

**STRATEGIC PLANNING
SUSTAINABILITY &
TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

8TH March 2016

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

Yes

DCLG Consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy

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 response to the consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework in Appendix I submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government be noted.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – national planning policies directly impact on local planning policies in the Local Plan and on neighbourhood plans and on the determination of planning applications which in turn influence the overall attractiveness of the borough.
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough -national planning policies directly impact on local planning policies in the Local Plan and on neighbourhood plans and on the determination of planning applications which in turn influence economic decisions in the borough.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee	8 th March 2016

DCLG Consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a brief overview of the Government's consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. The response to the consultation submitted on behalf of the Council is included in Appendix A. The Committee is requested to note this response.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') published in March 2012 sets out the Government's planning policies. The Framework is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The content of Local Plans and neighbourhood plans must also accord with the Framework.
- 2.2 A consultation on proposed changes to the Framework was published by the Department for Communities & Local Government in December 2015. The main points of the changes being proposed are:
- a) Change to the planning definition of affordable housing so it could include products such as starter homes which enable access to owner occupation but which do not add the permanent stock of affordable housing
 - b) A change to require local planning authorities to require higher density residential development around commuter hubs. This would apply to both plan-making and determining planning applications.
 - c) Strengthening the national policy support for new settlements
 - d) Specifying that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of using brownfield land for housing
 - e) More strongly supporting housing development on small greenfield and brownfield sites (<10 dwellings) within settlement boundaries but excluding garden land. Sustainable small developments adjacent to settlement boundaries would also be supported.
 - f) Specify that Local Plan should include a specific policy which sets out the considerations for the development of small sites.
 - g) Require local planning authorities to take action to identify additional housing land if there is an undersupply in the number of homes delivered on allocated Local Plan sites over a 2 year period.
 - h) Ensure unviable or underused employment land and land used for retail or leisure or institutional uses is released for starter homes
 - i) Amend the exception site policy to make it clearer that planning applications for starter homes will only be rejected if there are overriding design, infrastructure and local environmental considerations that cannot be mitigated

- j) Allowing starter homes in unlet commercial units, for example in town centres, and allowing a greater proportion general and starter homes in mixed use commercial developments.
- k) Enable starter homes to be provided on rural exception sites
- l) Enable neighbourhood plans to allocate small scale sites in the Green Belt for starter homes.
- m) Enable starter homes to be developed on brownfield sites in the Green Belt provided this would not result in substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 In accordance with the Council's constitution, a response to the consultation was prepared by officers and submitted by the deadline of Monday 22nd February 2016. The Chairmen of the Planning Committee and of Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee had sight of the draft prior to its submission and amendments were made in response. The submitted response is enclosed as Appendix I.

4. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 4.1 The Government will confirm the changes to the Framework in due course; it has not given a specific date when this will happen. The consultation proposes a transitional period of 6 to 12 months for the change to the definition of affordable housing. With this exception, it can be expected that the changes will come into force immediately once they are confirmed.
- 4.2 The regular planning training sessions will be used to update Councillors on the confirmed changes .

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Framework sets out national planning policy which informs planning decisions in the borough which in turn impact on the borough's attractiveness as a place to live and work.	Head of Planning & Development
Risk Management	None identified	Head of Planning & Development

Financial	None identified	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	None identified	Head of Planning & Development
Legal	None identified	[Legal Team]
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None identified.	[Policy & Information Manager]
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The Framework's underpinning objective is for the planning system to deliver sustainable development.	Head of Planning & Development
Community Safety	None identified.	Head of Planning & Development
Human Rights Act	None identified.	Head of Planning & Development
Procurement	None identified.	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management	None identified.	Head of Planning & Development

6. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix I: Response to the proposed changes to the Framework.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.