

**STRATEGIC PLANNING
SUSTAINABILITY &
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

5th February 2019

Maidstone Local Plan Review: Call for Sites Information Pack including a New Garden Communities Prospectus

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sarah Lee, Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report actions the Committee's decision of October 2018 to receive and approve the outline of the Call for Sites Information Pack. The Call for Sites is an important early step for the Local Plan Review. The information pack will provide valuable background information for those submitting potential development sites during the Call for Sites exercise. In addition to background information (part 1) and the submission form (part 3), a New Garden Settlement Prospectus (part 2) gives specific guidance for those promoting such large scale proposals in view of their particular complexity. The report also includes the proposed assessment form which will be used to evaluate the planning merits of the submitted sites. The Call for Sites is scheduled to open on Thursday 28th February.

This report makes the following recommendations to Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transportation Committee

That:

1. The Call for Sites Information Pack content, attached as Appendix 1, be agreed.
2. Delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning & Development to finalise the Call for Sites documentation for publication.
3. The criteria in the Site Assessment Form, attached as Appendix 2, be agreed for the evaluation of potential sites in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	5th February 2019

Maidstone Local Plan Review: Call for Sites Information Pack including a New Garden Communities Prospectus

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Call for Sites

- 1.1 One of the key evidence documents for the Local Plan Review is the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). This is a technical document which evaluates the planning merits of potential development sites to help with their selection for the Local Plan Review (LPR).
- 1.2 A key, early step in the SLAA process is to undertake a Call for Sites exercise. The purpose of the Call is to find out about available land by issuing an invitation for potential sites for consideration. The Call for Sites will encompass the following uses;
- Housing (including specialist housing e.g. housing for the elderly)
 - Offices (Use class B1a), Research & development (B1b), Light industry (B1c), General industry (B2-7) and Storage & distribution (B8)
 - Retail
 - Commercial leisure uses (e.g. hotels, gyms, cinemas)
 - Gypsy & Traveller/Travelling Showpeople accommodation
 - Nursing and care homes

Content of the Information Pack

- 1.3 This report actions the Committee's decision of October 2018 to receive and approve the outline of the Call for Sites Information Pack. The information pack is intended to provide key context, information sources and guidance which could help guide and frame the site submissions. The motivation is to encourage a diversity of sites to be submitted and for the submissions to be well thought out and supported, where possible, with appropriate technical studies.
- 1.4 The documents are aimed at landowners, developers, land promoters and their agents. The outline of the information pack (Appendix 1) has three main parts;
- Background information
 - A New Garden Communities Prospectus
 - Submission form and guidance
- 1.5 **Background information:** In addition to introductory sections, the key aspects of this section are as follows;
- a) A summary of our current knowledge on the amount and types of new development which the LPR will need to plan for. A more refined understanding of needs will emerge as the evidence base for the LPR is compiled (e.g. Strategic Housing Market Assessment; Economic Needs assessment; Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment);

- b) Commentary on the different types of sites. These concepts have been discussed informally at the Members' LPR workshops on 3rd September and 26th November 2018;
- c) Explanation of the adopted Local Plan's 'dispersed' strategy;
- d) Information about key national and local level environmental constraints which could impact on both the location and form of new development; and
- e) Acknowledgement that, in addition to those which are actively promoted through the Call for Sites, other sources of sites will be explored.

1.6 ***New Garden Communities Prospectus:*** The 2018 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights that new garden communities can play a particular role in areas of high housing demand¹. New communities are an opportunity to plan for growth in a particularly comprehensive and co-ordinated fashion. In view of their complex nature and additional information requirements, a specific 'prospectus' has been prepared which covers the following topics;

- a) A general description of the principles and qualities of new garden communities, drawing on what the Government and the Town & County Planning Association have said on the subject;
- b) Further considerations relevant to this borough in particular. This includes some specific underpinning themes on page 18 of the Prospectus which the Committee may wish to give particular consideration to;
- c) The potential role/s that MBC could take in the delivery of a new garden community;
- d) The importance of deliverability and viability; and
- e) Submission requirements. In addition to completing the standard Call for Sites submission form (see below), those submitting garden community proposals will be strongly encouraged to support their proposal with additional detail, in particular on infrastructure requirements and delivery, design, mix of uses, delivery trajectory and relevant technical studies.

1.7 ***Submission form and guidance:*** The guidance includes information on the technical studies which would be most useful to provide in support of submissions. Transport Assessment and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment are likely to be of greatest value; the relevance of other technical reports will depend on the specific characteristics of the site (e.g. heritage assessment; minerals assessment; flood risk assessment). Those submitting sites are encouraged to demonstrate how barriers to their site's successful development can be overcome.

1.8 In July 2018 Council resolved that conceptual masterplanning should precede the Call for Sites. Since this decision, Members have received information and discussed the different conceptual types of sites which could contribute to the Local Plan Review² and the Information Pack elaborates further with analysis of what contribution these sites make in the

¹ Paragraph 72

² SPST 9th October 2018 and also the Members' LPR workshops on 3rd September and 26th November 2018

current Local Plan and their potential strengths and limitations. As outlined elsewhere, the potential spatial options will evolve as the Local Plan Review progresses; a key input will be the availability of land which is what the Call for Sites helps to answer. The Call for Sites is a 'policy off' exercise which should not itself be impacted by pre-judgements on potential spatial options.

Site assessment form

- 1.9 The planning merits of the submitted sites need to be evaluated using consistent and objective criteria and an assessment form created for this purpose is included in Appendix 2. The criteria largely mirror those used for the SLAA for the adopted Local Plan as the core planning considerations are little changed.
- 1.10 In addition to testing whether a candidate site is 'suitable' in planning terms, sites will also be assessed for their 'achievability' and their 'availability'. Together these factors would help the council to determine whether development of the required quality and type to meet identified needs is likely to be delivered on the ground.
- 1.11 The intention is that the assessment of the submitted sites will be led by MBC Planning. In terms of external expertise, KCC Highways officers have offered their technical support to review transport assessments and the KCC Minerals & Waste team has similarly agreed to help in respect of minerals assessments. KCC Archaeology and Ecology teams and the Environment Agency provided technical input to the site assessments for the adopted Local Plan and the potential for such targeted expert input will be explored again.
- 1.12 The fact a site receives a favourable assessment through the SLAA does not, of itself, mean that the site will go forward for inclusion in the LPR and/or that it must be granted planning permission in the future. The SLAA will inform the content of the LPR but, whilst important, it is not the end of the story. Other influences include the evidential studies on future development needs, the testing of infrastructure implications and deliverability (viability) considerations as well as the findings of Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) and how the selection of sites and the selection of a preferred spatial strategy iterate and align.
- 1.13 Also, the Call for Sites is not the only source of potential sites and as a parallel exercise officers will explore other channels. The National Planning Practice Guidance provides some insight on this matter and lists other potential sources such as surplus public sector land, vacant and under-used land and buildings and withdrawn/refused planning applications (provided the principle of development was accepted). Sites revealed through these other sources will be assessed in the same manner, using the proforma from Appendix 2.

Next steps

- 1.14 Subject to the Committee's decision, the Call for Sites documents will be finalised. Delegated authority to the Head of Planning & Development is sought to;
- Complete those sections of text currently explained in outline ('Brief background to the LPR'; 'Next steps'; 'Maidstone at a glance');
 - Format the documents to presentation standard, including all graphical content;
 - Minor wording/structural changes
- 1.15 As previously noted, the Call for Sites is aimed at landowners, developers, land promoters and their agents. It will be publicised using the following channels;
- a) Notification sent to those on our Local Plan consultation database – this includes landowners, developers and agents;
 - b) Letters (by email) to all parishes councils and North Loose Neighbourhood Forum;
 - c) Emails to MBC Councillors;
 - d) Notification to public sector landowners (e.g. KCC; NHS Trust; Network Rail; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Justice etc.) and Registered Providers;
 - e) Notification to MBC Property and Economic Development & Regeneration teams
 - f) Article in Borough Insight (March edition);
 - g) Business representative groups;
 - h) Gypsy & Traveller representative groups;
 - i) Publication on the MBC website; and
 - j) Press release and public notice.
- 1.16 Those who have sent in site details early, pre-empting the Call for Sites, will be contacted and asked to make a formal submission using the form.
- 1.17 The Call for Sites will open on Thursday 28th February 2019 with the request that sites are submitted on/before Friday 24th May.
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2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Information pack

- 2.1 Option A – That the content of the information pack and the Call for Sites is progressed as outlined in the report and Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Option B – That the information pack is not progressed or its content is substantially amended.
- 2.3 Option C – That the publication of the Information Pack and the Call for Sites is delayed or deferred.
- 2.4 The purpose of the pack is to help inform those making Call for Sites submissions. The Call for Sites itself is integral to the Local Plan Review process as meaningful progress with the plan is contingent on

understanding which land is feasible and acceptable for development. Whilst there is no requirement in national policy or guidance that an information pack should accompany a Call for Sites, it is considered to have a worthwhile purpose, potentially helping to frame the content of the submissions and encouraging the submission of supporting technical studies.

- 2.5 Delay to the Call for Sites exercise will adversely impact on the timetable for the LPR agreed by Council in July 2018 as the information it generates is integral to the progression of the plan. The assessment of sites is a time-consuming process in its own right (based on the experience of the adopted Local Plan) and needs to be commenced early in the plan preparation process. Having an understanding of which land is potentially available and suitable for development enables the identification of potential spatial options to iterate and evolve. Also, meaningful progression of other aspects of the evidence base, such as infrastructure implications (including highways modelling) and air quality modelling, relies on information about locations/amounts of new development which in turn is contingent on the SLAA process.

Site assessment form

- 2.6 Option A – that the criteria in the site assessment form in Appendix 2 is agreed.
- 2.7 Option B – that the criteria in the site assessment form are not agreed, or are altered to include non-planning considerations.
- 2.8 In respect of the assessment form, officers advice is that there is no realistic alternative to using a standard form of some kind to ensure the planning merits of sites are evaluated in a transparent and consistent manner. To be objective and 'sound', the consideration factors must be limited to planning matters.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 For the reasons set out above, in both cases **Option A** is the recommended approach.

4. RISK

- 4.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will 'add value' to the process of identifying sites for the Local Plan Review which in turn impacts positively across the full range of Strategic Plan Priorities 'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure'; 'Safe, clean and green'; 'Homes and communities' and 'A thriving place'.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Legal	The approach presented accords with national policy and guidance and will ensure conformity with the plan making Regulations in regard to the development of the LPR.	Cheryl Parks, Mid Kent Legal Services (Planning)
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with the General Data Protection Regulations and locally adopted policies.	Cheryl Parks, Mid Kent Legal Services (Planning)
Equalities	No equalities impact identified.	Equalities and Corporate

		Policy Officer.
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Crime and Disorder	No implications.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Procurement	No implications.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development

6. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Outline for the Call for Sites Information Pack comprising background information, new garden communities' prospectus and submission form and guidance.
- Appendix 2: Site assessment proforma

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.