

AGENDA

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Tuesday 10 November 2015

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Burton (Chairman), English,
Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer,
Paine, Springett, de Wiggondene and
Mrs Wilson

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1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Notification of Visiting Members
4. Disclosures by Members and Officers

Continued Over/:

Issued on Monday 2 November 2015

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**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

5.	Disclosures of Lobbying	
6.	To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information	
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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2015

Present: Councillor Burton (Chairman), and Councillors Chittenden, English, Mrs Gooch, D Mortimer, Paine, Springett, Mrs Stockell, de Wiggondene and Mrs Wilson

Also Present: Councillors Perry, Mrs Ring and Sargeant

107. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Grigg.

Councillor de Wiggondene sent apologies for lateness.

108. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

- Councillor Chittenden for Councillor Grigg
- Councillor Stockell for Councillor de Wiggondene (who arrived at 18:47)

109. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mrs Grigg is elected (uncontested) as the Vice Chairman for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2015/16.

110. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

The following Visiting Members were in attendance reserving their right to speak:

- Councillor Perry
- Councillor Ring
- Councillor Sargeant

111. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

112. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that all Committee Members, with the exception of Councillor Chittenden, had been lobbied on item 18 – North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan.

It was noted that Councillors Burton, Paine and Stockell had been lobbied on item 17 – Lease for the Park and Ride site, Sittingbourne Road, Maidstone.

It was also noted that all Councillors had been lobbied on Landscapes of Local Value and the Integrated Transport Strategy.

113. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

The Chairman informed the Committee there was a possibility for Agenda item 17 – Lease for the Park and Ride Site, Sittingbourne Road, Maidstone, to move into Part II on the grounds it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, depending on how the discussions went.

114. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2015

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed subject to the following amendments:

- Minute 103, Decision 3 – addition of the record of voting as follows:
 - For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0
- Removal of the duplicate of Councillor Burton from the list of Councillors Present at the meeting.

115. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

116. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mr Sean Carter, Chairman of the North Loose Neighbourhood Planning Forum, asked the following question of the Chairman regarding agenda item 18 – North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan:

"The process to produce this plan started in May 2012, first of all to have an agreed Designated Neighbourhood Area and then to become a Neighbourhood Planning Forum. Therefore we have spent 3.5 years and literally thousands of volunteer hours putting this plan together."

We now have an officer's report with their opinions which no doubt Councillors will take note of.

Why is it that the people who actually compiled the Neighbourhood Plan have no involvement with this meeting and have no chance to answer questions from the Councillors?"

The Chairman responded as follows:

"The Neighbourhood Plan preparation process is controlled by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and includes two major consultation phases:

Regulation 14 requires the draft Neighbourhood Plan to be consulted on for at least six weeks and this is a process managed by the appropriate Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum. Typically, the Borough Council assists this process with printing and notices, and informal comments from the Policy Team.

At this stage, changes can be made to the substantive content of the Neighbourhood Plan, and Borough Council officers frequently suggest changes and amendments with regard to what are appropriate planning matters, the process to be followed and other relevant issues.

At consultation phase, the Parish Council prepares the formal submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the 2012 Regulations, which is commonly known as "the Regulation 15 submission".

The Borough Council is then required, under Regulation 16, to undertake a six week statutory public consultation and is responsible for the management of that process. This is also the stage where the Borough Council makes its own representation on the Neighbourhood Plan which is taken to committee for Member approval for onward submission to the independent Examiner.

The Borough Council is acting, at this stage, as a consultee in the same way as any other institution or individual, and its response must follow the same guidelines as for the Examiner. That is, the Neighbourhood Plan is tested for its adherence to the basic conditions laid down by statute and supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 065 of the Guidance).

Notwithstanding all previous involvement with the Neighbourhood Plan, the report to committee assesses whether, in the Borough Council's view, the Plan conforms with the Regulations. If Members approve the report, it passes to the Examiner without further amendment, together with all other representations made during the consultation. The Examiner then considers all the representations made, and the Plan itself, and produces a report suggesting amendments where she/he thinks fit and, if appropriate, recommending that the Plan proceeds to a referendum.

The committee report is effectively an objective assessment of whether the Neighbourhood Plan satisfies the basic conditions for a Neighbourhood Plan, as submitted. The Examiner's role is to assess the appropriateness of all representations made, including the Borough Council's, and no further amendment of the committee report is possible although any Members' discussion will form part of the submission of the representation to the Examiner."

The Chairman added:

"Under the new regime of governance we now operate under, quite simply, there is nothing provided for in the constitution that we have now adopted to allow members of the public to actually speak at committee meetings. Previously, under the other system, there were different stages of Overview and Scrutiny before decisions were made where there was some degree of flexibility, but currently the constitution does not have any statutory provision."

Mr Carter asked the following supplementary question:

"Just hearing what you are saying, where the public has no involvement, I just wonder where democracy comes into it"

The Chairman responded as follows:

"I think the process is clearly laid out and perhaps the democracy that we are now applying is the consequence of the democratic process to changes to the governance system we now operate within."

117. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR NOTING

RESOLVED: That the Committee's Work Programme, with the addition of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan timetable, be noted.

118. REFERENCE FROM HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE -
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP
NOMINATIONS

The Committee acknowledged the importance of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) as a major project for the Council and agreed it was important that the Committee engaged with the DMP Board.

The Committee was informed that the Task and Finish Groups were part of the DMP Board, which was external to the Council's Governance structure, and as such, not governed by the Council's Constitution.

The Committee agreed that, while there were Committee Members interested, it was difficult to nominate Committee Members to the Task and Finish Groups listed in the referral without knowing their terms of reference, frequency and timing of meetings and who other, external, members were.

RESOLVED: That the Committee formally request from the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee, additional details of the Destination Management Plan's Task and Finish Groups, to include the terms of reference for each Group, dates and times of meetings and information on other Task and Finish Group members.

Voting: For – 4 Against - 4 Abstention – 1

Councillor Stockell left during the debate and therefore received no vote on this item.

The Chair cast the deciding vote – the motion was carried.

Councillor English requested that his dissent was noted.

119. REFERENCE FROM POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - LANDSCAPES OF LOCAL VALUE DECISION REFERRAL RESULT

Members considered the Reference from the Policy and Resources Committee regarding the Referral of the Decision on the Landscapes of local Value.

Members were informed the Committee that the decision of the Policy and Resources Committee to include part of the Low Weald (the area currently defined as a Special Landscape area in the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000) as a Landscape of Local Value had been incorporated into the revised supporting text and policy criteria of draft policy SP5 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

The Committee noted the revised text and policy criteria would form part of the Regulation 18 Consultation exercise that was taking place between 2 October 2015 and 5pm on 30 October 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the referral outcome from Policy and Resources Committee.

120. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - IMPLICATIONS OF THE REFERENCE FROM POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE 23 SEPTEMBER 2015: LANDSCAPES OF LOCAL VALUE

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report.

121. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - CORRECTION TO DECISION UNDER MINUTE 52 OF THE MEETING OF 23 JULY 2015

RESOLVED: That the Committee correct the published decision under Minute 52 of the Minutes from the meeting of this Committee on 23 July 2015 to read:

'The following sites, which have already obtained either Planning Permission or a Resolution to Grant by the Council's Planning

Committee, be approved for Public Consultation (according to the relevant stage of the consultation for each site):

H1(39) – Lane at Ulcombe Road, Headcorn (Regulation 19)
H1(61) – Land at Cross Keys, Roundwell, Bearsted (Regulation 19)
H1(65) – Land North of Lenham Road, Headcorn (Regulation 19)'

Voting: For – 8 Against – 0 Abstention – 1

122. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE ITS - ALL MODES OF TRANSPORT

The Committee was informed that the changes to policy DM15 (Park and Ride), deleting reference to the park and ride sites at Linton Crossroads and Old Sittingbourne Road, formed part of the ongoing Regulation 18 Consultation ending on 30 October 2015. The Committee agreed it was not possible to pre-empt the responses to the consultation so the draft Integrated Transport Policy would be presented to the Committee at their meeting of 1 December 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the verbal update on the position of the draft Integrated Transport Policy.

123. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND SHARED SERVICES - LEASE FOR THE PARK AND RIDE SITE AT SITTINGBOURNE ROAD, MAIDSTONE

The Chairman reminded the Committee of the possibility of moving into Part II if the discussion on this item referred to potentially exempt information.

The Parking Services Manager outlined the process necessary to lead up to the closure of the Park and Ride site at Sittingbourne Road, Maidstone.

Members expressed their concern was raised that there was no clear idea of where the displaced vehicles, currently using the site, would go once it was closed.

The Committee noted that an extensive search for alternative sites around Junction 7 of the M20 had been carried out. Land values, which were high in this area, played a significant part in deciding the viability of continuing the service from this area.

Some Committee members voiced their disappointment at the closure of the site but recognised the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy would provide a process for improvements to bus services and other mitigating measures.

RESOLVED:

1. That a new short term lease of three months be agreed with Gallagher Properties Limited based on the current lease arrangements;

2. That Arriva Kent and Surrey are issued with a contract variation to amend the service provision from three sites to two from 8 February 2016.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions – 2

124. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - NORTH LOOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Committee were informed of the process the North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan) had been through. The reasons behind the Council's formal representations to the Regulation 16 Consultation on the Plan were explained, and were a factual assessment of whether the Plan satisfied the requirements of local and national planning policy.

The Committee discussed the Council's responses and acknowledged the work the North Loose Neighbourhood Forum (NLNF) had put into the production of the document.

The Committee discussed the Plan's contribution to the Maidstone Borough Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN). It was explained that the Plan would have Development Plan status once adopted and it would be expected to show site plans and the indicative yield for each site mentioned in the Plan to demonstrate a contribution to meeting the OAHN. The Committee noted these details could be included in the Plan before it went to the Examiner.

The Committee agreed that the Plan was in general conformity with the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, with the exception of the New Line Learning site and the low housing densities, which would need to be justified.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee approves the report as the basis for formal representations on the Regulation 16 North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan (August 2015);
2. That the Committee agrees the Council's consultation responses to the Regulation 16 North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan (August 2015) summarised below.

The North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan (August 2015):

- a) Is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000;

- b) Has been assessed, at this stage, to not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats regulations assessment;
- c) Is not in line with national policy in respect that it fails to adequately indicate how it has contributed, and will contribute, to the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan's Objectively Assessed Housing Need since the beginning of the emerging Local Plan's period. It is suggested that the Forum specifies the boundaries and quantum of development anticipated for each site;
- d) Is not in line with national and local policy in relation to the Plan's references to low housing density standards across the Neighbourhood Plan area;
- e) Is not in conformity with the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Draft 2014 (MBLP 2014) in relation to the non-allocation of the New Line Learning draft housing allocation. Related to this, clarification is needed on the identification of open spaces as they relate to this site and countryside links;
- f) Should seek to ensure the Plan is 'future proofed' in relation to references to the Code of Sustainable Homes; and,
- g) Should include adequate justification and detailed costing where policies refer to the seeking of development contributions.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

125. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND SHARED SERVICES - DISPOSAL OF LAND AT BRUNSWICK STREET, MAIDSTONE

The Parking Services Manager presented his report.

The Committee discussed concerns regarding the impact of the closure of the Sittingbourne Road Park and Ride site may have on parking availability in Maidstone town centre and the further impact of disposing of parking spaces on this site.

The Committee noted that 50% of the site was currently used on a regular basis and provision for this number of spaces could be provided for in the plans for the site once it was disposed of.

RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the requirement for fewer parking spaces in Brunswick Street and agrees to collaborate with the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee to consider a new housing development on the site of the existing car park and adjoining

land and to re-provide a new smaller car park to meet the existing car parking space needs in the area (target of 33 spaces).

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

126. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30pm to 8:35pm

Agenda Item 11

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

10 NOVEMBER 2015

REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL

1. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

- 1.1 On 16 September Council considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources – Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014-15.
- 1.2 The Maidstone Borough Council Constitution for 2014-15 stated that “Overview and Scrutiny Committees may report annually to the full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate” (Part One, article 6.3 (d) of the previous Constitution
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee had responsibility for producing the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.
- 1.4 The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees formed the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee as per the constitution.
- 1.5 The Annual Report provided an overview of the year, highlighting successes alongside the challenges of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the 2014-15 Municipal Year.
- 1.6 The Annual Report 2014-15 is the last following the decision of Council on 10 December 2010 to return to a Committee system.
- 1.7 The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee wanted to ensure a sense of continuity between the two systems of governance and ensure the topics it had looked at remained on the radar of the new Committees. Therefore it made the following recommendation “that the new Policy and Resources Committee considers the topics (listed below) as part of its work programme in the next Municipal Year.”
 - Maternity Services
 - Draft Economic Development Strategy
 - Careers Guidance Review
 - The Local Plan

- Continued representation from Maidstone Borough Councillors on MKIP Joint Committees (post Overview and Scrutiny)
- Budget Working Group
- Loneliness and Isolation
- MKIP Environmental Health Shared Service
- Play Areas Strategy
- Crime and Disorder.

1.8 It is likely that these topics have already been considered and programmed into the four new Service Committees' Work Programme, if appropriate. Therefore this report and the recommendation should be noted.

2. RECOMMENDED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to Council 2014/15 be noted subject to the following amendments:

The deletion of the duplicate paragraph on page 10; and to read:

"That the new Committees consider the topics (listed) as part of their work programmes in the next Municipal Year".

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY
AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
10 NOVEMBER 2015
REFERENCE FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE

1. ACTIVE FRONTAGES

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 1 October 2015, a Member raised the issue of active frontages particularly in rural and rural edge areas. During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the urbanising effect of active frontages in these areas and also to the highway safety issues. It was suggested that the issue be referred to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee for consideration as to what if any policy initiatives are required.

- 1.2 RECOMMENDED: That the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee consider the issue of active frontages particularly in rural and rural edge areas and what if any policy initiatives are required.**

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

10 NOVEMBER 2015

REFERENCE FROM HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

1. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 1.1 On 13 July 2015 the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee considered the report of the Head of Economic and Commercial Development on the Destination Management Plan (DMP). The Committee noted that the Destination Management Plan Board was constituted from two officers, one Councillor, a representative from Visit Kent and six stakeholders from across the visitor economy sector, and nominated a member of the Committee to sit on the Board. Members heard that, at the launch of the Destination Management Plan, several working groups were established to work on the delivery of the DMP Action Plan.
- 1.2 The Committee recognised that there were strategies within other Service Committees remits that could assist and affect the delivery of the Destination Management Plan.
- 1.3 At the meeting the following decision was made:

That the Committee approve and adopt the Destination Management Plan for the Borough of Maidstone and endorse the Action Plan accompanying the Destination Management Plan provided a member representative from each Service Committee is included in the membership of relevant Task and Finish Groups.
- 1.4 After the meeting Officers confirmed the titles of the Destination Management Plan working groups as follows:

Group One: River

Group Two: Town

Group Three: Events

Group Four: Countryside
- 1.5 Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee made a reference to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee recommending:

That a Member be nominated as the representative of the Committee on any relevant Destination Management Plan Task and Finish Groups.

- 1.6 Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee responded to the reference as follows:

That the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee provide additional details of the Destination Management Plan's Task and Finish Groups, to include the terms of reference for each Group, dates and times of meetings and information on other Task and Finish Group members.

- 1.7 The Head of Commercial and Economic Development, Dawn Hudd, has produced a document outlining the composition and role of the DMP Board and working groups, attached at Appendix A.

2 **RECOMMENDED:**

- 2.1 That one Member of the Strategic, Sustainability and Transport Committee be confirmed as the Committee's approved representative, to be co-opted onto any of the Task and Finish groups when required for specific tasks relating to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee's remit or decisions, as and when the working groups see fit.

DELIVERY OF THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (DMP)

The DMP was developed over the first half of 2015 using a proven five stage process which involved extensive consultation with stakeholders and partner organisations. The DMP was adopted by Maidstone Borough Council in July 15 and was officially launched to the sector in September 15. It is a three year plan which incorporates an action plan to deliver the themes identified.

DMP Board

The Project Group which managed the development of the DMP will evolve into the DMP board, responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Plan. The DMP Board will meet quarterly to review progress. It may want to meet more frequently in the first 6 months, as it moves forward with early tasks.

The core DMP Board will comprise one Councillor and two officers from Maidstone Borough Council, a representative from Visit Kent and six industry representatives, chosen for their interests and expertise in the themes of the action plans – events, town and countryside. Additional people will be co-opted as needed, for their specialist input. The role and composition of the DMP Group will be reviewed at year three to check it remains the best way to deliver the DMP. The Council's Heritage, Culture and Leisure (HCL) Committee nominated Cllr David Pickett to be their representative on the Board on 13 July 15.

The DMP Board will oversee delivery of the Action Plans. Early tasks will be to cost and prioritise the Action Plans and to identify a Lead Organisation for each Action. Some of the DMP actions will be driven forward by individual members of the Board but a number of themed working groups will be established to progress actions over the life of the DMP. This will build the engagement with different interests in the Borough and encourage ownership of the DMP and its delivery by all stakeholders.

Run Workshop sessions for tourism and other businesses and organisations involved in tourism to familiarise them with the Story and to help them think creatively about how they might use it to develop and differentiate their own offer, service or business and help to deliver the Action Plans.

Develop an Online Shared Story Toolkit for tourism stakeholders to use, comprising Story-inspired product development ideas plus downloadable marketing copy (tailored for use in different markets) and images based on the Shared Story – so that people in the place are “singing from the same song sheet”.

Name	Organisation
Dawn Hudd (Chair)	MBC
Laura Dickson	MBC
Cllr David Pickett	MBC, HCL Committee
Natalie Moor	Hazlitt Theatre
Andy Davy	Maidstone Town Centre Management
Leonardo di Gagliano	Hilton Hotel
Kate Blacker	This Art of Mine
Glyn Charlton	Detling showground
Shane Guy	Leeds Castle
TBC	Visit Kent

Working Groups

Four Working Groups have been developed around the following themes:

Working Group 1 – River Access Improvement & River Experience

Working Group 2 – County Town

Working Group 3 – Events

Working Group 4 - The Countryside

The groups will be administered and chaired by MBC officers to provide continuity and to ensure that the Board receives regular and timely updates from the working groups and consistency in reporting against the action plan.

The working groups will be comprised of stakeholders with specific interest and skills in those areas and membership will be fluid to reflect the nature of the projects being worked on. There will be a maximum of two MBC Officers and two MBC Councillors on each working group to ensure that the groups are sector led and that external resources are maximised.

At the HCL meeting when the DMP was adopted members were keen that when necessary members from other Committees would be engaged in the working groups to ensure that necessary actions were undertaken i.e. improvements to shop fronts may require input from Planning.

Current membership is made up of nominated specialist MBC officers, HCL Committee members, those individuals that signed up to be involved at the launch event, key industry partners and others that have been involved in the development of the plan to date.

Working Group 1 – River Access Improvement & River Experience

Programme of enhancements and improvements to make the river more accessible and appealing to visitors: • signing and entrance points to the river from the town centre • footpath investment – signing to include distances to key points, accessibility for cyclists • investment in moorings • parking for river visitors	
Focus on strengthening visitor hubs on the river: • Improve access, facilities, activities and interpretation • Explore opportunities for more camping cabins/pods (luxury camping huts – alternative to camping in the open) to enable long distance walking, canoeing etc Priority hubs : • Church of All Saints/amphitheatre • Cobtree by Kent Life • Lockmeadow	
Create river-based events & activities that will appeal to visitors, animate the river, provide a reason to come today, contribute to extending the visitor day into the early evening. Opportunities could include – dragon boat racing, rowing events, festival of lights, regattas etc.	
Build up marketing activity over time linking to countryside theme. Develop marketing collateral – maps, trails, leaflets.	
Prioritise river management – litter, dredging, landscaping, lighting, policing, anti-social behaviour, mooring, illegal camping.	
Develop Riverside Walking and Cycling Path from Allington to East Farleigh with connections to the wider Maidstone area. Potential to expand this up to Aylesford Bridge	
Name	Organisation
Jason Taylor (Chair)	MBC
Fran Wallis	MBC
Ian Tucker	Maidstone United
Steve Law	Explore Kent
Cllr Gordon Newton	MBC – MBC HCL Committee
Cllr Dave Narghi	MBC
Claire Proctor	Downs Mail
Tony Monk	Streetlife
Nick Kennedy	Kentish lady
Brian Hegarty	Street Life
Neil Gunn	Environment Agency
Adrian Larkin	Allington Marina
Mark Smurthwaite	Medway River Users Association
	Rowing Club
	Kent County Council
Cllr Stephen Paine	MBC – P&R Committee

Working Group 2 – County Town

Develop local markets and fairs – food (including a farmer’s market), arts & crafts etc: • Review existing provision • Develop and deliver new markets in different town centre locations and develop a calendar of markets throughout the year • Use County Town Market Charter and history as part of the positioning for street markets • Introduce street food • Develop local market management plan – litter/cleaning, selection of stall traders, access
Use themed trails and quarters to help make the town more legible for visitors and encourage exploration: • Identify trail themes and quarters • Develop a programme of animation and interpretation including: • Making use of green spaces • Pavement trails/digital trails using app • Distinctive lighting • Mark the quarters e.g. with sculpture, distinctive street sign branding, lighting etc.
Shopfront improvements including: • Shop front design and window displays (produce toolkit) • Maintenance to frontages e.g. redecoration, brand signs
Strengthen town’s association with the countryside through celebrating and promoting local food • Encourage local restaurants to source local produce and promote it • Explore potential for a new local produce centre
Agree a strategy for improved access by car and coach into the town centre and support with: • Clear uncluttered road signing • Signing to car parks/coach park • Visitor orientation in the car/coach parks • Pedestrian signing from car parks to the town centre and main attractions.
Review coach parking provision – volume, location and facilities – to reflect needs of international coach parties for shopping, and take account of potential growth.
Improve welcome and visitor facilities at the rail stations: • Welcome sign and town map on board • Clear signing to drop-off/pick-up points Longer term, a need to deliver new development at Maidstone East station to improve first impressions and provide additional welcome & visitor facilities.

Appendix A

Name	Organisation
Fran Wallis (Chair)	MBC
Lyn Palmer	MBC
Barbara Dunford	Kent Community events
Cllr Richard Ash	MBC
Neil Pattison	Jubilee
Mike Evans	MMF
Larry Williamson	MTCM
Ken Scott	MAAP/Town Team
Lloyd Wright	Fremlin Walk
Chris Seare	Kent Highways
Ilsa Butler	TCM
David Statham	South East Trains
Jayne Jones	House of Fraser
Cllr Denise Joy	MBC, P&R Committee
Cllr Stephen Paine	MBC, P&R Committee

Working Group 3 - Events

Create an Events Experts Group that brings together senior decision makers from the main venues & MBC to “join the dots” when it comes to planning & infrastructure, programming & marketing

Carry out an Audit & Gap Analysis – looking at infrastructure & resources (physical & people), including venue capacities, transport links, traffic management, parking, signing, policing & crowd management. Must take into account potential negative impact on local communities & environment. Should include analysis of processes (licensing, highways, planning etc) too. Gap Analysis will then identify if new infrastructure/processes needed - & specific actions should then be developed.

Develop an Event Organisers’ Toolkit – to make it easier to hold an event in the borough.

Set up a “No Clash Diary” – for venues to enter information on provisional as well as firm bookings. This is an “internal” tool for venues, organisers, accommodation providers and public agencies within the Borough (and neighbouring areas) to use – to help them avoid clashes, to spread events across the year, and also facilitate identification of potential “clusters” for joint development & marketing (see next action).

Develop themed seasons/festivals, inspired by the Shared Story and by major events. May need a DMP Group sub-group – an “Events Development Taskforce”. Members of the Taskforce to be selected for their specific skills (marketing, events management, programming, fundraising).

Develop a consumer-facing “Events for Visitors Calendar” – comprising an online realtime database of confirmed events for consumer marketing (website content, emarketing, social media & traditional media relations work), linked to the Culture Kent data pool. Evolution of current online events calendar on Visit Maidstone. Related to “No Clash Diary” – but serves different purpose. Drives events information on Visit Maidstone & Visit Kent websites, but also for tourism industry’s own marketing (could incorporate a “widget” for tourism providers to use on their own websites, providing a live feed). Will need to be promoted to visitor-facing businesses as well as consumers. Needs tight criteria & market focus so only features events with clear visitor-appeal, and presents them in a way that motivates visits (e.g. clustering them, using Shared Story themes etc).

Name	Organisation
Laura Dickson (Chair)	MBC
Jason Taylor	MBC
Sam Bromley	Leeds Castle
Jo Hage /Sarah Macdonald	Rise communications
Lucy Hegaty	Kent Showground
Barbara Dunford	Kent community Events
Larry Williamson	MTCM
Cllr David Pickett	MBC, HCL Committee
Ed Martin	Produced in Kent
Cllr Dave Narghi	MBC, P&R Committee
Neil Pattison	Jubilee
Jamie Freeman	Headcorn Aerodrome
Luke Bentall	Social Festival
Tracy Brunt	KCC
Cllr Martin Round	MBC, P&R Committee

Working Group 4 - The Countryside

Product audit – map & gap current provision of trails, walks and countryside & river experiences.	
Marketing audit – understand who currently markets the countryside experiences, where and how. Find best digital solution to make sure that online information for visitors from various sources is easily found. Consider how best to use/work with existing brands and sub-brands e.g. Garden of England, Heart of Kent, Our Land .	
Develop themed experiences and trails that use Shared Story for inspiration, include key attractions, pubs etc along trail to drive more spend .	
Develop marketing collateral – digital and offline. Rich online content.	
Audit walks and trails selected for promotion to visitors to ensure they are easy to use and attractive – safe and easy to find car parks at start points, good facilities along the way, e.g. picnic sites, interpretation, benches, viewpoints etc. Ensure the routes are consistently signed and that refreshment stops and attractions along the route provide appropriate facilities for walkers and cyclists, e.g. cycle lock ups . Develop a plan for investment to plug gaps in provision.	
Develop rural Visitor Information Points – “i” branded.	
Work towards becoming Kent’s first “Walker Friendly” destination using the Cyclist Welcome and Walkers Welcome - Identify key towns/villages and support Walkers Welcome accreditation (prioritise villages with direct train links into Maidstone) - Promotional activity	
Name	Organisation
Christine Dier (Chair)	MBC
Abi Lewis	MBC
Cllr Peter Spearink	Staplehurst Parish Council
Jo Hage / Sarah Macdonald	Rise Communications
Steve Law	Explore Kent
Ed Martin	Produced in Kent
Yvonne Stark	
Victoria Rose or Julian Barnes	Biddenden vineyards
Jamie Freeman	Headcorn Aerodrome
Nick Johanssen	Kent Downs AONB
Joe Gluck	Kent Wildlife Trust
Valerie Woollven	Tithe Barn Lenham
Cllr Gordon Newton	MBC, HCL Committee
Cllr Richard Ash	MBC, HCL Committee
Cllr John Perry	MBC, P&R Committee



Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee Work Programme

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Democratic Services Team
E: democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk

Publication Date: 10/08/2015

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the decisions to be taken by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee of Maidstone Borough Council on a rolling basis. This document will be published as updated with new decisions required to be made.

DECISIONS WHICH COMMITTEES INTEND TO MAKE IN PRIVATE

The Committee hereby gives notice that it intends to meet in private after its public meeting to consider reports and/or appendices which contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The private meeting of any Committee is open only to Committee Members, other Councillors and Council officers.

Reports and/or appendices to decisions which Committee will take at their private meetings are indicated in the list below, with the reasons for the decision being made in private. Any person is able to make representations to the Committee if he/she believes the decision should instead be made in the public part of that Committee meeting. If you want to make such representations, please email committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk. You will then be sent a response in reply to your representations. Both your representations and the Committee's response will be published on the Council's website at least 5 working days before the Committee meeting.

ACCESS TO COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reports to be considered at any of the Committee's public meetings will be available on the Council's website (www.maidstone.gov.uk) a minimum of 5 working days before the meeting.

HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

The Council actively encourages people to express their views on decisions it plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or to the relevant Chairman of a Committee.

Alternatively, you can submit a question to the relevant Committee, details are on our website (www.maidstone.gov.uk).

Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary:	Contact Officer:	Public or Private (if Private the reason why)	Documents to be submitted (other relevant documents may be submitted)	Local Plan timetable
9 June 2015	Maidstone Borough Local Plan Position Statement	Sue Whiteside	Public		
9 June 2015	Strategic Housing Market Assessment update – implications of the 2012-based household projections	Sarah Anderton	Public	SHMA Update – Implications of 2012 Based Household Projections	SHMA Update – Implications of 2012 Based Household Projections
9 June 2015	Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Housing Sites Update	Sarah Anderton	Public		
9 June 2015	Neighbourhood Planning: changes to decision making arrangements	Jillian Barr	Public		
14 July 2015	Retail and mixed use site allocations	Sarah Anderton	Public		Final Review
14 July 2015	Landscape and Open Space – policies and site allocations	Jillian Barr	Public		
14 July 2015	Affordable Housing policy	Sue Whiteside	Public		
14 July 2015	Recommendations from PTD OSC review of Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using the car	Tessa Mallett	Public	Final review report	
14 July 2015	Reconsideration of previously rejected MBCLP Reg 18 draft and SHLASS housing sites	Steve Clarke	Public		
18 August 2015	Results of the VISUM transport modelling	Steve Clarke	Public		
18 August 2015	Policies for new land allocations (Older's Field, Hubbards Lane, Bentletts Yard)	Sue Whiteside	Public		
18 August 2015	Gypsy and Traveller site allocations	Sarah Anderton	Public		
18 August 2015	Employment site allocations	Sarah Anderton	Public		

Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary:	Contact Officer:	Public or Private (if Private the reason why)	Documents to be submitted (other relevant documents may be submitted)	Local Plan timetable
18 August 2015	Future locations for housing growth	Steve Clarke	Public		
18 August 2015	Landscapes of Local Value (supplementary report)	Sue Whiteside	Public		
18 August 2015	Open space allocations	Chris Berry	Public		
18 August 2015	Maidstone Borough Local Plan – mixed use allocations (deferred item)	Sarah Anderton	Public		
8 Sept 2015	Maidstone Borough Local Plan – transport policies				
8 Sept 2015	Landscapes of Local Value (deferred item)				
8 Sept 2015	5 year housing supply position				
6 Oct 2015	North Loose Neighbourhood Plan				2 October 2015 – MBC LP Reg 18 Consultation on key policy and site allocation changes (4 weeks)
10 Nov 2015	Maidstone Local Development Scheme Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Objections to Traffic Regulation Orders Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 onwards – including Exempt Appendix				
18 Nov 2015	Adjourned date				

Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary:	Contact Officer:	Public or Private (if Private the reason why)	Documents to be submitted (other relevant documents may be submitted)	Local Plan timetable
1 Dec 2015	Possible petition on the closure of Cranbourne Avenue Draft Integrated Transport Strategy for consultation Broomfield and Kingswood Neighbourhood Plan Reg 16 consultation proposed response Maidstone Bridges Gyratory Improvement Scheme River Medway Towpath – Maidstone Sustainable Access to Education and Employment LEP Scheme (Cycling Infrastructure)	 Abi lewis Fran Wallis			Pre-Regulation 19 Consultation workshops 3 &15 December – for Parish and Borough Councillors 21 December – Borough Councillors only
7 Dec 2015	Adjourned date				
12 Jan 2016	Consideration of the Publication version of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan for consultation (Reg 19)	Sue Whiteside	Public		
18 Jan 2016	Adjourned date				
9 Feb 2016	Brief report - Reformation of the Maidstone Public Transport Operators Group (formerly Maidstone Public Transport Users Group)	Steve Clarke			Feb/Mar 2016 – MBC LP Regulation 19 consultation (6 weeks)
15 Feb 2016	Adjourned date				
8 Mar 2016	CIL Draft Charging Schedule	Andrew Thompson	Public		
16 Mar 2016	Adjourned date				
5 Apr 2016					May 2016 – Submission of MBC LP 2016 to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination
11 Apr 2016	Adjourned date				

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT

10 NOVEMBER 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 ONWARDS

Final Decision-Maker	Council (2 March 2016)
Lead Head of Service	Head Of Finance & Resources
Lead Officer and Report Author	Head Of Finance & Resources
Classification	Public report with exempt appendix
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee agrees to submit the proposals set out in Appendix A to this report to Policy & Resources Committee for inclusion in the savings proposals for the medium term financial strategy 2016/17 onwards.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

The medium term financial strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. It reflects the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport	10 November 2015
Policy & Resources Committee	16 December 2015
Council	2 March 2016

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 ONWARDS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 On 8 September 2015 the Committee considered a report on the medium term financial strategy 2016/17 onwards (MTFS). That report set out the draft plans of the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.
 - 1.2 This committee agreed to consider option for savings and growth pressures at an informal briefing session in advance of full consideration at this meeting.
 - 1.3 The committee's informal briefing was on 15 October 2015 and this report provides details of the proposals discussed in order for the committee to formal approve them for inclusion in the MTFS.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 29th July 2015 Policy & Resources Committee agreed a strategic revenue projection based on a series of planning assumptions. That projection identified a need to find £3.76m of savings over the period of the strategy, 2016/17 to 2020/21, as set out in the table below:

Year	£m
2016/17	1.63
2017/18	0.79
2018/19	0.71
2019/20	0.53
2020/21	0.10
Total	3.76

Table 1: Required budget strategy savings by financial year

- 2.2 Policy and Resources Committee requested that all service committees review the proposed strategic revenue projection and develop proposals for savings over the period of the MTFS and identify any additional unavoidable growth pressures that cannot be resourced by the committee concerned.
- 2.3 On 8 September 2015 this committee considered the request and agreed to identify its proposals initially through a briefing with officers. That briefing session occurred on 15 October 2015 and the proposals discussed are set out in **Appendix A** to this report. Table 2 below compares the value of the proposals to the Council's identified need set out in Table 1 above:

Year	£m	£m
2016/17	1.63	0.34
2017/18	0.79	0
2018/19	0.71	0
2019/20	0.53	0

2020/21	0.10	0
Total	3.76	0.43

Table 2: Proposed budget strategy savings by financial year matched to overall need

2.4 The councillors attending the briefing discussed the savings proposals that are now set out in Appendix A. The councillors also discussed a number of further items and expressed concern that the proposals so far brought forward related to 2016/17 only and no longer term plan to cover the period of the MTFS had been developed. The matters discussed are as follows:

- a) Planning pre-application advice – The councillors at the briefing requested further detail on the specifics of pre-planning application advice:
 - The annual budget is currently £85,600.
 - Income in 2014/15 was £84,800 and is projected to be £91,000 in 2015/16 allowing for the increase as proposed in 2016/17.
 - All pre-application advice can be charged for and this policy is promoted by central government.
 - There is no evidence of a negative impact on applicants and it is clear that pre-application advice often results in fewer conditions or compromises in decisions.
- b) Planning repeat fees – The councillors at the meeting considered if and when the Council is able to charge a new fee on an amended application:
 - The trigger for an application requiring a new fee is set out in the fees regulations, and relates to whether or not the revised (new) application is of the same character or description. Legally any material change to the description requires a new fee eg house types such as increasing the amount of detached as opposed to semi-detached.
 - In addition to this it is possible to apply for a non-material amendment for very small changes to a planning permission and/or a minor material amendment for more significant changes which effectively are applications to vary the detailed plans already approved, both of these command small fees (much less than a new application fee).
- c) Parking – The councillors at the briefing considered a number of issues surrounding future potential improvements in parking services that would generate savings or improve income. It was considered to be a large and technical review of the service and a report to a later meeting of the committee is intended. Any proposals with financial consequences will then form part of the committee’s medium term response to the MTFS.

2.5 In addition the briefing considered the capital programme and noted that there is infrastructure funding currently identified in the programme. Current schemes include the major improvements to the gyratory system in the town centre. No additional schemes were raised at the briefing.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The committee should consider the proposals set out in Appendix A and decide one of the following options:
 - 3.2 Option 1 - Not to submit any proposals to Policy & Resources. A decision to not submit proposals would not be appropriate as the Council has a need to identify significant savings in order to balance its budget and it is appropriate for all service committees to contribute.
 - 3.3 Option 2 – Provide alternative proposals. Although at the informal briefing councillors considered the available options and officers have confirmed that the proposals set out in the appendix are viable, it is possible that the committee could propose alternative options. The options discussed at the briefing and proposed in the appendix are viable and should not be set aside at this time.
 - 3.4 Option 3 – Agree the proposals set out in the exempt appendix. As stated these are all viable proposals that have been identified as deliverable with minimal impact on the Council’s strategic priorities.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to submit to Policy and Resources Committee the proposals set out in Appendix A to this report.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 These proposals follow on from the consultation by Policy and Resources on the MTFS and constitute this Committee’s response to the request to identify savings and growth pressures.
 - 5.2 The Policy and Resources Committee will consider all service committees’ proposals at its meeting on 16 December 2015 along with the results of the budget consultation and any updated financial information from Government and other sources.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The agreed recommendations will be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 16 December 2015 when it considers the updated MTFS following the final calculation of the tax base for council tax, the detailed fees and charges proposals and the
-

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The medium term financial strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. It reflects the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.	Head of Finance & Resources
Risk Management	Matching resources to priorities in the context of the significant pressure on the Council's resources is a major strategic risk. The MTFS is improved each year to enhance its resilience and effectiveness. The MTFS is considered by Policy & Resources Committee, all service committees, the Audit Governance & Standards Committee and Council. Specific budget savings proposals are identified in the appendix to this report.	Head of Finance & Resources
Financial	The MTFS impacts upon all activities of the Council. The future availability of resources to address specific issues is planned through this process. It is important that the committee gives consideration to the strategic financial consequences from the recommendations in this report.	Head of Finance & Resources
Staffing	The process of developing the budget strategy will identify the level of resources available for staffing over the medium term.	Head of Finance & Resources
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget and development of the savings proposals assists this obligation.	Head of Finance & Resources

Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The objective of the MTFS is to match available resources to the priorities set out in the Strategic Plan.	Head of Finance & Resources
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Community Safety	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Human Rights Act	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Procurement	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Asset Management	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Savings Proposals 2016/17 to 2020/21

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - MTFS 2016/17 ONWARDS

Head of Service	Proposal	Priority	Saving Category	Risk	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2012/21 £
Planning and Development	Increase pre-applications fees by 10% to Kent average	2	2	L	20,000	-	-	-	-
Finance & Resources	Bus Shelter Income	1	2	M	25,000	-	-	-	-
Parking Services	Park & Ride	2	3	M	298,000	-	-	-	-
					343,000	-	-	-	-

Corporate Priorities

Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all	1
Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough	2

Savings Categories: 1 - Efficiency; 2 - Income; 3 - Service Reconfiguration

Agenda Item 14

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

10 NOVEMBER 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

SECOND QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head Of Finance & Resources
Lead Officer and Report Author	Head Of Finance & Resources
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the revenue budget position as at September 2015, the predicted outturn to 31 March 2016.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

The medium term financial strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. It reflects the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee	10 November 2015
Policy & Resources Committee	25 November 2015

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 ONWARDS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a financial analysis of the committee's services in the second quarter of 2015/16. The information is provided specifically for the Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee.
 - 1.2 The intention of the report is to ensure the Committee is regularly informed of performance and to enable it to take timely action where it is appropriate.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Head of Finance & Resources is the Responsible Financial Officer, and has overall responsibility for budgetary control and financial management. However in practice day to day budgetary control is delegated to service managers, with assistance and advice from their director and the finance section. It is best practice however to provide updates to the Committee on performance and this report is the second of four updates for 2015/16.

Revenue

- 2.2 The budget used in this report is the agreed estimate for 2015/16 including the carry forward resources agreed by Cabinet in April 2015. Actual expenditure to September 2015 includes all major accruals for goods and services received but not paid for by the end of the quarter.
- 2.3 An analysis that is summarised at service area, of the full year's budget, the profiled budget to September 2015 and expenditure to September 2015 is attached as **Appendix A**. The financial analysis is based on direct expenditure only. This removes the influence of internal recharges and accounting adjustments upon the variance analysis. An indicative projected year end outturn figure is also shown.
- 2.4 Appendix A shows that actual spend is on target overall with a positive variance 2015 of £89,293 at the end of the second quarter. This variance incorporates variances that relate to the provision of transport services where surpluses are ring-fenced to transportation and cannot be utilised to cover the cost of other council services.
- 2.5 The predicted outturn figures show only the major variances and these suggest a likely adverse variance of £109,000 at year end. This will be tempered by the smaller positive variances within the Committee's services. A brief explanation of the major variances is included against each significant variance in the Appendix.

Capital

- 2.6 The Committee has capital funding for the Infrastructure Improvements and some work is set to commence this year on the bridges gyratory system. Current projections suggest that despite the later than intended start the programme will be completed during 2017/18.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 – The Committee could chose not to receive quarterly budget monitoring reports or receive the reports at a more regular frequency. However the current frequency is considered good practice and has been in place for many years at this Council, enabling an appropriate level of monitoring and timely action where necessary.
- 3.2 Option 2 - The committee could consider the details set out in Appendix A and propose alternative actions to those set out. However the details set out in this report follow on from the first quarter's monitoring report. The current report shows that the planned actions are being implemented with the appropriate effect on resources.
- 3.3 Option 3 - The committee could consider the details set out in Appendix A and agree to note the details reported by officers.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The recommended option is Option 3. The Committee should note the budget performance set out in Appendix A to this report and the actions that have been taken.
- 4.2 The year-end variance reported at £109,000 positive, will be further mitigated by the minor budget variances that have been projected to be zero at the year-end as a most likely result would be a low level positive variance when all of these services areas are combined.
- 4.3 This information will be collated into an overarching report of the strategic budget position to Policy and Resources Committee. The strategic position is currently in balance and it is expected that Policy & Resources Committee will utilise positive variance such as this to support areas of budget pressure during this year. The Council will follow good practice and officers will continue to control expenditure against budget to reduce the currently predicted year end over spend in other committees where this is occurring.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 This is the second report to this committee on the 2015/16 performance against budget. The previous report showed a high predicted positive variance which has reduced in this second quarter as a result of actions taken most especially in Planning, this has increased employee costs.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Officers will continue to take all possible actions to control the budget and utilise resources effectively.
- 6.2 The high level details contained in this report will be reported to Policy & Resources Committee as a strategic overview of budget monitoring across the organisation.
-

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The medium term financial strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. It reflects the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.	Head of Finance & Resources
Risk Management	A regular and timely awareness of the budget position assists the Committee to prepare for and control the risk of insufficient resources to achieve the Council's priorities.	Head of Finance & Resources
Financial	The financial implications are summarised in the report and set out in more detail in the Appendix. It is important that the committee gives consideration to any specific services areas that are at variance and any actions officers are continuing at this time.	Head of Finance & Resources
Staffing	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Legal	None identified	Head of Finance &

		Resources
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Community Safety	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Human Rights Act	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Procurement	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources
Asset Management	None identified	Head of Finance & Resources

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Budget Monitoring Report 2016/17 to 2020/21

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO SEPTEMBER 2015

Service Area	Full Year Budget	YTD Current Budget	YTD Amount	YTD Variance	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance	Comment
Building Regulations Chargeable	-295,160.00	-155,797.20	-162,905.88	7,108.68	-295,160.00	0.00	
Building Control	-990.00	-466.00	4,587.98	-5,053.98	-990.00	0.00	
Street Naming & Numbering	-29,000.00	-14,502.00	-24,477.50	9,975.50	-29,000.00	0.00	
Development Control Advice	-78,250.00	-39,125.00	-42,648.86	3,523.86	-78,250.00	0.00	
Development Control Applications	-902,690.00	-456,441.00	-637,196.10	180,755.10	-1,202,690.00	300,000.00	As a consequence of additional planning fee income. This is tempered by additional employee costs set out below.
Development Control Appeals	19,410.00	9,904.00	141,177.11	-131,273.11	19,410.00	0.00	
Development Control Enforcement	67,070.00	-1,872.00	3,808.75	-5,680.75	67,070.00	0.00	
Planning Policy	150,990.00	152,660.00	164,267.89	-11,607.89	150,990.00	0.00	
Neighbourhood Planning	0.00	0.00	23,236.70	-23,236.70	0.00	0.00	
Conservation	-6,420.00	1,590.00	8,607.16	-7,017.16	5,580.00	-12,000.00	The current expectation is that the service will continue to under perform against its income target. The outturn can currently be covered by planning fee income.
Land Charges	-231,170.00	-134,006.40	-167,511.56	33,505.16	-231,170.00	0.00	
Environment Improvements	12,300.00	6,148.00	2,143.15	4,004.85	12,300.00	0.00	
Name Plates & Notices	17,600.00	8,804.00	7,454.90	1,349.10	17,600.00	0.00	
On Street Parking	-284,910.00	-140,581.10	-149,186.45	8,605.35	-284,910.00	0.00	
Residents Parking	-223,980.00	-128,986.00	-162,613.91	33,627.91	-223,980.00	0.00	
Pay & Display Car Parks	-1,209,890.00	-531,590.10	-623,433.84	91,843.74	-1,309,890.00	100,000.00	Predictions of year end forecast are notoriously difficult for parking income as weather and other trends have a direct impact.
Non Paying Car Parks	9,160.00	7,689.00	7,669.31	19.69	9,160.00	0.00	
Off Street Parking - Enforcement	-159,270.00	-78,325.00	-61,240.81	-17,084.19	-159,270.00	0.00	
Park & Ride	467,420.00	262,818.50	238,176.35	24,642.15	467,420.00	0.00	
Socially Desirable Buses	63,780.00	7,344.00	6,659.40	684.60	63,780.00	0.00	
Other Transport Services	15,700.00	13,717.00	15,762.52	-2,045.52	15,700.00	0.00	

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO SEPTEMBER 2015

Service Area	Full Year Budget	YTD Current Budget	YTD Amount	YTD Variance	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance	Comment
Development Management Section	610,670.00	307,368.00	399,466.75	-92,098.75	800,670.00	-190,000.00	Increased staff costs in line with service planning and related to increased planning applications. See income above.
Spatial Policy Planning Section	391,780.00	195,967.00	171,866.59	24,100.41	391,780.00	0.00	
Head of Planning and Development	92,020.00	46,006.00	49,311.60	-3,305.60	92,020.00	0.00	
Development Management Enforcemen	135,930.00	67,956.00	69,289.89	-1,333.89	135,930.00	0.00	
Building Surveying Section	344,030.00	175,483.00	177,065.10	-1,582.10	344,030.00	0.00	
Mid Kent Planning Support Service	155,920.00	285,351.50	316,664.92	-31,313.42	244,920.00	-89,000.00	The outcome of the work currently underway on this shared service is not yet confirmed. Additional costs are currently being incurred and may increase over this figure. The long term budget pressures from this service will be considered by Policy & resources Committee
Heritage Landscape and Design Section	155,790.00	77,888.00	81,400.34	-3,512.34	155,790.00	0.00	
Parking Services Section	272,460.00	136,599.00	134,906.72	1,692.28	272,460.00	0.00	
Strategic Planning, Sustainability &	-439,700.00	81,601.20	-7,691.78	89,292.98	-548,700.00	109,000.00	

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

10 November 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Objections to Traffic Regulation Orders

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	David Edwards Director of Environment and Shared Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transport Committee agree to the Joint Transportation Board recommendations in relation to Waiting Restrictions Variation No 30 and Designated Parking Places Variation No 11 and agree to make the Orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 .
2. That the Committee recommends to Kent County Council as the Highway Authority that the various Orders be sealed as outlined in this report.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.
By managing parking demand and regulating dangerous and antisocial parking.
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough.
By ensuring traffic flow, easing congestion.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Joint Transportation Board	14 October 2015
Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee.	10 November 2015

Objections to Traffic Regulation Orders

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Identify proposals which are intended to resolve parking problems and improve traffic flow by reducing localised congestion; this is in accordance with the Borough Council's priority to improve access across the Borough through better roads.
 - 1.2 To enable the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transport Committee to consider the recommendations of the Joint Transportation Board in relation to Waiting Restrictions Variation No 30 and Designated Parking Places Variation No 11.
 - 1.3 To enable the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transport Committee to recommend to Kent County Council as the Highway Authority that the Orders be sealed and the proposals implemented as outlined in this report.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Various requests from Councillors and the public have been received by Parking Services for the introduction of parking restrictions at several locations across the Borough. These have been surveyed and evaluated to assess the impact on parking provision within each local area where significant parking difficulties were identified. Proposed Orders were advertised and all comments received during the formal consultation were reviewed and considered.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 To consider the views of the public and the recommendations of the Joint Transportation Board and agree to make the Orders.
 - 3.2 To agree to recommend to Kent County Council as the Highways Authority that the Orders be thereafter sealed
 - 3.3 To not proceed with the recommendations contained herein, which would result in some much needed Traffic Regulation Orders not being implemented, which are intended to regulate parking to reduce identified difficulties.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transport Committee consider the views of the public and the recommendations of the Joint Transportation Board and agree to make the orders and then recommend that they be sealed by Kent County Council, as set out in Options 3.1 and 3.2 above.

- 4.2 This will result in some much needed Traffic Regulation Orders being implemented, which are intended to regulate parking to reduce identified difficulties.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Correspondence was sent to statutory and non statutory consultees. Street notices were also posted in the affected roads.
- 5.2 A Public Notice formally advertising the Orders for Waiting Restrictions Variation No 30 and Designated Parking Places Variation No 11 were published in the local press during the week ending Friday 17th July 2015.
- 5.3 Full details were contained in the draft Orders which, together with a copy of the Public Notices, site plans and a statement of the Borough Council's reasons for proposing to make the Orders were placed on deposit at the Main Reception, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ, and at the Gateway Reception, King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ.
- 5.4 Proposed Orders were advertised and all comments received during the formal consultation were reviewed and considered.
- 5.5 The proposals and results of the public consultation were formally presented to the Joint Transportation Board on 14th October 2015.
- 5.6 Orders not receiving objections to Waiting restrictions variation No 30 and Designated Parking Places Variation No 11
(DYL means waiting to be prohibited at all times by double yellow lines; SYL and loading restrictions means no waiting at the times prescribed).
- 5.7 Waiting restrictions.
- 5.8 MAIDSTONE; Ashburnham Road and Downs View Road;
To introduce a 30 minute restriction from Mon-Fri 1.30pm -2.pm with amendments to the DYL to help alleviate congestion at certain times and allow free flow of traffic and safe passage. Although no objections were received, we did receive correspondence which suggested some changes to the scheme and raised concerns in relation to vehicle migration.
- 5.9 MAIDSTONE; Brunswick Street, George St and Orchard St;
Amend the current restrictions from a SYL Mon-Fri 9am -5pm to a DYL in some locations and introduce additional resident parking bays due to a change from commercial to residential properties.
- 5.10 MAIDSTONE; Tarragon Road and Tarragon Road (Exit road from Maidstone Hospital) Hermitage Lane and Coriander Drive;
To formalise the existing restrictions due to the adoption of the road by Kent County Council.
- 5.11 MAIDSTONE; Heathfield Road;

To extend the existing DYL due to inconsiderate parking to allow free flow of traffic. Two letters of support and one comment received raising concerns in relation to vehicle migration and increased speeds.

5.12 MAIDSTONE; Waterlow Road;

To introduce a small section of DYL to preserve access/egress.

5.13 MARDEN; Church Green;

To amend the current Mon-Fri 1.30-2pm to Mon –Fri 10.30-11am, at the request of local councillors and the Parish to review the parking restrictions in the Village.

5.14 Loading Restrictions

5.15 MAIDSTONE; Earl Street and Week Street;

To formalise the existing restrictions.

5.16 Residents parking.

5.17 MAIDSTONE; Brunswick Street, George St, Orchard Street;

Introduce additional resident parking bays due to a change from commercial to residential properties and amend existing bays.

5.18 Designated disabled persons parking places.

5.19 MAIDSTONE; Bower Lane, Dover Street, Foley Street, King Edward Road, Milton Street, and Whitmore Street;

Establish new parking places for disabled persons vehicles (Blue Badge Holders)

5.20 Orders receiving objection to Waiting restrictions variation No 30 and Designated Parking Places Variation No 11 together with a summary of the objections and the relevant Joint Transportation Board recommendations.
(DYL means waiting to be prohibited at all times by double yellow lines; SYL and loading restrictions means no waiting at the times prescribed).

5.21 MAIDSTONE; John Street;

To amend the current Mon-Fri 9am-5pm restrictions to DYL at the junctions to preserve sightlines and free flow of traffic.

Four objections were received on the grounds that the imposition of a 24 hour restriction would have a significant detrimental impact upon the residents in the area, by removing the ability to park outside of the current restriction times. They would also have a negative impact upon the running of the business in the area, in both in terms of the delivery of supplies and also impact upon customers and patrons of the business.

Although it is appreciated that the proposal will reduce parking availability, it should also be noted that you should not park opposite or within 10 metres of a junction, however the original decision to amend the initial Order was made to increase the parking availability and if there are difficulties which relate to safety then these should be referred to Kent County Council. One letter in support.

Joint Transportation Board Recommendation: To recommend to the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee not to proceed with the proposal.

5.22 MAIDSTONE; Sandling Road;

To amend the current Mon-Fri 9am-5pm restrictions to Mon-Sat 8am-6.30pm and DYL to preserve sightlines and free flow of traffic and reduce traffic congestion.

One comment was received on the grounds that the proposal to change the current restriction to the proposed Monday to Saturday 8.00am – 6.30pm restriction would have a detrimental impact on the residents parking availability, it was also suggested by a local resident that the current Residents' Parking restriction times should be reduced to a 5 minute waiting limited.

The original request raised concerns in relation to the vehicles parking on the current restrictions which impeded vehicle movement: we have no plans to change the current waiting limit in the residents parking bays as a proposal to change the waiting times in North 1 was put forward in 2013 but was not approved due to objections received. The Council did, however, change the upper section of Sandling Road to 30 mins as this was supported.

Joint Transportation Board Recommendation: To recommend to the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee to proceed with the proposal.

5.23 MAIDSTONE; St Laurence Avenue;

To introduce DYL opposite the access/egress to a commercial property.

One objection was received on the grounds the restrictions are no longer warranted as the company who occupied the premises and who requested the restrictions no longer occupy the land, negating the need for the restrictions.

Joint Transportation Board Recommendation: To recommend to the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee not to proceed with the proposal.

5.24 MAIDSTONE; The Mallows;

To introduce restrictions from Mon-Sun 8am -6pm to manage parking demand and allow free flow of traffic and safe passage.

Seven objections were received on the grounds that the imposition of the current proposed Monday to Sunday 8.00am – 6.00pm restriction would have a significant detrimental impact on the residents parking availability, and the dispersion of vehicles into other streets would also have a further effect on the other residential streets. Three comments were also received and three letters of support, however some residents do not consider that there was a problem with parking.

The proposal is designed to manage the current parking demand in the area and migration of vehicles may occur. However, this will be monitored and, if necessary, further restrictions may need to be considered although this will need to be managed carefully to reduce the impact on residents.

We have written to the residents with an amended proposal of Mon-Fri 09.00am – 5.00pm and have received one correspondence withdrawing their objection to the original proposal and in favour of the new proposal.

Joint Transportation Board Recommendation: To recommend to the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee not to proceed with the proposal as there remains substantial objections to the scheme.

5.25 MARDEN; High Street;

To amend the current Mon-Fri 1.30-2pm restriction to Mon –Fri 10.30-11am and amend the Monday to Saturday 08:00 to 18:30 restriction opposite Maidstone Road to DYLS to improve safety, at the request of local councillors and the Parish Council to review the parking restrictions in the village. One objection was received on the grounds that the imposition of a 24 hour restriction would have a significant detrimental impact upon the running of the business in the area, in both in terms of the delivery of supplies and also impact upon customers and patrons of the business and their generally safety. It will therefore have a direct influence on customer levels; the dispersion of vehicles into other street would also have a detrimental effect on the mainly residential streets.

The proposal is only to change a small section of SYL from Mon-Sat 8am-6.30pm restriction, opposite the Maidstone Road junction to a 24 hr restriction. Therefore, currently, vehicles cannot park in this location during these hours. We are also proposing to amend the existing SYL from Mon – Fri 1.30 -2pm to Mon-Fri 10.30am -11.am and will still leave sufficient parking for customers. There is also alternative parking within the Village Car Park.

We have been working in liaison with the Parish Council and have had responses back from Councillors. They did not make comment on the consultation as they agreed with the DYL proposal. However, their comments are: _DYL are supported outside the Post Office mainly on road safety grounds as it is opposite Maidstone Road junction which is particularly difficult junction for larger vehicles. The effects on businesses would be no different during the day as the restriction period is the same and reduced outside of the operational hours (with parking available nearby for any early morning deliveries / collections).

Joint Transportation Board Recommendation: To recommend to the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee to proceed with the proposal.

5.26 Designated free parking places

5.27 MARDEN; High Street;

To introduce a 4-hour waiting limited bays to increase vehicle turnover due to the review of the parking restrictions in the Village.

Two objections and two letters containing comments on the proposal were received on the grounds that, the imposition of a 4-hour waiting restriction would have a significant detrimental impact upon the residents and businesses in the area, in both in terms of the delivery of supplies etc and also impact upon customers and patrons of the business.

It could therefore have a direct influence on customer levels; the dispersion of vehicles into other street would also have a detrimental effect on the mainly residential streets.

Joint Transportation Board Recommendation: To recommend to the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee not to proceed with the proposal.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Where agreed, the Traffic Regulation Order Waiting Restrictions Variation No 30 and Designated Parking Places Variation No 11 will be amended accordingly and presented to Kent County Council as the Highway Authority for sealing.
- 6.2 The 'as made' Order will be advertised.
- 6.3 The objectors will be informed of the outcome.
-

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The proposals are intended to resolve parking problems and improve traffic flow by reducing localised congestion; this is in accordance with the Council's priority to improve access across the Borough through better roads, thereby keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.	Parking Services Manager
Risk Management	Consideration has been given to objections and formal letters of support with regard to each proposal. However this must be balanced against the risks involved in relation to road safety, free flow of traffic, environmental impact and vehicle migration.	Parking Services Manager
Financial	The costs of the order variation and implementation will be met from within the existing Parking Services budget.	Finance Team

Staffing	None	
Legal	Formal orders will need to be made and signed by Kent County Council as the Highway Authority.	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning) Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None identified	Clare Wood, Policy & Performance Officer
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None	
Community Safety	None	
Human Rights Act	None	
Procurement	None	
Asset Management	None	

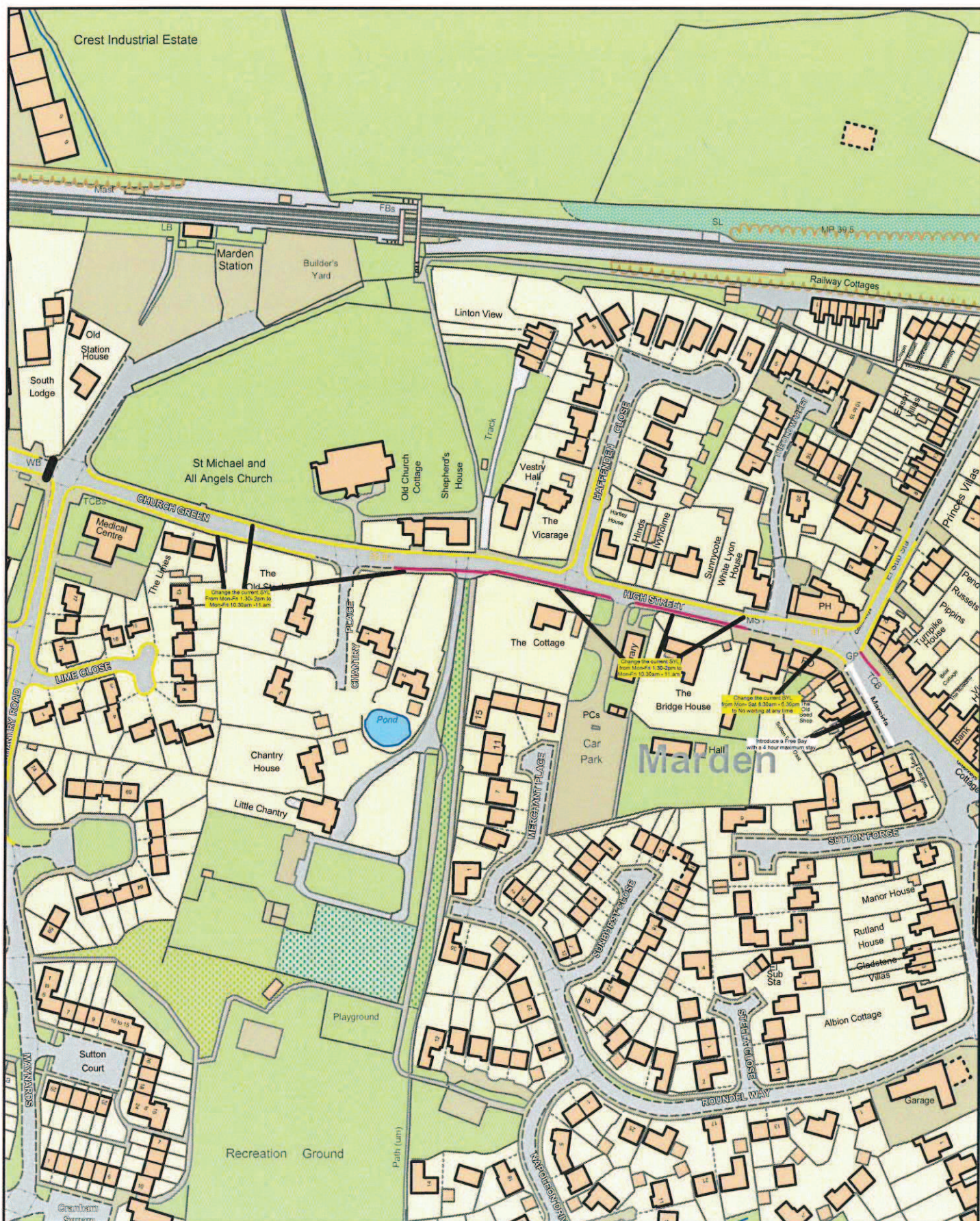
8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

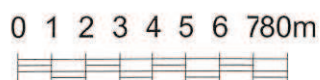
- Appendix A: Maps of the Proposals

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.



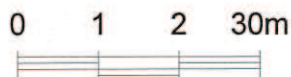
Marden Amendment



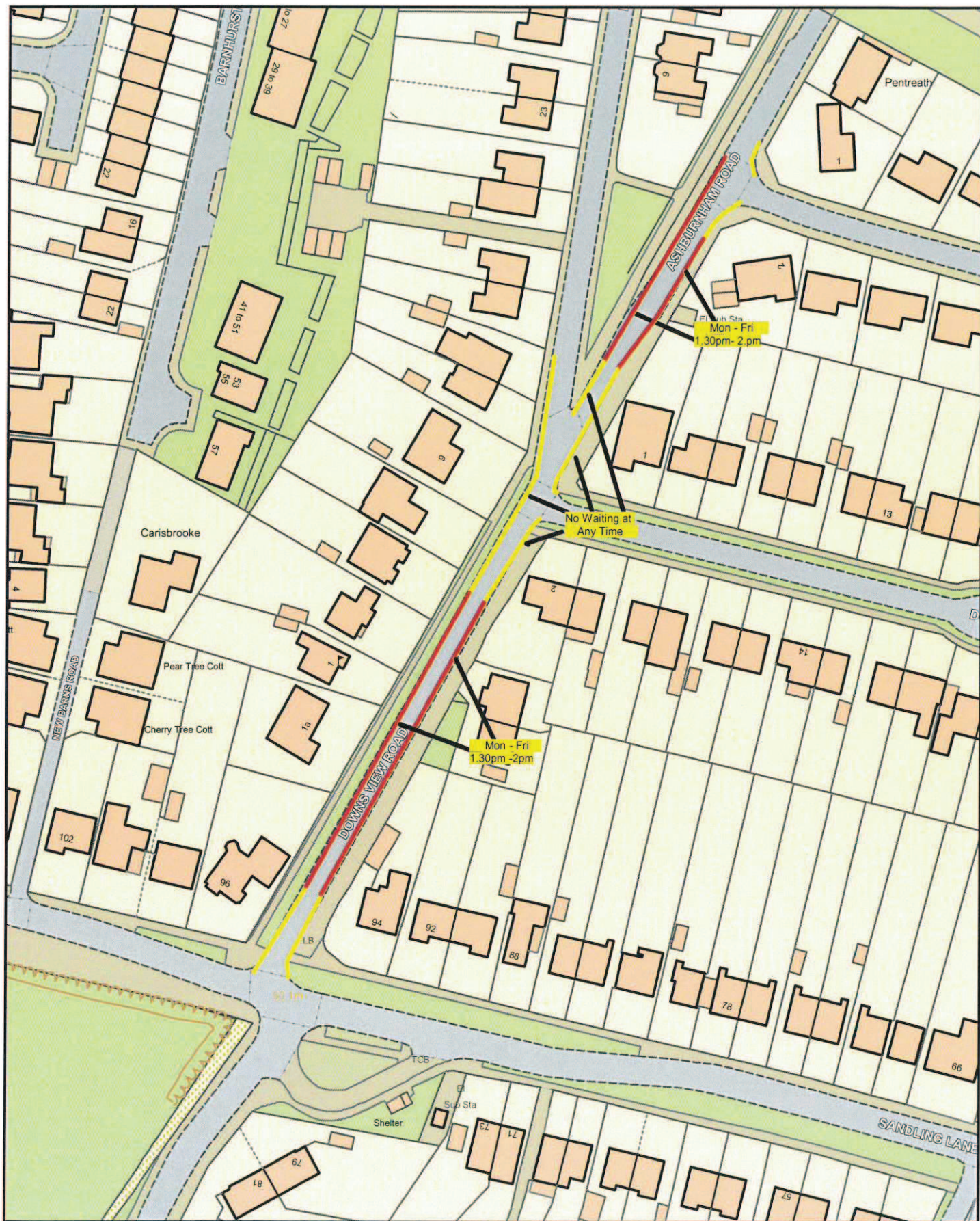
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Brunswick Street / George Street



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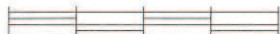


Downs View Road

Ashburnham Road proposal



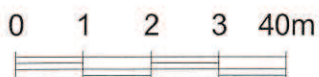
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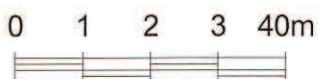
The Mallows



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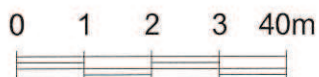
Heathfield Road Proposals



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Tarragon Road Scheme



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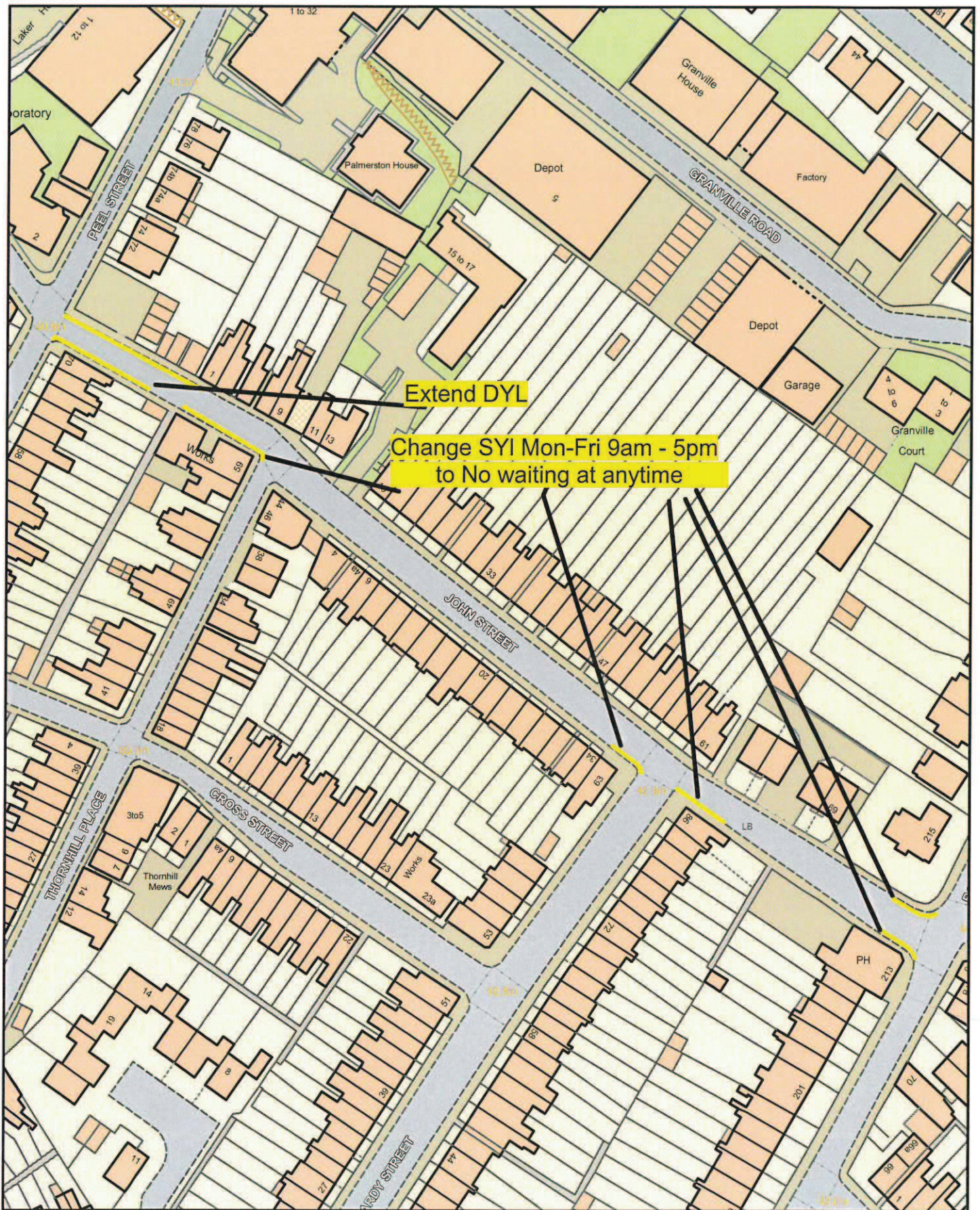
Waterlow Road Proposal



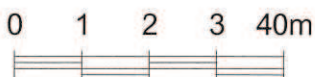
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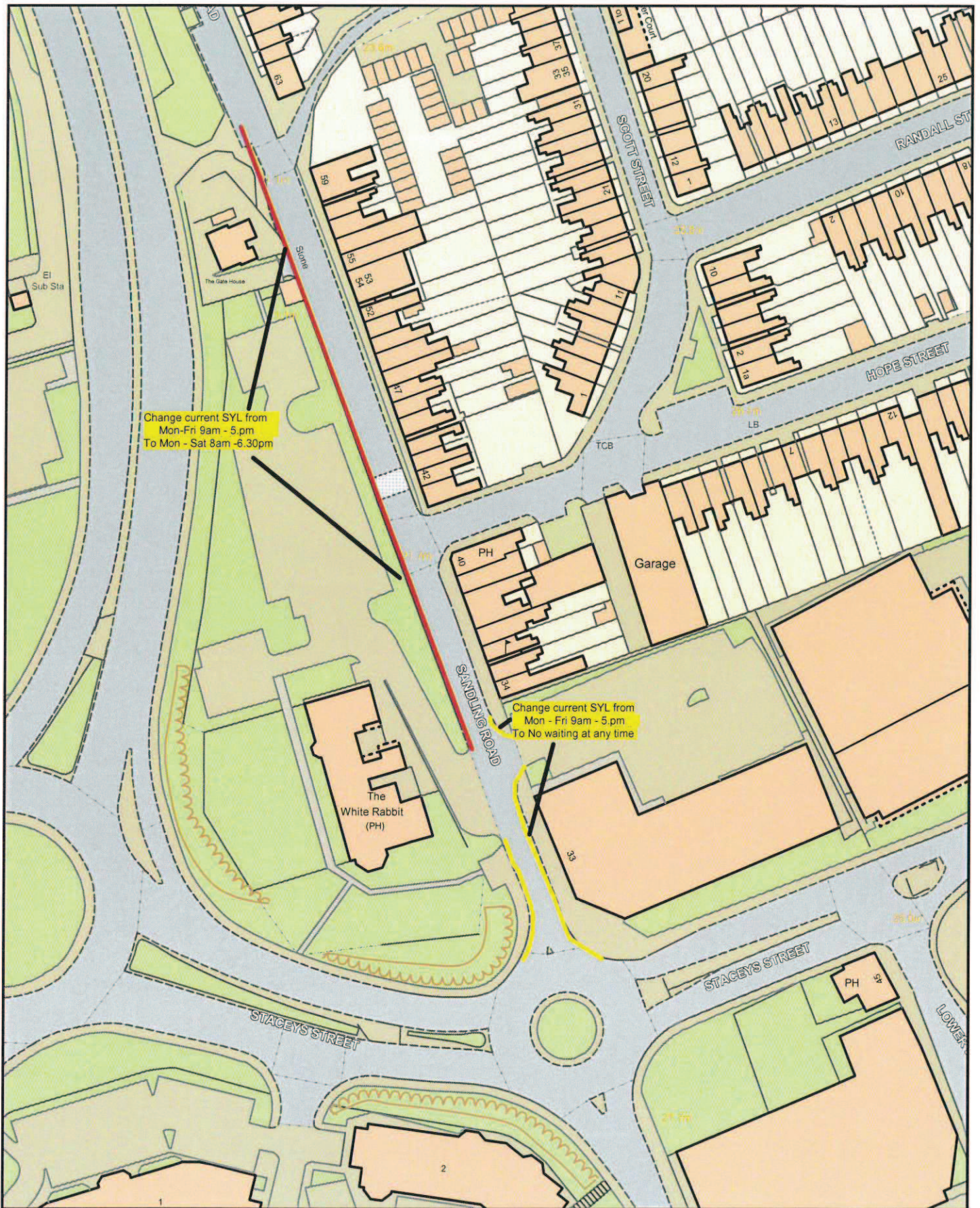
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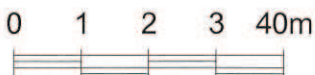
John Street Proposal



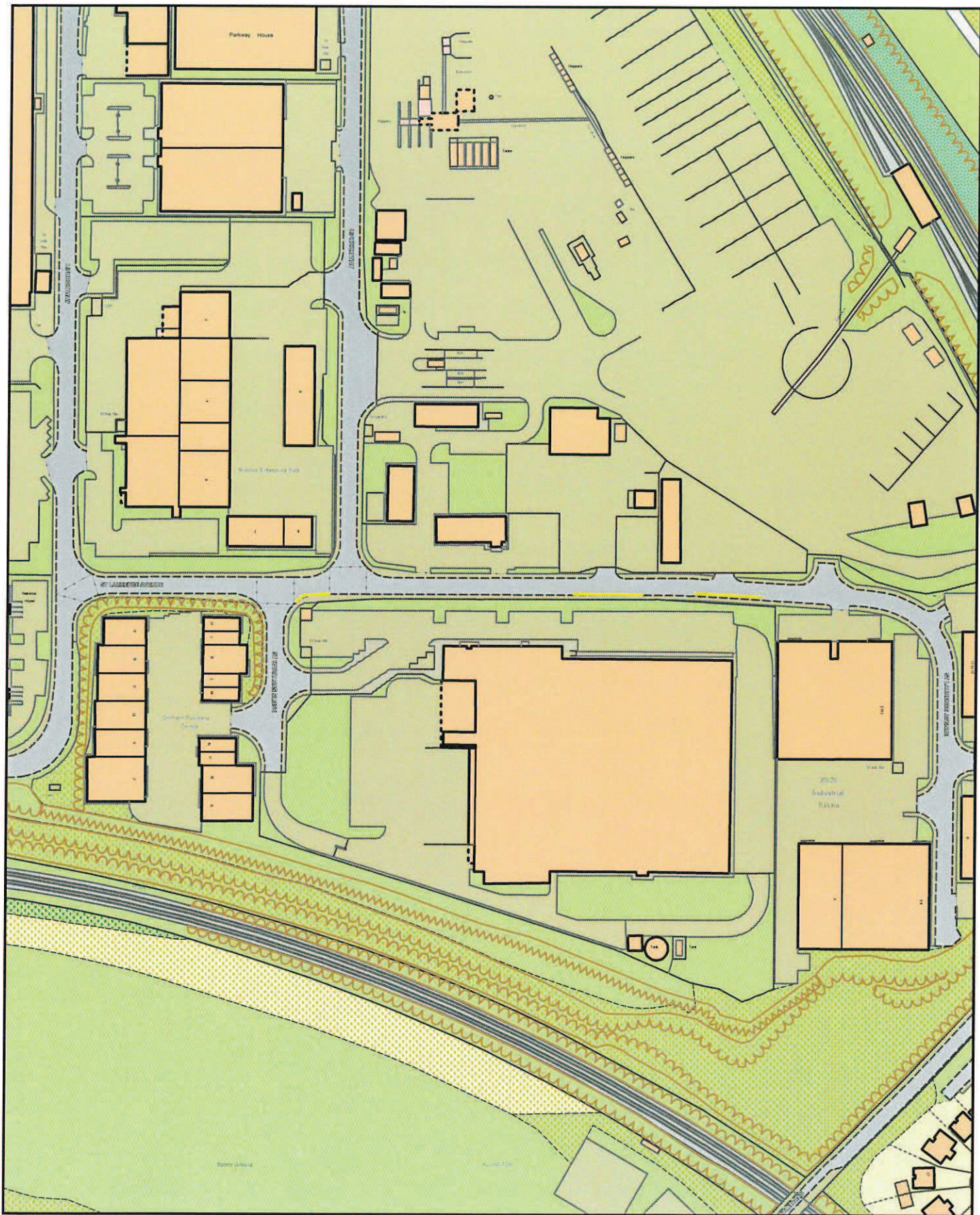
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Sandling Road Proposal



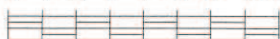
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St Laurence Avenue Proposal



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Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transport Committee

**10 November
2015**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes
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Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transport Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Chris Berry, Planning Consultant to Planning Policy
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	Staplehurst, Marden and Yalding, Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton, Sutton Valence and Langley, Headcorn...

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Committee approves this report as the basis for formal representations on the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan (July 2015) according to Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012; and
2. That the Committee agrees the Council's consultation responses to the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan (July 2015) in Section 3 below which are described in more detail in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.23 of this report.
3. The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan (July 2015):
 - a) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000;
 - b) has been assessed, at this stage, to not require Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessment;
 - c) is in general conformity with the adopted policies of the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 apart from the following specific policies of the Local Plan:
 - Local Plan Policy ENV28 – Development in the Countryside: Though Policy PW2 of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan does not preclude the development allowed by Local Plan Policy ENV28, the supporting text is not in general conformity with this strategic adopted Local Plan policy over an extensive rural area to which it applies and as written would preclude the operation of Local Plan Policy ENV28

- Local Plan ENV44 – Conversion of Rural Buildings for Commercial, Industrial, Recreational and Tourism Purposes: Though Policy PW2 of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan as written does not preclude the development allowed by Local Plan Policy ENV28, the supporting text is not in general conformity with adopted Local Plan Policy ENV44 over an extensive rural Area to which it applies and as written would preclude the operation of Local Plan Policy ENV28
- Local Plan ENV45 – Conversion of Rural Buildings for Residential Purposes: Policy PW2 as written is does not preclude the development allowed by Policy ENV28, the supporting text is not in general conformity with Local Plan Policy ENV45 over an extensive rural area to which it applies and as written would preclude the operation of Local plan Policy ENV28
- Local Plan Policy ED2 – Retention of Employment Sites: Policy H6 of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan as written is unclear but within the areas defined in the Local Plan would not protect against redevelopment or use of vacant business, industrial, storage or distribution sites or premises for non-employment purposes. The policy is therefore not in general conformity with this strategic policy and as written would preclude the operation of Local Plan Policy ED2.
- Local Plan Policy R1 – Maintaining and Enhancing Existing Retail Facilities: Policy GW1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting text are not in general conformity with Local Plan Policy R1 in relation to ensuring that development in the station area is not threatening the overall economic vitality and viability of established High Street retail or other business units in the station area.
- Local Plan Policy R2 - Major Retail Proposals Exceeding 500 sq metres: Policy GW1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting text are not in general conformity with Local Plan Policy R2 in relation to establishing an appropriate scale of development and apply a sequential approach.
- Local Plan Policy R10 - Local Convenience Shops, Post Offices and Pharmacies: Policy GW1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting text are not in general conformity with this strategic adopted policy in relation to ensuring that development in the station area is not threatening the overall economic vitality and viability of established High Street retail centre or other business units in the station area.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough Council.

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	10 November 2016

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report constitutes the formal response of the Borough Council to the Consultation on the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan ("the Neighbourhood Plan") in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. The Parish of Staplehurst was agreed as a designated Neighbourhood Plan Area on 14th January 2013 by the Council and a Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared.
- 1.2 An initial draft of the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared in accordance with Regulation 14 in June 2014 and this was consulted upon and informal comments made by council officers in October 2014. The draft Neighbourhood Plan was amended in the light of representations made and the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan 2015 – 2031 was submitted to the Borough Council for public consultation as required by Regulation 15.
- 1.3 The Borough Council is responsible for the conduct of the public consultation which is required by Regulation 16, and can also make its own representations on the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the consultation process. Comments may be made with regard to the extent to which the council believes the Neighbourhood Plan has satisfied the basic conditions (see para. 2.8 below) of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations and these are then passed to the independent Examiner at the next stage of the process.
- 1.4 The following representations are made with regard to the submission document.
- 1.5 The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan:
 - a) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000;
 - b) has been assessed, at this stage, to not require Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessment;
 - c) is in general conformity with the adopted policies of the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 apart from the following specific policies of the Local Plan:
 - Local Plan Policies ENV28, ENV44 and ENV45 - Development in the Countryside and Conversion of Rural Buildings et al: the supporting text to Neighbourhood Plan Policy PW2 is not in general conformity over an extensive rural area to which it applies and would preclude the operation of the above adopted Local Plan Policies.

- Local Plan Policy ED2 Retention of Employment Sites: Policy H6 of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan is not in general conformity with the above adopted local Plan Policy.
- Local Plan Policies R1, R2 and R10 Maintaining and Enhancing Existing Retail Facilities et al: Policy GW1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting text is not in general conformity with the above adopted Local Plan Policies by not seeking to sufficiently protect the existing High Street Local Centre.

- 1.6 If approved, the representations made at Section 3 of the Recommendations will be forwarded with the record of any subsequent discussion by Members of this committee, without further processing, for consideration by the Examiner. After consideration of these and all other representations from consultees, the Examiner will prepare a report and make a recommendation regarding a referendum.

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Maidstone Borough Council has supported Staplehurst Parish Council in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan by offering advice and guidance to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan complies with the necessary Regulations and other statutory requirements, as well as providing practical advice about how to achieve the overall aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as updated by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 set out the formal stages which a Neighbourhood Development Plan must proceed through before it is made (adopted). Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the development plan for Maidstone Borough.
- 2.2 Following the formal submission of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with to Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, Maidstone Borough Council has a statutory responsibility for a number of stages, both in terms of organisation and cost. These formal stages may be generalised as:
- consultation, (Regulation 16)
 - examination,
 - referendum and
 - formally making the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2.3 The statutory (Regulation 16) consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan referred to in paragraph 1.1 above began on Friday 23 October 2012⁵ and will be completed on Friday 4 December 2015. Preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan began in January 2013, when the Neighbourhood Plan Area ("the Area") was agreed, and has been developed by Staplehurst Parish Council, with support from community volunteers, Maidstone Borough Council, and consultants FERIA Urbanism.
- 2.4 The final draft of the Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for consultation in August 2015. It aims to reflect community-wide views, concerns and wishes about the future of the Area and must be in general conformity with national policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework

(NPPF) and the policies in the adopted Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000. The Neighbourhood Plan will progress to Examination following the Regulation 16 Consultation and when made, the plan period will run alongside the Maidstone Borough Local Plan to 2031.

- 2.5 The Neighbourhood Plan has six main sections: Planning For The Future; Meeting The Conditions; Strategic Planning; Village Character; Planning Policies and Objectives, and Next Steps. Officers have assessed the Neighbourhood Plan against the legal, procedural and technical criteria for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, and are satisfied that it should proceed to examination.
- 2.6 After the consultation closes, the Neighbourhood Plan, together with supporting documents and comments received during the consultation, will be submitted to the Examiner for independent examination. The Examiner's role is to test whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions set out in the Regulations and further matters set out in the planning legislation (see paragraph 2.8 below).
- 2.7 The 'basic conditions' may be summarised as; whether the Neighbourhood Plan:
- a) has regard to national policy and guidance;
 - b) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - c) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area or any part of that area; and
 - d) does not breach or is otherwise compatible with EU obligations, including the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC and Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- 2.8 The further matters that are considered by the Examiner include considering whether the draft Neighbourhood Plan complies with the definition of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and the provisions that can be made by a Neighbourhood Development Plan; and whether the Neighbourhood Plan as submitted is compatible with the Human Rights Convention. The Examiner may also make recommendations on whether the area for referendum should extend beyond the Neighbourhood Plan boundaries, i.e. the Area.
- 2.9 The current consultation gives Maidstone Borough Council an opportunity to comment on whether it considers the Neighbourhood Plan meets the set of 'basic conditions'. The consultation response set out in this report will inform the Examiner of areas of particular concern to the Borough Council and during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, meetings were held between council officers and the authors of the Neighbourhood Plan to discuss the basic conditions, and other related items.
- 2.10 The following points are the Council's proposed responses to the consultation and are summarised in the recommendations to this report at 1.1 above.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.11 The Neighbourhood Plan makes specific reference to the requirements of the NPPF in terms of planning positively and supporting policies for housing and economic development, and accepts the principle of development within the housing allocations as set out in the emerging draft Local Plan (Regulation 18). The Neighbourhood Plan is considered to have met the objectives of paragraph 184 of the NPPF regarding making sufficient provision for new housing, and thus meeting its contribution to the Council's objectively assessed need.

Conformity with Adopted Local Plan Policy

- 2.12 A basic condition for the Neighbourhood Plan is that it must be in general conformity with the 'saved' strategic policies of the adopted Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000, that is, the high level strategic elements in the local plan that are essential to delivering the overall planning and development strategy for the local area.
- 2.13 For the purposes of decision-taking, saved local plan policies should not be considered out of date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of the NPPF. However, from March 2013, due weight should be given to saved policies in existing plans according to their consistency with the NPPF, and the adopted policies have been assessed for their consistency with the NPPF and the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.14 Neighbourhood plans should thus only be expected to be in conformity with those strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan which are consistent with the NPPF. Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have been tested for their general conformity and the following comments may be made with regard to their consistency with Local Plan saved policies.

Consistent policies

- 2.15 Local Plan policies where the Neighbourhood Plan is either consistent or reliant on existing policy, comprise:
- Policies ENV 23, 23, 27, 34, and 41
 - Policies H1, 16 and 28
 - Policy E9
 - Policy R11
 - Policies CF1,2,and 3

Inconsistent policies

- 2.16 Local Plan Policy ENV28 – Development in the Countryside: Though Policy PW2 of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan does not preclude the development allowed by Local Plan Policy ENV28, the supporting text is not in general conformity with this strategic adopted Local Plan policy over an extensive rural area to which it applies and as written would preclude the operation of Local Plan Policy ENV28

- 2.17 Local Plan ENV44 – Conversion of Rural Buildings for Commercial, Industrial, Recreation and Tourism Purposes: Though Policy PW2 of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan as written does not preclude the development allowed by Local Plan Policy ENV28, the supporting text is not in general conformity with adopted Local Plan Policy ENV44 over an extensive rural Area to which it applies and as written would preclude the operation of Local Plan Policy ENV28

- 2.18 Local Plan ENV45 – Conversion of Rural Buildings for Residential Purposes: Policy PW2 as written is does not preclude the development allowed by Policy ENV28, the supporting text is not in general conformity with Local Plan Policy ENV45 over an extensive rural area to which it applies and as written would preclude the operation of Local plan Policy ENV28

- 2.19 Local Plan Policy ED2 – Retention of Employment Sites: Policy H6 of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan as written is unclear but within the areas defined in the Local Plan would not protect against redevelopment or use of vacant business, industrial, storage or distribution sites or premises for non-employment purposes. The policy is therefore not in general conformity with this strategic policy and as written would preclude the operation of Local Plan Policy ED2.

- 2.20 Local Plan Policy R1- Maintaining and Enhancing Existing Retail Facilities: Policy GW1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting text are not in general conformity with Local Plan Policy R1 in relation to ensuring that development in the station area is not threatening the overall economic vitality and viability of established High Street retail or other business units in the station area.

- 2.21 Local Plan Policy R2 - Major Retail Proposals Exceeding 500 sq metres: Policy GW1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting text are not in general conformity with Local Plan Policy R2 in relation to establishing an appropriate scale of development and apply a sequential approach.

- 2.22 Local Plan Policy R10 - Local Convenience Shops, Post Offices and Pharmacies: Policy GW1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting text are not in general conformity with this strategic adopted policy in relation to ensuring that development in the station area is not threatening the overall economic vitality and viability of established High Street retail centre or other business units in the station area.

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 2.23 Maidstone Borough Council has carried out its duty to screen the Neighbourhood Plan for the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) and received responses from statutory consultees as required by the legislation. At this stage, the Borough Council is satisfied that there are no requirements for a SEA or HRA.

Conformity with emerging Local Plan Policy

- 2.24 Whilst it is not a requirement for a Neighbourhood Development Plan to be in conformity with an emerging plan, it is nonetheless clear that the emerging strategic policies and priorities, and importantly the substantial evidence which underpin them, are relevant. The Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed for its consistency with the emerging local plan and it is regarded as broadly in line with the vision of the local plan which sees the role of Staplehurst as a rural service centre being reinforced by directing suitable development and supporting infrastructure.
- 2.25 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks the retention of existing services, the addition of new infrastructure where possible, and the regeneration of employment sites including the expansion of existing employment sites. It seeks 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.
- 2.26 Key infrastructure and service improvements needed to support delivery are sought with new development expected to make an appropriate contribution towards any infrastructure needs arising as a result of such development.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Once the Neighbourhood Plan is made it becomes part of the Council's development plan and is used for development management decision making. If the Borough Council does not respond to the consultation draft, it will have missed an opportunity to submit formal comments to the examination. There are therefore two options to consider:
- 3.2 Option A: To approve this report as the basis for the Borough Council's comment on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.3 Option B: Councillors may not agree to make representations but this would compromise our opportunity to inform the Examiner of our policy positions.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Councillors are recommended to adopt Option A.

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	When the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' it will form part of the development plan for Maidstone. This will assist in the delivery of the Council's objectives, notably	Head of Planning and Development

	'Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all'. The action areas supporting the priorities will also be addressed through the development plan.	
Risk Management	This consultation is being run to ensure that the plan maintains the requirements of government legislation.	Head of Planning and Development
Financial	Initial financial implications in terms of staffing resources will be mitigated by future Neighbourhood Plan Grant.	Section 151 Officer and Finance Team
Staffing		Head of Planning and Development
Legal	The Neighbourhood Plan has been completed and submitted in accordance with the statutory requirements relating to Neighbourhood Plans and their preparation	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning) Mid-Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The needs of all interested parties have been considered as part of the consultations. Alternate formats of documents will be made available on request.	Policy and Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The plan has been the subject of both Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment.	Head of Planning and Development
Community Safety	There are no implications for Community Safety	Head of Planning and Development
Human Rights Act	There are no implications for the Human Rights Act	Head of Planning and Development
Procurement	When the current consultation is complete, the plan will proceed to Examination. The Examiner will be appointed with due consideration to procurement requirements of the Council's Purchasing Guide and Contract Procedure Rules	Head of Planning and Development and Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	There are no implications for asset management	Head of Planning and Development

6 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix 1: Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan July 2015



STAPLEHURST **NEIGHBOURHOOD** **PLAN**

SUBMISSION PLAN 2015 — 2031
JULY 2015

Staplehurst
Parish
Council

**STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
REGULATION 16 (SUBMISSION PLAN)**

July 2015

|||||

This plan has been prepared by:

**Staplehurst Parish Council, The Parish Office, Village
Centre, High Street, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BJ.**

Digital copies of this document can be downloaded from:

**www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk
www.maidstone.gov.uk**

|||||

Please send all comments and responses to:

**Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House,
King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ.**

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BUILDING A STAPLEHURST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

PLAN PERIOD 2015 — 2031



doc. ref: 099_Q_150908_Submission-Plan_FINAL

Feria Urbanism is a planning and design studio that specialises in neighbourhood strategies, public participation and community engagement. Established in 2007, we have been involved in a diverse range of projects across the UK and have developed key skills in organising community engagement events to inform excellent planning and design.

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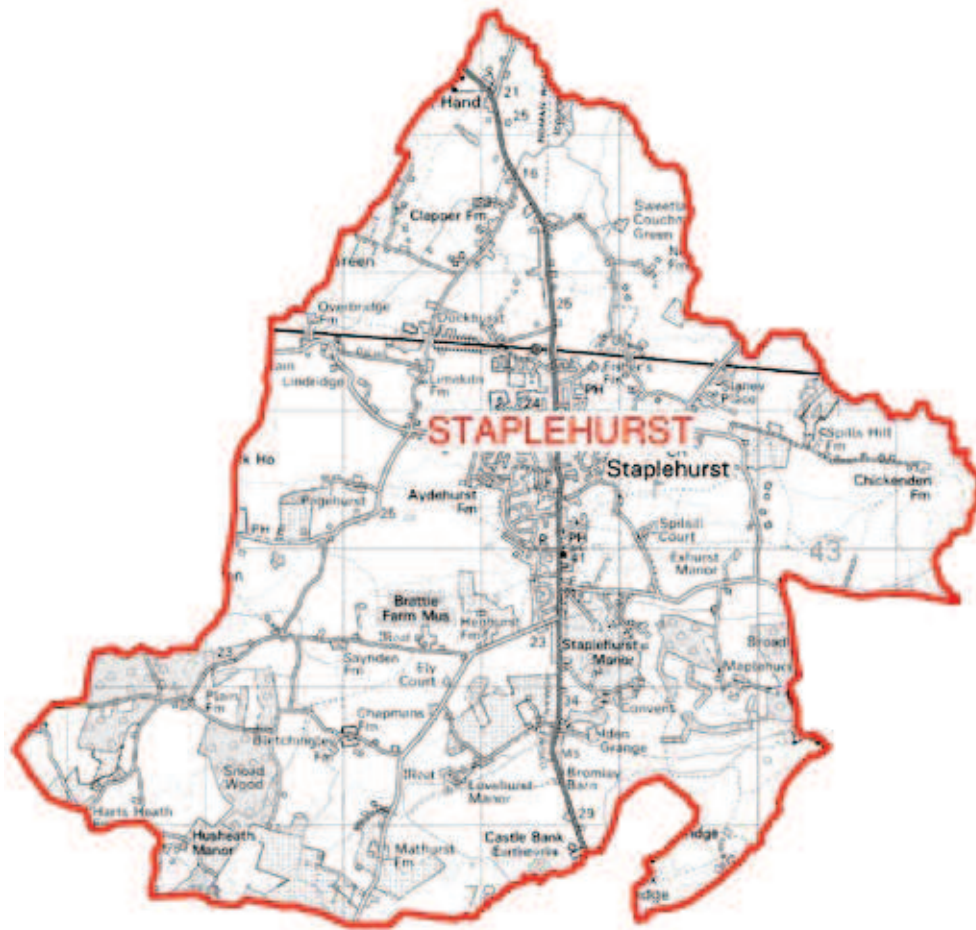
Next Steps



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MAINTAINING + ENHANCING THE VILLAGE CHARACTER



Neighbourhood Plan Boundary This boundary is contiguous with the parish boundary and therefore the plan policies apply to the whole parish. The neighbourhood plan boundary was formally approved by Maidstone Borough Council 14th January 2013.

1.1 THIS SUBMISSION PLAN HAS BEEN PREPARED BY STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL ON BEHALF OF THOSE THAT LIVE AND WORK WITHIN THE PARISH OF STAPLEHURST.

1.2 THE PLAN SETS OUT A VISION FOR THE PARISH THROUGH UNTIL 2031 AND IS SUPPORTED BY A SET OF PLANNING POLICES AND A SERIES OF SPECIFIC PROJECTS. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING REGULATIONS, THIS PLAN HAS BEEN PREPARED THROUGH EXTENSIVE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION.

1.3 The community engagement process has informed the plan's primary aims and ambitions. The plan must therefore:

- Coordinate all new development proposals
- As far as is possible, provide certainty regarding the future of the parish
- Describe the necessary additional community infrastructure required to support a growing village
- Strengthen and enhance the historic village heart
- Improve choice over access and movement
- Introduce high quality architecture
- Ensure the feel of a village community is retained
- Support more retail opportunities
- Support continued investment in education
- Make walking and cycling easier and safer
- Create a happy and fulfilling place.

1.4 This neighbourhood plan comprises specific planning policies and objectives, all grouped under six policy themes. These are all supported by a strategic village framework, indicating how new development needs to integrate with the existing village. This plan has all has been informed by a series of distinct public engagement events, each using a wide range of different public consultation techniques.



Residents work together to decide how best to describe their community and their place.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

2.1 Staplehurst Parish Council recognises the need to plan for the future. There is much value in preparing plans and policies that anticipate changes to village life to help ensure an appropriate and coordinated response. Change is inevitable but how the village responds to this change is what matters.

2.2 This neighbourhood plan represents the first opportunity in the history of Staplehurst for the community to create a legally binding, statutory plan that explains how new developments must integrate with the existing village; sets out the expected quality of design for new development and also links housing growth to investment in new village infrastructure, including improved community facilities.

ALL PLACES ARE EITHER GROWING OR DECLINING. NOTHING STAYS THE SAME.

2.3 There has been a settlement near All Saints church, Staplehurst since about 1000 AD and the village lies on the Roman Road from Maidstone to Hastings, now the A229. The road between Marden and Headcorn crosses the A229 in the centre to create a crossroads, known as Cuckold's Corner.

2.4 Most development was confined to areas along this road until a number of residential areas were built, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s and to the east and west of the main A229 road. The parish covers an extensive area of countryside, mostly devoted to farming and industries related to agriculture, and there is a significant rural population in the parish, including traveller communities.

2.5 Although the railway station is next to the A229, it is some distance from the church so that the built up area of the village now extends nearly two kilometres from the station in the north to just south of Pinnock Lane. The station serves a wider catchment than just the parish and much of the vehicle traffic heading to the station brings people that live outside the parish. Although many people travel out of the parish to work (and a smaller number commute in), the community has large areas of dedicated employment land in the north west of the village adjacent to the station and sustains a large number of voluntary organisations providing a diverse range of activities and services. In addition to children growing up in the village, there are also a significant number of retired people, many living in retirement and care homes.



These images of Station Road (left) and Cuckold's Corner (right) reveal the significant changes that the village has undergone in the last century.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

2.6 The community engagement event in September 2013 revealed that a primary concern of the community was regarding the impact of housing growth on the character of the village. This reflected the findings of the Staplehurst Housing Survey 2010 (report by Tessa O'Sullivan, Rural Housing Enabler with support from Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group and Maidstone Borough Council) that highlighted a widespread concern about new developments within the parish. Key findings included:

- 454 (64%) respondents indicated that they could not support more housing development in Staplehurst
- 601 (85%) respondents felt that the current infrastructure would not support more housing, with the most frequent comments relating to access and movement, and retail and the inadequacies of both.

2.7 Of the respondents who said they would support more development, 157 (22%) felt that affordable housing for people with a connection to the parish was needed.



Village Visioning Event September 2013

2.8 Further analysis found that the need for affordable housing was fairly evenly spread between single people, couples and families.

2.9 Given this background research, the neighbourhood plan seeks to directly address the deficiencies in infrastructure (especially foul and surface water drainage, community facilities, retail, access and movement) and the need for some affordable housing to meet specific needs.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN VISION

2.10 In response to this anxiety about new development in the village, combined with a recognition that some new affordable housing is desirable, the neighbourhood plan has been prepared with the express vision of:

1. Maintaining and enhancing the rural character of Staplehurst village, its immediate setting and the wider parish.
2. Coordinating all new development so that it contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and essential services for all members of the community.
3. Creating a robust yet flexible access and movement network appropriate for all modes of travel and for current and future populations.
4. Using land and resources efficiently so that new developments have a reduced demand for energy and move towards carbon neutrality.
5. Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the whole built environment and the wider countryside.
6. Enforcing the quality of new development through use of materials, details and inclusive design that responds to context.
7. Ensuring that land made available for development will be developed in such a way as to improve people's quality of life, for both new and existing residents.
8. Delivering the community infrastructure necessary to support a growing village in the 21st Century.

2.11 Finally, the neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with Maidstone Borough Council's adopted Local Plan (2000) and its emerging Local Plan, as represented by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 — without such general conformity the neighbourhood plan cannot be adopted as a statutory planning document.



Effective community consultation is a key part of meeting the basic conditions necessary for a robust neighbourhood plan.

MEETING THE CONDITIONS

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3.1 This neighbourhood plan must meet certain basic conditions before they can come into force. It will be checked by the local planning authority and be tested by independent examination before going to referendum. The plan needs to accord with the Neighbourhood Plans (General) Regulations 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework and Maidstone Borough Council planning policies.

3.2 The neighbourhood plan does not simply repeat the local or national planning policies. The Localism Act 2012 enables communities to create a plan that reflects the needs of the local population and future residents. A collaborative approach, led by Staplehurst Parish Council and involving local residents and other interest groups, including developers and neighbouring communities, has created a plan that broadly reflects local aspirations.

GENERAL CONFORMITY

3.3 The planning context for the production neighbourhood plans are set out in the Localism Act 2011, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. For a neighbourhood plan to be approved, it must demonstrate that it:

- is in compliance with national planning policy as set out by the NPPF
- contributes to sustainable development
- is in general conformity with the spatial policies of the development plan for the local area
- is compatible with European policies
- reflects best practice in terms of quality urban design and sustainable planning principles.

3.4 The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan also:

- contains a mix of uses that meets the need of the local community
- has been developed through widespread local consultation
- has general support from the residents of Staplehurst
- has general support of the various land owners/developers on whose land new development is being proposed
- provides development that will add to the village without unnecessarily infringing upon protected countryside
- creates a welcoming environment for residents, tourists and business interests alike
- promotes sustainable development through a holistic approach to development in the village
- enhances pedestrian and cycle routes in the village
- encourages a strong village economy through extra retail and employment opportunities to support the local jobs and reduce the need to travel.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.5 This neighbourhood plan is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which has been taken into consideration at all stages of the plan's development.

3.6 Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the NPPF make clear that neighbourhood plans need to take the policies in the NPPF into account and that these policies are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, alongside local documents such as the Local Plan and neighbourhood plans.

3.7 Paragraph 16 of the NPPF states that neighbourhoods should develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development and that neighbourhoods plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.

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3.8 Staplehurst Parish Council considers that this neighbourhood plan supports both of these objectives. The range of policies in this neighbourhood plan both addresses the strategic growth agenda in the Maidstone Local Plan and helps shape and support development in response to the local context.

3.9 Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that neighbourhood plans should include a policy on economic growth in the rural areas. This neighbourhood plan contains such a policy, PW1. Paragraph 58 of the NPPF requires neighbourhood plans to include policies that encourage good design in their areas and this is met through neighbourhood plan policies H1 and H2.

3.10 Paragraphs 150 — 157 of the NPPF set out how development plans should be aspirational but practical and should spatially address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This neighbourhood plan has been generated to address all of these aspects while remaining flexible in order to respond to change in the parish.



Three Day Design Forum **October 2013**

3.11 Paragraphs 183 — 185 of the NPPF provide some general guidance on the production of neighbourhood plans in addition to the requirements of paragraph 16. In particular, paragraph 184 makes it clear that “... neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than is set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies”.

3.12 This neighbourhood plan accepts the principle of development within the housing allocations as set out in the (Regulation 18) draft Local Plan and it is therefore considered to meet the objectives of paragraph 184 of the NPPF. It should also be noted that paragraph 185 of the NPPF states that once approved, the policies in the neighbourhood plan will take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood.

3.13 Staplehurst Parish Council acknowledges that there is no up to date and adopted Local Plan in place at Maidstone Borough Council. It therefore wishes to move quickly, but thoroughly, towards the adoption of this neighbourhood plan in order to give the community that lives and works in the parish the certainty and control it needs over its future.

SUSTAINABILITY

3.14 Paragraphs 7 and 14 of the NPPF identify the components of sustainable development, and how planning applications and Local Plans can meet these requirements. It is considered that the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan fills an economic, social and environmental role in planning positively to shape the future development and needs of the parish. In addition, the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the policies set out in the emerging Maidstone Local Plan. This neighbourhood plan has been produced with the requirements of paragraph 14 of the NPPF in mind.

3.15 The policies in the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan have been produced in general conformity with the strategic policies of the emerging Maidstone Local Plan. These Local Plan policies have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in line with the relevant European directives. The policies in the neighbourhood plan therefore supplement and help to implement these strategic policies. They are therefore considered sustainable in line with these regulations.

88 / 12 3.16 This neighbourhood plan is a sustainable plan that incorporates employment, key services and new facilities together with a range of access and movement options that help reduce the need to travel.

3.17 As part of the evidence base for the preparation of the neighbourhood plan, the parish council has undertaken a housing needs survey to understand local need to inform an appropriate mix of house types and tenures in Staplehurst. It has also held collaborative design and planning workshops to determine the most appropriate locations for new development that can contribute to the overall sustainability of the village while minimising any negative impact upon attractive areas of countryside.

RURAL SERVICE CENTRE

3.18 This neighbourhood plan positively supports development by accepting the village's strategic role as a designated Rural Service Centre (RSC). The parish council acknowledges that Policy SP3 in the draft Maidstone Borough Council (Regulation 18) Local Plan designates Staplehurst a Rural Service Centre — that is, a larger rural settlement deemed suitable by MBC for additional houses.

3.19 This neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the policy themes and growth agenda as set out by Maidstone Borough Council. In this respect, the parish council firmly believes it meets the general conformity test for neighbourhood planning with respect to the borough or district level planning policies.

3.20 Staplehurst Parish Council recognises the importance of new development and the significant role the village can play in accommodating this development as a designated Rural Service Centre. This neighbourhood plan gives the community in Staplehurst the control and confidence it needs to help it develop as a prosperous and attractive Kentish village.

SUPPORTING NEW DEVELOPMENT

3.21 This plan supports new development in a sustainable way. Development is located and designed so as to create a compact and balanced settlement that enhances connections across the village. This will help create a sustainable settlement that will connect residential neighbourhoods with services through the increased use of non-car modes of travel. The sites identified for development are informed by their immediate context. This is a direct response to paragraph 47 of the NPPF on delivering high quality homes in a rural environment; this plan identifies key sites in the village that reflect locations suitable for the long term success of the village.



This neighbourhood plan contains an assessment of the qualities that make Staplehurst special.

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BEST PRACTICE IN RURAL DESIGN

3.22 To ensure that the design and layouts of new development are appropriate to the village, the plan encourages high quality design and sustainable planning based on an assessment of the positive qualities of the existing village. This plan seeks to integrate new development with the necessary social and physical infrastructure. Paragraphs 47 — 55 in the NPPF expect the delivery of high quality homes to match appropriate housing needs through sensitively designed new places. This plan indicates appropriate housing sites in the context of the wider village. In terms of design, a positive relationship between existing built areas and the new will be critical to the successful assimilation of new development.

3.23 The selection of the indicated development sites has been based on striking the right balance between the need for more housing and the protection of the countryside environment. Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states that new developments “... will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term”. The parish council considers this draft plan to be a long-term strategy that will enhance the village through high quality architectural form and layout.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

3.24 The parish council believes that this neighbourhood plan supports the needs of the wider community by addressing the social, economic and environmental aspects of village life. This has been expressed through the identification of new areas of housing, new retail opportunities, together with a sustainable access and movement network across the village. The specific policy themes within the plan will benefit all elements of the community.

EFFECTIVE LOCAL CONSULTATION

3.25 As set out in Section 14 (a) of the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations, consultation on the plan and the plan-making process must be brought to the attention of the people who live or work in the village. Staplehurst Parish Council has ensured that this is a plan that reflects local opinions and local needs. To ensure that public engagement and consultation were effective, input from the community has been sought at every stage and has been invaluable to the production of the plan. Throughout the process, members of the community have been able to shape discussions and form dialogues with fellow residents, with land owners and with other interest groups. The result has been that different groups have been able to find shared outcomes.

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3.26 There has been a series of consultation and engagement events that have directly influenced the drafting of the plan. All consultation material relating to these events (e.g. slideshows, reports and posters) have been published online during the plan preparation.

3.27 Please see the accompanying Consultation Statement for full details on the consultation process undertaken as part of the preparation of this neighbourhood plan. Please see the accompanying Conditions Statements for more details on how the neighbourhood plan meets the required conditions.

BROAD LOCAL SUPPORT

3.28 From the outset, Staplehurst Parish Council has tried to ensure that a broad cross-section of the local community has been involved in the plan-making process. The consultation and engagement process has been open and transparent and interest groups such as land owners, local developers and school representatives have all been included in the process. All these groups are considered appropriate consultation bodies to include, as defined in the neighbourhood planning (General) Regulations Schedule 1.

3.29 This approach towards finding shared solutions to resolve issues in the village has the support from the various interest groups and from those on whose land development is being proposed. It is hoped that this support for the process will also translate into support for this draft plan.

ESTABLISHING THE OVERALL VISION

3.30 The results of the local consultation and the parallel work to ensure the plan meets the basic conditions have been combined to establish an shared vision, bringing the plan in line with paragraph 183 of the NPPF. This vision is expressed in the form of eight key vision points. These points have structured the neighbourhood plan and informed the development of the individual policies and objectives.



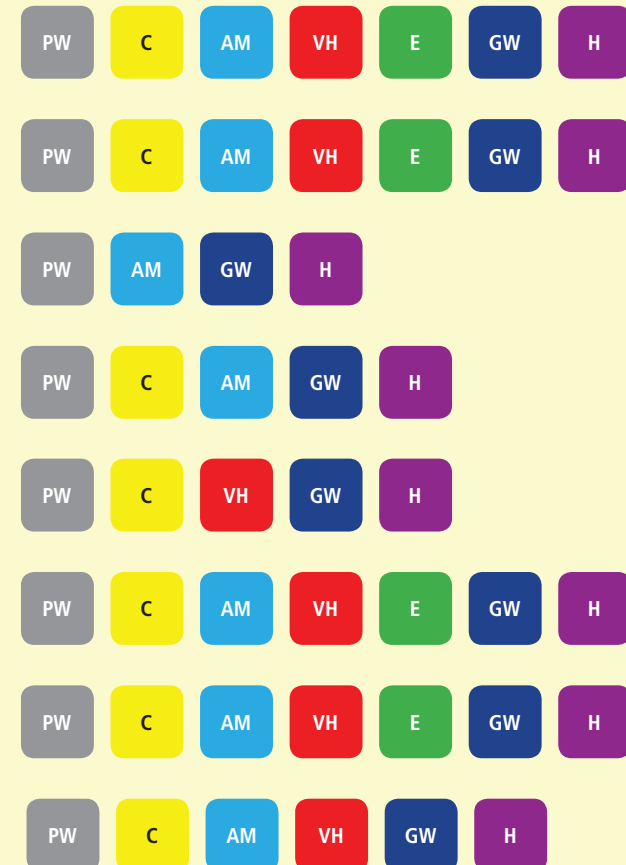
These are the six policy themes that sit below a set of parish-wide planning policies. Together, they all ensure the plan can meet the vision and objectives.

HOW HAVE THE PLANNING POLICIES + OBJECTIVES BEEN INFORMED BY THE VISION?

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN VISION POINTS

PRINCIPAL POLICY THEMES DEVELOPED TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

- 1 Maintaining and enhancing the rural character of Staplehurst village, its immediate setting and the wider parish.
- 2 Coordinating all new development so that it contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and essential services for the whole community.
- 3 Creating a robust yet flexible access and movement network appropriate for all modes of travel and for current and future populations.
- 4 Using land and resources efficiently so that new developments have a reduced demand for energy and move towards carbon neutrality
- 5 Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the whole built environment and the wider countryside.
- 6 Enforcing the quality of new development through use of materials, details and inclusive design that responds to context.
- 7 Ensuring that land made available for development will be developed in such a way as to improve people's quality of life, for both new and existing residents.
- 8 Delivering the community infrastructure necessary to support a growing village in the 21st Century.



Policies + Objectives Table This table sets out how the planning policy themes of the neighbourhood plan link back to the eight vision points established through the consultation and engagement work. See pages 24 to 58 for a full description of each policy theme and the individual policies and objectives contained within.



Even historic places have been planned through deliberate decisions taken over the years, contributing to what is often seen as organic growth. This neighbourhood plan aims to continue this proven tradition of creating a planned settlement.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

4.1 A critical role of the neighbourhood plan is to provide a coordinated vision for the future of the village. This will make sure that individual development sites contribute in an effective and appropriate way to an overall vision. Without such coordination there is a risk of fragmented or piecemeal development.

4.2 To better understand how new development should respond to the local context, an assessment of the village's activities, uses, street patterns, character and form has been undertaken, together with an appreciation of the landscape setting. This assessment is set out in a series of diagrams that help inform a strategic framework plan that will guide Staplehurst over the coming years.

LIFE + ACTIVITY

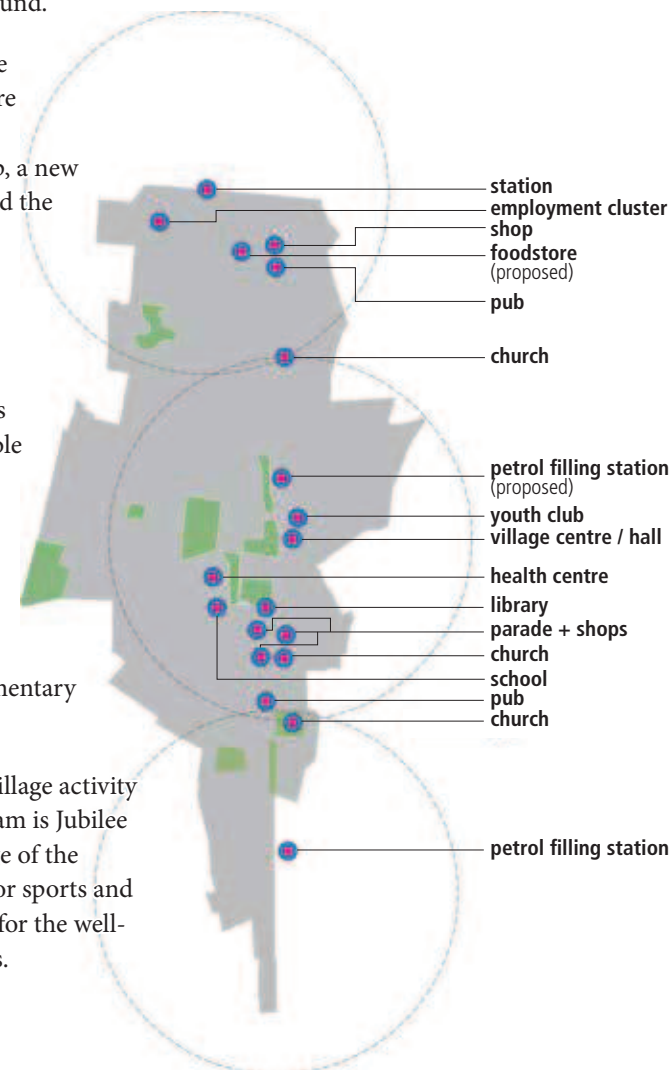
The essential village services and facilities

4.3 The distribution of the village's essential services and facilities is very much skewed towards the village heart, reflecting the historic origins of Staplehurst. This is where the Village Centre, youth club, health centre, parade of shops, school and three churches can be found.

4.4 Other services can be found to the north, where there is another pub, a local convenience shop, a new foodstore (proposed) and the railway station. To the south, there is a petrol filling station.

4.5 The village can therefore be described as comprising three walkable "neighbourhoods" (i.e. north, central and south), each of around one kilometre across. The plan seeks to further define these and ensure they are complementary with one another.

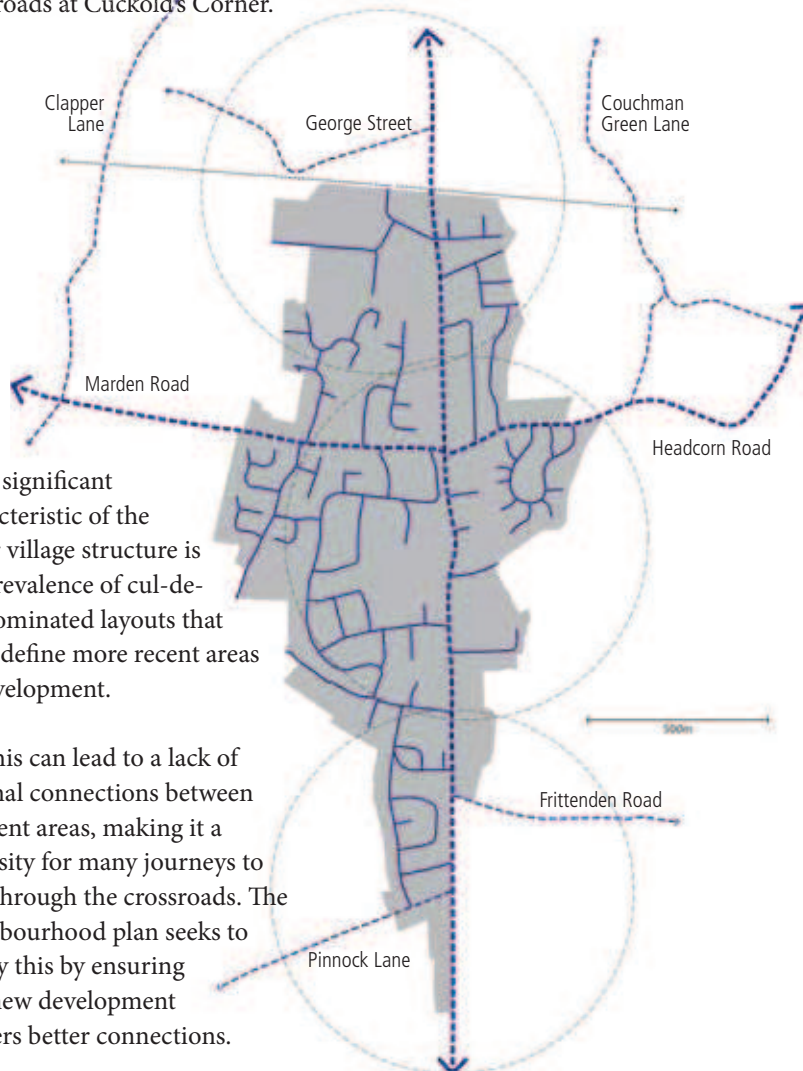
4.6 A vital location for village activity not shown on this diagram is Jubilee Field, on the eastern edge of the village. This is a centre for sports and recreation and essential for the well-being of village residents.



STREET STRUCTURE

The historic street pattern informs movement choices

4.7 The structure of the village is very much defined by its historic street pattern, formed around a crossroads at Cuckold's Corner.



4.8 A significant characteristic of the wider village structure is the prevalence of cul-de-sac dominated layouts that often define more recent areas of development.

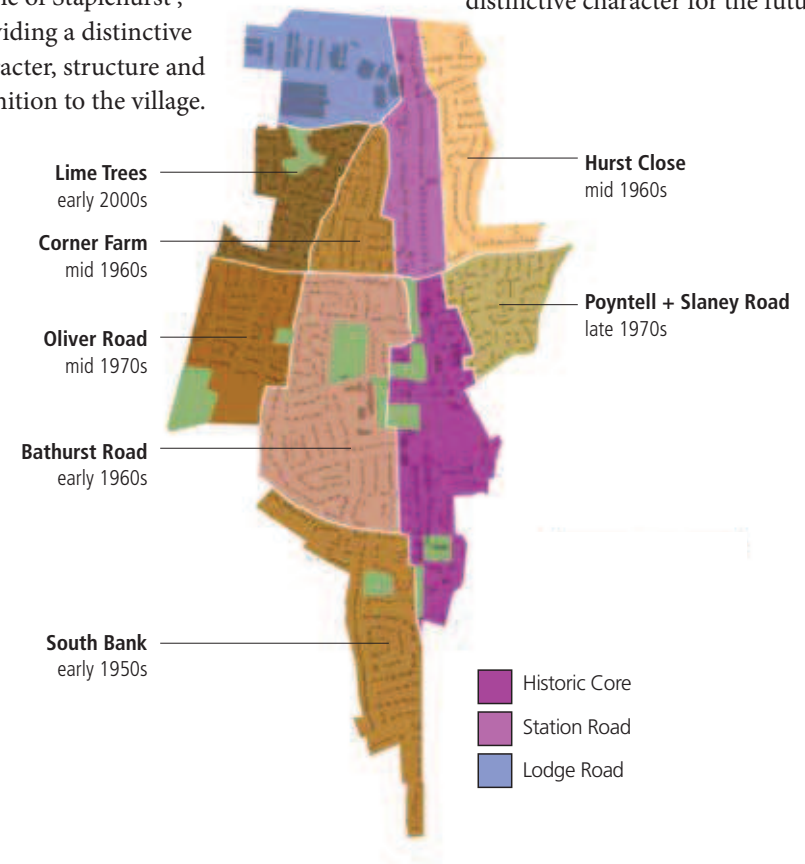
4.9 This can lead to a lack of internal connections between different areas, making it a necessity for many journeys to pass through the crossroads. The neighbourhood plan seeks to rectify this by ensuring that new development delivers better connections.

CHARACTER AREAS

The different land uses and building layouts

4.10 The historic heart of the village is located between the crossroads and the All Saints Church on top of the hill. To the north, lies the Station Road character area of brick villas fronting the road. These two areas contain most of the village's essential services and facilities and can be described as the "spine of Staplehurst", providing a distinctive character, structure and definition to the village.

4.11 Attached to this spine, are various areas of predominantly residential development. These are the neighbourhoods that provide good homes for the residents of Staplehurst. New developments need to be of a high quality design that will also add new residential and mixed-use areas of distinctive character for the future.



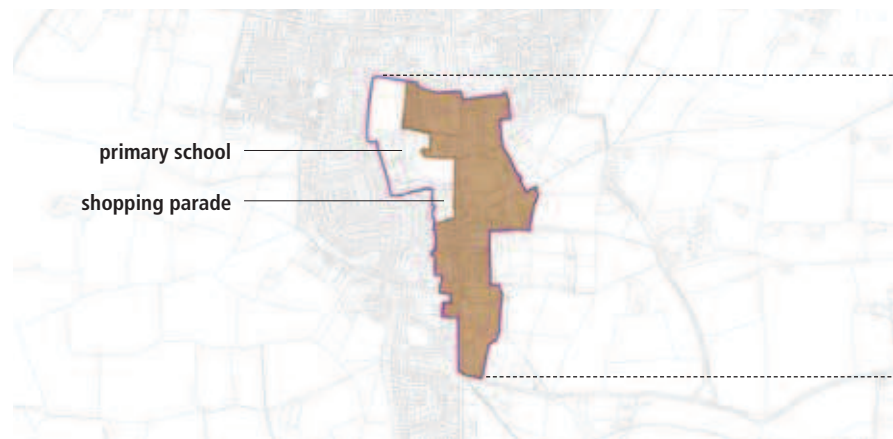
CONSERVATION AREA + VILLAGE HEART

The village core

4.12 There is widespread support from within the community for creating a stronger village heart. The cluster of uses in and around the High Street that support the social and community life of Staplehurst is vital for a growing village.

4.13 All ages and all activities can be found in this one part of Staplehurst. Primary school children and their parents, the elderly and teenagers. Football games, book reading, grocery shopping, pub meals and local Kentish beer. Taken together, these “people, places and activities” are what makes village life special. This village heart is defined by the purple boundary line shown below.

4.14 Maidstone Borough Council has 41 conservation areas that cover areas of special architectural or historic interest. One of these is in Staplehurst, shown by the brown shaded area below. Of the features in the village heart, only the school and shopping parade are not in the Conservation Area.

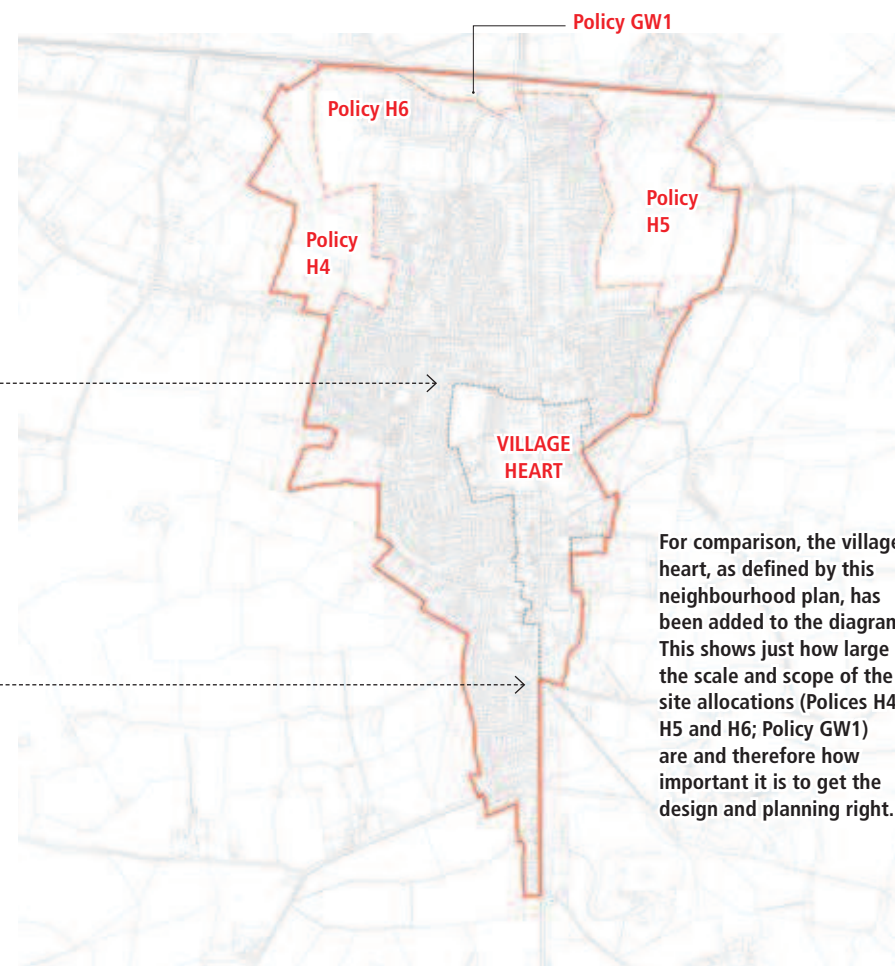


4.15 There is no “Article 4 Direction” for the Staplehurst Conservation Area. Under this direction, any work that changes the external appearance of a building, or affects its grounds may require planning permission from the Borough Council.

LIMITS OF BUILT FORM

The new village envelope

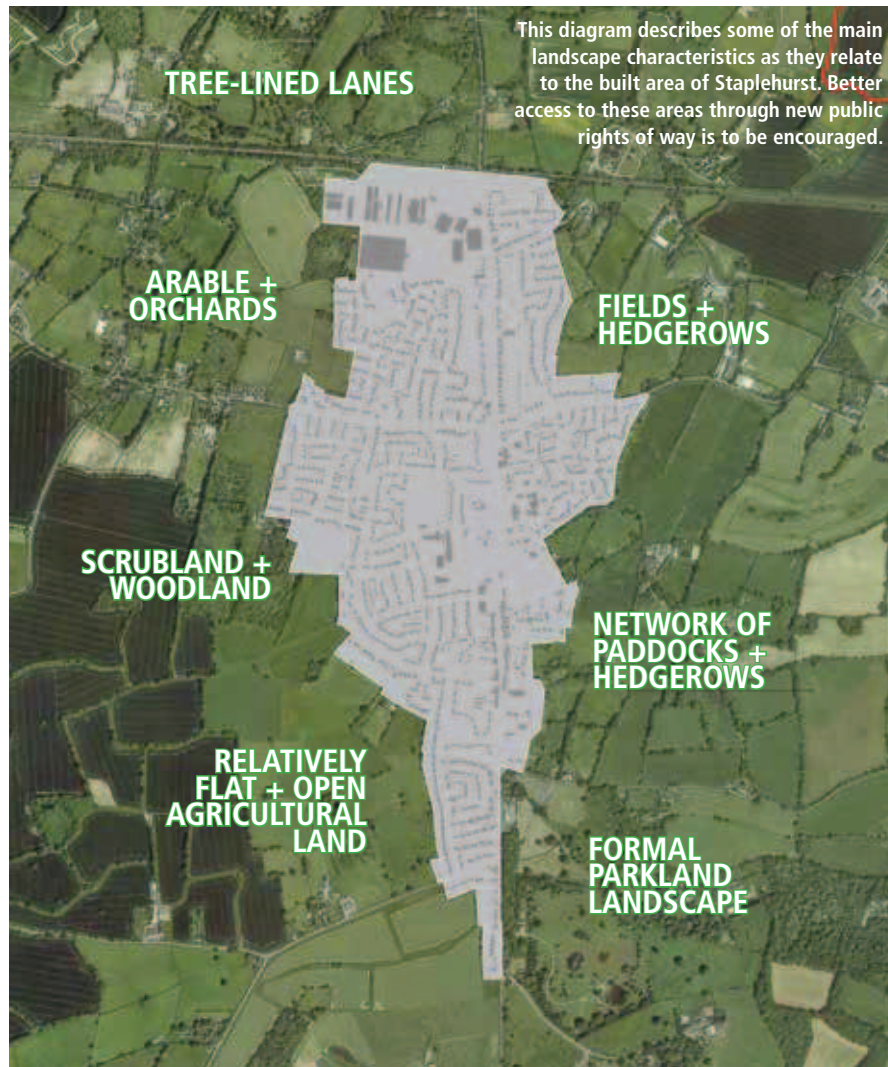
4.16 The inclusion of two housing allocations on the east and west of the village means the village envelope will increase. The diagram below shows a new village envelope for the neighbourhood plan period to 2031, indicated by the solid red line. The previous boundary is shown by the dotted red lines for the locations only where it was not contiguous with the new envelope line.



RURAL CHARACTER

How the countryside informs the village setting

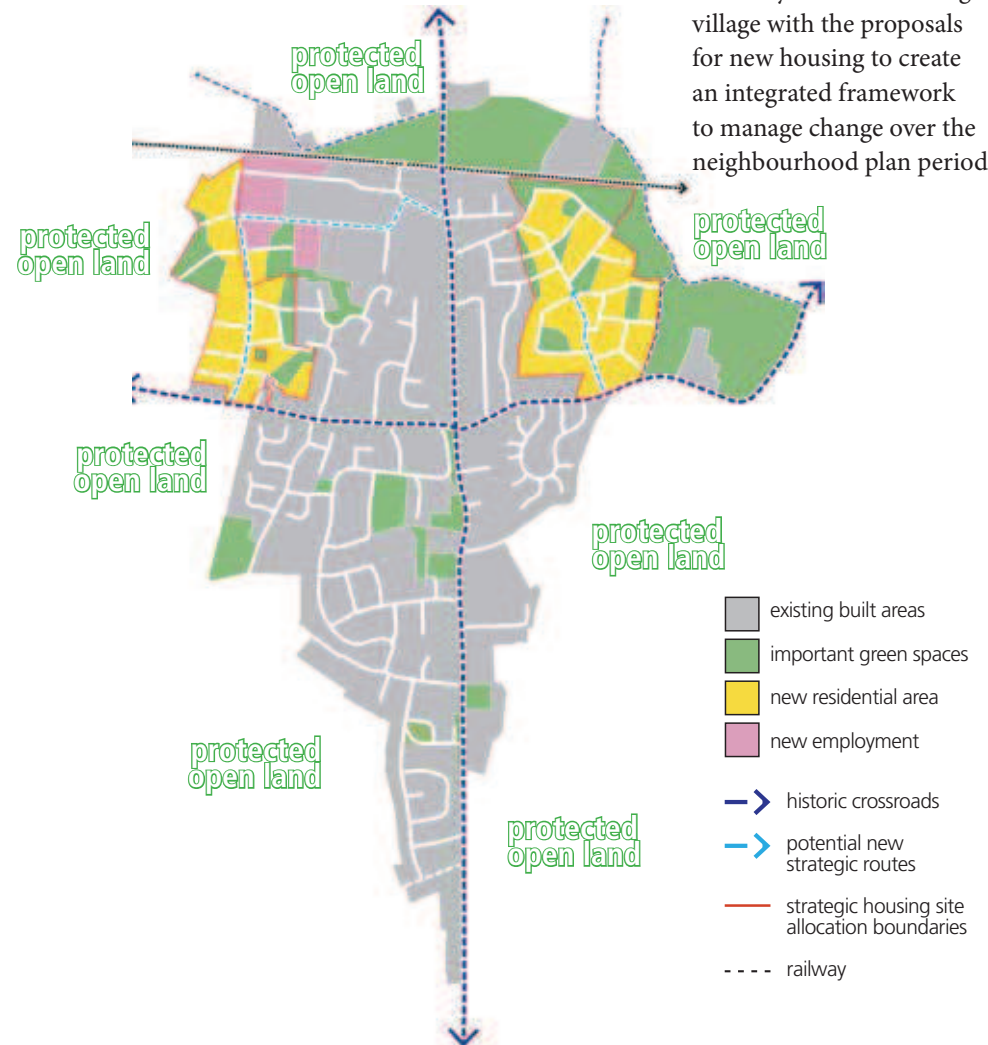
4.17 The immediate rural area comprises different areas of character. Their relationship with the built form of the village gives a particular sense of place.



FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM

Bringing It All Together

4.18 This plan brings together the analysis of the existing village with the proposals for new housing to create an integrated framework to manage change over the neighbourhood plan period.



CONCEPT DRAWING + FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM

4.19 A principal aim of the plan-making process, in particular the consultation and engagement events, has been to ensure a strategic approach is taken at all times. Individual development sites have been assessed within the context of the whole village and wider parish to test how they can contribute to the bigger picture.

4.20 The concept drawing that emerged from the three day design forum has provided a sound basis for moving forward with the neighbourhood plan preparation. This drawing was tested at consultation events in January, February and March 2014, and through a questionnaire, and a majority of respondents (57% of respondents) supported it as a basis for future work.

4.21 The framework diagram (page 19) is based on refinements to the three day concept drawing and brings together the existing built areas with the potential areas for new homes and new employment. The framework diagram shows how the two housing allocations need to be sensitively but effectively integrated with the existing fabric of the village. This requires the landowners and developers to think strategically by looking beyond their red line allocation boundaries. This is necessary to ensure that the early phases of development do not prejudice the longer term objectives of the overall vision for a connected and integrated village.

THE MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

4.22 Policy SP3 in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 designates Staplehurst a Rural Service Centre — that is, a larger rural settlement with a range of existing facilities and transport links making it suitable for additional houses.

4.23 These new homes are allocated in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 Appendix A Housing Allocations to the east and west of the A229. Policy H1(36) is the housing allocation shown by the red line to the west of the village. According to Maidstone Borough Council calculations, this can accommodate up to 250 new homes. Policy H1(37) is the housing allocation shown by the red line to the east of the village and, according to Maidstone Borough Council calculations, this can accommodate up to 400 new homes. This is a total of up to 650 new homes over the plan period, based on Maidstone Borough Council housing number calculations for the capacity of each site.

4.24 The neighbourhood plan framework diagram looks beyond these two red lines to test how these two allocations will need to be integrated with the rest of the village. This is something this neighbourhood plan must do as the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan does not address this integration issue.

PLANNING POLICIES + KEY AREAS OF CHANGE





VILLAGE CHARACTER

06 / 22

5.1 What makes the historic heart of Staplehurst distinctive? The way the buildings frame and enclose space contributes significantly to the sense of place. Special buildings, such as the pub, are located on corners to create small but memorable landmarks. New developments in Staplehurst can and should take inspiration from the village heart.

5.2 New housing should be influenced by the traditional character and style of the village, referencing the local context through high quality materials and styles appropriate to the place. The aim for all new developments should be to leave a positive architectural legacy and to add to the character of the village. This does not exclude innovative modern or contemporary architecture and this will be encouraged where appropriate.



High Street, Staplehurst Buildings linked together in a terraced row help enclose the space and define the street's form. The roof line has a distinct rhythm created by chimneys, towers and visible gable ends. Most building lines are on the back of footway with no private front garden spaces.



The King's Head Pub This taller building located on a corner plot on higher ground helps create a distinctive local landmark. The pub rises to three storeys with a steeply pitched roof. The built form comprises several different blocks with a modulated building line, stepping back from the footway on occasions to define doorways and entrances.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS FROM STAPLEHURST

5.3 These particular architectural details have been selected as they represent some of the more effective building and design techniques that help add to the character and quality of the parish. The fact these examples have primarily been drawn from the older parts of the village does not mean more recent developments in Staplehurst are poor quality. Rather that the distinctive sense of place evident in the historic heart is what the community admire most about where they live. New development proposals must learn from this and look to incorporate techniques such as this, where appropriate. See also the Staplehurst Village Design Statement (April 2005) that remains a valid document and a source of useful guidance for all new development.



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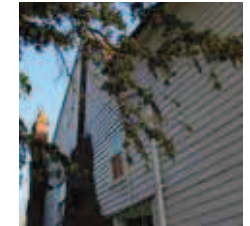
04



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- 01 Simple but traditional Palladian-style housing provides the sense of importance and quality to some of the properties in Staplehurst.
- 02 Careful and deliberate use of colour helps to identify and pronounce the characteristics of the building. In this example brick, coloured window frames, traditional tall roofing all contrast with the white rendered walls.
- 03 The use of double bays on the ground creates flexible spaces that help allow a building to change use from residential to retail/cafe.
- 04 Careful use of brick, timber and tile cladding on buildings creates a Kentish village aesthetic and creates a sense of a strong and robust buildings.
- 05 Structural elements standing proud and on show (e.g. external timber trusses and joists) can accentuate a building's longevity.
- 06 Buildings positioned side-on to main streets can help mitigate traffic impacts and also allow for deliberate orientation in relation to the sun.
- 07 Traditional lapped-timber cladding can be accurately reproduced using modern materials for a longer lifespan.

- 08 Low rise mature hedging provides clear and defensible boundaries but does not obstruct the view of the fine architecture behind it.
- 09 Medieval stonework of the All Saints church needs to be celebrated and welcoming to not only visitors but villagers too.
- 10 Traditional fencing and shrub-planted borders used to separate private gardens from public streets or roads.
- 11 Maintaining the traditional look of the village pubs is important; there must be resistance against any modern or corporate identities being applied to their external appearances through branding or signage.
- 12 Half-timbered elevations on an arts and crafts style house, with a distinctive tall chimney feature.
- 13 Mature planting vegetation within private gardens softens the street scene and adds distinctive rural qualities to some buildings in the village.
- 14 The terraced row of houses at Cross-At-Hand represents a high density form of development appropriate to a village or rural setting.



Throughout the process, residents have been encouraged to share their ideas through facilitated discussions.

PLANNING POLICIES

/ 24
92

6.1 In order to achieve the ambitions of the neighbourhood plan, a robust set of planning policies has been written. These set out what development can and cannot do, where it should be located and how the existing parts of the parish will benefit from new investment related to the new development.

6.2 The neighbourhood plan policies must be in “general conformity” with the Maidstone local plan and with national and European planning policy. General conformity means they do not have to be exactly the same and it is encouraged that they add more detail and more local knowledge to make the plan as responsive as possible to local people.

7.1 PARISH-WIDE THEME (Policy Code PW)

“Create an integrated set of neighbourhood planning policies that support sustainable development objectives across the whole of Staplehurst parish”

Policy Theme Background

7.2 While many of the planning policies deal with issues in and around the village of Staplehurst, this neighbourhood plan needs to deal with the whole parish. The neighbourhood plan therefore contains three overarching parish-wide policies that apply to all six of the policy themes that sit beneath them.

7.3 These three parish-wide policies are considered to be relevant to the whole parish and apply equally to all developments, be these community infrastructure (such as a new community hall or new shops), new homes, a new school site or new footpaths and countryside access.

7.4 The parish-wide policies deal with the need to achieve the right level of investment in utilities and infrastructure for a growing village; the need to protect the countryside and biodiversity; the need to support a strong local economy with access to jobs and employment opportunities and the need to support renewable energy technologies in the right locations.

POLICY PW1

THE INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED THROUGH THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Policy Supporting Text

7.5 Staplehurst will inevitably experience growth over the next decade or more. This can only happen if the right level of investment is made in improvements to the infrastructure at the right time. Delivery of infrastructure need not all be 'up-front' but current and forecasted infrastructure shortfalls must be independently evaluated and a full mitigation plan must be supplied by the developer before large-scale housing applications can be approved. Investment in the necessary infrastructure to improve the streets and roads network and to address drainage issues, applies to all new development sites, be they residential, community or employment focused.

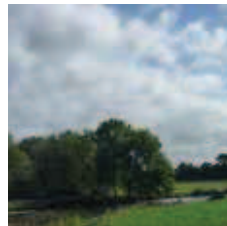
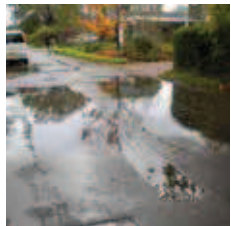
7.6 Access + Movement Future changes to the street and road network need to acknowledge the rural character of the village; encourage more choice of routes throughout the village to help reduce traffic congestion at peak times on the A229 and Marden and Headcorn Roads. Changes to the streets and roads improvements must encourage greater use of other modes of transport, including walking and cycling throughout the village, to make them a safer and more viable option. Better links between the east and west and the north and south of the village will help reduce congestion and promote healthier lifestyles through active travel modes.

7.7 Drainage Infrastructure Staplehurst has experienced a number of incidents of surface water flooding, both from public foul water sewers and rainwater drains, in recent years. Further development must incorporate robust measures to avoid making the situation worse, and if possible, ameliorate the problems that exist at present time. The integration of proven and effective techniques, including the selective use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) where shown to be appropriate, will be essential through a number of interventions to prevent further flooding. Best practice guidance indicates a number of means to positively reduce the risk of flooding in Staplehurst, including use of permeable surfaces, on-site attenuation systems and the inclusion of specially designed landscape into all new development.

7.8 Policy PW1 is linked to a set of specific projects identified through the neighbourhood plan process. Policy PW1 will act as "hook" or a starting point for these projects to be developed further. The projects may require further feasibility work, perhaps outside the scope of the neighbourhood plan, to establish how they can be funded and delivered.

7.9 While community consultation confirmed a new Village Centre building as the main project, this order of priority should not be seen as fixed or definitive but more as an overall indication of preference. The list needs to be treated as flexible if it is to be responsive to different funding opportunities.

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Flooding on Chapel Lane (far left) and open countryside north of the village (left).

Specific projects linked to Policy PW1 in a general order of preference and the further work required

7.10 Improved Village Centre

Feasibility study to understand the cost/benefit of redeveloping the site through demolition, rebuild, conversion or refurbishment with the aim of creating a community hall fit for purpose. An improved village hall and/or village centre is a priority for the village and so will also be a priority for any s106 and/or CIL contributions; and the present Village Centre site should be protected as being in community use.

7.11 Improved drainage infrastructure

All new developments to use best practice techniques in mitigating against further drainage problems.

7.12 Investment in the school

Continued investment in the primary school. Land search required for a suitable site to be safeguarded for another education site, subject to land ownership and support from Kent County Council.

7.13 Better retail opportunities

Development of two retail clusters, one in the village heart, another at the railway station. Feasibility study, to including land owner agreements, needed at the station.

7.14 Investment in the medical centre, sports facilities + the library

Continued investment in medical facilities and the library in the village heart. Focus new sports investment at facilities in Jubilee Field subject to funding applications.

7.15 Buses, parking + traffic

Rationalisation of parking provision in the village heart, better crossing points and better bus services. Landowner agreements needed.

7.16 Better broadband communications

Use the expected growth of the village, to be managed through the neighbourhood plan, to argue for better telecommunications and broadband technology in Staplehurst. Cooperation of utility companies needed.

POLICY PW2

NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE BEYOND THE EXTENDED VILLAGE ENVELOPE OTHER THAN IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS THE PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE WHERE THE BENEFIT CLEARLY OUTWEIGHS THE HARM AND IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT NO SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE SITES ARE AVAILABLE. THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ON LAND WITHIN AND BEYOND THE VILLAGE ENVELOPE WILL ALSO BE MAINTAINED AND ENHANCED.

Policy Supporting Text

7.17 The neighbourhood plan strongly supports the protection of the wider countryside outside the areas identified for new development. See page 18 for map showing the village envelope. There is, therefore, a presumption against the development of any land other than those sites identified as suitable for development within this neighbourhood plan. The proximity of Staplehurst to the countryside is an important part of the identity of the village. Greater access to this countryside through improvements to the rights of way network will be sought from the developers of the new built areas of the village.

7.18 The countryside is well-loved by the local community and is often cited as a key reason why recent incomers to the village moved here from elsewhere. It is also an important attraction for tourism, an increasingly important part of an active rural economy. Maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity of the countryside is an integral part of this protection. The introduction of green corridors, both between and within new and existing areas of development, will be encouraged in the design of new development areas. These green corridors must link to the wider countryside. The introduction of easy-to-access recreational routes to help demarcate the interface between the built areas of the village and the wider countryside beyond will also be actively encouraged.

POLICY PW3

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS WILL BE SUPPORTED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- 1) Installations should be sensitive to the existing communities and the impact they may have upon the landscape and views**
- 2) Productive agricultural land of the highest quality (e.g. Grades 1, 2 and 3a) should be protected**
- 3) Schemes on previously developed land and on the roofs of industrial or employment buildings will be given priority consideration over those in other locations.**

Policy Supporting Text

7.19 Integral to the protection of countryside (see Policy PW2) is the need to sensitively promote sustainable forms of energy production in appropriate locations. The parish council acknowledges the role that renewable energy schemes will play in safeguarding the nation's energy security and the increasing role they will need to play to combat the harmful effects of climate change by helping to decarbonise energy generation.

7.20 However, the scale and size of certain renewable technologies, especially wind and solar, can have significant visual impacts upon the existing countryside scene. Developers will need to demonstrate the impact of their schemes clearly through the planning application process, a process which the parish council will be involved in as a statutory consultee.



Wind power can be visually obtrusive but can also play an important role in power generation. Solar farms should be kept off prime agricultural land.

POLICY PW4

NEW DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN STAPLEHURST MUST HAVE REGARD TO THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND THE HERITAGE THAT IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LANDSCAPE. LARGE DEVELOPMENTS (i.e. OVER 0.5 HECTARE) SHOULD BE SUITABLY INFORMED AND MAY NEED AN APPROPRIATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SURVEY.

Policy Supporting Text

7.21 Staplehurst has a rich and diverse heritage and has been an area favored for occupation and farming since the prehistoric period. There are some major route-ways traversing Staplehurst parish, some of which date back to the Roman period and possibly before, relating to the Iron Age and later use of the Weald's rich resources. Staplehurst itself is one of Kent's post medieval market towns, serving the medieval and post medieval farm and horticultural holdings in the surrounding area. Some of this heritage is identified in the Kent Historic Environment Record (held at Kent County Council) as designated and un-designated heritage assets. However, heritage is an integral part of the landscape. It is reflected as sites and the surrounds of sites but it is also the pattern of fields, route-ways and clusters of houses and farms. Understanding the heritage of an area includes understanding the landscape as a whole.

7.22 New developments within Staplehurst need to have regard to the historic environment and consultation with the Heritage Team at Kent County Council is advisable. There should also be regard to NPPF Section 12 on the historic environment and to Local Plans policies. Large developments (i.e. over 0.5 hectare) should be suitably informed and may need an appropriate archaeological desk based assessment and historic landscape survey. NPPF encourages "the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring" and that wherever possible, opportunities should be identified "to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place."

COMMUNITY THEME (Policy Code C)

"Ensure that housing development brings an appropriate level of investment into community infrastructure"

Policy Theme Background

8.1 New housing development in Staplehurst over the coming years should seek to bring with it financial investment in community infrastructure. This includes the village hall, the school, the library, the shops and services, the railway station, children's play areas, footpaths, bus and rail services, countryside access and all the other services and facilities that make working and living in Staplehurst the positive experience it is. A growing village needs the level and quality of the associated community infrastructure to be expanded and improved to meet the needs of its residents and workers.

8.2 Planning permission for new housing will come with conditions attached that require the developer concerned to make an appropriate financial contribution to the village. This is known as "planning gain" and is an established planning procedure in the UK.

8.3 The difference in areas with an adopted neighbourhood plan is that the community, through the plan, can directly influence and prioritise the areas of village infrastructure it feels are in most need of investment. Early ideas include investment in the "Village Heart" area and also around the station in the north, including a possible new bridge over the tracks. The neighbourhood plan can also set out a long term plan to link housing growth to levels of community investment. Furthermore, a parish with an adopted neighbourhood plan will receive 25% of the revenues from the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be charged by Maidstone Borough Council arising from the development that a parish chooses to accept in its plan area. Parishes without a neighbourhood plan, but where CIL is charged, will receive just 15%.

POLICY C1

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE LIBRARY SITE TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.4 The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan supports the continued investment in the local library site. The library is located at the heart of the village in proximity to other local services that are equally important to the community. The library provides a vital service to village life and the surrounding rural areas.

8.5 The library supports the local community cohesion and supports education and learning for all age groups. Investment here must aim to maintain and enhance the library as a modern, flexible space offering the right range of services, including internet connections and an appropriate range of up-to-date books, that will allow the library to continue to connect communities within Staplehurst village and the wider parish.

8.6 The neighbourhood plan identifies this as a key service to be protected, maintained and enhanced. Through the planning obligations linked to future development in Staplehurst, an appropriate level of funding will be directed towards the library service to ensure it will meet the needs of a growing village.



The library is a vital resource in the heart of the village.



Policies C1, C2, C3, C4 and C6 Location of community facilities to be maintained and enhanced shown by the red lines. The "village heart" (see page 41) is shown by the black dotted line.

POLICY C2

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE PRIMARY SCHOOL SERVICES TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.7 The primary school is a vital asset to Staplehurst village, the wider parish and beyond. The relatively central location of the school ensures direct access for much of the local community. It also lies in close proximity to the other services and facilities in the heart of the village. The planned future growth of Staplehurst will put the primary school under increased pressure to provide additional school places to children living in Staplehurst. Therefore, investment in the primary school to help it meet this demand is vital to ensure that it can continue to provide an excellent start in life for those growing up in the village.

8.8 Continued engagement will be required between Staplehurst Parish Council, Maidstone Borough Council, the school governors and Kent County Council to ensure this investment is delivered in a timely manner and at the appropriate level.



The primary school is a vital village service and will be under increasing pressure as the village grows.

POLICY C3

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE YOUTH CLUB PROVISION TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.9 Investment in youth facilities (including the youth club building and youth services delivered by the voluntary sector) in Staplehurst is necessary and required to ensure a balanced and happy community. The neighbourhood plan aims to maintain and enhance all local services that are used by its young residents.

8.10 A range of youth facilities is needed for different demographics within the under-18 population in Staplehurst, from pre-school children to independent teenagers. The current youth groups are popular and well-attended; the planned growth of the village means funding must be secured to ensure these services continue to meet the needs of the growing young population. Better youth facilities could be incorporated into a new Village Centre and this needs to be considered as part of any feasibility study.



Youth club facilities are currently in the heart of the village, adjacent to the Village Centre.

POLICY C4

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE HEALTH CENTRE SERVICES TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.11 Demand placed on the excellent health facilities in the centre of the village is certain to increase following village expansion. Residents of all ages need access to high quality, local care. In order to ensure that the health care provision is maintained and enhanced for the current and future residents, a higher level of investment is needed. The current health centre is located in the heart of the village, in proximity to other vital village services.

8.12 The neighbourhood plan supports further investment into this single site, rather than into new satellite centres, to ensure the best quality service for its residents. The relatively central location makes it accessible to the majority of local residents and allows for “linked trips” as those attending the health centre can also perhaps drop children off at school or attend events in the Village Centre as part of the same journey.



The health centre provides excellent care for current residents but it will need more investment as the village expands.

POLICY C5

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE FACILITIES AT JUBILEE FIELD AS THE VILLAGE’S CENTRE FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

Policy Supporting Text

8.13 The process of engagement developing the Staplehurst neighbourhood plan has highlighted the need for enhanced sports and recreational facilities in the village. The Jubilee Field site, on the eastern edge of the village with access to wide open sports pitches, is considered to be the best location for further investment. There is currently a lack of indoor sports facilities within the parish (e.g. a high ceiling sports hall, performance space or similar) with most residents having to travel outside of the village to use such a space.

8.14 The Jubilee Field site has the capacity to accommodate new indoor and outdoor sports facilities for the current and future populations of Staplehurst. Through the planning obligations linked to future development in Staplehurst, an appropriate level of funding will be directed towards the sports and recreation facilities to ensure it will meet the needs of a growing village. These funds may be matched with grants from national agencies, sports federations and national governing bodies.

8.15 Investment in facilities at Jubilee Field must be complementary to investment within the “village heart” and not place both sites and their respective facilities in a competitive situation with one another.



Jubilee Field will remain the focus for outdoor recreational facilities.



Policy C5 Location of the Jubilee Field where facilities to be maintained and enhanced.

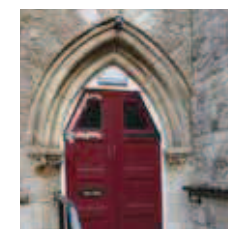
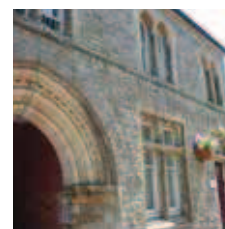
POLICY C6

REDEVELOP THE 'VILLAGE CENTRE' SITE TO CREATE A NEW, MORE EFFICIENT COMMUNITY CENTRE BUILDING TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

8.16 The current Village Centre building was the village school from 1873 to 1987 and now serves the parish in a variety of ways. It provides space for clubs, societies and groups across the parish, as well as hosting the parish office. However, demand in the area is greater than the supply that can be provided by the current building. Moreover, the building is in need of repair and has significant running costs due to its inefficient heating and lighting systems. The building needs to be made fit for the current and future residents of the village. The engagement events as part of the neighbourhood planning process highlighted this as a critical issue for the village.

8.17 The majority feeling amongst residents was that the existing location of the Village Centre must be retained. This location is also within walking distance of the existing parade of shops in the centre of the village, allowing further linked trips between existing community facilities. The facility forms a key component of the cluster of facilities that comprise the village heart and it has relatively easy access directly off the high street. This location also gives it a prominence to “passing trade” and a new building here will have the opportunity to become a “shop window” or showcase for the range of village activities, subject to the right building configuration and design.



The current building might survive in a renovated or modified state but the location of the new Village Centre should be on the same site, right in the heart of the village.

8.18 Discussions were held as part of the neighbourhood planning process about whether or not to demolish, refurbish or rebuild. There was a general feeling that it would be a shame to demolish the entire building. The handsome stonework of the facade, the articulation of the main elevation and main structural elements could all be worth retaining. A creative architectural brief, that requires the skillful blending of the old and the new together to form a more modern building fit for the future, could be prepared. A more modern building, but with retained heritage elements, could generate a revenue stream for the village through function hire (e.g. weddings).

8.19 However, a cleared site could offer more flexibility to the design, and perhaps be more economically viable as it will not have the added restoration costs associated with the retention of heritage elements already on site. A cleared site may also allow fresh thinking as regards site layout and access arrangements, to create more useable outdoor spaces and allow for striking, modern design that is nevertheless sympathetic to the village context.

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8.20 A decision on exactly how to proceed with this project — that is, retain, refurbish, convert, modify or demolish and rebuild — can only be taken following more thorough cost-benefit analysis outside the scope of this plan. Whatever the preferred approach will be, it must deliver a multi-purpose building of special architectural merit right in the heart of the village.

8.21 Investment in facilities at the Village Centre must be complementary to investment within the Jubilee Field and not place both sites in a competitive situation with one another.

ACCESS + MOVEMENT THEME

“Reduce pressure on the crossroads by ensuring alternative access routes; develop a better connected series of village streets”

Policy Theme Background

9.1 The work undertaken so far on the neighbourhood plan has revealed a weakness in the current design and layout of Staplehurst in that “all roads lead to the crossroads”. This means that many journeys through and around the village will pass through the Cuckcold’s Corner simply because other route options do not exist. See street structure diagram, page 17.

9.2 Therefore, new developments must seek to create alternative routes between:

- 1) different areas within the village; and,
- 2) outlying areas of the parish and the village.

9.3 This will allow people access to their homes and other destinations in Staplehurst without necessarily passing through the crossroads. Creating alternative routes will give people a greater choice of movement and reduce the pressure on the crossroads.

9.4 At the three day design forum in October 2013, minor modifications were suggested to ease traffic flows through the crossroads. These modifications are likely to be affordable, environmentally sensitive and reduce queuing times (see drawings on pages 49, 50, 60 and 61 in the Three-Day Design Forum report for more details).

9.5 Any design intervention at the crossroads must be combined with improvements to the street network across the village to encourage greater levels of walking and cycling, helping to reduce dependence on the car for short trips.

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Neighbourhood Plan Objective 01

There is a need to safeguard access points for new railway bridge crossings to the west of the current high street bridge link.

This can be achieved by ensuring that the layout of all new developments does not prevent the delivery of a new bridge link in future, either in this plan period or future plan periods.

9.6 New and enhanced access points over the railway to the west of the current A229 road bridge will provide an alternative to the current limited number of routes. A new bridge crossing will be important if the growing village is to have the better connectivity it requires for the future.

9.7 The primary function of this link will be to provide attractive, safe and convenient access for existing and new residents that live and work in the area to the west of the village. The secondary function will be to alleviate traffic levels along the main road (A229) by providing an alternative route for local traffic, reducing the impact of new development on the A229 crossroads.

9.8 The safeguarding of these access points, and routes to them, is therefore vital to the formation of more sustainable access and movement links across the village. The layout of future development adjacent to these access points must acknowledge this requirement by delivering residential and employment layouts that provide clear and direct connections to the safeguarded sites.

9.9 The precise location and scale of the crossing will be determined through further design and feasibility work. However, it is envisaged that the bridge will be a low impact, small-scale bridge or crossing suitable for local traffic only. Not only will a bridge of this type be more affordable to deliver but it will also deter or even prevent larger vehicles (e.g. HGVs) and high speed or high volumes of traffic. Instead, the bridge will provide local access for local residents using private cars, helping to reduce the impact of new traffic movements on the A229. Bridges should also be accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.

9.10 The financing of a new railway crossing could be through a combination of funding from Kent County Council and Network Rail. There may also be a role for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements to help finance the new crossing. The delivery of the new railway crossing could be triggered by specific phasing of the adjacent development.

9.11 However, the precise nature of the funding and timing will be determined through a specific project agreement. In the first instance, the neighbourhood plan seeks to ensure that development plans and proposals secure the ability to deliver a new link through responsive and flexible housing layouts that do not prejudice the ability to deliver the link at a later date.



Further detailed design work is required to understand exactly how and where a new rail bridge crossing could be delivered.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 02

Ensure the network of footpaths and footways throughout the village is safe, convenient and comfortable, with wider footways where necessary.

9.12 The network of the existing footpaths and footways throughout Staplehurst does not always allow for safe and convenient access. In many places, they are too narrow to be used comfortably. In other places, there are historical features of merit, such as the listed steps by Vine House, that add special character to the village but further frustrate easy movement.

9.13 To encourage more people to walk, the existing and future footpaths around the village need to be generous, well-surfaced, safe and well-connected. In the centre of the village, particularly around the crossroads, many existing footpaths could be widened to make walking more comfortable. The dominance of the through road is further emphasised by narrow footpaths that do not allow convenient access around the village and these can be widened to give greater priority to pedestrians. In heritage areas where features such as steps cannot be moved, alternative measures must be introduced, such as ramps or pavement build-outs, to help overcome the barriers to movement that steps can present.

9.14 With space for car parking limited within the historic part of the village, especially around the parade of shops, the school, health centre, library and Village Centre, an increase in the numbers of people walking will go some way to ease the pressure on giving over more land to car parking.



Pavement widths adjacent to Cuckold's Corner are inadequate and must be made wider through highways improvements.

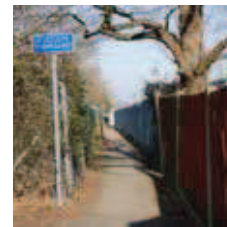
Neighbourhood Plan Objective 03

The proposed layout for new development sites must deliver a series of connected streets and lanes that will ensure a choice of routes for new and existing residents.

9.15 Future development proposals for residential sites must be based on a series of well-connected streets and lanes that provide genuine movement choices for new and existing residents. The design and nature of these new streets and lanes must be informed by the existing positive characteristics of the village.

9.16 Residential development sites must avoid layouts dominated by wide, fast roads and many cul-de-sac streets as these frustrate movement choices and lead to additional car traffic. Instead, a well-designed hierarchy of street types must be used to create flexible layouts that respond to wide variety of activities, including car parking, children's play, walking and cycling and help foster a sense of community and well-being amongst the people that live there.

9.17 New streets and lanes must also be effectively "plugged into" the edges of the existing village so as to integrate new and existing communities with minimal disturbance and disruption. Feelings or perceptions of a series of disconnected neighbourhoods must be minimised through sensitive integration of new and existing areas.



Unwelcoming pedestrian "cut-throughs" need to be avoided in new developments in favour of a well-connected street network.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 04

Create a series of on-street and off-street cycling routes that are safe, convenient and comfortable and will encourage people to cycle for short trips in and around the village.

9.18 The creation of new connected layouts comprising safe streets and lanes will also need to create streets safe for cycling. In certain areas, segregated or dedicated cycling infrastructure may be required, for example, at key junctions or around the school. These measures will help raise the level of utility cycling (e.g. riding to work, the shops or to school). Good quality cycle infrastructure will give cyclists the space they need to ride safely on the roads and keep the pavement space for pedestrians. Facilities that are to be shared between pedestrians and cyclists must be avoided if at all possible within the built-up part of the village.

9.19 Meanwhile, Staplehurst is surrounded by attractive open green space and areas. The creation of off-street recreational cycling routes will enhance existing access and connections between the built-up village and the green spaces beyond. These routes need to be convenient, accessible and enjoyable if they are to help encourage cycling as a recreational activity which in turn, may help raise levels of utility cycling. Such off-road routes through the countryside can often be safely and successfully shared between walkers and cyclists. Regular access to green open space has a significant positive impact upon an individual's mental health and access to the countryside setting of Staplehurst must be promoted by well-connected accessible cycle routes.



Quality provision for cycling needs to be incorporated into all new developments.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 05

Create better and more frequent pedestrian crossings, including along the A229 as the road passes through the village.

9.20 The A229 carries a combination of through-traffic and local traffic. It is also a vital walking route between the heart of the village and residential areas. Better and more frequent pedestrian crossings at specific points (i.e. Railway Tavern, Village Centre and Pinnock Lane) will be required to provide safer and more convenient access between where people live and where people want to get to.

9.21 In line with the aims of other policies in the plan, these interventions will help encourage more local trips to be made on foot. With limited space for car parking within the historic part of the village, especially around the parade of shops, the school, health centre, library and Village Centre, an increase in the numbers of people walking will go some way to ease the pressure on giving more land over to car parking. Being able to cross the main road safely and more conveniently will support this.

9.22 There is also a need for new dedicated crossing points along the Marden Road and the Headcorn Road, the precise sites to be identified.



There is a generously wide pedestrian crossing point adjacent to the parade of shops but similar provision is lacking elsewhere.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 06

Improvements to the Marden Road – Headcorn Road – Station Road – High Street crossroads, to ease traffic flow and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists while retaining the village character that is special to Staplehurst.

9.23 The crossroads marks a historic location within the village and provides a distinct rural identity to Staplehurst. The magnificent row of horse chestnut trees, the small green space, the Martyr's Monument, the right angled turns in the street and the handsome residences all combine to provide an attractive village scene.

9.24 However, the levels of traffic currently using the crossroads, combined with the relative narrowness of the carriageway and the turning lanes can lead to congestion and tailbacks during peak hours. Relatively minor and affordable interventions are therefore sought at the crossroads area to help ease traffic flows and remove the likelihood of tailbacks and long waiting queues during peak hours.

9.25 These interventions could include widening and or realignment of the footpaths and footways; realignment and/or remarking of the right turn lanes to provide more generous passing room for through traffic; a better setting for the monument (that is currently on the north west corner of the crossroads and can remain there); thinning of hedge rows to make more of the village green open space on the south west corner of the junction; tree maintenance to lift the crowns and provide a more visible location for village welcome signs and directional arrows.

9.26 The crossroads is about more than just moving cars across and through the village; it marks an historic place and is part of the rural fabric of Staplehurst. This special character will be maintained. Careful and considerate design must deliver both a better village scene, an enhanced sense of place and also help ease movement and travel patterns.



Could a new footway to the west of the chestnut trees release land to help deliver a more generous right turn lane to help avoid tailbacks?

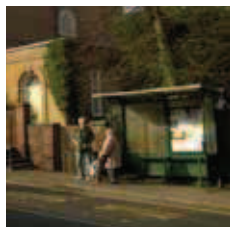
Neighbourhood Plan Objective 07

Improvements to bus services and bus waiting facilities.

9.27 With more people living and working in the village, investment in the bus services and bus waiting facilities (e.g. shelters, stops, real time information systems, a dedicated bus stop for the railway station etc.) will be required. Existing shelters must to be upgraded where appropriate, new stops and shelters installed along new routes and support for more frequent services to the most popular destinations will be sought.

9.28 The design and layout of new areas of housing must be able to accommodate new bus routes so that future residents will not be too far away from a bus stop. If the bus service is to offer a viable alternative to the private car, then it needs to be accessible, reliable and affordable to all that live and work in Staplehurst.

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Better bus shelters should be installed across the village.

VILLAGE HEART THEME (Policy Code VH)

“Strengthen the focal heart of the village around the Village Centre, Library, Health Centre, Primary School and Parade of Shops”

Policy Theme Background

10.1 The historic heart of Staplehurst contains the cluster of uses and activities that make the village a special place to live and work. There are the community activities at the Village Centre (that includes the parish office) the library and the churches. There is also the commercial activity at the parade of shops, a variety of shops on the opposite side of the road, a cafe and the pub. Together, all these uses give life and vitality to the village. The central area of the village also has Conservation Area status, awarded by Maidstone Borough Council and contains many high quality buildings

10.2 The three day design forum revealed a widespread desire to strengthen and enhance this cluster of uses rather than locate new community facilities elsewhere. Investment must aim to expand the facilities where necessary and deliver better connections between each of the uses to make them easier to access. Several of the buildings can also be made more attractive and visible to passers-by especially the Village Centre and the Parade. Options for the redevelopment or demolition and rebuild of the Village Centre remain under consideration.

10.3 The cluster of facilities at Jubilee Field, on the eastern edge of the village, will also be maintained and enhanced. This location is considered less accessible than the village heart and so will have a greater emphasis on outdoor recreation, sports facilities and uses that need large areas of open space. The result will be an area that complements the uses in the village heart.

POLICY VH1

EXISTING RETAIL AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES IN THE VILLAGE HEART TO BE RETAINED AND ENHANCED TO THE STANDARD REQUIRED FOR A RURAL SERVICE CENTRE.

Policy Supporting Text

10.4 With a growing village and with new housing sites identified on the outer edges of the current village, some distance from the existing retail offer, it will be necessary to provide a greater range of shops and services in closer proximity to its resident population if the village is to have a sustainable future. Without this, many residents will choose to leave the village, often by car, in order to obtain groceries and other regular items of shopping.

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10.5 Existing parade of shops on the High Street, and other retail facilities in the village heart, are to be protected and enhanced. As the historic heart of the village, this area has been identified by residents as an important commercial area for both now and into the future. This plan supports continued investment in local retail and associated services in this location. As this site is well-connected to existing residential areas, it must provide high quality and convenient shops and services to a local catchment that can arrive on foot and by bicycle, as well as to a wider catchment from further afield.



Policy VH1 Location of the existing retail and ancillary facilities to be maintained and enhance.

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The existing retail cluster around the parade of shops needs to be retained and enhanced.



Parking in and around the parade of shops needs to be rationalised with a better management regime and more appropriate waiting times.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 08

Ensure better and more connected routes between the library, primary school, health centre, village centre, youth club and church through safe, comfortable and convenient walking routes.

10.6 The library, primary school, Village Centre, youth club, health centre and churches provide many of the essential services integral to the quality of life in Staplehurst. The close proximity of these services can be further enhanced through better connections between them. There is potential to be sought for an increased number of “linked trips” in which the car is parked once followed by a series of different short journeys on foot between the different areas of activity.

10.7 The existing footpaths between these focal areas are not always suitable for all residents in the village, in particular for those that use wheelchairs or those that find walking on uneven surfaces difficult. Footpaths must be widened where possible and more pedestrian crossings at particular points will allow greater movement in an east-west direction across the village, connecting up the cluster of facilities in the village heart. See also Objective 05.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 09

Rationalisation of parking provision at the health centre, parade of shops and library area to ensure convenient and appropriate levels of car parking.

10.8 The library, primary school, Village Centre, parade of shops, health centre, youth club and church all have their own car parking and drop-off arrangements to different degrees. Space is at a premium in this part of the village and it is unlikely that any significant amount of new land will come forward for additional car parking, if indeed that is desirable. Instead, a review of the waiting time restrictions, the opportunity for shared spaces, joint management and for the realignment of existing car parks to make them more efficient must be explored.

The Village Heart Policy VH1

10.9 There is widespread support from within the community for creating a stronger village heart. The cluster of uses in and around the High Street that support the social and community life of Staplehurst is vital for a growing village.

10.10 Policy DM20.1(vii) of the Maidstone local plan seeks to retain and enhance these facilities but the neighbourhood plan policies need to go further by explaining how these facilities work together and what is needed to support them into the future.

10.11 Policy VH1 required a series of actions and individual projects, each linked to other policies within the neighbourhood plan. Fragile and delicate parts of a village, such as the historic heart of Staplehurst, need to be nurtured and cared for. They have survived for many years and are very flexible but need to be looked after.

1. Improvements to the crossroads to make walking and cycling easier. These measures should also reveal the potential of the village green, provide a better setting to the monument and ease traffic flows.

3. Continued support and investment for the primary school. There is a need to identify room for expansion.

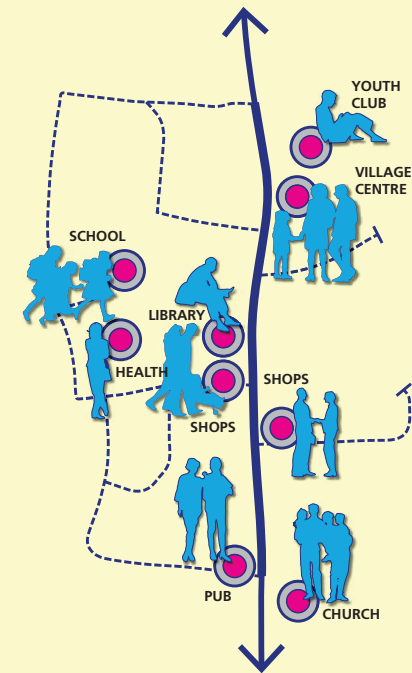
5. Investment in the library, health centre and parade of shops, especially in the public realm. Rationalisation of the parking spaces and parking regime is also required.



WHY IS THE VILLAGE HEART SO SPECIAL?

10.12 All ages and all activities can be found in this one part of Staplehurst. Primary school children and their parents, the elderly and teenagers. Football games, book reading, grocery shopping, pub meals and local Kentish beer.

10.13 Taken together, these “people, places and activities” are what makes village life special. This diagram (below) tries to capture all these activities and the physical links that bind them. How can these links be made stronger for the future? And what new activities for the 21st Century can be added to the village heart mix?



GATEWAYS THEME (Policy Code GW)

“Improve the function and visual qualities of the land around the station; ensure other approaches to the village are visually appealing”

Policy Theme Background

11.1 There are many parts of Staplehurst that have a strong visual identity and are attractive places to be. For example, in the southern half of the village, there is a positive relationship between the buildings and the wider countryside, with strong visual connections between the two. Also, there is an attractive cluster of heritage buildings around the Conservation Area. However, the approach from the railway station is dominated by surface car parks and areas of scrappy under-utilised land. The area lacks a positive identity and fails to create a welcoming gateway to Staplehurst for those arriving by train.

11.2 As first impressions go, it could be much better, yet the station is a prize asset and one of the criteria required for Staplehurst being given Rural Service Centre status by the Maidstone Borough Council.

11.3 Yet the area has great potential. The railway station is a daily destination for regular commuters and this to and fro movement can add life to the area if utilised in the right way. Rationalisation of the car parking, from all being surface level to a multi-deck arrangement, can maintain car parking availability but free up land for more productive uses.

11.4 New commercial activity around the station, like small business units, shops or services and cafés all focused around a new market square could provide the positive new welcome that Staplehurst deserves. The scale of development here will be constrained to ensure the protection and on-going viability of the existing retail centre in the village heart (see Policy VH1).

POLICY GW1

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE STATION AREA TO CREATE A POSITIVE NEW APPROACH TO THE VILLAGE FOR THOSE ARRIVING BY TRAIN AND BY ROAD FROM THE NORTH; INCLUDING A NEW LANDSCAPED CIVIC SPACE AND SMALL-SCALE RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

Policy Supporting Text

11.5 The plan-making process identified a clear need to improve the space around the station area. As a whole, the under-utilised nature of the area, dominated by surface car parking, leaves a poor impression on both first time visitors and regular users of this part of the village. However, the presence of the station and the recently constructed new factory for DK Holdings shows the area has good commercial and economic opportunities and these can be leveraged to deliver a better public realm.

Better Public Realm

11.6 The existing entrance area around the station building is currently in a neglected condition and required improvements to the layout, including a rationalisation of the surface car parking, landscape works, materials, lighting and seating could deliver significant enhancements in the form of a civic space (a high quality “market square”) marking a key gateway to the village. A well-designed civic space of this type could provide better car parking facilities, as well as a shared space that on weekends could accommodate social activities for the community, such as markets or festival events.

11.7 To deliver the new civic space, a certain proportion of the existing surface car parking could be decked on a new multi-level car park structure. This decked car park will release land adjacent to the station to allow for more creative uses that will socially and culturally enrich the village experience. This decked structure could maintain a net neutral level of car parking (if desired) but could also allow for extra car parking spaces to be delivered on site.

Retail Investment

11.8 Economic activity could be enhanced through the creation of small-scale retail and commercial units around the edge of the new civic space that could trade off the regular footfall in the area. The station area is close to the two large areas of land to the east and the west of the village identified as being able to accommodate the majority of the new housing growth. This makes it an accessible location by walking and cycling to new residents and therefore a sustainable location for new retail and associated services.

11.9 The southern part of the site is already has planning permission for a new food store and other parts of the station environs could provide further retail units or associated services. The site's proximity to the railway station means there are excellent opportunities for retail and business spaces to trade off the footfall generated by the station.

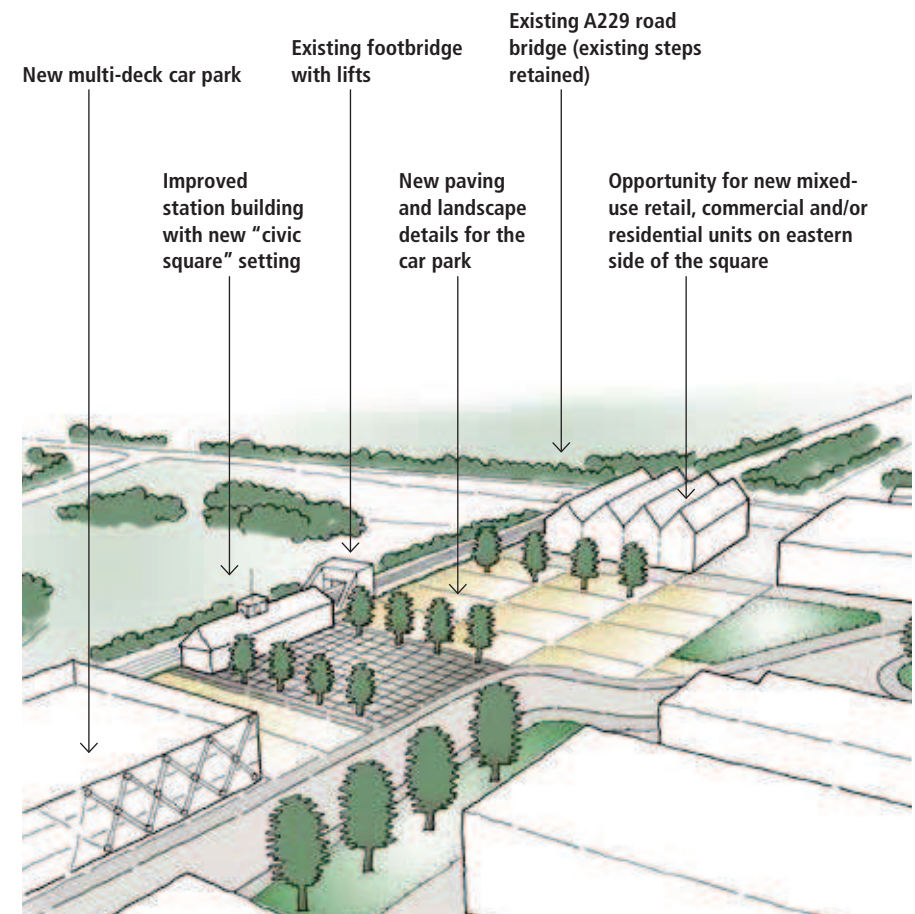
11.10 Maidstone Borough Council granted planning permission for the food store in March 2013 and therefore this neighbourhood plan has been prepared on the basis that additional retail provision in the area identified around the station will be in conformity with Maidstone Borough Local Plan policies designed to protect existing retail areas.

Conclusions

11.11 This area has the potential to provide a new civic space (e.g. a village "market square") together with small-scale retail and other commercial opportunities. The station area is an important gateway entrance to the village through which a large number of people pass every day. This plan policy has a very high level of support from the local community and implementation will be a key part of the delivery of the Rural Service Centre concept.

Illustrative Sketch Policy GW1

11.12 The area around the railway station has the potential to provide a new civic space (e.g. a village "market square"). Small-scale retail and commercial units could locate around the edge of the space, trading off the regular footfall in the area. To deliver the new civic space, a certain proportion of the existing surface car parking could be decked on a new multi-level car park structure. This decked car park will release land adjacent to the station to allow for more creative uses, such as markets or festivals, to enrich the village experience.



Illustrative Layout Policy GW1

11.13 Policy DM13 of the draft Maidstone local plan sets out a strategy for sustainable transport that includes rail travel. Furthermore, one of the criteria for Staplehurst being designated a RSC was the presence of a mainline railway station so it does not seem unreasonable to seek greater investment in the station in return for the housing numbers being allocated in Staplehurst.

11.14 Policy GW1 of this neighbourhood plan expands on the relevant Local Plan policies by requiring a redevelopment that creates a positive new approach to the village; including a new landscaped civic space and small-scale retail and commercial opportunities around the station.

11.15 Set out here is a concept for the station area based on the sketch scheme generated at the three day design forum in October 2013. Relocating a proportion of the existing surface car park into a decked structure will release land that can be landscaped into a small-scale, attractive market square.

11.16 This space will still be able to accommodate parked cars but will also be able to host events and other activities, especially at weekends when demand for parking spaces at the station is often lower than during the working week.

11.17 While the village has excellent green open spaces, such as Surrenden Field and Jubilee Field, it currently lacks a purpose built market square or other similar dedicated hard space that can be used for markets or other small temporary events. Such places can go a long way to giving a village a positive sense of identity as well as being a venue for functions and events that can bring the community together.

11.18 For the formal red line boundary drawing of this site, please see the diagram on page 45.



This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.



Location of the station area to be redeveloped (Policy GW1).

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 10

Safeguard the green and rural feel to the approach to Staplehurst from the south.

11.19 The approach to the village from the south is important as it helps to define and identify Staplehurst as a village set within countryside. The close proximity of the village's built elements with the surrounding countryside gives this approach a distinctive rural feel.

11.20 This neighbourhood plan aims to protect this by supporting the larger development allocations in the northern part of the village; any small-scale infill development in the southern part of Staplehurst must be sensitive to its environment. The density, size and design of any small-scale infill development must be appropriate to the context and help safeguard the rural nature of the southerly approach.



The approach to the village from the south is characterised by strong green edges. This needs to be maintained and enhanced.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective 11

Create defined and welcoming gateways to the village when approached from the west, via the Marden Road and from the east, via the Headcorn Road.

11.21 The gateways in and out of the village along the Marden Road and Headcorn Road are very important in helping to define the extent of the village. They require distinctive features to mark the entrance to the village and to define the village as separate from the surrounding countryside. New junctions along these east and west routes to allow access to new areas of housing must be sensitive and small-scale in keeping with the village qualities and characteristics.

11.22 Large traffic-engineering solutions (e.g. roundabouts with visually intrusive traffic management paraphernalia such as chevron boards and white paint) must be avoided and more sensitive junction designs introduced instead. This approach does not necessarily exclude roundabouts, but their design needs to be responsive to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and also be aesthetically appropriate to a village setting.



Positive new gateways to the village need to be introduced as part of new developments to the east and the west.

EDGES THEME (Policy Code E)

"Identify and strengthen specific green edges to deliver a long-term edge to the village; and improve public access to the countryside beyond"

Policy Theme Background

12.1 An understandable concern of many residents in Staplehurst is where and when will expansion stop? What will prevent the village growing even more than already planned? In response to this, the neighbourhood plan is looking to define new edges to Staplehurst that will become permanent boundaries to the village.

12.2 The village edges need to be designed in a way that will provide a sense of enclosure to the village, prevent unchecked sprawl and ensure that new areas of homes can positively respond to the landscape. New housing clusters also need to be the right scale and in the right location and not be large anonymous housing estates.

12.3 The new village edges must also encourage public access to the countryside beyond. Many residents value living close to some of the most attractive countryside in England but easy access can be frustrated through blocked footpaths or private ownerships. Opening up more land around the new edges of Staplehurst to create highly-valued recreational routes will be one way to ensure the new village edges have a sense of permanence and will reassure village residents that growth will not continue ever outwards.

POLICY E1

ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT SITES ON THE EDGE SHOULD INTEGRATE POSITIVE PLANTING AND RECREATIONAL ROUTES ALONG THEIR BOUNDARIES AND WITHIN THEIR LAYOUTS TO HELP DEFINE A LONG TERM EDGE TO THE VILLAGE AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS ON THE EXISTING VILLAGE EDGE.

Policy Supporting Text

12.4 In order to prevent planned housing developments from unchecked further expansion, the integration of green spaces and recreational routes along the boundaries of development sites should seek to provide clearly defined edges. The integration of green spaces immediately to the east and west of the new developments, using new public rights of way and recreational spaces, must be incorporated into any new designs. These will help connect the new housing layouts to the countryside beyond and connected layouts will allow existing residents better access too. The formation of clearly defined edges will provide natural boundaries to help fix housing growth over the long term. The questionnaires returned as part of the consultation events suggested what could be incorporated into the village edges and these include:

- agriculture
- circular footpaths
- woodland
- cycleways
- allotments
- fitness trails
- wetlands
- sports
- low density villas

12.5 Developers working up more detailed designs for housing allocations are directed to this list of ideas to help inform the edge conditions of new areas of housing. Furthermore, new developments must be designed in a sensitive way to respond to the needs and requirements of existing village residents who live on what is currently the outer edge of Staplehurst.

HOUSING THEME (Policy Code H)

“Ensure the mix of new housing responds to local needs and local demands in terms of prices, sizes and tenures; ensure that new housing designs are high quality and respond appropriately to the Kentish context”

Policy Theme Background

13.1 It is inevitable that Staplehurst will be required to accommodate new homes over the coming years. Therefore, the neighbourhood plan is being prepared on the basis that a substantial number of new houses will be built. The Maidstone Borough Council (Regulation 18) Local Plan suggests 650 new homes could be built in Staplehurst between now and 2031.

13.2 Policy SP3 in the draft Maidstone Borough Council local plan designates Staplehurst a Rural Service Centre — that is a large settlement suitable for additional houses. Policy H1(36) is a housing allocation to the west of the village. This is for 250 new homes on land known as Hen and Duckhurst Farm. Policy H1(37) is a housing allocation to the east of the village and this is for 400 new homes on land known as Fishers Farm. Although the draft housing numbers have now been published, best practice in planning for an expanding village advises that a plan created by “designing to numbers” does not always deliver the right quality of environment.

13.3 Instead, the plans must be “place-led” – that is, the plan must respond in a positive manner to the local landscape, the local context and the existing village setting. Although no final decisions have been taken about the sites, the results of the three day design forum in October 2013 suggested that much of the new housing will be situated on the eastern and western flanks of the village and almost all of it north of the crossroads. The Maidstone Borough Council housing allocations reflect these broad locations.

13.4 How can housing in these locations be designed in a way that best responds to local factors? New areas of housing need to create special places that are architecturally distinctive and will become cherished by those that live there and the wider village residents. All developers will be required to use the village character assessment (page 22) and the Staplehurst Village Design Statement (2005) to inform the design of all house types and site layouts. It is not the role of the neighbourhood plan to provide detailed design guidance for how sites should be developed but it does provide clear advice on the design principles that must underpin any future proposals.

13.5 All future planning applications must be developed through consultation with the communities that live immediately adjacent to the site and with the wider community too. A variety of drawings and reports need to be produced that will give confidence that development can be achieved in the most effective and successful way possible.

13.6 The precise mix of housing must respond to local needs in terms of size of each property, the price, the amount of land around it and the mix of tenure (i.e. whether houses are for sale or for rent). Regard for the findings of the Staplehurst Housing Survey 2010 (report by Tessa O'Sullivan, Rural Housing Enabler with support from Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group and Maidstone Borough Council) will be essential.

13.7 Finally, Maidstone Borough Council has made a commitment to renew efforts to engage with foul water utility providers and other organisations with responsibility for managing water, including surface water, in the borough concerning future infrastructure provision both to respond to the current concerns and issues arising from consideration of the housing needs in the future, particularly for Headcorn and Staplehurst.

POLICY H1

THE DESIGN OF NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD BE PRINCIPALLY INFORMED BY THE TRADITIONAL FORM, LAYOUT, CHARACTER AND STYLE OF THE VILLAGE'S VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE.

Policy Supporting Text

13.8 Any new housing development must be shaped and influenced by the traditional character and style of the village. The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan requires all new developments to reference the local context and demonstrate the use of high quality materials and styles appropriate to the place. See village character assessment on pages 22 — 23.

13.9 For example, any small-scale in-fill developments that may come forward in the south of the village must be sensitive to the rural and more historic nature of the village, by reflecting the character of housing in proximity to countryside. New housing within the larger allocations to the east and west of the village may be required to develop their own distinctive characters, to add to the overall variety and mix to be found within the village. The aim for all new developments must be for them to leave a positive architectural legacy, to be sensitive to their local context and environment and add to the positive character of the village.

13.10 Policy H1 does not exclude innovation or modern and contemporary architecture. Such designs are encouraged across the parish. Where appropriate, architects and designers are encouraged to create new designs that reflect both the local context and the current technology and materials of the era within which they will be built.



The variety and quality of architecture in the village, both the modern and the more established, are to be celebrated and new development should leave a positive legacy.

POLICY H2

ALL NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS WILL COMPRISE HOUSE TYPES FIT FOR MODERN LIVING.

Policy Supporting Text

13.11 The neighbourhood plan requires all future housing development to support modern lifestyles through innovative design. These will include reducing energy costs through meeting high design standards as well as internal space standards and layouts that will encourage working from home. Design details, such as the ability to receive parcels securely when not at home, storage of several bicycles, flexible use of garage and garden spaces and the effective storage of waste and recycling bins must all be considered.

13.12 All housing should seek to meet “Lifetime Homes” standards to ensure properties are sustainable and can be easily adapted to meet the needs of a changing population. The development of one-storey dwellings, appropriate for an elderly population and those with restricted mobility, must be considered across all new development sites. All housing designs must also promote efficient use of water, electricity and energy. The introduction of on-site generation technology, smart meters and other measures to reduce energy consumption is necessary across all housing sites.



Are the house types most recently constructed in Staplehurst still suitable for modern lifestyles? What innovations should be included for the future?

POLICY H3

A RANGE OF APPROPRIATE TENURES AND SIZES OF NEW PROPERTIES TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS AND DEMANDS WILL BE DELIVERED.

Policy Supporting Text

13.13 The type, tenure and size of future housing must reflect the local needs and demands of Staplehurst. New housing development must aim to meet housing need in the area, rather than attract incomers in the first instance.

13.14 Affordable Housing Staplehurst Parish Council has carried out a housing needs survey (2010) which identifies a modest local demand for affordable housing. This plan therefore supports some key worker and shared ownership housing to allow children of local families to remain in the area. Developers and local housing associations must therefore provide affordable housing that prioritises local residents' needs and ensures a distribution of units across both individual developments and the whole village and parish. Affordable housing delivery during the plan period needs to be in conformity with adopted Affordable Housing Development Plan Document (2006) prepared by Maidstone Borough Council.

13.15 Responsive Housing Future homes must be designed for a changing population. This may involve family homes and homes for an aging population to provide a good social mix, supporting social cohesion and independent living. The size of new developments must also be reflective of local needs. The station in Staplehurst is an important feature of the village, which already attracts working-age adults with families to the village. Therefore an adequate amount of family-sized houses must be built as well as providing for smaller units and innovative hybrid housing that can respond to modern lifestyles. For example, small-size private-rented apartments, perhaps designed in the form of a courtyard development sympathetic to the rural context, could be built within walking distance of the station. Such housing types may be suitable for young professionals who have grown up in Staplehurst, now need regular access to London but wish to live in affordable accommodation within their home village.

POLICY H4*

DEVELOP LAND AT HEN AND DUCKHURST FARM FOR UP TO 250 HOUSING UNITS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING PLANNING AND DESIGN CRITERIA:

- 1) Developers must provide an overall site master plan that shows a robust long term plan demonstrating how the land within the red line allocation can eventually be linked to the Lodge Road employment land to the north and east of the site.**
- 2) Design details of a through-route, or “spine street”, that will be capable of safely taking two-way traffic between the Marden Road and Lodge Road are required. This street needs to be fronted by high quality architecture and be planted with appropriate tree species to create a beautiful and verdant boulevard street that helps establish a distinctive sense of place. The street needs to be accessible and safe for all modes of travel.**
- 3) The overall site master plan must also safeguard access point(s) to a future railway bridge crossing. The precise design and location of the new crossing to be determined through further design and feasibility work.**

- 4) Proposals must demonstrate how new developments can be successfully integrated with the existing village while respecting the privacy, well-being and quality of life of residents currently living on the western edge of Staplehurst. Specific attention is needed with regard to points of access and existing views of open countryside.**
- 5) Sufficient space is to be included within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS implementation plan.**
- 6) The site master plan needs to integrate positive planting and recreational routes along the boundaries to help define a long term edge to the village.**
- 7) The inclusion of high quality play spaces and recreational areas to be integrated into the development.**

** Link to Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 Appendix A Housing Allocations H1(36) - Hen and Duckhurst Farm.*

Policy Supporting Text

13.16 Future development to the west of the village must be complementary to the adjacent existing housing. It needs to be sensitive of the current situation while also successfully integrating with the wider village. New housing layouts should sensitively include the provision for a street network that will provide a choice of movements, both from the Marden Road to the south and from Lodge Road from the north. Which of these two connections is opened up first needs to be subject to a detailed phasing plan but both access points will be needed over the longer term. A new street capable of successfully accommodating through traffic needs to link the northern and southern access points.

13.17 The new layout should also successfully connect with the adjacent area of housing, with details of the nature of these links (e.g. vehicular, pedestrian, cyclist etc) to be the subject of detailed studies to be undertaken by the developer in cooperation with the local community and the parish council.

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13.18 A feasible overall concept plan for the entire housing and employment areas will be required from developers prior to any implementation of early phases. Proposed housing and employment layouts must also ensure a new street to the north can be achieved over the longer term, connecting to a new railway bridge crossing. The timing and funding of this bridge link is still to be decided but in the first instance, the layout must not prejudice its future delivery.

13.19 New housing in this area should include strong, green landscape features along the future street network. Developers will be required to use the village character assessment (page 22) and the Staplehurst Village Design Statement (2005) to inform the design of all house types and site layouts.

13.20 Dwellings on the western edge should be afforded views across open countryside. The integration of existing public rights of way and the planting of a green edge will add a strong and natural edge to the village. See Policy E1. To mitigate the impacts of flooding in the village, a further investigation is needed into how an attenuation pond system could be established. This could be integrated into an attractive green space for community use with an essential role in flood mitigation.

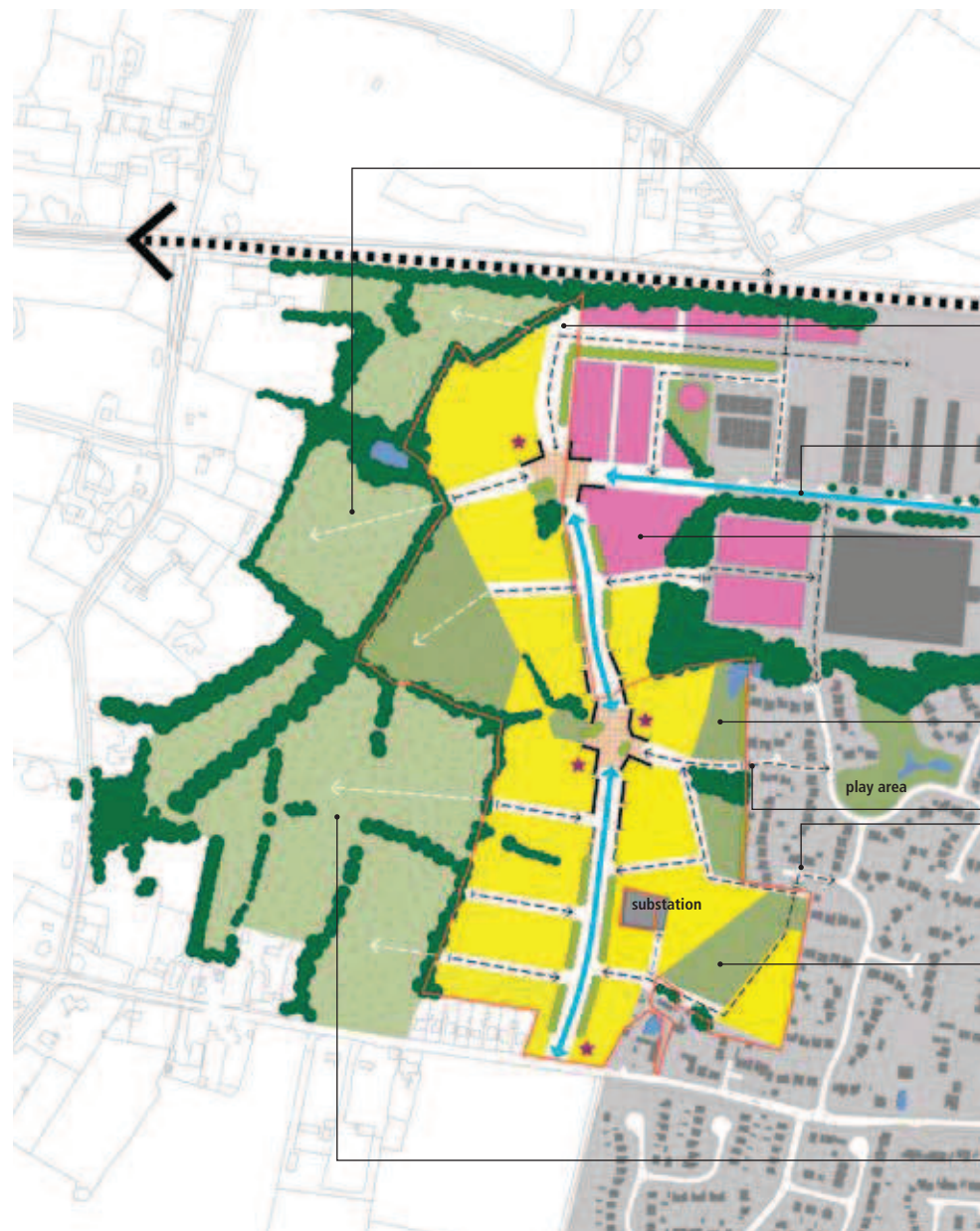
13.21 It is not the role of the neighbourhood plan to provide detailed design guidance for how this site should be developed but Policy H4 provides clear advice on the design principles that must underpin any future proposals. Future planning applications must be developed through consultation with the communities that live immediately adjacent to the site and with the wider community too. A variety of drawings and reports need to be produced that will give confidence that development can be achieved in the most effective and successful way possible.

13.22 There is a need for a historic landscape survey and historic landscape character assessment to inform the layout and master plan design and ensure important historic landscape features and heritage assets are suitably preserved and integrated into the new development. Prior to detailed designs, an appropriate archaeological assessment should be undertaken to identify any archaeological constraints or enhancements and to ensure suitable archaeological mitigation.



Some existing residents have views of the Oast Houses near to the Marden Road (far left) Can these views be retained? The site needs to be connected to Lodge Road (left).

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Illustrative Layout Policy H4

KEY

- Potential new residential areas
- Potential new employment areas
- Open green space
- New proposed planting
- Existing planting to be maintained and strengthened
- Accessible countryside beyond the site development
- Existing development
- Potential new civic spaces to provide positive character at street junctions
- Strong built edges to define the street
- Opportunity to introduce a new landmark architectural feature
- Local links
- Strategic links



Ensure good access to open countryside beyond the development site to the west.

Safeguard opportunity for new bridge crossing of the railway. Precise location and nature of the bridge to be determined.

Link between new development and Lodge Road required to provide access to the station and the wider network.

Integrate new employment land effectively through the creation of a transition zone

Edge design to respond to the needs and requirements of existing village residents

Pedestrian and cycle links needed here between existing development and new areas of housing to integrate communities. Width of links to be suitable for emergency vehicles.

Opportunity to keep land open to maintain existing view from existing development to Oast Houses at farm complex.

Ensure good access to open countryside beyond the development site to the west.

Policy H4 Illustrative design and planning principles for development of land west of the village.

This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.



Policy H4 Location of the land for housing at Hen and Duckhurst Farm.

POLICY H5*

DEVELOP LAND AT FISHERS FARM FOR UP TO 400 HOUSING UNITS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING PLANNING AND DESIGN CRITERIA:

- 1) Developers must provide an overall site master plan that shows a robust long term plan demonstrating how the land within the red line allocation can be linked to Sweetlands/Pile Lane and the wider countryside to the east of Staplehurst.
- 2) Design details of a connected series of streets across the development will be required, showing how the whole site can be successfully connected to the existing network at Headcorn Road and Sweetlands/Pile Lane.
- 3) Proposals must demonstrate how new developments can be successfully integrated with the existing village while respecting the privacy, well-being and quality of life of residents currently living on the eastern edge of Staplehurst. Specific attention is needed with regard to points of access and existing views of open countryside.
- 4) Sufficient space is to be included within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SUDs implementation plan. Space is needed for informal recreation and children's play.

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* Link to Maidstone Borough Local Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) 2014 Appendix A Housing Allocations H1(37) - Fishers Farm, Fishers Road, Staplehurst.

5) The site master plan needs to integrate positive planting and recreational routes along the boundaries to help define a long term edge to the village.

6) The inclusion of high quality play spaces and recreational areas to be integrated into the development.

Policy Supporting Text

13.23 This is the larger of the two housing allocations. As with the smaller allocation to the west, development here must be complementary to the adjacent existing housing. It needs to be sensitive of the current situation while also successfully integrating with the wider village.

13.24 Access from the south via the Headcorn Road is likely to be a main entry and exit point but due to the very restricted access opportunities via Fishers Road and Newlyn Drive/Hurst Close, a link is required to the east to connect with Sweetlands/Pile Lane. Without such a link, there is a risk that the site will be developed as a cul-de-sac, with a single point of access from the Headcorn Road, placing unnecessary pressure on the Headcorn Road and the Cuckold's Corner crossroads. A feasible and tested overall concept plan for the entire housing allocation is required from the developers prior to any planning permission for the implementation of early phases.

13.25 Given the relatively large size of this allocation, an overall concept plan will be required showing how different areas of character could be developed, using different densities and building types. For example, higher density developments could be located along the strategic routes while lower density forms could be located towards the outer edges. Higher density areas within the centre of the site can be offset by careful integration of green open spaces to create greens, play spaces and important social and community spaces for new and existing residents. The relatively close proximity to nearby facilities, including Jubilee Field to the south east and the railway station to the west, should be capitalised on with good walking and cycling routes to encourage easy and safe access by non-car modes.

13.26 The design must creatively incorporate much of the existing ecology and landscape and should maintain well-developed green edge adjacent to Pile Lane, the dog track and the Jubilee Field.

13.27 Development in the southern part of the allocation, adjacent to the Headcorn Road should have a strong edge built, set back behind a landscape belt. This will provide a positive new edge to the village approach, combining built form with natural features. The design of this southern edge needs to create a welcoming edge to Staplehurst to those arriving from the east. Development of the northern part of the allocation should look to integrate existing farm buildings and built structures at Fishers Farm. The incorporation of older building into a new development can add character and value if delivered in an appropriate way.

13.28 It is not the role of the neighbourhood plan to provide detailed design guidance for how this site should be developed but Policy H5 provides clear advice on the design principles that must underpin any future proposals. Future planning applications must be developed through consultation with the communities that live immediately adjacent to the site and with the wider community too. A variety of drawings and reports needs to be produced that will give confidence that development can be achieved in the most effective and successful way possible.

13.29 There is a need for a historic landscape survey and historic landscape character assessment to inform the layout and master plan design and ensure important historic landscape features and heritage assets are suitably preserved and integrated into the new development. Prior to detailed designs, an appropriate archaeological assessment should be undertaken to identify any archaeological constraints or enhancements and to ensure suitable archaeological mitigation.



How can potential negative impacts on existing adjacent residents be designed out? This area also marks the transition between the village and open countryside (left) and new development needs to acknowledge this significant location through its design.

KEY

- Potential new residential areas
- Potential new employment areas
- Open green space
- New proposed planting
- Existing planting to be maintained and strengthened
- Accessible countryside beyond the site development
- Existing development
- Potential new civic spaces to provide positive character at street junctions
- Strong built edges to define the street
- Opportunity to introduce a new landmark architectural feature
- Local links
- Strategic links

NORTH



This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.

Illustrative Layout Policy H5

Access to east via Couchman Green Lane to allow movement to and from the site without travelling through the village

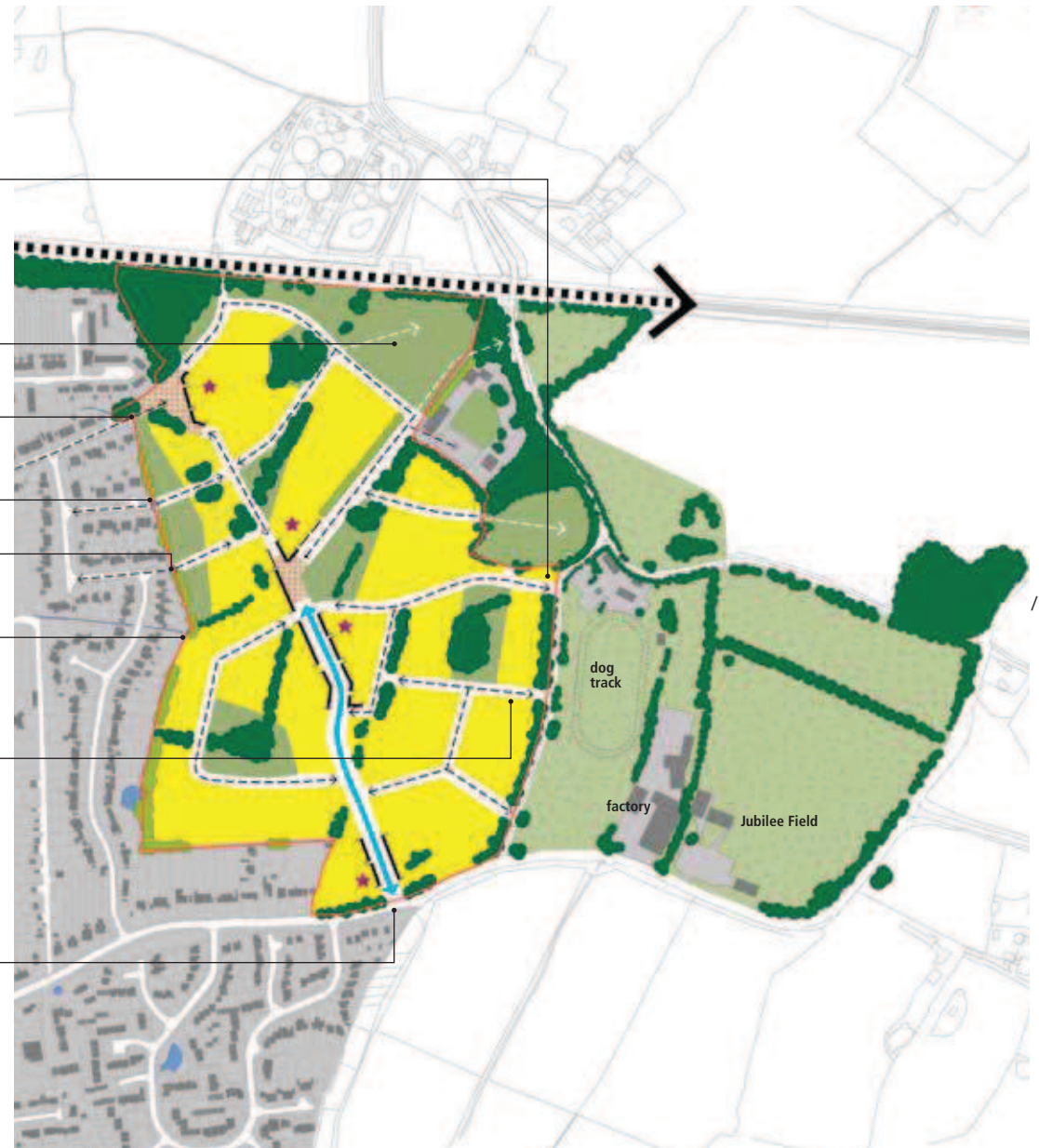
Ensure good access to open countryside beyond the development site to the east.

Pedestrian and cycle links needed here between existing development and new areas of housing to integrate communities. Width of links to be suitable for emergency vehicles.

Edge design to respond to the needs and requirements of existing village residents

Links needed to land beyond the village via Pile Lane and out towards the east

Access from south via Headcorn Road, with welcoming gateway feature



Policy H5 Illustrative design and planning principles for development of land east of the village.



Policy H5 Location of the land for housing at Fishers Farm.

POLICY H6

PROTECT THE EXISTING EMPLOYMENT FACILITIES AT LODGE ROAD AND ENHANCE AND EXPAND THE AREA AS A MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL AND EMPLOYMENT AREA SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- 1) Protection of existing businesses and operations.**
- 2) No net loss of employment floor space site.**
- 3) Developers must provide an overall site master plan to demonstrate how mixed-use residential and employment land within the red line allocation can be linked to residential land to the west and south west of the site allocation.**

Policy Supporting Text

13.30 There is an opportunity to expand the existing employment cluster at Lodge Road through new development immediately to the west and north of the existing industrial and employment units. New buildings here need not necessarily reflect the current building typologies but instead could be smaller-scale and more rural in their design (e.g. two or three storey courtyard schemes). These new units could also include a significant amount of residential use, such as small apartments in the upper floors. Development of this type could help form a “transition zone” between the existing employment buildings to the east and the new residential area to the west at Hen and Duckhurst Farm.

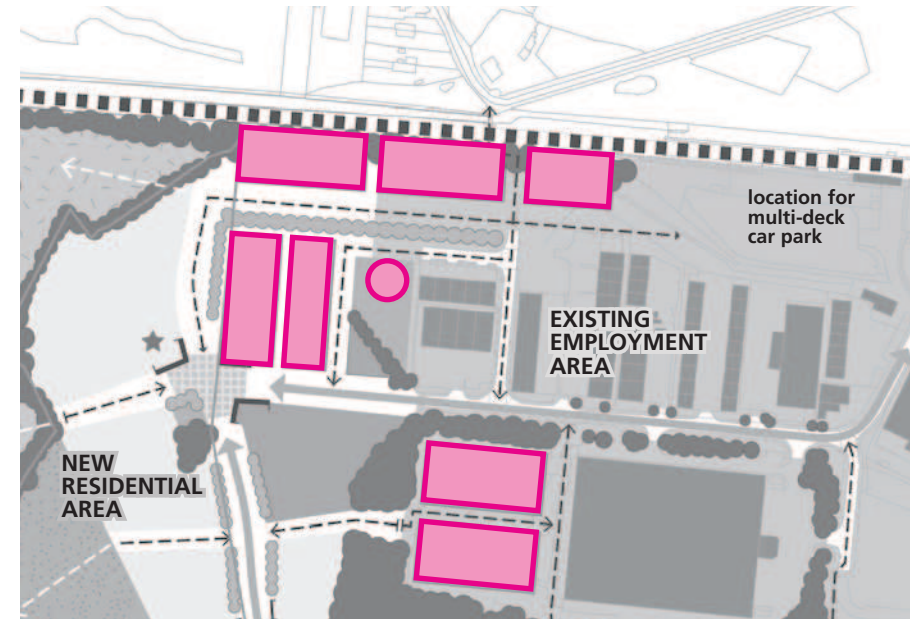


The Lodge Road employment area is a vital asset to the parish.



Policy H6 Location of the land for employment and housing.

Illustrative Layout Policy H6



This plan shows an illustrative layout for the land that lies between the existing employment area and the new allocated residential area. The blocks shown in pink could be developed as rural courtyard employment areas, similar to those shown in the photographs (page 58).

This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.

Clockwise from top left:

- Ashford, Kent
- Moulton St Mary, Norfolk
- Parkway Farm, Dorset
- Poundbury, Dorset
- Hallastson, Herefordshire
- Cuckfield, Sussex
- Priston, Somerset
- Parkway Farm, Dorset



Neighbourhood Plan Objective 12

Support for a strong local economy with good access to jobs and employment opportunities.

13.31 While it is recognised that Staplehurst is an important village for rail commuters travelling to London there is also a need to strengthen and support a local economy that is not reliant on people leaving the village to work. The village already accommodates many local firms and employers in the Lodge Road industrial area and this is of great value to the local economy.

13.32 Other employment opportunities can be found in the village heart, comprising the library, primary school, Village Centre, parade of shops, youth club, health centre and church. Further investment in the parade could create more workshop or small office spaces, either above the shops or immediately behind in new courtyard-style developments. The neighbourhood plan will also support farm diversification in outlying areas of the parish, such as small-scale sensitive employment developments (e.g. courtyard schemes) and tourist accommodation.

13.33 Further new employment uses could be generated adjacent to the station as part of the investment in new public realm. It is encouraged that land to the east of the station is safeguarded for small workshop, small-scale retail or office uses. These spaces could be flexible units to help support small and emerging business, as well as existing home-workers in the parish.



The station and its immediate surroundings have been identified for future investment.

PLAN MONITORING

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14.1 Monitoring is an essential and continuous part of the plan-making process. The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan will be monitored by Maidstone Borough Council to assess whether it is supporting and delivering the aims of the Local Plan strategy.

14.2 The monitoring indicators identified are a mix of relevant indicators drawn from a number of sources including the National Planning Policy Framework, indicators identified in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and local indicators identified in respect of key policies of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

14.3 The key indicators for the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan will be on delivery of community infrastructure, employment, housing and positive environmental change.

14.4 General Delivery Indicators

- Development on allocated and sites with planning permission.
- Percentage of completions on previously developed land, including planning permissions implemented involving planning condition(s) for remediation.

14.5 Employment Indicators

- Changes (up or down) in the number of companies/businesses (no. of VAT registered) located in the area
- Employment land lost or gained compared to other uses

14.6 Housing Indicators

- The number of dwelling completions that are provided relative to the Council's estimated provision
- Change in the total number of households
- Average densities on permitted housing sites
- Affordable housing completions

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14.7 Environmental Indicators

- Levels of new open space provided, especially natural/semi-natural green space.
- Change to number of buildings on national and local lists of buildings at risk.
- The amount of open space/facility established by type relative to the standard.
- The number of permissions granted and implemented for renewable and low-carbon schemes and their expected levels of generation.
- The number of planning permissions granted for residential development in flood risk areas contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency.
- The number of developments which use sustainable drainage systems.
- The number of applications which do not receive approval for water supply and wastewater connection from the appropriate water company.
- Waste water treatment capacity.
- The amount of new habitat created, especially natural/semi-natural green space.
- Any monitoring undertaken of Kent Biodiversity Action Plan, including habitats created.

NEXT STEPS

15.1 This is the Submission Plan and has been submitted to Maidstone Borough Council for a six week consultation period.

15.2 Please send your views and opinions to Maidstone Borough Council before the end of the six week consultation period.

15.3 Once the consultation period is closed, Maidstone Borough Council will gather together all comments received during the consultation period and present them to an independent planning inspector, appointed to examine the plan. Should the independent planning inspector find the neighbourhood plan to be sound, then it will go forward to be the subject of a referendum, to be voted upon by the residents living within the Staplehurst Parish boundary.

15.4 Parish contacts for further information:

- **Mr. Mick Westwood, Clerk to the Parish Council**
- **Mr. Rory Silkin, Chairman of Staplehurst Parish Council**

The Parish Office, Village Centre, High Street, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BJ.

SUPPORTING REPORTS

Basic Conditions Statement
July 2015

Consultation Statement
July 2015

Exhibition Posters
November 2014

Regulation 14 Plan
June 2014

Exhibition Posters
June 2014

Exhibition Slide Show
June 2014

Results of the Questionnaire
March 2014

Exhibition Posters
January 2014

Results of the Three Day Design Forum
October 2013

Results of the Village Visioning Event
September 2013

RELEVANT WEBLINKS

Staplehurst Parish Council
<http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/default.aspx>

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

Maidstone Strategic Policy Framework 2015
http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/60907/Strategic-Policy-Framework.pdf.

Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment Final Report January 2014
http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/44656/Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-2014.pdf

Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Regulation 18) Consultation 2014
<http://dynamic.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2018.pdf>

Maidstone Borough Conservation Areas
<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/business/planning/landscape,-heritage-and-design/conservation-areas>

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**STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
REGULATION 16 (SUBMISSION PLAN)**

July 2015

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This plan has been prepared by:

**Staplehurst Parish Council, The Parish Office, Village
Centre, High Street, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BJ.**

Digital copies of this document can be downloaded from:

**www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk
www.maidstone.gov.uk**

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Please send all comments and responses to:

**Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House,
King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ.**

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

**10 November
2015**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Local Development Scheme 2014-2017

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Director or Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development, and Sue Whiteside, Principal Planning Officer
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All wards

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That Council is recommended to adopt the Local Development Scheme (attached at Appendix A) and agree that the Scheme comes into effect on the date of adoption.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	10 November 2015
Council	9 December 2015

Local Development Scheme 2014-2017

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the revision of Maidstone's Local Development Scheme 2014-2017 (attached as Appendix A) and to recommend that Council adopts the Scheme. The Local Development Scheme sets out the programme for the production of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, from Publication for consultation in February/March 2016, through submission and examination, to an estimated adoption date in March 2017.
 - 1.2 Having considered the views of the community on the content of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, the next step is to consult on its preparation process: whether the local plan has met legal requirements and meets the tests of soundness.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The council is required to produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS), which sets out the range of local plans it is proposing to prepare over a minimum three year period. There is no requirement to include a programme for the production of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) but, historically, the council has identified the key SPDs needed to deliver the detail of higher tier policies. Local authorities are charged with keeping their LDS up-to-date and to review its progress through annual monitoring reports.
- 2.2 The council's current Scheme was adopted in 2013 following the decision to combine the preparation of two local plans (Core Strategy and Development Delivery) into a single Maidstone Borough Local Plan. Local plans are prepared in accordance with planning regulations¹ and a partial consultation (Regulation 18) on the local plan was programmed for autumn 2013. However, further work proved necessary to supplement the evidence base that underpins the local plan, so a full draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan was published for Regulation 18 consultation between March and May 2014.
- 2.3 Since May 2014, the representations received together with additional potential development sites, which were submitted through a further call for sites, have been considered through a series of meetings of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee (and the former Planning, Transport and Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet). Account has also been taken of the council's newly published evidence base documents and changes to national policy and guidance that may impact on the policies of the local plan.
- 2.4 A partial Regulation 18 consultation was undertaken during October 2015 which focused on new and deleted policies and site allocations, together with key

¹ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

amendments to policies and site allocations. Approved amendments arising from the 2014 public consultation together with recommended changes resulting from the 2015 public consultation will be incorporated into the Publication version of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Regulation 19), which will be presented to the Committee on 12 January 2016 and to Council on 25 January 2016. Having considered the views of the public and other bodies on the content of the local plan, the next step is the Publication of the proposed submission version of the local plan, when the consultation stage (Regulation 19) is focused on whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with legal requirements and it meets the tests of soundness.

- 2.5 The programme for the production of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan is set out below. Once the local plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination the timetable is in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate. Although the Inspectorate has given an indication of timescales, the programme will ultimately depend on the volume and complexity of the issues raised by respondents. Further, if there are main modifications to the plan following examination, the modifications will be subject to consultation which will add approximately three months to the adoption date.
- 2.6 Of particular importance to the local plan programme is the Written Statement made by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning on 21 July 2015. The statement makes clear that in cases where local plans have not been produced by early 2017 (5 years after the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework), the government will “intervene to arrange for the Plan to be written, in consultation with local people, to accelerate the production of a Local Plan”. The timetable set out below will enable the council to retain ownership of the production of its local plan.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Stage	Timetable
Publication consultation (Regulation 19)	12 February to 30 March 2016
Submission to the Secretary of State (Regulation 22)	May 2016
Hearing sessions (Regulation 24) – estimate	September 2016
Adoption (Regulation 26) – estimate	March 2017

- 2.7 A suite of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to expand or add detail to the higher tier policies in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan will be required following the plan’s adoption. The SPD process is quicker than that for local plans because they are not subject to examination, although must be taken through public consultation. Three SPDs have previously been agreed as a priority in the adopted LDS: Parking Standards, Landscape Character Guidelines, and Affordable Housing and Local Needs Housing. This list is still relevant, and further SPDs agreed by the Committee will be added to this list over time.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1: The Committee recommends that Council adopts the Local Development Scheme 2014-2017 (attached at Appendix A) and that the

Scheme comes into effect on the date of adoption. This will ensure the council has an adequate resolution to adopt its Local Development Scheme in advance of Publication and Submission of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination.

- 3.2 Option 2: That the Local Development Scheme 2014-2017 (attached at Appendix A) is not adopted. This is not recommended because the Local Development Scheme would not be compliant with Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2008 (as amended by Localism Act 2011). Consequently, the council would not have met its legal compliance on this matter and the Maidstone Borough Local Plan would be found unsound.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Committee adopts Option 1 and recommends to Council that the Local Development Scheme 2014-2017, attached at Appendix A, be adopted and that the Scheme comes into effect on the date of adoption.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Formal and informal consultation feedback has assisted the decision making process in respect of amendments to local plan policies and site allocations. Once this process is complete, the Publication version of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan will be subject to Regulation 19 consultation and Submission. A Consultation Statement, explaining how the consultation stages of the local plan have helped to develop the plan, is required to support the local plan at submission stage.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Following adoption of the Local Development Scheme 2014-17 by Council, the Scheme will be uploaded to the local plan webpage.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Maidstone Borough Local Plan will deliver the spatial objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Plan. It will also have regard to objectives set out in other council documents, such as the Economic Development Strategy and the Housing Strategy.	Head of Service

Risk Management	The adoption of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan will reduce the risk of inappropriate development. The LDS includes a section that reviews risk management of the programme in detail.	Head of Service
Financial	The preparation of the local plan has been fully funded as part of the council's revenue budget. Potential deficiencies that might impact on the production of the local plan will be identified at an early stage.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The team is now fully staffed and additional short-term resources have been employed to assist with consultation representations and preparation of the Publication version of the local plan.	Head of Service
Legal	A resolution by Council to adopt the Local Development Scheme will ensure that the Scheme meets legal requirements and supports a sound local plan.	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None identified	Clare Wood, Policy & Information Officer
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The Local Plan is fundamentally concerned with delivering sustainable development objectives.	Head of Service
Community Safety	N/A	Head of Service
Human Rights Act	N/A	Head of Service
Procurement	Consultants are used to prepare specialist or technical evidence to support the local plan and are appointed in accordance with the council's procurement procedures.	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	N/A	Head of Service

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Maidstone Borough Council Local Development Scheme 2014-2017

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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

**This Local Development Scheme came into effect on
9 December 2015 and replaces all previous versions of
the Scheme**

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What is the Local Development Scheme?

1.1 Councils are required to produce a **Local Development Scheme** (LDS) under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The LDS is a three year project plan which sets the timetable for the production of Maidstone Borough Council's local plan. It explains how the council will resource and manage the preparation of documents, and includes a risk assessment of events that might impact on the programme together with an explanation of how such risks will be mitigated.

1.2 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. This Scheme includes a programme for the preparation of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. Whilst there is no requirement to include a timetable for the production of supplementary planning documents (SPD), the council has identified key SPDs that are a priority to support the delivery of local plan policies.

The Development Plan

1.3 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 and neighbourhood development plans.

1.4 The development plan for Maidstone comprises a number of local documents: adopted development plan documents (DPD), which are now called local plans; saved policies from the adopted Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000; and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans that are prepared by Kent County Council. At 9 December 2015, the development plan comprises:

- Affordable Housing DPD (December 2006)
- Open Space DPD (December 2006)
- Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan Saved Policies (September 2007)
- The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

Planning Documents

1.5 The Local Plan is the plan for the future development of the borough and 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 be superseded by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan once adopted. The production of local plans 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 it plays a key part in delivering the spatial objectives of the council's Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Plan.

1.6 Neighbourhood Development Plans are not compulsory but, once made, they are a statutory document that form part of the development plan. In Maidstone these are prepared by parish councils or neighbourhood forums, and the plans are subject to consultation, examination and referendum. The plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted local plan, and should have regard to any emerging local plan. The council currently has 12 designated neighbourhood areas and a further neighbourhood area is subject to consultation. Five neighbourhood plans are at various stages of production.

1.7 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 on-line policies map that can be accessed through its website.

1.8 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) expand or add detail to local plan policies and are prepared with stakeholder and public engagement. They are not subject to sustainability appraisal or examination because the local plan policies 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 **Planning Policy Advice Notes** are also a material consideration, and those that meet the disciplines of SPD production can be given commensurate weight in the decision making process.

1.9 In addition to the Local Development Scheme, the **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** and **Monitoring Reports** are a crucial part of the plan making process. 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.

1.10 The council's adopted planning documents are set out below.

Local Plan

- Affordable Housing DPD (2006)
- Open Space DPD (2006)
- Saved policies from the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan (2007)

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 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)

Planning Policy Advice Notes

- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019
- Kent Design Guide 2005/06
- Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards (interim guidance) (2006/2008)

- Domestic and Medium Scale Solar PV Arrays (up to 50KW) and Solar Thermal (2014)
- Large Scale (>50KW) Solar PV Arrays (2014)

Supporting Documents

- Local Development Scheme 2014-2017 (December 2015)
- Statement of Community Involvement (2013)
- Monitoring Reports.

Community Infrastructure Levy

1.11 The **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule** will set out the standard charges that the council will levy on specified types of development, in order to fund the infrastructure needed to support growth. The timetable for preparing the Charging Schedule will closely follow the local plan programme, and the schedule will be supported by a **Infrastructure Delivery Plan** which will identify what, where, when and how the infrastructure needed over the lifetime of the local plan will be delivered.

1.12 The Charging Schedule will identify the schemes and/or types of infrastructure to be funded by CIL through the Regulation 123 List. Section 106 planning agreements which are negotiated with developers to obtain infrastructure funding will continue to play a significant role in securing site specific infrastructure to support the delivery of key development sites allocated in the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

1.13 The process for preparing a CIL Charging Schedule is similar to that for local plans, and is set out in The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Public consultation on the council's CIL preliminary draft Charging Schedule (Regulation 15) was undertaken from 21 March to 7 May 2014. Formal public consultation on the CIL draft Charging Schedule (Regulations 16/17) is programmed for May 2016, with a view to submitting the schedule to the Secretary of State for examination (Regulations 19/20) in August 2016.

Review of the Local Development Scheme 2013-2015

2.1 Maidstone's Local Development Scheme was first adopted in 2005 and has been the subject of a number of reviews, the latest in 2013. In 2013, the Scheme combined the preparation of two local plans (the Core Strategy and Development Delivery) into a single Maidstone Borough Local Plan. A local plan must be prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

2.2 Following previous consultations on iterations of the Core Strategy, a partial consultation (regulation 18) on the local plan was programmed for October/November 2013. Although much of the Core Strategy could be incorporated into the new local plan, it subsequently became clear that further evidence was necessary, for example, to confirm the borough's objectively assessed housing need and complete additional viability testing. Consequently the 2013 LDS programme has not been met.

2.3 Instead of a partial consultation on the local plan in autumn 2013, a public consultation (Regulation 18) on the entire draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan was undertaken between 21 March and 7 May 2014. A further "call for sites" ran alongside the consultation, to enable the council to undertake an appraisal of the sites' development potential for housing or Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. Since then, the council has given consideration to the representations received, through a series of committee meetings, and has taken account of the impact of changes in national policy such as the introduction of the National Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Several policies and site allocations in the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 are in the process of being amended as a result. As part of the preparation of the local plan, the council also resolved to undertake a partial consultation (Regulation 18) focusing on key changes to new, amended and deleted policies and site allocations. The consultation ran for 4 weeks from 2 to 30 October 2015.

2.4 The amendments arising from the 2014 and 2015 public consultations will be incorporated into the Publication version of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Regulation 19) which will be published in February 2016. Having considered the views of the public and other bodies on the content of the local plan, Regulation 19 consultation is focused on whether the local plan has been prepared in accordance with legal requirements and it meets the tests of soundness.

2.5 Since the 2013 LDS was prepared, the council has published the following documents to supplement its evidence base. These documents will assist in supporting the local plan during examination.

- Retail Capacity Study (2013)
- Town Centre Assessment (2013)
- Local Plan Viability Testing (2013 and 2015)
- Agricultural Land Classification Study (2014)
- Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land Forecast (2014)
- Qualitative Employment Site Assessment Report (2014)
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment updates (2014 and 2015)

- Strategic Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessment (2015)
- Landscape Capacity Study (2015).

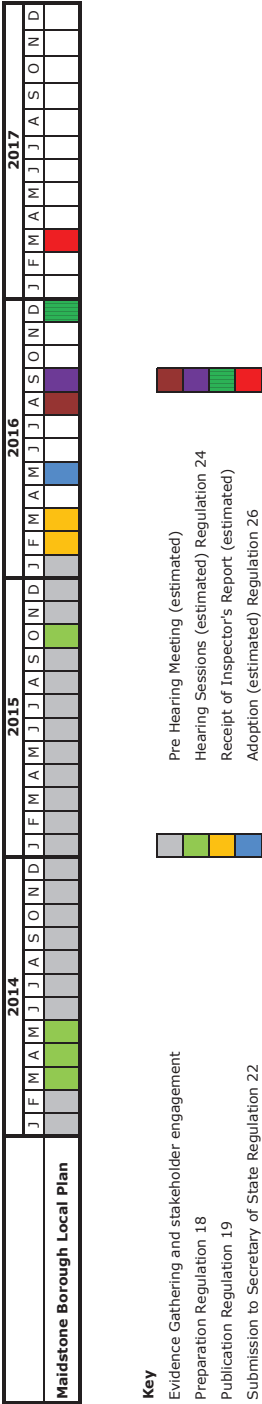
2.6 Although not a requirement for the LDS, the 2013 Scheme included a suite of supplementary planning documents (SPD) that are needed as a priority to add detail to policies contained in emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan. This list remains pertinent, and the adoption of the documents will closely follow the adoption of the local plan.

- 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 affordable housing and local needs housing policies of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

2.7 Further supplementary planning documents and master plans that will support a range of local plan policies will be produced following the adoption of the priority SPDs.

2 . The Local Development Scheme

Local Development Scheme 2014-2017



Note: If there are main modifications to the local plan post-examination, the modifications would be subject to consultation and consequently delay adoption by approximately 3 months.

Monitoring and Review

2.8 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 annual Monitoring Reports, and the council will monitor and review the LDS programme to ensure that the key stages for document production set out in the Scheme are met.

Risk Management

3.1 The adoption of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan will reduce the risk of inappropriate development and will provide a clear policy direction to Councillors, the development industry and members of the public. The council is continually assessing the risks to the LDS programme and must consider how risks can be minimised and managed should problems be encountered.

Risk	Impact	Mitigating Actions
New National planning legislation and/or guidance is published.	Additional work is required to comply with new requirements, causing delay to the programme.	A watching brief is kept on the introduction of new and amended planning legislation and guidance, and changes are responded to promptly. Counsel has been retained to offer legal advice on document content and processes, to ensure that risks to the preparation of plans are appropriately considered.
The level of public engagement at consultation stages is greater than that forecast.	Increased time required to assess a greater volume of representations, or to prepare additional evidence in order to respond to complex issues.	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 additional resources have been employed to create flexibility.
Difficulties arise in staff recruitment and retention.	Slippage in the local plan programme.	Staff vacancies have been filled promptly where possible, and incentives used to attract staff. The team is currently fully staffed, but redeployment of staff or employment of consultants to meet key milestones can be considered if difficulties arise.
Staff time is diverted to other work.	Slippage in the local plan programme.	The council has prioritised and resourced the production of its local plan.
There is insufficient funding to progress the local plan.	Quality of the evidence base is compromised and/or key milestones cannot be met.	The council has a dedicated budget for the preparation of the local plan and costs are closely monitored. The council will ensure that the budget is managed efficiently and effectively, and will identify any likely deficiencies at an early stage.

Risk	Impact	Mitigating Actions
IT systems are unreliable and/or inadequate for consultation and examination processes.	Slippage in the local plan programme caused by administrative delays.	Corporate liaison on IT and Communications matters are essential, in order to resolve problems at an early stage. Objective, which is an on-line system, is used to create and publish consultation documents, and to manage representations received.
Council rejects the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.	Document requires additional work to build consensus, and results in repetition of specific stages of the plan making process.	Political and stakeholder co-operation is essential for the council to meet key target dates. The local plan has been underpinned by a robust evidence base, and steered by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee (and formerly by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet). The Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee has cross-party membership, and the views of visiting Councillors have been taken into account at committee meetings. Three "drop-in" sessions have been arranged for Councillor briefings, prior to consideration of the Publication version of the local plan (Regulation 19).
Maidstone Borough Local Plan is found unsound during examination.	Document requires additional work and results in repetition of specific stages of the plan making process.	Risks to the adoption of the local plan are generally associated with meeting the tests of soundness at examination. Legal services have been retained to offer advice on document content and processes, and the local plan has been subject to critical friend analysis. The plan has also benefited from reviews by the Planning Advisory Service and the Planning Inspectorate. The council will continue to fully engage with stakeholders during the preparation of the local plan, and to satisfy its duty to cooperate with partners.

Risk	Impact	Mitigating Actions
A legal challenge to the Maidstone Borough Local Plan is raised.	Document requires additional work and results in repetition of specific stages of the plan making process.	Legal services have been retained to ensure regulations are complied with.

Table 3.1 Risks to the programme for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan

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	• 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 and larger villages • 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	Central government policy and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.
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 ¹⁴⁸

Timetable	
SA Scoping Report	June 2013
Preparation (Reg 18)	21 March to 7 May 2104, and 2 to 30 October 2015
Publication (Reg 19)	12 February to 30 March 2016
Submission (Reg 22)	May 2016
Pre Hearing Meeting (estimate)	August 2016
Hearing Sessions (estimate)(Reg 24)	September 2016
Receipt of Inspector's Report	December 2016
Adoption (estimate)(Reg 26)	March 2017
Arrangements for Production	
Internal Partners	Teams within the directorates of Planning & Development, Environment & Shared Services, and Chief Executive; Corporate Leadership Team; Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee.
External Partners	Appropriate national consultees, Town Centre Management, parish councils, adjacent local planning authorities, Kent County Council, and other stakeholders and community groups set out in the SCI.
External Resources	Kent County Council, Highways England, infrastructure providers, the Homes and Communities Agency, and use of external consultants to provide evidence (as required).

Table 4.1 Project Plan for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan

Glossary of terms

Acronym	Term	Description
	Development Plan	The Development Plan includes adopted local plans and neighbourhood development plans, and sets a framework for the decision making process.
DPD	Development Plan Document	A DPD is a spatial planning document that is subject to independent examination. DPDs are now known as local plans.
KCC	Kent County Council	The county planning authority, responsible for producing the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans.
LDS	Local Development Scheme	The LDS is a business programme (or timetable) for the production of the local plan.
	Local Plan	The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by a local authority in consultation with the community. Once adopted, the local plan becomes part of the development plan. The local plan for Maidstone currently includes adopted DPDs and saved policies. These will be superseded by the the Maidstone Borough Local Plan once it is adopted. The Local Plan does not include SPDs or Planning Policy Advice Notes, although these documents are material considerations in the decision making process.
MBC	Maidstone Borough Council	The local planning authority responsible for producing the local plan.
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan	Neighbourhood development plans (also known as neighbourhood plans) are prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a particular neighbourhood area. Neighbourhood plans must be in conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan and, once made, form part of the council's development plan.
	Planning Policy Advice Notes	Advice notes are a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the local plan or the development plan. If subject to adequate stakeholder and public consultation, advice notes can carry commensurate weight with SPDs in the decision making process.
	Policies Map	The policies map uses an on-line 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.
	Saved policies	Policies from the adopted Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan (2000) that were saved in 2007 under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
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 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.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document	An SPD provides further detail to policies set out in local plans. SPDs are a material consideration in the decision making process but are not part of the development plan or the local plan.