

Maidstone Local Plan Review – Feedback from the Scoping Themes & Issues (Regulation 18) public consultation

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Egerton, Strategic Planning Manager & Sarah Lee, Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

In July 2018 the Council agreed to undertake a Local Plan Review. The current Maidstone Borough Local Plan, adopted in October 2017, includes Policy LPR1 setting out matters which such a review should consider. The revised National Planning Policy Framework issued in July 2018 and further revised in February 2019 will also need to be taken into account. A Scoping Themes & Issues document was produced and published for a 10 week consultation period between July and September 2019. A particular purpose of the consultation was to gather early feedback on the matters and issues which the Local Plan Review may need to tackle. This report provides the Committee with headline findings from the consultation. This information will be used to inform future stages of the Local Plan Review as outlined in the report.

Purpose of Report

For information.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the content of this report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee	10 th March 2020

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CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Whilst this report is for information at this stage, the Local Plan Review (LPR) as a whole can contribute to all four objectives. The Scoping Themes and Issues consultation document previously agreed by this Committee explains this inter-relationship between the Strategic Plan objectives and the LPR.</p>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Similarly, the relationship between these objectives and the LPR is explained in the Scoping, Themes and Issues consultation document itself.</p>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Risk Management	<p>The report is for information only and the recommendation to note its content does not raise any specific risks at this stage.</p>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
Financial	<p>In addition to core funding for the Strategic Planning team, additional funding has been set aside for the Local Plan Review in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Scoping, Themes & Issues consultation was funded from this budget.</p>	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager
Staffing	<p>The Council is currently engaged in a recruitment process for key posts relating to the Local Plan Review. Should</p>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development

	this prove unsuccessful, it may be necessary to seek secondments from within the Council or to recruit temporary support pending a further recruitment process.	
Legal	This report is 'for information' so it does not raise any specific legal implications in itself. More widely, the preparation of the LPR is governed by specific legislation and regulations and informed by national planning policy and guidance. Legal advice on specific matters is obtained from MKLS and/or counsel as the LPR is progressed.	Cheryl Parks, Mid Kent Legal Services (Planning)
Privacy and Data Protection	The feedback to the Scoping Themes & Issues consultation has increased the volume of data held by the Council. This data is being held in line with our retention schedules. Personal information was redacted from the consultation responses before they were published on the LPR consultation portal.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	A separate equalities impact assessment is being undertaken for the Local Plan Review. This is a live document that will be revisited as the review progresses. It will consider and be responsive to the the outcomes of the Scoping, Themes & Issues consultation.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer.
Public Health	The LPR as a whole will have, or has the potential to have, a positive impact on population health and that of individuals.	[Public Health Officer]
Crime and Disorder	The LPR as a whole can potentially have a positive impact on crime and disorder.	[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement	This report is for information only and does not raise any specific procurement issues at this stage.	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 In July 2018 the Council agreed to undertake a Local Plan Review. The current Maidstone Borough Local Plan, adopted in October 2017, includes Policy LPR1 setting out matters which such a review should consider. Also, the year after the Local Plan was adopted, a revised National Planning Policy Framework was published which introduces amended requirements which the Local Plan review will need to address. Notable amongst these is the introduction of the standard methodology for calculating housing

requirements and the need for local plans to be reviewed on a 5-yearly cycle.

1.2 This report is one of three reports on the Committee's agenda concerning the Local Plan Review;

1. This report provides the headline findings from the Scoping Themes & Issues public consultation held last year.
2. Local Plan Review Progress and Update report provides information on the wider Local Plan Review process including the work undertaken so far and forthcoming work. This report provides important background for the third report on the Local Development Scheme.
3. Local Development Scheme report provides an updated timetable for the Local Plan Review. Subject to the Committee's decision, the timetable will be reported on to Full Council for a final decision.

1.3 The Scoping Themes & Issues (Regulation 18a) consultation document was prepared as a first stage consultation document for the Local Plan Review. A key purpose of the document was to invite feedback on the matters and issues which the Local Plan Review should cover. The draft document was considered by this Committee at its meeting on 25th June 2019 and was agreed, with amendments, for public consultation. This public consultation ran for 10 weeks between 19th July and 30th September 2019.

1.4 Prior to this consultation, a separate 'Call for Sites' exercise was undertaken between February and May 2019. There is further information about the assessment of the submitted sites in the Local Plan Review update report elsewhere on this agenda.

1.5 The Scoping Themes & Issues consultation comprised a set of overarching questions (8) and a separate set of technical questions (31) focused on specific topic areas. We received some 555 responses from the following; parish councils (20), developers/agents/ landowners (90), expert agencies & infrastructure providers (11), other councils and MPs (7), residents associations/ neighbourhood planning groups (3) and other specialist groups¹ (7) with the balance from private individuals (417). Approximately 250 of the responses were on a standard template objecting to the proposed garden community at Marden. The full text of each of the responses has been uploaded onto the consultation portal and is available here; <https://maidstone-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/>

1.6 In addition, we received 3 petitions;

- Staplehurst – 235 signatures 'Remove Staplehurst's designation as a rural service centre'
- Broadway – 5,442 signatures 'Do not develop the Broadway Shopping Centre into Housing'
- Marden – 2,957 signatures 'The villagers of Marden say no to the creation of a garden community in or around Marden village'

¹ Examples being the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, Woodland Trust, House Builders Federation

1.7 Appendix 1 provides a question by question summary, showing the most popular responses to each of the consultation questions and the types of respondents who made them. This provides the Committee with an overview of the breadth of feedback across all the topic areas. In addition, the following section picks out some of the overarching themes that emerged from the consultation.

<p>1 - Infrastructure</p>
<p>This was a key matter which was raised in response to the Q ‘what makes good growth’? Respondents wanted infrastructure to be delivered before/at time of development (residents, parishes, agencies and developers) and were also concerned that both current and future needs should be met [14 residents + 6 parish councils]. This point was also made several times in response to different questions.</p> <p>In a similar vein, there was an emphasis that key facilities and services should be retained and expanded if existing village and town centres are to be fit for the future [44 residents; 6 parish councils]. According to the responses, the most important services/facilities for a successful new development are;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community and retail facilities for all ages and in walking distance (GPs, Shops, pub schools etc) 2. Roads should be improved to increase capacity as well as adequate parking provisions 3. Public transport needs to be upgraded to meet the demand of local and rural areas (more frequent services, reliability, green) 4. Ensure that infrastructure is continually upgraded to meet demand and changing landscapes and create sustainable communities (broadband, EV power points, water supply etc.) <p>In addition, a number of respondents stated that new housing development should pay for the services and infrastructure needed to create a sustainable community (21 residents; 3 developers; 1 expert agency; 2 councillors; 3 parish councils)</p> <p>A benefit of growth which respondents saw was to create more local facilities in local areas to reduce the amount of people having to travel to larger towns including public transport/highway infrastructure [Residents (124) Expert agency (1) Councillor (1) Parish Council (11)]. However a significant number of respondents, mostly from Marden, felt that there would be no overall benefits as a result of growth in villages [199 residents].</p>
<p>2 – Climate Change</p>
<p>A number of respondents expressed the view that good growth also is about optimising sustainability (renewable energy, water usage, open spaces, low/zero carbon) [18 residents; 3 Parish Councils]. Suggested approaches are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect farmland and green spaces to help cope with heavy pollution levels [Residents (256), Parish Council (1) Residents Assoc (1) (many of these are Marden responses)] • To incorporate renewables into new developments and phase out fossil fuels to make Maidstone environmentally attractive [Residents (29) Developer (2) County Council (1)]

<p>Expert agency (5) Maidstone BC (1) Councillor (1) Parish Council (9)]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space and tree planting needs to take place to reduce carbon and flooding in existing and new developments (tree preservation orders). [Residents (28) Developers (4) Expert agency (5) Councillor (1) County Council (1) Parish Council (5)] • Ensure the most environmentally sensitive areas of the borough are protected (AONB, Greenbelt, Landscapes of Local Value [Residents (180) Developers (2) Parish Council (1) (many of these are Marden responses)] <p>Improving public and sustainable transport was popular. Public transport needs to be more environmentally sustainable, cheaper and have a more frequent service [Residents (29) Developers (6) Expert agency (1) Councillor (2) Parish Council (5)]</p>
<p>3 – Brownfield land</p>
<p>When people were asked what makes good growth, and were asked how to sustain and diversify housing delivery, the most popular responses were about maximising delivery on brownfield sites. [Residents (282) (many of these are Marden responses)]</p> <p>When asked how do we achieve brownfield land development (Technical question TQ6), the most popular responses were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on brownfield sites/disused offices should be mandatory before greenfield sites are considered or put in the local plan [Resident (25) Developers (3) Expert Agency (2) Parish Council (3)] • Building on brownfield land needs to be made more profitable than greenfield (greater s106/CIL contributions for greenfield)/ Infrastructure needs to be provided to allow for development on brownfield land [Resident (27) Developers (4) Expert Agency (1) County Council (1) Parish Council (12)]
<p>4 – Housing numbers</p>
<p>Revising the housing projections came up in response to ‘what makes good growth’? [13 residents/ 4 parish councils]. Addressing the housing targets was also highlighted as a way to address climate change [Residents (197) Parish Council (1) (many of these are Marden responses)]</p>
<p>5 – Involvement</p>
<p>A request for involvement in the LPR process was a repeating theme across the consultation topics. In respect of infrastructure there was a request to liaise with residents, service providers, organisation and councils to understand their viewpoints [Residents (246) Developers (4) Expert agency (2) County Council (1) Parish Council (7)]. This general theme was repeated with respect to Gypsy & Traveller provision, the identification of small housing sites and build rates and community facility provision.</p>

1.8 The consultation also asked about future patterns of growth. When considering the responses, it is worth being aware that the consultation took place before the Call for Sites submissions were published.

We asked 'what is your preferred option for the future pattern of growth?'. The options were
A – Maidstone focus
B – Dispersal (Maidstone, Rural Service Centres, Larger Villages)
Bi – Dispersal plus additional villages
C – Focus on Garden Communities

The responses were;

(A) Maidstone Focus - Residents (30) Developers (6) Expert agency (4) Parish Council (8)
Residents Assoc (1)

(B) Dispersal/Bi - Residents (19) Developers (22) Expert agency (3) Councillor (1) Parish Council (1)

(C) Focus on Planned new settlements and major extensions to existing settlements (garden suburbs) - Residents (6) Developers (1) Expert agency (2) Councillor (2) Parish Council (3) County Council (1)

Combination of A and B - Residents (265) Developers (1) Expert agency (1) Parish Council (2)
Residents Assoc (1) [especially Marden]

Combination of A and C - Residents (2) Parish Council (1)

Combination of B and C - Residents (1) Councillor (1)

Combination of A, B and C - Residents (1) Developers (6) Expert agency (3) MBC Councillor (2)

We also asked 'For your preferred option, what infrastructure would you want to see brought forward as a priority?'. The responses were;

- For all options - Open space, expansion of facilities (GP, schools etc), renewables/climate change adaption
- For Options A/B – particular focus on transport, highways and parking (in Maidstone town); s106 monies which have been secured need to be spent on infrastructure (raised by Marden respondents in particular)
- For Option B - all infrastructure services should be provided before new developments are built

Next steps

1.9 The consultation feedback will be one of the inputs as the Local Plan Review moves forward to its next 'preferred approaches' stage.

1.10 The diagram in the Local Plan Review Progress Update report illustrates the range of inputs to the evolving Local Plan Review. This includes plan-wide assessments (e.g. Sustainability Appraisal), evidence studies, feedback from consultation, local strategies such as MBC's Strategic Plan, Duty to Co-operate influences, national policy and guidance and infrastructure requirements. Public feedback is one of the factors which will need to be weighed as the plan moves forward. Potential approaches will be identified for each of the main policy areas and each approach will be tested against this full range of factors. This comparative and objective assessment, which could be presented in the form of an options matrix, would have the purpose of identifying for the next stage of public consultation which approach/es are realistic potential options and which is the preferred way forward. This process is important so that we can demonstrate to the

Inspector that we have explored and consulted upon a range of reasonable alternatives.

1.11 The Local Plan Review Progress Update report and Local Development Scheme report both propose a staged approach to the next stage of public consultation (Regulation 18b). Work on the key growth strategies would be prioritised first so that consultation on the more spatial aspects of the plan is undertaken soonest. Consultation on more detailed topic areas would follow. In both cases, the public feedback to the Scoping Themes & Issues document would be an important input as described above.

1.12 Thereafter, the background work would be finalised (evidence studies, infrastructure requirements, plan-wide assessments, Duty to Co-operate influences, analysis of the Regulation 18b stage feedback). The 'preferred approaches' to the various topic areas would be retained, refined or replaced depending on this latest information. Again, this re-assessment process will need to be comprehensive, objective and recorded in a transparent way. A full draft of the Local Plan Review will be prepared to include the detailed policy wording. This will be subject to a formal stage of public consultation (Regulation 19 stage) before the plan is submitted for Examination. The timings of the forthcoming stages through to adoption of the Local Plan Review are detailed in the Local Development Scheme report.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS/PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 At this stage the Committee is being asked to note the content of the report. As outlined above, 'optioneering' is an important part of the Local Plan Review process by which potential ways forward are compared objectively to help the Council select reasonable approaches for inclusion in the plan.

4. RISK

4.1 This report is presented for information only and has no specific risk management implications at this stage.

5. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Scoping Themes & Issues Consultation Feedback - most frequent responses

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Maidstone Local Plan Review - Scoping, Themes & Issues (Regulation 18a)