 Maidstone's local planning policy framework currently comprises:

- Local Development Scheme (2013)
- Statement of Community Involvement (2006, emerging update 2013)
- Annual Monitoring Reports (2004 to 2012)
- Affordable Housing DPD (2006)
- Open Space DPD (2006)
- Saved policies from the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan (2007)
- Sustainable Construction: Using Water SPD (2006)
- Loose Road Character Area Assessment SPD (2008)
- London Road, Bower Mount Road, Buckland Hill Character Area Assessment SPD (2008)
- Residential Extensions SPD (2009)
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014 (endorsed March 2009)
- Kent Design Guide 2005/06 (endorsed May 2009).

2 . Challenges for Maidstone

2.1 The borough of Maidstone covers 40,000 hectares and is located in the heart of Kent. It has a large urban area to the north west of the borough and is surrounded by a substantial rural hinterland. Maidstone is the County Town of Kent and over 70% of the borough's population of approximately 155,800⁽¹⁾ people live in the town's urban area. Maidstone is strategically located between the Channel Tunnel and London, and has direct connections to both via the M20 and M2 motorways. There are rail connections to London, the coast, and to the Medway Towns through three central railway stations in the town. These railways also serve the rural service centres of Harrietsham and Lenham. The railway line to the south of the borough provides access to London and the coast for the rural service centres of Marden, Staplehurst and Headcorn. Whilst the Channel Tunnel Rail Link runs through the borough, there are no stations to access the Link. There are a number of main transport routes in the borough, including the A229, A249, A274, A20 and A26.

2.2 The town centre has a strong commercial and retail centre, and Maidstone is one of the largest retail centres in the south east. Economically the borough is relatively prosperous with a considerable employment base and a lower than average unemployment rate compared to Kent. However, Maidstone also has a low wage economy, which leads to out-commuting for higher paid work. The local housing market flows across district boundaries and is influenced by London, resulting in relatively high local house prices. Some areas in central Maidstone are in need of regeneration, and there are also pockets of deprivation in the suburban areas, most notably in North, High Street, Shepway North, Shepway South and Park Wood wards.

2.3 The rural area of the borough is characterised by a large number of villages and hamlets. The rural service centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst provide services and facilities to the rural hinterland, although smaller villages also play a vital role. There are some significant centres of economic activity in and around the larger rural settlements, and smaller commercial premises are scattered throughout the borough.

2.4 Large tracts of Maidstone's countryside have special nature and landscape designations to protect their value. There are many places and buildings of historic value, and much of the rural area is classed as best and most versatile agricultural land. The River Medway courses through the borough and the town centre and, together with its tributaries, is one of Maidstone's prime assets.

2.5 Consistent with Maidstone's growth role, the Council's priorities for the borough are to achieve a growing economy and to ensure Maidstone is a decent place to live⁽²⁾. Maidstone's emerging local plan policies seek to provide for economic growth and prosperity and the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs. Key to delivering these aims is the provision of supporting infrastructure. The direction of Maidstone's growth is constrained by a high quality environment, the extent of its flood plain, and the limitations of its transport and infrastructure system (including water supply and waste water). There are also concerns about the loss of open space and the intense scale of development in the urban area.

1 2011 mid year population estimates released 25 September 2012, ONS

2 Strategic Plan 2011 to 2015

2.6 The challenge for Maidstone's Local Plan is how to manage the potential impacts from future growth, and allow for more employment and residential development to take place in a sustainable manner to assist the local economy whilst protecting the valued landscape, biodiversity and countryside of the borough.

Review of the Local Development Scheme 2012-2015

3.1 Maidstone's Local Development Scheme (LDS) was first adopted in 2005 and has been the subject of a number of reviews, the latest in 2012.

3.2 In 2012, the Council included 2 key local plans in its scheme: the Core Strategy and Development Delivery. The Council successfully met the key milestone for a partial public consultation on the Core Strategy Strategic Site Allocations in August/September 2012 (known as "participation" or regulation 18 stage of plan production).

3.3 During 2012 a number of core strategy examinations in other parts of the country, including the south east, were being suspended because of a lack of evidence supporting the local authorities' housing and employment targets. The implications arising from these suspensions needed to be given full consideration to ensure that Maidstone's local plan evidence base was robust enough to support a sound Core Strategy at examination, particularly in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In November 2012 the Council resolved to delay the Core Strategy programme so that further work could be undertaken, and it was agreed that the documents set out below should be updated before the Core Strategy programme could restart:

- Review of demographic and employment data;
- Completion of a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA);
- Production of a new Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA); and
- Production of a new Strategic Economic Development Availability Assessment (SEDLAA).

3.4 This additional work results in a delay to the Core Strategy programme of 19 months, moving its adoption date from December 2013 to July 2015.

3.5 Consequently, Maidstone has taken the opportunity to amalgamate its two local plans into one document, bringing forward the adoption date of Development Delivery without causing further delay to the Core Strategy programme. The move towards the preparation of a single local plan, as opposed to more than one document, is supported by the NPPF and new plan making regulations published in 2012. The new plan will be known as the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the plan period will run from 2011 to 2031 to ensure the Council has a 15 year plan in accordance with the recommendations of the NPPF.

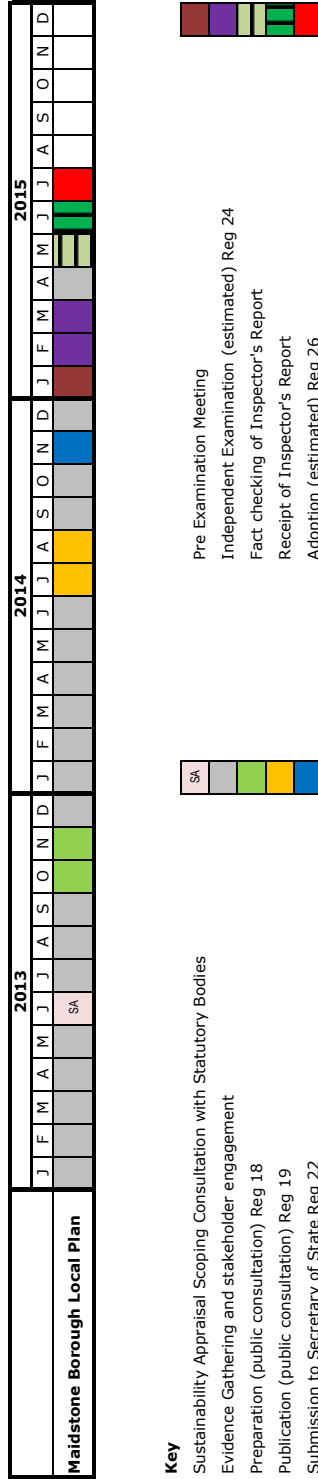
3.6 The **Maidstone Borough Local Plan** (MBLP) will incorporate the policies from two previous public consultations on the Core Strategy (spatial and core policies in 2011 and strategic site allocations in 2012), and will contain the balance of land allocations as well as new policies for the regeneration of the town centre, the designation of protected areas and development management policies. The Council will undertake an additional stage of public consultation on the MBLP for the new policies and land allocations (called "participation" or regulation 18) in 2013, as set out in the LDS, before proceeding to formal public consultation stage (called "publication" or regulation 19) in 2014 on the entire Local Plan.

3.7 The LDS (2012) included a suite of supplementary planning documents (SPD) that are required to add detail to policies contained in local plans. This list remains pertinent:

- A **Parking Standards SPD** is required to set local parking standards for new commercial and residential development
- A **Landscape Character Guidelines SPD** is required to develop a "toolkit" to assist with the determination of planning applications within the landscape areas identified in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (2012)
- An **Affordable and Local Needs Housing SPD** will deliver the detail of the Core Strategy affordable housing policy.

3.8 An important element in the preparation of local planning policy documents is consultation with stakeholders and the public. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out in detail how and when these groups can participate in the preparation of local plans. It is also important for the Council to engage with key stakeholders during the production of certain evidence documents. The new SHLAA and SEDLAA will form the basis for new development site allocations in the local plan, so these documents will be prepared in consultation with the development industry, the parish councils, the environment groups, and relevant county and local authorities. The Council has already set up focus groups for the development industry and the rural service centre parish councils, and regularly meets with its neighbouring authorities under the duty to cooperate. Several workshops have been held and are continuing.

Local Development Scheme 2013-2015



Key

- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Consultation with Statutory Bodies
- Evidence Gathering and stakeholder engagement
- Preparation (public consultation) Reg 18
- Publication (public consultation) Reg 19
- Submission to Secretary of State Reg 22



- Pre Examination Meeting
- Independent Examination (estimated) Reg 24
- Fact checking of Inspector's Report
- Receipt of Inspector's Report
- Adoption (estimated) Reg 26



Monitoring and Review

3.9 The Council will continually assess and build on its evidence base to ensure it has sufficient social, environmental, economic and physical information to identify the spatial characteristics and needs of the borough to inform the preparation of its local plan. The local plan will explain how its policies will be delivered and implemented, and will identify performance indicators against which the success of policies will be monitored. A number of the performance indicators will be monitored through the Annual Monitoring Reports, and the Council will monitor and review the LDS timetable to ensure that the key stages for document production set out in the scheme are met.

4.1 The adoption of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan will reduce the risk of inappropriate development and will provide a clear policy direction to Members, the development industry and members of the public. The Council is continually assessing the staffing and financial resources available to produce its local planning policy framework, and progress is periodically reported to the Council's Cabinet in line with budget bids. However, there are still several problems which might be encountered in keeping the LDS programme on course, and the Council must assess how these risks might be minimised.

4.2 New national planning legislation and advice has been published over the past year, including the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and new plan making regulations. The Council will keep a watching brief on the introduction of further national policy or regulatory changes. Counsel has been retained to offer legal advice on document content and processes, to ensure that all risks to the preparation of plans are appropriately considered.

4.3 The number and complexity of representations at consultation stages will remain a risk because objectors may raise issues that require further consideration. To mitigate against a potential delay to the programme, time has been built into the programme to consider and respond to representations, an on-line consultation system is in place to manage the volume of representations, and the Council has prioritised and resourced the production of its Local Plan.

4.4 Risks to the adoption of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan are generally associated with meeting the tests of soundness at Independent Examination. Legal services have been retained to offer advice on document content and processes to ensure the local plan is found sound at examination..

4.5 Political and stakeholder co-operation is essential for the Council to meet key target dates. A number of plans involve partnership working with other agencies, such as the infrastructure providers (health, education, water, electric, gas, etc.), the Highways Agency, Kent County Council, the Environment Agency, and the development industry regarding land delivery. The Council is minimising this risk to the programme by fully engaging with stakeholders through a number of working groups, and by setting up a series of Member meetings to steer documents through the plan making process. The Council will also satisfy its duty to cooperate with its partners, including adjacent local authorities.

4.6 The LDS takes into account current staffing levels and the Council will endeavour to recruit and retain skilled and experienced staff who are necessary to deliver the scheme. Specialist consultants and contractors will be engaged periodically, as required. The Council can take action to mitigate against shortages in an area of skills scarcity, but cannot plan for all interruptions through vacancies, sickness and maternity leave. A restructure of the Planning Department in 2012 offers a greater flexibility and movement of staff resources where required.

4.7 A dedicated budget to deliver the local planning policy framework has been identified through the Council's medium term financial strategy. The Council will ensure that the budget is managed efficiently and effectively, and will identify any likely deficiencies at an early stage.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN	
Subject	Sets the spatial vision and strategy for the future development of Maidstone to 2031; identifies borough wide site specific land allocations for new housing, business, retail and infrastructure; includes policies for the regeneration of the town centre; designates protection areas; and includes development management policies.
Status	Local Plan
Coverage	Maidstone borough
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's spatial vision, spatial objectives, and strategy for the distribution of development 2011 to 2031 • The delivery of growth targets for housing and employment, together with supporting infrastructure • The allocation of development sites, in accordance with the spatial strategy and defined on the policies map • Safeguarding of identified employment areas • Provision for housing needs through an appropriate dwelling mix, affordable housing and local needs housing • A criteria based policy and pitch target, together with land allocations, to meet the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople • The delivery of quality and sustainable new development • Town centre and suburban regeneration • Designation of rural service centres • Protection and enhancement of the borough's historic and natural environment • Delivery of sustainable transportation and other infrastructure • Development management policies
Chain of Conformity - national & regional	Central government policy and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework 2012. The Regional Spatial Strategy (the South East Plan 2009) until such time as it is revoked under the Localism Act 2011.
Chain of Conformity - local	Regard to the Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy, Strategic Plan, Economic Development Strategy and Housing Strategy.

Policies Map	To be amended to reflect the adoption of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan
Timetable	
SA Scoping Report	June 2013
Preparation (Reg 18) - partial consultation	October/November 2013
Publication (Reg 19)	July/August 2014
Submission (Reg 22)	November 2014
Pre Examination Meeting	January 2015
Examination (estimate)(Reg 24)	February/March 2015
Fact Checking Inspector's Report	May 2015
Receipt of Inspector's Report	June 2015
Adoption (estimate)(Reg 26)	July 2015
Arrangements for Production	
Internal Partners	Teams within the directorates of Change, Planning & the Environment and Regeneration & Communities, Corporate Leadership Team, Member Advisory Group (Spatial Policy Strategic Advisory Group)
External Partners	Appropriate national consultees, Town Centre Management, parish councils, adjacent local authorities, and other stakeholders and community groups set out in the SCI
External Resources	KCC, Highways Agency, infrastructure providers, the HCA, and use of external consultants to provide evidence (as required)

Table 5.1

Acronym	Term	Description
	The Act	The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by the Planning Act 2008 and 2009.
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report	The Monitoring Report provides a framework with which to monitor and review the effectiveness of local plans and policies.
	Development Plan	The Development Plan includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans and regional plans (until such time as they are abolished).
DPD	Development Plan Document	A DPD is a spatial planning document that is subject to independent examination. Under new regulations, DPDs are now known as local plans.
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency	The national housing and regeneration agency, responsible for providing funding for affordable housing, bringing land back into productive use, and raising standards in the physical and social environment.
KCC	Kent County Council	The county planning authority, responsible for producing the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans and the County's local planning policy framework.
LDS	Local Development Scheme	The LDS is a business programme or timetable listing the documents the Council will produce under the local planning policy framework, and explaining how documents will be prepared and when they will be published.
	Localism Act	The Localism Act was published in 2011 and introduces new freedoms and flexibilities for local authorities and communities.
	Local Plan	The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by a local authority in consultation with the community. The Local Plan for Maidstone includes DPDs adopted under the Act and saved policies. These will be superseded by the the Maidstone Borough Local Plan once it is adopted in 2015. The Local Plan does not include SPDs or supplementary guidance, although these documents are material considerations in development management decisions.
MBC	Maidstone Borough Council	The local planning authority responsible for producing the local planning policy framework.
	Neighbourhood Plan	Neighbourhood plans were introduced by the Localism Act, and are plans prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a particular neighbourhood area. Neighbourhood plans must

6 . Glossary of Terms

		be in conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.
NPPF	National planning Policy Framework	The NPPF was published in March 2012 and it sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these must be applied. Local Plan policies must be in conformity with the NPPF.
	Policies Map	The policies map uses an ordnance survey map base to show all land use policies and proposals, and is updated as each new local plan is adopted so that it reflects the up-to-date planning strategy for the borough. Maidstone has an on-line interactive policies map.
	Saved policies	Policies from the Maidstone Borough wide Local Plan (2000) that were saved in 2007 under the Act.
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy	The RSS sets out the region's policies for the development and use of land. The RSS currently forms part of the development plan and the South East Plan is the RSS for the region.
SA	Sustainability Appraisal	The SA is a tool for appraising policies and proposals to ensure they reflect sustainable development objectives, including social, economic and environmental objectives. An SA must be undertaken for all local plans.
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement	The SCI specifies how the community and stakeholders will be involved in the process of preparing local planning policy documents.
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy	The SCS is produced by local authorities with the aim of improving the social, environmental and economic well being of their areas. The actions of the local public, private, voluntary and community sector are coordinated through the SCS.
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment	SEA is a generic term used to describe the environmental assessment of policies, plans and programmes. The European SEA Directive requires a formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes, including those in the field of planning and land use.
SoS	Secretary of State	Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.
SPSAG	Spatial Planning Strategy Advisory Group	Maidstone Borough Council Member committee set up to steer and advise Cabinet on the

		production of the Local Plan and associated documents.
	Supplementary Guidance	Local authorities can endorse publications prepared by regional or strategic bodies as supplementary guidance. These documents are a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan or the local plan. If subject to adequate stakeholder and public consultation, supplementary guidance can carry commensurate weight with SPDs in decision making processes.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document	An SPD provides further detail to policies set out in local plans. SPDs are a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan or the local plan.