

## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Planning, Transport & Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Thursday 26 September 2013**

#### **URGENT ITEM: Five Year Housing Land Supply – Methodology and Judgements**

**Report of:** Orla Sweeney, Overview & Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 **REASON FOR URGENCY:** to be taken as an urgent item to enable the Committee to make a timely recommendation in response to the instruction from Full Council.
- 1.2 On Monday 2 September 2013 an extraordinary meeting of the Maidstone Borough Council was held to consider a motion.
- 1.3 As a result of this meeting Maidstone Borough Council made a detailed 3 part instruction (**Appendix A**). Part 1 and Part 2 of this instruction were to the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee as follows:
  1. Elected members are provided with the opportunity to both scrutinise the methodology and judgements that need to be made in calculating the five year housing land supply through Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
  2. The issues to be considered at a single item agenda of the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> September and Overview and Scrutiny Committee should report its findings to Full Council as soon as practicable and in any case should report the position it has reached to the Full Council scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013.
- 1.4 The Chairman felt it appropriate to receive a presentation from representatives from Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council and Maidstone Borough Council on the five Year housing land supply in order to allow elected members the opportunity to both scrutinise the methodology and judgements the need to be made in calculating the five year housing land supply.
- 1.5 The Committee concluded at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September and in its report to Full Council on 18<sup>th</sup> September that a second meeting should be held to evaluate the evidence it felt was missing.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee are advised to hear evidence from and interview the following witnesses in turn:
- Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council, two representatives
  - Home Builders Federation (HBF), James Stevens, Strategic Planner
  - Maidstone Borough Council, Rob Jarman Head of Planning and Development and Sue Whiteside, Team Leader, Spatial Policy
- 2.2 The Committee should consider the evidence provided by Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council, attached at **Appendix B** and the evidence provided by Maidstone Borough Council, at **Appendix C**.
- 2.3 The Committee should also consider the background information provided at **Appendix D** and **Appendix E**. Appendix D is guidance from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) in relation to a five year housing land supply. Appendix E is a table of information that has been gathered to assist the Committee. All Kent Authorities were contacted to establish if they had undertaken a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), if they had a tested five year housing land supply and if they had included a windfall allowance.
- 2.4 The Committee is recommended to report its findings to Full Council as soon as practicable.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September the Committee supported a recommendation to hold a second meeting as it was felt that there was not enough evidence to support Boughton Monchelsea's argument that a specific number of windfall sites should be included based on past trends nor did it feel that Maidstone Borough Council provided enough evidence to support their argument.
- 3.2 The Chairman and Vice-Chairman were given delegated authority to scope the meeting.
- 3.3 In its concluding deliberations the Committee had referenced guidance from the PAS on a five year housing land supply (Appendix D). Under 'next steps' it states that:
- 'The methodology should: ensure that the NPPF requirements are followed; take into account appeal cases which refer to flaws in methodologies; and, if considered necessary, be tested by peers in other local authorities.'

3.4 It was on this basis that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman felt that all Kent local authorities should be contacted on behalf of the Committee to establish if they:

- a) If they had undertaken a SHLAA
- b) Had a tested five year housing land supply; and
- c) If they had included a windfall allowance.

3.5 This information has been included at Appendix E for the Committee's information.

#### **4. Witnesses selection and meeting objective**

4.1 Following its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September the Chairman of the Planning Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny reported the Committee's findings to Full Council on 18<sup>th</sup> September. The statement, in full, is attached at **Appendix F**.

4.2 The Statement to full Council outlines the Committee's recommendations for a second meeting.

4.3 Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council have specifically been requested to provide background evidence to substantiate paragraph 5 c in the document titled 'Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Housing Land Supply, Note of Advice.' The paragraph reads:

"5. Turning to the substance, it is worth emphasising some important facts:

c. There is likewise the clearest evidence, based on past trends, that windfalls will likewise arise in the next 5-year period, **at a rate again in excess of 300 year (332 dpa or 1660 in total).**"

4.4 In bold and underlined is the part of the paragraph the Committee specifically seek evidence of.

4.5 Maidstone Borough Council witnesses have been requested to provide evidence of its methodology and judgements in relation to future trends which have resulted in its decision regarding windfall sites.

4.6 In addition to these witnesses the Chairman and Vice-Chairman contacted PAS for an independent planning advisor. PAS sent a request on the Committee's behalf to its suppliers but no one responded to this.

4.7 A Strategic Planner from the HBF was sought as a witness to provide the Committee with an alternative perspective.

#### **5. Impact on Corporate Objectives**

- 5.1 The Committee will primarily consider reports that deliver against all the Council priority: 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live.'
- 5.2 The Strategic Plan sets the Council's key objectives for the medium term and has a range of objectives which support the delivery of the Council's priorities. Actions to deliver these key objectives may therefore include work that the Committee will consider throughout the coming year.