

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

16 November 2011

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL CORE STRATEGY - CONSULTATION

Summary

Maidstone Borough Council have recently carried out formal consultation on its draft Core Strategy 14 October 2011. This report seeks Members' endorsement of the response already sent in order to meet the consultation deadline.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Maidstone Borough Council has prepared a Core Strategy consultation draft. As the consultation period did not allow a prior report to be brought to Members, I prepared the response, which is reproduced under **Annex A**, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member with a view to its subsequent endorsement by this Board.

1.2 Key points of the Core Strategy.

1.2.1 The key points of the Core Strategy are:

- The plan period for the Maidstone Core Strategy is 2006 to 2026, with 2006 being used as the baseline date for assessing housing and commercial land supply needs.
- The housing land requirement is 10,800 dwellings. 80% of this figure is allocated at the urban area of Maidstone with the remaining 20% spread across the larger villages.
- 60% of the housing development within the Maidstone urban area is on previously developed land with the remainder on two strategic Greenfield locations; one at the south eastern edge and the other on the north western edge close to the boundary with Tonbridge and Malling.
- An Area Action Plan for Maidstone Town Centre and its immediate surroundings is to follow at a later date. A need for additional non-food

retail development of around 55,250 sq. m. during the plan period has been identified. Most, if not all of this is expected to take place within the town centre. The food retailing need identified for the same period is 4,650 sq. m which is likely to be met through growth at the existing District Centres.

- A new hub for employment development has been identified at junction 8 of the M20. No specific proposals have been set out with regard to development capacity or floor space figures, but uses are to include warehousing and distribution. All existing employment sites are to be protected.

1.3 Impacts of Maidstone Core Strategy on Tonbridge and Malling

1.3.1 The response in **Annex A** raises concern on a number of the broad proposals due to their potential impact on the Borough. These are:

- The proposed strategic housing location of 975 units at a site near the shared boundary off Hermitage Lane
- A lack of information on the likely significant impact on the local; and strategic highway network in the locality
- The impact on the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) between junctions 4 and 5 of the M20 and west of Hermitage Lane on the A20, and the detrimental impacts any increased traffic generation may have on air quality here resulting from the proposed housing development to the north west of the town and employment development at Junction 8.
- General concern about the erosion of the strategic gap.
- The potential conflict of this major proposal with planned and formally allocated development on previously developed land in our Borough and the lack of discussion to consider any future conflict with policies and plans in this Borough.

1.3.2 Maidstone town is already built up in many areas to the western boundary between the two authorities. Its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which is a background study for the Core Strategy, identifies a number of possible sites near to this boundary. The adopted Local Plan (2000) identified a housing allocation for 380 units in this area, but development has since been refused on this site in the absence of need and it does not feature in Maidstone's Saved Policies document. Although the Core Strategy only sets out diagrammatically the general strategic location for housing sites, based on the information in the SHLA, it would seem that 975 units are proposed in the general area of the former Local Plan allocation. At this stage, it looks as if this Strategic Location for Housing may run close to or even cross the common boundary of our Authorities. There are no specific details about where access will be provided, but it would be likely to be via Hermitage Lane which will undoubtedly impact upon the

highway capacity for the surrounding road network, including Hermitage Lane, the junction with the A 20 and the A 20 itself, the Coldharbour roundabout and Junction 5 of the M20.

- 1.3.3 The identification of such a substantial strategic housing site in this location would result in Maidstone's urban area further expanding and intruding into open countryside and the Strategic Gap between the urban confines of our two areas, thereby weakening the integrity of the Strategic Gap. This places pressure on the area in a way which could unacceptably erode this important anti-coalescence area, which has been and remains an important open feature that has defined the structure of the urban areas and provides relief to the otherwise continuous spread of development. The above concerns are set out in the attached letter.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Depending on Maidstone Borough Council's response to our comments, there may be a need to attend their Public Examination to give evidence in support of the objections made. This will have resource implications for the Council as yet unknown.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 Without the relevant information as set out above, there is potential for severe highway capacity problems and air quality deterioration to unacceptable levels. The potential conflict with currently allocated but yet to be developed sites could cause difficulty in delivery of housing in this Borough.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 The response to Maidstone Borough Council's consultation on its Draft Core Strategy, as set out in Annex A, **BE ENDORSED**.

Background papers:

contact: Jill Peet

Nil

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The subject matter of the report is not relevant to this.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	The subject matter does not lend itself to this.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		The content of this report does not impact on this or provide an opportunity to do so.

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.