



Maidstone Borough Council Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

Final Report
November 2009

Prepared for

Maidstone Borough Council

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Scott Wilson
6-8 Greencoat Place
London
SW1P 1PL

Tel 020 7798 5000
Fax 020 7798 5001

www.scottwilson.com

Table of Contents

1 Introduction 5

2 Approach to the SA..... 7

3 Urban area 14

4 Urban extension 19

5 Urban fringe..... 23

6 Rural Service Centres 27

7 Rural settlements and the countryside..... 32

8 Air quality and causes of climate change 36

9 Biodiversity and green infrastructure..... 41

10 Community wellbeing 49

11 Economy..... 58

12 Flood risk..... 67

13 Housing and affordable housing..... 71

14 Gypsies and travellers 75

15 Land use, landscape and the historic environment..... 79

16 Transport and accessibility 89

17 Waste 97

18 Water resources and quality 100

19 Next steps 106

Appendix I - Consultation Responses 107

Table of figures

Figure 1: Five-stage approach to SA.....	7
Figure 2: Maidstone's environment	44
Figure 3: Index of Multiple Deprivation in Maidstone Borough.....	55
Figure 4: Flood risk in Maidstone – Zones 2 and 3 from SFRA	69
Figure 5: Agricultural Land Classifications Map and Key	83
Figure 6: Maidstone Borough landscape.....	84
Figure 7: Landscape Character Areas in Maidstone	86
Figure 8: Historic Environmental Constraints in Maidstone Borough – land use, landscape and historic environment.....	87
Figure 9: Major transport links in around Maidstone	93
Figure 10: Car ownership in Kent.....	94
Figure 11: Water availability for the South East	102
Figure 12: Thames River Basin District.....	104
Figure 13: Percentage change in summer precipitation (UKCIP, 2009)	105
Table 1: Meeting the requirements of the SEA Directive	10
Table 2: Regional Sustainability Framework objectives	11
Table 3: Detailed 2006 (and 2005) data supporting the indicator NI186: Total and Per capita CO2 emissions in the LA area (summary by sector)	38
Table 4: Description and status of SSSIs in Maidstone	45
Table 5: Green Spaces in Maidstone Borough	47
Table 6: Education Statistics in Maidstone, Kent and the South East (2007).....	53
Table 7: Crime statistics in Maidstone (April 2007 – March 2008).....	53
Table 8: Health Statistics in Maidstone	56
Table 9: Economy related issues, objectives and targets	60
Table 10: Total Jobseekers Allowance claimants in Maidstone (June 2009)	63
Table 11: Main employment by sector in 2007 in Maidstone Borough	64
Table 12: Percent rank and actual value of economic indicators for Maidstone	64
Table 13: Key Assets of Maidstone's Natural Environment	82
Table 14: Methods of travel to work in Maidstone.....	95
Table 15: Extract from Best Value Performance Indicators: Actual Out-turn 2007-09 and Targets for 2008-11	99
Table 16: Water company household metering (percentage)	103

1 Introduction

1.1 This report

- 1.1.1 Scott Wilson has been commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council ('the Council') to carry out the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the revised Maidstone Core Strategy and future Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The Core Strategy and other DPDs form part of the Maidstone Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.1.2 SA involves identifying and evaluating the impacts of a plan on the economy, the community and the environment – the three dimensions of sustainable development. It also suggests ways of avoiding or reducing any adverse impacts arising from the plan as well as ways of maximising its positive impacts. SA is a statutory requirement for Core Strategies and other DPDs under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 1.1.3 In order to undertake the appraisal of the Core Strategy and other DPDs, it is first necessary to establish a methodology or framework for undertaking the appraisal as well as an evidence base to inform the identification and evaluation of impacts. The framework and evidence base are documented in a Scoping Report. Scott Wilson prepared a first version of the Scoping Report in 2006; however, much has changed since then (the South East Plan, for example, has been published) and this report provides an updated Scoping Report.
- 1.1.4 It should be noted that the SA incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as required under EU legislation¹.

1.2 Maidstone Core Strategy and other DPDs

- 1.2.1 The Council published its Core Strategy 'Preferred Options' for consultation in January 2007. This envisaged the greatest proportion of new housing development in the Borough being concentrated in Maidstone - with an eye to regenerating the town - as well as a sustainable urban extension to the east / south-east of the town. The Council is now preparing a revised Core Strategy for further consultation. This report provides the framework and evidence base for undertaking the appraisal of the revised Core Strategy.
- 1.2.2 The Council is also set to prepare further DPDs as outlined in the revised Local Development Scheme 2009²: Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Allocations DPD; Town Centre Regeneration AAP; Maidstone Urban Extension AAP; and Land Allocations DPD. This report also provides the framework and evidence base for undertaking the appraisal of these. This scoping report does provide additional guidance in relation to Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Allocations and Urban Regeneration given their relative priority in the LDS programme.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and Programmes on the environment (the 'SEA Directive') implemented through The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

² A revised Local Development Scheme was submitted to the Secretary of State for approval in July 2009

1.3 Report structure

1.3.1 This report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 sets out the approach to preparing the Scoping Report
- Chapters 3 – 7 set out the evidence base for key spatial areas in Maidstone Borough
- Chapters 4 – 15 set out the evidence base for key sustainability topics
- Chapter 16 sets out what happens next in the plan-making and SA processes.

2 Approach to the SA

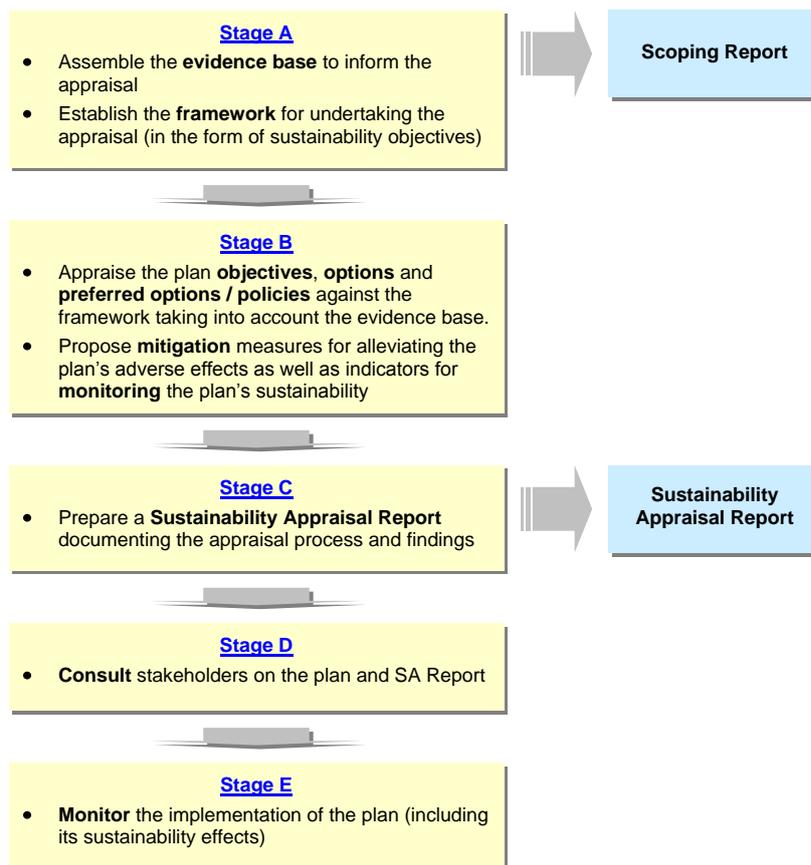
2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter sets out the approach taken in preparing the Scoping Report including the proposed framework around which the appraisal will be organised.

2.2 SA process

2.2.1 SA is based on a five-stage approach – see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Five-stage approach to SA



Stage A – Framework and evidence base

- 2.2.2 Stage A in the SA process involves developing the framework for undertaking the appraisal – in this case the identification of a series of spatial areas and topics on which the appraisal will focus – together with an evidence base to inform the appraisal. The framework and evidence base are presented in a Scoping Report – this report – for consultation with the statutory consultees – English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The evidence base presented in the Scoping Report should include an analysis of the relevant policy context; a description of the current baseline situation; an analysis of how the current situation might evolve in the absence of the plan; and the identification of any problems which the plan may need to address.

Stage B - Appraisal

- 2.2.3 Stage B in the SA process involves undertaking the appraisal itself. This involves identifying and evaluating the impacts of the different options to the plan makers as well as the preferred options / policies which together comprise the plan. The appraisal is organised around the framework identified in Stage A and informed by the evidence base assembled at Stage A. Mitigation measures for alleviating adverse impacts are also proposed at this stage together with potential indicators for monitoring the plan's implementation. Mitigation measures are generally in the form of recommendations for changes to the plan in order to improve its sustainability performance. Crucially, the appraisal should be undertaken in parallel with development of the plan and the appraisal findings should be fed into the emerging plan. In practice, this means undertaking several rounds – or iterations – of appraisal at different stages in the plan-making process.

Stage C - Reporting

- 2.2.4 Stage C in the SA process involves documenting the appraisal findings and preparing an SA Report (this incorporates the material required for inclusion in the 'Environmental Report' under the 'SEA Directive'). The full SA Report should be published for consultation alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the DPD in question; however, SA reports focusing on the emerging plan may be published earlier in the plan-making process (e.g. at the 'issues and options' stage).

Stage D - Consultation

- 2.2.5 Stage D in the SA process involves consulting on the 'pre-submission' version of the plan and the accompanying SA Report; however, as stated above, SA reports can be prepared to accompany consultation on earlier versions of the plan.

Stage E - Monitoring

- 2.2.6 Stage E in the SA process involves monitoring the adopted plan including its sustainability impacts; this is done through the LDF Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

2.3 SA methodology

2.3.1 This Scoping Report has been structured around a series of spatial areas within Maidstone Borough as well as a series of topics. Together, these spatial areas and topics provide the proposed framework for undertaking the SA.

2.3.2 For each spatial area and topic identified, we have asked a series of questions in order to complete the Scoping Report:

- What's the policy context?
- What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?
- What's the situation now (including any identified problems)?
- What will be the situation without the plan?³
- What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

2.3.3 For future rounds of appraisal itself, we will also ask the following questions:

- What will be the situation with the plan?
- How can we mitigate / enhance effects (Scott Wilson's recommendations to the Council)?
- How can we best monitor the plan's impacts?

2.3.4 These questions correspond to the key requirements of the SEA Directive, therefore clearly demonstrating compliance with the Directive's requirements – see Table 1.

³ Note that the situation without the plan equates to the current plan for the Borough together with other future changes and trends.

Table 1: Meeting the requirements of the SEA Directive

Key questions	Corresponding requirement of the SEA Directive (the ‘environmental report’ must include...)
What’s the policy context?	<i>“an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes”</i> (Annex I(a))
What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?	<i>“the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation”</i> (Annex I(e))
What’s the situation now (including any identified problems)?	<i>“the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme”</i> (Annex 1(b)) <i>“the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected”</i> (Annex I(c)) <i>“any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC”</i> [NB issues relating to European sites are addressed through Habitats Regulations Assessment] (Annex I(d))
What will be the situation without the plan?	<i>“the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme”</i> (Annex I(b))
What will be the situation with the plan?	<i>“the likely significant effects (1) on the environment, including on issues <u>such as</u> biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors</i> [our emphasis] <i>(1) These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects”</i> (Annex I(f))
How can we mitigate / enhance effects (Scott Wilson’s recommendations to the Council)?	<i>“the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme”</i> (Annex I(g))
How can we best monitor the plan’s impacts?	<i>“a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring...”</i> (Annex I(i))

2.3.5 In relation to the question 'What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?', we have focused in particular on the objectives set out in the Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East – see Table 2.

Table 2: Regional Sustainability Framework objectives

South East Regional Sustainability Framework Objectives	
1	To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need
2	To improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health
3	To reduce poverty and social exclusion and, by improving their performance, close the gap between the most deprived areas in the South East and the rest of the region
4	To raise educational achievement levels across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work
5	To reduce crime and perceptions of disorder
6	To create and sustain vibrant communities which recognise the needs and contributions of all individuals
7	To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
8	To encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the South East and promote sustainable tourism
9	To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region
10	To sustain economic growth and competitiveness across the region by focusing on the principles of smart growth: raising levels of enterprise, productivity and economic activity
11	To stimulate economic revival in deprived areas
12	To develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities
13	To develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness of the region
14	To improve efficiency in land use through the appropriate re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings, including re-use of materials from buildings, and encourage urban renaissance
15	To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public wellbeing, the economy and the environment
16	To reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve
17	To address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases
18	To ensure that the South East is prepared for the impacts of climate change
19	To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity
20	To protect and enhance the region's countryside and historic environment

21	To improve the efficiency of transport networks by enhancing the proportion of travel by sustainable modes and by promoting policies which reduce the need to travel
22	To reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably and ethically produced, local or low impact products
23	To reduce waste generation and disposal , and achieve the sustainable management of waste
24	To maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers, ground waters and coasts, and to achieve sustainable water resources management
25	To increase energy efficiency , security and diversity of supply and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in the region

2.4 SA framework

2.4.1 In identifying the spatial areas and topics that will provide the basis for the appraisal, we have considered:

- The topics addressed in the SA of the South East Plan⁴ and the SA of the Partial Review of the South East Plan concerning provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- The topics suggested in the SEA Directive (see Table 1 above)
- The likely significant effects of the Core Strategy
- The views of the Council

2.4.2 The proposed spatial areas are:

- Urban area
- Urban extension
- Urban fringe
- Rural service centres
- Rural settlements and the countryside

2.4.3 The proposed topics are:

- Air quality and the causes of climate change
- Biodiversity and green infrastructure
- Community wellbeing
- Economy
- Flood risk
- Housing and affordable housing

⁴ Scott Wilson and Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants (2009). *Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East: Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment/ Appropriate Assessment of the Secretary of State's Final Revisions* [online] available at: http://www.gos.gov.uk/497648/docs/171301/815607/fSA_and_HRA_Assessment.pdf (accessed 21 July 2009).

- Gypsies and travellers
- Land use, landscape and the historic environment
- Transport and accessibility
- Waste
- Water

2.5 Consultation on this Scoping Report

- 2.5.1 Consultation during the SA is a statutory requirement and is an essential part of the SA process. Consultation on the Scoping Report is important as it allows stakeholders to verify that all of the relevant plans, policies and programmes have been reviewed, to check that the most up-to-date baseline information has been included and to ensure the key sustainability issues have been identified.
- 2.5.2 This report was sent to the three Statutory Consultation bodies⁵: Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. The report was issued for formal consultation for a period of five weeks. This document now incorporates responses to comments received. The comments received and responses to those comments are included in Appendix I. In addition a meeting was held with the Environment Agency on the 22nd October 2009 to discuss issues particularly focussing on flooding.

⁵ As required by Regulation 4(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

3 Urban area

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This chapter sets out for Maidstone's **urban area** the policy context; the key sustainability objectives that need to be considered, the situation now (including any problems); the situation without the plan (i.e. the business-as-usual scenario); and issues which we think should provide a particular focus for the appraisal of the Core Strategy and other DPDs.

3.2 What's the policy context?

- 3.2.1 Under the South East Plan, the prime focus for development in the region should be urban areas, in order to foster accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services, and avoid unnecessary travel. In particular, the Plan identifies a network of 22 **regional hubs**, of which Maidstone is one⁶. Regional hubs are intended to be a focus for investment in new multi-modal transport infrastructure; other new infrastructure (including health, education, social and green infrastructure, and public services); new investment in economic activity and regeneration; new market and affordable housing; and new major retail and employment development. Maidstone, in particular, was designated as a regional hub since it is *"The county town of Kent serving as the focus for administrative, commercial and retail activities. Well related to strategic rail and road networks. Interchange point between intra and local rail services"*. Policy SP2 in the South East Plan requires Local Development Documents (LDDs) – including the Maidstone Core Strategy – to support and develop the role of regional hubs by, in particular, prioritising sustainable transport (public transport, walking and cycling) and focusing new housing development and economic activity in locations close to or accessible by public transport. The South East Plan also designates Maidstone a Primary Regional Centre, where the most significant levels of growth are expected. Maidstone is also the subject of a dedicated policy in the South East Plan (AOSR7) – see below. According to the policy's supporting text, an indicative 90% of new housing in Maidstone Borough should be in or adjacent to Maidstone town.

⁶ Government Office for the South East (2009) *The South East Plan* [online] available at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/> (accessed 16 June 2009).

POLICY AOSR7: MAIDSTONE HUB

The local development framework at Maidstone will:

- i. make new provision for housing consistent with its growth role, including associated transport infrastructure
- ii. make new provision for employment of sub-regional significance, with an emphasis on higher quality jobs to enhance its role as the county town and a centre for business. The concentration of retail, leisure and service uses at the centre will allow close integration between employment, housing and public transport
- iii. confirm the broad scale of new business and related development already identified and give priority to completion of the major employment sites in the town
- iv. make Maidstone the focus for expansion and investment in new further or higher education facilities
- v. support high quality proposals for intensifying or expanding the technology and knowledge sectors at established and suitable new locations
- vi. ensure that development at Maidstone complements rather than competes with the Kent Thames Gateway towns and does not add to travel pressures between them
- vii. avoid coalescence between Maidstone and the Medway towns conurbation.

“Maidstone is the county town of Kent and serves as the focus for administrative, commercial and retail activities. It is designated as a hub under Policy SP2 of this Plan as it is well related to strategic rail and road networks and serves as an interchange point between intra and local rail services. It also offers opportunities for some new housing development. An indicative 90% of new housing at Maidstone should be in or adjacent to the town. Associated infrastructure to support growth should include the South East Maidstone Relief Route and Maidstone Hub package.”⁷

3.2.2 The Government announced its **Growth Points** initiative in October 2006, which aims to support high rates of housing delivery over the first ten years of the South East Plan. Nine growth points were subsequently announced including Maidstone. Under the South East Plan, Maidstone Borough as a whole must deliver on average 554 net additional dwellings each year (a total of 11,080 over the Plan period, 2006 – 2026). Local partners’ ambitions for Maidstone as recorded by the Government are⁸:

- Ease congestion and reduce air pollution in the Town Centre through a package of traffic management measures and improvements to public transport
- Provide new, better located mixed use employment sites in the town centre and urban fringes, including new higher and further education campuses, medical and sports facilities
- Regenerate the town centre environment through street scene improvements and the implementation of the All Saints Link Road project
- Construct the South Maidstone Strategic Link Road

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

- Provide an additional 10,080 new homes by 2026⁹, 5040 of which will be provided by 2016 and address local housing needs by providing much needed low cost family homes
- Provide a modern and efficient domestic recycling service, supported by suitable facilities offering increased capacity
- Create an entrepreneurial hub for business start ups in partnership with the private sector
- Enhance the recreational facilities of parks and play areas and provide diversionary activities for young people in areas of acute deprivation

3.2.3 Under Policy BE1 in the South East Plan on urban renaissance, local authorities and their partners should use the opportunities associated with new development to help provide significant improvements to the built environment.

3.3 What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?

3.3.1 Many of the objectives set out in the Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East – see Table 2 - are relevant in considering future impacts on Maidstone’s urban area. Particularly relevant objectives include:

- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need
- To improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health
- To create and sustain vibrant communities which recognise the needs and contributions of all individuals
- To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
- To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region
- To improve efficiency in land use through the appropriate re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings, including re-use of materials from buildings, and encourage urban renaissance
- To improve the efficiency of transport networks by enhancing the proportion of travel by sustainable modes and by promoting policies which reduce the need to travel

⁹ Increased under the South East Plan

3.4 What's the situation now?

3.4.1 Maidstone town centre is a major retail and leisure destination and successfully competes with other regional shopping centres¹⁰. According to evidence cited in the Maidstone Economic Development Strategy¹¹, Maidstone town:

- Is among the top 50 retail centres in the country
- Has more than 700 shops, two department stores, over 75 cafes and restaurants, covering some 145,000 square metres of retail floor space.
- Employs 4,423 individuals – surpassing the majority of boroughs in Kent
- Has seen rising 'footfall' driven largely by Fremlin Walk, a 50 store space and 800 multi-storey car park situated on an old Kentish brewery site which has attracted high quality retailers
- Has a large number of independent retailers
- Has a lively night time economy (in 2006, 37,166 square metres of evening economy space were recorded in Maidstone – significantly more than any other town centre in Kent)

3.4.2 There are numerous listed buildings in the town centre as well as several conservation areas. There are various areas of greenspace in the town but these are largely concentrated in the green wedges which extend into the centre of the town. The town has several railway stations including Maidstone East, Maidstone West and Maidstone Barracks.

3.4.3 The town currently faces a series of challenges, including:

- The road system is severely constrained through the town centre causing congestion and pollution
- The supply of brownfield sites in Maidstone is declining
- There are areas of relative deprivation including Park Wood ward, North ward (in terms of barriers to housing and services), High Street and Fant wards (in terms of crime) and South, Shepway North, Shepway South and Park Wood wards (in terms of education, skills and training)
- The River Medway runs through the town centre and there is a degree of flood risk
- Rejuvenating the office market is a critical goal with unattractive office space in the town centre¹²
- The night time economy is largely focused on the activities of young people; this is thought by some to create a hostile environment for families, and there are calls in some quarters for a more diverse evening offer¹³

¹⁰ Maidstone Borough Council (2007). *Core Strategy Development Plan Document Preferred Options* [online] available at: http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/planning_building_control/local_development_framework/core_strategy.aspx (accessed 22 July 2009).

¹¹ Maidstone Borough Council (2008). *Maidstone Economic Development Strategy: Creating a 21st Century County Town* [online] available at: <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/business.aspx> (accessed 20 July 2009).

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*

3.5 What will be the situation without the plan?

3.5.1 In the absence of intervention through the Core Strategy, the Town Centre Regeneration AAP, urban regeneration and other initiatives, it is likely that the urban area would continue to perform reasonably well economically; however, it might not 'punch its weight'¹⁴. Intervention through the Core Strategy and the AAP (and other initiatives) is likely to focus particular attention on regenerating the town centre. Initiatives relating to Maidstone's Growth Point status may assist in combating transport and air quality issues. It should be noted that Maidstone urban area already provides a focus for new development with several 'saved' Local Plan policies promoting developments in and around the Maidstone urban area (see above).

3.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

3.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to the urban area include:

- The need to reduce congestion in the town centre
- The need to improve air quality in the town centre
- The need to regenerate the town centre and combat deprivation
- The need to provide quality office space in the town centre
- The need to enhance the public realm, including green infrastructure

¹⁴ Maidstone Borough Council (2008). *Maidstone Economic Development Strategy: Creating a 21st Century County Town* [online] available at: <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/business.aspx> (accessed 20 July 2009).

4 Urban extension

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This chapter sets out for potential development outside the Maidstone Borough's existing urban settlement boundaries, the policy context; the key sustainability objectives that need to be considered, the situation now (including any problems); the situation without the plan (i.e. the business-as-usual scenario); and issues which we think should provide a particular focus for the appraisal of the Core Strategy and other DPDs.

4.2 What's the policy context?

- 4.2.1 The Government's housing guidance states that local planning authorities and stakeholders should explore various options for accommodating new housing growth including "*expansion of existing settlements through **urban extensions** and creation of new freestanding settlements*" (our emphasis)¹⁵. The South East Plan emphasises that developments in and around urban areas, including new urban extensions should be well designed and consistent with the principles of urban renaissance and sustainable development (Policy SP3). In addition, the Plan states that local authorities should target positive management on areas where urban extensions are planned including engaging local communities and landowners to ensure early consideration is given to landscape and biodiversity enhancement, woodland management, recreation provision and access routes.
- 4.2.2 Under the South East Plan, Maidstone Borough as a whole must deliver on average 554 net additional dwellings each year (a total of 11,080 over the Plan period, 2006 – 2026). According to the Plan, an indicative 90% of new housing at Maidstone should be in or adjacent to Maidstone town.
- 4.2.3 The Council has found¹⁶ that not all future development in the Borough can reasonably be accommodated within the existing built up area of the Borough's towns and villages and it will be necessary to bring forward development on greenfield sites.
- 4.2.4 The Government now promotes the use of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as a key part of a robust evidence base for the LDF. The SHLAA assesses the likely level of housing that could be provided through unimplemented planning permissions and areas of land (including previously developed and greenfield sites) that have development potential for housing.
- 4.2.5 The SHLAA is not a policy making document, but is an important tool in revealing the capacity of the Borough to accommodate the necessary housing growth. Within the SHLAA methodology, assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of a site provides the information on which the judgement can be made in the plan making context as to whether a site is considered deliverable, developable or not currently developable for housing development.

¹⁵ Communities and Local Government (2006). *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing> (accessed 22 July 2009).

¹⁶ Maidstone Urban Capacity Study, GVA Grimley 2006 & Maidstone Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Baker Associates 2009

- 4.2.6 Previous to the SHLAA, a number of criteria were used to identify the most appropriate locations for a new sustainable community at the edge of Maidstone town and further information can be found in the Core Strategy 'Preferred Options'¹⁷ and in the associated Preferred Location for Development Background Document¹⁸.
- 4.2.7 PPS3 (Housing) states that local planning authorities should identify sufficient deliverable sites to deliver housing in the first five years and identify a further supply of specific, developable sites for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15. Windfall sites are not allowed as part of this potential for the first 10 years. The SHLAA is also helpful in assessing when sites are likely to come forward.
- 4.2.8 The Maidstone Borough SHLAA has confirmed that there is currently a 5 year supply of housing land in the Borough. However, without the allocation of further sites, the Borough would not meet its housing targets. The SHLAA reveals a shortfall commencing in 2014/15. For this reason, the Core Strategy is likely to be required to allocate strategic housing sites to meet this shortfall.

4.3 What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?

- 4.3.1 Many of the objectives set out in the Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East – see Table 2 - are relevant in considering future impacts in relation to Maidstone's potential urban extensions. Particularly relevant objectives include:
- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need
 - To create and sustain vibrant communities which recognise the needs and contributions of all individuals
 - To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
 - To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity
 - To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region
 - To improve the efficiency of transport networks by enhancing the proportion of travel by sustainable modes and by promoting policies which reduce the need to travel

4.4 What's the situation now?

- 4.4.1 Analysis has shown that it will not be possible to locate all proposed development in the Borough within the confines of the built up areas¹⁹. The Council's preferred approach is to create an attractive and cohesive new mixed use sustainable community to the south-east /

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Maidstone Borough Council (2007). *Core Strategy Preferred Location for Future Development: Background Document: BD2* [online] available at: http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/planning_building_control/local_development_framework/core_strategy.aspx (accessed 22 July 2009).

¹⁹ Maidstone Borough Council (2006). *Maidstone Urban Capacity Study 2006* [online] available at: http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/planning_building_control/local_development_framework/core_strategy.aspx (accessed 20 July 2009).

east of Maidstone town with a strong sense of place around a range of local services and sustainable transport provision. This was based on an initial assessment including the fact that the majority of higher order services such as comparison shopping, leisure and cultural pursuits, further education and wider employment opportunities are located in Maidstone; the approach does not rely on unachievable and unacceptable development sites and dwelling densities; sustainable transport options (public transport, walking and cycling) can be achieved more readily, with shorter journey distances; and affordable housing provision would be concentrated where there is greatest need²⁰. The Council initially considered a range of constraints - landscape, nature conservation, flooding, agricultural land quality and transport – and concluded that the greatest opportunity to create a sustainable new community of the necessary critical mass was at the south-eastern / eastern edge of Maidstone town.

- 4.4.2 The SHLAA has confirmed the analysis that insufficient housing supply can realistically be achieved from sites within the urban areas. Applying an appropriate density to suitable, available and achievable sites, the estimated total site capacity of previously developed land within Maidstone is less than 1,500 dwellings.
- 4.4.3 Without the urban extension to the east/ south east of Maidstone, the SHLAA also reveals that there would be insufficient capacity from suitable alternative greenfield options at the edge of Maidstone. Some 800 dwellings could be accommodated on greenfield sites, comprising the outstanding greenfield Local Plan allocations outside the urban extension area - whilst other greenfield sites put forward could accommodate less than 1500 dwellings if all proved suitable.
- 4.4.4 The SHLAA also confirms that there is not another alternative spatial strategy option to those previously considered for delivering the necessary housing targets and that is likely to provide a sustainable pattern of development and comply with regional or national planning policy. Previous to the SHLAA and updated national and regional policy, a number of criteria were used to identify the most appropriate locations for a new sustainable community at the edge of Maidstone town and further information can be found in the Core Strategy 'Preferred Options'²¹ and in the associated Preferred Location for Development Background Document²².
- 4.4.5 In terms of the situation now, the area at the south-eastern / eastern edge of Maidstone town requires further assessment to refine the strategic location for a sustainable mixed use community assessing broad constraints and opportunities including existing land-uses, ecological, heritage and landscape and taking into account stakeholder views, as well as the ability of developers to deliver the developments.
- 4.4.6 It is considered unlikely that the first limited housing development would be delivered at an urban extension east/south east of Maidstone town until 2015/16. For this reason it is likely that the Core Strategy will be required to allocate an additional strategic site(s) to meet this shortfall in deliverable sites.
- 4.4.7 The SHLAA has revealed a number of potential sites which could be developed during the 2014/15 period and the Borough Council will appraise the suitability and achievability of these sites, as well as other sustainability considerations prior to making a decision on which should be allocated. The shortfall in development in the medium term is as a result of the lead time for

+ reference to CS Key Considerations report

²¹ *Ibid*

²² Maidstone Borough Council (2007). *Core Strategy Preferred Location for Future Development: Background Document: BD2* [online] available at: http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/planning_building_control/local_development_framework/core_strategy.aspx (accessed 22 July 2009).

the urban extension and previous expectations of brownfield urban sites proving over optimistic, largely because of the effects of the credit crunch and recession.

4.5 What will be the situation without the plan?

4.5.1 In the absence of intervention through the Core Strategy, an urban extension of a critical mass to support the necessary strategic and community infrastructure would be unlikely to come forward and Maidstone Borough would be unable to sustainably accommodate the necessary level of housing in the existing urban area. Similarly, if the planned provision of strategic sites in the medium did not occur, the most sustainable development options might not be implemented. More broadly, failure to provide for further development through the urban extension might jeopardise Maidstone's economic and regeneration aspirations.

4.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

4.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to the potential urban extensions include:

- The need to give early consideration to landscape and biodiversity enhancement, woodland management, recreation provision and access routes
- The need to protect areas of biodiversity including ancient woodlands and local wildlife sites
- The need to ensure that potential urban extensions provide access to adequate employment opportunities, a range of community facilities and good public transport, walking and cycling links to the town centre and other key services
- The need to ensure that potential urban extensions promote and do not detract from the regeneration of Maidstone
- A critical mass of development will be required for an east / south-east urban extension to ensure the provision of necessary strategic and community infrastructure and a step change in high quality sustainable development
- The need to ensure that the villages retain their distinctive identity and that the character and setting of the conservation areas are protected.

5 Urban fringe

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter sets out for Maidstone's **urban fringe** the policy context; the key sustainability objectives that need to be considered, the situation now (including any problems); the situation without the plan (i.e. the business-as-usual scenario); and issues which we think should provide a particular focus for the appraisal of the Core Strategy and other DPDs.

5.2 What's the policy context?

5.2.1 Policy C5 in the South East Plan on managing the rural-urban fringe states that LDDs – in this case the Core Strategy and other DPDs – should identify issues and opportunities that require action to deliver a sustainable multi-functional rural-urban fringe; plan positively for facilities connected with the sustainable management of urban areas; and identify any parts of the rural-urban fringe around settlements that are currently or potentially subject to dereliction. Within the South East the rural-urban fringe represents an important asset and the Plan identifies that there is potential to make better use of these areas to meet wider objectives.

5.2.2 Similar to the previous section, the South East Plan emphasises that developments in and around urban areas, including new urban extensions should be well designed and consistent with the principles of urban renaissance and sustainable development (Policy SP3). In addition, the Plan states that local authorities should target positive management on areas where urban extensions are planned including engaging local communities and landowners to ensure early consideration is given to landscape and biodiversity enhancement, woodland management, recreation provision and access routes.

5.2.3 Within the urban fringe the provision and maintenance of green infrastructure (GI) is particularly important and the role of the fringe in improving accessibility to the countryside is a prime concern. Given the close proximity to urban areas, the urban fringe is highlighted by the South East Plan as an area which may be most appropriate for locating certain waste related activities such as composting. Although, this is likely to be less relevant in the Maidstone situation due to the existing provision of facilities. Additionally, Policy AOSR7 states that the LDF at Maidstone will “*avoid coalescence between Maidstone and Medway towns conurbation.*”

5.2.4 The South East Plan cites research which has shown that the urban rural fringe serves an important role both functionally (i.e. what it can do for the area's operation) and structurally (i.e. how it serves to define the area) for the South East²³; and further research has identified how a functional relationship may be provided for through greater interaction and integration between ten key functions: ²⁴

- A bridge to the country - provide linkages to networks of new and improved parks, woodlands and other green spaces to the urban centre and wider countryside by footpaths, bridleways, rivers and their valleys, canals and cycle ways. Also join up

²³ Groundwork and the Countryside Agency (2004). *Unlocking the potential of the rural urban fringe*. Cheltenham: Countryside Agency.

²⁴ Groundwork and the Countryside Agency (2005). *The Countryside in and around towns*. Cheltenham: Countryside Agency.

urban and country parks and other green spaces to form continuous green corridors between urban areas and countryside.

- A gateway to the town - quality countryside can create a powerful first impression to visitors and possible investors as a gateway to the urban area.
- A health centre - more accessible and attractive countryside and green space infrastructure close to where most people live and work provides an invaluable recreational resource.
- A classroom - countryside in and around towns provides hands-on learning opportunities in 'outdoor classrooms'. This supports the national curriculum, in particular environmental education and rural studies.
- Recycling and renewable energy centre - countryside in and around towns plays an important role in the sustainable management of waste, water and pollution generated in urban areas.
- A productive landscape - farmers operating close to urban areas can take full advantage of their proximity to large urban markets, supplying high quality local produce through direct marketing and farmers markets to consumers as well as supermarkets.
- A cultural legacy - countryside in and around towns contain many imprints of the history of towns and communities, their development and expansion or sometimes even their disappearance.
- A place for sustainable living - decisions are to be made on where to accommodate the need for new development, especially affordable homes. These decisions should consider the pros and cons of increasing housing densities in existing urban areas, expanding market towns and villages, allowing the selective expansion of cities, and creating new settlements.
- An engine for regeneration – the countryside on the urban edge can be used as a strategy for local regeneration to communities to develop their own confidence, skills and prospects.
- A nature reserve - countryside in and around towns contain historic and newly established environments such as woodlands, wetlands, meadows and other natural habitats.

5.3 What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?

5.3.1 Many of the objectives set out in the Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East – see Table 2 - are relevant in considering future impacts in relation to Maidstone's urban fringe. Particularly relevant objectives include:

- To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment, as well as the town centre
- To encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the South East and promote sustainable tourism
- To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity

- To protect and enhance the region's countryside and historic environment

5.4 What's the situation now?

- 5.4.1 The natural topography on which Maidstone is built, the historic development of large parks within the town and the patterns of suburban development have contributed towards Maidstone town's strongly defined star shape of development on the higher ground divided by green corridors of more rural character in the valleys between.²⁵ This has resulted in a unique function and structure of the Maidstone urban fringe.
- 5.4.2 The undulating topography of the area helps Maidstone retain the character of a small country town with a key feature being views of the countryside from several locations towards the Loose Valley to the south, the North Downs to the north and Greensand Ridge to the west.²⁶
- 5.4.3 To the north of the Maidstone Town urban area and north of the M20 lies the North Downs AONB and at the northern edge of the town there are Local Wildlife Sites which co-exist alongside ancient woodlands.²⁷ To the south, the Loose and South Medway valleys are important sites for wildlife and include two areas of ancient woodland. Land within the Medway valley, immediately outside the built up area of Maidstone, is within the floodplain and this area also contains an area of Grade 1 agricultural land. To the east there is the River Len.²⁸
- 5.4.4 As mentioned in Section 4, there are several villages to the east, south and west of Maidstone town - such as Leeds and Otham - which have older centres, separate identities and distinctive characters. The preservation of these qualities through protection from coalescence is important.²⁹
- 5.4.5 In terms of sustainable transport there are existing cycling connections from the centre of Maidstone town to the east/south east and the north/north west and further proposed connections to the south/ southwest and north/ northeast. These facilities can and will play an important part in promoting the functional linkages between urban and rural areas, via the urban fringe.

5.5 What will be the situation without the plan?

- 5.5.1 In the absence of intervention through the Core Strategy it is likely that the unique function and form of Maidstone's urban fringe would continue, thus maintaining the distinctive rural character of the surrounding villages. However, intervention through the Core Strategy and associated LDDs is likely to ensure that some development adjacent to and within the urban fringe reflects up-to-date Government policy and best practice guidelines, particularly with regards to the implementation of green infrastructure.

²⁵ Maidstone Borough Council (2008). *Character Area Assessment: Loose Road Area SPD* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090213_Loose%20Road%20combined%20120209%20final.pdf (accessed 23/07/09).

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Maidstone Borough Council (2007). *Core Strategy Preferred Location for Future Development* [online] available at: http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/070126_BD2%20main%20doc%20combined.pdf (accessed 22 July 2009).

²⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁹ *Ibid*.

5.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

5.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to the urban fringe include:

- The need to ensure that new development at the edge of the urban area facilitates access to the urban fringe and countryside, particularly through the provision and maintenance of green infrastructure
- The need to ensure that any parts of the urban fringe which are currently or potentially subject to dereliction are considered
- Coalescence between Maidstone and Medway towns (and Tonbridge and Malling) conurbations is avoided
- The distinctive character and identity of villages are preserved and protected
- Opportunities to improve the function of the urban fringe are exploited
- The need to protect areas of biodiversity including ancient woodlands and local wildlife sites.

6 Rural Service Centres

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This chapter sets out for Maidstone's **Rural Service Centres**³⁰ the policy context; the key sustainability objectives that need to be considered, the situation now (including any problems); the situation without the plan (i.e. the business-as-usual scenario); and issues which we think should provide a particular focus for the appraisal of the Core Strategy and other DPDs.

6.2 What's the policy context?

6.2.1 PPS7: Locating Development in Rural Areas³¹ states that LDDs should facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas. Policies should be designed to sustain, enhance and, where appropriate, revitalise country towns and villages (including through the provision of affordable housing) and for strong, diverse, economic activity, whilst maintaining local character and a high quality environment.

6.2.2 Away from larger urban areas, planning authorities should focus new development in or near to local (rural) service centres and these centres should be identified in the development plan as the preferred location for such development. In terms of economic development, local planning authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas by identifying suitable sites for future economic development and by setting out in LDDs their criteria for permitting economic development in different locations.³² LDDs should also be used to

- Facilitate and plan for accessible new services and facilities;
- Where possible, ensure that new development in identified service centres is supported through improvements to public transport, and to walking and cycling facilities;
- Support mixed and multi-purpose uses that maintain community vitality; and
- Support the provision of small-scale, local facilities to meet community needs outside identified local service centres.³³

6.2.3 According to PPS7 planning authorities should also ensure that development respects and, where possible, enhances the considerable historic and architectural value that may be found in country towns and villages. Policies and guidance should be prepared to encourage good quality design throughout rural areas.

6.2.4 While the South East Plan does not contain a single generic policy relating to rural areas it does include four key principles for rural policy development (these are discussed further in Section 7). In terms of specific policy, it does however, include Policy BE4: The Role of Small Rural Towns ('Market' Towns) which states that local planning authorities should encourage and initiate schemes and proposals that help strengthen the viability of small rural towns, recognising their social, economic and cultural importance to wider rural areas and the region

³⁰ Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst

³¹ ODPM (2004). *PPS7: Sustainable development in rural areas* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147402.pdf> (accessed 23/07/09).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

as a whole. This policy applies to Maidstone's Rural Service Centres. The Policy states that local planning authorities, through their LDDs and other means, should:

- Support and reinforce the role of small rural towns as local hubs for employment, retailing and community facilities;
- Encourage community-led assessments of need and action planning;
- Provide for sufficient housing development (especially for affordable housing) in small rural towns where this would reinforce and develop the distinctive character and role of the town and meet identified needs;
- Protect and enhance the character and appearance of individual small rural towns;
- Develop public transport networks which meet the needs of both the market towns and their surrounding rural area.

6.3 What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?

6.3.1 Many of the objectives set out in the Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East – see Table 2 - are relevant in considering future impacts on Maidstone's Rural Service Centres. Particularly relevant objectives include:

- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need
- To create and sustain vibrant communities which recognise the needs and contributions of all individuals
- To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
- To protect and enhance the region's countryside and historic environment

6.4 What's the situation now?

6.4.1 Maidstone's RSCs are found to the east of Maidstone Town (Harrietsham and Lenham) and in the southern part of the borough (Marden, Staplehurst and Headcorn). All the current RSCs have mainline rail connections to London. Harrietsham and Lenham are located on a direct rail link to Maidstone while Marden, Staplehurst and Headcorn are situated on the mainline via Tonbridge and are also able to access Maidstone via the Medway Valley rail line. All have rural bus service connections to Maidstone town. In recent years four of the five RSCs have published Parish Plans, with the exception of Marden adopting a Village Design Statement in October 2001.

6.4.2 Surrounded by open countryside, Lenham is well served by transport links as it is just off the A20 and on the main London rail line between Ashford and Maidstone. The village is built around a medieval square and there exists a good mixture of shops and services contributing

to a 'lively' village. The Lenham Parish Plan³⁴ identifies key concerns for the residents as follows:

- Continued support for open spaces
- Maintenance of public space and children's playground
- Traffic levels within the Parish and using the Pilgrim's Way, and general road conditions in the Parish
- The continued provision of rail services to London
- A need for more youth facilities
- Development in rural areas of the Parish

6.4.3 Harrietsham is a village located between Maidstone and Ashford, close to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the M20.³⁵ The majority of the community commute to work and the village is served by a Community Hall, new school, Doctor's Surgery, Shop, Post Office, Veterinary Practice, a pub and some small industrial sites.³⁶ The Harrietsham Parish Plan³⁷ identifies that key concerns for the residents include:

- The speed and movement of traffic within the village
- Only a radical shift in the public transport system would encourage residents to leave their private cars at home
- Quality of roads
- Perceptions of crime
- The provision of affordable housing

6.4.4 The village of Headcorn has good road links to the A20, M20 and other parts of the south east. Shopping facilities are considered to be excellent for a village. Headcorn Parish was estimated to have a population of 3,300 in 2007³⁸. The Headcorn Parish Plan³⁹ identifies that key concerns for the residents include:

- Provision of health care facilities
- Housing affordability and sheltered housing for the elderly and disabled
- Speeding traffic within the village
- Fly tipping
- Measures needed to support tourism-related activities
- Road conditions

³⁴ Lenham Parish (2007). *Lenham Parish Plan* [online] available at: <http://www.lenhampc.kentparishes.gov.uk/default.cfm?pid=4454> (accessed 24/07/09).

³⁵ Action with Communities in Rural Kent (no date). *Community led plan case study: Harrietsham* [online] available at: http://www.acre.org.uk/DOCUMENTS/communityledplanning/Harrietsham_casestudy_web.pdf (accessed 24/07/09).

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ Harrietsham Parish Council (2004). *Harrietsham Parish Plan 2004* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/Harrietsham%20Parish%20Plan.pdf> (accessed 24/07/09).

³⁸ Kent County Council (2009) *2007 Parish Level Population Estimates* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/publications/community-and-living/2007-parish-population-estimates.htm> (accessed 18/08/09).

³⁹ Headcorn Parish Council (2005). *Headcorn Parish Plan 2005* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Headcorn%20Parish%20Plan.pdf> (accessed 24/07/09).

6.4.5 Staplehurst has a population of approximately 5,860⁴⁰. It contains four churches, a library, a small supermarket, a health centre, dentists, shops, pubs and an industrial estate. It also has a community centre.⁴¹ The Staplehurst Annual Report⁴² and the Staplehurst Partnership⁴³ notes that concerns for this Parish include:

- Speeding and levels of traffic around and through Parish
- Allotment provision
- Policing
- Improving the social and physical infrastructure in line with Staplehurst's growing population.

6.4.6 The Marden Village Design Statement although dated does contain similar issues and information to those of the other RSCs parish plans, including aspects relating to history, landscape, buildings, open space, agriculture and industry, transport, services and amenities.

6.4.7 To provide a more complete and consistent summary of the current situation (including information on Marden) this section will be updated by Scott Wilson following the publication of the Borough's Rural Service Centre Hierarchy Report (in progress).

6.5 What will be the situation without the plan?

6.5.1 In the absence of intervention through the Core Strategy, the RSCs will most likely continue to perform well against key economic, environmental and social indicators. However, through intervention with the Core Strategy (and other initiatives including the Sustainable Community Plan) a more robust framework for managing the impacts of growth and supporting sustainable economic development in the RSCs will be provided. It is likely that without a core strategy and appropriate policies on the provision of affordable housing this area will remain a concern within RSCs, particularly for the elderly and the young.

6.5.2 The Council has commissioned a Rural Service Centre Hierarchy Report which is currently in preparation. When this report has been finalised the findings from it will be included in this section.

6.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

6.6.1 The Rural Service Centre Hierarchy Report will inevitably suggest issues which should be a particular focus for the appraisal. The policy context and limited review of four of the five RSCs suggests that the following may also be key issues:

- The need to manage the impacts of growth (particularly traffic) within the RSCs and in the surrounding area

⁴⁰ Kent County Council (2009) 2007 Parish Level Population Estimates [online] available at:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/publications/community-and-living/2007-parish-population-estimates.htm> (accessed 18/08/09).

⁴¹ Staplehurst Village (no date). *Visitor Information* [online] available at: http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/visitor_information.aspx (accessed 24/07/09).

⁴² Staplehurst Parish Council (2008). *Staplehurst Annual Report 2007-2008* [online] available at:

<http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/uploads/Staplehurst/annualreports/AnnualReport2008.pdf> (accessed 24/07/09).

⁴³ Staplehurst Partnership (2006). *Staplehurst Village Update* [online] available at:

<http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/uploads/Staplehurst/annualreports/AnnualReport2008.pdf> (accessed 24/07/09).

- The continued and improved provision of alternatives to private cars
- The maintenance of open spaces
- Access to key facilities and services
- Maintenance and viability of local facilities and services
- Maintenance and enhancement of the local distinctiveness and character of the individual villages.

7 Rural settlements and the countryside

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This chapter sets out for Maidstone's **rural settlements and the countryside** the policy context; the key sustainability objectives that need to be considered, the situation now (including any problems); the situation without the plan (i.e. the business-as-usual scenario); and issues which we think should provide a particular focus for the appraisal of the Core Strategy and other DPDs.

7.2 What's the policy context?

7.2.1 The policy context in Section 6.2 considering the implications of PPS7 is largely consistent for rural settlements and the countryside. However, in addition to policy direction for local service centres, PPS7 also includes policies which apply to the largely undeveloped countryside that separates cities towns and villages. PPS7 notes that while much of the land use planning in the countryside is outside the scope of the planning system, planning has an important role in supporting and facilitating development and land uses which enable those who earn a living from, and help to maintain and manage the countryside to continue to do so. Policies in LDDs should seek to maintain and enhance the environmental, economic and social value of the countryside, allowing these areas to remain an important natural resource, contribute to national and regional prosperity and be enjoyed by all.

7.2.2 PPS7 states that when preparing policies for LDDs and determining planning applications for development in the countryside, local planning authorities should:

- Support development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises;
- Support other countryside-based enterprises and activities which contribute to rural economies, and/or promote recreation in and the enjoyment of the countryside;
- Take account of the need to protect natural resources;
- Provide for the sensitive exploitation of renewable energy sources in accordance with the policies set out in PPS22; and
- Conserve specific features and sites of landscape, wildlife and historic or architectural value, in accordance with statutory designations.

7.2.3 PPS7 also provides further guidance on the protection of special landscape values. PPS7 states that the Government recognises and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally. The Government believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas. Similarly Policy C4 of the South East Plan states that local authorities should develop criteria-based policies to ensure that all development respects and enhances local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Additionally, the South East Plan does not promote the use of settlement separation policies other than Metropolitan Green

Belt policies but it does promote the use of integrated spatial rural policy development, as described below.

7.2.4 PPS7 also includes criteria for the re-use of buildings in the countryside, policy guidance with regard to nationally designated areas and the role of LDDs in supporting development proposals that will assist farming and farmers. Key to this latter element is the recognition that diversification into non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm enterprises and PPS7 includes guidance to local planning authorities in supporting this shift. Consideration in PPS7 is also given to the role of local planning authorities in supporting tourism and leisure activities which are vital to many rural economies.

7.2.5 The South East Plan does not contain a single generic policy relating to rural areas. Instead, policies influencing the spatial development of rural areas are threaded throughout the strategy. The plan does include four key principles for rural policy development. These are:

- **Sustainable rural communities** which are inclusive, tackle disadvantage and provide a range of affordable housing, access to essential services, and support for local community-based activities and decisions;
- **Sustainable rural economies** which support and develop both a profitable land-based economy, as well as the rural-based manufacturing and service economy, and high quality tourism;
- **Sustainable rural environments** which celebrate and enhance character and distinctiveness; accept change and development which respect that character; provide for a wide range of recreation and retreat; and
- **Sustainable natural resources** where they are used more prudently with more thought given to alternative energy sources, and the most valuable are protected and conserved.

7.2.6 Also Policy BE5 states that in preparing LDDs, local planning authorities should positively plan to meet the defined local needs of their rural communities for small scale affordable housing, business and service development, taking account of changing patterns of agriculture, economic diversification, and continued viability of local services. LDDs should also define their approach to development in villages based on the functions performed, their accessibility, the need to protect or extend key local services and the capacity of the built form and landscape setting of the village. The Policy continues, declaring that all new developments should be subject to rigorous design and sustainability criteria so that the distinctive character of the village is not damaged.

7.3 What are the key sustainability objectives that we need to consider?

7.3.1 Many of the objectives set out in the Regional Sustainability Framework for the South East – see Table 2 - are relevant in considering future impacts on Maidstone’s rural settlements and the countryside. Particularly relevant objectives include:

- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need

- To create and sustain vibrant communities which recognise the needs and contributions of all individuals
- To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
- To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity
- To protect and enhance the region's countryside and historic environment

7.4 What's the situation now?

7.4.1 The borough is the subject of a number of important environmental constraints, including a small area of Metropolitan Green Belt, the Kent Downs AONB, and does contain areas of special landscape value. The countryside also includes Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites. Maidstone also contains large areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land including Grades 1 and 2.⁴⁴

7.4.2 There are 35 village conservation areas and the rural parishes contain 1,687 listed buildings. The borough's most recent AMR states that it is "vital that new development maintains and enhances the amenity of the built up areas to protect the quality of life for existing residents."⁴⁵

7.4.3 The Maidstone Borough Wide Adopted Local Plan 2000 states that the open countryside

[I]ncorporates many elements that are quintessentially typical of Kent. In the north lie the North Downs, the escarpment face of which sweeps down to the valleys of the Rivers Medway and Len before rising again to the prominent Greensand Ridge, which in turn overlooks the Low Weald with its characteristic landscape of small fields, finally giving way, in the south of the Borough, to the High Weald.

7.4.4 Maidstone's 2007 Local Development Scheme notes that there are small commercial premises spread throughout the borough and although it is going through some significant changes agriculture remains an important industry (including traditional farming for soft fruits and hops).⁴⁶ Approximately 30% (2,100) of the borough's 7,000 businesses are located in rural areas.⁴⁷

7.4.5 Access to public transport in the rural areas is extremely limited and is a key challenge for the borough.⁴⁸ Additionally, while housing in Maidstone town has traditionally been considered relatively affordable relative to the south east average, there are affordability concerns in rural Maidstone and for those on average or low incomes.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Maidstone Borough Council (2008). *Maidstone AMR* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 23/07/09).

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ Maidstone Borough Council (2007). *Local development scheme* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/070329_LDS%20March%202007.pdf (accessed 23/07/09).

⁴⁷ Maidstone Borough Council (2008). *Maidstone Profile Report* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Maidstone_Profile_Report_Draft_V3_1.pdf (accessed 24/07/09).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* and Maidstone Borough Council (2009). *Maidstone 2020: the strategy for the community* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/Sustainable%20Community%20Strategy%20for%20Maidstone%20Borough%20adopted%20a pril%2009.pdf> (accessed 24/07/09).

⁴⁹ Maidstone Borough Council (2009). *Maidstone 2020: the strategy for the community* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/Sustainable%20Community%20Strategy%20for%20Maidstone%20Borough%20adopted%20a pril%2009.pdf> (accessed 24/07/09).

7.4.6 As noted in the Maidstone SCS, The Action for Communities in Rural Kent the top four issues emerging from parish plans in Maidstone are:

- Traffic levels
- High house prices
- Facilities for teenagers
- Post office provision

7.5 What will be the situation without the plan?

7.5.1 In the absence of intervention through the core strategy the borough may not be able to successfully manage potential impacts from future growth (as provided by the South East Plan). In particular, the substantial levels of growth and associated impacts from traffic congestion, housing and employment could seriously affect the landscape character and biodiversity within the borough.

7.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

7.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to the rural settlements and the countryside include:

- The need to ensure that new development enhances the quality of rural villages
- The need to support economic diversification
- Housing affordability
- Access to key facilities and services
- The need to manage the impact of rising traffic levels
- Protection of special landscape values.

8 Air quality and causes of climate change

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The Government has a National Air Quality Strategy⁵⁰ to improve and protect ambient air quality in the UK in the medium-term. Improvements in air quality help meet health and biodiversity objectives, as well as helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

8.1.2 Climate change has become a key issue. Lord Nicholas Stern has suggested that, worldwide, climate change could reduce GDP by 20% unless it is actively tackled now⁵¹. According to the 2009 UK Climate Projections⁵²:

- All areas of the UK will get warmer (with the warming greater in summer than in winter).
- There is likely to be little change in the amount of precipitation (rain, hail, snow etc) that falls annually, but it is likely that more of it will fall in the winter, with drier summers, for much of the UK.
- Sea levels rise (greater in the south of the UK than the north).

8.1.3 As a result, there will be permanent changes in the natural environment and increasingly, substantial challenges to national prosperity and social cohesion at the local level. The Government's principal concern for sustainable development has now filtered down to local authorities and climate change mitigation is being encouraged through promoting measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

8.2 What's the policy context?

Air Quality

8.2.1 The European Air Quality Framework Directive (96/62/EC)⁵³ effectively sets limits for twelve air pollutants. The Government's Air Quality Strategy (2000)⁵⁴, prepared under the Environment Act (1995), contains plans to improve and protect air quality in the UK. However, it only considers ambient air quality and leaves other aspects such as occupational, vehicle and indoor air quality management to be addressed separately. Local authorities such as Maidstone Borough Council have a statutory duty for local air quality management (LAQM) under the Environment Act 1995. The Council is required to carry out regular reviews and assessment against eight of the national air quality objectives. Where it is found that objectives are unlikely to be met, local authorities must designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) to address and manage the problems. The Council designated Maidstone Town (the existing urban boundary) and the M20 corridor (Junctions 5 to 8) in 2008 as an AQMA. The

⁵⁰ Defra (2007) *The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/airquality/strategy/pdf/air-qualitystrategy-vol1.pdf> (accessed 17 June 2009).

⁵¹ Stern, N. (2006) *Stern Review on the economics of climate change* [online] available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/stern_review_report.cfm (accessed 23 June 2009).

⁵² Defra (2009) *UK Climate Projections* [online] available at: <http://ukcp09.defra.gov.uk/> (accessed 16 July 2009).

⁵³ EU (1996) *Council Directive 96/62/EC of 27 September 1996 on ambient air quality assessment and management* [online] available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31996L0062:EN:HTML> (accessed 17 June 2009).

⁵⁴ DEFRA (2007) *The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/airquality/strategy/pdf/air-qualitystrategy-vol1.pdf> (accessed 16 June 2009).

Council is currently preparing an action plan⁵⁵ aiming to achieve the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide and 24-hour mean PM10 objective, which will replace the current action plans. An action plan for the M20 has also been prepared by the Council. Measures are also proposed to improve air quality both within the AQMA and across the Borough as a whole.

- 8.2.2 Air quality issues are also able to be addressed through spatial planning, local transport and controlling industrial pollution sources. The other two main organisations responsible for managing air quality are the Environment Agency, which is responsible for the regulation of emissions from industrial facilities and processes and the Highways Agency, responsible for managing motorways and trunk roads. Maidstone Borough Council has set up an air quality and transport steering group which comprises internal departments and external organisations in order to better coordinate air quality issues across the Borough.

Climate change

- 8.2.3 The Climate Change Act 2008⁵⁶ sets targets for green house gas emission reductions through action in the UK and abroad of at least 80% by 2050, and reductions in CO₂ emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline. The South East Plan aims to reduce the region's carbon emissions by 20% by 2010 and at least 25% by 2015. Maidstone's target for CO₂ emissions reduction is contained in the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy and aims for a 20% reduction by March 2016⁵⁷.

- 8.2.4 PPS1 supplement on Planning and Climate Change⁵⁸ requires local authorities to mitigate and adapt to climate change through appropriate location and patterns of development, promoting the reduction of the use of the car, conserving and enhancing biodiversity and ensuring that new development is resilient to the effects of climate change. PPS22 on Renewable Energy⁵⁹ includes a requirement for local authorities to allocate specific sites for renewable energy and to encourage developers to provide on-site renewable energy generation as appropriate. The Code for Sustainable Homes⁶⁰ sets out the national standard for sustainable design and construction of new homes. From April 2008, achieving Level 3 of the Code became mandatory for new social housing developments. From 2010 all new residential developments will have to meet the equivalent of Level 3 of the Code for Energy Use under the Building Regulations. The Building Regulations for energy use for new residential development will be progressively tightened requiring buildings to be effectively 'carbon neutral' from 2016 onwards, which is equivalent to Level 5/6 of the Code. In terms of carbon emissions Level 3 equals a 25% energy/carbon improvement relative to current 2006 standards in the Building Regulations. New housing developments will have to comply with Level 4 by 2013 (44% energy/carbon improvement relative to current 2006 standards in the Building Regulations) and Level 5 by 2016 (zero carbon). Maidstone is also currently reviewing its Climate Change Action Plan, particularly looking at how it can better adapt to climate change.

⁵⁵ Maidstone Borough Council (2007) *Maidstone Town Centre Air Quality Action Plan* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/FinalizD%20AQAP%20Maidstone%20Town%20Centre.pdf> (accessed 17 June 2009).

⁵⁶ The Climate Change Act 2008 is available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/legislation/> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁵⁷ Maidstone Borough Council and Maidstone Matters Partnership (2009) *Sustainable Community Strategy* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/community/community_strategy.aspx (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁵⁸ Communities and Local Government (2007) *Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/ppscclimatechange.pdf> (accessed 16 June 2009).

⁵⁹ ODPM (2004) *Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps22> (accessed 17 June 2009).

⁶⁰ CLG (2008) *The Code for Sustainable Homes: setting the standard in sustainability for new homes* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/codesustainhomesstandard.pdf> (accessed 17 June 2009).

8.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

8.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:

- To reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve
- To address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases
- To increase energy efficiency, security and diversity of supply and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in the region

8.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

Air Quality

8.4.1 Maidstone's town centre, key road junctions and the M20 have generally poor air quality primarily resulting from traffic emissions and congestion. Three additional air pollution 'hotspots' have been recently identified at busy traffic junctions within the Maidstone Town urban area (Fountain Lane, Well Street, Wheatsheaf Junction) in addition to the existing hotspots in the town centre and the M20. This has contributed to the enlargement of the AQMA designation to encompass the whole of Maidstone Town urban area. NO₂ is produced by road vehicles and can cause respiratory illnesses and possibly increase the risk of lung infections. This pollutant affects young children and asthma sufferers in particular⁶¹.

8.4.2 Fine particles or PM10 are linked to a number of respiratory illnesses including asthma and lung cancer. According to the Council, the provisional annual PM10 objective for 2010 is predicted to be exceeded at a number of busy roads in the Borough⁶². This will require further consideration in future air quality assessments.

Climate change

8.4.3 As shown in Table 3, the average per capita emissions for Maidstone are 6.8 kt CO₂, the same as the average for the South East. In comparison to other local authorities in Kent, per capita emissions in Maidstone are relatively low e.g. Tonbridge and Malling (7.8) and Shepway (7.6).

Table 3: Detailed 2006 (and 2005) data supporting the indicator NI186: Total and Per capita CO₂ emissions in the LA area (summary by sector)⁶³

Local Authority / Region	Industry and Commercial (kt CO ₂)	Domestic (kt CO ₂)	Road Transport (kt CO ₂)	PER CAPITA EMISSIONS (Tonnes of CO ₂)
Maidstone	376 (355)	354 (346)	248 (252)	6.8 (6.7)
South East	21,210 (20,927)	21,044 (20,690)	13,742 (14,099)	6.8 (6.8)

⁶¹ Maidstone Borough Council and Maidstone Matters Partnership (2009) *Sustainable Community Strategy* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/community/community_strategy.aspx (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁶² Maidstone Borough Council (2009) *Local Air Quality Management – monitoring and our role* (web page) [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/environment/environmental_enforcement/air_quality.aspx (accessed 17 June 2009).

⁶³ Defra (2006) *Local Government Indicators* (data) [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/globalatmos/globalghg.htm> (accessed 17 June 2009).

- 8.4.4 According to the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2007/08⁶⁴, an application was granted for renewable energy generation during 2007/08, in the form of a small scale 12m wind turbine (13.59 MWh). The Council plans to facilitate further schemes throughout the borough, particularly through planning conditions.
- 8.4.5 The Council is beginning to look into climate change adaptation and by March 2010, aims to have prepared businesses and residents to adapt to climate change e.g. by raising public awareness of flooding and other extreme weather incidents⁶⁵.

Are there any evidence gaps?

- 8.4.6 According to the AMR, the Council has only started monitoring planning applications specifically for renewable energy this year. As the database of planning applications build up, the methodology for monitoring this indicator will become more refined. In the future, planning applications granted for renewable energy generation will be surveyed to establish when the application is implemented.

8.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

- 8.5.1 Research by AEA Technology suggests that background air quality throughout the UK will improve significantly over the next 10-15 years, primarily as a result of tightening Euro emission standards for cars and lorries and cleaner energy generation⁶⁶. However, the model used does not include the increase in housing figures proposed in various Regional Spatial Strategies, nor government proposals for new power stations.
- 8.5.2 According to the Council, background levels of air quality in the Borough have remained constant for the last five years based on monitoring station data. Unmanaged growth and increasing traffic congestion will adversely impact on air quality and contribute to increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

⁶⁴ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Maidstone Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 17 June 2009).

⁶⁵ Maidstone Borough Council (2005) *Climate Change Plan and Climate Change Action Plan* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/climate_change_plan_adopted_0705.pdf (accessed 17 June 2009).

⁶⁶ Grice, S. et al (2006) *Baseline projections of air quality in the UK for the 2006 review of the Air Quality Strategy*, report to Defra et al [online] available at: http://www.airquality.co.uk/archive/reports/cat16/0604041040_baselineprojectionsreport5.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009) and Grice, S. et al. (2007) *Updated projections of air quality in the UK for base case and additional measures for the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 2007*, report to Defra et al [online] available at: http://www.airquality.co.uk/archive/reports/cat17/0707171116_newbaselineandadditionalmeasuresreport_v6.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

8.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

8.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to air quality and the causes of climate change include:

- The need to improve air quality in the AQMAs, including the town centre, key road junctions and the M20
- The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet Government's targets
- The need to increase the renewable energy capacity in the Borough
- The need to adapt to climate change.

9 Biodiversity and green infrastructure

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Biodiversity is the term given to the diversity of life on Earth and this includes the plant and animal species that make up our wildlife and the habitats in which they live. As well as being important in its own right, we value biodiversity because of the ecosystem services it provides, such as flood defence and clean water; and the contribution that biodiversity makes to wellbeing and sense of place.

9.1.2 Green infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green spaces including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. It can help to make walking and cycling more attractive; promote mental wellbeing; help to establish local identity and a sense of place; help to reduce air pollution; contain flooding; and reduce temperatures at a time of global warming⁶⁷. This Chapter should be read with Chapter 8 – Air Quality and causes of climate change and Chapter 18 – Water resources and water quality.

9.2 What's the policy context?

9.2.1 The EU Sustainable Development Strategy, adopted in 2006, includes an objective to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010⁶⁸. The UK is also a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), a principal objective of which is the conservation of biodiversity. Commitment to the CBD led to the preparation of the 1994 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP), the overall goal of which is to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the UK and to contribute to efforts to conserve global biodiversity. The UK BAP identifies our most threatened biodiversity assets and includes action plans for the recovery of priority species and habitats⁶⁹. A Biodiversity Strategy for England was subsequently published in 2002⁷⁰ and includes the broad aim that planning, construction, development and regeneration should have minimal impacts on biodiversity and enhance it wherever possible. PPS9 on Biodiversity and Geological Conservation emphasises that the Government's objectives for planning include ensuring that biodiversity is conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development, so that policies and decisions about the development and use of land integrate biodiversity with other considerations⁷¹. Importantly, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 placed a Duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. According to the Government, the Duty aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, clarify existing commitments with regard to biodiversity, and to make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision-making⁷².

⁶⁷ Davies et al. (2006) *Green Infrastructure Planning Guide* [online] available at:

http://www.greeninfrastructure.eu/images/GREEN_INFRASTRUCTURE_PLANNING_GUIDE.pdf (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁶⁸ Council of the European Union (2006) *Renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy* [online] available at:

http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st10/st10917_en06.pdf (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁶⁹ For further information on the UK BAP see: <http://www.ukbap.org.uk/>

⁷⁰ Defra (2002) *Working with the Grain of Nature: A Biodiversity Strategy for England* [online] available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdf/biodiversity/biostrategy.pdf> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁷¹ ODPM (2005) *Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* [online] available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/historicenvironment/pps9/> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁷² Defra (2007) *Guidance for Public Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty* [online] available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/key-docs.htm> (accessed 17 July 2009).

- 9.2.2 The South East Plan⁷³ includes a policy on green infrastructure (CC8) requiring local authorities and partners to work together to plan, provide and manage existing and new green infrastructure. Policy NRM5 requires that local planning authorities shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity and actively pursue achieving a net gain. Consideration of how developments should contribute to biodiversity gain is included in policy CC4 on Sustainable Design and Construction. The South East Biodiversity Strategy (2008)⁷⁴ aims to provide a vision and framework for the delivery of biodiversity targets in the region. It also sets out to be a core element within the strategies and delivery plans of organisations and authorities in the region.
- 9.2.3 The South East Green Infrastructure Framework⁷⁵ provides guidance to local authorities on how to provide the green infrastructure⁷⁶ that is required by the South East Plan. According to the Framework, green infrastructure should be fully integrated in the plan-making process and consideration of green infrastructure should begin at the earliest stages of that process. Green infrastructure provision should be considered in relation to the needs of a particular area.
- 9.2.4 At the local level, a Maidstone Open Space DPD was adopted in 2006 setting requirements for open space for urban and rural development. Two other key documents are currently being prepared by the Council: the Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan setting out local priorities for biodiversity conservation and the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan will set out a framework for the protection, management, enhancement and promotion of Maidstone's natural environment and biodiversity. It outlines a number of strategic objectives required for the conservation of the wider biodiversity resource together with a set of detailed objectives and actions for the protection of priority habitats, and a summary of planned Maidstone Borough Council led biodiversity projects.

9.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

- 9.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:
- To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity
 - To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
 - To maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers, ground waters and coasts, and to achieve sustainable water resources management

9.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

- 9.4.1 The spatial distribution of habitat designated as being of European or National importance is shown in Figure 2. The AMR for Maidstone Borough states that much of the Borough's rural area contains high quality landscape and is rich in biodiversity. Indeed, 27.25% of the Borough's total area is AONB, 0.35% SAC, 0.69% SSSI and 5.75% Local Wildlife Sites. There

⁷³ GOSE (2009) *The South East Plan* [online] available at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁷⁴ South East England Biodiversity Forum (2008) *The South East England Biodiversity Strategy* [online] available at: <http://strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk/> (accessed 17 July 2009).

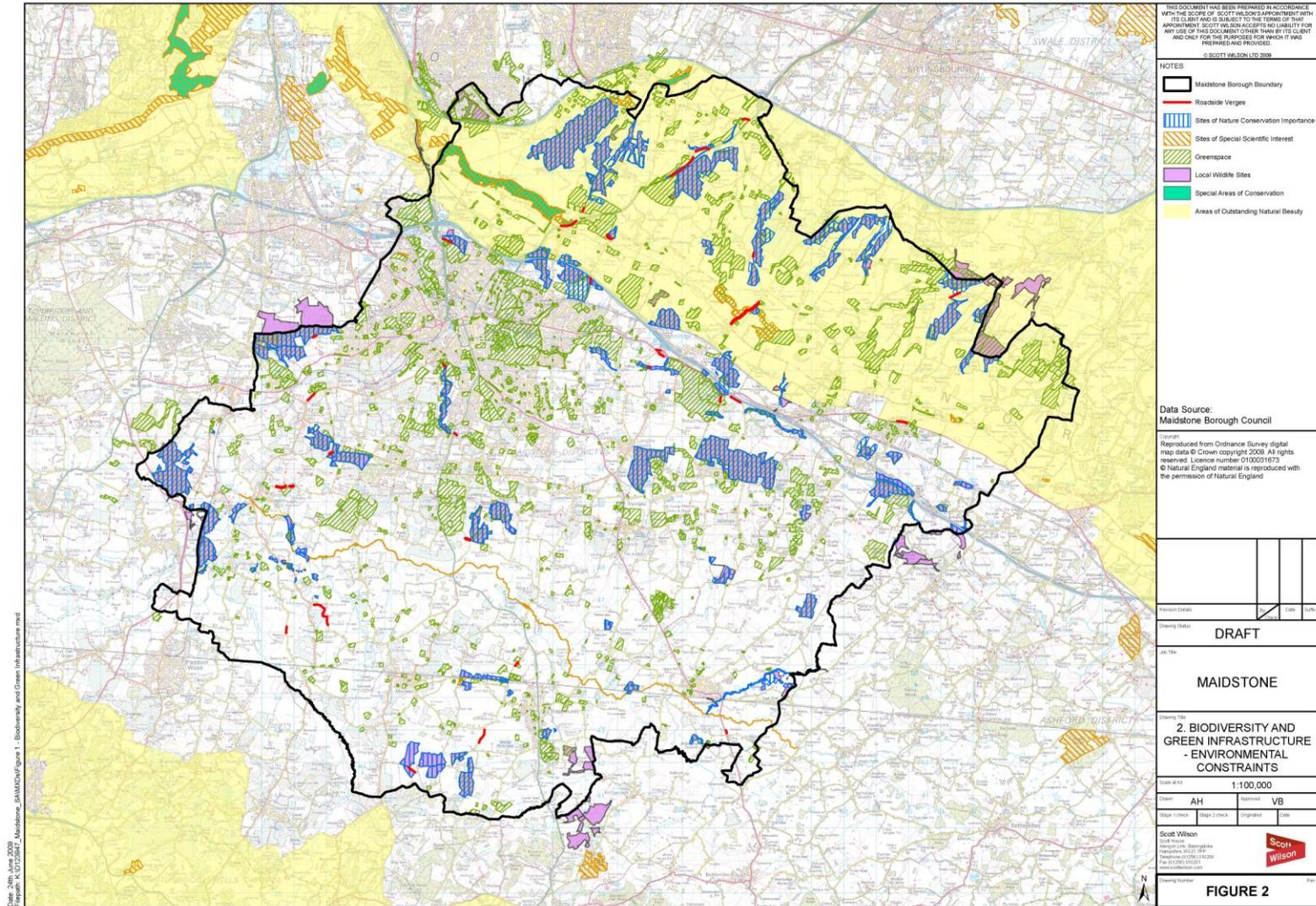
⁷⁵ LUC (2009) *South East Green Infrastructure Framework* [online] available at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/497648/docs/171301/SEGIFramework.finaljul09.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2009).

⁷⁶ This also includes open and running water, water resources and flood management.

are also 34 roadside verges of nature conservation interest and three Local Nature Reserves (Bell Lane, Vinters Valley Park and Boxley Warren), with further LNR designations being pursued by MBC at Fant Wildlife, Bredhurst Wood, Sandling Park, Horish Wood, Admiral and Gorham Wood. The River Len reserve is currently an informal reserve which will be formally declared as an LNR in the future.

- 9.4.2 North Downs Woodlands to the west of the district is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) comprising of dry grassland steppes (14%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (63%) and coniferous woodland (23%). The site was primarily designated due to the presence of Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests and *Taxus baccata* yew woods on steep slopes. Queendown Warren SAC lies on the northern border of Maidstone Borough. The district also contains five Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) (Boxley Warren, Vinters Valley Park, Len Valley, Fant and Bell Lane), 2 Country Parks (White Horse Wood and Teston Bridge) and three Millennium Greens (Allington, Collis and Hollingbourne).
- 9.4.3 In regard to Figure 2, it is important to note that Maidstone is intending to introduce criteria-based policies in their LDDs that will utilise the review of their Landscape Character Assessment in order to provide sufficient protection of the local landscape, without the need for local designations. This is considered best practice and is in line with policies contained in PPS7.

Figure 2: Maidstone's environment



9.4.4 Table 4 shows the status of the 9 SSSIs in Maidstone. Defra's Public Service Agreement (PSA) (2005-2008) target is to achieve 95% by area of SSSI in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. The table shows that of the nine SSSIs, seven meet the PSA target.

Table 4: Description and status of SSSIs in Maidstone⁷⁷

SSSI	Description	Current status
Lenham Quarry	A Geological Conservation Review Site known as Pivington Quarry. Contains marine gastropod and bivalve faunas, as well as serpulid worms, brachiopods, bryozoans, scaphopods and echinoids; fauna allows placing of this deposit in a time period which is otherwise poorly represented in the rocks of the British Isles.	100% favourable; 100% meeting PSA target
Hollingbourne Downs	Section of the North Downs escarpment supporting a variety of habitats characteristic of calcareous soils, including unimproved chalk grassland and beech woodland with oak and ash.	54.92% favourable; 39.74% unfavourable recovering; 5.33% unfavourable declining; 94.66% meeting PSA target
Spot Lane Quarry	Quarry exhibiting a cross-section through a series of cambered blocks, tilted downslope, and intervening loess-filled gulls (cracks). One of very few sites available where loess fauna can be studied.	100% favourable; 100% meeting PSA target
Marden Meadows	One of the best examples of unimproved neutral grassland remaining in Kent. Increasingly uncommon habitat type owing to habitat destruction. The ponds and old hedgerows are also of interest. Wide range of fine grasses and flowering herbs.	100% favourable; 100% meeting PSA target
River Beult	River flows for most of its length over Wealden clay which influences its ecology. One of the few clay rivers in England which retains a characteristic flora and fauna. Has suffered some enrichment with phosphate and nitrate from sewage effluent and agricultural run-off. The section of river being notified, from Smarden to the Medway confluence, excludes the upper river which is ditch-like with an impoverished fauna and flora.	100% unfavourable no change; 0% meeting PSA target
Oaken Wood	Provides the best example in Britain of ridge and trough topography produced by intense cambering and gulling during the Pleistocene	100% favourable; 100% meeting PSA target
Allington Quarry	Important site for Pleistocene geomorphology, providing an extensive section through a series of loess-filled gulls.	100% unfavourable recovering; 100% meeting PSA target
Wouldham to Detling Escarpment	10 km stretch of the chalk escarpment to the north of Maidstone including representative examples of woodland, scrub and unimproved grassland habitats on chalk. Supports a number of rare and scarce species of plants and invertebrates. The Culand Pits are also of importance because of their rich and unique fossil fauna which includes a variety of fish and reptiles. The site lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	49.30% favourable; 50.70% unfavourable recovering; 100% meeting PSA target
Purple Hill	Site includes areas of chalk grassland, scrub and woodland. Grassland is extremely herb rich and contains one nationally rare plant species.	64% favourable; 36% unfavourable recovering; 100% meeting PSA target

⁷⁷ Adapted from Natural England SSSI summaries. See: <http://www.natureonthemap.org.uk/map.aspx> (accessed 25 June 2009).

- 9.4.5 A Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been drafted. The BAP proposes specific objectives and targets for safeguarding and enhancing Maidstone's natural environment. The plan identifies the following Habitat Action Plans (HAP):
- Lowland calcareous grassland;
 - Dry acid grassland;
 - Lowland meadows;
 - Lowland beech and yew woodland;
 - Wet woodland;
 - Wood pasture and parkland;
 - Lowland deciduous mixed woodland;
 - Traditional orchards;
 - Lowland heathland;
 - Ponds;
 - Rivers; and
 - Urban green spaces.
- 9.4.6 Maidstone is identified in the Kent BAP for a number of important wildlife habitats. Important natural features in Maidstone Borough include; almost a third of native yew and beech woodlands found in the county, river habitats, including the River Beult Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the River Medway and the River Len, Low Weald meadows, including Marden Meadow SSSI with its abundant orchids, the distinctive Low Weald landscape, with its small fields, hedgerows and ponds, woodland and grassland habitats on the chalk, Gault clay and Greensand and important geological sites, including Aylesford Quarry and Aylesford Pit⁷⁸.
- 9.4.7 Maidstone town is home to Mote Park, a Grade II English Heritage listed park, as well as a number of other parks including the newly created Whatman Millennium Park and two Millennium Greens. Current provision of Green Space by type has been included in Table 5. Maidstone's Green Space Strategy highlights that some areas in the Borough have a low provision of green space. In addition, a lack of key linkages of green spaces to create linear walkways, green and wildlife corridors, and failing recreational infrastructure due to neglect and lack of expenditure have also been identified as issues. The standard of green space quality is said to be variable, with some areas having limited variety and interest. Future threats include lack of funding and a lack of forward planning to meet the demands of users⁷⁹.

⁷⁸ Maidstone Borough Council and Maidstone Matters Partnership (2009) *Sustainable Community Strategy* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/community/community_strategy.aspx (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁷⁹ Maidstone Borough Council (2005) *The Maidstone Green Spaces Strategy* [online] available at: http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment/parks_open_spaces/green_spaces_strategy.aspx (accessed 25 June 2009).

Table 5: Green Spaces in Maidstone Borough⁸⁰

Green Space Type	Urban (Hectare per 1,000 population)	Rural (Hectare per 1,000 population)
Parks & gardens	2.30	N/A
Amenity greenspace	0.7	0.8
Provision for children & young peoples (equipped play)	0.12	0.09
Green corridors	N/A	N/A
Outdoor sports facilities	1.4	2.7
Allotments & community gardens	0.21	0.18
Cemeteries & graveyards	0.66	0.59

Are there any evidence gaps?

- 9.4.8 Further detail is needed regarding the rare and endangered species just specific to the Maidstone Borough. A detailed knowledge of flora and fauna is required both at county level and at individual wildlife sites in order to ensure that decisions made are fully effective. A BAP is drafted for Maidstone. However, it is yet to be formally adopted by MBC.
- 9.4.9 A thorough appraisal of green spaces and local standards of provision has already been carried out in the Borough and a Green Infrastructure Strategy is being drafted.

9.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

- 9.5.1 Development within the district may result in increased fragmentation and isolation of habitats. Climate change is also a key threat to the biodiversity of the Borough. Without adequate mitigation measures in place, the Borough of Maidstone may experience shifting habitat ranges, an increased risk to native wildlife and an increase in foreign (e.g. continental) biodiversity, beyond that which is already anticipated. Furthermore, local and regional biodiversity targets set out within the SE Plan will be harder to attain.
- 9.5.2 The green spaces strategy has identified local standards and inadequacies of provision of open space within the Borough. Without adequate measures set out within the LDF, it may be anticipated that this situation may not be reversed. The limited funds identified as available for green infrastructure may be poorly distributed. Targets for quantity and quality may not be reached for green space.

⁸⁰ Adapted from Maidstone Green Spaces Strategy. See: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/environment/parks_open_spaces/green_spaces_strategy.aspx (accessed 25 June 2009).

9.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

9.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to the biodiversity include:

- The need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and protected areas in Maidstone (informed by the Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan).
- The need to enhance existing green spaces and where an under provision has been identified, contributions from development should be sought.
- The need to conserve and enhance water courses and their benefits to biodiversity and public amenity.

10 Community wellbeing

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)⁸¹ has defined sustainable communities as: “...places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all”.

10.1.2 As such, sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development by: “balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental components of their community, meeting the needs of existing and future generations and respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their own communities sustainable”.

10.1.3 Social inclusion is a key aspect of sustainable communities and many interlinked factors are important in ensuring that individuals and areas are able to fully participate in society. Factors such as low income, poverty and unemployment can be compounded by poor housing, high crime, discrimination, poor health and family breakdown. A combination of problems can create a vicious cycle and lead to social exclusion. “Social exclusion can happen as a result of problems that face one person in their life. But it can also start from birth. Being born into poverty or to parents with low skills still has a major influence on future life chances”.

10.1.4 Community wellbeing is therefore influenced by a number of crosscutting factors. This section focuses on many of these, including health, education, safety, and deprivation. Also the provision of open spaces and green infrastructure is documented as having beneficial effects on health and well being.

10.2 What’s the policy context?

10.2.1 Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future⁸² (the ‘Sustainable Communities Plan’) was launched in 2003 and sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in urban and rural areas. The main aspects are:

- addressing housing shortage, comprised of accelerating the provision of housing, affordable housing and tackling homelessness;
- addressing low demand and abandonment;
- ensuring all social housing is brought up to a decent standard by 2010;
- improving the local environment of all communities (liveability); and
- protecting the countryside and using land more effectively.

10.2.2 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development⁸³ sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system; stresses the importance of a

⁸¹ CLG (2003) *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/sustainablecommunitiesbuilding> (accessed 18 June 2009).

⁸² CLG (2003) *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/sustainablecommunitiesbuilding> (accessed 18 June 2009).

strong, stable and productive economy and requires local planning authorities to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided to support new and existing development and housing. It also states that accessibility to jobs and services should be addressed as a means of achieving social cohesion and inclusion. PPS3: Housing⁸⁴ emphasises that housing developments should be in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and good access to jobs, services and infrastructure. The Government's White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities⁸⁵ introduced a new performance framework tailored to the local needs through the Local Area Agreement and encourages councils to develop neighbourhood charters setting out local standards and priorities. The White Paper also calls for more accountable and responsive local government, a greater role for community participation in decision-making and an enhanced role for community groups.

- 10.2.3 The Government's strategy for neighbourhood renewal – A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal (2001) – included a commitment to social inclusion and that within 10 to 20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. This should be done by addressing the underlying problems of declining areas such as high unemployment, weak economies and poor schools and using Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to unite public, private, community and voluntary sector and drive change forward.
- 10.2.4 The South East Plan contains several key policies on issues that affect community wellbeing. S1: Supporting Healthy Communities which highlights the role of the planning system in preventing health problems, through providing access to amenity and open spaces, housing for excluded groups, safer footpaths and cycle lanes etc. Policy S2 deals with the provision of health facilities and encourages local authorities to work closely with the NHS. Other policies aim to promote adequate provision of education facilities (S3) and increasing participation in cultural and sporting activities (S5). Policy S6 on Community Infrastructure requires local authorities to encourage the mixed use of community facilities and appropriate location, according to need of these facilities. Spatial disparities in socio-economic deprivation, including health inequalities should be addressed through joint working between local authorities and other relevant partners (SP4: Regeneration and Social Inclusion).
- 10.2.5 Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy identifies the following priorities for the Borough:
- tackling congestion and its impact on air quality and the local economy;
 - the need to match improvements in infrastructure and resources with housing growth;
 - developing Maidstone's leisure and retail economy;
 - supporting the development of rural service centres;
 - responding to the influence of the growth areas of Ashford and the Thames Gateway including continuing to attract high quality residential, employment and commercial development and to regenerate the Town;
 - tackling health inequalities;
 - tackling child poverty and its impact on educational attainment;

⁸³ ODPM (2005) *Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/planningpolicystatement1.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2009).

⁸⁴ ODPM (2000) *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁸⁵ CLG (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous> (accessed 17 July 2009).

- responding to the challenge of climate change and its impact; and
 - improving waste collection and recycling.
- 10.2.6 Other relevant local strategies include the Maidstone Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-2008⁸⁶ which has an over-riding objective to reduce crime in the borough over the three year period by 15.2%. The following Key Priorities have been identified to achieve this target and are the subject of Individual Action Plans:
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
 - Promote a positive image of young people
 - Drug and alcohol misuse
 - Reduce the fear of crime by engaging with communities
- 10.2.7 Maidstone's commitment to equality is enshrined in the Borough's Race Equality Scheme 2002⁸⁷ and the Borough's Corporate Equality Plan 2008-2011⁸⁸.

10.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

- 10.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:
- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need
 - To improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health
 - To reduce poverty and social exclusion and, by improving their performance, close the gap between the most deprived areas in the South East and the rest of the region
 - To raise educational achievement levels across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work
 - To reduce crime and perceptions of disorder
 - To create and sustain vibrant communities which recognise the needs and contributions of all individuals
 - To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
 - To encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the South East and promote sustainable tourism
 - To develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness of the region

⁸⁶ Safer Maidstone Partnership (undated) *Maidstone Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-2008* [online] available at: [http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/C&D%20Strategy%20Document%202005%20-%202008%20-%20\(11-11-05\).pdf](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/C&D%20Strategy%20Document%202005%20-%202008%20-%20(11-11-05).pdf) (accessed 18 June 2009).

⁸⁷ Maidstone Borough Council (2002) *The Race Equality Scheme* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/031021RaceEqualityScheme.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

⁸⁸ Maidstone Borough Council (undated) *Corporate Equality Plan 2008-2011* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/Corporate%20Equality%20Plan.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2009).

10.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

- 10.4.1 Maidstone's population is predicted to increase from 142,800 in 2006 to 167,600 in 2026. This constitutes approximately a 17% growth. The final South East Plan includes a housing figure for Maidstone of 11,080 dwellings. This would take the number of households from 59,300 in 2006 to 70,200 by 2026. One of the key aspects of future population in Maidstone is the trend towards an ageing population which is not unique to the Borough. However, the increase in people aged 65+ will be 18.8% higher in Maidstone than in Kent which has clear implications for community services and particularly provision of health services⁸⁹.
- 10.4.2 Figure 3 shows that although Maidstone is a relatively prosperous Borough, there are pockets of deprivation in the town centre area and areas to the southeast of the town. These areas are in the 10% (in red in the map) and 20% (orange) most deprived in the Country. When looking at the different components of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), deprivation in terms of education, skills and training is also high in the areas to the southeast of the town. Health deprivation is also particularly high in the same areas. Maidstone's SCS states that 11% of Maidstone's population live within these areas. The SCS highlights a series of problems in the most deprived areas within the Borough: men live on average five years less than those from the most affluent areas, there are higher levels of teenage pregnancy (See Table 8), lower levels of skills/qualifications and higher levels of crime and child poverty.
- 10.4.3 Table 6 indicates that the Borough performs well compared to national, regional and county averages for GCSE attainment of 5 A* to C grades, but other GCSE statistics show Maidstone in comparison not performing as well. According to the SCS, the Borough has a higher proportion of school leavers achieving five or more A* - C grade GCSEs. There are considerable differences between the performances of different schools. For instance, four secondary schools in the Borough performed below the 30% threshold set by national government.
- 10.4.4 Maidstone also has a relatively high number of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). In 2008, Maidstone had an average NEET rate higher than Kent. Maidstone has also experienced an increase in numbers of young people entering the criminal justice system and had the third highest number of entrants of any district in Kent. The SCS also highlights that both the level of NEETs and the numbers of young offenders are significantly higher in certain wards: High Street, Shepway South and West and Park Wood. The boundaries of these wards roughly match those areas that have highest deprivation in the District (see Figure 3). Therefore there is a clear link between these issues and deprivation in Maidstone.

⁸⁹ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Maidstone Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 20 July 2009).

Table 6: Education Statistics in Maidstone, Kent and the South East (2007)^{90,91}

Percentage of pupils achieving	Maidstone	Kent Local Education Authority	South East
GCSE Attainment 2007/8 (Rev)			
5 A* to C grades (%)	71.6	67.4	66
5 A to G grades (%)	91.2	92.9	93.2
No Passes (%)	2.3	1.6	1.5
Key Stage 2 (% age reaching level 4 or above 2007/8 (Rev)			
Maths	N/A	75	78
English	N/A	79	82
Key Stage 3 (% age reaching level 5 or above) 2006/7			
Maths	N/A	74	78
English	N/A	73	76
Science	N/A	72	75
Full Time Staying on Rates (By Area of Residence 2005/6)			
16 year olds	N/A	79	82
17 year olds	N/A	67	68

10.4.5 The SCS highlights that overall crime is low in Maidstone and falling (see Table 7). However, there was an increase in the number of violent offences that occurred between 2003 and 2006. Despite this, Maidstone's crime levels are not high compared to other Boroughs in Kent. Fear of crime is said to be high compared to actual rates.

Table 7: Crime statistics in Maidstone (April 2007 – March 2008)⁹²

Offence	Number	Per 1,000 population	Change % 06/07-07/08
Burglary dwelling	3354	2.5	-18.2
Robbery	97	0.7	10.2
Sexual offences	133	0.9	-14.2
Theft from a vehicle	759	5.3	-23.0
Theft of a motor vehicle	410	2.9	-30.5
Violence against the person	2,353	16.5	-1.5

10.4.6 In terms of health, Maidstone has its own hospital and the SCS indicates that the Borough performs similarly to other Kent Boroughs within all of the key areas assessed for health. Although as identified above and in Table 8, there are differences within the Borough with typically the socially and economically disadvantaged wards having lower standards of health

⁹⁰ Government Office for the South East (2008) *Kent and Medway Key Facts* [online] available at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/ourRegion/aboutLocalities/kentMedway/> (accessed 19 June 2009).

⁹¹ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *Education and Skills in your Area – statistics* [online] available at http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/inyourarea/statics/la_29UH_4.shtml (accessed 19 August 2009)

⁹² Government Office for the South East (2008) *Kent and Medway Key Facts* [online] available at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/ourRegion/aboutLocalities/kentMedway/> (accessed 19 June 2009).

than those that are more affluent. In addition, circulatory disease appears to be much higher than the average for the south east.

- 10.4.7 Congestion is an issue within Maidstone's town centre which results in air quality problems as discussed above. In addition, the SCS highlights that the numbers killed and seriously injured on the roads is an issue of particular priority. Maidstone has one of the highest numbers of casualties (people killed or seriously injured) of any district in Kent.

Figure 3: Index of Multiple Deprivation in Maidstone Borough

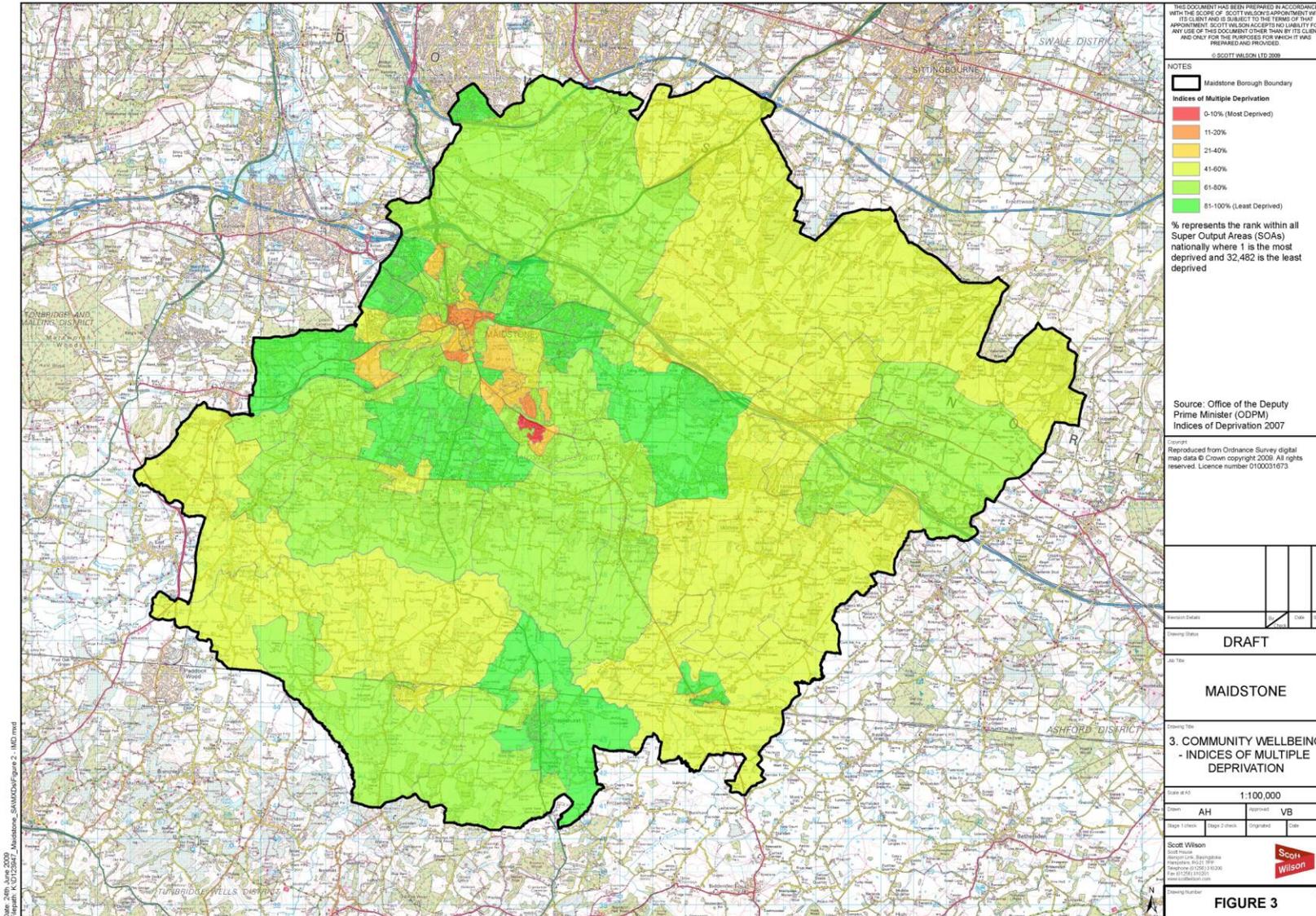


Table 8: Health Statistics in Maidstone⁹³

(1) SMR = standardised mortality ratio. A ratio under 100 indicates better than expected performance

Indicator	District	South East	England
Male life expectancy (years) 2005-07	78.1	78.9	77.7
Female life expectancy (years) 2005-07	82.2	82.7	81.8
Under 18 conception rate per 1,000 females aged 15-17 2004-06	38.2	33.5	41.2
Limiting long-term illness rate per 1,000 persons (2001 Census)	127.6	128.1	155.3
All causes all ages SMR 2005-07 (1)	99.1	92.8	100
Circulatory disease All ages SMR 2005-07 (1)	103.8	93.4	100
Cancer all ages SMR 2005-07 (1)	98.2	94.5	100
Accidents all ages SMR 2004-07 (1)	93.5	96.1	100

Are there any evidence gaps?

10.4.8 No evidence gaps have been identified at this stage.

10.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

10.5.1 The increasingly ageing population will put increasing pressure on health and other services. Whilst the Borough is likely to remain prosperous, the already disadvantaged areas may continue to suffer current or increasing levels of deprivation across all indicators. A particular concern is the issues affecting young people in the deprived areas in the Borough which are also likely to increase in response to higher levels of deprivation. These include high numbers of teenage pregnancies, high number of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training and high number of young offenders.

10.5.2 The incidence of road accidents and deaths is already high and would be likely to increase in the light of an increase in population and road traffic.

⁹³ Government Office for the South East (2008) *Kent and Medway Key Facts* [online] available at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/ourRegion/aboutLocalities/kentMedway/> (accessed 19 June 2009).

10.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

10.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to community wellbeing include:

- The challenge of meeting the needs of a growing population and particularly the elderly
- The need to reduce inequalities in the Borough by addressing the issues of the most deprived areas and the most vulnerable groups and particularly the young and deprived
- The low performance of some of the schools in the Borough
- The impacts of air quality on health
- Reducing the number of road accidents.

11 Economy

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 Local economies are open to global, national and regional influences and changes in the wider economy. This presents numerous threats and opportunities. Recognition of local strengths and weaknesses, and public and private sectors working together in partnership, are important in ensuring local preparedness to adapt to change, address threats and respond to opportunities⁹⁴. A healthy and prosperous economy is key to a healthy society (e.g. town vibrancy, good environments to live and work) and with careful planning it should also enhance environmental well-being.

11.1.2 Local economies are characterised by a range of interlinked factors, including housing and transport which within this report are discussed in Sections 13 and 16. This section focuses on employment, skills and education as key factors that influence the local economy of Maidstone.

11.2 What's the policy context?

11.2.1 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)⁹⁵ stresses the importance of a strong, stable and productive economy and requires planning authorities to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided to support new and existing economic development and housing. Accessibility to jobs and services are also addressed as a means of achieving social cohesion and inclusion. The document sets out how authorities can contribute to delivering sustainable economic development including recognising that economic development can deliver environmental and social benefits; recognising the wider benefits of economic development alongside any adverse local impacts; ensuring suitable locations are available for economic sectors; providing infrastructure and services to support new and existing economic development and housing; taking account of the relevant economic strategies in DPDs; and, identifying opportunities for future investment to deliver economic objectives. PPG4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms (1992)⁹⁶ aims to encourage continued economic development that is compatible with the Government's environmental objectives.

11.2.2 Draft PPS4: Planning for Prosperous Economies⁹⁷ consultation closed at the end of July 2009 with the government expecting to publish the final PPS and associated guidance before the end of 2009. The draft PPS4 seeks to combine all national planning policy on economic development in urban and rural areas and town centres into one consolidated and streamlined PPS. The new PPS4 seeks to provide planning certainty for businesses and investors by creating a 'positive planning' environment which recognises the importance of different drivers of economic development, from town centres through to rural enterprise. It also retains the sequential test of town centres first. In its final form this PPS will replace a number of existing

⁹⁴ Kent CC (2007) *Kent Prospects 2007 - 2012* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/publications/community-and-living/kent-prospects-2007-to-2012.htm> (accessed 21 July 2009).

⁹⁵ ODPM (2005) *Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningpolicystatement1> (accessed 29 June 2009).

⁹⁶ ODPM (1992) *Planning Policy Guidance 4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppg4> (accessed 29 June 2009).

⁹⁷ Communities and Local Government (2009) *Planning Policy Statement – Consultation Paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/consultationeconomicpps> (accessed 25 August 2009)

guidance documents including PPG4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms, PPG5: Simplified Planning Zones and PPS6: Planning for Town Centres.

- 11.2.3 PPS7: Sustainable development in rural areas (2004)⁹⁸ aims to raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas and promote a sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sector. Development within existing towns and villages should be allowed where it benefits the local economy and / or community (e.g. affordable housing for identified local needs); maintains or enhances the local environment; and does not conflict with other planning policies. Accessibility should be a key consideration in all development decisions likely to generate many trips. Development should be located in or next to towns or other service centres that are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. Local authorities should set out policies allowing some limited development in, or next to, rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres, in order to meet local business and community needs and to maintain the vitality of these communities. Re-use of buildings is encouraged especially for economic development purposes. Local authorities should also be supportive of well-conceived farm diversification schemes for business purposes.
- 11.2.4 The South East Plan includes Maidstone as one of 22 Regional Hubs identified as centres of economic activity, regeneration, skills, and training investment and multimodal transport infrastructure. Other relevant policies include RE1: Contributing to the UK's long term competitiveness that states that LDFs should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in the global economy and changes in the economic needs of the region. This policy is of particular relevance in light of the current economic recession. Policy RE2: Supporting nationally and regionally important sectors and clusters encourages local authorities through regular employment land reviews to identify the key employment sectors and clusters within their local area and opportunities for expansion. Policy RE3: Employment and land provision requires local authorities to have regard to strategic and local business needs and to facilitate a flexible supply of land to meet the needs of the economic sectors. This policy also recommends undertaking employment land reviews at the same time as housing reviews and in partnership with adjoining authorities as appropriate. The particular economic needs of rural communities and rural industries should also be addressed in LDDs.
- 11.2.5 The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) for the South East 2006-2016⁹⁹ identifies economic challenges for the south east and sets a course for the region's economy addressing these challenges, setting out values, visions, policies and actions needed. The Strategy adopts three ambitious headline targets against which progress is measured:
1. Achieve an average annual increase in Gross Value Added per capita of at least 3%
 2. Increase productivity per worker by an average 2.4% annually, from £39,000 in 2005 to at least £50,000 by 2016
 3. Reduce the rate of increase in the region's ecological footprint (from 6.3 global hectares per capita in 2003, currently increasing at 1.1% per capita per annum), stabilise it and seek to reduce it by 2016

⁹⁸ ODPM (2004) *PPS7: Sustainable development in rural areas* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps7> (accessed 29 June 2009).

⁹⁹ SEEDA (2006) *The Regional Economic Strategy 2006-1016 – A Framework for Sustainable Prosperity* [online] available at: http://www.seeda.co.uk/Publications/Regional_Economic_Strategy/ (accessed 29 June 2009).

11.2.6 The SCS for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020¹⁰⁰ includes a goal to “Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all” and a cross cutting goal to “Tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage”. A series of objectives and targets related to the first goal have been included in the SCS. It should be noted that the accompanying text recognises that some of these objectives and targets may need to be reviewed in light of the current economic crises. The key objectives and targets by related issue have been included in the table below:

Table 9: Economy related issues, objectives and targets¹⁰¹

Issue	Objective	Target
Lack of sector specialisms and innovation	Develop a more entrepreneurial and innovative local economy	Maintain or increase the stock of VAT registered businesses (per 1000 population)
Average weekly earnings of residents are 13% higher than workers in the borough indicating a large number of commuters to higher paid jobs	Increase availability of higher value jobs to residents within the Borough.	To increase total gross weekly workplace wages in Maidstone Borough from 2007 level of £376.80 closer to parity with the south east regional average (£392.70 in 2007) NI 166.
Productivity within Maidstone is weak compared with the rest of Kent	Increase productivity/Gross Value Added per worker in the Borough.	Narrow the gap between regional GVA and Maidstone's.
Maidstone has limited provision of higher education within the Borough and lower rates of adults qualified to Level 2 in some wards.	Expand higher and further education within Maidstone, retain graduates, raise skills and foster innovation.	Narrow gap of proportion of adults qualified to Level 2 (equivalent to 5 A*- C grades at GCSE level) from 2006 baseline 65.5% (2006) to south east average 68% by 31st March 2011.
Four wards within Maidstone are within the 20% most disadvantaged in Kent.	Reduce worklessness within the Borough.	Reduce worklessness and from 7.7% (Feb 2008)
The economic down turn will have a significant impact on the economic vitality of the Borough.	To cushion the effect of the downturn on the Borough's economy.	Develop Regeneration Strategy by 2010.

11.2.7 The Maidstone Borough Council Strategic Plan 2009-2012¹⁰² sets out how the Council will work to achieve its objectives and contribute to the goals in Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy. Priority Theme 1 of five is 'A place to achieve, prosper and thrive', stressing the importance of economic development and regeneration initiatives. It also sets out key objectives to deliver objective for 'economy and prosperity' identified in the SCS. Other key local documents include the Maidstone Local Action Plan (LAP) 2008-2011¹⁰³ based on the priorities and targets for Kent set out in Kent Agreement 2 (KA2). Adopted from KA2 as high priority is 'economic success' – National Indicator (NI) 163 – Proportion of population aged 19-

¹⁰⁰ MBC & MBLSP (2003) *Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/community/community_strategy.aspx (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁰¹ Maidstone Borough Council and Maidstone Matters Partnership (2009) *Sustainable Community Strategy* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/community/community_strategy.aspx (accessed 17 July 2009)

¹⁰² MBC (2009) *Maidstone Borough Council Strategic Plan 2009-12*. Provided by Maidstone Borough Council.

¹⁰³ Kent Partnership & Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (2008) *Maidstone Local Action Plan 2008 – 2011: Maidstone Matters Partnership in Action* [online] available at: <http://www.kentpartnership.org.uk/kent-agreement-2-lsps-local-action-plans.asp> (accessed 29 June 2009).

64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher NI 171 New business registration rate.

11.2.8 The Maidstone Borough Economic Development Strategy (2008)¹⁰⁴ was prepared in response to the challenges facing the Maidstone economy, and the new responsibilities facing the Council and partners for driving economic development. A vision to create by 2028: “a model 21st century county town, a distinctive place, known for its blend of sustainable rural and urban living, excellence in public services, dynamic service sector-based economy, and above all, quality of life. It identifies a series of priority actions to strengthen the competitiveness of the Maidstone economy, and sets out a detailed action plan to support these proposals, together with lead responsibilities and timetables for delivery:

- developing sector specialisms
- creating a more innovative and entrepreneurial economy
- attracting and retaining investment
- developing a culture of lifelong learning
- investing in transport and infrastructure.

11.2.9 The Retail Needs Assessment Study 2007 (addendum 2008)¹⁰⁵ identifies retail floor space requirements up to 2026, including the consideration of committed developments for convenience goods (food and groceries); core comparison goods (clothing and footwear); and bulky goods (household goods such as furniture, carpets and DIY).

11.2.10 Maidstone has also undertaken an Employment Land Study (2008)¹⁰⁶ to assess the current employment land provision and identify future requirements for land and premises and identify the portfolio of sites needed to support the local economy. This sets out conclusions and recommendations to meet future economic needs. Both the Employment Land Study and the Retail Need Assessment Study are currently being updated. These updates are to take into account the recession, the information obtained from the recent ‘Call for Potential Strategic Employment and Retail Sites’ exercise, and confirmation of an 11,080 housing target for Maidstone by 2026, set by the South East Plan. These studies are due to be published in late 2009.

11.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

11.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:

- To reduce poverty and social exclusion and, by improving their performance, close the gap between the most deprived areas in the South East and the rest of the region
- To raise educational achievement levels across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work

¹⁰⁴ MBC (2008) *Maidstone Economic Development Strategy: Creating a 21st Century County Town* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/business.aspx> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁰⁵ KCC (2007) *Retail Needs Assessment Study – Borough of Maidstone* [online] available at: [http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080714_Maidstone%20Study%20of%20retail%20need%202007%20final%20040108%20\(Addendum\).pdf](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080714_Maidstone%20Study%20of%20retail%20need%202007%20final%20040108%20(Addendum).pdf) (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁰⁶ MBC (2008) *Employment Land Study* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/081202_Maidstone%20ELR%20low%20res%20version.pdf (accessed 29 June 2009).

- To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region
- To sustain economic growth and competitiveness across the region by focusing on the principles of smart growth: raising levels of enterprise, productivity and economic activity
- To stimulate economic revival in deprived areas
- To develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities
- To develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness of the region
- To reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably and ethically produced, local or low impact products

11.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

11.4.1 It should be noted that the key documents reviewed for this section in general do not reflect the current economic recession in their findings. However, this is partly being remedied through the update to the Employment Land Study and Retail Needs Assessment. Currently the Government and the authors of the Employment Land Study update are generally taking the view that the recession is a short term effect and that it is reasonable to assume that more normal economic conditions will prevail over much of the life of a Core Strategy. Nevertheless, the practical effect on short term delivery must be taken into account.

11.4.2 The number of VAT registered businesses in Maidstone Borough rose between 2006 and 2007 from 5,670 to 5,860. This number of new business registrations is higher than the Kent and England averages, suggesting that Maidstone is viewed as an attractive location to establish a new business. High business density in the Borough is considered to be a considerable strength. However, the most up-to-date dataset does not reflect any possible negative consequences of the current economic climate.

11.4.3 The Maidstone State of the Economy Report¹⁰⁷ highlights that the economy is comparatively weak but has considerable potential to strengthen its economic base. In particular, the report identifies the unspecialised nature of the economy and the lack of innovation as key weaknesses. It also identifies that much of the Borough's qualified workers commute outside Maidstone. Key strengths mentioned include the entrepreneurial nature of its residents and a highly qualified population. The report cites the following key characteristics of Maidstone's businesses and economy:

- 30% of all businesses are in Real Estate, Renting, and Business Services. The report highlights that these businesses are small and Maidstone business services does not capture key industries. It is also likely that this type of business may have been affected by the economic recession.
- The construction industry is large, manufacturing small. Again, the construction industry has been one of the worst hit during the current recession.

¹⁰⁷ Gavurin (2008) *Maidstone: State of the Economy Report* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Maidstone%20State%20of%20the%20Economy%20Report%20Gavurin.pdf?bcsi_scan_F6892CABA15785B4=0&bcsi_scan_filename=Maidstone%20State%20of%20the%20Economy%20Report%20Gavurin.pdf (accessed 29 June 2009).

- The public sector employs a significant proportion of Maidstone's workers.
- Business density is high (considered one of the strengths).
- Low number of people and businesses supporting innovation. Maidstone is reported to be short of around 300 businesses and 2,400 people. In addition, Maidstone has fewer people working in education. The report highlights that these factors taken together constitute a significant weakness.
- Patent applications in Maidstone are about half the level of the South East (generally an innovative region) and about two thirds the rate of the UK.
- The business stock was said to be weak with around 1,500 jobs at risk. This may have worsened due to the economic recession.
- The estimated Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker is estimated to be high.
- Levels of entrepreneurship are high which was highlighted as a significant strength.
- Business stock is unspecialised (another potential weakness).

11.4.4 In terms of people, the findings of the State of the Economy report highlight that in general the pay of Maidstone residents is high compared to the pay of workers (due to residents commuting out of the Borough). However, the pay of workers compared well with other similar places and is improving. A key weakness is that, on balance, managers commute out and administrative workers commute in, plus relatively few Maidstone residents or workers are managers. Gender differences emerge and Maidstone has a comparatively low female employment rate. Generally, the employment rate in Maidstone is higher than in the rest of the country.

11.4.5 The last point is backed up by recent statistics (June 2009) on Jobseekers' Allowance claimants, which show that Maidstone has a lower percentage of claimants than the South East and considerably lower than Great Britain.

Table 10: Total Jobseekers Allowance claimants in Maidstone (June 2009)¹⁰⁸

	Maidstone (numbers)	Maidstone (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
All people	2,365	2.7	3	4.1
Males	1,744	3.7	4.1	5.8
Females	621	1.5	1.7	2.2

11.4.6 However, there are some areas of Maidstone in the 20% most deprived in terms of employment (High Street, Park Wood, Shepway North and Shepway South wards) and income (East, High Street, Park Wood, Shepway North, Shepway South and South wards).

11.4.7 Maidstone has a high proportion of workers in public administration, education and health than the South East and England averages. The average in other sectors is lower except for construction (see Table 11).

¹⁰⁸ ONS (2009) *Labour Market Profile Maidstone* [online] available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038431809/report.aspx?town=maidstone> (accessed: 22 July 2009).

Table 11: Main employment by sector in 2007 in Maidstone Borough¹⁰⁹

Sector	District (% main employment)	South East (% main employment)	England (% main employment)
Banking, finance and insurance, etc	18.2	23.8	22.3
Construction	6.3	4.6	4.8
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	22.4	24.7	23.5
Manufacturing	5.9	8.5	10.0
Other services	3.9	5.3	10.6
Public admin, education & health	35.4	22.5	23.6
Transport and communications	4.7	6.0	6.0
Total Employees (Number)	74,900	3,731,800	23,004,900

11.4.8 Maidstone's population is highly skilled (see also Table 11), however, the State of the Economy report indicates that current output from schools is worrying and this is considered a significant weakness.

11.4.9 Overall the economic profile of Maidstone ranks fairly highly. Of the ten indicators used to assess the economic performance of Maidstone, the Borough has 2 indicators in the top 25% of England authorities and 4 above the England median. Maidstone scores below the England median in workplace-based earnings, employment rate and three-year business survival rate. Although employment rate and weekly earnings (workplace based) have increased and unemployment rate decreased, the Borough performed worse nationally in 2008 than 2003 (see Table 12). The proportion of those employed in the knowledge economy has also performed poorly in the Borough. There are noticeable increases in the percent-rank scores and indicator values for resident-based earnings and those with NVQ4+.¹¹⁰

Table 12: Percent rank and actual value of economic indicators for Maidstone¹¹¹

Note: rank out of 100, where 100 is best

Economic indicator	Percent rank of indicators for Maidstone (where 100 is best)			Actual indicator values for Maidstone		
	2003	2008	Change	2003	2008	Change
Unemployment rate	74	67	↓	1.2	1.3	↑
Median full-time weekly earnings (workplace)	63	45	↓	390.0	424.1	↑

¹⁰⁹ Adapted from GOSE (undated) *Key Facts: Maidstone*. See: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/497648/docs/170192/179006/179018/Maidstone.pdf> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹¹⁰ Kent County Council (2008) *Economic Profile 2008 Maidstone* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/20674626-8BC9-41BC-99CB-9404E8E5EA8F/0/ep08maidstone.pdf> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹¹¹ Adapted from KCC (2008) *Economic Profile 2008 Maidstone*. See: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/20674626-8BC9-41BC-99CB-9404E8E5EA8F/0/ep08maidstone.pdf> (accessed 29 June 2009).

Economic indicator	Percent rank of indicators for Maidstone (where 100 is best)			Actual indicator values for Maidstone		
	2003	2008	Change	2003	2008	Change
based)						
Median full-time weekly earnings (residence based)	70	79	↑	422.1	517.3	↑
Employment rate	58	42	↓	79.0	75.1	↓
Total number of employees	72	73	↑	67,892	71,752	↑
Stock of VAT registered businesses	76	76	↔	5,075	5,075	↑
Three-year business survival rate	42	24	↓	69	70	↑
Gross Value Added (GVA) per head	74	76	↑	14,956	19,326	↑
Percentage of employees in the knowledge economy	61	52	↓	14.6	13.2	↓
Percentage of the working age population with NVQ4+	52	82	↑	23.4	33.7	↑

11.4.10 In terms of Maidstone as a location, the State of the Economy report highlights that commercial premises and housing are less affordable compared to other places in the South East and this is considered a potential weakness. The green environment and safe place to work were considered particular strengths of Maidstone. Maidstone currently experiences higher in-commuting than out-commuting, which suggests that Maidstone is an attractive employment area¹¹².

11.4.11 The Annual Monitoring Report notes a net gain of completed employment workspace occurred during 2007/8 mainly in use class B2 (general industry), but also B1a (office space) and B1c (light industry). No gain occurred in the amount of B1b (research & development, studio, laboratories, hi-tech) employment floorspace.

Are there any evidence gaps?

11.4.12 The full impact of the economic recession in Maidstone is yet to be fully determined.

¹¹² MBC & MBLSP (2003) *Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/community/community_strategy.aspx (accessed 29 June 2009).

11.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

- 11.5.1 The full impact of the economic recession for Maidstone is yet to be fully determined. However, the Borough has certain characteristics, including the high skills level of its population and low unemployment and high business density that suggest potential resilience to the recession.
- 11.5.2 However, the Borough has a large proportion of real state and construction businesses which have been seriously affected by the economic downturn. In addition, the lack of specialisation and innovation that characterise Maidstone's economy are likely to remain.
- 11.5.3 Without the plan, identified weaknesses such as high price of residential and commercial properties are likely to remain a problem. The key strengths of local character, green spaces and low crime should be enhanced by the plan.
- 11.5.4 Employment and income inequalities are likely to continue or worsen for the most deprived areas in the Borough.

11.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

- 11.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to the economy include:
- The need to maintain and enhance the characteristics of the Borough that contribute to attracting high quality and high value business and workers, e.g. quality public realm and green space, availability of suitable land, premises and facilities
 - The need to encourage new business creation particularly those which may lead to specialisation of the economy and innovation
 - The current inequalities in income and employment within the Borough.

12 Flood risk

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 Government guidance on flood risk emphasises that although flooding cannot be wholly prevented, its impacts can be avoided and reduced through good planning and management. As a consequence of climate change, the Pitt Review into the 2007 floods emphasised that flood risk is here to stay. Flooding from all sources is expected to increase with climate change.

12.2 What's the policy context?

12.2.1 Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25)¹¹³ sets out Government policy on development and flood risk. Its aims are to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process, to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas of highest risk. Where new development is, exceptionally, necessary in such areas, the policy aims to make it safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, reducing flood risk overall. PPS25 requires a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to be carried out to inform the sustainability appraisal and preparation of the authority's LDDs. Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) commissioned Mott MacDonald in June 2007 to carry out an SFRA. The aim of the SFRA¹¹⁴ is to provide a detailed and robust assessment of the extent and nature of the risk of flooding and its implications for land use planning. In addition, the SFRA sets the criteria with respect to flood risk for the submission of planning applications and for guiding subsequent development control decisions.

12.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

12.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:

- To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public wellbeing, the economy and the environment

12.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

12.4.1 According to Maidstone's SFRA¹¹⁵ there are areas in Maidstone at risk from frequent flooding as they are located in the functional floodplain of the River Medway, River Len, River Loose and their tributaries. As Figure 4 shows, flood risk is particularly high in the southwest of the Borough and there is some flood risk through Maidstone town, along river courses.

12.4.2 The SFRA indicates that the majority of flood risk from watercourses within Maidstone is from fluvial flooding, although there is some risk of tidal flooding in the vicinity of Allington.

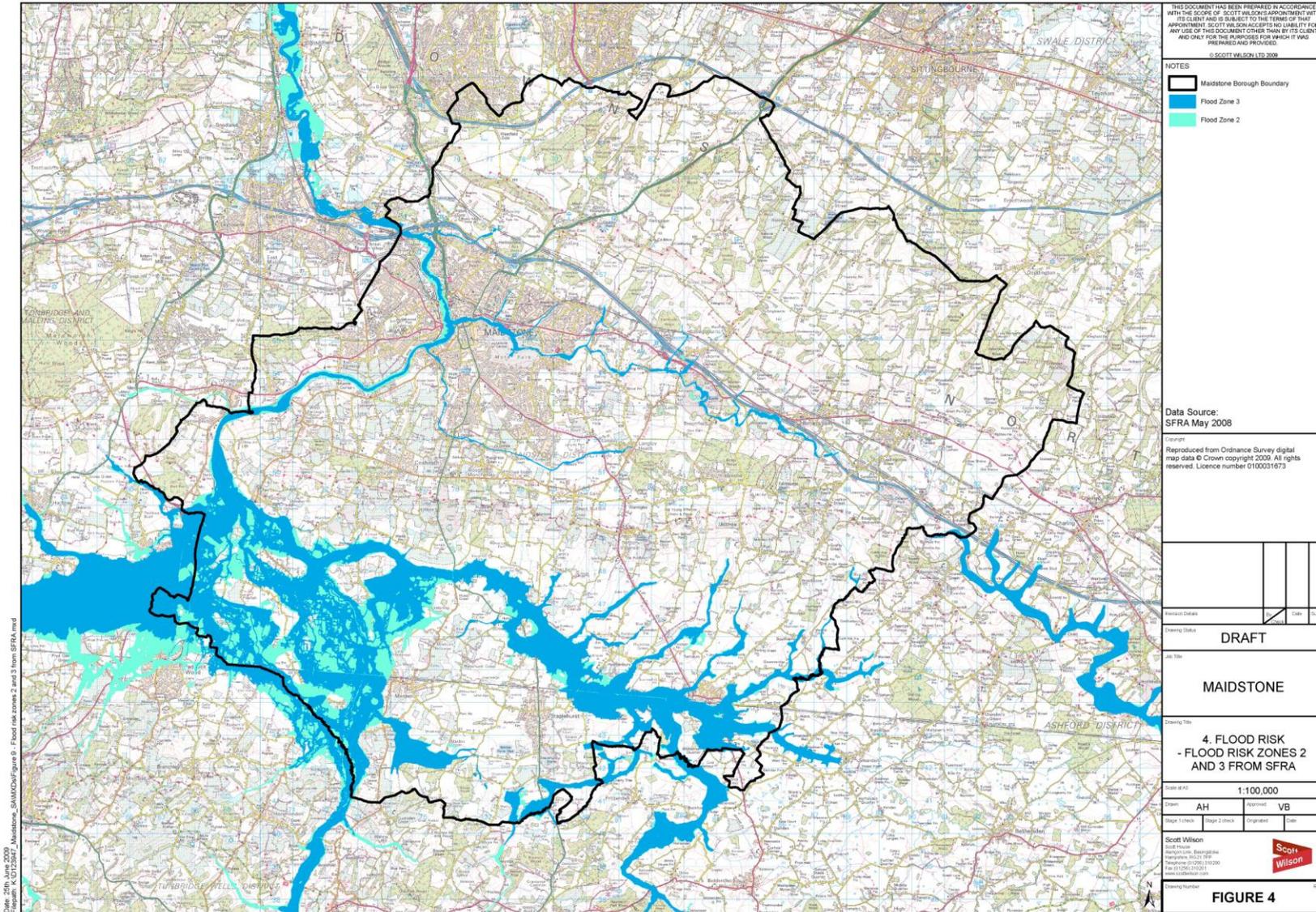
¹¹³ Communities and Local Government (2006) *Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps25floodrisk> (accessed 15 July 2009).

¹¹⁴ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment* [online] available at: [http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080714_MaidstoneBC_SFRA_FINAL_May08%20\(amended\).pdf](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080714_MaidstoneBC_SFRA_FINAL_May08%20(amended).pdf) (accessed 22 June 2009).

¹¹⁵ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment* [online] available at: [http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080714_MaidstoneBC_SFRA_FINAL_May08%20\(amended\).pdf](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080714_MaidstoneBC_SFRA_FINAL_May08%20(amended).pdf) (accessed 22 June 2009).

- 12.4.3 The SFRA includes information on historical floods: the centre of Maidstone was flooded both in the November 1960 and September 1968 floods. 70 people were also affected by the floods in Maidstone in October 2000. Other flood incidents have been isolated fluvial flooding in Maidstone Town and incidents due to blockages in the river channel, causing backing up of water. There have also been a few isolated incidents of surface water flooding throughout Maidstone Town.
- 12.4.4 In terms of surface water flooding incidents in Maidstone, the SFRA highlights that these are very localised and have occurred in several areas across the Borough, but particularly in the South. This is due to the geology of the area which has low permeability and slow infiltration rates. The SFRA also reported that surface water flooding throughout the borough has mainly been caused by the blockage of gullies and ditches leading to insufficient drainage and ponding of water.
- 12.4.5 The findings of the SFRA indicate that incidents of sewer flooding are more prominent in urban areas where there is a higher density of sewers and more water being discharged into the sewer system, although localised incidents of sewer flooding in rural areas have also been reported. Sewer flooding has been caused due to insufficient sewer capacity, as well as blockages in the sewer system.
- 12.4.6 The SFRA reports that there have been few incidents of groundwater flooding and these have occurred in a band across the centre of the Borough including locations such as Yalding, Loose, Boughton Monchelsea, Leeds, Ulcombe and Harrietsham.
- 12.4.7 The majority of flood incidents reported in Maidstone have occurred due to sewer blockages and surface water drainage systems. Therefore the SFRA states that development in the borough must include the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to minimise the increase in surface water due to new development. Incorporation of SUDS, however, should be appropriate to the physical and chemical characteristics of a site and the underlying soil type and geology. In the Borough on many sites, SUDS would be used for storage and attenuation of flow (for example detention basins or sealed swales) rather than actual/immediate discharge (for example soakaways or permeable paving).

Figure 4: Flood risk in Maidstone – Zones 2 and 3 from SFRA



Are there any evidence gaps?

12.4.8 No evidence gaps have been identified at this stage.

12.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

12.5.1 Flood risk is likely to increase in the future even if no further development took place in the South East region, due to the effects of climate change. Generally, rising sea levels will increase coastal flooding (although not a particular issue for Maidstone); and increased rain in the winter and stronger storm events will increase fluvial flooding. The Pitt Review concluded that flood risk will increase in the future: *"The scale of the problem is... likely to get worse... events of this kind are expected to become more frequent... climate change has the potential to cause even more extreme scenarios than were previously considered possible. The country must adapt to increasing flood risk"*.

12.5.2 For Maidstone specifically, without the Plan, there is likely to be further 'frequent flooding' in areas of Maidstone, particularly in Maidstone Town (which has suffered from flooding in the past). In addition, the Government has identified Maidstone as a 'New Growth Point' and this will result in a total of 11,080 (according to the adopted South East Plan) new homes in the Borough over the next 20 year period between 2006 and 2026. Given that the majority of this growth is proposed to be accommodated within and adjacent to Maidstone Town and the fact that some areas of Maidstone Town are at risk from frequent flooding, the Plan will play an important role in mitigating potential flood risk and adapting to climate change.

12.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

12.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to flooding include:

- The need to take the findings of the SFRA into account in preparing policies and allocating sites for new development
- The need to include SUDS as part of new developments
- The need to ensure that the sewer infrastructure is appropriate to the levels of new development.

13 Housing and affordable housing

13.1 Introduction

13.1.1 Housing is a key policy theme, high on the agenda of both the Government and the public. Part of the Government's aim to create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities is that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place in which they want to live now and in the future.

13.2 What's the policy context?

13.2.1 The Government's key housing policy goal, as set out in PPS3: Housing¹¹⁶ is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. In particular, the planning system should deliver a "sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and seeking to improve choice". Both PPS3 and PPS1: Sustainable development highlight the need to provide affordable housing.

13.2.2 Housing numbers are set by central government and the South East Plan sets a target for Maidstone to deliver 11,080 additional dwellings or an annual average of 554 new homes up to 2026. Policy H3 sets a target that 25% of all new housing should be socially rented accommodation and 10% intermediate affordable housing. The Regional Housing Strategy (2008)¹¹⁷ includes key priorities for the type and size of affordable housing including that 25% of new social rented and 15% of intermediate homes funded through the 2008-11 programme should have three or more bedrooms.

13.2.3 Maidstone Borough Housing Strategy 2005-2009¹¹⁸ sets out the four housing priorities for the Council:

- The supply of new Affordable Homes.
- Tackling Homelessness.
- Improving existing Homes.
- Addressing the needs of Vulnerable Households.

13.2.4 The Housing Strategy Review 2007¹¹⁹ identifies additional needs for the Council including the delivery of rural housing schemes, reducing the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households, and improving energy efficiency of the social housing stock. Maidstone Borough Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013¹²⁰ (identified as a need in the Housing Strategy Review) includes a series of actions to reduce homelessness:

- increase awareness and information about housing and the risk of homelessness;

¹¹⁶ Communities and Local Government (2006) *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing> (accessed 1 July 2009).

¹¹⁷ South East England Regional Assembly (2008) *Regional Housing Strategy 2008-11* [online] available at: http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/documents/housing/rhs_2008-11.pdf (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹¹⁸ Maidstone Borough Council (undated) *Housing Strategy 2005-2009* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Housing%20Strategy%202005-2009.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹¹⁹ Maidstone Borough Council (2007) *Housing Strategy Review* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Housing%20Strategy%20Review%202007.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹²⁰ Maidstone Borough Council (2007) *Housing Strategy Review* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Housing%20Strategy%20Review%202007.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

- provide advice to those with housing needs, to prevent homelessness;
- offering a range of housing options to those facing homelessness; and
- provide a safety net for those who do become homeless.

13.2.5 In terms of affordable housing, the Council prepared an Affordable Housing DPD (2006)¹²¹ which states that the council will seek a minimum of 40% of affordable dwellings in sites of 15 units or more or 0.5 hectares or greater. No less than 24% of the total number of new dwellings should be affordable rented housing. The affordable housing policy is likely to be updated in light of up to date evidence, in particular the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and incorporated into the Core Strategy to ensure coherence and consistency. It will be also necessary to consider the economic viability of the affordable housing provision (in the context of all other possible infrastructure demands affecting viability).

13.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

13.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:

- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need

13.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

13.4.1 In order to meet the housing requirements remaining over the period of the South East Plan, the Council needs to build 554 units per annum to meet the final target of 11,080 dwellings.

13.4.2 The Maidstone Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)¹²² found that the total development potential in the borough is 16,391 dwellings. Note that the SHLAA is not a policy making document, but is an important tool in revealing the capacity of the Borough to accommodate the necessary housing growth.

13.4.3 Over four fifths of Maidstone's dwellings were completed at densities that accord with government advice (i.e. minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare), and a high proportion of dwellings have been built on brownfield sites, i.e. 93.7% of units between 2004/5 and 2007/8 have been built on previously developed land¹²³. The SHLAA reveals that this level of brownfield development can not continue.

13.4.4 The Balancing Housing Markets Report (2005)¹²⁴ highlighted a shortage of 1 and 2-bed affordable houses and modern flats in the current stock. This report is now dated and up to date information will soon become available with the recently commissioned Strategic Housing Market Assessment study.

¹²¹ Maidstone Local Development Framework (2006) *Affordable Housing Development Plan Document – Adopted December 2006* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/061220%20AH%20DPD%20Adopted.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2009).

¹²² Baker Associates (2009) *Maidstone Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* [online] available at http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/planning_building_control/local_development_framework.aspx (accessed 21 July 2009).

¹²³ Government Office for the South East (undated) *Kent and Medway Key Facts – Maidstone* [online] available at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/497648/docs/170192/179006/179018/Maidstone.pdf> (accessed 8 July 2009)

¹²⁴ Maidstone Borough (2005) *Balancing Housing Markets Report* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/080527%20BHM%202005.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

- 13.4.5 The AMR states that in Maidstone house prices have risen steeply over the past 8 years, with an overall increase of 5.8% between 2006/7 and 2007/8, nevertheless a lower increase than between 2005/6 and 2006/7 (where house prices rose by 7.8%). The AMR highlights that Full time average earnings in Maidstone have risen by 8.59% in the past 6 years (2002-07): 11.96% (2002-2007) for males and 1.73% (2002-2006) for females. Over the same period, average house prices have risen by 75.98% (£137,095 in 2001/02 to £241,257 in 2007/08). However, Land Registry figures for January to March 2009 show that the average house price for Maidstone is £205,171.
- 13.4.6 According to the AMR, local planning policies were not meeting Maidstone's need for affordable housing in 2005. This has improved in recent years with the adoption of the Affordable Housing DPD in late 2006 with applications in 2007/08 nearly meeting the 40% affordable housing target. Nevertheless, the AMR also notes that only 12% of Maidstone's housing stock is affordable housing and the number of households on the Housing Register in 2008 (2,290) is an indication of the need for affordable housing.
- 13.4.7 With regards to the quality of the housing stock, the AMR states that only 4% of Maidstone's housing stock is classified as unfit for habitation, compared to 7% nationally. 21% of units were not decent for habitation, the main reason being poor thermal efficiency. The number of households living in overcrowded conditions has seen a recent improvement, with a decrease from 511 to 219 (i.e. more than halved) between 2007 and 2008.
- 13.4.8 In addition, data available in the AMR indicate that there has been a decrease in the number of homeless households in recent years, with total numbers in 2005/6, 2006/7 and 2007/8 being respectively 174, 53 and 41.

Are there any evidence gaps?

- 13.4.9 According to the AMR, there is no information regarding the quality of new housing development, a core indicator in the AMR, and it envisaged that this lack of data may potentially be unavailable for the next three years.
- 13.4.10 A Strategic Housing Market Assessment study for Maidstone has been recently commissioned and the Assessment will be used:
- To set out the likely profile of household types requiring market housing
 - To understand the existing mix of housing types
 - To understand the demand for market housing
 - To understand the local housing market(s)
 - To help set an overall numerical target for the amount of affordable housing to be provided to 2026 and separate numerical targets for social rented and intermediate tenures.
- 13.4.11 The impacts of the current economic recession on house building and the housing market in Maidstone is yet to be fully determined.

13.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

- 13.5.1 The demand for affordable housing is likely to increase, exacerbating the already existing difference between affordable housing demand and supply (the first exceeding the second). The existing need for small and large properties would also increase, affecting those that require smaller sized properties, entering the housing market as well as larger families. The trend towards an ageing population would mean that there will be an increased shortage of housing appropriate for elderly and disabled people. The application of lifetime homes standards to new housing development can assist in addressing the problem.
- 13.5.2 Kent County Council projections¹²⁵ based on the South East Plan indicate that by 2026 there will be 10,900 more households in Maidstone compared to 2006.

13.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

- 13.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to housing include:
- To ensure the provision of affordable housing in a sustainable manner
 - To ensure that the size of new homes, particularly affordable housing meet the needs of the existing and future population, including elderly people.

¹²⁵ Kent County Council (2009) *District profiles* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/publications/community-and-living/district-profiles.htm> (accessed 18 August 2009).

14 Gypsies and travellers

14.1 Introduction

14.1.1 Planning for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (GTTS) presents a number of sustainability challenges. Particular challenges relate to the need to improve the current situation for this disadvantaged group (they are believed to experience the worst health and education status of any disadvantaged group in England, and research indicates that this is linked to the lack of good quality sites¹²⁶, whilst also respecting their particular cultural and social needs, and avoiding conflicts of interest with the local settled population.

14.2 What's the policy context?

14.2.1 Circular 01/06 Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites (2006)¹²⁷ states that sufficient sites must be allocated within LDFs (namely in the site allocations DPDs). The Circular also mentions that where there is a clear and immediate need, local planning authorities should bring forward DPDs containing site allocations in advance of regional consideration of pitch numbers, and the completions of the Accommodation Assessments¹²⁸.

14.2.2 Some other key messages from the Circular, which should be taken into account through the SA, include:

- the need to recognise, protect and facilitate a traditional way of life while creating sustainable, respectful and inclusive communities;
- the particular need to take account of highways considerations, as well as the potential for noise and other disturbance (including from the movement of vehicles);
- the need to avoid significantly contaminated land, but recognise that the reuse of previously developed land or derelict land can have positive impacts on the environment and openness;
- the benefit of locating sites on the outskirts of built up areas;
- rural or semi rural areas may be acceptable; and
- the need for sites to respect the scale of and not dominate the nearest settled community.

14.2.3 Designing Gypsy & Traveller Sites: A Good Practice Guide¹²⁹ adds to Circular 01/06, in particular by stating that sites should be near to housing for the settled community, but also where there is visual and acoustic privacy. It also emphasises the need for sites to be sympathetic to the environment.

14.2.4 The South East Plan identifies GTTS as a group with particular housing needs that should be taken into account. In addition, Policy H7 of the South East Plan on the provision of new

¹²⁶ ODPM (2006) Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/circulargypsytraveller.pdf>

¹²⁷ ODPM (2006) Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites. Available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/circulargypsytraveller.pdf>. Accessed 30th June 2009.

¹²⁸ South East England Regional Assembly (2006) A Clear Vision for the South East – The South East Plan Core Document.

Available at: http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/sep_submitted.html. Accessed 30th June 2009.

¹²⁹ CLG (2008). Designing Gypsy & Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide. Available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/designinggypsyttsites> (accessed 27 July 2009)

pitches for GTTS is currently the subject of a single issue review¹³⁰. This review was initiated in response to the two Government Circulars (Circular 01/06 and Circular 04/07: Planning for Travelling Showpeople), which require RSSs to identify the number of pitches each local planning authority should provide taking into account the Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation Assessments produced at a local level. The current draft policy sets a requirement for Maidstone to provide an additional 35 pitches for gypsies and travellers (from a baseline of 115 in 2006) and 3 additional pitches for travelling showpeople (from a 2006 baseline of 8) by 2016. The draft policy also requires local authorities to make appropriate provision for transit and temporary stopping purposes.

14.2.5 The Ashford, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2005/2006¹³¹ identified that Maidstone has a high level of unauthorised sites and a need for some additional pitches to meet the backlog and newly arising need for pitches for the period 2006 to 2011. The survey also identified a preference for privately owned sites and recommended that new sites should be located in areas appropriate for general residential use and developed with access to local facilities and to key services such as health and education.

14.2.6 In response to the findings of the Accommodation Assessment and the emerging allocation of new pitches included in the single issue review of the South East Plan, Maidstone Borough Council is preparing a Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD. This forthcoming DPD will not allocate sites for Travelling Showpeople.

14.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

14.3.1 The key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework are:

- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home suitable to their need
- To improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health
- To reduce poverty and social exclusion and, by improving their performance, close the gap between the most deprived areas in the South East and the rest of the region
- To raise educational achievement levels across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work
- To reduce crime and perceptions of disorder
- To create and sustain vibrant communities which recognise the needs and contributions of all individuals
- To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
- To encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the South East and promote sustainable tourism

¹³⁰ The draft submission *Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East* [online] is available: http://www.gose.gov.uk/497648/docs/171301/815607/824352/Partial_Review_of_Policy_H7.pdf (accessed: 27 July 2009)

¹³¹ DCA (2005) Ashford, Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling & Tunbridge Wells Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2005/6 – Final report. Available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080414%20GTAA%20Final%20Report%20.pdf>

- To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region
- To improve efficiency in land use through the appropriate re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings, including re-use of materials from buildings, and encourage urban renaissance
- To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public wellbeing, the economy and the environment
- To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity
- To protect and enhance the region's countryside and historic environment
- To reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve the sustainable management of waste.

14.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

- 14.4.1 Gypsies and Travellers in England are estimated to make up less than 1% of the English population, but only a proportion of gypsies and travellers live in caravans¹³². The lack of sufficient appropriate sites leads to the use of unauthorised sites which in turn may lead to tensions with other residents. For instance, in the South East of England some 22% of GTTS caravans have no authorised place to stop which makes their occupants homeless from a legal point of view¹³³.
- 14.4.2 According to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, Maidstone has a high level of unauthorised sites in addition to a strong supply of authorised sites. The study identified a need for future growth that should be in line with the preferences expressed through the survey. The AMR¹³⁴ reports that a total of 12 additional pitches were provided in 2006/07 and 3 additional pitches in 2007/08.
- 14.4.3 The Accommodation Assessment found that the Gypsy and Traveller Community in the study area is well settled, with over 65% of households having lived at their current site for over 5 years. Related to this general feeling of being well settled, the Accommodation Assessment found that most Gypsies and Travellers are registered with a doctor.
- 14.4.4 Key health and safety concerns voiced by Gypsies and Travellers were fire prevention, vermin, blocked or poor drainage and awaited repairs. In Maidstone the key health and safety concern was fire prevention. Some households reported difficulties with schooling due to their mobility or local hostility. A very high proportion, 89.2% (17) of the children not going to school in the survey lived in Maidstone.
- 14.4.5 Just over half of people interviewed (50.7%) were happy with their site or pitch. Most households (over 85%) are happy with their accommodation, a higher level than for those living in housed/settled accommodation (55.2%). The general preference was towards small and privately owned sites.

¹³² ODPM (2006) as above.

¹³³ *Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East* [online] available at http://www.gose.gov.uk/497648/docs/171301/815607/824352/Partial_Review_of_Policy_H7.pdf (accessed: 27 July 2009)

¹³⁴ Maidstone Borough Council (2007) *Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

Are there any evidence gaps?

- 14.4.6 The Accommodation Assessment 2005/2006¹³⁵ notes that the demand for transit provision has not been assessed. The Partial Review is recommending that the requirement for transit provision be set at the local level. The data Kent County Council collects on unauthorised encampments will help inform this process.

14.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

- 14.5.1 The current under provision of pitches will remain a problem, leading to unauthorised occupation of sites potentially giving rise to tensions with local residents. Those living in unauthorised sites will also be more likely to experience lack of access to essential services such as health and education, thus increasing the disadvantage experienced by GTTS.

14.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

- 14.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to Gypsies and Travellers include:
- The need to provide sufficient additional pitches in line with identified need and the revised South East Plan Policy (H7)
 - The need to ensure that new sites are located with adequate access to services such as health and schools.

¹³⁵ DCA (2005) Ashford, Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling & Tunbridge Wells Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2005/6 – Final report. Available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/080414%20GTAA%20Final%20Report%20.pdf>

15 Land use, landscape and the historic environment

15.1 Introduction

15.1.1 Maidstone Borough is characterised by a large urban area (Maidstone Town), a rural area and small villages, within a rich and varied landscape. Of particular significance is the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB). The Borough is also rich in historical assets and contains numerous listed buildings, conservation areas, monuments and parks and gardens of historical value including Mote Park, Grade II on the English Heritage register of Historic Parks.

15.2 What's the policy context?

Land use

15.2.1 PPS3 on Housing¹³⁶ sets a national target that 60% of new dwellings should be built on previously developed land. It also suggests that the density of new residential dwellings should be at least 30 dwellings per hectare to help ensure efficient use of land.

15.2.2 PPG2: Green Belts¹³⁷ contains a presumption against any development in the green belt that detracts from its purposes which are:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

15.2.3 PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas states that new development in the open countryside should be strictly controlled and that priority should be giving to the re-use of previously developed or brownfield land, except in cases where there are no brownfield sites available or these brownfield sites perform poorly in terms of sustainability in comparison with greenfield sites, including accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling, high quality design and inclusiveness. PPS7 also mentions that where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable, areas of poorer quality should be used in preference to the best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification). Development plans should include policies that identify any major areas of agricultural land planned for developments and may also include policies that protect the best and most versatile areas from development.

15.2.4 Policy PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control (2004) states that the planning system plays a key role in determining the location of development which may give rise to pollution, either directly or indirectly, because planning decisions can have a significant impact on the quality of

¹³⁶ ODPM (2000) *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing> (accessed 17 July 2009).

¹³⁷ ODPM (1995, amended 2001) *Planning Policy Statement 2: Green Belt* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppg2> (accessed 22 July 2009).

air, water and land, and therefore affect the environment in the short and long term. The companion document PPS23 Annex 2: Development on Land Affected by Contamination gives further guidance on issues relevant to development land use that may be affected by contamination. The 1990 Environmental Protection Act requires local authorities to secure the appropriate remediation of contaminated land and to maintain a register of contaminated land. In response to Government requirements, Maidstone has prepared a Contaminated Land Strategy (2001)¹³⁸.

Landscape

- 15.2.5 The UK ratified the European Landscape Convention¹³⁹ in 2006. The Convention aims to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures for protecting, managing and planning landscape throughout Europe. PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas emphasises that planning authorities should ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible enhanced. This includes the protection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) but also locally valued areas, which can be protected through specific policies included in LDFs.
- 15.2.6 PPS7 also provides guidance on the protection of special landscape values. PPS7 states that the Government recognises and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally. The Government believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas.
- 15.2.7 The South East Plan also requires that high priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the region's AONBs (Policy C3). Proposals for development should be small scale and sustainably located and designed. In addition, proposals that support the economies and social wellbeing of the AONBs and their communities will be encouraged as long as they do not conflict with the aims of conservation and enhancement of these areas. The use of landscape assessments to inform the protection and enhancement of the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape is encouraged by policy C4. Policy C4 of the South East Plan states that local authorities should develop criteria-based policies to ensure that all development respects and enhances local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Additionally, the South East Plan does not promote the use of settlement separation policies other than Metropolitan Green Belt policies but it does promote the use of integrated spatial rural policy development.
- 15.2.8 The Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines 2000¹⁴⁰ provides guidance on measures that will integrate new development into the surrounding landscape. This includes location, scale, and style of development, the materials used for buildings and hard surfaces, and appropriate planting. The report also identifies eighteen landscape character areas for the Borough. The Maidstone Borough LCA is being reviewed in accordance with up to date guidance (Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002), best

¹³⁸ Maidstone Borough Council (2001) *Land Contamination Strategy* [online] available at: [http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Draft%20Strategy\(31.05.06\)%20final.pdf](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/Draft%20Strategy(31.05.06)%20final.pdf) (accessed 23 June 2009).

¹³⁹ More information about the European Landscape Convention is available at: <http://www.coe.int/t/dq4/cultureheritage/Conventions/Landscape/> (accessed 21 July 2009).

¹⁴⁰ Maidstone Borough Council (2000) *Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/001%20Cover-002%20Contents_Merged.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

practice, national and regional planning policy documents, including the South East Plan and PPS7, Rural Areas, and current and relevant published landscape assessments where these exist. The number of character areas is likely to be substantially increased reflecting a finer grain assessment process.

- 15.2.9 The Landscape Character Assessment Guidance shows how to identify and express the different elements, such as woodlands, hedgerows, moors, mountains and farmland, building styles, and historic artefacts, which give a place its unique character. *"Landscape Character Assessment is the tool that is used to help us to understand, and articulate, the character of the landscape. It helps identify the features that give a locality its 'sense of place' and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas."*

Historic Environment

- 15.2.10 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development¹⁴¹ highlights the need to protect and enhance the historic environment. PPG15: Planning and the historic environment (1994)¹⁴² states that planning policies can not only reduce threats to the historic environment but also increase its contribution to local amenity. Heritage can also act as a catalyst for regeneration¹⁴³.
- 15.2.11 Draft PPS15: Planning for the Historic Environment consultation closes at the end of October 2009 and will replace PPG15 and PPG16: Archaeology and Planning.
- 15.2.12 It is intended to reflect a more modern, integrated approach which defines the historic environment in terms of heritage assets to be conserved in accordance with a set of principles and in proportion to their significance - it also separates policy from guidance.
- 15.2.13 The South East Plan (Policy BE6) requires that local authorities adopt policies to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and the contribution it makes to local distinctiveness and sense of place. The policy also encourages the sensitive use of historic assets, particularly redundant or under-used buildings, through regeneration.
- 15.2.14 The Kent Design Guide 05/06¹⁴⁴ provides criteria to achieve high standards of design. Maidstone has endorsed this guide as Supplementary Guidance (under the auspices of the new PPS12).

15.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

- 15.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:
- To improve efficiency in land use through the appropriate re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings, including re-use of materials from buildings, and encourage urban renaissance

¹⁴¹ ODPM (2005) *Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningpolicystatement1> (accessed 21 July 2009).

¹⁴² CLG (1994) *Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/historicenvironment/ppg15/> (accessed 23 June 2009).

¹⁴³ DCMS (2001) *The historic environment: a force for our future* [online] available at: http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/4667.aspx/ (accessed 21 July 2009).

¹⁴⁴ Kent County Council (2005) *Kent Design Guide 2005/06* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/publications/council-and-democracy/kent-design-guide.htm> (accessed 23 June 2009).

- To protect, and enhance the region's country-side and historic environment

15.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

- 15.4.1 The Core Strategy will set the appropriate mix of previously developed land and greenfield sites for new development. It has been recognised that a proportion of greenfield sites will have to be released in order to meet the South East Plan's housing targets¹⁴⁵.
- 15.4.2 The Council is currently working on a priority list of sites where contamination is possible, as part of their statutory duty to identify contaminated land within the Borough and where possible ensure remediation through the planning system¹⁴⁶.
- 15.4.3 Maidstone is covered by several planning and landscape designations including Metropolitan Green Belt, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and contains special landscape values (see Table 13). The Kent Downs is a nationally important landscape and the eighth largest AONB in England and Wales (see Figure 6). Table 13 shows the main landscape designations in Maidstone Borough. It is important to note that Maidstone is intending to introduce criteria-based policies in their LDDs that will utilise the review of their Landscape Character Assessment in order to provide sufficient protection of the local landscape, without the need for local designations. This is considered best practice and is in line with policies contained in PPS7 and the South East Plan.
- 15.4.4 They should ensure that such designations are based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned

Table 13: Key Assets of Maidstone's Natural Environment¹⁴⁷

Natural Environmental Assets	Km ²	%
Total Area of Borough	393.40	100
Metropolitan Green Belt	5.29	1.34
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	107.19	27.25
Special Landscape Areas	200.21	50.89
Areas of Local Landscape Importance	15.01	3.82

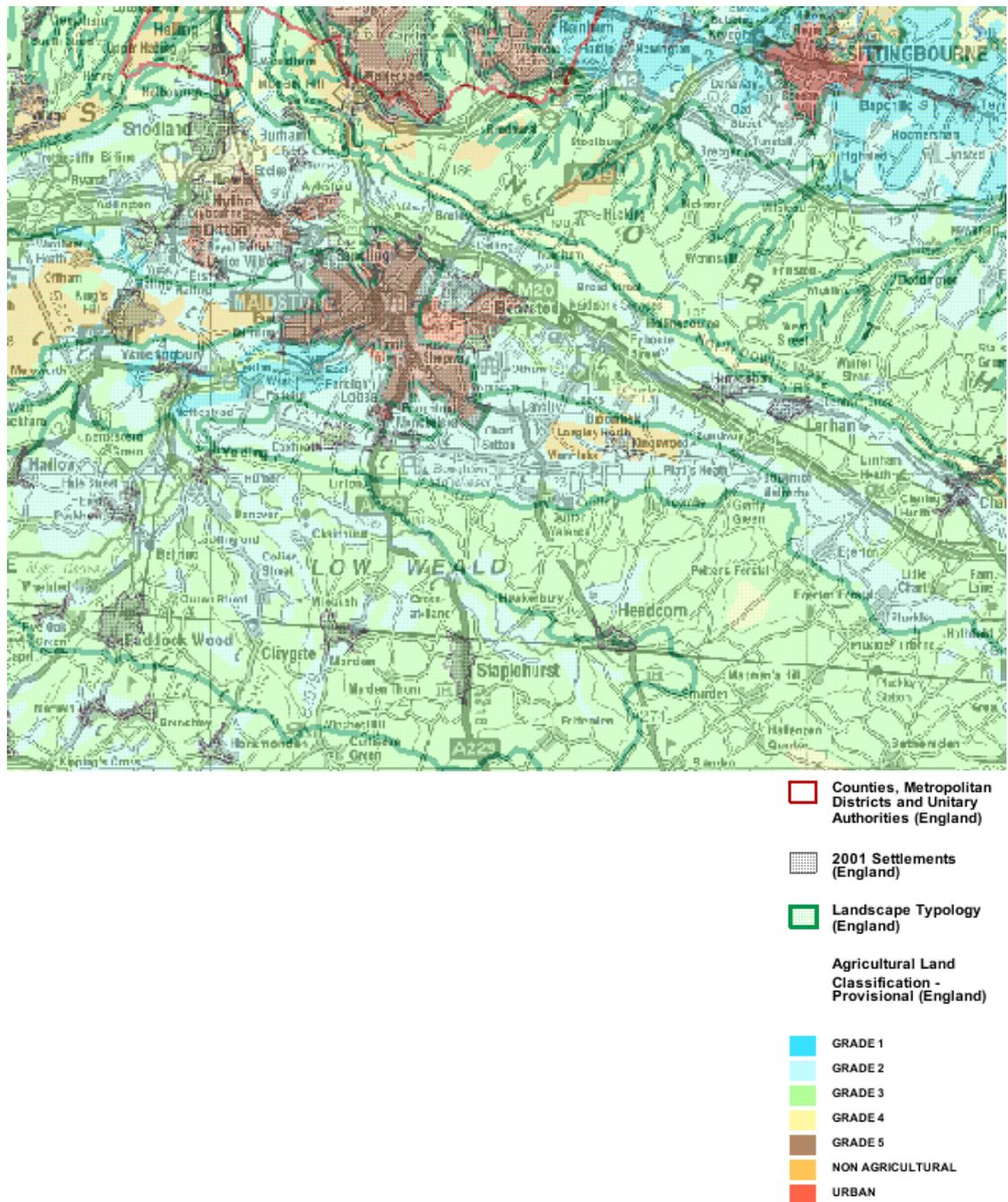
- 15.4.5 The Borough contains substantial areas of high grade agricultural land and areas of Grade 1 (highest quality) extend along the Medway Valley to the west of Maidstone town (see Figure 5).

¹⁴⁵ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

¹⁴⁶ Maidstone Borough Council (undated) *Environmental Enforcement* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/environment/environmental_enforcement/land_contamination.aspx (accessed 23 July 2009).

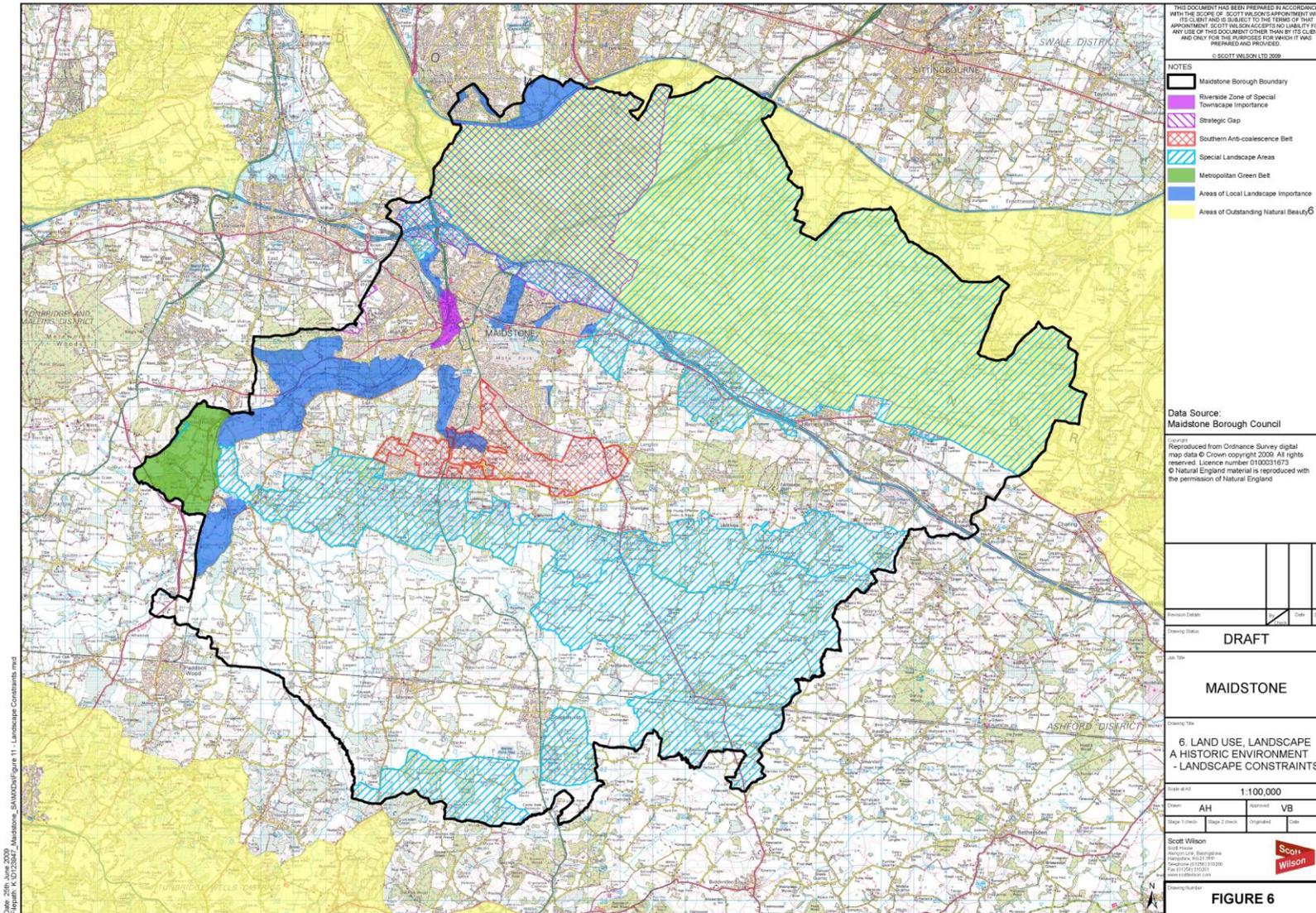
¹⁴⁷ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

Figure 5: Agricultural Land Classifications Map and Key¹⁴⁸



¹⁴⁸Magic (2009) *Agricultural Land Classification in Maidstone* [online] available at: www.magic.gov.uk (accessed 30 June 2009).

Figure 6: Maidstone Borough landscape



15.4.6 Maidstone's Landscape Character Areas are shown in Figure 7. Maidstone's landscape can be clearly divided into three general areas¹⁴⁹:

- The North Downs: is a striking and dramatic feature in the surrounding landscape. The North Downs landscape is characterised by its chalk topography and the open expanses of rolling downland, with its pattern of copses and woodland in the numerous dry valleys. While much of this area is secluded and unspoilt, the river Medway cuts through the Downs between Maidstone and Rochester and is associated with busy transport routes, industry, urbanisation and mineral extraction.
- The Wealden Greensand runs in a long curved belt parallel to the North Downs with considerable local variation, but is unified as a result of underlying geology and topography and the distinctive spring-line settlements below the Downs. Sunken lanes and hidden valleys are a feature locally, but this part of the Greensand is less wooded than to the west. Human influence is strong, with a major town (Maidstone) and numerous communication routes in the vale beneath the scarp. At its eastern end this area is sandy and heathy, with mixed farming, while the central area, on lighter loams, is a major fruit growing area.
- The Low Weald is a low-lying region crossed by several rivers, distinguished by heavy clay soils with a flat or gently undulating topography and a predominantly agricultural land use. Small towns and villages are scattered among a 'patchwork quilt' of woodland, permanent grassland, hedgerows and wetlands. Arable crops form part of this patchwork, within which hop gardens and extensive orchards are a particular feature.

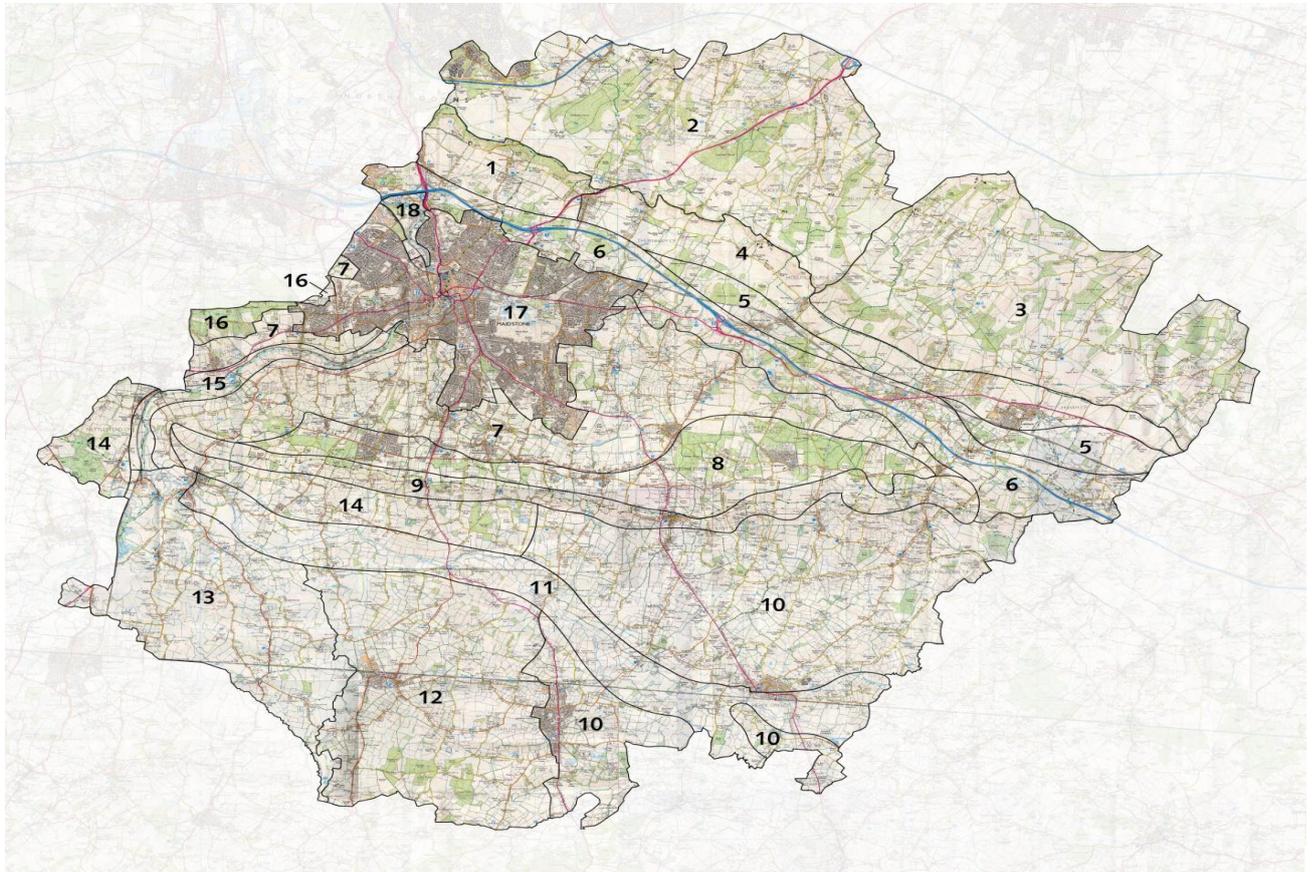
15.4.7 Maidstone's Landscape Character Assessment is in the process of review and will include a substantial increase in character areas.

15.4.8 In terms of historical assets, the Borough contains about 2,000 listed buildings (of these 329 are located in urban wards), six conservation areas within or adjoining the town centre and 35 village conservation areas¹⁵⁰, 29 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and parks and gardens of historical value including Mote Park, Grade II on the English Heritage register of Historic Parks. Maidstone also contains four listed buildings included in English Heritage's risk register. See Figure 8 for historical assets in Maidstone Borough.

¹⁴⁹ Maidstone Borough Council (2000) *Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/001%20Cover-002%20Contents_Merged.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

¹⁵⁰ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

Figure 7: Landscape Character Areas in Maidstone¹⁵¹

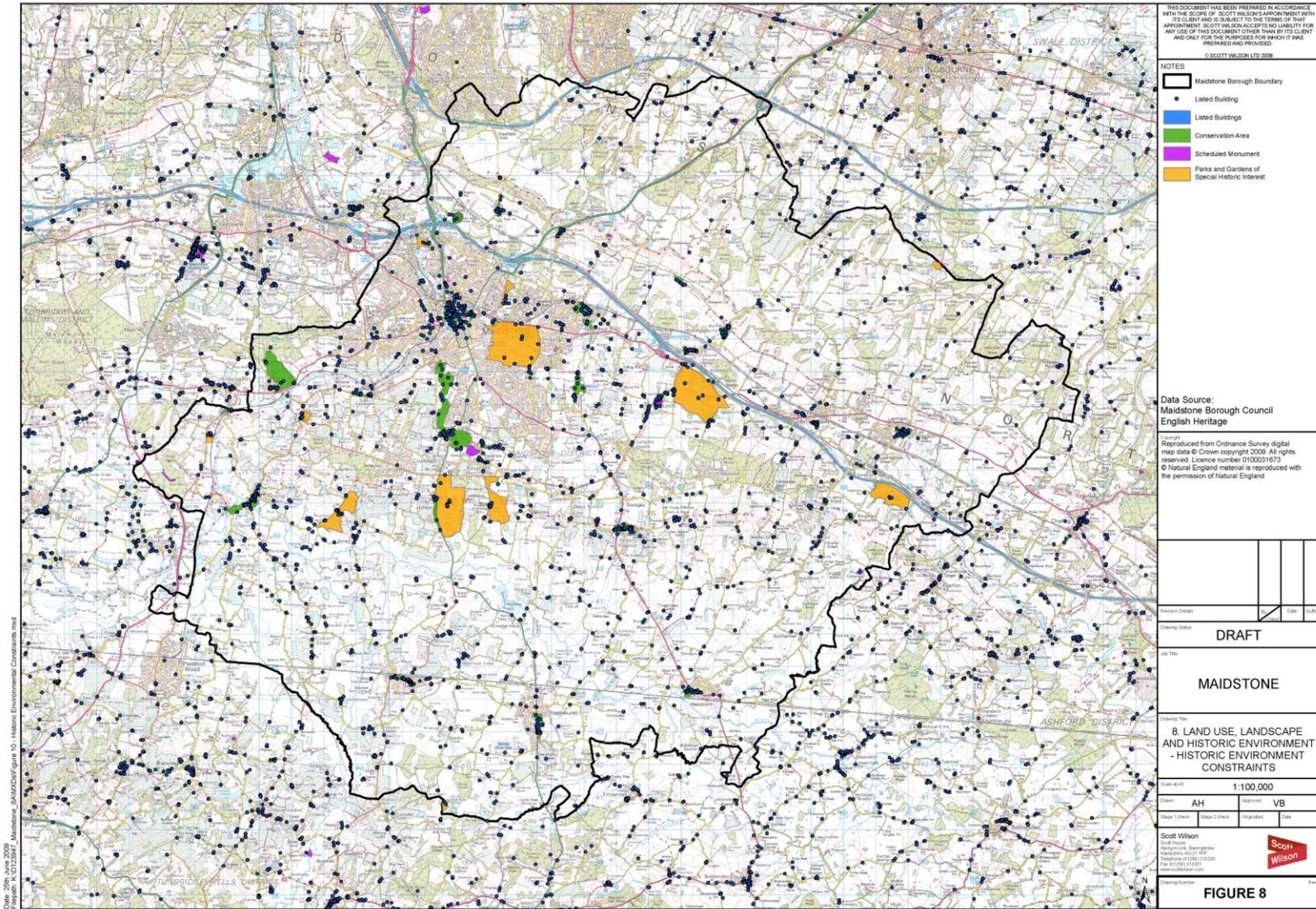


Key:

- Area 1: Boxley Vale
- Area 2: Bredhurst to Bicknor North Downs
- Area 3: Wormshill to Otterden North Downs
- Area 4: Hollingbourne Vale
- Area 5: North Maidstone Gault Clay Vale
- Area 6: Leeds Transport Corridor
- Area 7: Greensand Fruit Belt
- Area 8: Coxheath Greensand Plateau
- Area 9: Greensand Ridge
- Area 10: Southern Mixed Pasturelands
- Area 11: Beult Valley
- Area 12: Low Weald Fruit Belt
- Area 13: Teise and Upper Medway Valleys
- Area 14: Valeside Parklands
- Area 15: Middle Medway Valley
- Area 16: Oaken Wood
- Area 17: Maidstone Urban Area
- Area 18: Lower Medway Valley

¹⁵¹ Maidstone Borough Council (2000) *Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/001%20Cover-002%20Contents_Merged.pdf (accessed 23 June 2009).

Figure 8: Historic Environmental Constraints in Maidstone Borough – land use, landscape and historic environment



Are there any evidence gaps?

15.4.9 All of the current baseline evidence above is from the 2000 Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines and the Land Contamination Survey. However, there are a number of reports in preparation: the Landscape Character Area Assessment, the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

15.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

15.5.1 Maidstone is rich in landscape and historical assets. Without the plan, it is possible that inappropriate development may take place which could potentially affect these assets. Without the plan, it is also possible that many of the opportunities for historical buildings and areas to contribute towards regeneration may be lost.

15.5.2 Maidstone will need to release greenfield sites in order to meet the development targets allocated in the South East Plan. Without the plan, it is possible the sites released are not the most sustainable or are plainly inappropriate.

15.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

15.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to land use, landscape and the historic environment include:

- The need to protect the Borough's landscape and historic assets from inappropriate development
- The need to maximise the amenity and regeneration value of Maidstone's historic environment
- The need to identify and avoid if appropriate remediate contaminated land in the Borough.

16 Transport and accessibility

16.1 Introduction

16.1.1 Transport plays a vital role in supporting sustainable development. In economic terms an efficient and well managed transport network connects localities and regions to national and international markets, secures the localised benefits of agglomeration economies and underpins private sector productivity gains. In social terms good connectivity can stimulate labour market flexibility through improvements in accessibility, allowing a wider range of the population to access employment opportunities. Environmental impacts can be reduced by sustainable transport schemes which may include fast, efficient and affordable public transport as well as the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure. Maidstone's Core Strategy should play a key role in encouraging spatial development which leads to sustainable transport patterns in the Borough and beyond.

16.2 What's the policy context?

16.2.1 PPG13: Transport¹⁵² states that quality of life depends upon transport and easy access to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services. PPG13's objectives include the integration of planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level in order to promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and moving freight; promote accessibility to jobs and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and reduce the need to travel, especially by car. The guidance also recognises the role of walking and cycling in reducing air pollution.

16.2.2 Nationally, the Transport 2010: The Ten-Year Plan (July 2000)¹⁵³ and Progress Report (2003) set out a strategy to tackle congestion and pollution by improving all types of transport (rail, road, public and private). Targets include: a 50% increase in rail use (measured by passenger kilometres); an 80% increase in rail freight; and a 10% increase in bus passenger journeys, and the approach is based on:

- integrated transport;
- public and private partnership between the government and private sector; and
- new projects to modernise the transport network.

16.2.3 The Future of Transport: A Network for 2030 White Paper (2004)¹⁵⁴ updated the 'Transport 2010' policies and examined the factors that will shape travel and transport over the next thirty years. It sets out how the Government will respond to the increasing demand for travel, maximising the benefits of transport while minimising the negative impact on people and the environment. Key objectives include: improving the flow on local roads; improving the reliability of buses; encouraging walking and cycling; better management of road networks; using technology to keep people better informed; promoting school and workplace travel plans and public transport improvements; more demand responsive transport; and making services more accessible to improve travel choice.

¹⁵² ODPM (2001) *Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/155634.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹⁵³ DfT (2000) *Transport Ten Year Plan 2000* [online] available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/policy/transport2010/transport2010meetingthelocal3735> (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹⁵⁴ DfT (2004) *Future of Transport* [online] available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/whitepapers/previous/fot> (accessed 30 June 2009).

16.2.4 The South East Plan's Transport chapter forms the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for the region to 2026. The RTS provides the context within which local authorities will review their local transport plans (LTPs) and LDFs. The key challenges faced by the region that are relevant to Maidstone include:

- Maintaining and improving connectivity with London
- Delivering transport measures which address severe deprivation, and
- Reducing the impact of the transport system on the environment.

16.2.5 The need for sustainable transport modes is also recognised throughout the South East Plan. Policy AOSR7 of the South East Plan further highlights the important role of integrated transport planning for Maidstone Borough:

"Maidstone is the county town of Kent and serves as the focus for administrative, commercial and retail activities. It is designated as a hub under Policy SP2 of this Plan as it is well related to strategic rail and road networks and serves as an interchange point between intra and local rail services. It also offers opportunities for some new housing development. An indicative 90% of new housing at Maidstone should be in or adjacent to the town. Associated infrastructure to support growth should include the South East Maidstone Relief Route and Maidstone Hub package."¹⁵⁵

16.2.6 At the county level, the Kent Local Transport Plan 2006-2011¹⁵⁶ includes ten key objectives, dealing with: Accessibility; Demand Management; Environment, Heritage and Communities; Health; Integration; Keep Kent Moving; Road Safety; Sustainable Regeneration; UK Connections; UK Gateway. The LTP's headline targets are to achieve:

- A 10% increase (from 58%) by 2011 in the number of households within 30 minutes travelling time of a hospital by public transport
- A 5% increase (from 88.9%) by 2011 in the number of households within 15 minutes of a GP's surgery by public transport
- By 2007/8 a 40% reduction on 2000 levels in the number of people killed & seriously injured on Kent's roads with a corresponding 50% reduction for children. A corresponding 10% reduction in the number of people slightly injured by 2010/11.
- A reduction in average vehicle speeds on Kent's roads in residential areas by 10% by 2011
- A 2% increase per year in bus patronage on 2003/4 levels
- A 6% improvement in bus punctuality by 2011
- A 38% increase in cycling on 2003/4 levels by 2011
- Restraining Kent wide traffic growth to less than 2% per annum
- A 10% increase in the use of sustainable transport modes for journeys to school by 2011.

¹⁵⁵ Government Office for the South East (2009) *The South East Plan* [online] available at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/> (accessed 25 August 2009).

¹⁵⁶ KCC (2006) *Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/transport-and-road-planning/our-transport-vision/local-transport-plan.htm> (accessed 30 June 2009).

16.2.7 The Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2005-2015¹⁵⁷ includes seven outcomes (themes) and targets to measure progress:

1. Improving accessibility to Jobs and Services
 2. Better Use of the Existing Transport System to restrict traffic growth
 3. Reducing the Environmental Impact of Traffic
 4. Improved Integration between Different Transport Modes
 5. Improve Road Safety
 6. Support Sustainable Regeneration and Appropriate Development
 7. Develop Realistic Alternatives to the Car
- Limit growth in traffic volume to 5% less than predicted over ten years.
 - Meet emissions targets for NO₂ and PM₁₀ by 2010.
 - Increase use of public transport to 5% above current levels.
 - Reduce deaths by 5% and accidents resulting in injury by 5% over ten years.

16.2.8 Maidstone is currently preparing the Maidstone Hub Transport Strategy which will be closely linked with the Kent Local Transport Plan.

16.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

16.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:

- To improve accessibility to all services and facilities including the countryside and the historic environment
- To improve the efficiency of transport networks by enhancing the proportion of travel by sustainable modes and by promoting policies which reduce the need to travel

16.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

16.4.1 Maidstone is the 'County Town' of Kent and is consequently a busy town which suffers from severe traffic congestion. The current transport network is said to be fragmented and historically constrained. The situation has worsened over the last twenty years and there is a risk that the current issues may affect the future economic prosperity of the Borough. Current transport issues are also likely to be exacerbated in the future years as the new housing allocated in the South East Plan and the associated services and business are developed.

16.4.2 The key issues that affect the transport system in Maidstone include:

- High car use, which is also forecast to increase over the next 10 years, peak time traffic delays and gridlock caused by capacity of the M20

¹⁵⁷ MBC (2005) *Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2005-2015* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/PDF/050603 ITS.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2009).

- Lack of appropriate access to and from the south of the Borough
 - Lack of viable alternatives to the car, including the presently limited cycle and pedestrian network, poor public transport in rural areas, inadequate rail links and slow journey times
 - Environmental problems, particularly air pollution
 - Increased pressure caused by new development
- 16.4.3 Three railway routes through the Borough serve 13 passenger stations and the principal route serving urban Maidstone is the London-Ashford via Maidstone East. From Maidstone East, the principal station in the Borough, journey time to London is less than an hour. Direct rail links to London and the proximity of the capital is identified in the AMR as factor in shaping local economy, house prices and travel.
- 16.4.4 Figure 9 illustrates the major transport routes into and around Maidstone. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link now called High Speed 1 (HS1) and the M20 motorway pass through the Borough.
- 16.4.5 The Government's projections to 2025, based on the National Transport Model, predict car ownership will increase at national level, and that traffic in England will grow by 26% between 2000 and 2010. 2001 census data shows that Maidstone has a lower percentage of households with no cars or vans (17.37%) than the South East (19.43%) and particularly England (26.84%). The Borough has fewer households with one car or van, but more households with two, three or four cars and vans, than the South East and England¹⁵⁸. Figure 10 shows the varying levels of car ownership across the county of Kent – accessibility has already been identified as a key issue for the county, and the map demonstrates that within Kent and, indeed, Maidstone, the percentage of non car owners is variable¹⁵⁹.

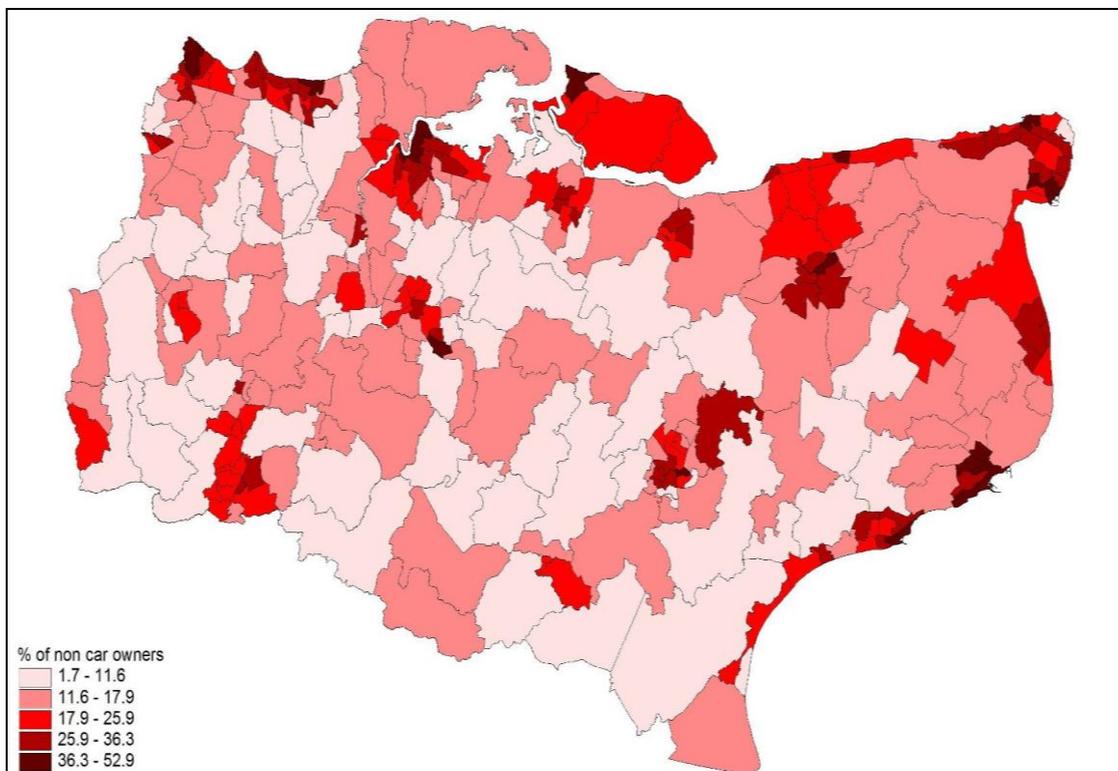
¹⁵⁸ ONS (2001) *Neighbourhood Statistics for Maidstone – Distance travelled to Work (UV35) (2001)* [online] available at: <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk> (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹⁵⁹ KCC (2006) *Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/transport-and-road-planning/our-transport-vision/local-transport-plan.htm> (accessed 30 June 2009).

Figure 9: Major transport links in around Maidstone



Figure 10: Car ownership in Kent¹⁶⁰



16.4.6 The average distance (km) travelled to work is notably greater in Maidstone (16.98) than in the South East (14.89) and England (13.31). Table 14 shows the different modes of transport of Maidstone's population in 2001. The main mode of transport to work in Maidstone was the car or van – a trend that is shared by the South East and England. However, this figure is notably higher than for England and marginally higher than for the South East. Similarly, use of the train to travel to work is more common in Maidstone than in the South East and England. Another figure to note is that less people travel by bicycle to work in Maidstone than in the South East and England. It is also worth noting that Maidstone has a higher percentage of home workers than the South East and England¹⁶¹. The AMR identifies that Maidstone has more professionals who commute in to work than commute out¹⁶².

¹⁶⁰ KCC (2006) *Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/transport-and-road-planning/our-transport-vision/local-transport-plan.htm> (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹⁶¹ Office of National Statistics (2001) *Neighbourhood Statistics for Maidstone – Distance travelled to Work (UV35) (2001)* [online] available at: <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk> (accessed 30 June 2009).

¹⁶² MBC (2008) *Maidstone Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Report 2007/8* [online] available at: http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/pdf/090508_AMR%202007-2008%20with%20erratum.pdf (accessed 06/09)

Table 14: Methods of travel to work in Maidstone¹⁶³

Method of Travel	Maidstone %	South East %	England %
Works mainly at or from home	10.08	9.93	9.16
Underground, metro, light rail or tram	0.10	0.23	3.16
Train	6.13	5.63	4.23
Bus, minibus or coach	4.27	4.35	7.51
Taxi or minicab	0.27	0.41	0.52
Driving a car or van	60.72	59.18	54.92
Passenger in a car or van	5.69	5.65	6.11
Motorcycle, scooter or moped	0.87	1.12	1.11
Bicycle	1.24	3.07	2.83
On foot	10.21	9.91	9.99
Other	0.42	0.50	0.46
Public transport users in households with car or van	88.17	81.41	69
Public transport users in households without car or van	11.55	17.73	30.45

Are there any evidence gaps?

16.4.7 An integrated transport strategy for the Borough (Maidstone Hub Transport Strategy) is currently in preparation.

16.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

16.5.1 Without the plan it may be expected that the combination of continuing population growth and existing approaches to planning for transport infrastructure would probably worsen transport problems in the Borough such as congestion and accessibility. This would hinder access to services and facilities.

16.5.2 The impacts upon the local economy from poor transport infrastructure could be negative. Without adequate transport measures in place to support an increasing population and the business community, in particular necessary transport links with London and neighbouring areas, local business could suffer and inward business investment in the Borough could be discouraged.

¹⁶³ ONS (2006) *Neighbourhood Statistics for Maidstone – Travel to Work (KS15) (2001)* [online] available at: <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk> (accessed 30 June 2009).

16.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

16.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to transport include:

- The need to reduce congestion in Maidstone Town
- The need to improve access and public transport, particularly in rural areas
- The additional pressure that new development will put on the transport network
- The need to maintain or improve the links with London.

17 Waste

17.1 Introduction

17.1.1 Waste has traditionally been seen as an unavoidable by-product of increased prosperity and economic activity. In more recent years the development of new products and materials, and changes in the way they are used has led to a steady growth in the amount consumed and change in the nature of the waste produced. Disposal of waste has been predominantly to landfill, which has led to environmental problems, including greenhouse gas emissions and liquid pollutants (although modern landfill sites are now much more tightly regulated). More recently, increasing concern about the environmental impacts of landfill has led to investigation into alternatives that are more sustainable. Integrated waste management planning is now seen as best practice. Integrated or sustainable waste management attempts to segregate the various components of the waste stream and to manage each in an environmentally sound and economically efficient manner, making use of waste as a resource wherever possible.

17.2 What's the policy context?

17.2.1 According to PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (2005)¹⁶⁴ all planning authorities should, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities, prepare and deliver planning strategies that:

- help deliver sustainable development through driving waste management up the waste hierarchy, addressing waste as a resource and looking to disposal as the last option, but one which must be adequately catered for;
- enable sufficient and timely provision of waste management facilities to meet the needs of their communities;
- help secure the recovery or disposal of waste without endangering human health and without harming the environment, and enable waste to be disposed of in one of the nearest appropriate installations;
- protect green belts but recognise the particular locational needs of some types of waste management facilities when defining detailed green belt boundaries; and
- ensure the design and layout of new development supports sustainable waste management.

17.2.2 The South East Plan includes several relevant policies, including CC3: Resource Use which includes an action to increase efficiency of resource use in new development. Policy CC4: Sustainable Design and Construction, includes securing reduction and increased recycling of construction and demolition waste and procurement of low-impact materials. Policy W2: Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition states that 'development plan documents will require development design, construction and demolition which minimises waste production and associated impacts'.

17.2.3 Kent County Council is the waste planning authority covering Maidstone and responsible for preparing waste strategies. The Kent Waste Local Plan 1998¹⁶⁵ sets a countywide strategy for

¹⁶⁴ CLG (2005) *Planning Policy Statement 10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management* [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147411.pdf> (accessed 1 July 2009).

waste disposal, including the identification of specific site opportunities for waste management and disposal facilities. The plan's objectives include changing the ways by which waste is now dealt with in Kent including the development of cleaner technologies. It also aims to move away from the current reliance on landfill and towards alternatives including Integrated Waste Management Facilities, which embrace re-use and recycling, and / or waste to energy. The plan also includes a target that by 2011 landfill with waste that has not been subject to any prior processing will have ceased. The Kent Waste Development Framework¹⁶⁶ will replace the adopted Waste Plan.

17.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

17.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:

- To reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve the sustainable management of waste

17.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

17.4.1 According to Maidstone's Best Value Performance Plan 2008-11¹⁶⁷, the percentage of household waste recycled has increased from 12.82 to 14.38 between 2006 and 2008, against a target of 13.00 for 2007-2008. In terms of the quantity of household waste composted as a percentage of the total waste collected, this has also improved substantially and for 2007-2009 (9.40) it has already exceeded its 2011 target of 8.00. The figures for household waste collected per head have actually decreased between 2006 and 2008 and have also already exceeded their 2007-2008 targets. Therefore, overall, Maidstone is performing well in reducing the percentage of household waste while increasing the amount of recycling and composting. Maidstone successfully exceeded its 2007-08 targets and looks set to improve even further over 2008-2009.

¹⁶⁵ Kent County Council (1998) *Kent Waste Local Plan* [online] available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8DEEE260-ABB0-4D70-B4A3-34AEFFCF60C7/0/0607wlp1998.pdf> (accessed 9 July 2009).

¹⁶⁶ See Kent County Council website: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment/planning-and-land-use/minerals-and-waste/wastedevelopmentframework.htm> (accessed 1 July 2009).

¹⁶⁷ Kent County Council (2008) *Minerals and Waste Annual Monitoring Report* [online] available at: http://www.kent.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/618A7EEA-C096-4CEE-B031-2C2807A943E3/0/kentamr08.pdf?bcsi_scan_F6892CABA15785B4=0&bcsi_scan_filename=kentamr08.pdf (accessed 9 July 2009).

Table 15: Extract from Best Value Performance Indicators: Actual Out-turn 2007-09 and Targets for 2008-11¹⁶⁸

Indicators	2006/07 Actual	2007/08 Actual	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target	2010/11 Target
Percentage of household waste recycled	12.82	14.38	13.00	19.00	26.00	27.00
Quantity of household waste composted as a % of total waste collected	6.39	9.40	7.00	8.00	8.00	8.00
Kg of household waste collected per head.	436.5	425.89	453.0	420	415	410

Are there any evidence gaps?

17.4.2 Information on non-household waste in the Borough has not been identified.

17.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the 'business-as-usual' option)

17.5.1 Given recent decreases in total amounts of waste collected in Maidstone, it is possible to assume that the total amount of waste collected will keep decreasing. The data also indicates that recycling levels have been increasing steadily between 2002 and 2007/8, and therefore it is likely that recycling and composting levels will keep improving (albeit at a lower percentage level given that the easy gains have likely to have been made first).

17.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

17.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to waste include:

- To maintain positive trends in terms of household waste recycling, composting and reduction
- To minimise the amount of waste from all sources going to landfill

¹⁶⁸ Maidstone Borough Council (2008) *Best Value Performance Plan 2008-11* [online] available at: <http://www.digitalm Maidstone.co.uk/docs/Best%20Value%20Performance%20Plan%202008-11%20Council%20FIN.doc> (accessed 9 July 2009).

18 Water resources and quality

18.1 Introduction

- 18.1.1 Water quality is assessed by the percentage of river length that has good chemical and ecological status. Ecological status, in turn, is defined as a combination of physico-chemical elements (e.g. nutrients, pH and dissolved oxygen), biological elements (e.g. fish and algae), specific pollutants and hydromorphology (e.g. depth, width and flow).
- 18.1.2 Poor water quality is typically due to a combination of agricultural runoff, untreated drainage from built-up areas and roads, and discharge from wastewater treatment works. It can affect people's health, and that of plants and animals.
- 18.1.3 The pressures on our water resources are growing. More houses are being built, our population is increasing and we are all using more water. Climate change will only add to these pressures. In England and Wales, roughly 48% of the water abstracted is for household use, 22% for non-domestic use, and 22% is lost due to leakage¹⁶⁹.

18.2 What's the policy context?

- 18.2.1 The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD)¹⁷⁰ requires all inland and coastal waters to achieve at least 'good status' by 2015 or, where this is not possible, by 2021 or 2027. The Environment Agency has prepared draft River Basin Management Plans¹⁷¹ that show how these requirements will be met by 2025. This includes a plan for the Thames River Basin District (which covers Maidstone). Proposed measures in the plans include, for local authorities:
- Inclusion of water efficiency and groundwater protection policies in LDDs;
 - Inclusion of planning policies that require waste water treatment infrastructure capacity;
 - Promotion of sustainable drainage schemes;
 - Strategic development planning, incorporation of green infrastructure, and controls on specific pollution;
 - Ensuring that LDDs take into account the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan.
 - Action to reduce the physical impacts of urban development in artificial or heavily modified waters.
- 18.2.2 Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England (2008)¹⁷² sets out the Government's vision for how the water sector will look by 2030 and some of the steps necessary to achieve it. The Strategy requires planning authorities to work closely with the water companies and the Environment Agency on timing and numbers of new households in areas likely to see the greatest growth. The CLG/Defra's report 'Water efficiency in new

¹⁶⁹ Environment Agency (2007) *Water supply in England and Wales 2000 to 2007* [online] available at:

<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0907BMXP-e-e.pdf?lang=e> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷⁰ European Union (2000) *EU Water Framework Directive* [online] available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷¹ Environment Agency (2008) *Draft River Basin Management Plans* [online] available at: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33106.aspx> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷² Defra (2008). *Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England* [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/strategy/pdf/future-water.pdf> (accessed 22 July 2009).

- buildings¹⁷³ outlines policies and measures that aim to reduce domestic consumption in new properties to 125 litres per head per day (l/hd/d) through the introduction of new building regulations. Government has also consulted on amending the Building Regulations to include minimum water efficiency standards for new homes¹⁷⁴, and will review the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 later in 2009. However there is uncertainty about when these will be agreed, and associated implementation put in place.
- 18.2.3 The Code for Sustainable Homes¹⁷⁵ outlines various target levels for the construction of sustainable homes, one aspect of which is the efficient use of water. From 2010, all affordable housing will have to be constructed to Code Level 3, which sets water consumption at 105 l/p/d for internal use for an average year.
- 18.2.4 The Environment Agency is developing Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS)¹⁷⁶ which consider how much water can be abstracted from watercourses without damaging the environment within a catchment – the most appropriate scale for planning for water. They recognise the needs of abstractors whilst also fitting in with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. The Environment Agency is also carrying out research into environmental limits and how they relate to infrastructure provision. Maidstone Borough is within the area of the Medway CAMS. The Environment Agency's view on water metering is that the majority of homes in water stressed areas should be metered by 2015 (Maidstone is currently considered to be under stress, see Figure 11 below).
- 18.2.5 The South East Plan (policy NRM1) reiterates the need for LDDs to assist the UK in achieving the objectives of the WFD by delivering appropriate actions set out in River Basin Management Plans. The same policy also requires local authorities to identify circumstances under which new development should exceed the Building Regulations standards and the circumstances under which SUDS should be incorporated into new development. A final relevant point is that local authorities should direct new development to areas where adequate water supply can be provided and also ensure that where appropriate new development is phased to allow for the necessary water infrastructure to be implemented. In relation to water quality, Policy NRM2 requires local authorities to contribute to maintaining and enhancing water quality through their LDFs. This should include taking into account of water related studies and maps from the Environment Agency¹⁷⁷ and water and sewerage companies, ensure that water quality standards are met, ensuring that the rate and location of development does not breach relevant quality targets and not allowing development that presents a risk of pollution in areas of high groundwater vulnerability. Local authorities should also ensure that the location and phasing of development takes into account the existing or planned sewerage infrastructure.
- 18.2.6 Maidstone is undertaking a Water Cycle Strategy which will be a key piece of evidence to inform the management of water resources, the implementation and improvement of water services infrastructure and improvement of water quality in the Borough.

¹⁷³ CLG / Defra (2007) *Water efficiency in new buildings* [online] available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/WaterEfficiencyNewBuildings.pdf> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷⁴ CLG (2008) *The Building Act 1984, The Building Regulations 2000. Proposals for amending Part G (Hygiene) of the Building Regulations and Approved Document G: Consultation* [online] available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/partgconsultation> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷⁵ CLG (2006) *Code for Sustainable Homes: a step-change in sustainable home building practice* [online] available at:

http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/code_for_sust_homes.pdf (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷⁶ For more information on catchment abstraction management strategies see: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33372.aspx> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷⁷ Such as the Environment Agency's Groundwater Protection Policy (GP3)

18.3 What are the key objectives and other decision-making criteria that we need to consider?

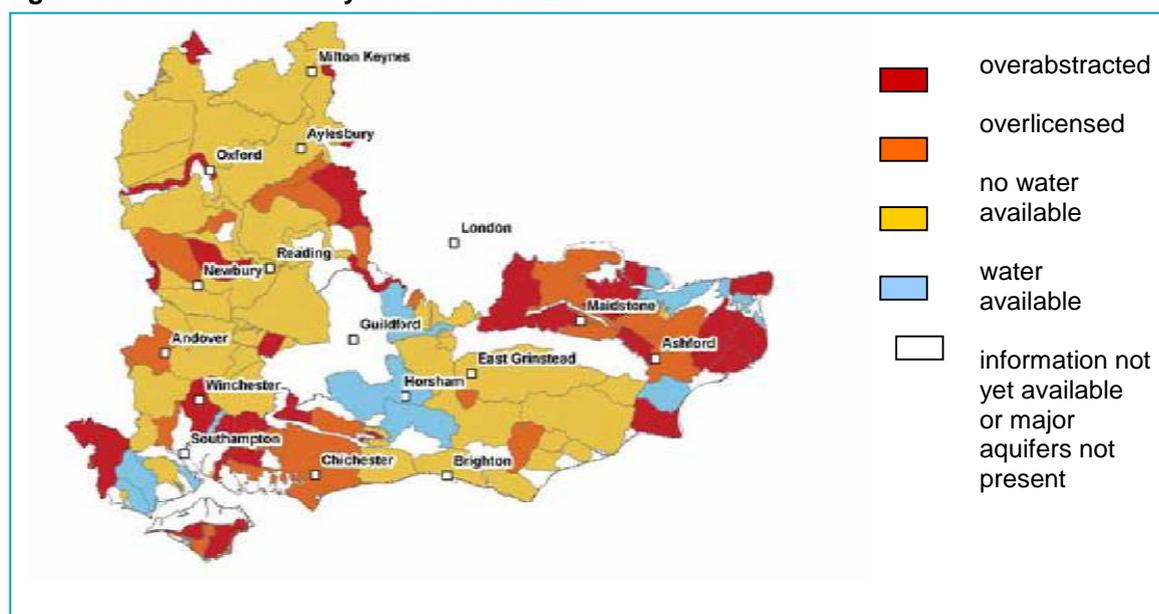
18.3.1 Key objectives from the South East Integrated Regional Framework include:

- To maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers, ground waters and coasts, and to achieve sustainable water resources management

18.4 What's the situation now? (including any existing problems)

18.4.1 According to the Environment Agency, there is less water available per person in the South East than in many Mediterranean countries¹⁷⁸. Maidstone is located in an area of water scarcity (see Figure 11 below) and experienced a two year drought following the heat wave of 2003¹⁷⁹.

Figure 11: Water availability for the South East¹⁸⁰



18.4.2 Daily domestic water use per person in 2004 was 176 litres in Maidstone – which is well above the national average for that year of 154 litres. The percentage of river length assessed as good biological quality in the Borough was 77.25% in 2005 – this value is lower than for 2000 (78.86%) and quality peaked in 2002 (82.27%). The percentage of river length assessed as good chemical quality for Maidstone is much lower at 50.90% – although this value is an

¹⁷⁸ Environment Agency (2005). *Water for the future: Managing water in the South East of England* [online] available at: http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/waterressesummary_2005304.pdf (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁷⁹ Maidstone Borough Council (undated) *Climate change and Maidstone Borough* [online] available at: http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment/climate_change.aspx (accessed 23 July 2009)

¹⁸⁰ Environment Agency (2007). *Water supply in England and Wales 2000 to 2007* [online] available at: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0907BMXP-e-e.pdf?lang=e> (accessed 29 June 2009).

improvement on 2004 (48.88%), in earlier years chemical quality has been higher and peaked in 2002 at 57.06%¹⁸¹.

18.4.3 Maidstone Borough lies predominantly within the Thames River Basin District (see Figure 12). The River Medway is a 'main river' which flows through Maidstone Borough. Currently only 16 km of river length (4%) in the Medway catchment areas is achieving good ecological status/potential and the River Medway suffers from high nutrient levels. The Thames district is one of the driest in the UK due to low rainfall levels. Groundwater is important in providing around 40% of public water supplies with chalk forming the predominant aquifer type. However, current assessments show that groundwater is fully utilised over much of the Thames River Basin District and, therefore, the draft Plan for the Basin District states that maintaining the quantity and quality of groundwater is extremely important for the District¹⁸².

18.4.4 Maidstone Borough's drinking water is generally of good quality, with a small improvement in overall compliance with drinking water standards at the consumers' taps (99.96% compared to 99.95% in 2006)¹⁸³. The water infrastructure system is operated by Southern Water (sewerage systems) and South East Water (public water supplies). Table 16 shows the percentages of metered properties in the area covered by South East Water that serves Maidstone. Although the percentage is higher than the England and Wales averages, it is still far from achieving the 2015 Environment Agency's aspiration for universal water metering in water scarce areas.

Table 16: Water company household metering (percentage)¹⁸⁴

	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
South East Water (formerly Mid Kent Water)	17	20	23	27	29	32	34	37
England & Wales total	17	18	20	22	23	25	27	29

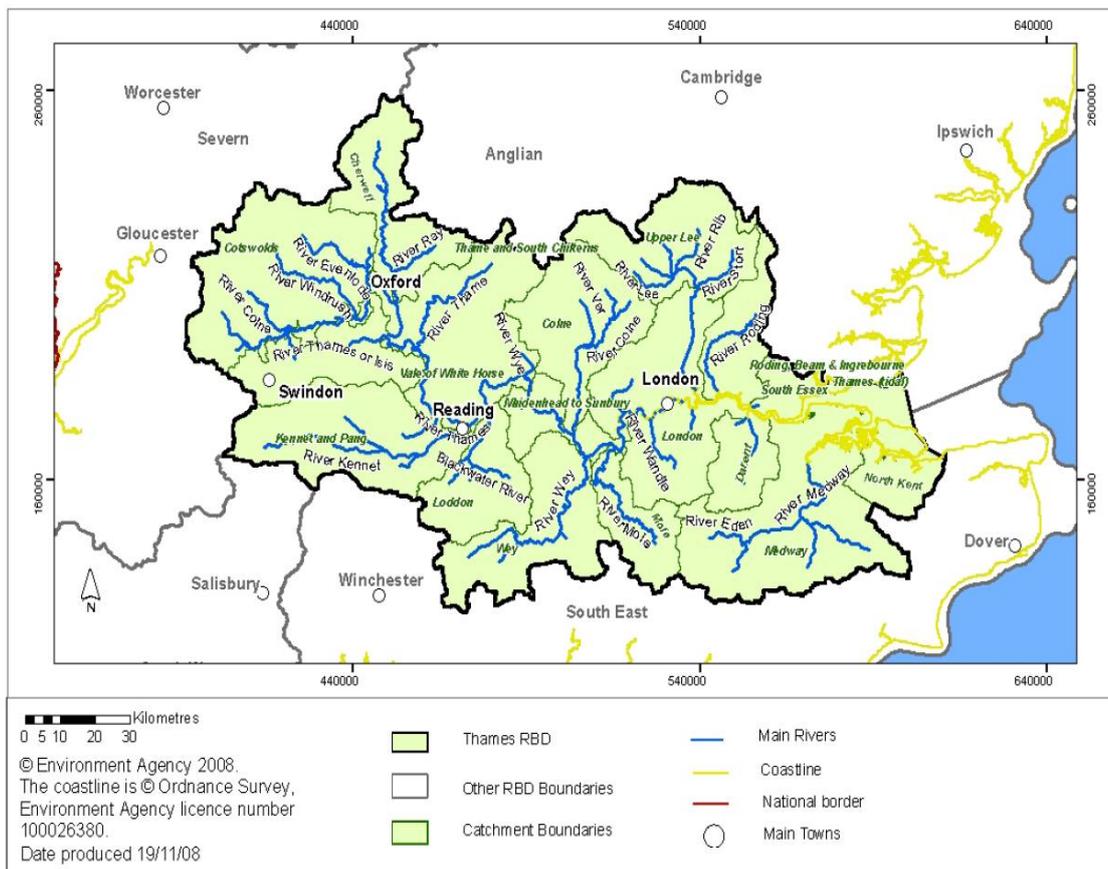
¹⁸¹ Audit Commission (2009) *Audit commission area profiles – Data profile for Maidstone* [online] available at: <http://www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁸² Environment Agency (2008) *River Basin Management Plan for the Thames River Basin District* [online] available at: <http://wfdconsultation.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfdcms/en/thames/Intro.aspx> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁸³ Drinking Water Inspectorate (2008) *Drinking water 2007: Southern region* [online] available at: <http://www.dwi.gov.uk/pubs/annrep07/CIR07%20Southern%20Region.pdf> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁸⁴ Environment Agency (2007). *Water supply in England and Wales 2000 to 2007* [online] available at: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0907BMXP-e-e.pdf?lang=e> (accessed 29 June 2009).

Figure 12: Thames River Basin District¹⁸⁵



Are there any evidence gaps?

18.4.5 A Water Cycle Strategy is currently being prepared for Maidstone; this document will provide more localised information on water quality and quantity in the Borough.

18.5 What will be the situation without the plan? (the ‘business-as-usual’ option)

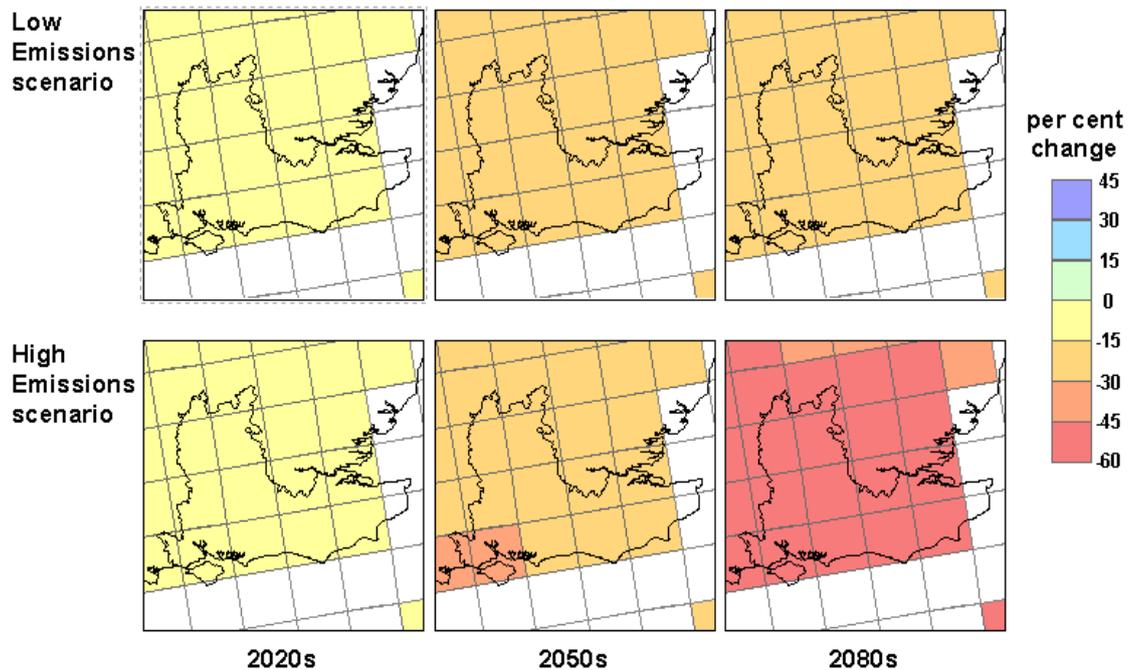
18.5.1 Climate change is likely to lead to both less water being available in hot summers, and people wanting to use more water during those times. Figure 13 shows predicted reductions in summer rainfall to about 2080¹⁸⁶; winter rainfall is expected to increase over time, but not as quickly as summer rainfall will decrease.

18.5.2 Water quality and quantity would be likely to be adversely affected by new development particularly in the absence of a plan that sets out the appropriate distribution and phasing of development to take into account infrastructure and environmental constraints.

¹⁸⁵ Environment Agency (2008) *River Basin Management Plan for the Thames River Basin District* [online] available at: <http://wfdconsultation.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfdcms/en/thames/Intro.aspx> (accessed 29 June 2009).

¹⁸⁶ UKCIP (2009) *Regional scenarios for the South East* [online] available at: http://www.ukcip.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=177b (accessed 29 June 2009).

Figure 13: Percentage change in summer precipitation (UKCIP, 2009)¹⁸⁷



18.6 What issues should be a particular focus for the appraisal?

18.6.1 In light of the information above, key issues to take into account in the appraisal in relation to water quality and resources include:

- Maidstone is located in a water scarce area, which will be exacerbated due to climate change and future growth and development
- The need to improve the water quality of Maidstone's water courses in line with the Water Framework Directive requirements
- The need to ensure distribution and location of new development takes the water supply and sewerage infrastructure into account

¹⁸⁷ UKCIP (2009) *Regional scenarios for the South East* [online] available at: http://www.ukcip.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=177b (accessed 29 June 2009).

19 Next steps

19.1 Consultation on this Scoping Report

19.1.1 Task A5 involved consultation on the scope of the SA. The consultation period lasted for five weeks and during this time the Statutory Consultees were invited to comment on the report.

19.1.2 Following consultation on the Scoping Report, the comments received have been integrated into the report. The Scoping Report can now be finalised and the next stage of the SA commence. The next stage involves identifying and evaluating the impacts of the Core Strategy and other DPDs.

19.2 SA of the Core Strategy and other DPDs

19.2.1 The framework and evidence base presented in this final Scoping Report will provide the basis for undertaking the SA of the Core Strategy and Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Allocations DPD as the two first DPDs under the revised Local Development Scheme 2009¹⁸⁸. Other evidence (e.g. from studies undertaken by the Council) will also be drawn on where appropriate. Subsequent DPDs that will be appraised include the Town Centre Regeneration AAP; Maidstone Urban Extension AAP; and Land Allocations DPD. However, Maidstone Borough Council will have to update the Scoping Report at the appropriate time for these subsequent DPDs and therefore undertake further consultation with the statutory consultees and others as appropriate.

19.2.2 In order to complete the appraisal, for each spatial area and topic we will ask:

- What will be the situation with the plan?
- How can we mitigate / enhance effects (Scott Wilson's recommendations to the Council)?
- How can we best monitor the plan's impacts?

19.2.3 In this way, the Core Strategy and the subsequent DPDs will be comprehensively analysed in terms of their effects on different parts of Maidstone and the full range of sustainability issues.

¹⁸⁸ A revised Local Development Scheme was submitted to the Secretary of State for approval in July 2009

Appendix I - Consultation Responses

Respondent	Type of Comment (Suggestion, Query, Comment Support, Criticism, Clarification)	Comment	Response to comment (noted, agree, disagree)	How has this been taken into account?
Environment Agency	Comment	Section 8.3.1 – A key objective is to address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. Taking the carbon footprint of the district's activities and population as a whole, the energy used in treating and distributing drinking water and treating waste water will be a significant proportion of the total. By assisting in improving groundwater and surface water quality, this will also reduce the burden on the water companies treating drinking water and therefore result in an overall reduction in emissions.	Noted	N/A
Environment Agency	Comment	Section 9 - The conservation and enhancement of Biodiversity in Maidstone Borough would appear to be reliant on the Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan being completed and of sufficient detail to adequately outline how Biodiversity action will protect and enhance the Borough's environment. However the Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan has not to date been completed, and it was not been made clear from the outset that it will be the main basis of Biodiversity planning policy. It is difficult to see how the plan is going to be sufficient in its ambitions to adequately deliver a net gain in Biodiversity through the planning process. It would be useful to have some reassurance from Maidstone Borough Council that the Biodiversity Action Plan's scope will indeed include the delivery of Biodiversity protection and enhancement in Maidstone Borough through the Planning Process.	Noted	A draft Biodiversity Action Plan for Maidstone has been prepared, although it is yet to be formally adopted by MBC. The SA Scoping Report now identifies the Maidstone BAP as a key document in the management and protection of biodiversity under the LDF.
Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 9.3.1 – A key objective is the accessibility to countryside, and we assume the whole natural environment within the district. This section currently seems to neglect the importance of the watercourses and the likely growing public interest in them if access is increased which should be considered as part of the green infrastructure objective for the district.	Agree	Section 9.6.1 amended to reflect suggestion.

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Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 9.3.1 – A key objective is the accessibility to countryside, and we assume the whole natural environment within the district. This section could also link to other sections dealing with water resources/water quality/sustainable development.	Agree	Section 9.1.2 amended to reflect suggestion.
Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 12.4.7 - This section states that “development in the borough must include the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to minimise the increase in surface water due to new development”. A large proportion of the borough is underlain by either the Gault or Weald Clay formations. These are both impermeable geologies with poor infiltration potential. There are also areas where discharge to ground would result in mobilisation of contaminants, for example on some brownfield sites, which would not be acceptable to the Environment Agency. It should therefore be acknowledged that the use of SUDS will need to be governed also by the physical and chemical characteristics of a site, and that on many sites SUDS would be used for storage and attenuation of flow (for example detention basins or sealed swales) rather than actual/immediate discharge (for example soakaways or permeable paving).	Agree	Section 12.4.7 amended to reflect suggestion.
Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 12.4.8 - The Environment Agency strongly recommends that a level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is carried out.	Noted	<p>A meeting was held with EA. Essentially it was agreed that EA would not expect a level 2 SFRA to be produced for the Maidstone Borough Core Strategy provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strategic housing allocations (equating to approximately 800 dwellings) are made within the 1:25 year flood zone along the river Medway; and the 1:100 year flood zone for the rivers Len, Loose, Teise or Beult • The East / South East Urban

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				<p>Extension is shown diagrammatically (rather than a 'red lined' allocation) and the Core Strategy contains a policy requirement which effectively means locating sensitive uses outside areas liable to flood in compliance with PPS25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be no site allocations within the town centre • That any indicative development shown within the town centre study would be likely to lead to / result in nil detriment in relation to flooding impacts <p>Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs) are likely to be necessary to support the Urban Extension AAP and the Town Centre AAP both of which would contain site allocations.</p>
Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 12.5.2 - Prior to the completion of the Level 1 SFRA in 2008, the Environment Agency identified the need for a level 2 SFRA. The SFRA itself also recognises this, stating that "increased accuracy of the flood extents in the urbanised area is essential to enable adequate and appropriate management of flood risk in the future".	Noted	See comment above
Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 12 - The current modelling has a lot of uncertainty associated with it due to a lack of topographic detail and the Level 1 recommends	Noted	See comment above

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		that a Level 2 SFRA is undertaken along the River Medway, River Len and River Loose within Maidstone town centre. Given that the Government has identified Maidstone as a new 'growth point' further work is likely to be required in order to adequately manage flood risk and adapt to climate change.		
Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 12 - It is important that the functional floodplain is accurately mapped in order to identify areas that are unsuitable for development at an early stage. This should inform the sequential approach to development both in Maidstone and the surrounding villages that are risk.	Noted	N/A
Environment Agency	Criticism	Section 15 - Although Section 15 makes a brief reference to identifying and remediating land impacted by contamination in the borough, we are disappointed to note that no reference has been made to Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control (PPS23). As PPS25 is the main driver behind Section 12 and PPS10 is the principal driver within Section 17, for example, PPS23 will need to be similarly incorporated into Section 15.	Agree	Section 15.2.4 amended to incorporate PPS23 and PPS23: Annex 2.
Environment Agency	Suggestion	Section 18.2.5 – This section discusses locating developments in areas where they will not breach relevant quality targets. It also discusses that developments that could pose a risk of pollution will not be permitted in certain areas. Direct reference should be made within this section to the Environment Agencies Groundwater Protection Policy (GP3).	Agree	Section 18.2.5 amended to reflect suggestion.
Natural England	Suggestion	Section 3.3 – there is reference in 3.4.3 to there being areas of deprivation with Urban Maidstone. We would therefore suggest that Objective 2 of the Regional Sustainability Framework – To improve the health and well being of the population and reduce health inequalities in heath – would be appropriate.	Agree	Section 3.3.1 amended to reflect suggestion.
Natural England	Support	Section 3.6.1 – we welcome the inclusion of Green Infrastructure as an issue to focus upon.	Noted	N/A

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Natural England	Suggestion	Section 4.3 – the urban extension will result in the encroachment of the Town boundary into open countryside. This could have issues with biodiversity and therefore we would suggest that Objective 19 of the Regional Sustainability Framework – To conserve and enhance the region’s biodiversity – is included here. We note that biodiversity is listed as a key issue under 4.6.1.	Agree	Section 4.3.1 amended to reflect suggestion.
Natural England	Support	Section 4.6.1. – we support the inclusion of the first key issue listed “The need to give early consideration to landscape and biodiversity enhancement, woodland management, recreation provision and access routes”. A good Green Infrastructure plan can deliver much of this and note that a Green Infrastructure paper is being prepared by the Borough.	Noted	N/A
Natural England	Support	Section 5.2.3. – we note the reference to and importance given to Green Infrastructure in improving links to the countryside.	Noted	N/A
Natural England	Suggestion	Section 9.3 – given that the River Beult is in unfavourable condition largely due to agricultural run-off and Maidstone is in an area of water over abstraction Objective 24 of the Regional Sustainability Framework – To maintain and improve the water quality of the region’s rivers, ground waters and coast, and to achieve sustainable water resources management – may be appropriate.	Agree	Section 9.3.1 amended to reflect suggestion.
Natural England	Comment	Section 10 - The provision of open spaces and green infrastructure is documented as having beneficial effects on health and well being.	Noted	Section 10.1.4 amended to reflect comment