

Local Plan Review Update

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Tom Gilbert, Principal Planning Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All wards.

Executive Summary

At the 10th 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

Noting

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	8 December 2020

Local Plan Review Update

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the 10th March 2020 meeting of the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (SPI) 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 At its meeting on 9 November 2020, the Committee considered the Local Plan Review (Regulation 18¹) Preferred Approaches document and this, together with a sustainability appraisal, were approved for consultation. Consultation and pre-consultation arrangements were also agreed, so that public consultation on the plan would be undertaken between 1 and 22 December 2020. The Committee authorised the Head of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, to make subsequent minor amendments and factual alterations to the consultation document.
- 1.3 At the time of writing the Council has undertaken a comprehensive pre-consultation programme. This has included briefings with key stakeholders (infrastructure providers & regulatory bodies), Parish Councils, relevant Kent County Council members with wards in Maidstone Borough, the Kent Association of Local Councils, a private developers' forum, as well as meetings with Kent County Council and neighbouring local planning authorities.
- 1.4 The aim of the pre-consultation meetings has been to inform the groups named above of the consultation, its purpose, and the nature of the proposals. This is to enable these parties to submit comprehensive and informed responses to the council for consideration as part of the formal consultation.
- 1.5 At the time of writing, preparatory work for the consultation was progressing satisfactorily, meaning that the consultation itself could take place as scheduled and in accordance with relevant requirements, including the published Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.6 Officers also wanted to use this report to provide Members with an update on the proposed Government changes to the local housing need figures. On 22 September 2020, a report was presented to this committee relating to the Government consultation on 'Changes to the current planning system' (6 August to 1 October 2020). Part of that consultation proposed changes to the standard methodology for assessing housing need. Under the proposed changes, the annual housing need for Maidstone Borough would increase from 1,214 to 1,569 per year.

¹ Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

- 1.7 At present there has been no official response from the government to the representations made by this authority and other respondents to the consultation. However, it has been reported widely that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is considering adjusting the proposals to rebalance the housing need more evenly across England. At the time of writing, there has been nothing published by the government to indicate what revisions will be made and how they will affect boroughs such as Maidstone.
- 1.8 Officers continue to engage with officials at MHCLG on this issue as part of wider discussions on the Local Plan Review and will report back to Members with any material updates to the situation.
- 1.9 Lastly, Members attention is also drawn to the fact that Maidstone Officers are monitoring key risks to the Local Plan Review process. These risks comprise a range of operational and technical matters and these include -
- proposed changes to the current national planning system being introduced within the Local Plan Review timeline. Officers are closely monitoring the situation and maintaining dialogue with central government and will appraise Members regularly
 - the implications of the current Covid-19 pandemic on the Local Plan Review process. Officers will manage this through close working with Members, other stakeholders and providers of commissioned services to minimise impact on the timeline for the review
 - the shortening of the Local Plan Review production process and potential implications for the associated evidence base. Officers have undertaken a full review of the evidence base timescales and are seeking to prepare relevant information within the revised timescales and this process will be continually risk assessed going forward.
 - The potential for there to be a lack of feedback and cooperation by statutory bodies, neighbouring authorities, and other stakeholders. Officers are continuing to engage with these bodies and a full report will be presented to this committee in January.
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2. RISK

- 2.1 This report is presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications. Risks associated with the Local Plan Review are dealt with through the usual operational framework, as detailed above in the report.
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3. REPORT APPENDICES

- 3.1 None.
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4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Background Paper 1: Report to SPI Committee 22.09.20 on Council Response to the Government's Proposed Planning Reforms: 'Changes to the current planning system' and 'White Paper: Planning for the Future': https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/council-and-democracy/primary-areas/your-councillors?sq_content_src=%2BdXJsPWh0dHBzJTNBJTJGJTJGbWVldGluZ3MubWFpZHN0b25lLmdvdi51ayUyRmRvY3VtZW50cyUyRnM3MjQ5NCUyRkNvdW5jaWwIMjBSZXNwb25zZSUyMHRvJTIwdGhJTIwR292ZXJubWVudHMIMjBQcm9wb3NlZCUyMFBsYW5uaW5nJTIwUmVmb3JtcyUyMENoYW5nZXMIMjB0byUyMHRoZSUyMGN1cnJlbnQIMjBwbGFubmluZyUyMHN5cy5wZGYmYWxsPTE%3D