

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 27 January 2014

MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Issue for Decision

The report sets out how the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) has developed and the direction the strategy is taking. It also sets out the next steps for the developing the ITS further.

Decision Made

- a) That the refined vision and objectives for the Integrated Transport Strategy as the basis for officers to work with Kent County Council and other transport providers in achieving improvements to the transport systems in Maidstone be approved; and
- b) That the work programme as set out in in paragraph 1.3.42 of the report of the Head of Planning and Development for developing the ITS to a full draft document and public consultation in the summer of 2014 be approved.

Reasons for Decision

This section provides the background and context to show how the Integrated Transport Strategy ("ITS") has developed since the previous draft ITS went out for public consultation in August 2012. Information is provided on the actions taken to review the ITS and refine the direction of the transport strategy and produce a new vision and objectives. It also identifies a programme of further work now required to develop a full draft ITS. The Cabinet was invited to agree these to guide Maidstone Officers' work in achieving a jointly agreed strategy with Kent County Council with a view to achieving the timetable for further modelling in Spring 2014 and public consultation in Summer 2014 as set out below.

Maidstone Borough Council ("MBC") and Kent County Council ("KCC") are working to achieve a jointly agreed document and significant work has been undertaken together including jointly funded traffic modelling. In this Council's view the existing traffic situation in Maidstone is one of significant congestion on our roads. It is accepted that traffic congestion will increase as the borough grows, so the ITS is designed to minimise this increase and to mitigate the associated impacts on the local economy and air quality. The ITS is also directed towards improving road user safety and education.

Transport Strategy Development

The previous draft ITS was based on the results of multi-modal transport modelling commissioned by KCC and MBC. The model was used in 2011 and early 2012 to test the impact of planned housing and employment growth, together with background traffic growth, on the local transport network. The previous local plan housing target of 10,080 (to 2026) was used. The baseline data that informed the model was collected in 2007 at inner and outer cordon points around the Maidstone urban area. The data showed that the vast majority of vehicular traffic crossing the outer cordon in the morning peak hour was heading to destinations within the town itself, usually passing through the town centre to destinations including the secondary schools and the hospital. On this basis, the modelling strongly indicated that the provision of strategic highway capacity around the town (for example, the South East Maidstone Strategic Link scheme) would not represent a cost-effective solution to existing and forecast traffic congestion in and around the town centre.

These considerations, together with the significant peak period congestion and poor air quality across the urban area, require the ITS to complement one of the core principles in the NPPF, which is to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. The ITS therefore focuses primarily on demand management measures (such as park and ride services, bus priority measures and enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure), combined with targeted highway capacity improvements at strategic junctions. This will enable people to make informed choices about how and when they travel to and from the town centre and other destinations in the borough.

KCC and MBC jointly identified three transport strategy options to address the impact of forecast trip growth over the local plan period; namely, Option 1: 'Do Minimum', Option 2: 'Radial P&R Sites' and Option 3: 'North / South P&R Spine'.

Transport Strategy Options		
Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thameslink rail services to London; • M20 traffic signals; • Increased bus frequencies on all main radial routes into the town centre to at least every 10 minutes; • Romney Place bus lane; • Bus priority measures; • Upgrade existing park and ride site facilities; 	Option 1 plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A229 and A274 inbound bus / high occupancy vehicle lane; • Bus priority measures; • Bluebell Hill park and ride site; • Sutton Road park and ride site; • Linton Corner park and ride site; • Newnham Court park and ride site; 	Option 1 plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park and ride facilities and services along a north / south spine corridor; • Inbound bus / high occupancy vehicle lanes to support park and ride; • Bus priority measures; • New north west express loop bus service; • Improved through bus

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and cycling infrastructure; and • Travel plans for new development sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved through bus services to key destinations; • Reduction in town centre car parking supply; and • Increase in long-stay parking charges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • services to key destinations; • Reduction in town centre car parking supply; and • Increase in long-stay parking charges.
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Each of the options was modelled and subject to cost benefit analysis. Option 3 was found to have the most beneficial impact on traffic flows and to represent the greatest value for money. However, concerns over the existing subsidy requirement for park and ride and the capital cost of options 2 and 3 resulted in a modified option 1 being selected for public consultation in the summer of 2012.

Responses to the public consultation exercise on the ITS were collated to help inform its development. Responses ranged from those related to specific development sites and areas linked to the local plan, which will be considered through the planning process, to general comments regarding the overall strategy and specific comments regarding particular measures and actions. In terms of the issues raised, these varied from the need to tackle traffic congestion (approximately 12% of respondents), whilst not forgetting the needs of motorists, improving public transport provision including park and ride (approximately 23% of respondents), carefully considering town centre parking and enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure (approximately 12% of respondents). The need to ensure the strategy is deliverable and funding sources are identified was also raised.

In October 2012, the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) resolved that the level of forecast journey time increase on arterial routes associated with option 1 was not acceptable. In order to progress the ITS, it has therefore been necessary for officers to review and redefine the available options. At the meeting of the JTB in January 2013, an Informal Member Group (IMG) was established to progress the ITS and address the JTB's concerns.

Transport Strategy Review

The technical studies completed to date, together with the outcome of the public consultation exercise and the resolution of the JTB, demonstrate that any 'Do Minimum' option would not satisfactorily address existing or forecast congestion. They also provide a strong indication that deliverable and cost-effective demand management measures, such as a north/south park and ride spine with bus priority measures on routes serving the sites, should continue to form the basis of the ITS.

These principles were accepted by the IMG, which agreed to recommend that new and /or enhanced park and ride services should feature in the revised ITS, alongside measures to increase highway capacity at strategic

junctions in and around Maidstone. The IMG also expressed a clear view that any measures to increase the attractiveness of non-car modes should not disadvantage car or freight traffic.

On the advice of the IMG, KCC and MBC officers visited colleagues at Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council to view the city's new park and ride service and associated bus priority measures, and to discuss the critical success factors which could be applied in Maidstone. The meeting strengthened the findings of the earlier modelling exercise that a small number of large, purpose-built park and ride sites serving distinct catchment areas offer the strongest prospect of becoming commercially viable in the medium term. The park and ride service would also need to include bus priority measures along the route to provide journey time savings.

Alongside the enhanced park and ride facilities, highway capacity and pedestrian accessibility improvements at the Maidstone bridges gyratory are also proposed. The preferred option, which was endorsed by the JTB in October 2013, is to progress the previous 'A229 Through Link' scheme, involving the provision of two northbound lanes on the eastern side of the River Medway.

Defining the Transport Strategy Framework

It is considered that the ITS review exercise provides a sound basis on which to progress and develop a transport strategy framework. There are a number of essential elements to the strategy, which are then supported by discretionary elements.

The essential elements include:-

- A more targeted park and ride service, with new and / or improved sites in the vicinity of M20 junction 7 and at Linton Crossroads on the A229 corridor to the south of the town, aimed at long-stay commuters into the town centre;
- Bus priority measures in tandem with the enhanced park and ride service;
- Highway capacity improvements at the bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 junction 7, to improve journey time reliability and air quality;
- Increased bus service frequencies (to at least every 7 minutes) on radial routes serving Maidstone town centre;
- Walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on improved wayfinding, safer crossing points at the town centre gyratory, and improvements to the River Medway towpath;
- A car sharing initiative in partnership with local employers; and
- A refreshed town centre parking strategy, which will look to increase long-stay car parking charges and reduce car parking supply to promote the use of park and ride, and a reduction in short-stay car parking to prioritise shoppers and visitors.

The discretionary elements include:-

- A reduced town centre long-stay parking supply;
- A Maidstone public transport smartcard, similar to London's oyster card;
- A new park and ride service on the A229 corridor linked to the route 101 bus service, in partnership with Medway Council;
- Inbound bus and / or High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on the A229 Royal Engineers Road and / or A229 Loose Road corridors; and
- Greater use of the River Medway as a transport corridor.

The development of the transport strategy framework as shown above allowed the vision and objectives for the ITS to be redefined with the aim of making them more concise and targeted.

A Transport Vision for Maidstone

The transport vision for Maidstone set out in the draft local plan states that "by 2031, Maidstone will have a transport network that supports a prosperous economy and provides genuine transport choices to help people make more journeys by sustainable modes such as public transport, walking and cycling. The transport network will promote Maidstone town centre as a regionally important transport hub and will have sufficient people and goods-moving capacity to support the growth projected by the local plan to 2031. The borough will have a safe environment for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and its air quality will be better with more low carbon vehicles travelling on our roads. Both the rural service centres and Maidstone town centre will be better connected to facilities and employment within the borough. Strategic links to locations outside of the borough will be improved, and destinations such as London will be more accessible. Overall, Maidstone will be a better place to live with an enhanced quality of life supported by an improved transport network".

Transport Objectives

The transport objectives for the borough and how these will be achieved are as follows:

Ensure the transport system supports the growth projected by Maidstone's local plan and facilitates economic prosperity

This will be achieved by:

- Integrating transport and land use planning to support sustainable development, particularly in the growth areas identified in the local plan;
- Securing travel plans and appropriate developer contributions to ensure that the impacts of new development are adequately mitigated;
- Securing construction environmental management plans to minimise the impacts from new developments during construction;

- Investing in better public transport provision, in partnership with commercial bus and rail operators;
- Improving walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on routes across the River Medway and the town centre gyratory;
- Enhancing the accessibility and safety of the borough's transport network;
- Highway capacity improvements at the Maidstone bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 junction 7; and
- Facilitating the safe and efficient movement of goods and servicing trips across the borough.

Manage demand on the transport network through enhanced public transport and park and ride services and walking and cycling improvements

This will be achieved by:

- An enhanced park and ride service, with new and / or improved sites in the vicinity of M20 junction 7 and on the A229 corridor to the south of the town, aimed at long-stay commuters into the town centre;
- Bus priority measures on park and ride routes in tandem with the enhanced service;
- Increased bus service frequencies (to at least every 7 minutes) on radial routes serving Maidstone town centre;
- Inbound bus and / or High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on the A229 Royal Engineers Road and / or A229 Loose Road corridors;
- Improved walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on routes across the River Medway and the town centre gyratory; and
- Securing travel plans and appropriate developer contributions to ensure that the impacts of new development are adequately mitigated.

Improve highway network capacity and function at key locations and junctions across the borough

This will be achieved by:

- Highway capacity improvements at the Maidstone bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 junction 7.

Manage parking provision in the town centre and the wider borough to ensure it is fair and proportionate and supports demand management

This will be achieved by:

- A refreshed town centre parking strategy, prioritising shoppers and visitors;
- Giving consideration to a reduction in town centre long-stay parking supply;
- Utilising town centre parking tariffs to encourage a shift to sustainable modes of transport such as park and ride; and
- Reviewing the residents' parking zones to ensure they are fair, simple and meet the needs of all road users.

Improve transport choice across the borough and seek to influence travel behaviour

This will be achieved by:

- Implementing an Influencing Travel Behaviour (ITB) programme;
- Securing travel plans for new development in order to influence their associated travel behaviour patterns;
- Improved walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on routes across the River Medway and the town centre gyratory;
- A high-profile car sharing initiative in partnership with local employers;
- Introducing a Maidstone public transport smartcard, similar to London's oyster card; and
- Greater use of the River Medway as a transport corridor.

Improving strategic links to Maidstone across the county and to wider destinations such as London

This will be achieved by:

- Investigating the feasibility of a new park and ride service on the A229 corridor linked to the route 101 bus service, in partnership with Medway Council;
- Improved train service frequency and capacity to London through working with central government and the train operating companies; and
- Working with the Highways Agency to continue to enhance Maidstone's strategic road network connections.

Ensure the transport network provides inclusive access for all users

This will be achieved by:

- Reducing traffic dominance and severance;
- Improving road safety across all modes;
- Encouraging modes of transport that are affordable and easily available to everyone, such as walking, cycling and public transport;
- Improving the provision of transport information; and

- Removing physical barriers and ensuring transport modes are accessible to all users.

Address the air quality impact of transport

This will be achieved by:

- Implementing the Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan and Low Emission Strategy;
- Encouraging the take up of low carbon vehicle technology; and
- Providing the necessary supporting infrastructure to enable the use of low carbon vehicle technology.

Next Steps and Timetable

It is considered that the data derived from existing strategic transport modelling is now out of date. The previous modelling work was based on a housing figure of 10,080 and a future year of 2026. The housing figure is set to change significantly and in order to ensure the local plan is supported by a robust and sound transport evidence base it is considered necessary to undertake a new strategic transport modelling exercise once a new housing target and distribution strategy has been agreed.

The new modelling will factor in the trips generated by any housing and employment sites allocates in the draft local plan, and will cover the plan period 2011-2031. However, notwithstanding the fact that new modelling will be undertaken, the results of the previous modelling exercise combined with recent data obtained from transport modelling undertaken for the strategic sites in the south east and north west of the urban area, is considered robust enough.

On this basis, a number of steps need to be taken to develop the ITS further and to gain agreement to undertake a new public consultation exercise. The actions to be taken and approximate timings are as follows:

- **Action:** Agree a brief for carrying out the strategic transport modelling work based on a new agreed housing target, distribution strategy and package of transport mitigation measures.
- **When:** Spring 2014.
- **Action:** Undertake strategic transport modelling work to understand the transport impact of the proposed local plan growth. Test the package of transport mitigation measures in order to identify the measures required to manage the identified transport impact.
- **When:** Spring 2014.
- **Action:** Based on the outcomes of the modelling work, refine the ITS and develop an action plan. Produce a full draft ITS document and bring it to Scrutiny and Cabinet for agreement to go out to public consultation.
- **When:** Spring / Summer 2014.
- **Action:** Carry out public consultation of the draft ITS.
- **When:** Summer 2014.

Cabinet also considered an urgent update provided at the meeting from the Chief Executive following letters from KCC raising concerns with the report of the Head of Planning and Development.

The Cabinet considered the request to withdraw the report from the Agenda, however felt that the amendments to the recommendations proposed in the urgent update covered the points raised by KCC and agreed to consider the report.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

Not progressing the ITS would undermine the robustness and soundness of the evidence base of the emerging local plan.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Policy and Communications by: 5 February 2014
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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 27 January 2014

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT - GROUP 3 POLICIES

Issue for Decision

This final group of local plan policies will comprise the housing target and spatial distribution of development for the borough, and a number of transport based policies.

Decision Made

- a) That Policy SP3 for Rural Service Centres and SP4 for Larger Settlements be deferred and will be considered alongside the Strategic Housing Land Allocations Assessment scheduled to be considered by Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet in February 2014; and
- b) That the proposed policies listed below and associated plans of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Head of Planning and Development) be approved for public consultation:-

Development Management Policies (borough wide)	
DM1	Development on Brownfield Land
DM13	Sustainable Transport (<i>previously CS7</i>)
DM14	Public Transport
DM15	Park and Ride
DM16	Air Quality
Park and Ride Land Allocations	
PKR1(1)	Linton Crossroads
PKR1(2)	Old Sittingbourne Road

Reasons for Decision

The Cabinet report of 4 December 2013 explained that development management and spatial policies were being taken to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in three groups because of the number of policies that comprise the new local plan. The first and second groups of policies were approved by Cabinet on 22 October and 4 December 2013 respectively.

The report of the Head of Planning and Development focused on a third and final group of local plan policies before the local plan as a whole is brought to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in February 2014. The list of Group 3 policies is included in the table below.

Group 3 Policies	
Spatial Policies	
SP3	Rural Service Centres (<i>previously CS4</i>)
SP4	Larger Settlements
Development Management Policies (borough wide)	
DM1	Development on Brownfield Land
DM13	Sustainable Transport (<i>previously CS7</i>)
DM14	Public Transport
DM15	Park and Ride
DM16	Air Quality
Park and Ride Land Allocations	
PKR1(1)	Linton Crossroads
PKR1(2)	Old Sittingbourne Road

The group of policies above includes a mixture of Core Strategy policies which have been seen by Members before, some of which have since been amended for inclusion in the local plan, and a number of new local plan policies. The following paragraphs add some detail on the amendments made to existing policies, where relevant, and the content of the new policies.

SP3 & SP4 Rural Service Centre and Larger Settlements

The Cabinet decision to withdraw spatial policies SP3 and SP4 from the draft plan followed a recommendation from Scrutiny Committee (2 December 2013) that officers meet with the parish councils and Ward Members for the settlements not previously designated in the settlement hierarchy for the borough, namely; Coxheath, Yalding, Boughton Monchelsea, Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne) and Sutton Valence. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss the methodology used in making the designations and to hear any concerns that the parish councils may have with the policies going forward.

The settlement hierarchy for Maidstone establishes the most sustainable locations in the borough. The town centre and urban area sit at the top of the hierarchy because this is where the infrastructure is best and where the majority of the borough's population is situated in closest proximity to a wide range of services and facilities. The edge of the urban area is considered the next most sustainable location because any additional population in these areas can easily access services and facilities in the urban area and can make best use of existing infrastructure, e.g. public transport.

Outside of the urban and edge of urban areas, the rural service centres ("RSC") are considered the next most sustainable locations in the borough. The RSCs have more services and facilities, larger populations and better infrastructure than any other settlements in the borough. They serve their local communities and surrounding hinterland and are therefore considered more sustainable than the larger settlements, which are smaller in population and range of services, and tend to provide for the day-to-day needs of their local populations, therefore sitting below the RSCs in the settlement hierarchy.

Meetings have now taken place with the parish councils (and Ward Members) with respect to the Cabinet decision to withdraw policies SP3 and SP4, where officers have had the opportunity to better explain the need for a settlement hierarchy and the reasons why certain settlements are included in the hierarchy. Concerns were expressed by a number of the parish councils, which mainly focused on slight inaccuracies in the audit of services and facilities supporting the policies, and the perceived role the respective settlements play in the hierarchy.

Officers have given further consideration to the policies following the recent meetings and have decided to retain the designations as set out in the Scrutiny report of 2 December 2013. The settlements of Coxheath and Yalding are still considered suitable as rural service centres based on population, range of services and facilities, role of the settlement in serving a wider hinterland and potential to improve the range of services, facilities and infrastructure with respect to any future new development. However, Policy SP3 has been amended with respect to both settlements based on information received at the meetings. The amendments to the supporting text have focused on improving the accuracy of reporting on healthcare provision in Coxheath and highlighting the importance of flood mitigation in Yalding, particularly for the Syngenta site. The policy itself has been strengthened to provide more clarity on the fact that new development will only be approved within the settlement boundaries once they are redrawn in the new local plan. This will ensure that coalescence of settlements cannot occur.

Policy SP4 remains unchanged. Boughton Monchelsea, Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne) and Sutton Valence are considered suitable to include in the settlement hierarchy for the borough because each settlement has enough key services and facilities to support the day-to-day needs of its local population, and the population of these settlements is greater than a number of others with a similar level of services.

However, following points raised at the meeting by Visiting Members and Cabinet Members, it was proposed that Policies SP3 and SP4 be deferred until consideration of the Strategic Housing Land Allocations Assessment ("SHLAA") sites so that Cabinet can gain clarity as to the SHLAA implications of allocating these sites.

DM13 – Sustainable Transport (previously CS7 (2013))

Policy DM13 was approved as an interim local plan development management policy by Cabinet in March 2013. The policy is linked to the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), which supports the local plan with the aim of improving accessibility across the borough and to the town centre, in order to promote Maidstone as a regionally important transport hub. The supporting text and the policy have been further improved since Cabinet in March to add greater detail on air quality mitigation measures and adding a commitment to an enhanced public transport system which focuses on linkages to and from the town centre and to the rural service centres.

DM15 – Park and Ride Sites

Policy DM15 was approved by Cabinet for public consultation in August 2013 and sets the range of criteria that must be met if a new or replacement park and ride site is proposed. The only amendment to this policy is the inclusion of Linton Crossroads (to serve the A229 corridor) as a designated bus park and ride site along with the existing sites at Old Sittingbourne Road, Willington Street and London Road.

Linton Crossroads has been included in this policy based on transport modelling undertaken in 2011 and 2012, which has been used to support the ITS, part of the local plan evidence base. The evidence base shows that a site near Linton Crossroads is the most suitable location for park and ride to the south of the borough because it is at an appropriate distance from the town centre to intercept traffic movements early enough along the A229 corridor, and because the site would provide easy access to the identified catchment area, and particularly long stay commuters travelling to the town centre from the south of the borough. The ITS is the subject of a separate report on this Committee agenda.

The park and ride sites policy DM15 is supported by two park and ride site allocation policies, namely; the new site allocation at Linton Crossroads and an improved policy for the existing park and ride site at Old Sittingbourne Road (Eclipse Business Park) near the M20 junction 7. The "Eclipse" site is still considered the most appropriate site for park and ride to the north of the town based on the transport modelling and the fact that the site is already established and well integrated into the landscape in this location near the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The policies include detailed criteria to mitigate for any adverse impacts the sites may have on the landscape or the surrounding highways network and to ensure that any proposals for these sites are designed to a high standard to make them as attractive as possible for commuters. Both park and ride site allocation policies are included as in Appendix A to this report.

Policy DM16 - Air Quality

This is a new policy that has been developed to address growing air quality issues in the borough and to complement the National Planning Policy Framework requirement for councils to sustain compliance with EU limit values and national objectives for pollutants. The council has a responsibility to work towards achieving these targets and does this through the Local Air Quality Management regime. Through this function the council has identified 6 areas currently exceeding EU guideline values and has an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) in place in order to identify measures aimed at reducing air pollution at these locations.

The supporting text to the Air Quality policy gives examples of appropriate mitigation measures for proposals that will affect air quality, and links the evaluation of air quality impacts to the principles set out in the AQAP. This is taken forward into the policy where mitigation measures are required which are locationally specific and proportionate to the likely impacts of any new development proposals.

Policy DM1 – Development on Brownfield Land

The council has been very successful in recent years in delivering development on brownfield land. A large proportion of brownfield sites in the urban area have been developed at high densities for housing, particularly in and adjacent to the town centre along the River Medway. This new policy sets to build on this success and responds to one of the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, which encourages the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed, provided it is not of high environmental value.

Policies in the new Maidstone Borough Local Plan have been designed to avoid repetition, so the local plan should be read as a whole when determining planning applications. A table of all local plan policies is included at Appendix B. The draft local plan (including site allocations) will be presented to Cabinet, via Scrutiny Committee, in February 2014. This will give Members the opportunity to see the draft local plan as a single document and to see how a number of the policies are interconnected. It is hoped that the document will be approved by Cabinet to go forward for Regulation 18 public consultation, which is currently scheduled to commence in March 2014.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The policies could have been presented to Cabinet for approval as part of the new Maidstone Borough Local Plan as a whole. However, deliberation of these policies, some of which have not been seen by Members since October 2011, at this point offers the opportunity for early debate, and the chance to identify new local issues that have not been addressed through these and/or other policies that will be carried forward to the local plan. This is the final batch of policies that will be brought to Cabinet in advance of the whole local plan being brought for consideration and approval in February 2014.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Policy and Communications by: 5 February 2014
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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 27 January 2014

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN DRAFT SPATIAL STRATEGY

Issue for Decision

To consider the borough's objectively assessed needs arising from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. It will seek Member approval of the draft local plan spatial strategy for public consultation, including the targets for new dwellings and employment/retail floorspace.

Decision Made

- a) That the borough's objectively assessed housing need of 19,600 dwellings for the local plan period 2011 to 2031 as the basis for determining the housing provision for the borough be agreed;
- b) That the currently identified potential to make provision for 17,100 dwellings, subject to full consideration of proposed housing site allocations in February 2014 be noted;
- c) That the borough's objectively assessed need of 37 hectares for office, industry and warehousing based sectors and at the Maidstone medical campus for the plan period 2011 to 2031, and the draft provisions for employment floorspace (offices 39,830m²; industry 20,290m²; warehousing 49,911m²; medical 98,000m²) be noted;
- d) That the key local issues, as amended, set out in paragraph 1.3.46 of the report of the Head of Planning and Development be noted; and
- e) That the spatial vision and objectives, as amended, set out in paragraph 1.3.48 of the report of the Head of Planning and Development be agreed, subject to the earlier decision of the Cabinet to defer the decision on Policies SP3 and SP4 which impacts on the designation of Coxheath and Yalding as Rural Service Centres and the designation of Larger Settlements.

Reasons for Decision

Introduction

Since the Cabinet decision¹ to prepare a single Maidstone Borough Local Plan, Cabinet has received several reports on groups of local plan policies. Members have given consideration to spatial policies for urban and rural

¹ Cabinet 13 March 2013

areas together with more detailed development management policies.

The spatial strategy and development targets were initially set out in the Core Strategy, which was subject to public consultation in September/October 2011. However, new government guidance, namely the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2012 (and subsequent draft National Planning Practice Guidance 2013), required the evidence base supporting the spatial strategy to be updated. Consequently, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), the Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land Forecast report, Strategic Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA and SEDLAA), and the Town Centre Assessment and Retail Capacity Study have been prepared as part of the local plan evidence base. In addition, a consultation draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy has been produced.

In 2011 the council sought the public's views on a housing target of 10,080 for the period 2006 to 2026, using a dispersed distribution of development. The main issues raised by respondents were reported to Cabinet on 25 July 2012. There were mixed responses to the Council's 10,080 dwelling target whereby some respondents supported the target (22 respondents or 5%) while others believed it was too high or too low (42 respondents or 9%). A proportion of the development industry proposed a higher target, while residents sought a reduction.

There was a consensus of support from both the development industry and residents for a dispersed distribution pattern of development that delivers housing at the urban fringe and at rural service centres, although a minority of respondents did object in part or as a whole.

There was support for the principle of identifying a strategic housing development location to the north west of the urban area in the vicinity of Allington, although some objections focused on reducing the amount of housing proposed. A number of residents and the adjoining local authority unconditionally objected to development in this location (47 respondents or 10%) on the grounds of increased traffic congestion, the impact on the landscape, and maintenance of the strategic gap between conurbations.

There was general support for the south east strategic housing development location around Park Wood and Otham (6 respondents or 1%). In the main, objections were from a minority section of the development industry who objected to a move away from a strategic development area that would accommodate 3,000 or 5,000 dwellings supported by a strategic link road.

There was a call for the inclusion of specific targets for rural service centres, as opposed to a single target to be distributed amongst the 5 villages² (27 respondents or 6%). Part of the development industry wished to see detailed strategic development site allocations, as opposed to the strategic development locations identified on the key diagram of the consultation document. Site allocations within strategic development locations together with specific housing targets for rural service centres

² Originally included Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst

were the subject of a further public consultation in 2012: Core Strategy Strategic Site Allocations. Representations on strategic site allocations were considered when the allocations were confirmed at the Cabinet meeting of 13 March 2013. Respondents to the 2012 consultation sought site specific allocations at the rural service centres as opposed to overall village targets. The move to prepare a single local plan overcomes this objection.

In December 2012, Kent County Council issued revised demographic and labour supply forecasts for Maidstone borough, which took account of the latest CLG household projections. The forecasts were based on the new local plan period 2011 to 2031 and revealed an interim housing provision of 14,800 dwellings³. Consideration was given to the findings of the forecasts at the Cabinet meeting of 13 March 2013. This interim figure was never tested through public consultation but superseded the 10,080 dwelling target for the former plan period (2006/26). The new SHMA, which has been prepared in accordance with national guidance using the latest data from CLG and the Office for National Statistics, will supersede all former demographic forecasts for housing provisions.

The report of the Head of Planning and Development focused on the outputs from updated evidence documents for housing and economic development and, also taking into account previous consultation representations together with changes to national planning policy, sets out the consequential revisions to the local plan spatial vision and objectives and the implications for the borough's development targets.

A further report bringing together all of the policies of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan, including the spatial strategy, development targets and site allocations, will be presented to Cabinet on 24 February 2014. At the same meeting, Members will receive supporting reports on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the borough has been undertaken as a further piece of evidence to support the preparation of the local plan. The SHMA has been prepared in partnership with Ashford and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Councils which were at a similar plan making stage to Maidstone. Medway Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Swale Borough Council were invited to take part in the exercise but declined due the stage their local plans had reached. GL Hearn, a firm of expert consultants in this field, has undertaken the work for the three authorities.

A number of briefings and training sessions that included time for questions have been held, to assist Members in understanding the complexities of the SHMA. These sessions were well attended by Members.

- 28 August 2013 – Presentation on the methodologies validating the SHMA (and SHLAA/SEDLAA)

³ Based on 10-year trend-based projections 2011 to 2031.

- 4 & 11 November 2013 – Presentations/Workshops on the NPPF/NPPG and the importance of objectively assessed needs
- 22 November 2013 – Presentation/Q&A by Planning Advisory Service representative (Jo Lee of Peter Brett Associates) on Meeting Objectively Assessed Need: The SHMA – context and practice examples
- 9 December 2013 – Presentation/Q&A by GL Hearn (Nick Ireland and Justin Gardner) on the findings of the SHMA and housing provisions.

A principal purpose of the SHMA is to assess the overall need for additional housing in the borough for the plan period (2011-31). The NPPF directs that Local Plans should meet “the full, objectively assessed needs” for both market and affordable housing within housing market areas as far as this is consistent with other policies in the NPPF (NPPF paragraph 47). The housing market area reflects key functional linkages between places where people live and work.

The draft National Planning Practice Guidance 2013 (NPPG) sets out how a SHMA should be undertaken⁴. The guidance specifies that the basis for calculating the future overall need for housing must be the latest national household projections published by CLG. The SHMA has used the interim 2011 based household projections released by CLG in 2013. These are trend based projections that are an indication of the number of households that would form if recent demographic trends continued. They are interim projections, rather than official statistics, because they are based on the 2011 interim sub-national population projections (SNPP) which only project population growth to 2021. These population projections are based on the 2011 mid-year population estimates rolled forward from the Census 2011 data and applying the demographic trends used for the previous 2010-based SNPP. New SNPP data is expected in spring 2014, and updated CLG household projections are expected towards the end of 2014. This base information has then been further refined in the SHMA by examining the key local inputs that fed into the SNPP, and undertaking a critical assessment of more recent migration data, household formation rates and housing vacancy rates.

The conclusion of this analysis is that the SHMA predicts that some 19,600 new homes would need to be built over the 20 year plan period (2011-2031) for the full objective need for housing in Maidstone borough to be met, i.e. 980 dwellings per annum.

Importantly the methodology and key assumptions which underpin the assessment are common to the reports for each of the three authorities. This helps add to the rigour of the reports and means that there has been a consistent approach to the assessment of housing needs across the whole of the Maidstone housing market area which encompasses parts of Tonbridge & Malling Borough, namely Aylesford, East & West Malling, Larkfield and Snodland. The housing market areas have been based on CLG research of 2010 (The Geography of Housing Market Areas in England – CURDS). The administrative boundary of Maidstone falls within two

⁴ There is further advice on how to prepare a SHMA. PAS published “10 key principles for owning your own housing number – finding your objectively assessed needs”, and there is an online tool “What Homes Where” which is a website set up by professional bodies, charities and trade association professionals with an interest in planning for housing.

housing market areas: Maidstone and Ashford (Harrietsham & Lenham and Headcorn wards), although the objectively assessed needs have been disaggregated by district.

The extent of the Maidstone housing market area is an important consideration and the degree of integration with the Medway Towns to the north has been assessed. The labour market and migration move in both directions between Maidstone and Medway. However, the SHMA has analysed other factors, in particular the housing "offer" (house type, size and tenure), the London influence and housing costs, and concluded that there is justification to distinguish Maidstone from Medway in market terms.

The objectively assessed housing need for Maidstone has also been benchmarked against five and ten year migration trend projections. These provide a useful sensitivity test, but they do not take account of the impact of population age profile on migration (both in Maidstone borough and other areas from which people typically move to Maidstone). Further sensitivity testing of the objectively assessed housing need was undertaken through the modelling of two economic scenarios. This confirms that the scale of household growth necessary to generate sufficient working age people to support the expected growth in the economy over the same period (2011 to 2031)⁵ will not exceed the objectively housing assessed need of 19,600 dwellings.

The SHMA also considers the need for affordable housing over the plan period. The methodology draws together analysis of the number of households currently in housing need with estimates of how many additional households will require affordable housing in future years to 2031. The supply of affordable housing from existing stock re-lets, vacancies and developments in the pipeline is then derived to establish what the net requirement for new affordable housing will be. The SHMA concludes that of the total annual requirement of 980 dwellings needed over the local plan period (2011 to 2031), 324 new affordable homes will be needed annually between 2013 and 2031. This finding assumes that households will spend up to 30% of income on housing costs although, in fact, some households will be willing to spend a greater proportion than this. The private rented sector will also continue to have some role in providing affordable accommodation.

The SHMA is a technical document and is a pivotal piece of the local plan evidence base. Hence an independent demographer was appointed to review Maidstone's objectively assessed need. The demographer has concluded that the objectively assessed need of 19,600 dwellings set out in the SHMA is the best scenario of the alternatives tested, and that the results for population, households and new homes are robust.

Representatives from local authorities, house-builders, planning agents, estate agents and registered providers attended a stakeholder presentation and workshop for the SHMA, which was held on 26 July 2013. The workshop covered the three local authority areas but also drew comparisons with wider trends in Kent and other parts of the country.

⁵ Between 15,783 dwellings and 18,560 dwellings

The key points arising from the event were:

- Some recovery from the bottom of the market in 2007.
- Recovery has been variable across different segments of the market and in different areas:
 - Recovery in demand for family homes stronger (particularly small family homes) whilst flats remain muted
 - More established, affluent buyers returned to the market more quickly, first time buyer activity less so
 - Higher value rural locations and areas traditionally linked with the London market recovering more strongly.
- Future recovery is likely to be gradual, but in higher value areas demand and pricing pressures could return to the market more rapidly.
- Improving access to mortgage availability will be critical to the market recovery. Help-to-Buy is greatly assisting with this, but what happens after will be important. More certainty in the employment market and increases in earnings will also be needed to sustain recovery.
- Greater choice in the supply of sites (particularly more small sites) would help to improve housing delivery and provide an alternative to large scale allocations.
- The private rented sector continues to grow apace, but there is a need to ensure it is aligned with need and that standards are maintained. Demand for older persons housing and retirement accommodation is also strong.

Following the Members' presentation on 9 December 2013, the draft SHMA was published on 9 January 2014 and is available to view or download from the local plan webpage. At this point in time the SHMA should remain in draft because new national data on household projections is expected to be released in 2014. Officers will monitor the implications that may arise from new releases and will report resultant actions needed to Members.

Meanwhile, subject to Cabinet decisions in February when land allocations will be recommended, there is currently potential capacity to make provision for up to 17,100 dwellings over the plan period 2011-2031. This figure includes a yield of 8,210 dwellings from potential new SHLAA sites (in addition to the approved strategic housing sites), based on the dispersed distribution strategy formerly approved by Cabinet⁶ and the borough's environmental and infrastructure constraints.

The NPPF directs local authorities to identify deliverable housing sites for the first 5 years (it is implied this starts from the date of adoption of a local plan). Deliverable sites, including integral infrastructure, must be available, offer a suitable location, be achievable (with a realistic prospect of being delivered within those 5 years), and be viable. For years 6 to 10 and, where possible, years 11 to 15 following adoption (i.e. the last 10 years of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan period), sites should be developable. Developable sites must be suitably located, and available and viable at the point of release. The greater the number of dwellings on sites that are specifically identified as deliverable/developable, the more robust the local plan will be. However, the NPPF also allows for the

⁶ Cabinet reports 9 February 2011, 10 August 2011 and 25 July 2012

identification of broad locations for housing in this latter period. Three broad development locations yielding a potential 3,000 dwellings will be presented to Members in February.

This appraisal would currently result in an unmet need of 2,500 dwellings which represents 13% of the objectively assessed need. The council will need to be in a position to robustly defend any constraints to development, and to demonstrate what measures have been taken to fully meet the objectively assessed need. These measures will be discussed in more detail in the February reports when development targets are considered, but are likely to include a further call for sites as part of the public consultation process, a reappraisal of the reasons why sites previously submitted have been rejected, and ultimately whether (under the duty to cooperate) unmet need can be satisfied by neighbouring authorities.

Objectively Assessed Need and Housing Land Supply	Dwellings	Totals
Objectively assessed housing need		19,600
Completed dwellings 2011/12 and 2012/13	1,503	
Planning permissions at 1 April 2013	1,850	
Planning permissions 1 April to 1 October 2013	246	
Planning permissions – outstanding Section106 Agreements at 1 October 2013	107	
Land allocations – approved strategic sites	2,140	
Land allocations – potential SHLAA sites	8,210	
Total potential housing land supply (approx.)		14,100
Potential broad locations for housing development	3,000	
Total potential housing land supply including broad locations		17,100
Unmet housing need (19,600 less 17,100)		(2,500)

Constraints to Development

The NPPF makes distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status. Whilst the NPPF gives weight to the protection of international and national designations, this does not downgrade local designations for landscape or wildlife sites in plan making, and such sites are not suitable for development but a strong case for their protection must be made. Another important and common theme that runs through the NPPF is the need for viable infrastructure to support new development. The local plan must ensure that new and expanded infrastructure requirements generated by land allocations can be met.

Of international importance in Maidstone is the North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The borough includes 23 nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); and 63 Local Wildlife

Sites (LWS) and 2 Local Nature Reserves (LNR) which are locally important. A large area of the borough lies within the Kent Downs AONB, a nationally important landscape designation where a strong level of protection is given. A strong level of protection is also given to the small section of the Metropolitan Green Belt that lies to the west of the borough. These areas are protected but they are not sacrosanct.

All landscapes have some value, but they cannot all be protected, so at the local level the focus must be on protecting the borough's best landscapes. Of particular local significance are the borough's river valleys (the Medway, Loose and Len) and the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge. Local plan policies identify and safeguard such areas, although there are currently no major pressures for housing development in these locations.

In other parts of the borough where sites have been submitted for consideration through the call for sites, local constraints have been examined through the site assessment pro forma⁷. The pro forma has been used to assess each potential development site submitted through the SHLAA call for sites (and the SEDLAA) in order to achieve a consistent and transparent approach. The mitigation of constraints - local landscape, ecology, highways, services, flooding and so on - has formed part of the assessments. In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, the availability, locational suitability, deliverability and viability of each potential development site has been examined, and the results will be available to assist Member decision making in February.

There are often solutions to overcoming infrastructure constraints. A new school or community centre can be built; open space or play equipment can be provided; and increased traffic congestion can be addressed through new public transport schemes and highway improvements.

So if the council cannot fully meet its objectively assessed housing need, it must establish a strong case of constraint to development within the borough, and demonstrate that neighbouring authorities have fewer constraints.

Sustainability Appraisal and Testing of Development Options

Consultants URS have been commissioned to prepare the sustainability appraisal (SA) for the local plan. The production of an SA is required under EU regulations and planning law, and it is an appraisal of the economic, environmental, and social effects of a plan (and its policies) from the outset of the plan preparation process. An SA is an iterative process that allows decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

A key purpose of the SA is to appraise development options for the local plan. The emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan has a strategy of directing development to the most sustainable locations, in particular making best use of previously developed land (brownfield sites). Brownfield sites within an urban area have access to existing infrastructure and can generally be developed at higher densities, thus

⁷ Approved by Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development, via Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2013

reducing the need to release greenfield sites for development. This approach accords with the principles of the NPPF and the aims of this council. Regeneration of the town centre is one of the key objectives of the local plan, and every effort has been made to identify potential redevelopment sites over and above those that were submitted through the SHLAA call for sites in December 2013/January 2014. Local plan policies encourage a regeneration approach through the allocation of brownfield sites for redevelopment and by requiring a lower affordable housing contribution on brownfield sites within the urban area in order to encourage regeneration.

In the past 10 years, a high percentage of development has been built on brownfield sites (between 85% and 96% annually). This was a result of introducing a moratorium on the release of greenfield land allocated in the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan (2000) following the publication of an urban capacity study in 2002. This trend cannot be sustained and the moratorium has been lifted to enable the council to meet short and long term housing provisions. The need for greenfield sites is compounded by national policies that are leading to considerably higher annual housing targets than previously experienced. New homes are needed because of a growing population, people are living longer and there are more elderly people in smaller households, new jobs are being created and, over the past decade, there has generally been a level of net in-migration into the borough (both internal migration from other parts of the Country and international migration).

There is a clear hierarchy in determining which locations are the most sustainable for allocating new development sites. Following the redevelopment of brownfield sites within settlement boundaries, the most sustainable location for greenfield development is adjacent to the currently defined⁸ urban boundary, where access to services is greatest and best use can be made of existing infrastructure. However, not all development needs can be accommodated here because of environmental and infrastructure constraints. Seven rural service centres form the second tier in Maidstone's settlement hierarchy. These centres act as a focal point for trade and services for wider communities, providing a concentration of public transport, employment and community facilities. Rural service centres are Maidstone's most sustainable villages and are able to accommodate further development. Three larger settlements form the third tier of the settlement hierarchy. These villages have a smaller range of services than rural service centres, but still meet the day-to-day needs of local communities. Where appropriate, larger settlements can accommodate some limited development.

The SA is appraising various options that follow the settlement hierarchy, and is also assessing the impact of the Golding Homes' proposal for a new settlement⁹, which was submitted during the call for sites. The SA will appraise three targets for housing: 19,600 dwellings (objectively assessed need), 17,100 dwellings (draft capacity to date including broad locations for development), and 14,100 dwellings (draft capacity to date excluding broad locations for development). The SA will also appraise these targets

⁸ Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000

⁹ Proposal for a freestanding garden suburb, accommodating 4,500 new homes on greenfield sites located to the south east of the urban area.

against the various distribution options for development: a dispersed pattern of development, with and without broad locations for development and/or the new settlement. This will compare a strategy of development dispersal with one of a new settlement together with a reduced dispersal of development. These options will be tested against their ability to deliver the objectively assessed need for housing, but will be balanced by sustainability indicators including flooding, health, poverty, education, congestion, climate change, biodiversity, countryside, heritage, waste, energy and economy.

Sustainability Appraisal: Housing development options		
1	19,600	Dispersed and broad locations
2	19,600	Dispersed, broad locations and a new settlement
3	17,100	Dispersed and broad locations
4	17,100	Dispersed and new settlement
5	14,100	Dispersed only
6	14,100	Dispersed and a new settlement

The results of the appraisal will be available prior to the February reports when Members will consider the housing target and distribution pattern of development.

Employment Land Forecast

An updated employment land forecast has been prepared as evidence for the local plan, which will replace the employment forecast published in 2013 that was based on housing provisions of 14,800 dwellings. The new forecast uses a different methodology than previous for a number of reasons, not least to enable economic growth opportunities to be assessed objectively and then used to inform the housing growth discussion. The forecast has been produced by the consultancy firm GVA which has undertaken such forecasting work for the council in the past.

The approach used in this forecast looks first at the different sectors in the local economy and establishes which sectors are projected to grow or contract (in terms of jobs), and by what percentage, over the lifetime of the plan. The basis for this assessment is the nationally recognised Experian forecast for the borough. This has then been refined where more detailed local factors support a higher or lower growth rate than is predicted by Experian, which provides a more strategic analysis of the economy. In particular, the forecast has taken account of potential employment growth at the medical campus proposed at junction 7 of the M20; an allowance has been made for market "churn", calculated from the average annual construction rate of space within the borough; and the impact of changing working practices by sectoral activity in the borough has been appraised. The output of this sectoral analysis is an employment (jobs) forecast for all of the sectors in the local economy.

This jobs forecast is then converted into a land requirement for those sectors which will need new office, industrial or distribution/ warehousing floorspace for the full local plan period 2011 to 2031 (i.e. the B use classes). The creation of a total of 14,394 jobs between 2011 and 2031 are forecast across all employment sectors, of which 7,933 will be in the office, industrial and warehousing based sectors and at the Maidstone

medical campus, including KIMS¹⁰. Total figures in the table below vary due to rounding.

2011-2031	Job creation	Floorspace (m²)	Land (hectares)
Office	3,053	39,830	2.7
Industrial	226	20,290	5.1
Warehouse	453	49,911	10.0
General requirement	3,733	110,030	17.7
Medical	4,200	98,000	19.0
Total (incl. medical)	7,933	208,030	37.0

The council's ability to meet its employment provisions through new land allocations, together with the distribution of development, will be given consideration by Members through the February reports.

Retail Capacity Study

Members have received a presentation on the Maidstone Town Centre Assessment and the Retail Capacity Study, produced by consultants DTZ, and both documents have been published on the local plan webpage. At its meeting on 4 December 2014, Cabinet approved the retail provisions set out in the appended policies to that report. Two retail allocations at Maidstone East/Royal Mail Sorting Office and Newnham Park were approved, and the Mall was identified as a future broad location for retail growth.

The Maidstone Retail Capacity Study assessed the quantitative needs for retail development to 2031. The RECAP model was used in forecasting: an empirical step-by-step model based on the results of the 2012 Maidstone Household Survey of shopping patterns as its method of allocating retail expenditure from catchment zones to shopping destinations. The model is therefore based on consumer responses about actual shopping patterns.

The Retail Capacity Study was based on an interim provision of 14,800 dwellings. The consultants have considered the outputs in the context of increased provisions, and concluded that the population forecasts used for the purpose of the Maidstone Retail Capacity Study are consistent with a provision for 17,100 dwellings. For information and completeness, the retail provisions are reproduced below. The provisions are cumulative for each year.

Retail provisions	2016	2021	2026	2031
Comparison (m ²)	5,500	12,400	18,800	23,700
Convenience (m ²)	3,700	4,400	5,250	6,100

¹⁰ Kent Institute for Medicine and Surgery

Key Local Issues, Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives

The challenge for the local plan is to manage the potential impacts of future housing and employment growth, together with supporting infrastructure, to ensure that development takes place in a sustainable manner that supports the local economy whilst safeguarding valuable natural and built assets. The borough's key local issues were initially identified in the Core Strategy¹¹, and the same document set out the council's spatial vision and spatial objectives for the borough. These have been updated to ensure conformity with changing government policy and the publication of the NPPF and subsequent guidance, and to reflect any changes in local circumstances.

Revisions to the key local issues set out in the Core Strategy 2011 are set out below (deletions are shown in strike through text and additions in italic text). The revisions will be carried forward to the Maidstone Borough Local Plan for further public consultation (Regulation 18) following Member decisions on the plan in February.

Key Local Issues

1. Where, when and how much development will be distributed throughout the borough;
2. Maintenance of the distinct character and identity of villages and the urban area;
3. Protection of the built and natural heritage, including the Kent Downs AONB and its setting *and areas of local landscape value*;
4. Provision of strategic and local infrastructure to support new development and growth including a sustainable integrated transport strategy, adequate water supply, sustainable waste management, energy infrastructure and social infrastructure such as health, schools and other educational facilities;
5. Improvements to quality of air within the air quality management area (AQMA);
6. Regeneration of the town centre and areas of social and environmental deprivation;
7. Redressing the low wage economy by expanding the employment skills base *to target employment opportunities* and ~~improving higher and further education opportunities to target employment opportunities in green technologies including low carbon energy production~~;
8. Meeting housing needs *by delivering of vulnerable groups including young people*, affordable housing, local needs housing, accommodation for the elderly, accommodation to meet Gypsy and Traveller needs and accommodation to meet rural housing needs;
9. Promotion of the multi-functional nature of the borough's open spaces, rivers and other watercourses;
10. Ensuring that all new development is built to a high standard of sustainable design and construction; and
11. Ensuring that applications for development adequately address the impact of climate change, especially the issues of flooding and water supply.

¹¹ Core Strategy Public Consultation Draft 2011 (Regulation 18 consultation)

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan is the spatial interpretation of the vision and priorities set out in the Maidstone Community Strategy¹². The local plan also has regard to other corporate documents, in particular the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 (2013-2014 Refresh), the emerging Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the Housing Strategy 2011/12 to 2014/15. Spatial Policy officers work closely with colleagues in these departments and also with other departments such as Development Management, Economic Development, and Environmental Health. The policies of the local plan aim to deliver the plan's vision and objectives.

Revisions to the spatial vision and objectives set out in the Core Strategy 2011 are set out below (deletions are shown in strike through text and additions in italic text). The revisions will be carried forward to the Maidstone Borough Local Plan for further public consultation (Regulation 18) following Member decisions on the plan in February.

Spatial Vision

By ~~2026~~ 2031:

- The ~~Core Strategy~~ *Maidstone Borough Local Plan* will deliver sustainable growth and regeneration whilst protecting and enhancing the borough's natural and built assets;
- Development will be guided by ~~a sustainable~~ and *the delivery of the* integrated transport strategy together with the timely provision of appropriate strategic and local infrastructure;
- Maidstone *town* will be ~~a~~ *an enhanced* vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community benefiting from ~~its~~ *an* exceptional urban and rural environment with a vital and viable ~~Maidstone~~ town centre
- The ~~character and identity of rural settlements will be maintained~~ *roles of the rural service centres will be reinforced* by directing suitable development and supporting infrastructure to ~~the rural service centres of Coxheath, Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden, and Staplehurst and Yalding;~~
- *The roles of the larger rural settlements of Boughton Monchelsea, Eythorne Street (Hollingbourne) and Sutton Valence will be maintained through the delivery of limited development, where appropriate, together with supporting infrastructure;*
- *The distinctive character of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, together with the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt, will be rigorously protected and maintained;*
- Employment skills will be expanded to meet an improved and varied range of local jobs;
- There will be a better balanced housing market to meet the needs of the community across the whole borough; and
- Development will be of high quality sustainable design and construction to respond to climate change and to protect the environment.

Spatial Objectives

1. To provide for ~~10,080 new homes and 10,000 new jobs~~ *a balance of new homes and related retail and employment opportunities*, with an

¹² Maidstone Community Strategy 2009-2020 (refreshed July 2013)

emphasis on increasing skilled employment opportunities in the borough alongside developing learning opportunities.

2. To focus new development mainly within the Maidstone urban area with:
 - i. ~~80% of new housing built within and adjacent to the urban area of Maidstone with appropriate sustainable greenfield development being well located in relation to existing services in the urban area Principally within¹³ the Maidstone urban area and at the strategic development locations at the edge of town, including junction 7 of the M20 motorway;~~
 - ii. ~~The aim of providing 60% of new housing across the plan period on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings~~
 - ii. ~~New employment land allocations to be exploited in Maidstone Town Centre first co-ordinated with opportunities on the most suitable greenfield sites to provide for a suitable mix of employment opportunities To a lesser extent at the seven rural service centres of Coxheath, Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden, Staplehurst and Yalding¹⁴ consistent with their range of services and role; and~~
 - iii. ~~The creation of opportunities to provide for local power-generation Limited development at the three larger settlements of Boughton Monchelsea, Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne) and Sutton Valence where appropriate.~~
3. To transform the offer, vitality and viability of the *Maidstone* town centre including *its* office, retail, residential, ~~further and higher education~~, leisure, cultural and tourism functions together with significant enhancement of *its public realm* and ~~to the natural and built environment particularly in respect of including~~ the riverside environment.
4. To ~~consolidate~~ *reinforce* the roles of the rural service centres *through the retention of existing services, the addition of new infrastructure where possible, and the regeneration of employment sites at* ~~Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst as the focus of the network of rural settlements with retained existing services and regenerated employment sites including the expansion of existing employment sites where appropriate.~~
5. To support new housing in the smaller villages that meet local needs and is of a design, scale, character and location appropriate to the settlement and which supports the retention of existing services and facilities.

¹³ Land allocations will be made within and adjacent to the boundaries of the urban area, rural service centres and larger settlements as defined in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2000. A consequence of allocating land is the amendment of boundaries so that new sites become part of those settlements. To state that allocations will be made “adjacent” to settlements implies further development would be acceptable outside settlement boundaries following adoption of the local plan.

¹⁴ The primary development site at Yalding is the former Syngenta works, where flood mitigation measures will be an essential part of new development proposals.

6. To safeguard and maintain the character of the ~~district's~~ *borough's* landscapes including the Kent Downs AONB and other distinctive ~~local~~ landscapes of *local value* whilst facilitating the economic and social well-being of these areas, including the diversification of the rural economy.
7. To retain and enhance the character of the existing green and blue infrastructure and to promote linkages between areas of environmental value.
8. To ensure that new development takes account of the need to mitigate the impacts of climate change, *implementing sustainable construction standards for both residential and non-residential schemes*. ~~and adapt to climate change and also to improve air quality by locating development to minimise the use of resources, to promote sustainable travel patterns, to develop a greater choice of transport measures, to support water and energy efficiency measures and to encourage renewable energy sources and sustainable drainage solutions.~~
9. To ensure that new development is of high quality design, making a positive contribution to the area including protection of built and natural heritage and biodiversity.
10. To provide for future housing that meets the changing needs of the borough's population including provision for an increasingly ageing population and family housing, an appropriate tenure mix, affordable housing, and accommodation to meet the needs of the ~~local~~ Gypsy and Traveller community.
11. To ensure that key infrastructure and service improvements needed to support delivery of the ~~Core Strategy~~ *Maidstone Borough Local Plan objectives and policies* are brought forward in a coordinated and timely manner, and that new development makes an appropriate contribution towards the infrastructure needs arising as a result of such new development.

The need (or otherwise) for junction 8 of the M20 motorway to assist in delivering the borough's employment requirements will be given consideration by Members in February. This may result in an amendment to objective 2(i).

Following the decision to defer Policies SP3 and SP4, Cabinet felt it appropriate to agree the spatial vision and objectives, as amended, subject to amendments being required following the further consideration of these policies as they impact on the designation of Coxheath and Yalding as Rural Service Centres and the designation of Larger Settlements.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The key decision arising from the report of the Head of Planning and Development is the agreement of the borough's objectively assessed need of 19,600 dwellings. The NPPF aims to significantly boost the supply of housing land and the basis for calculating a borough's housing need is the most up-to-date Office for National Statistics data releases and CLG trend based population and household projections. The SHMA takes account of the latest national demographic data and has examined local factors such as migration patterns, household formation and vacancy rates. The next step is for the local authority to use its evidence base to demonstrate how (and if) it can fully meet objectively assessed need through the SHLAA, constraints mapping, infrastructure assessments and sustainability appraisal. To reject the objectively assessed need of 19,600 dwellings would result in the local plan being found unsound at examination.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Policy and Communications by: 5 February 2014
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