

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

19 November 2013

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 LOCAL PLAN AND DUTY TO COOPERATE UPDATE

Summary:

This report provides Members of the Board with a regular update on Local Plan progress and strategic planning matters relevant to the Duty to Cooperate.

1.1 Local Plan Progress

- 1.1.1 Since the last update in June, significant progress has been made in preparing the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Members will recall this is a key piece of the Local Plan evidence base and will, to a great extent, determine the amount of housing land that will need to be provided in the new Local Plan. I last reported that GL Hearn and Partners had been jointly commissioned by Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Ashford Borough Councils to prepare separate reports setting out the objectively assessed housing needs for the plan period to 2031.
- 1.1.2 Tonbridge and Malling forms part of two Housing Market Areas (HMAs) as defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Maidstone HMA and the West Kent HMA. Officers, and colleagues at Maidstone, have been working closely with GL Hearn in respect of the joint HMA that we share, in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate. Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks are at a different stage of plan-making at the moment but officers will, nevertheless, liaise with colleagues in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks when the results of the SHMA are made available to ensure we can demonstrate cooperative working.
- 1.1.3 Over the summer, GL Hearn and my planning policy team prepared demographic projections, held a stakeholder meeting of house builders (to better understand what the supply side is looking to deliver) and took on board the relevant parts of the Government's new draft planning guidance, which was published online in 'beta' format. Adjustments have been made throughout this period to take account of new data being released from the 2011 Census, sensitivity testing of the local housing market and also the results of the Economic Futures (demographic and growth scenarios) work that Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners have been helping

us with. The latter is particularly important in forming a rounded and realistic view of housing and employment needs through the Local Plan period.

- 1.1.4 All three authorities are now in receipt of first drafts of their SHMA reports and officers have been making initial comments and adjustments. Once the reports are in final draft form (expected to be just before Christmas) all Members will be invited to a briefing on the headline figures so that there is a wide awareness of the challenges that we will face moving forward. This will probably be during the first few weeks of January, to enable officers to prepare and also to allow for the majority if not all of a series of one to one meetings with all Parish Councils to have been completed, so that a summary of feedback can also be incorporated into the briefing session. It is also anticipated that this briefing will raise awareness of the next key stages of the Plan preparation, particularly as we move towards the Issues and Options public consultations in the spring/early summer which will be a critical stage of the Local Plan programme.
- 1.1.5 At the time of writing, the final reports from NLP regarding the Economic Futures work had just been received and this will also need to be fed into the SHMA. NLP and the planning policy team will soon begin work on a second phase of this work, which when complete will represent a new Employment Land Review, another key piece of the evidence base for the Local Plan and an increasingly important document for determining planning applications on currently designated employment land.
- 1.1.6 On 26 September, all Parish Councils were invited to a Local Plan event to explain the process in some more detail, highlight some of the key issues that this Plan will have to address, such as planning for future growth, and to invite Parishes to be more involved. The event was well attended and the question and answer session proactive and responsive. All Parishes were further invited to take a number of questions away to consider and given the option of a one to one meeting with officers. These meetings are now well underway (the first took place on 12 November) and it is hoped that they will be concluded by early in the New Year.

1.2 Duty to Cooperate Update

- 1.2.1 As noted in the previous section of this report, officers from Maidstone and TMBC have continued to work closely with Maidstone Borough Council in progressing the SHMA. This will be seen as a positive contribution when the respective Plans are tested at Public Examination. Local Planning Authorities are now required to record such practices in their Annual Monitoring Reports. In addition, meetings have also been held between senior officers and Members to ensure both authorities are aware of relevant strategic planning matters, local plan timetables and priorities.
- 1.2.2 Maidstone Borough Council has amended its timetable for preparing its Local Plan to take account of revisions to the evidence base, the new Draft Planning

Guidance and respond to emerging Inspectors' reports. This has had the helpful effect of bringing the two Plan timetables much closer together with adoption of both now anticipated during 2015.

- 1.2.3 Given that the SHMA reports for TMBC and Maidstone both contain contextual information about the shared Maidstone HMA, it makes good sense to ensure they are published at the same time. Officers will continue to liaise to ensure that as far as possible this is achieved, particularly as they will undoubtedly attract high profile interest. As noted, officers will also share the results of the review of that part of the Borough making up the West Kent HMA with colleagues in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks in the spirit of the duty to cooperate.
- 1.2.4 I have previously updated Board Members in respect of Medway Council's Masterplanning for Rochester Airport, part of which is located in our Borough. Public Consultations on the Draft Masterplan took place between 22 July and 20 September and a report on the responses is due to be considered by Medway's Cabinet at the end of November. I will provide a fuller update to the next Board meeting.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this information report, however, it is a statutory requirement for Local Planning Authorities to prepare up to date Plans and meeting the duty to cooperate is a key test

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The joint commissioning of work for the Local Plan with other local authorities represents a saving and therefore good value for money. It also means that officer time contributing to the project is shared. The expenditure to date is within the budget held largely within the Local Plan earmarked reserve.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 There is a significant risk associated with not having an up to date development plan which, at its most severe, could threaten our ability to control and shape development. However, progress on the Local Plan is being made in accordance with the timetable considered by the Board earlier this year. A further copy for information is attached at **[Annex 1]**. The programme has been shared with officials at the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Planning Inspectorate who have recognised our approach as an appropriate one.

1.6 Policy Considerations

- 1.6.1 When adopted, the Local Plan, together with the Kent Waste and Minerals Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, will form the development plan for the borough.

Background papers:

Nil

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