

DESIGN & SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Scoping, Themes and Issues Document
(REGULATION 18A) October 2022



Foreword - Setting a new benchmark for quality in Maidstone Borough

I am delighted to introduce you to the Maidstone Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document. I thank you for your time and involvement with this important piece of emerging policy.

Many will be aware of the importance of good design in Maidstone's built environment, and indeed the manner which our non-built environment complements this. This has been high on the Council's agenda for some time. As has the commitment to approaching this in a manner which also addresses long term sustainability and contributes to the Council's overarching ambitions for the quality of the whole environment.

It is the importance of these topics to Maidstone's future that has led to us approaching this as part of a separate and freestanding Development Plan Document (DPD). This will sit alongside our existing Local Plan, which is currently being reviewed, and which will carry the same weight as that Local Plan in terms of planning decisions. This approach allows for long term place-shaping within the Borough.

A further recognition of our commitment to ensuring the Development Plan Document is robust, and really reflects the issues that are important to communities, partner agencies and other stakeholders, is the decision to undertake a separate (Regulation 18A) Scoping Themes and Issues Consultation.

So, rather than us as a Council moving straight to the detail of what we feel are the matters which the Design and Sustainability Development Plan DPD needs to address, we have instead chosen, by way of this consultation, to develop this initially under a

series of the broad themes and headings which we feel are likely to emerge from the work.

This does not mean that we are inviting you only to comment within the confines of the themes and headings identified in the document. On the contrary, you are free to comment on the quite high-level subject areas that are identified at this point, and whether you feel there are issues missing, or indeed which should not be included. Equally, you may choose to respond at a more detailed level in relation to very specific matters which are important to you, and which you feel need to be considered in influencing our borough's built form, environment and approach to the sustainability agenda.

The responses received to this consultation will inform a much more detailed Regulation 18B consultation document in Spring of next year. This will be more developed including a detailed set of proposed approaches designed to reflect, and enable us to deliver, the nature of change which will make Maidstone an even better place to live.

Thank you again for your time, and we look forward to receiving your views.

Councillor Paul Cooper

Lead Member – Planning and Infrastructure

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Introduction

The Purpose of this Development Plan Document

The built and natural environments in Maidstone borough are unique and varied, spanning from characterful historic villages and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the bustle of Maidstone, the county town. We recognise that these places and landscapes are part of what make the borough special, and that we are all just the custodians for future generations.

Against the backdrop of the biodiversity and climate emergency, we want to preserve the character of these urban and rural areas, whilst promoting the highest design quality and sustainability standards for new homes and neighbourhoods as well as the supporting socio-economic and environmental infrastructure that goes with this. In order to deliver the new development that Maidstone needs, in a form that encourages people to thrive whilst securing the best sustainability credentials, we need to ensure that good quality design and high sustainability lie at the heart of all forthcoming development proposals.

The DPD will embed design and sustainability requirements across a series of geographic scales into adopted planning policy, delivering tangible actions that reflect the borough's declaration of a Biodiversity and Climate Emergency in 2019. The Design and Sustainability DPD will be an illustrated document that will provide residents, developers, and other stakeholders with a clear and consistent understanding of the development standards required to meet policy requirements in Maidstone borough.

The Design and Sustainability DPD will sit alongside the Local Plan Review (LPR) (once adopted), together (along with other documents) driving the

direction of development in the Borough for the next 15 years. The LPR is currently at Examination stage, with anticipated adoption in 2023.

The Design and Sustainability DPD will set a new benchmark for quality of development in Maidstone, helping to deliver the Strategic Plan's priorities.

Further, the DPD will build upon the the Maidstone Strategic Plan (2021 refresh) by aligning closely with the Plan's four priorities:

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
- Safe, Clean and Green
- Homes and Communities
- A thriving place.

The DPD will help deliver outcomes contained within the Strategic Plan (*in italics*). These include:

- *'The Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed'*. The DPD will help to deliver high quality places by requiring that planning applications for new development meet specific design and sustainability standards, for instance those relating to materials, distinctiveness and streetscape. Because this will create new places where people want to be, it will, in turn, produce healthy places that are resilient to climate change, and prosper economically.
- *'An environmentally attractive and sustainable Borough'; 'Everyone has access to high quality parks and green spaces'*. A core ambition of the DPD is to drive up environmental standards of new development. The DPD will aim to ensure

that new development integrates green spaces at every scale and will set standards for Biodiversity Net Gain. We know that access to high-quality open space not only has a positive impact on mental health, but also contributes to reducing the effects of climate change.

- *‘Improving housing through use of our statutory powers to promote good health and wellbeing.’* The DPD will require that new residential development, both internally and as part of a wider scale, meet certain standards which we know help in facilitating a good living standards for inhabitants, for current and future generations.

- *‘Our town and village centres are fit for the future; a vibrant leisure and culture offer, enjoyed by residents and visitors’.* The DPD will prepare the Borough for the future by requiring the highest sustainability standards for new development, for instance, in relation to active travel solutions, passive design and street trees. Vibrancy in new development will be built in via inventive and people-orientated design – required by the DPD.

What is a Development Plan Document and What Does it Do?

A Development Plan Document (DPD) is a planning policy document that makes up a part of a Local Authority's Development Plan. The development plan for an area comprises the combination of strategic and non-strategic policies which are in force at a particular time. Within this DPD, it is envisaged that some policies will be strategic (overall Borough strategy) and some will be non-strategic (area or type of development-specific).

Planning officers will assess planning applications against the policies contained within the Design and Sustainability DPD and it will provide a firmer basis for the negotiation of applications and the defence of planning appeals for approximately 15 years post-adoption.

Development Plans sit at the heart of planning and set out a vision and framework for the development of the area. In Maidstone borough, the Development Plan is formed of the Local Plan, seven adopted Neighbourhood Plans, and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The Local Plan is currently being updated and is subject to examination at the time of writing. Once adopted, the Local Plan Review will replace the Local Plan and form part of the Development Plan. The Local Plan sets out the overall strategy for the borough along with a range of non strategic policies, and the Neighbourhood Plans set out planning policies for the development and use of land in a local area.

Ultimately, the Design and Sustainability DPD will form an additional part of Maidstone's Development Plan once adopted (Figure 1, opposite), sitting alongside the Local Plan. All documents that make up the Development Plan have weight in decision-making, and it is a requirement in law that planning decisions must be taken in line with the policies contained within the Development Plan, unless there are material planning reasons which justify an alternative approach.

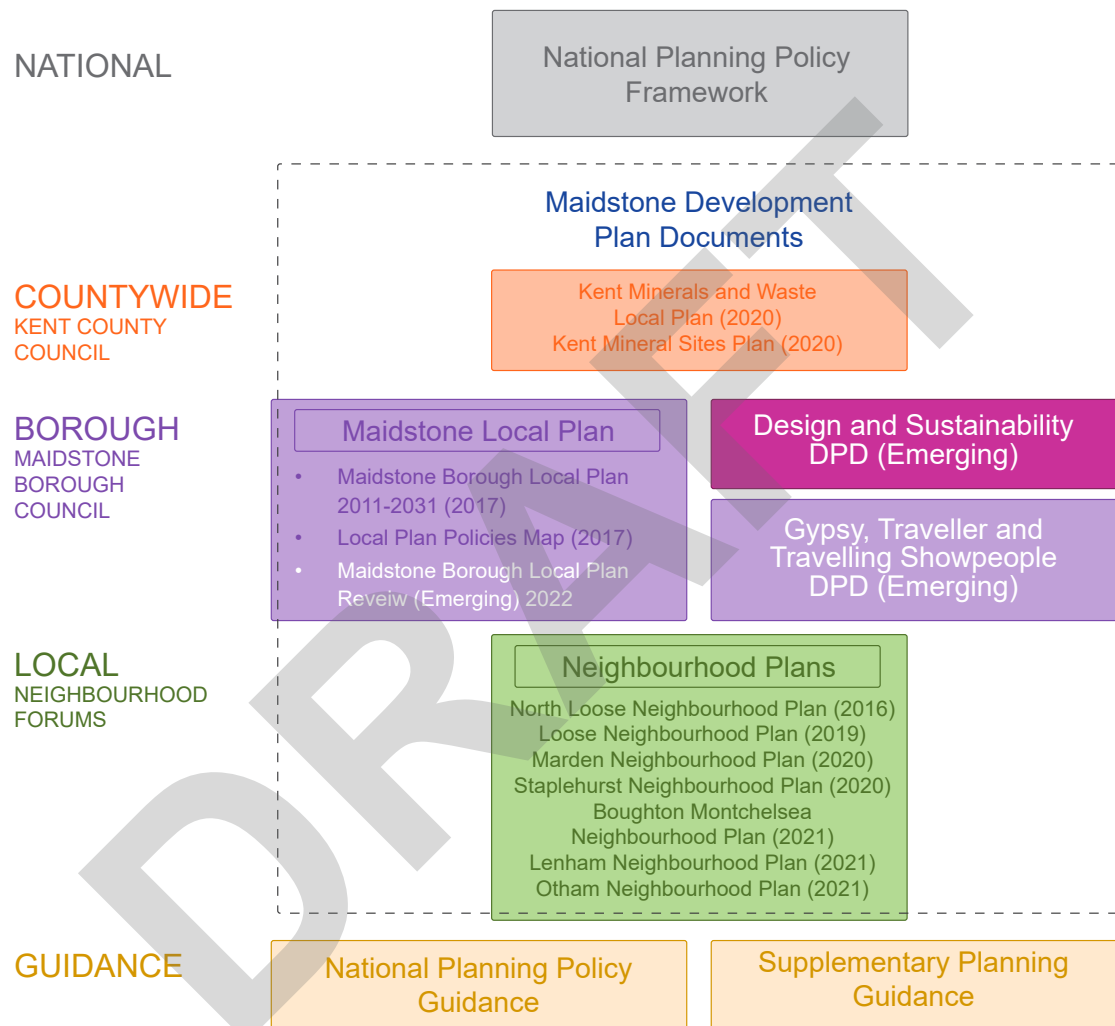


Figure 1: The Planning Policy Framework

Preparation of the DPD: what stage are we at and what are the next steps?

There are several stages of public consultation built into the process of delivering a development plan document. These are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as illustrated in Figure 2, below.

The first stage, Regulation 18, specifies that the local authority must notify persons of the subject of the plan and invite them to make representations about what the plan should contain. Regulation 19, the second stage, requires that before submitting a plan to the Secretary of State, the local authority must make the consultees notified as part of Regulation 18 aware of the places and times at which the proposed submission documents can be inspected.

In the preparation of this DPD, Regulation 18 has been divided into two phases, 18a and 18b. The current stage, 18a, is called the Scoping Themes and Issues Consultation and is the first consultation stage of the Design and Sustainability DPD. The purpose of this stage is to set out the key issues of Design and Sustainability the document should address and invite your views. Your comments on this consultation will help us to identify a refined set of themes and issues.

At the next stage, Preferred Approaches Consultation (18b), we will ask for your views on a more developed version of the DPD, where the key issues are expanded and progressed to form proposed policies and supporting text. At Regulation 19 – Draft for Submission – we will publish a final version of the DPD and invite you to make comments on whether you consider it to be justified and compliant with all existing obligations. These

comments will then be submitted to the Secretary of State along with the final DPD for independent examination. This will likely be in 2024.

The Development Plan Document will then be examined to assess whether it has been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is sound. Plans are ‘sound’ if they are:

- a) Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other local authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- b) Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- c) Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
- d) Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

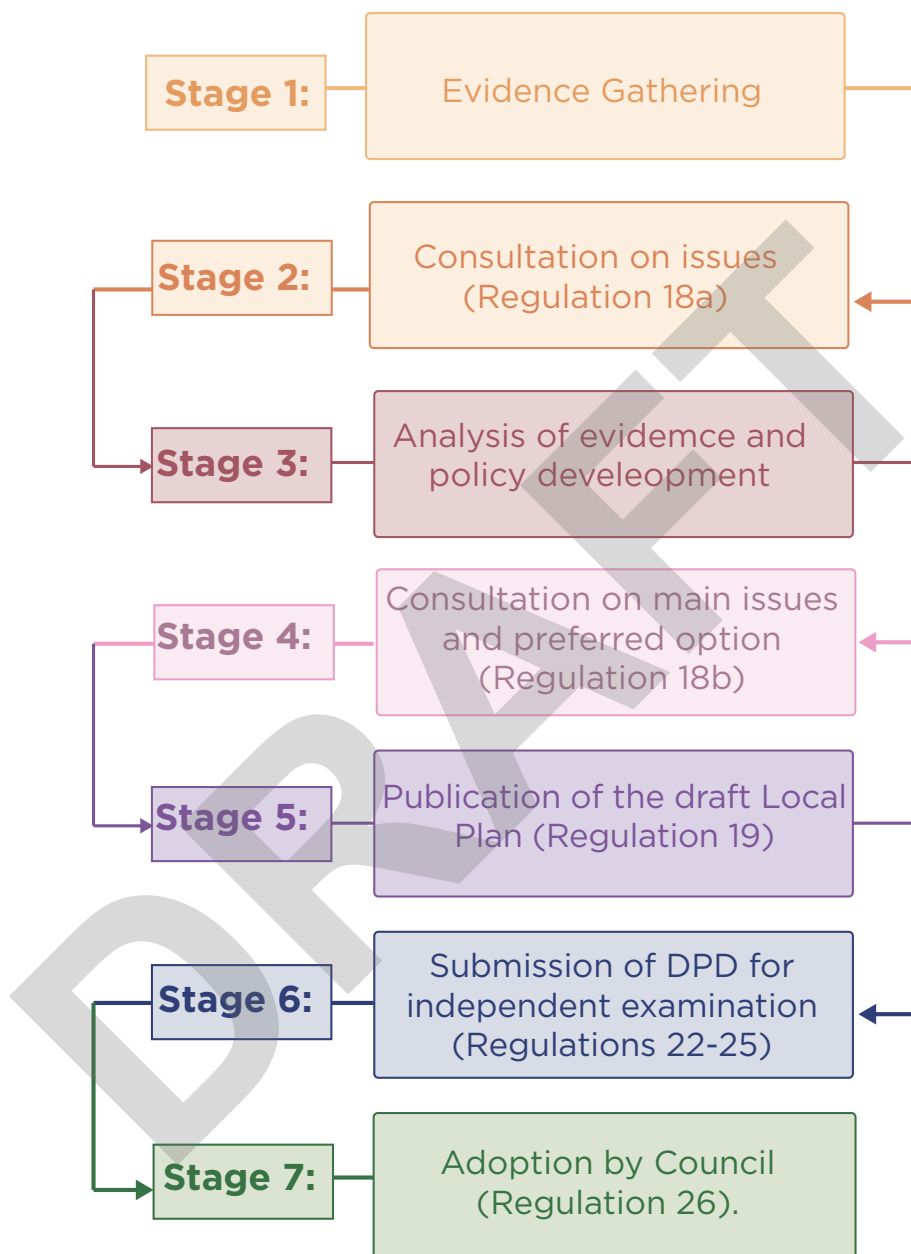


Figure 2: Development Plan Document Process

What are the key cross-boundary issues?

The NPPF states “Local planning authorities and county councils (in two tier areas) are under a duty to co-operate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters which cross administrative boundaries. It goes to note “Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary and whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere.”

Accordingly, in producing the Design and Sustainability DPD and associated evidence base we will engage with our council neighbours, KCC and statutory organisations on matters which have cross-boundary implications.

The duty to co-operate is an on-going process; joint

working must be effective and ‘deal with strategic, cross-boundary matters rather than defer them’. The purpose of the duty is to ensure that we take account of the implications of our plan for our neighbours and our statutory partners and that they do the same.

The list below highlights what could be considered to be, at this stage, the key strategic issues that will be considered within the Design and Sustainability DPD:

- Water quality and quantity
- Air quality
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Landscape context

This list is not exhaustive and we welcome any suggestions for additional cross-boundary matters.

Other considerations

National planning policy is outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the government’s policies and how they should be applied, including the preparation of Local Plans. This DPD, along with other documents forming the Development Plan should be created in accordance with the strategies and policies set out in the NPPF.

In addition, the government regularly publishes additional guidance on how to apply policy, and provides best practice for planning and design.

The key government guidance for the production of the Design and Sustainability DPD is the National Model Design Code, which develops the government’s principles of good design to demonstrate how these can be built into local authority’s own planning guidance and policy. This will be used to inform and guide the creation of policies within the DPD.

How can I respond to this consultation?

We are seeking your views. Questions have been included throughout this document or there is a separate response form containing all the questions. You do not need to answer all the consultation questions, just focus on the ones of most interest to you.

Please submit your responses online here: **INSERT LINK** or use the dedicated response form available on our website.

The deadline for your response is **11:59am on 12th December 2022**.

Key questions for consideration:

- How important do you think good design is in new development?
- Would you like to see improved sustainability standards in new development?
- Do you think we have identified all the issues that a Design and Sustainability DPD should consider?
- What should we be aspiring to deliver with the Design and Sustainability DPD?
- Have we identified all the cross-boundary/strategic issues that the DPD should address?
- What do you think should be the end date for the Design and Sustainability DPD? Why?
- What suggestions do you have to add to the content of the Design and Sustainability DPD?

The Issues

The DPD will focus on ensuring that development achieves the great benefits of developing appropriately and sympathetically designed places that achieve ambitious sustainability standards for all forms of development - commercial, community-based, and residential. This in turn improves the quality of life of people of the borough. Design and Sustainability should be considered as central to the characteristics of any new development, which means that proposals will need to rigorously address the needs of people and the environment.

To develop a Development Plan Document that provides guidance and parameters for exemplar design and sustainability, an approach needs to be articulated to each of the elements of the built environment.

Whilst acknowledging that there is overlap and interplay between them, the elements and their definitions are set out below. In the following pages, each theme is outlined with a description of the key issues facing the borough, why they are important, what Maidstone needs to deliver, and the topics that may be considered in the DPD.



Placemaking

This is the process of making places that encourage the right uses and activities in the right places. Placemaking can be understood as the 'software' of a development; it is a social concept that describes the creation of vibrancy and vitality in the places that we've built. Successful placemaking creates a clear purpose through which unique identity can develop over time.

High-quality placemaking should convey a care and attention to detail that encourages people to take ownership and pride of a place, and experience joy and inclusion and identify when in that space.



Streets & Buildings

This is the three-dimensional arrangement of the structures that we build. Streets and buildings can be understood as the 'hardware' of a development, which create a physical relationship between people, structures and services. Successfully designed streets and buildings provide a human-scale environment that feels safe and comfortable for everyone to use, as well as being efficient in a

form that is intuitive to navigate and contains clear visual cues. Highly sustainable forms of building ensure efficient use of land through developments which encourage people to walk or cycle where appropriate. Additionally, these will incorporate the efficient use of resources and energy.



Open Space and Nature

Open spaces serve a variety of very important functions that make our settlements healthy, liveable and desirable. Open space will range from the highly managed - formal parks and squares for example, to the natural and semi- natural spaces in which people are secondary to the natural environment. All types of open space are important for biodiversity and nature-based solutions. Well-designed open spaces are those which are carefully considered in terms of who will use them, how they are likely to evolve over time, how they are accessed and whether the boundaries create suitable enclosure whilst maintaining physical and

visual links to the surroundings. They must also look attractive, with features such as trees and planting that thrive and attract wildlife. Open spaces will provide additional benefits to their primary function, not only for recreation and enjoyment, but part of the natural and ecological infrastructure of the borough. Conserving, enhancing and reinforcing existing natural features will help to create connected green networks through the borough. Exceptional open spaces and a thriving natural environment have a key role to play in the management of water and the delivery of climate adaptation and mitigation in new development.



Movement

The movement network is formed from a connected network of streets, paths and tracks that provide safe, inclusive, accessible and attractive facilities for walking and cycling. The network should provide access to high-quality public transport connections and enable safe freight, delivery, servicing and private vehicle movements where required. High quality movement networks prioritise active and sustainable transport in order to ensure that people can stay connected to local amenities, jobs and services. Additionally the network should minimise

the impact of vehicles the local environment by reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions and can also contribute to healthier communities with improved wellbeing as a result of more active lifestyles. Well-designed movement networks ensure many connections between neighbourhoods and draw on the historic street patterns and desire lines of a place. The hierarchy and layout of well-designed movement networks should work intrinsically with built form and landscape, and seek to prioritise people over the needs of vehicles.



Sustainable Buildings

Sustainable buildings minimise the impact on the environment through approaches to their design, construction, operation. They will also minimise their impact at the end of their life by using materials that are readily re-used. Buildings should provide comfortable and healthy environments for people live, work, and spend time in as well as being intuitive to use and maintain.

Sustainable buildings reduce emissions and contribute to a circular economy by considering carbon consumption of the materials they are made from, the energy sources they are heated and powered by, as well as the ability to re-use or recycle materials at the end of a building's use.



Design Quality

Design quality refers to the articulation and delivery of great buildings and public spaces which enhance Maidstone's distinctive identity, and conveys the aspirations and attention to detail that is characteristic of great places.

Well-designed places are robust, and adaptable; ensuring that buildings and public spaces are durable and have a long lifespan which can evolve with changes to the way people live and work.



Placemaking

The Design and Sustainability Plan should:

Ensure that Maidstone Borough is delivering attractive and distinctive places that people want to live, work and play in, creating safe and secure places where people of all ages want spend time and develop a sense of pride in where they live and work.



*Image: Accordia, Cambridge
Credit: Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios*

The current issues in the borough include:

The Borough of Maidstone is an attractive place to live, work and spend time. It is important that this continues and is reinforced as new development occurs. The success of this is predicated on the recognition that the borough is made up of a diverse set of places, from the Town Centre of Maidstone, through to remote rural centres and the wider countryside. Strong attachment to places contributes to the positive health and well-being of communities by contributing to feelings of safety, security, inclusion and belonging. It encourages a sense ownership and pride in the places that people live and work. By achieving the right patchwork of opportunities for people to live, work and spend leisure time, the borough will attract and retain people and businesses that will thrive in proximity to one another.

Whilst the aspiration of most development is to provide an environment that is of its place, some development can lack a sense of identity, or a tangible relationship to a place with strong and established character. These developments could have been built anywhere, and fail in their attempts to articulate unique attributes that would generate identity and to provide a recognisable sense of place.

Key to developing a sense of place is the consideration of the relationship between existing and proposed land-use and built-form when

designing a place. Developments often consider these in isolation, leading to dispersed facilities at the edge of communities. These do not contribute to the legibility of a place, and concentrate civic activity at the edges rather than at the heart of new developments.

New developments have a significant role to play in contributing to the continued vibrancy and viability of rural settlements, however, there is a need to ensure these are not designed in a way that creates enclaves which do not encourage the throughput and incidental interaction of new residents with the existing village centres. This can mean the additional benefits of having new developments are not fully capitalised, as new residents bypass existing amenities and continue to rely on places that are not in the immediate locality. Ultimately, this disconnect can lead to a resistance from local people to further new development.

Topics that could be considered within the Placemaking theme:

- Getting the right mix of uses and types in the right places
- Creating attractive and distinctive identity for new development
- Understanding, valuing and interpreting existing context

Key Placemaking questions for consideration:

- Have we identified the key issues related to Placemaking?
- What are the public places/spaces in Maidstone Borough that you enjoy spending time?
- What are the key features of buildings and places that you would like to see reflected in new development?
- What are the elements of The Borough's heritage and identity that make the borough special?
- What do you think the DPD needs to do in order to deliver great places?



Streets and Buildings

The Design and Sustainability Plan should:

Ensure that development in Maidstone Borough is attractive with distinctive and easy to navigate streets and public spaces.



Image: The Gables, Crosby, Liverpool
Credit: DK-Architects

The current issues in the borough include:

The Borough of Maidstone has a strong heritage with a stock of well-formed buildings and public spaces. However, historically the borough has also had some large-scale infrastructure that have caused unintended consequences to some areas. There are strong historic cues from which development can draw to create legible, human scale, land efficient, and coherent development proposals which makes effective use of land. A coherent arrangement of buildings promotes walking and cycling which in turn leads to an efficient layout; provides continuity and enclosure which results in clearly defined public and private spaces; and enables legibility with recognisable routes, landmarks, and waypoints.

Without clear relationship between building height and street width, some new streets can be delivered out of scale. This can lead to a lack of human scale to development. This results in an environment that does not encourage walking and leads to vehicle dominance, along with higher vehicle speeds. This can reflect negatively on sense of place, human scale environment and perception of safety.

In some parts of the borough, buildings which are large in terms of height and massing can result in a

sense of over-development. Buildings of significantly large height or scale than the existing context should be carefully designed so as to ensure that consideration has been given surroundings. Additionally, new development can lack a strong building line, or have failed to reflect the route's role and function. A lack of definition between the street edge, property frontages and parking areas can result in developments that lack clearly defined spaces and form, which in turn can result in inappropriate and anti-social parking habits.

Topics that could be considered within the Streets and Buildings theme :

- Block type
- Building typologies
- Heights, massing and building lines
- Densities
- Public and semi-public spaces
- Movement within streets
- Spacing and permeability between buildings

Key Streets and Buildings questions for consideration:

- Have we identified the key issues relating to Streets and Buildings?
- How do you use the streets and buildings in your neighbourhood? How could we encourage greater use of spaces in your neighbourhood?
- Are there examples of great spaces in the borough that you enjoy being in?
- What are the architectural/unique features (locally and across the borough) that you would like to see reflected in new development?
- Do you think the borough should set out clear guidance on how to develop good urban design?



Open Space and Nature

The Design and Sustainability Plan should:

Ensure that Maidstone Borough is integrating green spaces and infrastructure at every scale of design, and that these are making a genuine and significant contribution to the net gain of biodiversity, the causes and effects of climate change, and the health and wellbeing of communities.



*Image: Bottière Chênaie, Nantes, France
Credit: Bruel-Delmar Landscape Architects*

The current issues in the borough include:

The Borough of Maidstone has been shaped by its relationship to the landscape and the natural environment. The North Kent Downs AONB makes up a considerable proportion of the north of the Borough, and parts of the south lie within the setting of the High Weald AONB, with the remainder in the low Wealden landscapes. These are characterised by their intricate network of grassland, woodland, riverine habitats and hedgerow-enclosed agricultural fields. These landscapes provide a strong framework from which to enhance, restore and create new biodiverse habitats, as well as providing amenity and well-being benefits for the borough's residents.

The rich landscape context and character of the borough is in danger of not being sufficiently well interpreted in proposals. There is insufficient analysis and interpretation of the visual impacts of developments. Landscape-led approaches to masterplanning a site, particularly in sensitive landscapes, can ensure and demonstrate that the visual impacts of a development are neutral or positive.

There is a recent trend for developments to deliver open space requirements at the edge of sites. Whilst this may be appropriate in some circumstances, generally this can discourage everyday and incidental use. Landscape and open space, including play space and amenity green spaces, should be the framework within which a new development's design evolves. It should be an integral part of the scheme's design, complementing and enhancing the development and the wider area.

Public spaces should be located so as to maximise their use and amenity value, and not used to create buffer zones and/or barriers between new and existing developments.

An overly-simplistic interpretation of landscape character and local wildlife habitats can mean that opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain are not being fully realised.

There is a reliance on high flow-rates and over engineered balancing ponds in the delivery of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). These ponds can be dangerous for people and as such, fenced off and securitised. Where sensitively designed SuDS can support important wet/dry habitats that contribute to a net gain of in biodiversity.

Topics that could be considered within the Open Space and Nature theme:

- Interpreting landscape context
- Responding to topography
- Designing green infrastructure and open spaces as an integral part of place
- Play and informal recreation
- SuDS, drainage, flood risk and water management
- Biodiversity net-gain
- Role of green infrastructure

Key Open Space and Nature questions for consideration:

- Have we identified the key issues related to Open Space and Nature?
- What are the positive elements of Maidstone's natural environment that make the borough special?
- How do you use the open spaces in your neighbourhood or where you work? How would you improve them?
- Is there a good network of open spaces in your neighbourhood and adjacent areas for you to use and to access other places?
- Do you think the borough needs to set out clear guidance on how to deliver new development that fits within the landscape and natural environment?



Movement

The Design and Sustainability Plan should:

Ensure that the Borough of Maidstone is delivering a connected network of streets that prioritises journeys by active and sustainable transport modes, whilst allowing the use of streets for essential private vehicle movements. Maidstone's streets should be attractive and safe for all users with a clear and legible movement hierarchy of primary, secondary and quiet streets.



*Image: Castleward, Derby
Credit: HTA Design*

The current issues in the borough include:

The Borough of Maidstone comprises a dynamic and varied set of places, with complex patterns of movement related to commuting and other activities. However, the transport system has a high dependence on single occupancy car journeys. Historic development, and road infrastructure has, as in many other areas, reinforced these patterns, which are not unusual in geographies characterised by dispersed population centres outside of the town centre. To ensure that the borough continues to thrive, active and sustainable transport modes should be prioritised and facilities designed into developments from the outset. These routes and facilities should contribute, reinforce or develop the existing local sustainable transport network. This will ensure that a safe, accessible and inviting environment with efficient sustainable transport connections is provided to encourage less car-dependency and reliance, thus safeguarding against future negative impacts to the place, and the environment.

Where developments at the edge of existing settlements rely on a single access point to the wider highway network, enclaves can develop that do not contribute to the legibility and integration of these new developments with their context. Opportunities for new connections via foot or cycle can also be overlooked, both independently and as part of new access points. This can result in some developments being poorly connected or severing surroundings, impacting the permeability and sustainability of new and existing neighbourhoods.

A lack of clear and well-articulated movement and place hierarchy in developments can have a significant impact on how the public realm is used. Properly articulated streets can play an important role in legibility and placemaking, by helping people know where they are, what facilities they provide, and how people can use them to navigate the

space. Where residential streets are not considered as places in their own right, this can create an environment that does not encourage people to spend time in, and navigate on foot or by cycle. This may result in a lack of sense of community and place.

The primacy of designing for private car use has discouraged equal investment in the design and integration of active and public modes of transport. As a result, existing walking and cycling and public transport facilities can be inefficient, unattractive, and ultimately a lower quality option for people to choose to move by. This in turn perpetuates car dominance and associated environmental and health-related consequences in the borough. Current active and sustainable transport networks in the borough are sometimes not considered integrated enough to respond to the climate emergency, transport decarbonisation and emission reduction targets, as well as urban resilience goals, and changing travel trends and patterns.

Topics that could be considered within Movement theme:

- Dedicated active travel infrastructure
- Safe and secure cycle parking
- Public transport integration
- Incorporation of green infrastructure in streets
- Defining the movement hierarchy
- Shared mobility solutions (Cycle hire, mobility hubs, micromobility, car sharing/clubs)
- Charging of electric and low emission vehicles
- Appropriately located and provided car parking design
- Demand responsive public transport solutions in rural settings

Key Movement questions for consideration: •

- Do you think that the built environment provides attractive options to walk and cycle? And what would encourage you to walk or cycle?
- What do you think about the provision of charging points and ability to drive sustainably in your area?
- Do you have a good range of options for moving around the borough that you live in?
- Do you think the borough needs to set out clearer guidance for coordinating different types of transport in new development?

Sustainable Buildings

The Design and Sustainability Plan should:

Ensure that new development in the Borough of Maidstone is delivered with net-zero carbon, and that buildings are able to mitigate the effects and adapt to the rapidly changing climate.



*Image: Exhibition Mews, Whitehill Bordon, East Hampshire
Credit: Ash Sakula Architects*

The current issues in the borough include:

Maidstone Borough will have to make its buildings more sustainable to lower its carbon footprint and reduce the whole life emissions of carbon to net-zero. There is significant opportunity to improve the built environment and ensure that all new development achieves high standards of sustainable design and construction, minimises carbon emissions and use resources efficiently, and enhancing resilience to a changing climate. Development must change from an assumption of the heating and cooling of buildings using fossil fuels, to harnessing the natural resources of the borough through environmental design and building efficiency. There are important advances in the local production of power through sustainable modes and these can be encouraged and promoted. This would make new (and existing) buildings both more resilient and more sustainable.

To deliver this, the design, development and adaptation of buildings should focus on principles related to the comfort of the occupants, energy supply, and demand and the environmental impact. Passive environmental design can ensure that buildings are heated and cooled naturally, minimising the need for carbon intensive mechanical solutions. Low and zero carbon technologies such as batteries, small scale solar, and heat pumps are reaching a degree of maturity and confidence so that cost effective energy production and storage can meet local requirements. A whole life approach to designing buildings can ensure that the carbon consumption of materials is minimised at design stage, that buildings are suitably insulated, and that at the end of their life materials can be suitably reused and recycled minimising environmental

impacts. And in an area where water is a scarce resource, any opportunity to reduce usage and waste should be exploited through innovative ways of capturing and reusing water.

Materials used in construction are generally carbon intensive in their manufacture meaning there is significant embedded carbon before the buildings are even occupied. There is significant scope to reduce these emissions using sustainable products, locally sourced materials and construction techniques that enable building components to be easily separated and recycled at the end of their design life.

Redevelopment proposals should prioritise the adaptation of existing buildings rather than the demolition and rebuilding on site. There is scope to ensure a 'fabric first' approach to designing buildings, and provide appropriate insulation of properties to minimise the energy consumption necessary for the comfortable occupation of the structure.

Topics that could be considered in the DPD:

- Potential for ground source heat, solar, battery storage low and zero carbon technologies
- Building orientation
- Passive design
- Environmental performance
- Reduction of waste and material use
- Water capture and on-site reuse

Key Sustainable Buildings questions for consideration:

- Do you think it is important and necessary to have sustainable building standards?
- Are you aware of good or bad examples of sustainable building design, either in your neighbourhood or further afield? Please provide examples.
- What are the most pressing sustainability issues you think should be addressed by new development?
- Do you think the borough should set out clear guidance on how to achieve ambitious sustainability criteria in new development?



Design Quality

The Design and Sustainability Plan should:

Ensure the delivery of great buildings and landscapes that are robust and adaptable enough to stand the test of time, enhancing the borough's identity. This includes new homes that have sufficient space to allow for a good standard of living, meeting the needs of current and future lifestyles. Ensure the use of high quality and appropriate materials that last throughout a development's lifespan.



*Image: Horsted Park, Chatham, Medway
Credit: Proctor and Mathews Architects*

The current issues in the borough include:

Maidstone Borough strives to provide a legacy of buildings and landscapes that will stand the test of time, with the use of materials and detailing that draw from the unique heritage of the borough in a coherent and contemporary manner. The quality of a development - be it commercial, community, or residential - is key to the way the overall success of its design is perceived, and subsequently the extent to which the community take ownership of and identify with it.

To ensure that development is viewed as positive and desirable by the communities that it is designed to support, opportunities should be taken to ensure that the design aspirations set out at a project's inception are achieved through its delivery, occupation and ongoing maintenance. In this way, the Borough of Maidstone can continue to provide attractive places that people want to make home.

Often materials are specified for a development at application stage are not being delivered consistently as the site is built out. This can be because the materials being used turn out to be of lower quality than expected, or the materials specification changes throughout delivery phases of a development, leaving an obvious patchwork of design quality and lack of attention to detail across the same site. There are also instances of differing design approaches and articulation of homes for private sale and other affordable types of housing. These can create obvious inconsistencies across development sites.

There are instances where the materials palette is designed to imitate what is perceived as the local vernacular. Whilst this can be successful if very sensitively considered, there is a risk of pastiche if the implementation is not well enough executed or if the quality of materials implemented is lower than the adjacent historic examples.

Development needs to provide adequate space to meet the everyday needs of the residents of the borough, including outdoor space in the form of private gardens and balconies. Consideration of storage space needs to be included in homes to ensure that usable space is maximised.

Topics that could be considered within the D&S DPD:

- Local distinctiveness
- Scale and detailing
- Materials specifications and building quality
- Modern methods of construction
- Quality of internal and external environments (inc. HMOs and office to resi)
- Private open space (gardens and balconies)
- Colour/materials
- Frontages
- Ensuring quality granted is quality delivered

Key Sustainable Buildings questions for consideration:

- Have we identified the issues relating to design quality in the Borough?
- Do you think it is important to set design quality standards for new development in the Borough?
 - What are the unique features of your neighbourhood or further afield that you think contribute to quality of place?
- Can you think of good examples of attention to detail in new developments in your neighbourhood? Please provide examples.
- Do you think the Borough should set out guidance on how to interpret local distinctiveness and materials?
- Do you think that we have appropriately avoided duplication with building regulation requirements? Please specify.

Key Evidence Documents

In addition to the production of key evidence to support the DPD, there are a number of existing documents that will support the Design and Sustainability DPD:

Placemaking

- National Design Guidance
- National Model Design Code
- Maidstone Economic Development Strategy

Streets & Buildings

- National Model Design Code
- Kent Downs AONB Farmstead Guidance; Landscape Design Handbook; Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: a design handbook.
- High Weald Design Guide
- The National Design Guide
- Kent Design Guide
- Kent Downs AONB Unit Renewable Energy Position Statement
- Kent Downs AONB Unit Setting Position Statement
- AONB Management Plans

Open Space and Nature

- Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment
- Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment Supplement 2012
- Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study
- Medway Valley Strategic Landscape Enhancement Plan
- Maidstone Landscapes of local Value
- AONB Management Plans
- Maidstone Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy
- Maidstone Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan
- Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy
- Kent Water for Sustainable Growth (2017)
- Kent Environment Strategy (2016)
- Kent Biodiversity Strategy (2020-2045)

Movement

- Gear Change – a Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking
- Gear Change: One Year On
- The second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2)
- LTN 1/20 Design of Cycling Infrastructure
- National Planning Policy Framework
- National Model Design Code
- Decarbonising Transport A Better, Greener Britain
- Bus Back Better: national bus strategy for England
- Streets for a Healthy Life (Homes England)
- Manual for Streets 1 and 2
- Future of Freight Plan: a long term plan
- Maidstone Transport Strategy 2011-2031
- Kent County Council Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031,
- Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: a design handbook.

Sustainable Buildings

- Kent Water for Sustainable Growth
- Maidstone Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy
- Maidstone Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan
- Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2020)
- Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway (2019)
- Kent Renewable Energy Action Plan (Updated 2017)
- Kent Environment Strategy (2016)
- Kent Downs AONB Unit Renewable Energy Position Statement
- Breeam
- Passivhaus

Design Quality

- Building for Life 12: Maidstone Edition
- National Model Design Code
- Kent Downs AONB Farmstead Guidance
- Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook
- Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: a design handbook.
- High Weald Design Guide
- The National Design Guide
- Kent Design Guide
- Nationally Prescribed Space Standards

- **Have we identified the key evidence base documents?**

