

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

27 July 2011

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING FORECASTS

Summary

To report on a Kent Planning Officer's Group initiative to provide guidance on the adoption of a common approach to estimating and setting local demographic changes and dwelling requirements.

- 1.1.1 Once the Localism Bill receives Royal Assent the Government has indicated its intention to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) like the South East Plan that currently provide the housing targets for each District and form the basis of the housing allocations in Local Development Frameworks (LDF). In the absence of the RSS it will be for local planning authorities to make their own decisions on the level of growth in their area supported by robust evidence on the local need for housing. The Government has, as yet, issued no further guidance on what is required.
- 1.1.2 Since this is going to be an issue that will affect all districts, the Kent Planning Officers Group has set up a small group of planning officers from across Kent, including the County Council, to consider how Kent Districts might work to a common framework to provide guidance and a robust framework within which to derive housing numbers in their LDFs. The Group had the following Terms of Reference:
- to recommend a common framework for the core planning factors considered by local planning authorities when setting their policy for dwelling numbers, in addition to population and household forecasts;
 - to assess the continued suitability of KCC's population and housing forecasts in the current circumstances;
 - to evaluate other forecasting models and approaches that might add value to KCC's in-house forecasts;
 - to work out a preferred approach for Kent that would continue to provide robust District level forecasts and demonstrate that Kent local

authorities are responding to the forthcoming duty for public bodies to work together;

- to seek to identify major infrastructure constraints in Kent to residential development.

- 1.1.3 The aim of the Group is to offer a resource to assist local planning authorities to come to an informed view about the most appropriate level of local housing development, setting out broad criteria that should be taken into account. It specifically does not recommend any particular dwelling quantities to be provided which is an approach consistent with the local determination of housing growth.
- 1.1.4 Parameters for demographic projections can still be provided by KCC ranging from assumptions of zero-migration (as many people moving in as out so that housing is effectively provided only for local growth) to the Government's latest projections which take account of past trends continuing. The actual level for housing that might be appropriate would then be a local policy judgement for each District but based upon a common set of criteria.
- 1.1.5 I welcome the preparation of this Study which also meets one of the agreed actions of the Kent Housing Strategy. It will be a useful guide when we decide that it is necessary to review the local evidence base that will need to inform any future review of the Local Development Framework. Once it is finalised it is to be reported to the Kent Forum in the autumn and commended to each District for use as they see fit in their LDF work.
- 1.1.6 I believe this is a helpful step in providing a sound technical foundation to enable district councils to evolve their future strategies and policies for development. It must be made clear though that this is only one ingredient in a wide planning process. It is also important to note that, although this type of approach was envisaged by the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy, the primary function will be to inform and assist district councils in their statutory Local Planning work.
- 1.1.7 At this stage I am bringing this to members attention for awareness in advance of any consideration by the Kent Forum.

Background papers:

contact: Brian Gates

Nil

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure