

At the point of writing, the Core Strategy has been approved by Cabinet (10 August) to go forward for public participation consultation beginning 2 September 2011, having already completed stakeholder consultation, corporate peer review and a number of Member workshops and committees. Public participation consultation, an informal, voluntary stage will run for a period of 6 weeks, providing members of the public, planning consultants, developers, local business owners and anyone else the opportunity to comment on all parts of the Core Strategy including if there are omissions.

The Core Strategy development plan document (DPD) is the key document within Maidstone's Local Development Framework (LDF) that guides the future development of the borough until 2026. It explains the "why, what, where, when and how" development will be delivered through a strategy that plans for growth and regeneration whilst at the same time protects and enhances the borough's environmental and built assets.

In preparing this strategy the council has sought to address local needs, especially for housing and economic development, with an emphasis on achieving continuing and higher levels of economic prosperity whilst at the same time protecting the environment and landscape making the borough of Maidstone a special place to live and work in.

The Core Strategy:

- Sets out the scale of development
- Identifies broad locations where development will be located
- Identifies when development will be built
- Explains how Maidstone Borough Council and its partners will deliver the strategy

The indicative longer term programme for the Core Strategy (subject to change) is set out below.

Informal consultation	Autumn 2011
Formal consultation	Spring 2012
Submission	Summer 2012
Examination	Autumn 2012
Adoption	Early 2013

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Housing and Spatial Distribution

Part of the Core Strategy's new role is to identify a local dwelling target for the period 2006 to 2026, and to demonstrate how that target will be delivered. The housing target and distribution of development for the period 2006 to 2026 that will underpin the Core Strategy Public Participation draft was considered and approved by Cabinet on 9 February 2011. The agreed approach includes a housing target of 10,080 dwellings in a dispersed distribution pattern that essentially directs development to the urban area and two strategic locations to the north-west and south-east of the urban area, and to the rural service centres of Harrietsham, Lenham, Marden, Staplehurst and Headcorn.

The Core Strategy must set a target for how many Gypsy and Traveller pitches should be provided in the borough. The draft Core Strategy proposes that 71 pitches should be delivered between 2006 and 2016. This figure stems from the council's current Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment which was completed in 2006. However because this assessment is now rather dated, as well as changing government guidance and the fact the target must be set for the whole period of the Core Strategy (to 2026), the council has decided to undertake an updated assessment. The results from this new assessment will enable an updated target to be included at the next stage of the Core Strategy.

Going forward, the requisite number of sites for housing will be allocated in the Development Delivery DPD, which is expected to follow on after the Core Strategy.

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Employment

The distribution of land for employment has been expressed in broad terms in the Core Strategy. A recent revised Employment Land Review (ELR) has found that there is a need to provide for some 17 Ha of employment land in the borough over the plan period.

The proposed distribution of employment land echoes that adopted for housing, which follows a dispersed pattern. However, in order to meet the total requirement for employment land, there is a need for a strategic location for employment development. Following consideration by officers of all known and available land it was resolved that this was best placed in the vicinity of junction 8 of the M20. Development at junction 8, to be guided by a development brief to be produced by the council, will be expected to accommodate in the order of 11 Ha of employment related development including warehousing and other industrial and employment uses. It is also considered appropriate and sustainable to allow for development at junction 7 that is specifically related to the new clinic and medical services.

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Transport

The purpose of the draft Maidstone Borough Transport Strategy is to:-

"Support the vision and development aspirations in the MBC Local Development Framework Core Strategy. It will particularly address traffic and transport concerns in the borough that are predicted to be affected by future LDF development proposals"

The strategy has been jointly prepared by Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council, and sets out proposals for improvements to the highway and transport networks in the borough over the LDF period up to 2026. The majority of current and potential transport issues are focused on the County Town of Maidstone, including emphasis on its role as a regional transport hub, and consequently the majority of the proposed measures are concentrated in this area.

In addition, the transport strategy acknowledges the issues of smaller towns and villages within the rural area of the borough, as these will also be affected by the transport impact of growth in population and employment.

The document will be issued for public consultation in September alongside but separately from the Core Strategy.

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Environment

The Core Strategy will help in delivering sustainable growth and regeneration while protecting and enhancing the borough's built and natural assets. Regeneration will be prioritised and delivered at the urban area of the county town first to make best use of previously developed land.

The establishment of a multi-functional green and blue network of open spaces, rivers and water courses will safeguard biodiversity and define the urban character of Maidstone while offering access to the countryside, which will be valued in its own right. The character and identity of all rural settlements will be maintained by directing suitable development and supporting infrastructure to the rural service centres of Harrietsham, Lenham, Marden, Staplehurst and Headcorn. Development will be of high quality design, and constructed in a sustainable manner to respond to climate change and protect the environment and biodiversity.

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Localism Bill and National Planning Policy Framework

The planning system is going to be subject to further change due to the Localism Bill and the Core Strategy when adopted will form a sound basis for going forward and ensuring that the needs and aspirations of the community are met. The Core Strategy is also a document that needs to be flexible enough to respond to changes in current standards and that allows the council to strive for excellence in all development activity that arises from proposals it makes decisions upon.

The Core Strategy will also be expected to be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a document that is currently undergoing consultation. As the NPPF is at such an early stage in its development the final document is likely to have undergone a number of changes. Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 10th August to attach little weight to the draft NPPF in decision making and plan making.

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Local Development Framework consultation database

This newsletter is circulated by post and email to people and organisations who wish to be informed of Maidstone Borough Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) and spatial policy. Those on the database also receive notification of important stages in the document production, such as when public consultation for development plan documents or supplementary planning documents will take place and details of how to participate.

The Maidstone Planning Viewpoint newsletter is also available online at http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework.aspx. Follow the link in the left hand menu for Planning Viewpoint.

Adding/removing your details from the database

If you received this newsletter by post or email your details are already held on the Council's LDF database. Please contact us if you would like your details to be amended or removed from the database.