

**Local Plan Review Update**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	<i>Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development</i>
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Phil Coyne (Interim Local Plan Review Director), Mark Egerton (Strategic Planning Manager)
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	<i>All</i>

**Executive Summary**

*At the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 meeting of this committee, Members resolved that officers provide a short-written update at each meeting of this committee, concerning any slippage and/or progress on delivering the Local Plan Review on the timescale agreed. This report provides the requested update.*

**Purpose of Report**

*For noting*

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the content of this report is noted.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2020

# Report title here

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p><b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b></p>	<p><i>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</i></li> <li>• <i>Safe, Clean and Green</i></li> <li>• <i>Homes and Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>A Thriving Place</i></li> </ul> <p>The Local Plan Review (LPR), can contribute to all four objectives. The Scoping Themes and Issues consultation document previously agreed by this Committee explains this interrelationship between the Strategic Plan objectives and the LPR.</p>	<p>Rob Jarman, Head of Planning &amp; Development</p>
<p><b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b></p>	<p><i>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Heritage is Respected</i></li> <li>• <i>Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</i></li> <li>• <i>Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</i></li> <li>• <i>Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</i></li> </ul> <p>Similarly, the relationship between these objectives and the LPR is explained in the Scoping, Themes and Issues consultation document.</p>	<p>Rob Jarman, Head of Planning &amp; Development</p>
<p><b>Risk Management</b></p>	<p><i>Please refer to Section 3 of this report.</i></p>	<p>Rob Jarman, Head of Planning &amp; Development</p>
<p><b>Financial</b></p>	<p>Provision has been made for the costs of delivering the local plan review within the Council's agreed budget and medium-term financial plan.</p>	<p>Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance</p>

<b>Staffing</b>	<i>There are no significant staffing implications resulting from this update report</i>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
<b>Legal</b>	This report does not raise any specific legal implications. 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 and this is incorporated.	Cheryl Parks Mid Kent Legal Services (Planning)
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	This report does not raise any specific privacy/data protection issues at this stage.	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	No implications identified as part of this report and recommendations. An impact assessment has been undertaken. This is a live document that is revisited as the review progresses	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	The LPR will have, or has the potential to have, a positive impact on population health and that of individuals	[Public Health Officer]
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The LPR can potentially have a positive impact on crime and disorder.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
<b>Procurement</b>	This report does not raise any specific procurement issues at this stage.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development & Section 151 Officer

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 meeting of this committee, Members resolved that officers provide a short-written update at each meeting of this committee, concerning any slippage and/or progress on delivering the plan on the timescale agreed. This report provides the requested update.
- 1.2 The Local Plan Review Update report presented to the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 meeting of this committee summarised the work that is taking place in preparation for public consultation in October 2020. This consultation will be

on preferred approaches and reasonable alternatives with an emphasis on the spatial strategy – the amount and location of future growth in housing, employment, and retail, for example that is associated with the Local Plan Review.

- 1.3 As part their consideration of the report at the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 meeting, Members resolved to accept proposals for a series of Member engagement exercises over the summer period. The purpose of the engagement exercises will be to ensure that Members have the opportunity to be involved and briefed on emerging proposals and supporting evidence, in the run up to the October 2020 public consultation exercise.
- 1.4 Despite the tight timeline, it is anticipated that the public consultation will take place from Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and finish 6 weeks later on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
- 1.5 This report provides Members with a summary of the key specialist evidence studies that will help inform the Member engagement and the October 2020 public consultation. Many studies will also inform other components of the Local Plan Review including the public consultation that is scheduled to take place in February 2021, on more detailed technical matters including development management policy areas.

### **Economic Development Needs Study (EDNS)**

- 1.6 The purpose of the EDNS is to provide an up-to-date, robust and comprehensive evidence base for employment, retail, leisure and town centre needs within the Borough during the period to 2042. The study follows a two-stage integrated approach:
- 1.7 Stage 1 – Taking stock of the current position: This is a baseline report demonstrating a holistic understanding of the current economic ‘state’ of the borough and its centres, encompassing all retail, leisure and main town centre uses, and commercial sectors. This also includes commercial viewpoints regarding the current local market and provides a narrative framing the key issues facing Maidstone’s commercial sector; and
- 1.8 Stage 2 – Future Needs Assessment: This is a substantive integrated study in accordance with government guidance and best practice for retail leisure and employment needs. It establishes the future need for retail and employment floorspace in the borough up to 2042 under 3 separate scenarios; it seeks to understand the needs of local businesses; and undertakes a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the borough’s employment land supply. It also includes the identification of potential policy approaches and spatial strategies for the LPR.
- 1.9 There remains scope for an additional, more detailed piece of work on the composition of any potential Garden Settlement(s), should they be included within our preferred spatial strategy.
- 1.10 As evidence gathering exercises associated with the EDNS were completed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the study does not account for the implications this may have on the borough’s future employment, retail,

leisure and town centre needs. Although there will be synergies with the Economic Development Strategy, it is possible that an update will be required to the EDNS once the long-term implications of Covid 19 are better understood.

### **Strategic Housing Market Assessment**

1.11 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment looks at housing need for all types of housing across the Maidstone area. It identifies the individual need for different housing typologies (such as affordable tenures, private rented housing, and older persons housing), and looks at overall housing need. It is intended to revisit this piece of work in Summer-Autumn 2021, as well as the latest government calculations associated with its housing needs standard methodology, prior to submission of the draft plan, to ensure we are delivering on the most up-to-date need figures.

### **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

1.12 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment draws together evidence concerning flood risk in the borough. This is a two-stage assessment.

1.13 The first stage provides up-to-date information on areas within the borough that are most at risk from flood events, including, where available, information from the 2019/20 floods. A second stage considers site impacts and potential mitigations in more detail, thus informing the selection and design of potential sites in the Local Plan Review. The primary objective is to locate more vulnerable uses away from areas with higher flood risk. The assessment therefore informs the choice of sites towards areas that benefit lower flood risk, unless exceptional benefits exist, for example on town centre sites proximate to the River Medway.

### **Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment**

1.14 The Sustainability Appraisal (which incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment) of the Local Plan Review is an important statutory undertaking to inform and support the conclusions in the Local Plan Review at each main stage for the duration of the Local Plan Review process. It is therefore being undertaken in an iterative manner, with the emerging strategy and policies being tested against sustainability objectives set out in the SA Scoping Report of 2019.

1.15 Currently, the consultants are looking at the impacts of three high-level indicative Reasonable Alternatives and thematic Reasonable Alternatives set out in 6 emerging Topic Papers. This will provide an objective basis to help with the forthcoming work on understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different spatial approaches when selecting reasonable alternative Spatial scenarios. These scenarios will then be tested and used to inform the preferred approach. The outputs will be consulted on alongside the LPR Preferred Approach in an Interim Sustainability Appraisal in October 2020.

### **Strategic Land Availability Assessment**

1.16 The Strategic Land Availability Assessment synthesises the need for development (as defined through the Borough's housing, employment, and retail needs assessments) and the land available to accommodate them (as identified through the existing Local Plan, through extant planning consents, through the Call for Sites and through the Council's research into alternative sources of sites).

1.17 The SLAA will contain a number of site assessments, most pertinently for the Call for Sites proposals, looking specifically at their suitability against criteria agreed at the time of issuing the Call for Sites. There will also be a more detailed assessment of the suitability and deliverability of Garden Settlement-scale proposals (see below).

### **Garden Communities Assessment**

1.18 As noted in detailed discussion at the 9<sup>th</sup> June meeting of this committee, consultants have been appointed to undertake a 2-stage assessment of submissions for potential garden communities. The first stage considers the overall suitability of sites for such purposes, while the second stage looks in more detail at deliverability and viability of proposals.

### **Maidstone Transport and Air Quality Modelling Project**

1.19 The methodology in place for this project follows a recognised approach to Local Plan transport assessments. The project has been split into two stages in order to assist in achieving shorter timescales for bringing forward its transport evidence than would otherwise be achievable, while maintaining a fully robust, evidence driven approach.

1.20 The two stages are inherently linked; however, completion of Stage 2 will require the Kent Transport Model to be available for the detailed testing of spatial allocation options.

1.21 Stage 1 of the modelling involves developing the evidence base to support the preferred approaches proposals. These proposals will set out a number of options for different quantities of development allocation in different sections or "corridors" of the District and what mitigation of transport and air quality impacts may be required to enable them.

1.22 Stage 2, building on the evidence base of Stage 1, will apply the new Kent Model in order to provide the more detailed and site-specific evidence base for a Regulation 19 draft of the Local Plan Review. This will, again, include highway impacts and air quality impacts, along with the necessary degrees of mitigation on a more site-by-site basis.

### **Integrated Transport Strategy**

1.23 The Integrated Transport Strategy is a joint piece of work by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) which sets the approach to managing transport issues in Maidstone over the Local Plan period. Progress is at an early stage, with an officer and stakeholder workshop being held in February. A representative Member workshop took

place on 24th June. Proposals and objectives will be identified to help generate an overall approach for the Local Plan Review.

### **Gypsy & Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)**

- 1.24 In addition to the above studies, a Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment has also been commissioned. As noted in the March 2020 meeting of this committee, it is now anticipated that the study will inform the public consultation on the Local Plan Review that is scheduled to take place in February 2021, on more detailed, technical matters including development management policy areas.
- 1.25 The GTAA must be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PTTS).
- 1.26 The new GTAA is currently being produced by external consultants and a key component of the evidence base requires interviews with Gypsy and Traveller households within the Borough. These interviews are normally carried out face to face, so Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown rules from late March have meant that these cannot be held at the current time. The consultants have carried out further interviews by telephone where this has been possible but the interview rates to date (around 50%) are not sufficient to produce a robust evidence base that would stand up to scrutiny.
- 1.27 However, there is a need to gain a preliminary, up-to-date understanding of future needs to enable initial work on the Local Plan Review and to inform forthcoming planning appeals. In this unprecedented situation, officers have agreed that the consultants produce an 'Interim GTAA' based on the data from the interviews that have been completed. The Interim GTAA will model the remaining need from households where an interview has not been possible to give an overall level of need, and this will be completed in July.
- 1.28 Going forward, the consultants will continue to carry out interviews over the telephone with a potential return to site interviews should lockdown restrictions be relaxed. Once a suitable level of interviews has been reached they will then produce the final GTAA. At present it is anticipated that it will be possible to produce the final GTAA for the consultation in February 2021 but this may need to be re-visited should the situation change with regard to Covid-19.

### **Sport Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy**

- 1.29 Like the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, the Sports Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy will feed into the February 2021 rather than the October 2020 consultation. A summary is provided, however, as the work is ongoing and involves ongoing liaison with Members and Parishes.
- 1.30 The strategies were approved by SPI Committee at its meeting of 9 July 2019. The strategies form part of the Council's evidence base for the

review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and inform development management decisions. They also provide the Council with an evidence base for future budgetary needs or grant funding applications.

- 1.31 Consequently, consultants PLC have been appointed to undertake a review of both strategies, to reflect the population growth arising from the Local Plan Review. The updates can be undertaken as a desk-top exercise, so have been able to be progressed during the period of Covid-19 lockdown and continued restrictions. Local stakeholder consultation is currently underway, and PLC is engaging with key stakeholders, including sports providers/users and governing bodies, MBC Councillors, and parish councils.

### **Heritage Strategy**

- 1.32 Although the Heritage Strategy will also feed into the February 2021 consultation, it is worth noting that this work is intended to involve specialist consultants, following early discussions with Historic England regarding their requirements.

### **Other Considerations**

- 1.33 As noted in the 9<sup>th</sup> June Local Plan Review Update report, there are other considerations that will feed into the Member engagement exercise and October 2020 public consultation, much of which is set out in subject-specific topic papers. The topic papers bring together a significant number of factors that influence the approaches, including previous Local Plan Review public consultation responses, legislation and government guidance and key strategies, such as the Council's Strategic Plan (2019-2045).

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## **2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 This report is for noting

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## **3. RISK**

- 3.1 This report itself has no specific risk management implications and the risks associated with the Local Plan Review programme are contained within a strategic risk assessment.
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