

**MAIDSTONE HOUSING STRATEGY**  
**CONSULTATION FEEDBACK SUMMARY**

**Workshop Feedback**

**Priority 1: Enable and support the delivery of quality homes across the housing market to develop sustainable communities**

- It was generally agreed that there is a need to deliver more housing (a mixture of private and social) and that any new housing should benefit the community.
- Infrastructure (such as transport, local employment) was important to consider when regenerating areas and delivering new homes.
- There was general support for the council setting up of a Local Housing Company in what was viewed as a positive step to address local ambitions and objectives. Lack of council owned land could however make delivery harder.
- Collaborative joint ventures and partnership work was encouraged with registered providers, developers, and the Homes & Communities Agency.
- There was agreement that the council should look to maximise and obtain investment to support housing delivery within Maidstone, as there are a range of potential funding sources available.
- Promoting self-build homes as an option (especially in smaller communities), as well as home ownership products, stimulated interest and was viewed as a positive approach.
- It was stressed that the 1% reduction in affordable/social rents over the next four years, plus the lack of grant, will have a significant impact on the viability of schemes to provide affordable rented homes.
- The requirement to have flexible policies and strategies was highlighted due to Government changes in national housing policy.
- There was recognition on an ageing population and the need to address older peoples housing needs.
- Following the Government's new space standards was encouraged as well as helping to enable the delivery of homes that can be adapted (wheelchair accessible/lifetime homes) to respond to peoples changing needs. Increase in cost though was raised as an issue.
- Rising costs in construction materials was noted as well as a shortage of skills in the construction sector. However local apprenticeship schemes were in operation and offered on-site experience to give apprentices the right mix of technical and practical skills.

**Priority 2: Ensure that existing housing in the Maidstone Borough is safe, desirable and promotes good health and well-being.**

- It was felt that the new Housing & Health team will be better able to signpost tenants and residents to relevant support services.
- Demonstrating value for money on health interventions was considered important along with being certain on the health demographics of some areas within the Borough.
- Promoting ways for residents to improve their health and well-being by tackling fuel poverty and advice on sustainable heating and energy efficiency in households was considered important.
- Working with health authorities to focus on long term health issues ensuring an efficient use of health and social care resources.
- Seeking good practice from the NHS Healthy New Town Initiative was raised where there will be a renewed focus on new affordable housing by offering support from the NHS to help “design in” health and modern care from the outset.
- More outreach work with the private sector and promoting further landlord incentives to access the private rented sector was encouraged.
- Unaffordable letting agency fees in the private rental sector was raised as an issue, and promoting housing associations to private landlords to be their managing agents could help with management and affordability issues.
- Exploring the use of Community Hub (Advice Centres) within schemes that can offer services and facilities to the wider community, as well as to residents of the scheme.
- There was widespread support for improving the condition and supply of accommodation within the private rental sector by engaging with landlords.
- A number of support issues were raised including the need to be able to challenge landlords on behalf of tenants, and landlords being kept up-to-date on their responsibilities and how they can take action when necessary.
- Partnership with housing associations and the voluntary sector can also be an opportunity to regenerate empty homes, and bring about some wider social benefits including opportunities for local employment, skills and training in the refurbishment of properties.
- Raising awareness of what affects housing quality can have on health and well-being was mentioned. There was also widespread agreement for ensuring sign-posting for appropriate advice and support was in place for residents to address health inequalities.

**Priority 3: Prevent homelessness, secure provision of appropriate accommodation for homeless households and supporting vulnerable people**

- There was support for increasing temporary accommodation supply with existing providers and for the council to directly acquire properties to house homeless and vulnerable households.
- Lack of affordable accommodation available for single under 35 year olds was acknowledged.
- There was agreement that strengthening partnerships, investment and landlord incentives with the private sector would be a viable option to secure appropriate accommodation for homeless households.
- Working with KCC to reduce the negative impact on children in temporary accommodation was highlighted.
- The need to offer advice and support to affected households to manage welfare reform changes to the benefits system was acknowledged.
- The importance of mapping local services and strong partnerships and communications across all sectors of relevance to homelessness (health, employment, vulnerable service users) was stressed.
- The Government emphasis on shared ownership and starter homes may restrict access to future affordable rented accommodation. Other tenure options for homeless households may therefore need to be considered.
- Prevention methods were considered as vitally important in helping to prevent and relieve homelessness.

## Online Survey Feedback

1. A profile of respondents replying to the questionnaire available online is shown in the table below. It should be noted that only 53 (50%) of the total respondents answered this question.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
A resident of the Borough	56.6%
A service user	1.9%
A service provider	11.3%
A councillor of Maidstone	3.8%
A member of MBC staff	11.3%
Other	15.1%

2. Respondents were asked: **How far do you agree or disagree that the identified key priorities meets the challenges for Maidstone over the next 5 years?** A summary of the responses are given in the table below.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Priority 1: Enable and support the delivery of quality homes across the housing market to develop sustainable communities</b>	44.7%	25.2%	30.1%
<b>Priority 2: To ensure that existing housing in Maidstone Borough is safe, desirable and promotes good health and well-being</b>	64.5%	24.0%	11.5%

<b>Priority 3: Prevent homelessness; secure the provision of appropriate accommodation for homeless households and supporting vulnerable people.</b>	65.2%	20.2%	14.6%
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3. Respondents were asked: **From the following list of outcomes, please indicate the extent to which you think the council and its partners need to address each outcome as identified in the Action Plan?** A summary of the responses are given in the table below.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Low Priority</b>	<b>Medium Priority</b>	<b>High Priority</b>
Enable the delivery of homes as identified in the emerging Local Plan. An appropriate policy framework is in place that delivers a mix of tenure and range of housing to meet identified need.	22.4%	22.4%	55.2%
Deliver a mix of homes of different types, tenure and size, via direct provision and in partnership with private developers, housing associations and other key partners, which meet the needs of the local population.	18.8%	18.8%	62.3%
Deliver new affordable homes that are designed to a high standard, energy efficient, accessible and respond to people's changing needs.	15.9%	17.4%	66.7%
Maximise housing investment opportunities by seeking innovative funding and delivery options to support housing delivery within Maidstone.	23.2%	29.0%	47.8%
To raise housing quality and	18.8%	26.1%	55.1%

standards across all tenures and improve the condition of existing homes to maximise health and wellbeing outcomes for all.			
To improve health outcomes for residents by reducing health inequality to ensure a healthy standard of living for all.	26.5%	29.4%	44.1%
Promote ways for residents to improve their health and wellbeing by tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency advice and managing domestic bills.	26.5%	30.9%	42.6%
Prevent and relieve homelessness amongst local residents who are at risk of homelessness by offering timely, expert advice that helps to prevent their homelessness.	15.9%	17.4%	66.7%
Increase the availability of suitable accommodation for homeless households via direct provision and the use of the private rented sector, to reduce temporary accommodation costs, length of stay and reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation.	20.3%	21.7%	58.0%
Support independent living and reduce risk of repeat homelessness for vulnerable residents by offering a range of housing options, advice and support to maintain or improve their health and well-being.	23.2%	18.8%	58.0%

4. Respondents were asked: **Are there any important issues missing from the proposed Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020 Action Plan?**  
A summary of the responses are given below.

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Yes	52%
No	48%

5. Where respondents answered yes, they were asked to tell us why. A summary of the general comments are given below.

<b>General Comments</b>
A failure to recognise the importance of adequate social and physical infrastructure.
Coordination with infrastructure and employment plans.
A more robust plan with firm details about where new housing will be built, also what infrastructure will be included and thought through prior to those developments taking place.
There could be a lot more focus on strategic partnerships with health, social care and council services to make firmer plans and support achieving some of the actions, particularly around health inequalities, fuel poverty, preventing homelessness etc.
The infrastructure needed to support the housing strategy appears to be lacking
Failure to aim to build so many houses, less would be better
Preservation of the quality of life for existing residents including adequate infrastructure investment
It assumes that finance will be from private sector. There is only one place for good social housing and that is with public authorities as in the 50's and 60's
There is absolutely no reference to council homes.
The infrastructure is not in place to support all of these new houses and this is an extremely high priority.
Maidstone needs to develop as a high class town full of rich people with upmarket shops and restaurants.
How will all the additional traffic that will be generated by all this additional houses.
Associated infrastructure to support all the new housing (i.e. roads, transport, schools, hospitals, doctors' surgeries etc.
It's not just the housing that is a problem, you need the infrastructure in place for these new homes, schools and doctors are needed for new occupants, also the parking situation in roads out of town on housing estates is ridiculous, you cram in the houses putting pressure on the services already there and stretching them to breaking point and unable to deliver a quality service.

<p>If you plan to build more houses first think about the infrastructure better roads, better schools, new surgeries, hospitals you can't build more houses without these.</p>
<p>Need to make the houses bigger so you can get better use of them.</p>
<p>You do not include that due to so many additional houses Maidstone which is constantly grid locked will get worse.</p>
<p>No joined up thinking with authorities which provide infrastructure such as roads, education and health care.</p>
<p>Constructive use of brown field land i.e. housing.</p>
<p>Transport infrastructure, Office accommodation to promote business within Maidstone. Sufficient GP places close to Housing.</p>
<p>More explicit content on Local Needs Housing for parishes within the borough. Also more information on sheltered and semi-sheltered housing strategy for our ageing population.</p>
<p>Need affordable rented homes - not just homes to buy</p>
<p>A concerted effort in exploring the brown field sites in the Borough. Prioritising planning proposals for the change of use of empty buildings in these areas.</p>
<p>The call for sites seems to ignore the need to regenerate urban and village cores by not obliging developers to put forward site in those locations rather to allow them to specify what they consider 'viable' i.e. most profitable for them. High quality homes and workspaces like those at Beddington Urban Development should be the default development with urban fringe and greenfield developments the last resort.</p>