

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

MONDAY 9 JUNE 2014

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Report prepared by Emma Boshell

**1. INTERIM REPORT ON THE KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE
MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 PUBLIC
CONSULTATION EVENTS**

1.1 Issue for Consideration

- 1.1.1 To note the key issues arising from the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 public consultation events. A report setting out the key issues arising from written representations together with recommendations to amend the local plan will be presented to the Committee in due course.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Planning and Development

- 1.2.1 That the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the key issues arising from the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 public consultation events.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Background

- 1.3.2 In February 2014, Cabinet approved the Maidstone Borough Local Plan for public consultation. At this stage in the plan-making process, consultation is carried out under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, allowing a reasonably flexible and informal consultation in that the document is still in draft form, and the regulations permit the council to make considerable changes to the local plan following the public consultation. The consultation ran for six and a half weeks to allow for public holidays, from 21 March to 7 May 2014.

- 1.3.3 In accordance with the Member approved consultation plan and stakeholder engagement plan, and the adopted Statement of Community Involvement, the council arranged over 30 events and in

doing so, engaged with an extensive cross section of Maidstone's communities. The consultation events included 15 public exhibitions, 5 duty to co-operate events with neighbouring authorities and infrastructure providers, 4 events with Maidstone's business communities, 4 workshops with the parish councils and with representatives of the non-parished areas, 3 events with the development industry, 2 online 'Twitter' debates and 1 staff event. The full list of events is attached at Appendix A.

1.3.4 The consultation and events were advertised in the Kent Messenger, the Kent and Sussex Courier and in the Downs Mail. In addition, full details of the consultation were published on the council's website including electronic versions of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and its evidence base. Hard copies of the consultation document, CDs and comment forms were placed in all libraries around the borough and in The Gateway on King Street. At the start of the consultation emails and packs were sent to all councillors and parish councils. The packs included a copy of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, a CD of the document, A4 posters for display on local notice boards, and a number of comment forms. Further, all consultees on the Local Plan consultation database were sent the latest edition of Planning Viewpoint newsletter and notified of the consultation.

1.3.5 The consultation was undertaken by the Spatial Policy team with support from Communications, Economic Development and Housing.

1.3.6 Representations

1.3.7 Approximately 2,200 representations were received during the consultation, plus an additional 50 that have been received after the consultation closed.

1.3.8 Of the 2,200 representations received within the consultation period, approximately 15% were submitted via the online consultation portal, 30% were submitted by email, and 55% were received by post (i.e. comment form or letter), many of which were submitted towards the end of the consultation.

1.3.9 The process of logging, validating and summarising the representations is now underway. This has to be completed before officers can present further reports that recommend amendments to the policies of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

1.3.10 Key issues raised at the consultation events

1.3.11 This section of the report summarises the key issues that were raised at the consultation events. Whilst officers will not know the full extent of the issues raised until all consultation responses have been logged,

validated and summarised, the conversations held at the various events around the borough give a good indication of the key issues. The issues have been organised by policy reference.

1.3.12 Spatial strategy

Policy	Key issues
SS1	Concerns about the soundness of the objectively assessed need of 19,600 homes and whether this figure should be met. Some consultees argue that the housing target should be determined from the borough's emerging neighbourhood plans. However, also some support for the 19,600 homes, as it was acknowledged that future generations will need somewhere to live.
SS1	Concerns that the housing numbers for the rural service centres and larger villages are too high.
SS1	Concerns about the quantity of development planned in the south east of Maidstone, and the impact on surrounding roads.
SS1	Concerns about the high number of greenfield sites and the need for a 'brownfield first' approach.
SS1	Support for the rejection of a concentrated settlement pattern of development approach e.g. Golding Homes freestanding settlement.
SS1	Concerns about a disconnect between the working age population and jobs created.

1.3.13 Spatial policies:

Policy	Key issues
SP1	Maidstone town centre – concerns from local businesses that Maidstone is not seen as a location for new development – the town is in competition with other centres for business and customers.
SP3 SP4	Rural service centres – concerns that the rural service centres and larger villages will lose their character and village setting.
SP4	Larger villages – concerns about Boughton Monchelsea and Coxheath being classified as a larger villages, as residents believe they does not have adequate infrastructure or services.
SP5	Countryside – support for the protection of the countryside, outside of identified settlement boundaries. However, there was a small number of concerns that this policy does not have the same strength as existing policy ENV28.

1.3.14 Development management policies:

Policy	Key issues
DM4	Principles of good design – concerns about the quality of new developments, in particular design and adequacy of garden space.
DM13	Sustainable transport – concerns about parking standards for new developments.
DM14	Public transport – bus services need to be improved in rural areas.
DM17	Economic development – concerns about the expansion of rural employment sites leading to further traffic congestion through the town.
DM23 DM24	Housing mix and affordable housing – residents consider that 40% affordable housing is too high for the rural areas, and call for a mix of house types, not just executive homes. There is a need for smaller homes for young people and the elderly.
DM25	Local needs housing – concerns about the lack of local needs housing in Lenham.

1.3.15 Infrastructure delivery policies:

Policy	Key issues
ID1	Infrastructure delivery – major concerns borough-wide about infrastructure, in particular flooding, waste water, education, health and highways.
ID1	Concerns that the consultation was underway but with so many infrastructure unknowns.
ID1	Concerns about the capacity of the crossroads at Staplehurst and the limited scope for improvements. It was queried at what point transport constraints become so extreme to make development unacceptable.
ID2	Electronic communications – good broadband connections are vital for businesses.

1.3.16 Site allocation policies:

Policy	Key issues
-	Support for the exclusion of Cross Keys, Bearsted, due to regular flooding.
H1(2)	East of Hermitage Lane – support for the protection of ancient woodland, but concerns about the new school being sited on orchard land. Also, objections to the vehicular access proposed along Howard Drive.
H1(39)	Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank, Headcorn – concerns that new development will cause surface water run-off into

	existing adjacent development, but also support for new development due to lack of affordable housing.
H1(46)	Vicarage Road, Yalding – concerns about access.
H1(48)	Heath Road, Boughton Monchelsea – concerns about access.
H3(2)	Invicta Barracks – concerns about the delivery of this site from developers, as it remains in active use.
H3(3)	Lenham – concerns about where the 1,500 homes will go and that they should be supported with new employment, but appreciation of the transparency of the council in consulting on the proposal.
-	Support for the exclusion of employment development at Junction 8 of the M20.
RMX1(1)	Newnham Park – concerns about new retail development and the potential impact on the town centre.
GT1	Criticism that the local plan does not allocate sufficient sites for Gypsies & Travellers and those sites it does allocate are existing unauthorised sites. More sites need to be found to prevent further unauthorised development in locations which already have a greater proportion of Gypsy & Traveller sites such as Headcorn and Staplehurst.
PKR1(1)	Linton crossroads – objections due to the loss of greenfield land and query over demand. Also, concerns about how bus priority measures will be delivered on the A229 from Linton crossroads given lack of carriageway space. A park and ride site would be better located between the A274 and A229 to serve both routes.

1.3.17 Work with parish councils in rural areas

1.3.18 The spatial strategy (policy SS1) of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan identifies a settlement hierarchy, where development is to be focused. After the town centre and urban area the hierarchy identifies five rural service centres and five larger villages, namely Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden, Staplehurst, Boughton Monchelsea, Coxheath, Hollingbourne (Eythorne Street), Sutton Valence and Yalding. The level of development proposed at these locations is higher than that proposed in the Core Strategy in 2011. As such, the council sought to engage more fully with the communities most affected by the proposed development.

1.3.19 The approach taken was based on workshops that focused on identifying a consensual vision for the place, the physical characteristics of each area and developing a clear and constructive expression of the community's expectations for the quality of any new development. Design South East, an independent not-for-profit organisation, provides built environment design support for local authorities, the development sector and communities, and help

facilitate these forums. They strongly advocate the importance of talking to, and getting to know each local community, to understand their design requirements to help foster trust between residents, local authorities and developers. In February 2014, Design South East were commissioned by the council to undertake this work with the rural service centres and larger village parishes.

1.3.20 Specifically, the work programme had three aims for the communities:

1. To have a clear understanding of how the settlement is organised and how these principles underpin character and can be used to guide future development that reinforces this character;
2. To be able to assess the locations of housing in the local plan against the core principles of their settlement – is there an opportunity to strengthen character?; and
3. To have the tools to engage constructively with developers and local authorities about the quality of planning applications.

1.3.21 A number of place-making workshops and 'walk arounds' have been held with the parishes. In addition, two collective facilitated sessions were held with council officers and the parishes. These were particularly beneficial. Moving forward, a multi-stakeholder event is planned for September, where parishes will sit around the table with council officers and service providers such as Kent County Council, Southern Water and the Environment Agency. The event will take a place-based approach and discussions will centre on individual sites. This is considered to be the best way to pool knowledge.

1.3.22 Design South East is expected to submit their final report and recommendations to the council towards the end of June 2014.

1.3.23 The Economic Development Strategy

1.3.24 Work has recently begun by the Economic Development team on producing a new Economic Development Strategy, as the previous one was produced in 2008 and is now considerably out of date. Information has been collected from a business survey, where 80 responses were received. Shared Intelligence has been commissioned to write the strategy. The development of the strategy will involve discussion with businesses and other stakeholders, and the team is engaging in a programme of business visits to gather local intelligence on business needs. The survey, visits and Economic Development Strategy will aim to identify the issues and choices that the council can address, and the interventions that may be needed to grow the type of local economy Maidstone wants in order to meet the employment needs of businesses and residents.

1.3.25 The Economic Development Strategy, when complete, will add to the suite of corporate documents which help to inform the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. Such council strategies include the Housing Strategy, the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Plan. In essence, the role of the local plan is to help deliver the spatial objectives of these wider strategies.

1.3.26 The Spatial Policy team will continue to be involved in the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy, inputting at key stages to ensure alignment between these two council documents.

1.3.27 The timetable for the production of the Economic Development Strategy is set out below.

	May				June					July			
W/C	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28
STAGE 1: INCEPTION, S.O.E													
Inception Meeting													
Scoping Report													
Review policies and plans													
State of the Economy report													
STAGE 2: VISION													
Stakeholder interviews													
Key Choices Report													
Workshops x 3 (Dates TBC)													
Interim report													
STAGE 3: STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT													
Stakeholder interviews													
Prepare First Draft EDS													
Comments and feedback													
Draft final EDS													
STAGE 4 ACTION PLANNING													
Action Planning													
Final EDS & Action Plan													

1.3.28 Timetable for the production of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan

1.3.29 The Maidstone Borough Local Plan timetable is currently under review following the significant volume of new sites (approximately 100) received through the additional call for sites, the volume of

representations received on the Regulation 18 public consultation, and the need to commission additional evidence to support the emerging plan and to respond to public challenges.

1.3.30A revised Local Development Scheme outlining the local plan programme will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 This is an information report for Overview and Scrutiny, and as such, there is no alternative action.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Maidstone Borough Local Plan consultation impacted on all three corporate objectives as set out in the Strategic Plan 2011-15.

1.5.2 **For Maidstone to have a growing economy** – residents, businesses and stakeholders have had an opportunity to comment on how best to achieve a growing economy in the borough.

1.5.3 **For Maidstone to be a decent place to live** – residents, businesses and stakeholders in the borough have had the best opportunity to comment on the policies that will shape how the borough will grow over the period until 2031.

1.5.4 **Corporate and customer excellence** –this objective deals with delivering cost effective services to the right people in the right places at the right time, and also delivering the information in an understandable format. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan consultation focused on reaching residents, businesses and stakeholders in a cost effective manner but ensured that nobody was disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, and officers ensured that people were listened to.

1.6 Other Implications

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development

X
X

6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management

1.6.1 Staffing – The Spatial Policy team will dedicate its time to assessing the representations made during the consultation and to making recommendations to amend policies. Other officers in the council will contribute as appropriate. Resources will be kept under review to ensure representations are dealt with in a timely manner.

1.6.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) – there is no longer a statutory duty to prepare an EqIA for local plans but the EqIA attached at Appendix B has been completed in order to meet the best practice requirements of the council. All individuals and communities have been engaged in the consultation process in accordance with the equalities legislation and the council’s Corporate Equality Policy, and consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

1.7 Relevant Documents

1.8 None.

1.8.1 Appendices

1.8.2 Appendix A – MBLP Regulation 18 consultation events.

1.8.3 Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment.

1.8.4 Background Documents

1.8.5 None.

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED

Yes

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No

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If yes, this is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected:

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