

AGENDA

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Tuesday 7 February 2017

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors D Burton (Chairman), English,
Mrs Grigg (Vice-Chairman),
D Mortimer, Munford, Prendergast,
Springett, de Wiggondene and Wilby

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1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items

Continued Over/:

Issued on Monday 30 January 2017

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact a Democratic Services Officer on 01622 602743 / 01622 602242**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk

Alison Broom

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

4.	Notification of Visiting Members	
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PUBLIC SPEAKING

In order to book a slot to speak at this meeting of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, please contact the Democratic Services Officer on 01622 602743/602242 or by email on committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 pm one clear working day before the meeting. If asking a question, you will need to provide the full text in writing. If making a statement, you will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on. Please note that slots will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Agenda Item 7

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 JANUARY 2017

Present: **Councillor D Burton (Chairman), and
Councillors D Burton, English, Garten, Mrs Gooch,
Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Prendergast, Springett and
Wilby**

Also Present: **Councillor Perry**

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Munford and de Wiggondene.

119. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor Gooch for Councillor Munford
Councillor Garten for Councillor de Wiggondene

120. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

121. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Perry was in attendance as a Visiting Member and indicated his intention to speak on item 12: Local Plan Update and item 13: Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals 2017/18.

122. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

123. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that Councillor English had been lobbied with regard to item 15: Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2017-18 update.

124. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2016

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

125. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

126. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

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

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

128. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman updated the committee on items added to the work programme since the agenda was published.

It was noted that:

The following reports were due to be considered by the committee on 7 February 2017:

- Public Art Policy
- Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal
- Kent Minerals and Waste Site Plans consultation response

The following reports to be considered by the committee did not have a confirmed date:

- Statement of Community Involvement
- Self-build and customer build register update

RESOLVED: That the committee work programme be noted.

129. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The Principal Planning Officer updated the committee on the progress of the Local Plan examination and provided the Government's latest position regarding the Housing White Paper.

The Officer outlined that the Local Plan Inspector had:

- Confirmed that the Council had met its duty to cooperate;
- Endorsed the Council's statement of housing need, but without the market uplift, making the figure 17,660;
- Opined that two sites – New Line Learning and Boughton Lane – should be removed from the Local Plan, and that sites in Yalding allocated for mixed housing and employment should be removed. It was also stated that a reduced housing supply was achievable at the Invicta Barracks site;

- Supported development at Woodcut Farm, Junction 8;
- Requested commitment to a review of the Local Plan from April 2021.

In response to a question it was explained that the five year land supply now stood at approximately 6.21 years. This figure would be updated with more recent completions data when monitoring for the 2016/17 monitoring year was undertaken.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

130. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed that the order of business be changed in the following terms:

- That Item 14: Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18: Fees and Charges be taken before item 13: Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget proposals 2017/18, as the former informed the latter.
- That item 16: Response to the Mayor of London's 'A City for all Londoners' publication be taken before item 15: Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2017-18 Update, as the officer for item 16 was only present for that item.

RESOLVED: That the change to the order of business be noted.

131. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY: FEES AND CHARGES

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report setting out proposed fees and charges for services within the remit of the committee.

In response to questions it was advised that:

- Details regarding the estimated decreased outturn for Street Naming and Numbering would be circulated to Members.
- Charges for Building Control inspection of solar panels were not statutory, but featured within the industry guidance adhered to by the Council.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The proposed fees and charges for 2017/18 as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be approved.
2. The fees and charges set by the government for 2017/18, as detailed in Appendix A, be noted.

3. All fees relating to planning and conservation be approved for introduction with effect from 1 February 2017.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain – 0

132. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS 2017/18

The report setting out details of the revenue budget proposals for the committee for 2017-18, and covering the remainder of the five year medium term financial strategy (MTFS) planning period, was presented by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement.

It was highlighted to the committee that:

- The recently announced Local Government Settlement had no effect on the budget, but the cut to the New Homes Bonus translated into a loss to the Council of £750,000 on what was previously expected for 2017-18, and £1.5m over the five year MTFS period. This would affect the capital programme and may require the Council to borrow towards capital projects.
- There was a projected budget gap of £4m over the MTFS period. If agreed, the proposed savings amounted to £3.2m and ensured a balanced budget for 2017-18.

The committee considered Appendix B to the report that outlined the budget proposals for 2017/18 – 2021/22, and in particular the proposed saving of £45,000 from Planning Policy based upon a reduction in staff levels. During discussion the following points were raised:

- The Planning Service had experienced difficulties in past years, however performance had now substantially improved. A reduction in staffing levels threatened to negatively affect the team's improved performance.
- The Local Plan was on track for adoption within the current municipal year, subject to the Inspector's findings, and it could be expected that the conclusion of the process would release Officer resources. However, the Inspector had requested commitment to a full review of the Local Plan, and this may require an allocation of Officer time equalling that given to the Plan's production.
- The committee felt that savings should be sought through the application of system improvements and through maximising income generation rather than reductions in staffing. There were aspirations for income generation in the form of the introduction of Planning Performance Agreements (to be discussed at a future meeting of the committee) and increases in parking charges.

- The loss of a Principal Planning Officer had entailed the use of consultants at a cost to the Council.
- The timetable for the proposed savings, specifically for the full £45,000 saving from Planning Policy to be realised within the single year 2017-18, was felt to appear unrealistic.

Noting the committee's comments the Director of Regeneration and Place advised that, whilst effort would be made to protect staff resources, he could not speculate on the findings of the planning service review ahead of its conclusion.

RESOLVED: That:

1. It be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee that the proposed budget reduction of £45,000 within planning policy for 2017/18 is not supported, as it is believed that to make this cut would lead to a reduction in the service to a level of deterioration which would be unacceptable. It is therefore requested that alternative areas for savings be considered.
2. Further comment on future years be deferred for consideration following the results of the planning service review.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain – 0

133. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S 'A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS' PUBLICATION

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report which advised Members of the publication of 'A City for All Londoners' by the Mayor of London, and note the officer's comments which were returned by the deadline of 11 December 2016.

The Officer explained that consultation on the draft London Plan would open in autumn 2017, with publication of the final Plan scheduled to take place in autumn 2019.

The committee noted that housing and transport issues within the plan affected Maidstone, and therefore must be factored into the council's response to the consultation for the London Plan.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

134. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20, 2017-18 UPDATE

The Head of Policy and Communications introduced the Strategic Plan 2015-20 refresh with draft amendments as proposed by Policy and Resources Committee on 3 January 2017.

The Committee debated the Plan and proposed a number of amendments.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The following amendments to the draft Strategic Plan 2015-20 be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee:

<u>Plan Page</u>	<u>As presented</u>	<u>Committee's amendments</u> (additions in bold)
Vision, Mission and Values Section		
3	Our Vision section followed by Our Mission section.	Reformat so that Our Mission is first section, followed by Our Vision.
Action Section		
3	Prioritisation of three actions for 2017/18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a clean and safe environment • Regenerating the town centre • A home for everyone 	Supported by Committee.
3	Regenerating the town centre.	Maintaining and enhancing the town centre.
3	A home for everyone.	Planning for the delivery of sufficient homes to meet our borough's needs.
Our Values Section		
3	Section placed on page 3.	Section to be relocated to last page of document.
Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough Section		
5	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver and honour our Parish Charter • Deliver the Communication and Engagement Action Plan • Work with our Parishes and Communities on the design of their communities 	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver and honour our Parish Charter • Deliver the Communication and Engagement Action Plan • Work with our Parishes and Communities on the design of their communities • Deliver the blue and green infrastructure strategy and the biodiversity action plan
Maintaining and enhancing the town centre Section (formerly Regenerating the town centre)		
6	Maidstone has had an historically thriving town centre, however we need to ensure that we keep pace with the changing economic environment and continue to meet the demands of businesses and consumers.	Maidstone has a historically thriving town centre, however we need to ensure that we keep pace with the changing economic environment and continue to meet the demands of businesses, residents and consumers.

	Investment in Maidstone town centre is needed if it is to continue to be a popular place for leisure, to live, shop and work.	
6	We mean: Ensuring we have a thriving and attractive town centre that is fit for the future.	We mean: Ensuring that we provide a diverse and thriving town with a full range of business, retail, cultural, and leisure opportunities with the investment to support them.
6	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Destination Management Plan 	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver (review and update) the Town Centre Development Plan • Deliver the Destination Management Plan
6	Measured by: <i>Bullet points deleted.</i>	Measured by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of vacant retail units • Target to minimise conversion of office space to residential • % hotel occupancy • Resident satisfaction • How Maidstone is rated as a retail, cultural and leisure destination
Securing Improvements to the Transport Infrastructure for the Borough Section		
6	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A transport network that meets the needs of residents and businesses We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an Integrated Transport Strategy and work with our partners to seek improvements to the transport infrastructure • Deliver the Local Plan • Introduce Community Infrastructure Levy • Create a transport operators group 	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustainable transport network that meetings the needs of residents and businesses We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an Integrated Transport Strategy and work with our partners to seek improvements to the transport infrastructure • Deliver the walking and cycling strategy <p><i>Remaining bullet points deleted.</i></p>
Promoting a range of employment skills and opportunities across the Borough Section		
7	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the skills and employment needs of our residents, supporting and attracting businesses and 	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the skills and employment needs of our residents and employers, supporting and attracting

	not becoming a dormitory Borough.	businesses and not becoming a dormitory Borough.
Planning for the delivery of sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs Section (formerly A home for everyone)		
7	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Local Plan • Deliver the Housing Strategy • Implement the Housing Assistance Strategy • Deliver the Homelessness Action Plan • Deliver the Affordable Housing Programme • Deliver the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Local Plan • Deliver the Housing Strategy • Implement the Housing Assistance Strategy • Deliver the Homelessness Action Plan • Deliver the Affordable Housing Programme • Deliver the Temporary Accommodation Strategy • Develop and implement a housing standards strategy

2. It be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee that the Key Performance Indicators be considered by each Service Committee following the finalisation and adoption of the Strategic Plan 2015-20.

135. DURATION OF MEETING

6.33 p.m. to 8.44 p.m.

Committee	Theme	Report Title	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Monitoring Reports	Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 3	07 February 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Monitoring Reports	Third Quarter Budget Monitoring	07 February 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Boughton Monchelsea and Linton Conservation Areas	07 February 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Local Plan Inspector's Interim Findings	07 February 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Town Centre Regeneration	Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal	07 February 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Response to Regulation 18 Consultation on the Medway Council	07 February 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Kent Minerals and Waste Site Plans consultation response	07 February 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Examination of the Local Plan - Inspector's modifications	14 March 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	5 Year Housing Land Supply	11 April 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Planning Performance Agreements	11 April 2017
			Apr 2017 then JTB in Apr and back to SPS&T in Jun 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Town Centre Regeneration	Town Centre Parking Analysis and Innovation Strategy	
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Neighbourhood Planning Update	Jun-17
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Monitoring Reports	Parking Services Annual Report	Jul-17
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Public Art Policy	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Enforcement	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	PDR Greensand Ridge	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Development of Supplementary Planning Documents for the Green and Blue Infrastructure	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Development of Supplementary Planning Documents for 2016/17	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Implementation of rewilding initiatives	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Local Development Updates	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	Update on Park and Ride post Sittingbourne Road Closure	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Monitoring Reports	Fourth Quarter Budget Monitoring	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Monitoring Reports	Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 4	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	New/ Updates to Strategies and Plans	Low Emissions Strategy	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Planning Support Service Options	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Report on committee taking part in KCC bus transport select committee	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Other	Renewal of Park and Ride contract	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Town Centre Regeneration	Union Street Redevelopment	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Completing the Local Plan	CIL Governance arrangements	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee (possible)	Parks and Open Spaces	Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Built Facilities Strategy	11 April 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee (possible)	Parks and Open Spaces	Parks, Open Spaces, Play Areas and Nature Reserves	TBC
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	Town Centre Regeneration	Brunswick Street Redevelopment	TBC
Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee	Members Briefing	Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan	07 March 2017
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	Members Briefing	Homeless Reduction Act	21 March 2017
NA	Member Development and Training (not report specific)	Masterplans for Lenham and Invicta Barracks workshop	TBC
NA	Member Development and Training (not report specific)	Masterplan for Maidstone East Redevelopment	TBC
NA	Member Development and Training (not report specific)	Housing and Planning Act - changes to National Policy in relation to Plan making	TBC (2017)

Key
Completing the Local Plan
Housing
Income Generation
Medium Term Financial Strategy
Member Development and Training (not report specific)
Monitoring Reports
Museums and Heritage
New/Updates to Strategies and Plans
Other
Other Finance Issues
Parks and Open Spaces
Town Centre Regeneration

Agenda Item 13

Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee

7 February 2017

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

No

Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 3 2016/17

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications
Lead Officer and Report Author	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager. Alex Munden, Performance and Business Information Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. Note the summary of performance for Quarter 3 of 2016/17 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and corporate strategies and plans.
2. Note where complete data is not currently available.
3. Identify any action that needs to be taken or amendments to the Quarter 3 report.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

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

Key Performance Indicators monitor the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities as set out in the Strategic Plan 2015-20. The Performance Plan provides progress against the Council's key strategies which deliver the Council's corporate priorities.

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Wider Leadership Team	16 January 2017
Heritage Culture & Leisure Committee	31 January 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee	7 February 2017
Communities, Housing & Environment	14 February 2017
Policy & Resources Committee	15 February 2017

Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 3 2016/17

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Wider Leadership Team is asked to review the progress of key strategies, plans, and performance indicators that support the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020
 - 1.2 Data has been provided where it was not available for the Quarter 2 performance update.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Having a comprehensive set of actions and performance indicators ensures that the Council delivers against the priorities and actions set in the Strategic Plan.
 - 2.2 The Strategic Plan now has 32 Key Performance Indicators that were agreed in April 2016. This is in addition to the existing 14 plan and strategy updates.
 - 2.3 Performance indicators are judged in two ways; firstly on whether performance has improved, sustained or declined, compared to the same period in the previous year. This is known as direction. Where there is no previous data, no assessment of direction can be made.
 - 2.4 The second way is to look at whether an indicator has achieved the target set and is known as PI status. If an indicator has achieved or exceeded the annual target they are rated green. If the target has been missed but is within 10% of the target it will be rated amber and if the target has been missed by more than 10% it will be rated red.
 - 2.5 Some indicators will show an asterisk (*) after the figure, these are provisional values that are awaiting confirmation. Data for some of the indicators were not available at the time of reporting in these cases a date has been provided of when the information is expected.
 - 2.6 Contextual indicators are not targeted but are given a direction. Indicators that are not due for reporting or where there is delay in data collection are not rated against targets or given a direction.
-

3. Quarter 3 Performance Summary

- 3.1 There are 32 key performance indicators (KPIs) which were developed with Heads of Service and unit managers, and agreed by Policy & Resources Committee for 2016/17.

- 3.2 Overall, 100% (3) of KPIs reported this quarter achieved their annual target for quarter 3 and performance improved compared to the same quarter last year.

4. RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A	Total
KPIs	3	0	0	1	4
Strategic Actions	2	1	0		3
Direction	Up	Across	Down	N/A	Total
KPIs	3	0	0	1	4

5. Performance by Priority

Priority 2: Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

- 5.1 The number of school journeys undertaken without a car was 4661 for quarter 3. This was an increase on quarter 2; and similar figure to quarter 1. The increase may be due to a push in the first school term after the school holidays to encourage pupils to engage in sustainable travel.
- 5.2 87.5% of major planning applications were processed on time during quarter 3. Performance continues to be strong in the processing of major applications.
- 5.3 A total of 69 affordable homes were delivered, exceeding the target of 45 for the quarter. There were 258 affordable completions up to 31 December 2016. The annual target has already been exceeded by 78 completions. Affordable completions have been strong this year as a result of some sites being delivered as 100% affordable housing. Some phases of affordable housing have been brought forward on sites in the emerging local plan.
- 5.4 We have housed 172 people through the housing register for quarter 3 2016/17. This is comparable to the number housed for the same period last year, and has exceeded the quarterly target of 150.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan Performance Update will be reported quarterly to the Service Committees; Communities, Housing and Environment Committee; Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee and Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee. The report will then go to Policy & Resources Committee following these meetings, with any feedback from the Committees.

7. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Council could choose not to monitor the Strategic Plan and/or make alternative performance management arrangements, such as the frequency of reporting. This is not recommended as it could lead to action not being

taken against performance during the year, and the Council failing to deliver its priorities.

8. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The key performance indicators and strategic actions are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2015-20 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives. They also cover a wide range of services and priority areas, for example waste and recycling.	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications
Risk Management	The production of robust performance reports ensures that the view of the Council's approach to the management of risk and use of resources is not undermined and allows early action to be taken in order to mitigate the risk of not achieving targets and outcomes.	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications
Financial	Performance indicators and targets are closely linked to the allocation of resources and determining good value for money. The financial implications of any proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and associated annual budget setting process. Performance issues are highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.	Section 151 Officer
Staffing	Having a clear set of targets enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans to be put in place.	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications
Legal	None identified.	Legal Team

Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The Performance Indicators reported on in this quarterly update measure the ongoing performance of the strategies in place. If there has been a change to the way in which a service delivers a strategy, i.e. a policy change, an Equalities Impact Assessment is undertaken to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on individuals with a protected characteristic.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Environmental/Sustainable Development	A number of performance indicators relate to our performance in environmental services. This has a significant effect on our ability to monitor the Environment in Maidstone. This is also important as one of our key priorities is to provide a clean and safe environment.	Policy and Information Manager
Community Safety	We have Key Performance Indicators that relate to important areas of community safety. These ensure that the work being done by the Community Safety Unit is relevant, and that key areas such as safeguarding are being developed.	Policy and Information Manager
Human Rights Act	None identified.	Policy and Information Manager
Procurement	Performance Indicators and Strategic Milestones monitor the any procurement needed to achieve the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.	Policy and Information Manager
Asset Management	Performance Indicators that measure our commercial activities monitor our use of our assets. Good performance shows good management of our assets, or can highlight where assets	Policy and Information Manager

	can be utilised more efficiently.	
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9. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix I: Strategic Plan Performance Update Q3 2016/17
-

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2016/17

Quarter 3 Performance Update



For further information about
Performance Management at Maidstone
Council, please contact Alex Munden,
Performance and Business Information
Officer.

OUR VISION

That our residents live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment, with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.

OUR MISSION

Putting People First.

OUR PRIORITIES

Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all

Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough



ACTION AREAS

Providing a clean and safe environment

Encouraging good health and wellbeing

Respecting the character and heritage of our Borough

Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions

Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone

Securing improvements to the transport infrastructure of our Borough

Promoting a range of employment opportunities and skills required across our Borough

Planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs

OUR VALUES

Service



Everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a positive and professional manner.

Teamwork



Working together to achieve our objectives and goals in a way that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone in our organisation.

Responsibility



We work in an environment that encourages us to take ownership for our actions. Making the right choices and decisions that lead to a satisfactory outcome for all.

Integrity



We have the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty. We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do.

Value



Taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend.

Equality



Valuing our differences and understanding how they can contribute to a better working environment and services that are fair and easy to access.

Understanding Performance

Key to performance ratings

Performance indicators are judged in two ways; firstly on whether performance has improved, been sustained or declined, compared to the same period in the previous year. For example, 2016/17 annual performance will be compared against 2015/16 annual performance. This is known as direction. Where there is no previous data, no assessment of direction can be made.

The second way in which performance is assessed looks at whether an indicator has achieved the target set and is known as PI status. Some indicators may show an asterisk (*) after the figure, these are provisional figures that are awaiting confirmation.

Data Only indicators are not targeted but are given a direction. Indicators that are not due to be reported or where there is a delay in data collection are not rated against targets or given a direction.

RAG Rating	
	Target not achieved
	Target missed (within 10%)
	Target met
	No target to measure performance against
	Data Only

Direction	
	Performance has improved
	Performance has not changed / been sustained
	Performance has declined
	No previous performance to judge against

Strategic Actions have also been rated using the RAG Status (Red, Amber or Green). The ratings are there to provide an assessment of how well the strategy or plan is progressing.

Performance Summary

This is the quarter 3 performance update on Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Plan 2015-20 as relevant to the Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee. It sets out how we are performing against the Key Performance Indicators and Strategic actions that directly contribute to the achievement of our priorities: Keeping Maidstone an attractive place for all and securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough.

Outlined below is a summary of the ratings and direction that have been given for the annual results.

RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A	Total
KPIs	3	0	0	1	4
Strategic Actions	2	1	0		3
Direction	Up	Across	Down	N/A	Total
KPIs	3	0	0	0	4

Priority 2: Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Securing Improvements to the Transport Infrastructure for our Borough

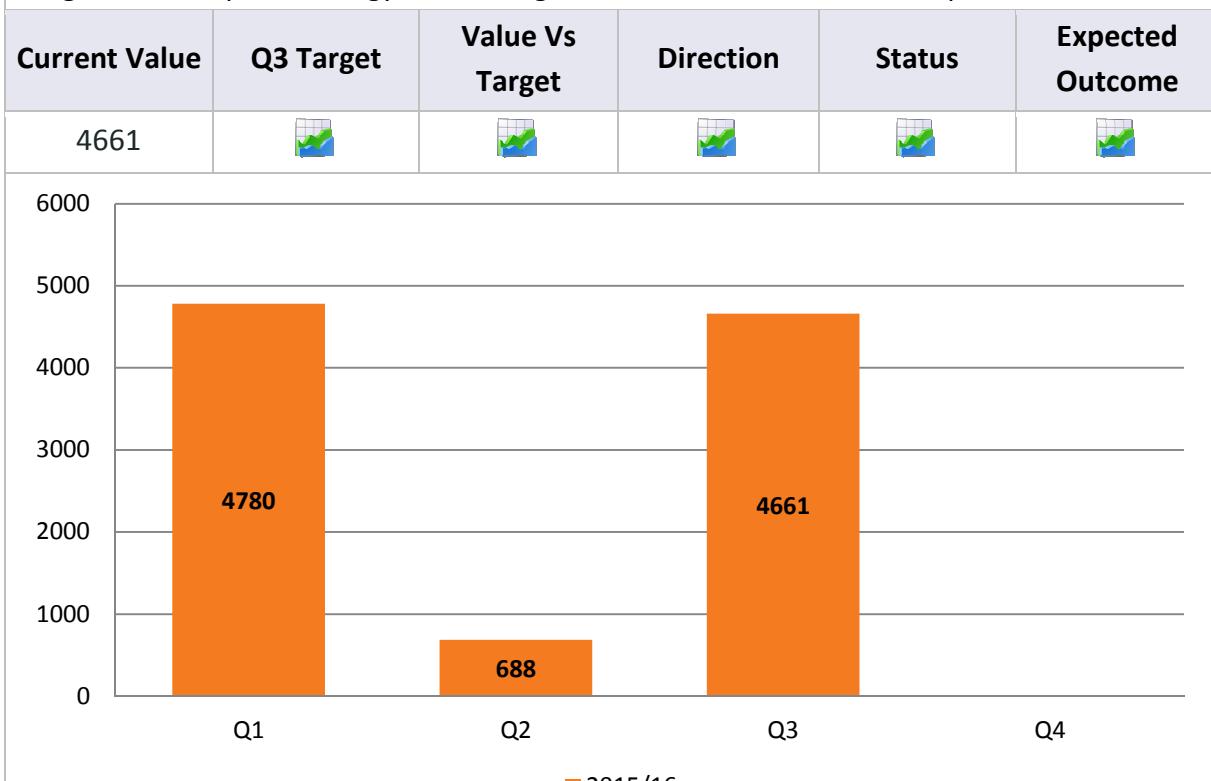
Maidstone is strategically situated between London and the channel ports and is serviced by two motorway networks, the M20 and M2, with rail connections to central London. With regard to travelling in and around the Borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly at peak time in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges.

Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) Update 🚛

Following adoption of Integrated Transport Strategy and Walking and Cycling Strategy at the 13th September 2016 Strategic Planning Sustainability and Transportation Committee, these documents have been used as evidence to support the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan. MBC will continue to work with KCC towards joint adoption of these documents. It is anticipated this Strategic Action will be green by the end of the year.

Number of school journeys undertaken without a car as part of borough wide schemes

Figures for this are published by KM Charity Team. This reflects the objectives set out in the Integrated Transport Strategy in reducing the use of unsustainable transport.



Performance Comment: There has been an increase in the numbers from last quarter and the figures have returned to a similar level to quarter 1. The increase may be due to a push in the first school term after the school holidays to encourage sustainable travel.

Planning for Sufficient Homes to meet our Borough's Needs

Over the last five years, the supply of new, affordable housing within the borough has been greater than in neighbouring authorities, although still less than historic levels. 189 new affordable homes were built in the borough in 2013/14 and 163 in 2014/15. In total 413 new homes were delivered in 2014/15, of these new homes over 75% were built on land that had previously been developed.

Local Plan Update

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan examination hearings continued throughout the October to December period. On the 22nd December the Inspector provided an interim report on his findings and initial conclusions. The report has been largely positive for the Council with some further work required regarding employment provision. It is anticipated that the Inspector will provide his final report following conclusion of the hearings, which will seek modifications to the Local Plan and require public consultation.

Housing Strategy Update

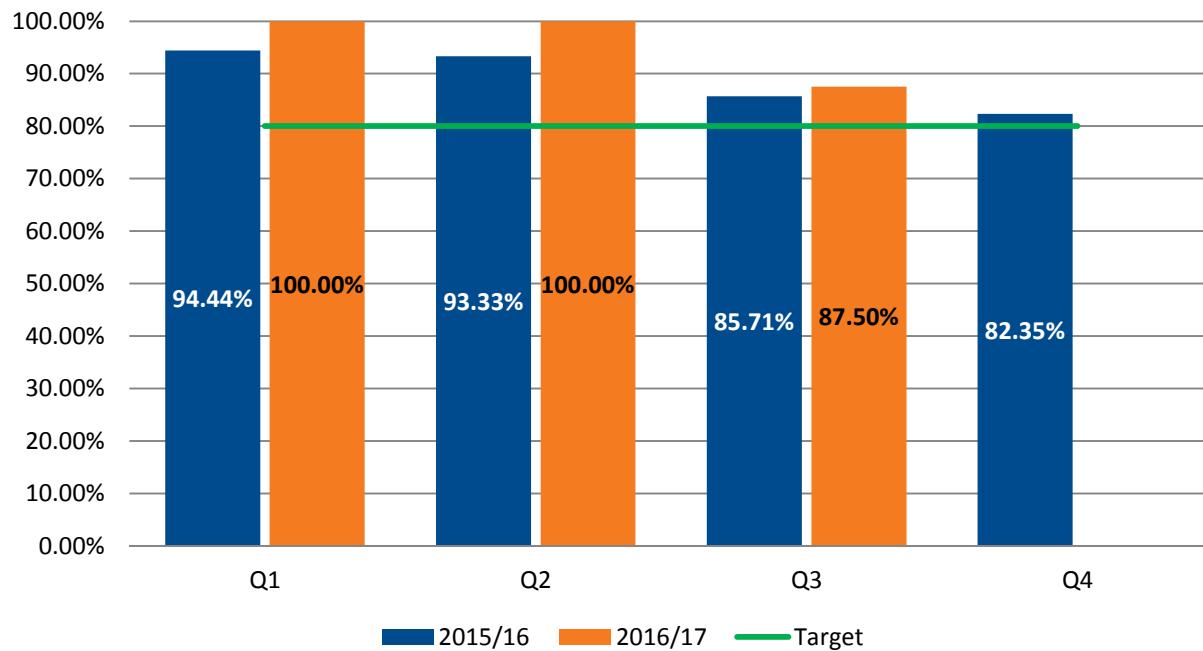
The Housing Strategy has entered into its delivery phase and implementing the action plan. The Council has set up a property holding company to progress the acquisition, delivery and retention of accommodation through direct intervention. Two major sites are being progressed in addition to smaller purchases that will support the Council's new temporary accommodation strategy. The Council is also working with housing providers to maximise the potential delivery of affordable housing, which should see an additional 200+ homes provided this year.

During the Quarter a new Temporary Accommodation Strategy was developed and adopted by the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee. The strategy sets out how the Council will assist those households who find themselves homeless, ensuring that good quality accommodation can be acquired whilst at the same time reducing the financial burden on the general fund. A range of measures including acquiring new accommodation and enabling greater access to both social housing and the private rented sector.

Processing of major planning applications in 13 weeks

This indicator measures the percentage of major planning applications processed within the statutory timescale of 13 weeks, or within timescales agreed with the developer. This has increased importance to central government. Major developments are classified as those providing 10 or more dwellings, or on an area of 0.5 hectares or more where the number of dwellings is unknown. Major applications also include building(s) where floor space is 1000 square metres or more, or the site has an area of one hectare or more.

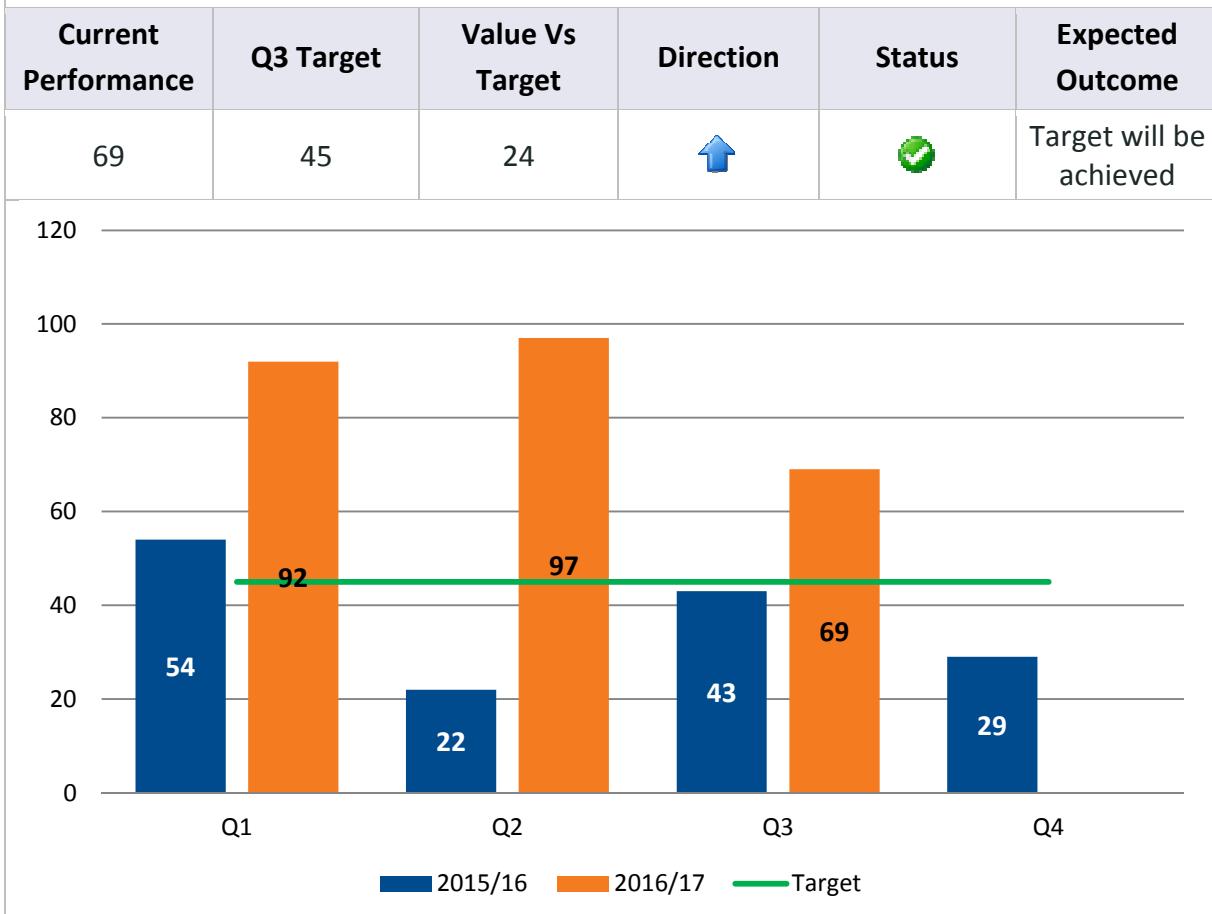
Current Value	Q3 Target	Value Vs Target	Direction	Status	Expected Outcome
87.5%	80%	+7.5%	⬆️	✅	Target will be achieved



Performance Comment: Performance continues to be strong in the processing of Major planning applications. Officers have been very successful in negotiating an extension of time agreements with developers, which has led to the successful delivery of housing sites. Since the 1 April 2016 over 96% of Majors have been delivered within agreed time scales.

Number of affordable homes delivered

Housing supply has not kept pace with demand. Many families are locked out of the housing market by unaffordable prices and unobtainable mortgages. Affordable dwellings include social-rented housing and intermediate housing. These can be new build or acquisitions; the figure does not take into account any losses.

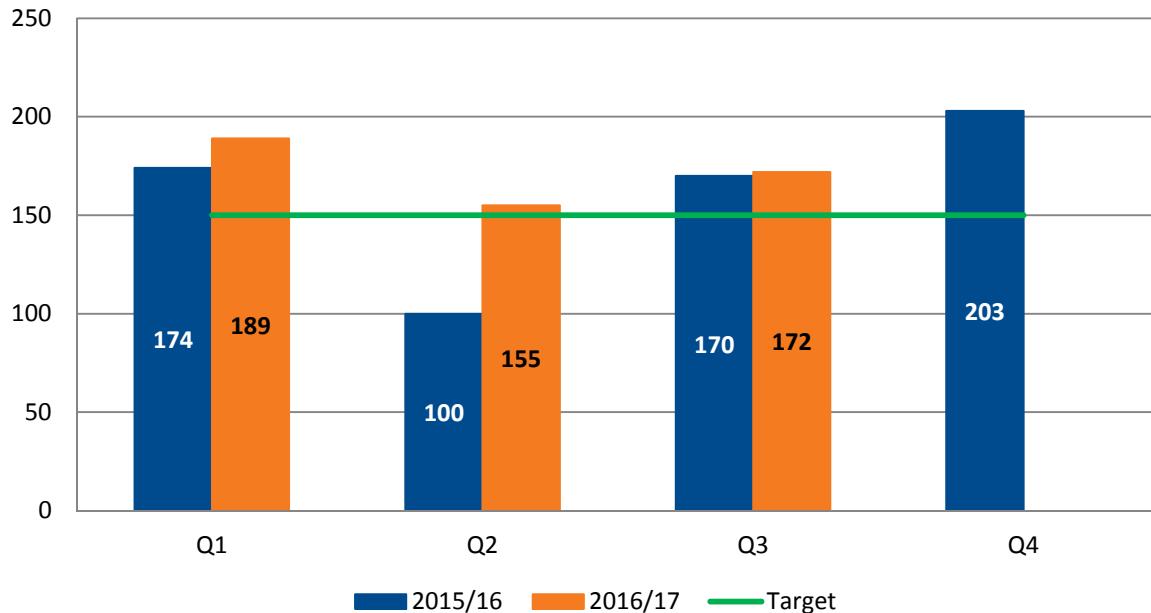


Performance Comment: The quarterly target of 45 affordable completions has been exceeded by 24. There has been 258 affordable completions up until 31st December 2016, which has already exceeded the annual year target (180) by 78 completions, with a quarter to spare. Affordable completions have been strong this year as a result of some sites being delivered as 100% affordable housing and phases of affordable development being brought forward quickly on several strategic allocated sites within the emerging Local Plan.

Number of households housed through housing register

This is an important indicator, which monitors the number of applicants on the housing register who have been successfully rehoused. This provides a balanced view of the work of the housing service, in addition to the homeless preventions indicator.

Current Performance	Q3 Target	Value Vs Target	Direction	Status	Expected Outcome
172	150	+22	↑	✓	Target will be achieved



Performance Comment: The quarterly target has been exceeded and we remain on track to exceed the year end target. This is a slight increase on the number housed for the same period last year. 172 households have been housed via the councils housing register in the past quarter. 34% of properties went to Band A applicants, 12% to Band B, 44% to Band C and 10% to Band D. During this quarter new affordable housing units were made available on developments at Langley Park, Imperial Park and The Coppice (all on the Sutton Road) along with Heath Road at Coxheath, Bridge Nursery and Hermitage Lane. The completion of these new developments continues to help with the amount of households that the council can assist with social housing.

So far, 516 households have been housed through the housing register in 2016/17 against the annual target of 600.

Agenda Item 14

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

7 February 2017

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

Yes

Third Quarter Budget Monitoring 2016/17

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee
Lead Head of Service	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Green – Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Lead Officer) Paul Holland - Senior Finance Manager Client Accountancy (Report Author)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the committee:

1. Notes the revenue position at the end of the third quarter and the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position where significant variances have been identified.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

The budget is a 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. The issues raised in this report identify areas where financial performance is at variance with priority outcomes.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee	7 February 2017
Policy & Resources Committee	15 February 2017

Third Quarter Budget Monitoring 2016/17

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the committee with an overview of the revenue budget and outturn for the third quarter of 2016/17, and highlights financial matters which may have a material impact on the medium term financial strategy or the balance sheet.
- 1.2 As at the 31 December 2016, this committee was showing a small overall favourable variance of £41,986, although there are significant adverse and favourable variances within this total. The individual variances for each service area are detailed at **Appendix I**.
- 1.3 The position for the council as a whole at the end of the second quarter shows a decrease in the overspend forecast at the end of the second quarter. Additional controls over spending that were introduced to address this at the end of the second quarter are detailed at paragraph 2.8 of this report.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Director of Finance & Business Improvement 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.
- 2.2 The medium term financial strategy for 2016/17 onwards was agreed by full Council on 2 March 2016. This report advises and updates the committee on the current position with regards to revenue expenditure against the approved budgets.
- 2.3 Attached at **Appendix I** is a table detailing the current budget and expenditure position for this Committee's services in relation to the third quarter of 2016/17, to December 2016. The appendix details the net budget per cost centre for this Committee, excluding capital charges. Actual expenditure is shown to the end of December 2016 and includes accruals for goods and services received but not yet paid for.
- 2.4 The columns of the table in the Appendix show the following detail:
 - a) The cost centre description;
 - b) The value of the total budget for the year;
 - c) The amount of the budget expected to be spent by the end of December 2016;
 - d) The actual spend to that date;
 - e) The variance between expected and actual spend;
 - f) The forecast spend to year end; and
 - g) The expected significant variances at 31 March 2017.

- 2.5 **Appendix I** shows that of an annual budget of -£708,440 there was an expectation that net income of -£434,502 would be achieved by the end of the third quarter. At this point in time the budget position for this committee as a whole is a small underspend of £41,986. However, the full year forecast indicates that there is expected to be a net underspend of £233,000 by 31 March 2017.
- 2.6 Explanations for variances within individual cost centres which exceed or are expected to exceed £30,000 are provided below in accordance with the council's constitution:

	Positive Variance Q3 £000	Adverse Variance Q3 £000	Year end Forecast Variance £000
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee			
Pay & Display Car Parks – Lockmeadow and King Street car parks have significantly outperformed against their income targets, despite the increased income budgets which were set for 2016/17. This trend is expected to continue through to the end of 2016/17. It should be noted that the forecast incorporates a shortfall of £73,000 for Mote Park car park. This has been offset against the overall underspend in the forecast outturn.	201		247
On-Street Parking – the surplus position in this area is expected to be maintained through to the year end. It should be noted that this surplus is ring-fenced to parking.	72		84
Development Management – there has been an overspend on agency staff costs which was not met by actual income received. The Head of Service has been aware of the problem and has taken steps to address the issue, which has reduced the variance that was forecast at the end of the 2 nd quarter.		-215	-212
Building regulations – income continues to be above budget in this area, and the underspend is expected to continue through to the end of the year. It should be noted that this service is required to break even on a rolling three year basis.	68		94

Street Naming & Numbering – although this variance is less than £30,000 it has been included as it is generating additional income above and beyond projected levels.			20
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Total			233

- 2.7 The overall forecast for the council at the end of the third quarter shows a decrease in the overspend projected at the end of the second quarter. Increased control in the following areas of spending were introduced across the council at the end of the second in order to improve the position:

1. Recruitment;
2. Temporary staff;
3. Discretionary spending; and
4. Contractual commitments.

These have achieved a measure of success and at this stage a reduction in the previously forecast overspend is projected for the Council as a whole.

3 AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 In considering the current position on the revenue budget at the end of December 2016 the committee can chose to note those actions and reconsider the outcomes at the end of the third quarter or it could chose to take further action.
-

4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The committee is requested to note the content of the report and agree on any necessary action to be taken in relation to the budget position.
-

5 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 This report is not expected to lead to any consultation.
-

6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The third quarter budget monitoring reports will be considered by the service committees in February 2017, culminating in a full report to Policy and Resources committee on 15 February.
- 6.2 Details of the actions taken by service committees to manage the pressures in their budgets will be reported to Policy and Resources committee at this meeting.

7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	This report monitors actual activity against the revenue budget and other financial matters set by Council for the financial year. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's medium term financial strategy which is linked to the strategic plan and corporate priorities.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Risk Management	The Council has produced a balanced budget for both capital and revenue expenditure and income for 2016/17. This budget is set against a backdrop of limited resources and an difficult economic climate. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives this committee the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks. The issues set out in this report do not exhibit the level of potential risk identified in previous years.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Financial	Financial implications are the focus of this report through high level budget monitoring. The process of budget monitoring ensures that services can react quickly to potential resource problems. The process ensures that the Council is not faced by corporate financial problems that may prejudice the delivery of strategic priorities.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement

Staffing	The budget for staffing represents approximately 50% of the direct spend of the council and is carefully monitored. Any issues in relation to employee costs will be raised in this and future monitoring reports.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget this monitoring process enables the committee to remain aware of issues and the process to be taken to maintain a balanced budget for the year.	[Legal Team]
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The budget ensures the focus of resources into areas of need as identified in the Council's strategic priorities. This monitoring report ensures that the budget is delivering services to meet those needs.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Environmental/Sustainable Development	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Community Safety	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Human Rights Act	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Procurement	No specific issues arise.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Asset Management	Resources available for asset management are contained within both revenue and capital budgets and do not represent a significant problem at this time.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement

8 REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix I: Third Quarter 2016/17 Revenue Monitoring – Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport
-

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee
Third Quarter Budget Monitoring - Full Summary to December 2016

Cost Centre	Budget for Year	Budget to December	Actual	Variance	Forecast	Year End Variance Explanation
	-£990	-£743	£186	-£928	-£990	£0
Building Control	-£990	-£743	£186	-£928	-£990	As previously reported income is forecast to be above budget in this area at year end. It should be noted that this service is required to break even on a rolling three year basis.
Building Regulations Chargeable	-£295,160	-£224,322	-£292,625	£68,303	-£389,609	£94,449
Building Surveying Section	£345,380	£260,685	£289,721	-£29,036	£345,380	£0
Conservation	-£11,470	-£5,155	£9,576	-£14,732	-£11,470	£0
Development Control Advice	-£115,000	-£86,250	-£79,230	-£7,020	-£115,000	£0
Development Control Appeals	£119,410	£92,160	£59,583	£32,577	£81,474	At present this should come in under budget, but the possibility of further appeals coming forward before the end of March does still exist.
Development Control Applications	-£1,295,980	-£978,252	-£899,371	-£78,881	-£1,257,630	-£38,350 This variance has arisen as income levels are below budget.
Development Control Enforcement	£47,310	£315	£0	£315	£47,310	£0
Development Management Enforcement Section	£138,950	£104,213	£123,493	-£19,280	£138,950	£0
Development Management Section	£753,680	£565,260	£779,939	-£214,679	£966,484	-£212,804 This variance represents an overspend on agency staff costs not being met by current income levels. The Head of Service is looking at ways of addressing this issue and the projected variance is lower than was previously forecast.
Environment Improvements	£0	£0	£6,272	-£6,272	£0	£0
Head of Planning and Development	£98,170	£73,403	£74,256	-£853	£98,170	£0
Heritage Landscape and Design Section	£165,610	£124,283	£124,733	-£450	£165,610	£0
Land Charges	-£215,540	-£155,640	-£157,464	£1,824	-£215,540	£0
Mid Kent Local Land Charges Section	£26,200	£19,650	£12,400	£7,250	£26,200	£0
Mid Kent Planning Support Service	£329,230	£248,353	£251,632	-£3,280	£329,230	£0
Mote Park - Enforcement	£23,940	£17,955	£17,929	£26	£23,940	£0
Mote Park Pay & Display	-£178,080	-£146,577	-£90,039	-£56,538	-£105,036	-£73,044 This variance is due to lower than expected income levels.
Name Plates & Notices	£17,600	£13,200	£16,480	-£3,280	£17,600	£0
Neighbourhood Planning	£0	-£6,250	-£7,254	£1,004	£0	£0
Non Paying Car Parks	£9,230	£8,463	£8,040	£423	£9,230	£0
Off Street Parking - Enforcement	-£192,070	-£143,378	-£126,441	-£16,937	-£192,070	£0
On Street Parking	-£292,940	-£214,930	-£287,595	£72,665	-£377,900	£84,960 This area will be in surplus at year end. It should be noted that this surplus is ring-fenced to parking.
Other Transport Services	-£9,300	-£6,975	£11,431	-£18,406	-£9,300	£0
Park & Ride	£178,440	£145,102	£145,894	-£791	£178,440	£0
Parking Services Section	£296,580	£222,623	£198,813	£23,809	£296,580	£0
Pay & Display Car Parks	-£1,384,900	-£1,015,089	-£1,273,879	£258,790	-£1,704,900	£320,000 This is slightly lower than had been previously forecast, but still shows significant out-performance of income targets, particularly at Lockmeadow and King Street car parks.
Planning Business Management	£101,540	£76,155	£75,990	£165	£101,540	£0
Planning Policy	£368,720	£368,720	£368,875	-£155	£368,720	£0
Residents Parking	-£223,930	-£162,381	-£190,241	£27,860	-£223,930	£0
Socially Desirable Buses	£63,780	£53,288	£50,457	£2,830	£63,780	£0
Spatial Policy Planning Section	£472,150	£354,363	£352,010	£2,352	£472,150	£0
Street Naming & Numbering	-£49,000	-£36,750	-£50,060	£13,310	-£69,000	£20,000
	-£708,440	-£434,502	-£476,488	£41,986	-£941,587	£233,147

Agenda Item 15

STRATEGIC PLANNING SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

7th February 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes
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Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Inspector's Interim Findings

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sarah Anderton, Principal Planning Officer (Spatial Policy)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Inspector's Interim Findings dated 22nd December 2016 be noted.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – the Local Plan aims to plan positively for future growth in a sustainable way and protect the borough's environmental assets
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – the Local Plan also aims to plan positively for growth of the local economy whilst also protecting the environmental assets which make the borough such an attractive place to work.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transport Committee	7 th February 2017

Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Inspector's Interim Findings

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is an information-only report to update the Committee on the Local Plan Inspector's Interim Findings which were issued on 22nd December. The report also sets out the next steps; an indicative timetable was outlined by the Inspector at the latest Hearing Session held on 24th January.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Inspector's Interim Findings

- 2.1 The Local Plan Inspector, Mr Mellor, issued his Interim Findings on 22nd December (Appendix A). In his Findings, he has addressed main issues discussed at the Hearings and has also identified where additional work is needed before he can reach his final conclusions on the overall soundness of the Plan. The Interim Findings are not comprehensive and they are not final but they do signal his emerging conclusions on key points.

Duty to Co-operate

- 2.2 The Inspector indicates that the Council has complied with the statutory Duty to Co-operate. This confirms that the Council has engaged constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with specified bodies, including neighbouring authorities and Kent County Council (KCC), on strategic matters. This is an important test to have passed as failure in this duty cannot be retrospectively rectified.

Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN)

- 2.3 The Council has produced a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The Inspector found that the housing market area employed in the SHMA was appropriate.
- 2.4 There was much discussion at the Examination on local need for housing within the borough compared with migration from outside. The Inspector found that there had been an appropriate assessment of both.
- 2.5 In April 2016, after the Local Plan had been submitted for Examination, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published its 2014-based household projections (the SHMA is based on 2012-based projections). The Inspector found no case to alter the OAHN figure in response and identified that these latest projections (or any that supersede them) would need to be taken into account in a review of the Local Plan.

- 2.6 Objectors promulgated that the OAHN should be reduced because of a claimed over supply of housing in the past. The Inspector identified that, at the time of the alleged over supply, housing targets were prescribed in the (now revoked) South East Plan and were redistributive in a nature. The National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') fundamentally altered the approach, specifying that Local Planning Authorities should aim to meet their own needs within their own boundaries.
- 2.7 The potential consequences of London's increasing population were discussed in detail at the Examination. Whilst it may well be the case that the borough has to accommodate an increased level of London's housing need, there is no certainty over when this might become necessary and the quantum of the requirement. This is one of the main matters for consideration in a first review of the Plan.
- 2.8 The average household size assumed in the SHMA was found to be appropriate.
- 2.9 The Local Plan OAHN figure of 18,560 homes included a 5% uplift to take account of market signals. This approach followed the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and reflected Inspectors' findings elsewhere. In fact, the Inspector found that the scale of the uplift was unlikely to affect average house prices and that this is dictated by delivery rates in any event. The Inspector concluded that the uplift was not justified; the OAHN figure is therefore reduced by 900 to 17,660 homes. He also found that there was no specific need to increase the OAHN figure to boost the supply of affordable housing.

Housing Supply

- 2.10 A Housing Topic Paper was prepared for the Examination as evidence of delivery and supply.
- 2.11 The Inspector carefully considered the quantum and general distribution of housing and the impact of constraints. He was generally satisfied with the approach taken in the Local Plan. He concludes that that there is not a fixed development capacity limit for the borough, rather locations have to be assessed individually to determine the scale of development appropriate, including the scope for mitigation.
- 2.12 Alternative strategies: The Inspector supported the overall development strategy (set out in Policy SS1) which sets a settlement hierarchy with Maidstone town best placed to accept development, followed by sites at its edge, then the five Rural Service Centres and five Larger Villages. This supports sustainable means of travel and is compliant, in other matters, with the Framework.
- 2.13 South East Maidstone: Policy SP3 is a strategic housing policy proposing six sites along the A274 which together will provide a total of 2,647 dwellings. Three of these already have permission and two await the completion of s106 Agreements.

2.14 The Inspector found that the highways mitigation, in particular public transport, to be secured through s106 monies was appropriate. The Inspector goes into detail in relation to the delivery of bus prioritisation measures, in particular, the extension of the existing bus lane. Other highway capacity improvements were also supported and the Inspector specifically cites the junction capacity improvements in the vicinity of Willington Street and Wallis Avenue. The implementation of such highways mitigation measures is needed for the successful delivery of the Local Plan and is to be delivered through the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP).

2.15 Other South Maidstone allocations: Traffic congestion along the A229 is also an issue. Two of the proposed housing allocations are along Boughton Lane: H1(29) New Line Learning and H1(53) Boughton Lane. The New Line Learning site was the subject of a dismissed public inquiry in 2016 where, inter alia, the Inspector (and Secretary of State) found that severe highway harm to junctions with the A229 would arise. This public inquiry has re-opened and is due to be held in October 2017. The Local Plan Inspector concluded that a deliverable scheme of mitigation was not in front of him and both sites are proposed to be deleted from the Plan, resulting in the loss of 255 units from the supply. Smaller sites in the vicinity have been retained.

2.16 Policy H2 Broad Locations for Housing Development:

- a. Town Centre: it was agreed that 940 dwellings would be delivered in the Town Centre Broad Location by 2031. This will be achieved through a masterplanning approach with partners.
- b. Invicta Park Barracks: during the Examination the Ministry of Defence announced that the Barracks would close in 2027. The Inspector supported the development of this sustainably located brownfield site but found that 500 homes, rather than the proposed 1,300, between 2026-31 was more realistic. This results in a numerical loss from the Plan period of 800 dwellings.
- c. Lenham Broad Location and Allocations: the broad location was proposed to deliver 1,500 houses between 2026 and 2031. The Inspector again considered this to be an overly optimistic delivery and has reduced the total to 1000 and, moreover, brought the 'start' date forward so the delivery period is 2021 to 2031. The actual allocations would be determined in a masterplan incorporated within a Lenham Neighbourhood Plan or, by default, in a Local Plan review before April 2021. The Inspector was supportive of the detailed allocations in Lenham.

2.17 Larger Villages: The Syngenta site at Yalding has been deleted due to flood risk and (see above) site H1 (53) at Boughton Lane.

2.18 Windfall allowance: The Inspector concluded that the housing windfall allowance has been adequately justified.

2.19 The housing trajectory and the 5 year housing land supply: the revised 17,660 dwellings would equate to 883 dwellings per annum on average over

the Plan period. As delivery was below target rates in 2011-16, the shortfall has to be made up. At the Examination, the Council proposed that the deficit should be made up in the next five years (2016-21) which is the so-called 'Sedgefield method' and is the preferred approach in the NPPG. The housing trajectory reflected this, with the further inclusion of a 5% buffer, as is also required by the Framework.

2.20 This approach results in a spike in the housing requirement over the 2016-21 period in particular, with a return to a lower rate towards the end of the Plan period.

2.21 The Inspector has instead proposed a smoother and more realistic pattern of delivery. Additional allocations in the latter Plan period are going to be needed, however, to boost delivery.

2.22 The recommended smoothing of the trajectory will serve to strengthen the Council's five year supply position. This provides clarity that Maidstone can demonstrate a five year supply assuming that the Inspector's Interim Findings are reflected in his recommended Modifications and these continued unchanged as the Plan moves into adoption, following the public consultation on the Modifications. If confirmed, the revised 1st April 2016 position would be 6.11 years with the strong prospect that the positive position will continue in subsequent years.

Employment

2.23 Through the Interim Findings, the Inspector requested further work in respect of two aspects. Firstly, he required an additional assessment of the inter-relationship between housing numbers, jobs growth and commuting in adjoining areas to confirm if there will be sufficient employment land overall in the wider area based on the known plan proposals/evidence of neighbouring Local Planning Authorities. Secondly, the Inspector asked that routes to boost the employment land supply for offices be explored.

2.24 Additional information was submitted to the Inspector on these two points and this submission was discussed at the Hearing Session held on 24th January. As a result of the discussion, officers are due to submit additional proposed changes to the Plan to confirm how the delivery of the office floorspace will be secured.

Transport & Air Quality

2.25 Consistency with national policy: Maidstone town is designated as an Air Quality Management Area because nitrogen dioxide emissions exceed European and national thresholds in certain locations. The Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan (2010) is referred to in the national Air Quality Plan but has not yet succeeded in bringing emissions within prescribed limits. The need to reduce emissions supports the aims of the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Walking and Cycling Strategy to encourage modal shift.

2.26 The Inspector concluded that the delivery of sustainable transport measures is of great importance.

2.27 Avoidance of severe traffic impacts on the strategic road network: a Statement of Common Ground had been agreed between the Council and Highways England and the Inspector concluded that any severe impacts are capable of mitigation.

Review of the Local Plan

2.28 The Inspector identified a number of issues to be addressed through a review of the Local Plan. He referenced the need to make specific allocations for the Broad Locations (Lenham and Invicta Barracks) and also the possibility of KCC making a decision on the Leeds-Langley Relief Road. He concluded that the Plan should include a policy commitment for a review with a target adoption date of April 2021 and, therefore, the review process would need to start much earlier. The end date of the Plan could be extended to 2036 as part of the Review.

Next Steps

2.29 At the Hearing Session on 24th January, the Inspector and officers discussed an indicative outline for the completion of the Local Plan process.

- Report to 14th March Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee on the proposed Main Modifications and minor changes requesting approval for public consultation
- Six week public consultation from late March/early April to mid-May (additional days may need to be added in view of the Easter and May bank holidays)
- Inspector receives consultation responses. The Inspector may decide that points raised in the responses require discussion at an additional hearing or hearings. A significant change in Government policy, such as the release of the Housing White Paper, could also prompt an additional hearing if the Inspector deems its content has implications for the Local Plan.
- Assuming no additional hearings, Inspector's Final Report should be issued in June.
- A report presenting the Inspector's Final Report and recommending adoption of the Local Plan will come to Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee and thereafter Full Council

3. AVAILABLE/PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Committee is asked to note the Interim Findings.

4. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Local Plan is one of the key strategies which will promote delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Risk Management	There is a continuing small risk relating to the outcome of the Local Plan examination. Officers have sought to minimise this risk by responding positively and promptly to the Inspector's recommendations and his requests for additional information.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Financial	The Council has incurred significant expenditure this year on the Local Plan Examination and funds have been set aside to cover the likely costs.	Finance Team
Staffing	The Spatial Policy Team is sufficiently staffed to manage the remaining Examination programme and the Modifications stage which will precede adoption of the Plan	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Legal	There are no legal implications for the Council arising from this report.	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning) Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An EQIA was undertaken to support the publication of the Local Plan. The webcasting of the examination hearings assists those unable to attend in person.	[Policy & Information Manager]
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The Local Plan is fundamentally concerned with the achievement of sustainable development.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Community Safety	There are no specific impacts or issues.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Human Rights Act	There are no specific impacts or issues.	Rob Jarman, Head of

		Planning & Development
Procurement	There are no specific impacts or issues	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Asset Management	There are no specific impacts or issues.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development

5. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Interim Finding from the Examination of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (22nd December 2016)
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6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

nil

INTERIM FINDINGS FROM THE EXAMINATION OF THE MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

22 December 2016

Robert Mellor BSc DipTRP DipDesBEnv DMS MRICS MRTPI

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

The scope of these findings

This paper has been produced to address a number of main matters which have been discussed at examination hearings to indicate where main modifications may or may not be required to make the Plan sound. It does not cover every matter but it provides a broad overview. It is also intended to assist in identifying where further work may be needed to support an update of the proposed changes that have already been prepared by the Council and which will form the basis of draft main modifications to the Plan (to be supported by revised sustainability appraisal) which would then be subject to public consultation. Such main modifications are also likely to include additional and typically more detailed matters which have previously been the subject of changes proposed by Maidstone Borough Council. These have been the subject of discussion at Examination hearings.

These are interim findings only. Final and fuller conclusions on the matters and issues referred to below will be set out in the Final Report at the end of the Examination process.

Matter 1: Duty to Cooperate

Issue – Whether the Local Planning Authority and other relevant persons have complied with the Duty to Cooperate?

1. S33A of the P&CPA sets out a statutory 'Duty to Cooperate' (DtC) which here applies to Maidstone BC and other local planning authorities, to Kent County Council, and to other persons prescribed by Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012 (the Regulations).

2. The duty requires those persons to cooperate with other persons to 'maximise the effectiveness' with which named activities are undertaken. Those activities include the preparation of development plan documents (such as this local plan) and activities that support that activity 'so far as relating to a strategic matter'. A strategic matter is defined by S33A(4) in summary as: (a) 'sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas' (a planning area in this case is the area of a borough or district council); and (b) 'sustainable development or use of land in a two tier area' (as this is) 'if the development

or use (i) is a county matter, or (ii) has or would have a significant impact on a county matter'. County matters broadly relate to minerals and waste and associated developments as defined by Paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

3. S33A(7) requires persons subject to the DtC to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State about how the duty is to be complied with. In that regard Paragraph ID 9-004-29140306 of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) confirms amongst other things that the duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree albeit that local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross border matters before they submit local plans for examination.
4. A number of Representors have claimed that MBC as the local planning authority has not complied with the DtC. These claims are made mainly in relation to the following broad subject areas:
 - Cross border housing needs and supply
 - Cross border provision for economic development and employment
 - Provision of strategic infrastructure, especially transport
 - Cross border strategic gaps in development
 - Minerals Planning Issues
5. MBC has issued a Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement [SUB 005] as recommended in paragraph ID 9-011-20140306 of the PPG. This was published after the closing date for representations on the submission plan and thus was not available when Representors were preparing their representations. It lists the relevant bodies and the forms and methods of cooperation undertaken over many years. This demonstrates that there has been extensive engagement notwithstanding that the minuting of meetings and their outcomes is sometimes incomplete.
6. The DtC Statement sets out the 4 strategic areas where there has been active cooperation under the following headings:
 - The homes needed in the area
 - The provision of employment, retail and commercial development

- The provision of infrastructure (includes transport)
 - The natural and historic environment
7. There has not been agreement between the Borough Council and all the persons with which there has been engagement under the DtC and that has impaired the ultimate effectiveness of cooperation. However the above national guidance confirms that there is not a duty to agree. Whether a lack of agreement raises an issue of soundness may be of relevance to other interim findings.

The evidence of the DtC Statement and supplementary evidence provided during the examination supports my conclusion that the Borough Council has engaged with neighbouring authorities and prescribed bodies to address strategic matters and has sought maximum effectiveness. It has therefore met the statutory duty set out in section 33A of the 2004 Act.

Matter 2: Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN)

8. The National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 47 provides amongst other things and in summary, that to boost significantly the supply of housing local planning authorities should:
- 'Use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period'.*
9. Based on the 2015 Update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) the submitted Local Plan identifies an Objectively Assessed Housing Need for 18,560 dwellings over the full Local Plan period between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2031 (928 dwellings per annum).
10. The Housing Topic Paper [[SUB 005]] records that 2,860 dwellings had been completed by 31 March 2016 and that there were extant planning permissions at 1 April 2016 for 5,475 dwellings (including a 5% non-implementation discount). That would leave a residual need for 10,225 dwellings.

11. A significant number of additional dwellings have either been permitted since 1 April 2016 or are the subject to a resolution to permit subject to the completion of a Section 106 planning obligation.

Issue - Whether the OAHN is based on the appropriate Housing Market Area

12. The Housing Market Area (HMA) for Maidstone as employed in the SHMA overlaps into Tonbridge & Malling Borough to the west. The Ashford HMA extends into Maidstone from the east. The SHMA has been commissioned jointly to assess needs in all 3 areas. Whereas a small part of the Borough's existing stock abuts the Medway towns there is little development potential in that area and it is appropriately included in the Maidstone HMA for the purposes of this assessment.
13. Housing Market Areas may need to be adjusted in the future to reflect changing migration patterns. However that is not necessary at this stage.

The Housing Market Areas have been appropriately assessed for the purposes of the SHMA.

Issue - What may be the contribution of local needs to the OAHN by comparison with migration from outside the Borough

14. Only about one quarter of the anticipated population growth in Maidstone is expected to come from natural growth of the existing population. The remainder is expected to result from net migration with about half of the total accounted for by internal migration from elsewhere in the UK including from London and from other Kent Boroughs or Districts. The remaining one quarter would come from international migration. The Annual Monitoring Report July 2016 records that the average total net migration inflow per year in the ten years up to 2014 was 1,317 people. That would equate to 13,170 persons over that period. The overall population rise in Maidstone between 2005 and 2015 is estimated at 21,146 persons including natural growth.
15. To seek to assess only those needs arising from the existing population would be ineffective in that continued migration from London or other areas could not be prevented and local people would likely be outbid in the market by those moving from higher value areas.
16. Whilst some Representors suggest that international migration will reduce as a result of Brexit, the current ONS projections only assume net international in-migration of 180,000 persons per year. The current rate of net

international in-migration is running at about 330,000 persons per year of which more than half are from outside the EU. That does not suggest that an early net reduction below 180,000 can be relied upon or that there is any reliable basis to amend the forecast need in Maidstone.

The OAHN has made an appropriate assessment of local needs and of those arising from migration from outside of the Borough.

Issue - Effect of the 2014-based household projections

17. Whereas the SHMA is based on the 2012 household projections, the ONS has since published 2014 based projections. These indicate a modest increase in need. However national PPG at 2a-016-20150227 makes clear that a new projection does not automatically mean that housing assessments are rendered outdated every time new projections are issued.

Whilst the latest information would need to be taken into account at the date of a Plan review, I do not consider that it is necessary to alter the assessment at this stage to reflect the 2014-based household projections and to do so would only delay the delivery of that housing for which the need has already been identified.

Issue - Whether the OAHN should be reduced because of a claimed previous over-supply of housing

18. Some Representors have argued that there has been a past 'spike' in housing delivery as a result particularly of high density flatted developments on brownfield sites at a time when there was a moratorium on greenfield development. That is claimed to have distorted the trends that have informed the ONS population and household projections. They point to advice in national Planning Practice Guidance at paragraph ID 3-036-20140306 that consideration can be given to evidence that the Council has delivered over and above its housing need in previous years and that past high delivery rates are no longer realistic.
19. However the South East Plan targets for Maidstone were not based on an objective assessment of needs in this Borough but were instead informed by wider regional and sub-regional assessments with individual targets for local areas that took into account a deliberate redistribution of population and households. Also there is no evidence that past delivery rates, which in any case were lower than now proposed, will not be maintained or exceeded. Office to residential conversions in Maidstone and other redevelopment are likely to continue to make a significant contribution to housing supply including high density flats. The SHEDLAA has identified extensive supply

elsewhere including greenfield development which had previously been precluded.

It would not be appropriate or necessary to reduce the OAHN because of alleged past over-supply of housing.

Issue - Whether additional provision should be made for increased population as a consequence of changing migration patterns with London or other migration from areas where supply may be constrained.

20. Representors have raised an issue as to whether adequate provision has been made for migration from London or from parts of West Kent where there are particular development constraints, notably the Metropolitan Green Belt.
21. There are disputes as to whether London is able to meet its own housing needs within its defined Housing Market Area in accordance with the London Mayor's previously stated intention. This relates both to whether those needs have been appropriately assessed and whether the London Boroughs have the capacity to meet the assessed requirement. An important consideration is whether insufficient housing supply in London or affordability issues will result in an uplift in migration from London to the rest of the South East including Maidstone.
22. The SHMA Update 2015 gave consideration to the potential effect of higher migration from London than that assumed in the ONS projections. Past migration figures at Table 28 of Document HOU 004 show that the net annual population flows from London to Maidstone averaged 760pa before 2008 but only 467pa in the period between 2007-2012 which is the period used for the ONS 2012 Sub National Population Projection. On the basis of a forecast that there may be a return to higher levels of movement in between these 2 rates a sensitivity analysis indicates that this could add demand for an additional 5.1% households in Maidstone. However the London Mayor has not requested that authorities outside London accommodate higher levels of migration and no additional allowance for higher migration has been included in the Maidstone OAHN.
23. The west Kent Boroughs of Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks have particular constraints on development including extensive areas of Green Belt. If they do not plan to meet their own assessed needs (including migration from London) then there could be increased migration to other areas such as Tonbridge & Malling (which has an overlapping housing market area) and

Maidstone. However whilst those Boroughs have identified an OAHN significantly above the annual housing requirement previously set by the South East Plan, they have yet to determine what their housing requirement should be in future years.

Whilst it is not impossible that increased migration from West Kent or London would place pressure on areas such as Maidstone with transport links those areas, this is a matter which would best be considered at the first Review of the Local Plan when policy provisions for London and west Kent will be clearer.

Issue - Whether the OAHN is based on an appropriate Average Household Size

24. Household size can significantly affect the projected need for dwellings. A long term trend towards smaller household sizes was arrested in recent years. This probably results from the suppression of household formation because of weak affordability, particularly for young people. However the planned uplift in the supply of market and affordable housing should improve affordability with a return to the trend towards smaller households.

The OAHN is based on appropriate Average Household Size.

Issue - Whether the OAHN should include a market signals adjustment for housing affordability

25. The OAHN figure of 18,560 dwellings in the submitted Local Plan includes an approximate 5% uplift for market signals. That equates to 45 dwellings per annum or a total of 900 dwellings over the full plan period.

26. At the examination hearings it was acknowledged by participants that the figure is arbitrary and lacks a scientific basis. The Home Builders Federation acknowledged that a 5% uplift would be too modest to make a difference to affordability and they sought a higher uplift. A modest uplift is unlikely to have a significant effect on market values, particularly if developers do not increase building rates by the same margin. In that regard representatives of the developer of the single largest housing site proposed for allocation told the Inquiry that they would be likely to deliver only 50 dwellings per annum rather than the 85 dwellings per annum previously advised. That 35dpa reduction alone would almost cancel out the 5% uplift which equates to only 45 dwellings per annum. Moreover new dwellings only account for a proportion of the total number of dwellings in the market which include many second hand properties.

27. A much more significant effect on market prices can be expected from the overall increase in past building rates that can be anticipated through the allocations in the plan. These are likely to at least double average completions during the early years of the remaining plan period. In these circumstances a still higher uplift is not justified.

I do not consider that the 5% market signals uplift would have the desired effect or is justified in this case. The OAHN figure should accordingly be reduced by 900 dwellings.

Issue – Whether a need for Additional Affordable Housing would justify and overall increase in housing provision

28. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies an affordable housing need for 5,800 dwellings from 2013 to 2031. The Housing Topic Paper 2016 [SUB 005] identified a supply of 5,350 affordable dwellings from completions, commitments, allocated sites, broad locations and local needs housing on exception sites. That figure has already required revision to 4,961 following the reintroduction of Government policy to raise the threshold for developments where affordable provision is required. It will require further revision to reflect other changes in supply including a reduced supply from the Broad Locations. However there will be an opportunity at the plan review stage to identify further provision from alternative allocations. Additional supply is also expected from the activities of registered providers of social housing.

29. What effect a redefinition of affordable housing to include starter homes may have is uncertain and awaits further Government guidance. The SHMA Update also refers to the significant role of the private rented sector in Maidstone. Those who cannot obtain a mortgage sufficient to purchase in the open market are likely to sort to private rented housing and will pay a market rent which may or may not be supported by housing benefit. However this is not relied upon in the plan as part of the supply of affordable housing.

There is not a current justification to increase the overall housing need figure as a means of boosting the supply of affordable housing.

Matter 3: Housing Supply

Issue – Whether the housing supply proposed in the Local Plan is justified, effective, and consistent with national policy

Issue – Whether there are constraints on the supply of suitable sites that would justify a lower housing requirement which would not meet or exceed the OAHN

30. That England as a nation has for a number of years been building many fewer houses than are needed by a growing population and growing household numbers has been widely reported. The resulting pressures on the housing stock and associated issues of affordability are particularly acute in London and the South East. As one of the main urban areas in Kent, Maidstone town cannot be insulated from these pressures and must have a role in addressing them, including migration from other areas. It is also appropriate to consider the role that the Borough's other settlements can play, particularly those that already have supporting services and infrastructure, such as the railway stations that provide connections to London and other parts of the region.
31. A Core Planning Principle of the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 17 is that planning should: '*proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals , such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities.*'
32. More specifically in relation to housing, paragraph 17 provides amongst other things that: '*To boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should: use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.*'
33. In a letter to Helen Grant MP dated 24 September 2015 and attached to her Representation R19421, the then Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis, made reference to the above guidance and confirmed that the housing need identified for Maidstone in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is not the same as the housing requirement.

34. As the Minister pointed out: '*Once the need has been assessed the Council should prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment [as it has] to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and likely economic viability of land to meet the need for housing over the plan period, and in so doing take account of any constraints such as Green Belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need. Once these constraints are taken into account the Council can decide how many homes it can plan for. It is against this figure that the five year supply of land is calculated*'.

35. The Minister also pointed out that national planning practice guidance: '*makes it clear that local plans can pass the test of soundness where local planning authorities have not been able to identify sites or broad locations for growth in the years 11-15 of the plan period*'.

36. In the case of Maidstone the amount of brownfield land that is available for redevelopment falls well short of the assessed housing needs. In common with most towns in South East England the main town has grown organically in the past. Whilst that external growth was paused for several years in the early part of this century that position cannot be sustained if the town is to make an appropriate contribution to housing needs. There are nevertheless particular physical constraints on expansion which include the proximity to the Borough boundary to the west, the presence of the River Medway, and the physical barrier created by the M20 motorway to the north.

37. Unlike in much of west Kent, the Green Belt covers only a small part of Maidstone Borough and therefore does not represent a significant constraint on development across the Borough. The main potential constraints of relevance to national planning policy are rather: landscape (especially the Kent Downs AONB and its setting); transport and other infrastructure; agricultural land quality; flood risk; and the natural and historic environment. In some cases such as flood risk and agricultural land value national policy provides for a sequential approach to site selection. Other policy tests also provide in various ways for the weighing of any adverse impacts with any public benefits.

Whilst development constraints are relevant considerations in Framework policies, they do not preclude all housing development or create a fixed capacity limit for the Borough. Rather it is necessary to assess locations individually and to apply judgements as to the impact of development there including whether what would be

significant adverse impacts can be adequately mitigated to allow development to proceed.

Because consideration of the relevant constraints involves judgements, there have been inevitable disagreements in the assessments of impacts as between the Council and those making representations on the Local Plan including those participating at the hearings.

Housing Strategy

Issue – Whether the plan is the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence

- 38.Whilst the submitted Local Plan includes a Spatial Strategy set out in a single Policy SS1, it also includes other spatial policies that are strategic in nature. Some of the allocation and Development Management Policies are also wholly or partly strategic but are not clearly identified as such. The Council has been asked to reorder and amend policies so that the strategic policies are more readily identifiable.
- 39.A core planning principle of the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 17 is that planning should: '*actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable*'.
- 40.The spatial strategy set out in Policy SS1 of the submitted Local Plan appropriately seeks that Maidstone town is the principle focus of development to include making best use of available sites within the urban area, the town centre as the primary office and retail location and with strategic development to the north west and south east of the urban area. 5 rural service centres are identified as second tier locations for development with 5 large villages as third tier locations and restraint elsewhere.
- 41.Accessibility to services and facilities by sustainable modes will inevitably vary between locations and not all villages or suburban locations will have all services and facilities close at hand. However distance to facilities cannot be the only consideration. Other matters include infrastructure

capacity, congestion and site specific considerations such as the natural and historic environment.

42. The physical layout of the Borough including the existing distribution of settlements, the location of rail and road routes and landscape, floodrisk and other environmental constraints all limit the reasonable alternative strategies. The Sustainability Appraisal appraised 5 alternative strategies for the distribution of housing development of between 18,600 and 19,600 dwellings. Two strategies involved a new settlement to the east of Maidstone but that was rejected because of the need for extensive new infrastructure and the harm to the area's character. The other rejected alternatives involved differing amounts of development at the villages, including whether or not there would be major development at Lenham. I consider that the alternatives have been appropriately assessed.

The Spatial Strategy set out in the Local Plan for housing development is consistent with national policy to manage growth patterns that favour sustainable means of travel whilst also taking account of other relevant factors.

The strategic policies in the Local Plan should be more clearly identified and distinguished from the non-strategic policies.

South East Maidstone

43. Policy SP3 of the submitted Local Plan proposes a Strategic Development Location comprising 6 housing sites in South East Maidstone on either side of the A274 Sutton Road. A key issue for these sites concerns highways and transport infrastructure. Some Representors including Kent County Council consider inadequate transport infrastructure to be a constraint that makes this location unsuitable for that development.

44. Maidstone currently experiences unusually high rates of car ownership and use, encouraged by the town's close proximity to the motorway network with 4 motorway junctions. Like other radial routes in Maidstone town which converge on the town centre gyratory system, the A274 Sutton Road already experiences congestion, particularly in the peak hours, as do the side roads that connect south east Maidstone to the A20 and M20 to the north of the town, avoiding the town centre. That congestion also affects bus services including a high frequency route that connects south east Maidstone to the town centre.

45. Under the heading '*Promoting sustainable transport*', Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides amongst other things that:

'Plans and decision should take account of whether:

- *The opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure;*
- *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and*
- *improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of development.*
Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

46. Of the 6 housing sites included in the SP3 allocation, sites H1(5) and H1(6) were previously allocated for development in the current Local Plan that was adopted in 2000. Both sites are now under construction and will together provide some 886 dwellings. In each case the planning permission for the sites was granted in 2014 and gave effect to a unilateral planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which included a financial contribution to highway mitigation works on the A274. The works included bus stops, highway widening, bus prioritisation measures between the Willington Street Junction and the Wheatsheaf junction, and junction capacity improvements in the vicinity of Willington Street and Wallis Avenue. The need for such works had been identified in the adopted Local Plan and in Transport Assessment for each site.

47. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework those works include an identified opportunity for sustainable transport. This would improve the reliability and speed of the bus service during congested periods and make it a more attractive mode of travel. The obligations would have been taken into account as highways mitigation when the planning permissions were granted.

48. The Local Plan is required to have regard to the Local Transport Plan. The Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016 [Document ORD 013] (LTP3)

provides that the Maidstone Transport Strategy and an Integrated Transport Programme '*will be driven by the desire to preserve and enhance the accessibility of Maidstone town centre by sustainable means. The proposed level of development will be underpinned by a package containing a number of traffic management measures including the enhanced provision and priority of bus services through the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership involving the County and Borough Councils along with the town's principal bus operator, Arriva. These priorities will drive scheme delivery irrespective of the future development scenario, with the detail and phasing dependent on the specific sites that come forward through the Local Development Framework*'.

49. The Implementation Plan for the Local Transport Plan theme of a 'Safer and Healthier County (2011-2016)' identifies the sole method of air quality management as '*Provision of bus priority and traffic management measures to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow in Air Quality Management Areas.*'
50. Bus priority on the A274 Sutton Road would accord with those priorities and in any event had already featured in the adopted Local Plan of 2000. Whilst the Local Transport Plan refers to the then draft target of 10,080 dwellings in Maidstone Borough that referred only to a plan period ending in 2026, not 2031. In any case the Local Transport Plan states that the priorities will be retained irrespective of the future development scenario.
51. It is acknowledged that the Local Transport Plan 2011-2016 (LTP3) is due to be replaced by the Local Transport Plan 4 2016-2031(LTP4) which is currently at draft consultation stage [Document TRA 034]. The draft plan contains much less detail than LTP3. Nevertheless it does set out outcomes which include measures to improve air quality, reduce congestion and improve journey time reliability, and to promote affordable, accessible and connected transport. A relevant Countywide priority is to provide: '*Increased access to jobs, education and health by public transport, providing opportunities to Kent's residents without the need for a private car and therefore reducing road congestion. An integrated transport package remains a priority for Maidstone.*
52. The Examination was informed that payments specified in the above S106 obligations have already been made to Kent County Council as the local highway authority. However the County Council has stated that whilst it supports the junction capacity improvements it will not implement the bus

prioritisation measures on the grounds that they would disadvantage other road users. The County Council is seeking instead to divert the relevant funds to pay for exploratory work to develop a case for a new road from the A274 to the A20 which road it would join in the vicinity of Junction 8 of the M20.

53. Of the remaining 4 sites in the SP3 allocation, sites H1(7), H1(9) and H1(10) are the subject of resolutions by the Borough Council to grant planning permission subject to the completion of S106 planning obligations which would also include transport mitigation payments. These would include additional contributions to bus priority measures, the provision of new bus services connecting south east Maidstone to railway stations (including the main Maidstone East station which is to be a Thameslink terminus), and various junction capacity works including signalisation to address congestion at Junction 7 of the M20. There is no application as yet on the fourth housing site - H1(8).

54. Kent County Council has not objected to the allocation of sites H1(5) and H1(6) which in any event are already committed. In these circumstances it is unreasonable for the County Council to obstruct the bus priority measures in Sutton Road on which the decisions to permit those developments were based and which accord with:

- saved policies of the adopted Local Plan;
- the Borough Council's Integrated Transport Strategy
- the sustainable travel objectives of the County Council's own Local Transport Plan 3 - 2011-2016;
- the similar objectives the County Council's emerging Local Transport Plan 4; and
- paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

55. The installation of an extended bus lane in Sutton Road would certainly qualify as a sustainable transport mode which has previously been identified as suitable in this location and its installation would be cost effective in that developer funding is already available. It would accord with the objectives of the adopted Local Plan and both the current and emerging Local Transport Plans. It has been relied upon as mitigation for the already permitted developments. To divert those funds to a study of a relief road would at

best delay mitigation by up to 10 years and at worst may result in no mitigation if that road does not go ahead. Neither would that road promote sustainable travel or provide significant transport capacity for movements between South East Maidstone and the town centre.

56. The County Council has suggested that a bus lane would disadvantage other road users but has not produced substantive evidence to that effect. The A274 Corridor Study prepared for the Borough Council contradicts that stance. It demonstrates that a bus lane can be provided within the existing highway land whilst maintaining one running lane in each direction for other traffic as at present. A bus lane would enhance the speed and reliability of bus services and provide a strong incentive for modal shift from car to bus use that would benefit all road users including other car drivers.
57. The County Council has objected to the allocation of the remaining four sites within the SP3 Strategic Development Location. This is on the grounds that their interpretation of transport modelling is that after mitigation the residual cumulative impacts of development would remain 'severe'. That modelling included a series of junction improvements but did not include any bus priority measures. The Borough Council disagrees that the impacts would be severe.
58. There is no national definition of what may constitute a severe impact and the Secretary of State's decision in relation to the New Line Learning appeal in Boughton Lane (see below) does not provide one. That decision related to a particular development with access to the A229 and where adequate mitigation had not been identified. That decision has in any event been quashed and new transport evidence is likely to be before the Secretary of State when it is redetermined.
59. Whilst the various Sutton Road developments would generate additional traffic movements some mitigation measures have been agreed by the County Council to increase junction capacities.
60. The County Council wishes to develop a case for constructing a new road between the A274 and the A20 which would by-pass the villages of Leeds and Langley and provide relief to existing roads (including Willington Street and the B2163) with potential environmental benefits as well as reduced congestion. Modelling suggests it may also reduce the number of cars heading through the town centre to destinations beyond the town. Such a

road was included in the adopted Local Plan 2000 and was also considered in the context of a new settlement but proposals for that settlement and a road were later abandoned. A new road may follow a different route. The Borough Council is generally supportive but funding the road would be a significant challenge unless it were to support further major development. In any event it would be unlikely to be delivered until very late in the plan period or even outside the plan period. It would not support the provision of housing that is needed in the shorter and medium terms and to delay that housing on the basis that a new road could be a possibility would not be justified when other measures are already available to mitigate its transport impacts.

The Policy SP3 South East Maidstone Strategic Development Location will generate additional traffic but the concentration of development close to the town allows alternative means of travel to be made available and the development proposals include measures to mitigate the travel impacts include highway capacity improvements, and improved bus services supported by bus priority measures.

Other South Maidstone Allocations

61. Traffic congestion is also a key issue for housing allocations that would rely on access to the A229 road which joins the A274 at The Wheatsheaf junction. In particular this relates to allocations H1(29) New Line Learning and H1(53) Boughton Lane. Both sites would be served from the northern end of Boughton Lane which joins the A229 at its junction with Cripple Street (also known as The Swan junction) to the south of The Wheatsheaf junction. In the submitted Local Plan these sites are proposed for allocation for 220 and 75 dwellings respectively.
62. The Borough Council has proposed a series of changes (PC/27, PC/28 & PC/29) which would: reduce the H1(29) allocation to 180 dwellings (with associated density changes); amend the access arrangements from Boughton Lane; and require capacity improvements at The Wheatsheaf junction (in addition to those already required by the policy at The Swan junction).
63. In 2014 the H1(29) site was the subject of a refused planning application for 220 dwellings. The appeal Inspector recommended, and the Secretary of State agreed in early 2016, that the appeal should be dismissed for reasons which included that the proposed development would have a severe adverse impact on the highway network in terms of congestion and inconvenience to local residents and other road users and on the strategic transport planning

of the area generally, contrary to the aims of paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (App/U2235/A/14/2227839). That decision was subsequently quashed for unrelated reasons but is to be redetermined. The Highway Authority did not object to the original application but does now object to the proposal subject to the appeal redetermination.

64. Compared to that appeal scheme the H1(29) allocation including the proposed changes would amend the dwelling numbers and access arrangements within Boughton Lane. A scheme to alter The Swan junction has also been investigated as a means of improving its capacity. The Council has also proposed the addition of a policy criterion relating to capacity improvements at The Wheatsheaf junction. However one scheme to improve capacity by restricting access to the Cranborne Avenue arm of that junction has already been rejected. The alternatives would require land acquisition, road widening and the relocation of services which measures have not been agreed. The Kent County Council as Highway Authority now objects to the proposed allocation on the basis that the mitigation would not be sufficient to avoid a severe impact and it has particular safety concerns about the proposed Swan junction improvements.
65. The A229 already carries more traffic than the A274 and is also likely to attract additional movements due to development at villages to the south of Maidstone and the withdrawal from the Local Plan of proposals for a park and ride site at Linton Crossroads which would have diverted some trips. Unlike the A274 road there is insufficient room within the highway to create bus priority measures that would encourage modal shift. A lack of capacity at The Wheatsheaf junction is likely to contribute to queues backing up and obstructing the Swan junction. Moreover Boughton Lane is itself already anticipated to carry significantly more traffic due to school expansion.
66. In all of these circumstances I do not consider the allocation of the H1(29) site to be sound. The H1(53) site is proposed for 75 dwellings which would also generate significant movements in the northern part of Boughton Lane. Without adequate identified mitigation that allocation is also unsound and that site allocation should also be deleted.
67. The H1(54) Boughton Mount site is a brownfield site for only 25 dwellings. It was included on a list of sites in South Maidstone to which the Highway Authority objected in its letter of 16 December 2016. However it would generate fewer traffic movements than the H1(53) site to which the Highway

Authority did not then object and some movements would have been generated by the site's previous use. The allocation should be retained.

68. Another site H1(55) for 40 dwellings at the junction of Church Road and Heath Road in Boughton Monchelsea may also generate additional movements on Boughton Lane. However traffic from that site has the opportunity to disperse to other routes and is likely to do so depending upon congestion levels on each route. Its development has not been objected to by the highway authority in relation to traffic impacts. This allocation should also be retained.

Having regard to the previous conclusions of the Secretary of State concerning development in Boughton Lane and because adequate mitigation measures for the impact on the A229 have not been demonstrated, allocations H1(29) and H1(53) should be removed from the Local Plan.

Policy H2 Broad Locations for Housing Development

69. Paragraph 45 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides amongst other things that local planning authorities should identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing and to '*identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15*'. Footnote 12 provides that: '*To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged*'.

70. The submitted Local Plan relies on 3 Broad Locations for the delivery of 3,500 dwellings.

H2(1) Town Centre Broad Location

71. The submitted Local Plan defines the whole town centre as a broad location for approximately 700 dwellings. During the examination the Council clarified that this would not include the other specific allocations proposed within the town centre and that neither would it include all windfall

development. The Council has also proposed a change which would increase the estimated number of dwellings to 990 such that the total delivery from all 3 Broad Locations would rise to 3,790 dwellings.

72. As the town centre covers a large area and development could take a variety of forms, including high density and mixed development schemes, there is uncertainty about how and where this housing would come forward. In further evidence to the examination the Borough Council has agreed that the policy should be modified so that delivery is concentrated firstly on 2 locations where change is anticipated in the plan period – The Mall and the Riverside Quarter. Both were previously identified in the Town Centre Study [Document CEN 002]. The second main source of supply would be through office to residential conversions that would typically come forward through the prior notification process as permitted development. The scope for such development has previously been identified in Document ECON 002 and has been demonstrated by a stream of prior notification applications. The residual 50 dwellings on unidentified sites in the town centre would be removed from the Broad Location and added to the windfall allowance.

The H2(1) Town Centre Broad Location should be amended to increase the amount of housing to 940 dwellings from the 700 proposed in the submitted Local Plan and to focus on the 2 areas of The Mall and the Riverside Quarter within which redevelopment is expected to deliver additional housing together with an allowance for office to residential conversions elsewhere in the town centre. 50 units should be added to the Borough wide windfall allowance in respect of other development on unidentified sites in the town centre that was previously part of the Broad Location allowance.

H2(2)Invicta Park Barracks Broad Location

73. The second Broad Location identified for housing development in the submitted Local Plan is the Invicta Park Barracks site which at present remains in operational use. At the date of submission it remained uncertain whether the Invicta Barracks site would become available for development within the plan period. However the Ministry of Defence has since announced that the Barracks are to close in 2027. This is a brownfield site in a sustainable location. However it is improbable that all 1,300 dwellings proposed on the site could then be delivered before the end of the plan period. A more realistic figure would be 500 dwellings.

The H2(2) Invicta Park Barracks Broad Location should be amended as only 500 of the anticipated 1300 dwellings are likely to be delivered within the Local Plan period.

H2(3) Lenham Broad Location and Allocations

74. The submitted Local Plan proposed Lenham as a Broad Location to deliver 1,500 dwellings between 2026 and the end of the plan period in 2031. Lenham is unusually well provided with services and facilities including shops, a secondary school, a railway station and direct access to the A20. It is also in a housing market area which overlaps with that of Ashford. Nevertheless development on that scale would represent a very substantial increase in size for the village, the railway service is inferior to that on other lines, and the village is relatively distant from both Maidstone and Ashford. It would thus be improbable that housing could be delivered at the rate of 300 per annum implied by the policy.
75. There is no reason to delay delivery until 2026 (as proposed in the submitted Local Plan). However, as there is an available supply of planning permissions and proposed allocations in both Lenham and nearby Harrietsham, neither is it necessary or appropriate to bring development forward sooner than 2021, particularly as there are expected to be infrastructure constraints to be addressed including sewerage and waste water treatment capacity and the need for a new primary school.
76. The Council has agreed that 2 existing permissions for sites granted on appeal at Ham Lane and the Old Goods Yard should be deducted from the Broad Location figure. That would leave a need to identify sites for 1,350 dwellings. However I consider that it would remain unrealistic in this village location to deliver 135 dwellings each year for 10 years. I therefore consider that the Broad Location should be further reduced to 1,000 dwellings, equivalent to 100 dwellings per annum between 2021 and 2031.
77. There is controversy over where development should be located around Lenham and especially what effect housing development at Lenham would have on the Kent Downs AONB which borders parts of the village to the north. If development is to come forward after 2021 that would allow that the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan can determine what sites should be

allocated. In particular it can examine the scope for development south of the railway which the Borough Council no longer opposes in principle. To that end the Borough Council has agreed to delete an inset map from the submitted Local plan that suggested the Broad Location development would be both east and west of the village and not to the south. In any event that map does not accord with statute and national policy provisions relating to how proposals are to be shown on the Policies Map and Key Diagram. The Borough Council proposes instead to amend the Key Diagram to indicate that the village would be a Broad Location but without further identifying where land would be developed. The above reduction in total numbers would also create more flexibility for the allocation of sites. Should the Neighbourhood Plan not succeed in identifying suitable site allocations then it would fall to a review of the Local Plan to do so.

78. Landscape capacity assessments have recommended that sites around Lenham and especially to the east have a low capacity for housing development. However such an assessment by its nature can only consider landscape character impacts within the identified areas and not the many other considerations that need to be weighed in the planning balance.
79. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act requires that due regard be had to the purposes of the AONB designation when considering development that may affect an AONB. That would include relevant development within the setting of the AONB as Lenham is. However it does not constitute an overriding duty to conserve or enhance all views to and from the AONB without regard to other considerations.
80. Evidence at the examination was that the main concern relates to views to and from the scarp and the Pilgrims Way long distance footpath which passes close to a memorial cross on the hillside. The outward views from here already include the built up area of Lenham, where not screened by trees, and especially the prominent industrial estate to the east of the village. There are also wide and distant views beyond the village as well as across the open foreground within the AONB which would be retained.
81. In that context the identified low landscape capacity east of Lenham means that more housing development can be expected to result in some change to landscape character adjacent to the village and some adverse effect on outward views from the AONB - albeit mitigated by the design and landscaping of the development. Some views towards the AONB and towards the memorial cross may also be affected. However views are

already restricted in places by buildings and vegetation and important viewpoints can be protected in the design and layout of schemes. Neither does the ability to see development from within the AONB necessarily harm the purposes of the AONB.

82. Whereas the final siting of the Broad Location development would be a matter for the Neighbourhood Plan, or by default a Local Plan Review, the submitted Local Plan also includes proposed housing allocations at H1(42) Tanyard Farm and H1(43) Glebe Gardens.
83. The small H1(43) site is already the subject of planning permission and does not require further consideration here.
84. The H1(42) site is separated from the AONB only by the A20 road and it straddles a right of way that leads from Old Ashford Road up to the memorial cross and the Pilgrims Way and from which long views are available. Parts of the site have also been affected by ground water and surface water flows during periods of high rainfall. Whilst the H1(42) site would be visible from the AONB, just as the adjacent industrial estate is already visible, there is scope for mitigation in the design and landscaping of the development to soften the edge of the built development. The site is sufficiently distant from the Pilgrims Way and set at a lower level such that its impact on the wider available views would be limited. Views towards the AONB and the memorial cross would continue to be available from the right of way that leads through the site and development can be set back from this route to allow broader views. Whilst there would remain some residual effects on views to and from the AONB I consider that these would be outweighed by the benefits of early provision of needed market and affordable housing in a sustainable settlement. The ground water and surface water issues would require detailed assessment through the development management process but there is likely to be a suitable engineering solution.

The H2(3) Lenham Broad Location should be reduced from 1500 to 1000 dwellings to be delivered between 2021 and 2031. That would be a more realistic delivery rate. The reduced total development within the Plan period would also allow more flexibility for its location. The allocations would be determined by a Neighbourhood Plan or, by default, in a Local Plan review before April 2021. The plans would need to address any infrastructure constraints. An additional 150 dwellings which would have been part of the Broad

Location will now come forward before 2021 as commitments following appeal decisions at Ham Lane and the Old Goods Yard.

The H1(42) Tanyard Farm allocation should also be retained in the Local Plan to support housing delivery before 2021.

Other Rural Service Centres

85. Lenham is one of 5 Rural Service centres identified in the submitted Local Plan as second tier locations for growth. Harrietsham is close to Lenham and shares some of its characteristics.

86. Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden all lie on the same railway line south of Maidstone with particularly good rail connections to west Kent and London that would make them attractive for those migrating from those areas (including commuters and retirees) and offset their relatively weaker road links. There are also some local employment opportunities.

The rural service centres are appropriately identified as second tier settlements for development.

Large Villages

87. The third tier settlements are the large villages of Coxheath, Sutton Valence Yalding, Boughton Monchelsea and Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne).

88. Coxheath has a wide range of services and shares many characteristics with the Rural Service Centres. Whilst it lacks a railway station it is close to Maidstone.

89. Sutton Valence and Yalding have fewer services and are more constrained by heritage, landscape and (at Yalding) floodrisk.

90. The main mixed development proposed at the Syngenta site at Yalding would make use of a brownfield site and is much closer to the railway station than the main village. However its allocation would not be sound as the housing development needed to make the development viable would conflict with the floodrisk and there is a lack of evidence that the risk could be adequately mitigated without worsening flood risk elsewhere in an area that has experienced severe local flooding and where the Environment Agency has

been unable to devise the means to prevent repeated flooding. The allocation should be deleted as it would not be effective in delivering the allocated development but to make best use of this derelict site it should be replaced by a policy that positively seeks alternative uses that would be compatible with the site's Zone 3a flood status.

91. Only one other housing allocation is proposed at either Sutton Valence or Yalding. These should be retained to provide the limited housing growth identified for these villages. The Sutton Valence allocation already has planning permission. In each case there is the opportunity for an emerging neighbourhood plan to identify the additional smaller sites which the parish councils have indicated that they would prefer. However once the Local Plan is in place with an identified housing supply these and other villages will be in a stronger position to resist unallocated development outside the settlement boundaries except where it would accord with other Local Plan policies such as that to provide affordable housing to meet local needs.
92. Traffic issues relating to Boughton Lane affect some of the Boughton Monchelsea allocations and are addressed above.

The large villages are appropriately identified and the amount of development is suitably related to the existing services and facilities which they possess. However due to floodrisk the RMX1(4) Syngenta site at Yalding should be deleted as an allocation for housing or specified employment use. The H1(53) Boughton Lane housing allocation at Boughton Monchelsea should also be deleted for traffic impact reasons.

Windfall

93. The Borough Council has provided suitable evidence to support its estimate of the contribution to housing supply of windfall development on brownfield sites. It has reasonably excluded a windfall allowance for the early years of the plan as this would risk double counting with existing commitments. It has also reasonably concluded that the number of anticipated windfalls should be reduced in the middle years of the plan period as many sites have already been identified through the SHEDLAA and allocation processes. Whilst a higher annual windfall figure is indicated for the final 5 years of the plan period, that would need to be similarly adjusted in a plan review as further sites are identified and allocated.

The windfall allowance as amended has been adequately justified.

The Housing Trajectory and the 5 year Housing land Supply

94. The revised housing need figure of 17,660 dwellings over the plan period would equate to 883 dwellings each year on average. As delivery in the first 5 years of the plan from 2011 to 2016 was at a lower rate there is an existing shortfall which needs to be made up. The national Planning Practice Guidance advises that, where possible, this backlog should be made up in the first 5 years of the plan period (also known as the Sedgefield Method). The trajectory seeks to reflect this.
95. The trajectory also takes account of the 5% buffer sought by paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework whereby supply is brought forward from later in the plan period. Some have argued for the application of a higher 20% buffer on the basis of alleged persistent under delivery of housing in the past. I disagree. Past delivery overall has exceeded the previous housing targets set out in the South East Plan and it would be unreasonable to apply higher housing need figures retrospectively that were only identified as recently as 2014.
96. Nevertheless, the combination of: a much higher housing need figure than the previous housing target; the Sedgefield method of addressing the backlog; and the 5% buffer together lead to a trajectory which oscillates from a low rate of delivery against currently assessed needs to a very high and possibly unachievable rate in the early years of the remaining plan period before reverting to a low rate. The latter low rate is exacerbated by a heavy and unrealistic reliance on high rates of delivery from 2 Broad Location sites. There is also some evidence of likely slippage in the delivery of some allocated sites early in the plan period.
97. There is a strong case for seeking a smoother and more realistic rate of delivery over the plan period. That would also provide more regular local employment in construction to accompany the uplift in housing provision. Such a smoothing of the trajectory would be most readily achieved by addressing the existing backlog over a 10 year period from April 2016 rather than over 5 years as currently proposed. However additional allocations on a greater variety of sites in the latter part of the plan period through the first plan review would also boost delivery then and especially in the final 5 years, avoiding overall under-provision against the assessed needs across the plan

period. If sufficient sites cannot be identified then the matter would need to be pursued through the duty to cooperate.

98. The recommended smoothing of the trajectory should strengthen the 5 year supply position as at 1 April 2016. That many additional planning permissions have been granted since that date indicates that the 5 year supply should also be strong at 1 April 2017 and in subsequent years.

If the suggested changes to the allocations and broad locations are carried forward as main modification the housing trajectory would need to be amended pending any new allocations at the first review of the Local Plan. Spreading the existing backlog over the 10 years from 2016 to 2026 would allow for a more realistic rate of delivery of the allocations and provide steady employment in the construction industry as a contribution to the identified need for additional employment in the Borough.

Matter 4: Employment

Issue - Whether employment needs and existing supply have been appropriately assessed

99. National Planning Practice Guidance advises that the assessment of economic development needs should relate to the functional economic market area. The Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land forecast 2014 [Document ECON 001] concluded that it is reasonable to define the functional economic area of Maidstone as focussed on the immediately surrounding districts. However whilst that document refers to a selection of plans and proposals in the adjoining targets and some of their targets for jobs and housing growth, it acknowledges that plans and proposals are being revised or finalised and could be subject to change. The Document does not contain any overall assessment of employment needs or provision across the neighbouring districts and does not relate employment growth to planned housing growth across that area in the light of commuting patterns.

100. MBC has issued an Employment and Retail Topic Paper 2016 [Document SUB 003] as supporting evidence for the Local Plan's employment policies. It explains that the Local Plan anticipates the creation of 14,400 jobs by 2031 in accordance with the aims of the *Maidstone Economic Development Strategy (2011-2031)* (EDS) [Document ORD 005]. This figure is derived

from the *Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land Forecast Final Report* (February 2014) [Document ECON 001].

101.The Economic Development Strategy indicates what sectors are relied upon to deliver that jobs growth.

Issue - Whether employment trends are appropriately taken into account when assessing housing needs.

Issue – What are the implications of the housing and employment targets for cross-border commuting patterns

102.The Economic Development Strategy acknowledges that Maidstone Borough has moved from being a slight net importer of labour to a net exporter. Information provided to the examination on commuting patterns in the 2011 census indicates that the net daily outward flow from Maidstone to London is 5,834 and that there is a net daily inflow to Maidstone from other mid and west Kent authority areas of 3,844 persons. The strongest net daily flows include 2,008 persons from Maidstone to Tonbridge and Malling and 3,413 persons from Medway to Maidstone.

103.Table 33 of the *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* [Document HOU 002] acknowledges that employment growth in Maidstone could partly support housing demand in the Medway Towns, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Swale. It might have also referred to Ashford from which there is also a significant net daily inflow of commuters.

104.Table 33 sets out what was then known about Housing and Employment Growth policies in the nearby authorities (including Ashford). However 3 of the 6 authorities then had no employment growth target and the only recent targets for the period ending in 2031 were then in the Swale Draft Local Plan of 2013. The Swale housing target has since been increased. Some updated information was provided in the Borough Council's written statement for Session 8.

105.In the examination hearings attention has been drawn to how the Maidstone housing target may relate to the employment target. It has been pointed out that the 14,400 jobs target is acknowledged as ambitious and yet at a current estimated employment rate of 1.3 jobs per household it may fall short of the numbers of employed persons that might be accommodated by the new dwellings proposed in the Local Plan.

106.Relevant factors could include changes in average household size including more single person households, and an increase in the proportion of retired persons and households no longer participating in the labour market. These trends would affect existing as well as new households.

107.What remains unclear is what impact cross-border commuting between Maidstone and neighbouring areas (and London) would have on job provision.

108.There is evidence that where the adjoining authorities have assessed their employment needs they consider that they can meet their needs within their own areas and in most cases are proposing new employment allocations to that end. However there are apparent disparities between the authorities concerning the number of jobs and the amount of employment land that is being proposed relative to the intended growth in housing in each area. It is also unclear how each authority is taking account of the effect of net cross-border commuting flows. Where flows are currently in equilibrium and likely to remain so this may not matter. However where an authority is planning for particularly high or low rates of job growth relative to the anticipated change in population or housing this could result in sharp changes in commuting patterns.

It is necessary to establish both whether there is likely to be sufficient land overall to accommodate the employment needs and also what effect there may be on travel patterns, including net flows to London or elsewhere.

An assessment is therefore needed which updates the position on job targets and employment land provision in Maidstone and the adjoining Boroughs/Districts within the same economic area relative to the anticipated housing and population growth in those areas.

Issue – Whether the employment allocations are justified and consistent with national policy and whether they would be effective in terms of deliverability

109.Only part of the growth in employment would be in B class business floorspace amounting to 3,732 jobs with a further 4,200 jobs at the medical

campus being developed at Junction 7. The Employment and Retail Topic Paper [Document SUB 003] and Proposed Change PC/2 corrected the employment floorspace requirements set out in the submitted Local Plan at Table 4.4 and identified a need for 24,000sqm of B1a office floorspace, 6,500sqm of warehouse floorspace and -15,600sqm of industrial floorspace.

110.EMP1(5) Woodcut Farm is identified as a strategic site that is critical to address a qualitative and quantitative need for high quality business space, notwithstanding that it is acknowledged that it would have adverse landscape impacts and that one scheme for the site has been refused planning permission mainly on landscape grounds.

111.The Employment and Retail Topic Paper suggested that the identified need for 24,000sqm of office floorspace would be met with 16,000sqm at Woodcut Farm and 8,000sqm at Mote Road in Maidstone Town Centre. However there are evident viability issues with both sites such that neither site is now expected by the Council to deliver this much space. Provision may be as little as half the figure of 24,000sqm. The suggested identification of 3,000sqm of office floorspace at Maidstone East would only partially make up the anticipated shortfall.

112.The Syngenta site at Yalding has been identified for 8,640sqm of business space. However floodrisk issues and the necessary deletion of a housing allocation that would have assisted development viability also mean that site is unlikely to be delivered in that form.

Unless alternative provision is identified there is likely to be a shortfall in the delivery of office floorspace against the identified requirement. Alternative provision may involve mixing development with more lucrative land uses in the town centre.

In the town centre, reduced on-site parking requirements could improve viability where alternative parking and public transport are available.

Consideration should be given to safeguarding part of Woodcut Farm or other sites suitable for office development from other uses for a

period pending a recovery of office development values later in the plan period.

Matter 5: Transport and Air Quality

Issue: Whether the Local Plan is consistent with national policy in relation to air quality impacts.

113.Paragraph 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides amongst other things that in preparing to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.

114.An issue that has come to the fore during the Examination is that of air quality, especially in relation to road traffic emissions and their associated health impacts. This follows the intended quashing by the High Court of the National Air Quality Plan (AQP) and the direction that the Government should urgently replace it with a new plan by July 2017.

115.Maidstone town is designated as an Air Quality Management Area on the basis that air quality targets for Nitrogen Oxide emissions exceed limits set by an EU Directive and national regulations at a series of locations within the town. These locations include The Wheatsheaf junction and also Upper Stone Street which is part of the town centre gyratory and carries traffic towards the A274, A229(S), A20(E) and B2010.

116.An Air Quality Action Plan adopted for Maidstone in 2010 is referred to in the national AQP but has not yet succeeded in bringing emissions within the limits.

117.Whilst some have argued that the air quality issue warrants a moratorium on new development in the town, that would not solve the existing problem and would not be consistent with national policy. A solution is needed that both addresses the existing air quality problem and allows that the needs for housing and other development can still be met whilst minimising pollution.

118.The amount of emissions from road vehicles is affected by the number of vehicles and also by the means of propulsion. The number of vehicles is unusually high in Maidstone because of high levels of car use relative to

other modes such as public transport, walking and cycling. The proportion of diesel vehicles has also grown in recent years and is likely to have arrested what was previously a downward trend in emissions. A switch away from older diesel vehicles towards electric vehicles as range improves and costs reduce and might help. Heavy diesel vehicles such as lorries and buses also make a significant contribution to emissions although the introduction of low emission vehicles can achieve reductions. Moreover one bus can carry as many people as a large number of cars, resulting in less emissions overall. This further supports the need for a bus lane on Sutton Road to encourage modal shift in south east Maidstone, including by existing residents.

- 119.Even where they are physically possible, road capacity improvements may reduce congestion and pollution from stationary traffic but can also encourage more vehicle movements with their associated emissions.
- 120.The need to reduce emissions supports the aims of the Borough Council's Integrated Transport Strategy and the Walking and Cycling Strategy to encourage modal shift.
- 121.Additional measures are likely to be needed including the designation of low emission zones or clean air zones, additional bus priority, replacing or retrofitting existing buses to reduce emissions, encouraging the use of electric cars and electric bicycles by requiring charging places and storage provision at homes, and reviews of the amount of parking provision in the town centre and its costs relative to other travel modes, especially bus travel. The commitment in the Integrated Transport Strategy to increase long stay parking costs 50% by 2031 lacks sufficient urgency and is unlikely to prompt the necessary early shift to other transport modes that is needed to reduce congestion and improve air quality, particularly if bus and train fares rise at a similar or greater rate.
- 122.Park and Ride (or Park and Train) may also be part of the solution if it results in fewer vehicles entering the town centre and would be of most benefit to those travelling from locations outside Maidstone with poor public transport connections. However careful siting and pricing policies are needed if park and ride sites are not to encourage passenger transfer from service buses to cheaper park and ride services that depend on subsidy, especially if this would harm the frequency or viability of service buses.

123. That significant modal shift is possible is demonstrated by other towns in the south including Brighton, Poole and Oxford. Concentrating development in or adjacent to the town on high frequency bus routes and in those rural service centres with railway services as proposed in the Local Plan makes modal shift more likely to be achieved than if development were to be more dispersed or located in new settlements with fewer facilities or public transport services and which still relied heavily on access to Maidstone town by car for employment, services and facilities.

124. A land use plan like the Local Plan can only partially address the air quality issues. Other available measures include the emerging Low Emissions Strategy, the intended review of the Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan, and a review of the parking strategy. The national Air Quality Plan may propose other specific measures for local implementation.

The need to address poor air quality within the Air Quality Management Area and especially at the exceedance locations would not justify a moratorium on development although it does emphasise the need for mitigation measures for individual developments. To achieve satisfactory air quality is likely to require a range of measures to address the existing problem whilst also allowing for necessary growth.

Issue - Whether the Local Plan is consistent with national policy for the avoidance of severe traffic impacts on the strategic road network resulting from development and is it supported by proportionate evidence

125. Further modelling work has been undertaken during the examination to test the cumulative impacts of planned development in Maidstone and adjoining Boroughs on the strategic road network.

126. A Statement of Common Ground [Document ED 103] has been agreed between Highways England and Maidstone Borough Council which concludes in summary that proposed junction improvements at M20 junctions 5-8 can adequately mitigate development but that timely implementation and continued monitoring are necessary as well as the possibility of Plan B mitigation if the planning permissions that would provide mitigation are not implemented in a timely fashion. Changes to the Policies DM24 and ID1 are recommended in the Statement including the use of Section 278 agreements under the Highways Act 1980. Subject to these changes Highways England is content that its objections have been addressed.

Severe traffic impacts on the strategic network are capable of avoidance through mitigation.

Matter 6: Monitoring and Plan Review

127. During the examination, consideration has been given to when the Local Plan should be first reviewed and whether the timing of such a review should be adjusted to address particular issues that have arisen.

128. A commitment to an early plan review has been used elsewhere to deal with identified shortcomings in plans and to allow them to proceed to adoption. Advice by the Planning Advisory service in '*Early Reviews' and Local Plans*' suggests that they should not be used to resolve matters critical to the Plan's strategy and that they are not a panacea for addressing the difficult issues.

129. In this case there are some issues which do need to be resolved before the plan is first adopted. However there are others, especially in relation to housing delivery at the end of the Local Plan period. These are less urgent because they do not impact on strategy in the first 5 years of the Local Plan. To delay the adoption of the Local Plan to resolve all of these matters would have other disbenefits including prolonged uncertainty about the 5 year housing supply position later in the plan period.

130. The submitted Local Plan indicated at paragraph 17.126 that a first review of the Local Plan '*will commence in 2022*'. A change proposed by the Borough Council (PC/59) would amend this to '*will commence by 2022*'. However there is no commitment to how quickly such a review would progress and no timetable for the necessary work. Moreover that would be too late to address the need to identify specific development site allocations in the Broad Locations (including any need to address a failure of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan to make such allocations). A review would also be needed in association with any decision by Kent County Council to go ahead with the Leeds-Langley Relief Road. Additional allocations will also be needed for the latter part of the plan period to supplement supply from the Broad Locations in order to provide necessary choice and to offset a reduced rate of delivery from those sites.

The Local Plan should include a policy commitment to a review with a target adoption date by April 2021. That review process would accordingly need to start much earlier. The plan could then be rolled forward by 5 years from 2031 to 2036.

Robert Mellor

INSPECTOR

STRATEGIC PLANNING SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

7th February 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes
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Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Egerton, Planning Policy Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

- Consider the initial findings of the high level options appraisal
- Instruct officers to undertake a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough and;
- Agree to consider a future report to the committee once an options appraisal has been undertaken and preferred options identified.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

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

Improved bus interchange facilities would play a key role in improving transport provision within the borough which will support the adopted Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy. Better facilities would help to improve the quality of bus service in Maidstone and the surrounding area. This may help to improve bus patronage which is one of the mitigation measures in the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy in support of the level of growth set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	7 th February 2017

Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents initial findings regarding a high level appraisal of future improvements to bus interchange facilities in the Borough, with a focus on Maidstone Bus Station. It considers potential further work through a study to investigate selected options and sites in more detail and generate preferred options, using specialist transport planning input, as appropriate.
- 1.2 Members are asked to:
 - Consider the initial findings of the high level options appraisal
 - Instruct officers to undertake a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough and;
 - Agree to consider a future report to the committee once an options appraisal has been undertaken and preferred options identified.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Officers and transport consultants have been asked to undertake a high level scoping exercise of options to improve bus interchange facilities in the Borough, with a focus on Maidstone Bus Station. The request aligns with Maidstone's draft Local Plan (Paragraph 17.140), as well as the adopted Integrated Transport Strategy, which includes 'Action PT13: Work towards an improved bus station in Maidstone town centre'. This initial scoping exercise is the first step in a process which seeks to establish a preferred option with the following initial aims:
 - Improve bus interchange facilities in Maidstone, including the bus station
 - Improve air quality and reduce noise pollution
 - Improve the quality of bus services in Maidstone
 - Increase bus patronage
 - Improve ease of movement for buses
 - Support the growth of the town
- 2.2 The high level appraisal has initially considered sites in Maidstone which may be suitable for further analysis as bus interchange facilities. Inputs to the study have been sought from several different Maidstone Borough Council services, including Planning Policy (including transport planning consultants), Economic Development and Property.
- 2.3 There is a clear link between potential future bus hubs and improvements to the existing bus network. A study would not necessarily seek to replace the existing bus station, but consider a range of sites which could be suitable for some form of interchange facility, whether this be a full station or a

small cluster of bus stops (bus hub). This would also include consideration of upgrading Maidstone Bus Station, which is owned by Capital and Regional who also own The Mall Shopping Centre. It is worth considering that the bus station acts as an operational terminus, although the high street is the place where most people catch buses.

- 2.4 In many scenarios a ‘hub and spoke’ model would apply where a primary focus for bus services would be complemented by smaller bus hubs fulfilling secondary purposes. Potential sites would therefore need to fulfil one or more services and functions in order to be suitable either as a single resource for bus operation or as part of a wider network of sites. Consideration will also need to be given to the potential function of a hub to facilitate interchange with other forms of movement e.g. rail services. A range of service options and functionalities for each potential site has been drawn up, as presented in the below table:

Service Options	Functionality (of individual sites)
Existing bus station only	Bus station
No bus station, bus hubs only	Single supplementary hub
New bus station only	Part of hub network
Bus station plus hub	Layover area
Bus station plus hubs	Interchange facility (multi-modal)

- 2.5 The following assumptions have also been drawn up, which could also inform the study and inform discussions with stakeholders:

Service Provider Requirements (not necessarily at one site)	Assumptions
Bus parking facility	Bus Operators continue to operate in same way
Not bus maintenance	Same network
Layover area / spare bus parking	Similar frequencies
Welfare area(s) / public toilets and food facilities	Same vehicles
Seating areas and bus stops	Armstrong Road remains for Arriva (offices, staff area, maintenance etc)
Some overground facilities to reduce noise / air quality impacts	Bus franchising not likely to happen in the short term

-
- 2.6 Following specialist transport planning input, an initial twelve sites have been considered for bus interchange facilities. These have been subject to a high-level assessment against the following criteria:

- Location
- Size and area
- Service options and functionality
- Impact on bus operations

- Planning issues / development constraints
- Land ownership
- Accessibility in terms of highways, pedestrian and cycling
- Environmental factors
- Cost

2.7 The below summary presents the twelve sites and the main considerations for each of them, when assessing their potential suitability for bus interchange facilities.

Site	Key Considerations
Maidstone Bus Station (The Mall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus operations set up to support station • Existing highway network set up and centrally located • Good terminus location • Required investment • Owned privately
Maidstone East Station (short term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located well for town centre and would improve rail to bus interchange • Arriva keen to increase number of services stopping at station • On highway nature of bus stops may impact on highway • Land not owned by MBC
Maidstone East / Royal Mail Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large site suitable for a number of facilities • Requires Network Rail car park to be part of redevelopment proposal • Creation of a public transport hub for Maidstone to support growth of town • Land allocated for a bus station or facility would reduce commercial space for the site
King Street On Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing highway network suitable and centrally located • On highway option, potential impact on traffic flow • Opportunity to improve urban realm on Kings Street close to existing bus station. Create Gateway to town centre • Not suitable if bus station remains in current configuration
Medway Street car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site owned by MBC • Small constrained site could only support a small hub • Current car park onsite is well used / revenue source for MBC • Not visible from the town centre • Known planning constraint (sewer)
Sittingbourne Road car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not centrally located and existing highway access not suitable • Site owned by MBC • Current car park onsite is well used / revenue source for MBC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement of parking following Park and Ride closure
Mote Road car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not centrally located • Site owned by MBC • Current car park onsite is well used / revenue source for MBC • Highway access not suitable for buses
The Broadway Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved bus connections with Maidstone West station • Lidl likely to leave site, bus interchange could be included in any redevelopment • Not well located for town centre
Armstrong Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up to support Arriva bus operations • Limited space for additional facilities • Not centrally location • Not suitable for a terminus
Newnham Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for a range of bus facilities (hub, layover area etc) • Not located centrally in town or close to rail stations • Bus hub / station would be attractive if more retail was developed at the site • Significant impact on existing bus operations for all operators
Sittingbourne Road Park and Ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large site with highway infrastructure set up for bus operations • Not located centrally in town or close to rail stations • Would require the re-routing of a number of bus services • Pedestrian and cyclist severance issues

2.8 Based on the results of the initial high level appraisal, further analysis of the following sites is recommended as part of the study, given that there are clear negative impacts of taking forward the other sites:

- Maidstone Bus Station (The Mall)
- Maidstone East Station (short term)
- Maidstone Eats Station / Royal Mail Redevelopment
- King Street On Street
- The Broadway Centre
- Sittingbourne Road Park and Ride site

2.9 Further investigation of potential sites will also take place as part of the study and the above does not represent a definitive list. It is proposed that the study would initially take forward the above aims, service options and functionalities for potential sites, assumptions, assessment criteria and sites themselves. If the Committee instruct Officers to produce the further study, it is proposed to undertake detailed scoping (sites, nature of sites etc) and generation of preferred options. This will include discussion with Kent County Council, Arriva, Capital and Regional plus other interested stakeholders. Although this will consider all elements of the scope, a focus will be on the link between potential future bus hubs and improvements to

the existing bus network. It is proposed to present findings of this exercise to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, with further recommendations.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There are two primary options available to Councillors.
 - 3.2 The first option is to consider the findings of the high level options appraisal and decline to take forward the proposed study.
 - 3.3 The second option is to instruct Maidstone Borough Council Officers to lead a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough and to consider a future report to the committee once an options appraisal has been undertaken.
 - 3.4 If the second option is chosen, the study would use transport planning consultants and will include discussion with Arriva, Capital and Regional plus other interested stakeholders.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is for Members of the Committee to instruct Officers to lead a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities in the town. The study will allow full consideration to be given to bus interchange facilities in the borough, including options other than improving the existing bus station.
 - 4.2 A future report would be taken to the committee, once an options appraisal has been undertaken and preferred options identified.
-

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 If the Committee instruct Officers to undertake the further study, it is proposed to undertake detailed scoping (sites, nature of sites etc) and generation of preferred options. This will involve commissioning transport planning consultants to undertake transport modelling and include discussion with Arriva, Capital and Regional plus other interested stakeholders, followed by revisions. Budgets have not been set aside to undertake and deliver this project. Corporate Leadership Team will sign off funding once there is more clarity as to the intended course of action.
 - 5.2 It is proposed to present findings of this exercise to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, with further recommendations.
-

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Improved bus interchange facilities would play a key role in improving transport provision within the borough which will support the adopted Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Risk Management	There are no significant risks associated with investigating preferred options for improved bus interchange facilities	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Financial	Work to establish preferred options would be undertaken in house and by specialist transport planning consultants. Budgets have not been set aside to undertake this work. Corporate Leadership Team will sign off funding once there is more clarity as to the intended course of action.	Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	Work to establish preferred options would be undertaken in house and by specialist transport planning consultants.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Legal	No specific implications arise from this report.	Estelle Culligan, Interim Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Improved bus interchange facilities would benefit all sections of the community.	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Improved bus interchange facilities would potentially help deliver various forms of sustainability benefits, including improvements to air quality	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Community Safety	Improved bus interchange facilities would potentially help deliver improvements to community safety	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)

Human Rights Act	There are no specific impacts or issues	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Procurement	Specialist consultant advice will be required. Consultants would be appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development) & Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Asset Management	The proposed study would consider sites that are included in the Council's property portfolio	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)

7. REPORT APPENDICES

7.1 No appendices are attached to this report.

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

7 February 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes
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Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013 – 2030: Draft Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation response

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning
Lead Officer and Report Author	Andrew Thompson, Principal Planning Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That Committee notes the consultation response sent to the Kent County Council Minerals and Waste Policy Team on 19 January 2017.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

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

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	7 February 2017

Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013 – 2030: Draft Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation response

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Kent County Council, in its capacity as Minerals and Waste Planning Authority, undertook consultation on its draft Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) during December and January.
- 1.2 A response (Appendix A) was submitted to the Minerals and Waste Policy Team on 19 January which is generally supportive of the draft SCI and provides a small number of comments on the draft SPD. The response highlights the need for further clarification regarding the approach to assessing the mineral safeguarding implications of proposed development allocations in emerging Borough or District Local Plans, and advocates that this process should be undertaken at a strategic level, so as to minimise the cost and time implications for authorities producing Local Plans.
- 1.3 This Committee is recommended to note the content of the response.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Kent County Council adopted the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (KMWLP) 2013-2030 in July 2016. The KMWLP is therefore part of the “development plan” for Maidstone Borough. The KMWLP sets out a planning strategy for minerals and waste matters across the Kent County Council area, and introduces a number of strategic and development management policies for minerals and waste development proposals.
- 2.2 The KMWLP does not however allocate specific sites for new waste and minerals development, and the County Council will instead prepare specific “Sites Plans” – which are themselves Local Plans – to address this gap. The Minerals and Waste Policy Team has advised that work on these documents is due to commence this year.
- 2.3 One of the key elements of the KMWLP is a suite of policies which seek to “safeguard” minerals and waste infrastructure, in order to protect against development which may impair their operation, and designate “Mineral Safeguarding Areas” within which relevant planning applications for non-mineral development must demonstrate that mineral deposits potentially located within these areas are not needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development.
- 2.4 For Maidstone Borough, six different mineral typologies are identified within these Mineral Safeguarding Areas, including Kentish Ragstone, Industrial Sands, Building Sands, Sharp Sands, Gravel Aggregates and Building Stone.

The extent of these Mineral Safeguarding Areas is identified in the KMWLP (extract at Appendix B), and is based on information held by the British Geological Survey. It is understood that the County Council will review the geography of these areas at least every five years.

- 2.5 The KMWLP does not however set out a clear process by which Local Planning Authorities preparing Local Plans are to assess the mineral safeguarding implications of proposed development allocations, and this issue has been subject to debate at the examination of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
- 2.6 During the examination, the County Council provided further information in respect of the minerals within Maidstone Borough which sets out the Minerals Planning Authority's analysis of the potential for Local Plan allocations to lead to the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources. For Ragstone, the analysis demonstrates that there is currently a landbank of some 61 years of supply, comfortably beyond the KMWLP plan period, and for Industrial Sands, the analysis concludes that the mineral has no modern day industrial application.
- 2.7 During the Local Plan examination therefore, Council officers have argued that allocations located within these two Mineral Safeguarding Areas should not be required to undertake "Minerals Assessments", which would assess the potential viability and practicality of mineral extraction taking place prior to/alongside development, at planning application stage. Although the County Council considers that future allocations should still be subject to this assessment, notwithstanding their analysis, officers are not proposing this modification for allocations within the ragstone and industrial sands Mineral Safeguarding Areas.
- 2.8 For the remaining Mineral Safeguarding Areas however, the analysis is less conclusive, and a more precautionary approach has been agreed with the County Council to require Minerals Assessments to be undertaken for future applications on allocated sites in these areas. These "proposed changes" will form part of the schedule of "main modifications" which will be subject to consultation in due course.
- 2.9 Given the need for clear guidance to support the implementation of the safeguarding policies more generally, the County Council has prepared a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which sets out the detailed information requirements for Minerals Assessments, in the case of Minerals Safeguarding Areas, and Minerals and Waste Infrastructure Assessments, in the case of infrastructure. The draft SPD was subject to consultation during December and January.
- 2.10 Officers in the Spatial Policy Team have considered the draft SPD and are generally supportive, however it remains the case that there is some uncertainty on the specific process by which the minerals safeguarding implications of allocations in emerging Local Plans are to be assessed. On the one hand the SPD suggests that Local Planning Authorities should undertake Minerals Assessments for all proposed allocations in emerging Local Plans, but on the other hand it indicates that these will only be required where certain exemptions (such as whether the mineral is of

economic value, or can be extracted without adversely affecting the delivery of non-mineral development) do not apply.

- 2.11 The response sent to the Minerals and Waste Policy Team therefore seeks further clarification on the nature of the information required to address mineral safeguarding issues during the preparation of Local Plans, and advocates that this should be pitched at a strategic level so as to avoid a potentially disproportionate requirement for Local Planning Authorities to undertake detailed Minerals Assessments for each site being considered for a development allocation which is located within a Mineral Safeguarding Area.
- 2.12 In respect of safeguarded minerals and waste infrastructure, the draft SPD sets out that the County Council should be consulted on any relevant proposals (located up to 250m from the facility) which may impair the operation of safeguarded infrastructure. To assist in the application of this policy, the response requests that the County Council provides the necessary GIS information to ensure that this requirement can be properly taken into account as part of the Borough's development management function.
- 2.13 Officers in the Spatial Policy Team have also considered the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which appears to set out an appropriate strategy for community involvement and this is reflected in the response.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There is only one option as this report is for noting only.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the response sent to the Minerals and Waste Policy Team on 19 January is noted.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The consultation response will now be considered by the County Council as it finalises the Safeguarding SPD for adoption.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 This report is for noting only.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	This report has regard to planning guidance proposals by the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for Kent which may impact on sustainable development within Maidstone Borough	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)
Risk Management	The Council is complying with the duty to co-operate with Kent County Council, in its capacity as Minerals and Waste Planning Authority	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)
Financial	No financial implications arising from this report	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	No staffing implications. This will be managed within existing staffing resources.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)
Legal	Regulatory processes and statutory requirements are currently being followed in respect of this matter.	Legal Team
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The consultation proposals do not raise any equality concerns	Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Regulatory processes in respect of this matter have been followed	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)
Community Safety	No implications.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)
Human Rights Act	The consultation proposals do not raise any human rights concerns	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)
Procurement	No implications.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)
Asset Management	No implications.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning)

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Response to the Safeguarding SPD Draft 19 January 2017
 - Appendix B: Extract from KMWLP showing geography of Minerals Safeguarding Areas in Maidstone Borough.
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Ms Sharon Thompson
Head of Planning Applications
Environment, Planning and Enforcement
Kent County Council

Sent via email only

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Chief Executive

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19 January 2017

Dear Ms Thompson,

**Consultation on Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and
Draft Minerals and Waste Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Document
(SPD).**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above documents, and for notification regarding the commencement of work on the forthcoming Kent Minerals and Waste Sites Plans.

The Council has no comments to make regarding the draft SCI, which appears to set out an appropriate strategy for community involvement.

In regards to the draft SPD, the urgency in preparing this document is welcomed as mineral safeguarding in particular has been a key matter discussed at the ongoing examination of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (MBLP) 2011 – 2031. Of particular relevance to the examination is the silence of the adopted policies in the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (KMWLP) in respect of the specific process by which proposed allocations in emerging Borough or District Local Plans are to take account of mineral safeguarding matters during the development of Local Plans. The adopted KMWLP indicates at 5.5.14 that:

"The allocation of land within an MSA [Mineral Safeguarding Area] will only take place after consideration of the factors that would be considered if a non-minerals development were to be proposed in that location, or in proximity to it, as set out in Policies DM7, DM8, CSM5 and CSM6."

The KMWLP however does not state that proposed allocations must be subject to a Minerals Assessment, as is the case for other types of sites, and Policy DM7 (7) specifically exempts allocations in adopted Local Plans from being subject to this requirement. The SPD therefore provides a valuable opportunity for the County Council to offer clear guidance on the process by which the mineral safeguarding

implications of proposed development allocations are to be examined through the development of emerging Local Plans.

The draft SPD seeks to address this issue at Chapter 4, Table 1:

"Minerals assessments will also need to be prepared by a local authority when they are producing site plans. Ideally this should take place between call for sites and the preferred options stages, on any sites which are within MSA's and do not meet the exemptions listed in Policy DM7."

It is understood that the term "exemptions" in this context refers to all policy criteria within DM7 and therefore indicates that some alternative approach (other than production of a Minerals Assessment) could be used to demonstrate compliance with the criteria (e.g. 1 or 2), thereby avoiding the need for a Minerals Assessment. This appears to reflect 5.5.14 of the KMWLP and the position set out at paragraphs 5.12 – 5.16 of the draft SPD which make no specific reference to the need for a Minerals Assessment in such circumstances.

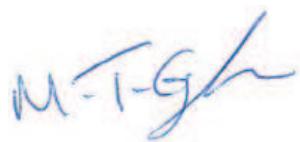
It would be helpful therefore if the SPD could clarify the nature of the information required to reach conclusions on meeting criteria such as 1, 2, 3 and 5, without the need for a Minerals Assessment.

The approach set out in the draft SPD places the responsibility on Local Planning Authorities to undertake/commission any relevant assessments in respect of minerals safeguarding issues for emerging allocations, which could have significant cost and time implications for authorities producing Local Plans. Indeed the MSA maps indicate that many of Kent's most sustainable settlements are surrounded by safeguarded minerals, and some of these areas may well be considered for new development allocations as part of emerging Local Plans. The scale of such assessments could potentially be significant therefore whilst the potential cost savings associated with combining on-site investigations for flooding, archaeology and minerals purposes, as referenced in the draft SPD, are unlikely to exist at Local Plan preparation stage.

Given the wider NPPF objectives to meet identified development needs through a proportionate evidence base, a more strategic approach to assessment, as alluded to above, would enable Local Planning Authorities to address this issue in a proportionate, cost-effective way through the development of Local Plans.

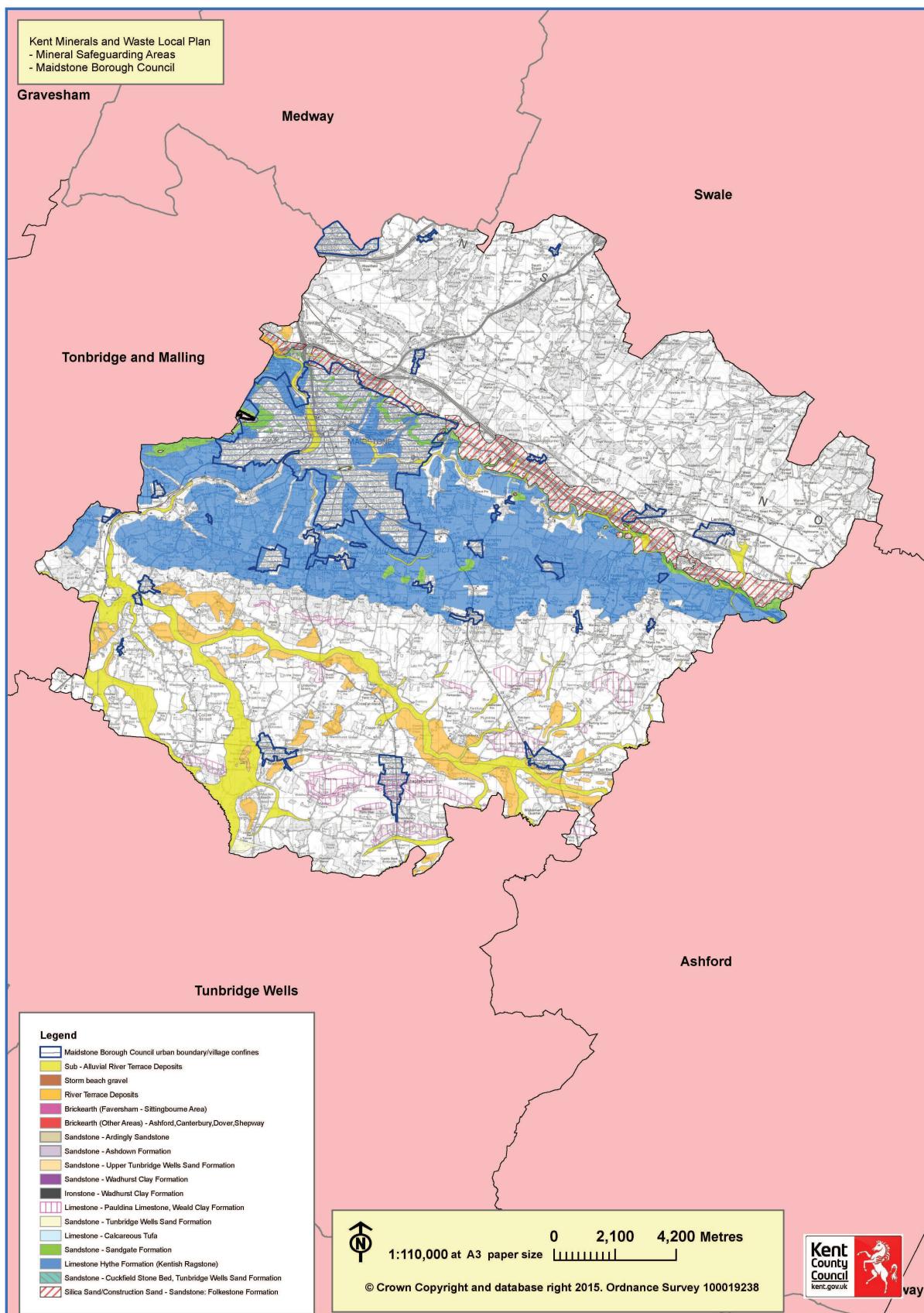
Paragraphs 4.34 – 4.41 of the draft SPD set out the information requirements for non-minerals and waste development proposed within or in proximity to (within 250m) of safeguarded minerals and waste infrastructure. It would be helpful therefore if the County Council could provide GIS layers showing the location (and buffer areas) of the safeguarded infrastructure within Maidstone Borough, to assist with the application of Policy DM8.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M-E-G-E-R-T-O-N".

Mark Egerton
Planning Policy Manager
Maidstone Borough Council

Maidstone Mineral Safeguarding Areas



Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

7 February 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes
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Response to Regulation 18 Consultation on Medway Council Local Plan

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Adam Reynolds, Planning Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee agrees the formal response to Medway Council Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

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

This report has regard to strategic proposals by an adjoining authority that may impact on infrastructure, residential amenity and employment in Maidstone Borough

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	7 February 2017

Response to Regulation 18 Consultation on Medway Council Local Plan

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is an informative report designed to draw the Committee's attention to the commencement of the Medway Council Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation document. An urgent update report and response will be provided to accompany this report and the Committee will be asked to consider the proposed response in order that it may be submitted by the deadline of 6th March 2017.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Medway Council is producing a new Local Plan, to replace its current saved Policies in the 2003 Local Plan and the Kent Waste and Minerals Local Plans. The new Local Plan will have a time horizon up to 2035.
- 2.2 In January 2016 Medway Council published the first stage of its new Local Plan Regulation 18 Issues and Options for public consultation. This further Regulation 18 Development Options consultation responds to the information gathered during the 2016 consultation, and represents the next formal stage in the preparation of the Medway Local Plan.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There are two options available to Members. Firstly, the Council could send a formal response to the consultation (with any amendments deemed necessary by this Committee).
- 3.2 Secondly, Members could choose not to make a formal response to the Council Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation.
- 3.3 Choosing to make a response will help ensure that Maidstone Borough Council's comments and concerns are provided to Medway Council at an early stage in order that they may be considered as its Local Plan is produced. If no formal representation is made, this would result in a missed opportunity for the Council to set out its position and concerns in respect of this important stage of Local Plan production for a neighbouring local planning authority.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As set out above, the preferred option is for the Council to submit a formal response to Medway Council consultation (with any amendments deemed necessary by this Committee) as set out in paragraph 3.1 above. This will

help ensure that Maidstone Borough Council's comments and concerns are provided to Medway Council at an early stage in order that they may be considered as its draft Local Plan is prepared.

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities		[Head of Service or Manager]
Risk Management		[Head of Service or Manager]
Financial		[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing		[Head of Service]
Legal		[Legal Team]
Equality Impact Needs Assessment		[Policy & Information Manager]
Environmental/Sustainable Development		[Head of Service or Manager]
Community Safety		[Head of Service or Manager]
Human Rights Act		[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement		[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management		[Head of Service & Manager]

7. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Medway Council Local Plan (2012-2035) Development Options Regulation 18 consultation document
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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Strategic Planning and Sustainable Transportation Committee

7 February 2017

E-Planning – Parish Copies of Applications

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Classification	Public
Wards affected	All parishes

This report makes the following recommendations:

That the committee note the planned change in the way that planning applications are provided to parish councils.

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 and Sustainable Transportation	7 February 2017

E-Planning - Parish Copies of Applications

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the next steps in the introduction of E-Planning which specifically relate to how information is provided to parish councils. The report sets out the options considered and informs the committee that option 1 is the option that will be implemented.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 MKPS is in the process of delivering its electronic planning project. This is part of the original vision for the shared service agreed by the council and it is driving changes to achieve an efficient and modern planning service.
- 2.2 The most efficient way for applicants to submit, and MKPS to receive, applications is via the planning portal (i.e. electronically) as they are entered into our systems automatically which in turn is good for the general public and other organisations as the information is made available via the website easily. We currently receive 70-75% of applications through the planning portal. The more we drive through this route the better for turnaround times, cost and transparency with the exception that all printing requirements fall on the Council for applications submitted this way. In order to maximise efficiency it is therefore crucial that we reduce the printing requirements in MKPS.
- 2.3 Printing costs an estimated £60-75k a year for MKPS which is made up of printing of documents during validation, printing of letters, printing of applications for planning officers and printing of applications for parish councils. Of that cost about 50-55% of the cost can be attributed to staff time, about £10k is for leases of largescale devices and the remainder (£20-25k) is for print consumables and machine click charges.
- 2.4 The production of hardcopies of planning applications for parish councils is a significant proportion of the printing requirements of MKPS and as part of a series of print reducing proposals the aim is to reduce print cost by £30k in 2017. For every application submitted via the planning portal in a parish area a copy of the application is produced to post to parishes, the postage carries with it a cost of around £6k a year. A reduction in the need to post documents would therefore also produce a direct saving into MKPS' budget.
- 2.5 It was also envisaged that MKPS would drive paperless process improvements across the planning service as a whole. A number of options were proposed when the pilot project for paperless applications was started with parish councils in 2014. This was put on hold due to performance issues at that time. Those options have been revisited below to test they are still viable.
- 2.6 The main barrier identified by parishes is poor quality broadband in some areas. There are a number of solutions available to this that will be

discussed with parishes depending on their individual need. Many parishes are in areas with good or acceptable broadband and this will not be an issue for them.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1

1. Implement E-Planning for planning application documents comprehensively with at least 2 months notice

The objective in this option is to remove all paper copies provided to parish councils and provide links to our website with the expectation that they will access the applications as all our consultees (such as the environment agency and KCC) do.

In recognition of variations in broadband quality across the borough and current capability in different parish organisations allow several months so that MKPS officers can work with parish councils to assess the practicalities of making this change, making bespoke arrangements where needed.

Where parishes have barriers to implementation, such as those identified in the 2014 consultation, the roll out of this change and solutions to it will be discussed with them individually.

Pros	Cons
Quick No capital costs No additional revenue costs Potential for reduced print savings depending on individual support needs of parishes Clear deadline	Change will not equally impact all parishes Some may consider precepting Potential for complaints from parish councils (short term)

2. Implement E-Planning for planning application documents comprehensively and provide Grant Support

The objective of this option is the same as Option 1; the additional element is the provision of a capital pot of funding for parish councils to purchase IT equipment to enable them to display planning applications at meetings.

Pros	Cons
No additional revenue costs Potential for reduced print savings depending on individual support needs of parishes Clear deadline	Potential delay to stopping paper copies of planning applications Capital funding required Administration for the funding required and consideration of

	assessment
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3. Full Funding	
The objective of this option is the same as for Option 1; the additional elements are the provision of a capital pot and revenue funding for parish councils to purchase IT equipment to enable them to display planning applications at meetings and to fund broadband. Remove all paper copies by a delayed deadline in order to allow parishes time to set themselves up for the change.	
Pros	Cons
Recognises the differing needs of parishes Clear deadline Parishes get new IT equipment and broadband that can be used for multiple purposes	Delay to stopping parish copies Capital funding required Revenue funding required Some parishes may require support in setting themselves up (IT) Parishes may require ongoing support (IT) Complicated to administer and could lead to disputes Expectation of capital replacement fund in the future

4. Retain hardcopies	
No change from current arrangement.	
Pros	Cons
No investment costs No need to make any changes No complaints from parish councils	No saving of revenue or staff time Costs will increase as planning portal usage increases Parish councils don't get funding for new IT equipment

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is option 1
- 4.2 This option delivers the required efficiencies to save money and is affordable whilst providing support and allowing parish councils enough time to adjust to the change. It also provides flexibility to deal with the individual needs of smaller and more remote parishes (particularly where high speed broadband is an issue).
- 4.3 Any changes to services to parish councils need to be considered in the context of the Parish Charter. The charter sets out an expectation that

parishes and the Council will work electronically where possible and maximise the efficiency of IT. Option 1 is consistent with this approach.

- 4.4 The minimum 2 month period identified at Option 1 satisfies the consultation period of 6 weeks for the change, as set out in the Parish Charter. This will be achieved through dialogue with Parish Councils individually in order to provide an opportunity for them to raise any issues that clearly demonstrate that for their parish this new arrangement is not deliverable. Each parish response will be considered and responded to in accordance with the parish charter.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 A consultation was carried out with parishes in 2014 which demonstrated that parishes could adapt to operating electronically only for planning applications, but some individual parishes may need bespoke support.
- 5.2 An additional consultation on individual parish needs is proposed (as set out in 6.2 below).
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 KALC will be informed of the changes that Maidstone Borough Council aims to implement and the process for this in advance of a letter that will be sent to parishes outlining the change.
- 6.2 A letter would then be drafted to the parish councils to inform them that copies of applications would cease, and set a date (recommended as 1 April 2017). This will also kick off a consultation period, in accordance with the parish charter, that will allow parishes the opportunity to raise any issues that clearly demonstrate that for their parish this new arrangement is not deliverable. Each parish response will be considered and responded to in accordance with the parish charter.
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7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	An efficient planning service impacts on all corporate priorities	Head of Planning and MKPS Mgr
Risk Management	There are always risks arising from implementing changes the main risk mitigation approach being to allow time for parish councils to adjust to the change with advanced notice and to consult on issues in accordance with the	Head of Planning and MKPS Mgr

	parish charter.	
Financial	The aim of this change is to deliver savings towards each Council's MTFS	S151
Staffing	Staff time would be saved in reducing printing of parish copies. This would then be considered alongside other savings delivered in the MKPS Improvement plan for realisation as actual savings through reduction in FTE	MKPS Mgr
Legal	There is no legal requirement for parishes to be provided hardcopies of applications but the changes need to be practicable and made in accordance with the parish charter.	MKPS Mgr
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The change is being applied to parishes and is not considered to disproportionately impact on any particular group. Specific requirements for hardcopies of documents will be dealt with under the usual means of access for those with disabilities or difficulties accessing the electronic planning register.	MKPS Mgr
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Printing less documents produces less paper and print waste.	MKPS Mgr
Community Safety	None directly	
Human Rights Act	None directly	
Procurement	None directly	
Asset Management	None directly	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

None.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.