

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

20 November 2012

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 RESPONSE TO MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL CORE STRATEGY ALLOCATIONS DOCUMENT AND INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Summary

This report seeks endorsement of the officer responses made in respect of the recent consultations by Maidstone Borough Council on a strategic sites allocations document and an Integrated Transport Strategy, which supplement the Core Strategy consultations last autumn.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Last autumn this Council responded to Maidstone Borough Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy consultation raising a number of concerns in respect of potential adverse impacts associated with proposed development on highway infrastructure, air quality and the future of the Strategic Gap. It was also pointed out that planned developments in TMBC may not have been fully taken into account (for example substantial residential development allocated at Preston Hall, Aylesford).
- 1.1.2 Before responding to all 2,800 comments received Maidstone Borough Council decided to undertake additional, fresh consultations on two detailed documents during the summer, possibly in anticipation of removing some of the earlier concerns by providing more information on the proposed sites and their impacts. One document sought to provide details on the location and scale of the proposed development allocations for new housing and employment, while the other considered the implications of the proposed developments on transport infrastructure and how these could be addressed with improvements.
- 1.1.3 The deadline for responding was the 1st of October 2012, for which officer comments were submitted. Subject to any further comments that the Board may wish to now make, endorsement is sought for the submissions made. It is anticipated that Maidstone Borough Council will respond to both consultations simultaneously, probably during 2013.

1.2 Summary of the latest responses

- 1.2.1 A full set of our responses can be found at Appendix 1 to this report. These can be summarised as follows:
- 1.2.2 Strategic housing allocations SS1a,b and c (Bridge Nursery (165 units), Land east of Hermitage Lane (415 units) and Land west of Hermitage Lane (300 units) respectively).
- 1.2.3 Last autumn the Council expressed the concern that an estimated 975 extra housing units in the vicinity of Hermitage Lane would have an adverse impact on local highway capacity, air quality and the integrity of the strategic gap. It was also pointed out that this could affect access to Maidstone Hospital by emergency vehicles. For information, 380 units had been proposed in the previous saved Maidstone Borough local plan.
- 1.2.4 While the number of proposed units appears to have been reduced to 880 in the latest allocations document and the extra details are welcomed, the concerns remain and these have been reiterated in the latest officer comments.
- 1.2.5 The Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), prepared jointly by Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Highways recognises that this additional development will impact on the local road network and sets out a number of improvement schemes that would be necessary to accommodate this growth.
- 1.2.6 It is interesting to note that just those improvements relating to Hermitage Lane would cost an estimated £4.6 to £6.6m, part of a total package of improvements for the whole of Maidstone Borough of between £39.5m to 43.5m. The ITS assumes most of this will be funded through developer contributions. This seems a moist optimistic outlook.
- 1.2.7 Our officer comments ask whether such a contribution is deliverable. Up to £6.6m costs to be borne by developer contributions from 880 dwellings seems very onerous, particularly as one of the sites already has the cost of a new primary school associated with it. Furthermore, recent Government statements suggest that developers should not be overburdened with contributions that make their schemes unviable. Additional sources of funding, such as the New Homes Bonus, could also be used, nevertheless delivering these improvements will be very challenging.
- 1.2.8 **Air quality**
- 1.2.9 Air quality is addressed briefly in the ITS, but does not provide the reassurance sought by the concerns raised by TMBC last autumn and consequently, these concerns have also been carried forward in the latest response.

1.2.10 **Planned developments in TMBC**

1.2.11 Despite the Council making the point last autumn, that developments planned in TMBC may not have been taken fully into account, the ITS still makes no reference to Preston Hall, which is currently the subject of outline planning applications for more than 200 dwellings. Consequently, this concern has also been repeated in the officer comments.

1.2.12 The receipt of the officer level comments has been acknowledged by Maidstone Borough Council. It would appear that in excess of 2,000 responses have been made in respect of these consultations. As noted, Maidstone Borough Council intend to respond in full during 2013 prior to further consultations on the Core Strategy prior to submission to the Secretary of State. This Council will have a further opportunity to comment at this stage.

1.3 **Legal Implications**

1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report seeking endorsement of the officer level comments made in respect of the consultations by Maidstone Borough Council. The response contributes to meeting the duty to cooperate.

1.4 **Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of this report.

1.5 **Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 Not responding to this latest consultation by the deadline would have carried the risk of not being able to reiterate the Council's concerns.

1.6 **Equality Impact Assessment**

1.6.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.7 **Policy Considerations**

1.7.1 Under the Duty to Cooperate it will become increasingly important to demonstrate collaborative working with neighbouring planning authorities to address strategic planning issues. The duty *is not a duty to agree* and highlighting the concerns set out in this report provides a basis for future discussions.

1.8 **Recommendations**

1.8.1 That, subject to incorporating any further comments by Members of the Advisory Board, Cabinet be recommended to endorse the officer comments at **Appendix 1** and that Maidstone Borough Council be notified in due course.

Background papers:

Maidstone Borough Council Core Strategy Strategic Allocations Public Consultation 2012; and
Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (2012-26)

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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 concerns expressed in the comments appended to this report impact upon all TMBC residents, businesses and visitors equally.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The endorsement of the comments made to Maidstone Borough Council will enable continuing discussion of the issues and highlight the impacts of the proposals beyond the borough boundary.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

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.