

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **COUNCIL**

**13 APRIL 2016**

### **REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE FROM 8 MARCH 2016**

#### **NORTH LOOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

##### **Issue for Decision**

At their meeting of 8 March 2016 the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport (SPST) Committee considered a report and an Urgent Update Report of the Head of Planning and Development on the North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The North Loose Neighbourhood Forum has spent approximately four years working on its plan, seeking local views and aspirations and working to ensure the Plan remains true to these values whilst also reflecting both local and national planning policy. This Neighbourhood Plan is the first to go through a referendum in Maidstone.

In October 2015 the SPST Committee approved the Council's response to the formal consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan under Regulation 16<sup>1</sup>. The response, along with all others received, was considered by the appointed Examiner, Ann Skippers, during the latter part of 2015 as part of the independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Ms Skippers completed her Examiner's report in December 2015, concluding the Plan was fit to proceed to referendum subject to some minor modifications. These were brought to the SPST Committee for consideration on 19 January 2016. The subsequent recommendations of the Committee were considered by Council on 25 January 2016 at which time approval was given to undertake a local referendum on the Plan as amended to include the minor modifications suggested by the Examiner.

The referendum took place on 3 March 2016 as required by the Regulations<sup>2</sup> with the process being overseen by the Registration Services team. Three polling stations were used: Polling district XA – YMCA, Melrose Close, Cripple Street, Maidstone; Polling district XD – Maidstone Hockey Club, Armstrong Road, Maidstone; Polling district XX – The Vine, Boughton Lane, Loose, Maidstone; with the official count taking place after the close of the poll at The Vine, Boughton Lane, Loose.

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<sup>1</sup> Town and Country Planning, England, Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Town and Country Planning, England, Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.

The turnout for the referendum was 34.8%, with 95% voting 'Yes' to the question: "*Do you want Maidstone Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for North Loose to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?*". The total number of votes cast was 1,410; 'Yes' votes were 1,332, 'No' votes were 77 and there was one void ballot paper.

When the outcome of a referendum is a 'Yes' the Regulations<sup>3</sup> require that the Council must make (adopt) the Plan as soon as reasonably practicable after the referendum.

### **Recommendation Made**

That the Committee recommends to Council that the North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan be made and becomes part of the Development Plan for Maidstone.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

There was only one option available to the SPST Committee which was to note the positive result of the referendum as set out in this report, and make a recommendation to Council at its meeting of 13 April 2016 to make the North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan in accordance with the Regulations.

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<sup>3</sup> Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004