

Annex B

Workshop	MDE DPD Issues and Options Report
Date	28th April 2008
Time	7:30 – 9:30pm
Location	Committee Room, Gibson Building
Attendees	Matthew Balfour (TMBC) Brian Gates (TMBC) Bruce Stewart (TMBC) Nigel De Wit (TMBC) Jenny Mentz (TMBC) Andrew Flindell (Aylesford Parish Council) Carole D'Silva (West Malling Parish Council) Alan West (West Malling Parish Council) Trudy Dean (West Malling Parish Council) Steve Perry (Borough Green Parish Council) Mike Mearns (Leybourne Parish Council) Barrie Garlic (Snodland Town Council) Daniel Brown (Snodland Town Council) Richard Clarke (Hadlow Parish Council) Marjorie Green (Hadlow Parish Council)
Apologies	Wateringbury Parish Council Ditton Parish Council Ightham Parish Council

Agenda

Welcome

Introduction and update on the LDF

Officer-led group discussions on:

1. Local Character/Quality of Life
2. Development in the Countryside
3. Natural Environment
4. Historic Environment
5. Climate Change
6. Open Space

Q&A

Thankyou

Local Character/Quality of Life

- **Q1 – What are the key local character features of the places where you live/work and how do they influence your quality of life?**

Summary of Group Discussion

- Traffic (M2/M20 corridor, access to road network, parking, reasonably good transport infrastructure, dissection of community by transport routes) (x6)
- Local shopping areas and amenities (market town vitality, farmers' markets, preservation, accessibility) (x4)
- Open spaces (extensiveness, accessibility, cleanliness, lakes) (x4)
- Countryside (proximity, rural character) (x3)
- Historic built heritage (Conservation Areas, maintenance of historic town centre) (x2)
- High density development
- Strategic location (relationship with the Thames Gateway and Maidstone)
- Infrastructure

- **Q2 – What factors influence quality of life in your local area that are related to development?**

Summary of Group Discussion

- Traffic (parking – lack of, increased volumes of traffic, excessive congestion, poorer air quality, noise quality) (x8)
- Local community (social structure - things for youngsters: clubs and/or societies, diversity, 'undesirables', meeting needs early on) (x5)
- Open spaces (retention of, countryside, pressure on) (x4)
- Over-development (over-intensification in already crowded village, back garden development, 'greed rules!') (x4)
- Local amenities and infrastructure (pressures on local supermarkets and other amenities, public services – particularly health, no consideration for existing village) (x4)
- Noise pollution
- Housing – quality of
- Street scene
- Rural character - retain

- **Q3 – Should Borough-wide Character Area Assessments be undertaken or, as at present, simply identify particular areas of character?**

- Consensus – need Borough-Wide Character Assessments and also Special Character Areas (combination of the two).
- Medway Gap has a particular character – bordered by urban areas – and is worthy of Special Character status
- Hadlow Tower – possibly include as an Area of Special Character

- Need a balance – concerned that ‘not so pretty’ areas will suffer from further development whilst ‘chocolate box’ villages are preserved
- Give voice to local people on what is special in their area

Development in the Countryside

• Q1 – What development pressures are being faced in the countryside?

Summary of Group Discussion

- Urban Development. (x8)
(traffic flow, traffic pollution, upgrading local rural roads, developer/government housing targets, brownfield infill)
 - Urban Development does not afford access to Open Space.
 - Lack of Affordable Housing. (x2)
 - Loss of Green Wedges separating Villages. (x2)
 - Lack of Infrastructure to support growth/development pressures.
 - Safeguarding best areas of the Countryside – agricultural quality and scenic value.
 - Local Employment.
 - More people having access to the Countryside puts pressure on unmade footpaths.
 - Lack of effective enforcement.
 - Lack of respect for existing residents.
- Q2 – Do the same issues apply Borough wide?**
 - It was agreed that development pressures exist equally, everywhere and throughout the Borough.
 - There was a concern that there is more development taking place in the Countryside, but a continuing loss of facilities and services in small villages.
- Q3 – Are exiting Development in the Countryside policies relevant and applicable?**
 - There is a need to ensure appropriate policies for Farm Diversification and Biodiversity.
 - There was a concern that the implications of approving development proposals were not carefully considered (cold store = warehouse = heavy traffic) and that the enforcement of conditions was not rigorous enough.
 - There was a lot of detailed and site specific discussion about Farm Diversification.

Natural Environment

- **Q1 – What elements constitute the natural environment?**

Summary of Group Discussion

- Rivers (Medway and Bourne – banks and riverside) (x5)
- Open views (across the countryside) (x2)
- Woodlands (not just ancient)
- Verges (motorway)
- Hedgerows
- Sunken lanes
- Natural wild landscapes – left alone
- Really, really old monuments (eg Kits Coty)
- Light pollution

- **Q2 – How can we best protect these areas?**

- Character areas could be used to determine how we protect natural areas
- Kits Coty – should be considered and treated as more than just an old building. It forms part of the landscape with footpaths etc. Need to value its tranquillity.

- **Q3 – What approach should we take towards the natural environment?**

- Need a managed, planned approach in the interest of biodiversity
- Need to consider effects of climate change
- Possibly let 'nature take its course'
- It is still a working environment – important to remember
- Need to consider costs of managing the natural environment

Historic Environment

- **Q - Do we need anything more than current guidance?**

- Recognition and enforcement of archaeological digs being carried out in areas of archaeological potential (identified by KCC) prior to any works on site being started.
- The role and status of Areas of Archaeological Potential should be defined in the DPD.
- General consensus that existing guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is acceptable.

- **Q - Should we consider a series of Local Listing?**

- General consensus that a system of local listings should be pursued. Such a system could be used to offer some planning policy protection

to those buildings and structures that are locally important to the character of an area, or those buildings that are more modern such as those built in the 1930's.

- Individual buildings and groups of buildings should be able to be included under local listings.

- **Q - Is there a role for contemporary architecture in the historic environment?**

- General consensus that there is a role for contemporary architecture.

Climate Change

- **Q – Should be looking at higher environmental standards?**

- Consensus that the Building Regulations are not good enough and new dwellings are inefficient.
- Consensus that TMBC should try and achieve higher environmental standards in advance of the Governments timetable, particularly in relation to water.
- The orientation, layout and landscaping of developments should be designed to avoid overheating in the summer and maximise daylight and solar gain in the winter.

- **Q - Are the thresholds for renewable energy generation appropriate?**

- General consensus that a lower threshold for the number of units should be considered due to the number of small applications made in the Borough.
- Some support for lowering the threshold to 1 so that any development can be captured and assessed.

- **Q - Should be encouraging winter water storage?**

- General consensus that water scarcity is a problem in the Borough and that a more efficient water management regime is needed, and that this could include winter water storage.

- **Other issues:**

- Developers and the local authority should advertise the financial benefits of a more energy efficient dwelling e.g. lower fuel bills, rather than just appealing to the environmental conscience of people.
- Some renewable energy technology, such as solar panels, is complicated to use and require maintenance to ensure effective operation. Although as technologies improve, these issues may become less of a problem, education for residents on how these technologies work may be needed.

- Climate change is more holistic than a single stand alone theme. Locally sourced building materials, locally sourced fuel, carbon and water footprints of development and the energy used in construction should all be considered part of sustainable development.

Open Space

- **Q - What do you enjoy most/value about open space?**
Summary of Group Discussion
 - Tranquillity, peace and quiet and space. (x8)
 - Fresh, clean air. (x2)
 - Enjoyment of the natural environment in safety.
 - Exercise. (x2)
 - Wildlife.
 - Freedom from traffic
 - Available for local amenities and all groups. (x3)
 - Maintenance of sports-fields. (x2)
 - Statutory designations – Green Belt, AONB, SSSI, Grade I/II Agricultural Land. (x2)
 - Views. (x2)
- **Q - What is the role of the urban/rural fringe?**
 - There was consensus that there should be a clear designation between the urban and rural areas.
 - The safeguarding of the Countryside is paramount.
 - The “creep” of the urban area into the rural areas is dangerous and potentially never-ending.
 - The separation of the urban and rural areas creates and/or allows the separate identity of towns and villages.
 - There is a need for the “connectivity” between the urban and rural areas, but this requires careful management. If not managed properly, and there are funding constraints, this connectivity could become an eyesore (poor maintenance, fly-tipping – and the inevitable responsibility debate: is it KCC/TMBC/PC?).
- **Q - What should be done with Low Quality/Low Value Open Space?**
 - There was a lot of detailed and site-specific discussion about the designation of low quality/low value open space, particularly the allotments.
 - Concern was expressed that the designation of Low Quality/Low Value was simply a snap-shot in time and symptomatic of poor management, not the suitability of the Open Space as open space.
 - It is necessary to consider Open Space in the long term
 - There was no consensus on the acceptability of the use of Low Quality/Low Value Open Space for alternative, non-recreational community uses.