

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Maidstone Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: Stakeholder Engagement – Responses Summary**

#### **Who responded:**

48 responses were submitted in total including 45 online and 3 by letter. Some online respondents also sent a letter or email with a copy of their response. Of the responses 8 were from parish council representatives and 2 from neighbouring authorities (Tunbridge Wells and Medway). Kent County Council, Kent Downs AONB and Kent Wildlife Trust responded. National statutory consultees Sport England, Natural England and the Environment Agency also provided responses. The remainder were from local voluntary organisations and individuals.

#### **Overview of key themes:**

The majority of respondents welcomed the strategy or generally supported its aims and objectives with a minority of exceptions. However, there were strong concerns related to the strategy development and consultation process. There were also many comments and suggestions regarding the content which are summarised below.

#### **Strategy process:**

- Strategy aspirations good but too general with no plan for implementation and no confidence that MBC will deliver.
- Timescale too slow, too late to impact on current development plans, out of sync with Local Plan development.
- Lack of evidence base to support strategy (open space audit, playing pitch and sports assessment).
- Need to assess progress and build on previous green space strategy.
- Concern over consultation process – particularly with Parishes – too little, too late.
- Concern that strategy proposals are not resourced/funded so will not be delivered (concern re lack of CIL policy to help fund local projects).
- Concern that strategy may impede economic development of the borough.
- Concern about how GBI proposals relate to Local Plan policies.
- Concern that updated audit will classify parks by component parts rather than whole parks.

#### **Strategy content – general:**

- Strategy too urban-centric/lack of recognition of rural and agricultural issues.
- Concern that urban and countryside objectives are separated – need to be considered holistically.
- Link between landscape features, function and green infrastructure is not reflected in strategy.
- Need more integrated thinking in the issues and opportunities section including a matrix of actions and benefits in summary.

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- Key issues re agriculture are outdated – loss of land for food production and recreational green space is current issue.
- Focus should be more on protecting and improving GBI (concern over loss of green space to development).
- Need to provide analysis of what improvements are needed where to deliver stated objectives.
- Needs to link more with existing documents and projects eg LBAP, BRANCH, KRAG and BOAs.
- 'Unfriendly' wording is off-putting.

#### **Strategy content – specific:**

##### Policy context:

- Include AONB plans and strategies in regional policy section.
- Include Flood and Water Management Act, Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans in policy context.
- Clarify status of documents in policy section.

##### Rural areas:

- Maps should include agricultural land including quality gradings.
- Maps should include detailed Borough Landscape Character Areas.
- Include map showing agri-environment schemes.
- ANGST should be a starting point for more qualitative analysis in rural areas – countryside may compensate for shortfall.

##### Blue infrastructure:

- Map showing relationship of Borough to water sub-catchment areas needed.
- Need to deal with issues in surface water management plans, catchment flood management plans and river basin management plans.
- Need to deliver strategic SUDS and provide more detail on SUDS in new development.
- Strategy needs to inform land use on flood plains.
- More emphasis needed on flood storage eg allowing flooding of green spaces, creation of flood meadows, wetlands, SuDS and not allowing building in flood plains.
- Need more proposals for enhancing water quality.
- Mention flooding in 2013/14.

##### Biodiversity:

- BOAs need more explanation.
- Need more focus on relationship between biodiversity and water.
- Need to focus on quality of habitats not just quantity.

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#### Sustainable movement:

- Focus more on improving walking and cycling routes – cycle ways in particular are lacking.
- Safety and lighting of routes needs highlighting.
- Need to create 'quiet lanes' and protect byways and green lanes.
- Need to identify how gaps in rights of way will be addressed.

#### Community involvement:

- Need to create an umbrella group for GBI related voluntary groups to share knowledge etc.

#### Heritage:

- Need to highlight protection of locally important heritage assets and local landscapes as well as nationally important ones.

#### Other:

- Acknowledge playing fields in smaller villages.
- More information needed on school grounds and link to schools.
- Need to include private gardens and issues such as problem of paving over front gardens.

#### **Area specific themes:**

South East of Maidstone – concern about development proposals leading to loss of landscape, lack of outdoor facilities and coalescence of settlements.

Langley – preserve land as green wedge at Imperial Park and identify special landscape areas in South Maidstone.

Langley Fruit Plateau should be marked for protection on map.

Loose – cycle path proposed in Neighbourhood Plan from Loose to Maidstone town centre but needs funding.

Loose Valley and stream – benefits are understated in document.

Sutton Valence – oppose designation as a 'larger village'.

Coxheath Parish – concern re lack of public green space.

Kent Downs AONB – GBI to mitigate impact of development in AONB and visitor pressures.

Harrietsham – open space audit carried out for Neighbourhood Plan.

Marden – concern over loss of open space and views to development.

Vinters Valley Nature Reserve and Cobtree Country Manor Park – add to the historic parks list (map 4 of the strategy document).

Bearsted area – concern that BOAs don't extend to key sites in this area and open countryside not protected from development in Local Plan.

Area north of Bearsted Rd – concern that developments approved are in contradiction to this strategy.

M20 J6 to J7 – more tree planting needed.

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A20 corridor – needs more attention as river basin source and area of recharge for North Downs aquifer.

Mote Park and Cobham Park are overused and new sites are needed to take pressure off.

Headcorn, Staplehurst, Marden – why no green space provision/investment in these areas?

Boxley Parish – concern re lack of play areas.

Concern that there are no proposals to protect Greensand Ridge and Low Weald areas.

Oaken Wood – concern about protection from quarrying.

River Beult SSSI to be restored so that it changes from 'unfavourable' to 'unfavourable improving' and ultimately to 'favourable' condition.

River Medway through town centre - more needs to be made of river frontage, need to deculvert river, extend footpaths on west side of river.

River Teise labelling incorrect and need to state impact of Bewl water management on river and ecological status.