

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

8 OCTOBER 2014

REFERENCES FROM COUNCIL

1. PETITION - ALLOCATION OF HOUSING SITES - LENHAM

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Council held on 17 September 2014, a petition in the following terms was presented by Mr Brian Llong:

We, the undersigned, being either residents or persons working in or having an association with Lenham, call upon Maidstone Borough Council to stop its decision to consider Lenham as being a suitable Parish to accommodate 1500 homes.

We believe that what to all intents and purposes is creating another village size development within the Parish would have a devastating effect on the local community.

We call upon Maidstone Borough Council to have a fair and even dispersal policy for housing throughout the Borough.

In presenting the petition, Mr Llong said that local residents were concerned about the impact of so many new homes on the character of the village and on schools, roads and other infrastructure.

- 1.2 During the discussion on the petition, Members made a number of points, including:
- The strong sentiments being expressed by local residents should form an important part of the Council's consideration of the various components of the new Local Plan going forward.
 - Lenham had not been singled out to receive the largest numbers of new homes. The Council needed to produce a sound new Local Plan very soon to avoid the risk of planning decisions being increasingly taken out of its control. In the meantime, the Council was about to embark on an intensive series of consultations to discuss concerns and share information.
 - The organisation of the petition demonstrated that local residents wanted to engage with the Council on this important issue. The new Local Plan was still in draft form and there

would be further discussion on housing site allocations, but it could not be guaranteed that there would be no housing growth in Lenham.

- The projected level of housing development was unprecedented in this Borough. Effectively, the Borough was experiencing unplanned growth because the figures could not be evidenced, and this was having an unsustainable impact on infrastructure, amenity and quality of life. It was accepted that growth was required, but it should be managed growth.
- The updated "objectively assessed need" for new housing was for 18,600 dwellings during the period 2011-31 (a reduction in the total requirement by some 1,000 dwellings compared with the main Strategic Housing Market Assessment report).
- Housing allocations would not be delivered immediately, but over the Plan period. The housing market in the UK was unsustainable with demand exceeding supply. A new Local Plan was needed to enable the Council to determine in a strategic way where growth should most appropriately go to meet current and future requirements.

1.3 The Council agreed that the petition and the points raised during the debate be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

1.4 RECOMMENDED:

1.4.1 That the Cabinet consider the petition and the points made by Members during the Council debate.

2. PETITION – FUTURE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - HEADCORN

2.1 At the meeting of the Council held on 17 September 2014, a petition in the following terms was presented by Councillor Edwards-Daem:

This petition is organised by residents of Headcorn

No to irresponsible building and urbanisation in Headcorn; ignoring local voters and contradicting the neighbourhood plan, ignoring the inadequate road infrastructure and road capacity, ignoring the adverse impact of traffic on village life and residents' safety, ignoring inadequate sewer capacity, ignoring serious flood risk, ignoring that the school is oversubscribed and promoting the destruction of village life.

In presenting the petition, Councillor Edwards-Daem said that local residents were concerned about the impact of new housing development on village life and infrastructure.

2.2 During the discussion on the petition, Members made a number of points, including:

- Consideration should be given to the special circumstances associated with development in the Weald.
- There was a need to build more homes and these should be affordable and accessible. However, until the new Local Plan was in place, the Borough was susceptible to developer-led housing provision particularly in village locations.
- If the current trajectory of growth continued beyond 2031, there was a risk that the character of the Borough would be destroyed with overcrowding and pollution etc. Consideration should be given to the impact of development beyond the life of the Plan.
- Infrastructure providers were looking at ways to mitigate the impact of development. There were problems with sewage in Headcorn, but unless Southern Water objected to an application it was difficult for the Council to refuse permission on these grounds.
- The administration was trying to control development, not to impose it. The Government was pressing local authorities to produce new Local Plans. The consequences were not popular, and a proper debate was required.
- Further consideration should be given to projected population growth, the demand for new housing and the impact on local infrastructure.
- Consideration should be given to reducing the housing figures having regard to their sustainability.

2.3 The Council agreed that the petition and the points raised during the debate be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

2.4 RECOMMENDED:

2.4.1 That the Cabinet consider the petition and the points made by Members during the Council debate.

NOTE: A briefing note provided by the Head of Planning and Development to assist the Council in its consideration of these petitions is attached as Appendix A.