

Core Strategy 2011



Contents

How to Read this Document	4
Preface	5
List of Policies	6
1 Introduction to the Core Strategy	7
Public Participation	13
2 Key Influences	15
National Plans and Strategies	15
Regional Plans and Strategies	15
Local Plans and Strategies	16
The Evidence Base	16
Saved Policies and Plans	17
Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment	17
Tests of Soundness	18
3 Spatial Portrait	19
Key Local Issues	21
4 Spatial Vision and Objectives	22
Spatial Vision	24
Spatial Objectives	25
5 Spatial Strategy	27
Spatial Distribution of Development	28
Maidstone Urban Area	28
Rural Service Centres	29
Countryside	29
Land Availability	29
Infrastructure	30
POLICY CS1 BOROUGH WIDE STRATEGY	31

6	Spatial Policies	33
	Maidstone Town Centre	33
	Town Centre Vision	33
	Town Centre Boundary Map	34
	Town Centre Quarters	36
	Town Centre Quarters Map	37
	POLICY CS2 MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE	38
	Maidstone Urban Area	39
	POLICY CS3 MAIDSTONE URBAN AREA	40
	Rural Service Centres	41
	Harrietsham	41
	Headcorn	42
	Lenham	42
	Marden	42
	Staplehurst	43
	POLICY CS4 RURAL SERVICE CENTRES	43
	The Countryside	44
	Rural Environment	44
	Rural Economy	45
	POLICY CS5 COUNTRYSIDE	46
7	Core Policies	47
	Sustainable Design and Development	47
	POLICY CS6 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT	48
	Sustainable Transport	49
	Parking	50
	Rail and Bus	51
	Cycling and Walking	52

POLICY CS7 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT	53
Economic Development	54
Centre Hierarchy	56
POLICY CS8 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	57
Meeting Housing Need	59
POLICY CS9 HOUSING MIX	60
Affordable Housing	61
POLICY CS10 AFFORDABLE HOUSING	62
Local Needs Housing	63
POLICY CS11 LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING	64
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation	65
POLICY CS12 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION	66
Natural Assets	68
Green and Blue Infrastructure	68
Biodiversity	69
POLICY CS 13 NATURAL ASSETS	70
8 The Delivery Framework	71
Providing the infrastructure and community facilities needed to support growth	71
Community Infrastructure Levy	72
POLICY CS 14 INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY	74
List of appendices	76
Key diagram	77

How to Read this Document

The Core Strategy comprises:

4

Orange boxes contain POLICY

Blue boxes contain information on how POLICY will be delivered and monitored

Green boxes contain important information to support POLICY

Where else to look for links to further information are indicated by *i*.

Documents that appear in larger type are generally statutory documents or other important documents that can be found either in the appendices to the Core Strategy or in the evidence base. An explanation of terms in larger type can also be found in the glossary.

This stage in the development of the Core Strategy is known as a Public Participation 'Regulation 25 Consultation'. **What this means is that** representations and comments are invited on what the plan and appendices should contain. The Council must then take into account any representation made in response to the consultation. Consultation at this stage is in advance of **a formal consultation process known as 'Regulation 27 Consultation' which is** programmed for later on in 2011/2012.

Although this document (with Appendices) is referred to throughout as the Core Strategy it should be emphasised that there has been no decision as to its contents, but only a decision to publish this proposed version for consultation under Regulation 25.

Guidance in Planning Policy Statement 12 (Local Spatial Planning) advises that the Core Strategy plan period must be run for a 15 year term from the date of adoption. The current proposed plan period runs until 2026 but in any event the Core Strategy will be subject to an early review.

The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) may impact on future versions of the Core Strategy and other development plan documents that will comprise the Local Development Framework in Maidstone. Any necessary changes including changes to the overall strategy and policies will be incorporated following adoption of the Framework.

Preface

The Maidstone Borough Core Strategy is a very important document. It sets the planning framework for our communities until 2026. In preparing this strategy the council has sought to address local needs, especially for housing and economic development, with an emphasis on achieving continuing and higher levels of economic prosperity whilst at the same time protecting the environment and landscape that helps to continue to make the borough of Maidstone a special place to live and work in.

The Core Strategy has been prepared working closely with partner organisations, including Kent County Council, local communities and agencies. There have been a number of major public consultations, the most recent being on the Preferred Options in 2007. Considerable changes have occurred in the planning system since the Preferred Options stage and the strategy has changed as a result of those changes to the legislation and guidance governing the planning system.

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

The council would like to thank all those who have responded to these consultations, giving their ideas and opinions which have helped the council in shaping the Core Strategy.

Planning often presents a difficult balance between national and regional policy and local need and aspirations. We trust that local residents, employees and employers will find that we are fulfilling our task of setting out a vision for the future of our borough with policies that reflect their own aspirations whilst delivering on national and regional requirements.



Chris Garland
Leader of Maidstone Borough Council

List of Policies

Spatial Strategy

CS1 Borough Wide Strategy

Spatial Policies

CS2 Maidstone Town Centre

CS3 Maidstone Urban Area

CS4 Rural Service Centres

CS5 Countryside

Core Policies

CS6 Sustainable Design and Development

CS7 Sustainable Transport

CS8 Economic Development

CS9 Housing Mix

CS10 Affordable Housing

CS11 Local Needs Housing

CS12 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

CS13 Natural Assets

The Delivery Framework

CS14 Infrastructure Delivery

1 Introduction to the Core Strategy

1.1 The Core Strategy development plan document (DPD) is the key document within Maidstone's local development framework (LDF) that sets the framework to guide the future development of the borough. It explains the "Why, what, where, when and how" development will be delivered through a strategy that plans for growth and regeneration whilst at the same time protects and enhances the borough's environmental and built assets. The Core Strategy:

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

1.2 The Core Strategy will cover the period from 2006 to 2026. A base date of 2006 has been used to assess the council's housing and commercial land supply against its targets for the 20 year period. There are a number of stages that a development plan document (DPD) such as the Core Strategy will have to go through before it can be formally adopted as part of Maidstone's LDF. Stakeholder and public engagement is an important part of the process.

1.3 During the consultation process associated with the Preferred Options for the previous version of the Core Strategy (2007) a representation that sought the inclusion of a land allocation for a strategic rail freight interchange in the Core Strategy was received. The Council halted the Core Strategy programme until specialist evidence could be prepared to respond to the representation. A planning application for the same proposal followed and subsequently an appeal was lodged which went to a Public Inquiry. Once the Council had considered all the evidence, the Core Strategy programme restarted in 2009 and the Council resolved to reject the representation. The Inspector subsequently dismissed the appeal in 2010. New plan making regulations and new government policy were introduced between 2006 and 2009. The impact of the new guidance meant that a more robust evidence base was needed to support the Core Strategy. The Council has now updated and supplemented its evidence base, available to see on the website.¹



¹ www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework.aspx

- 1.4 The consultation on issues and options carried out in 2006 was followed by the council appraising 11 draft spatial options before publishing a preferred spatial option in 2007 known as 7C. Preferred option 7C was an edge of centre and urban regeneration approach that included a dwelling target of 10080 houses for the plan period between 2006 and 2026. The focus of development was a single strategic development area (SDA) of 5,000 dwellings together with a strategic link road to serve it, with the balance of housing required to be provided within and adjacent to the urban area and larger villages. To balance the housing growth with employment opportunities and to increase prosperity Preferred option 7C also identified a need to provide for at least 10,000 new jobs in a range of sectors and locations.
- 1.5 Preferred Option 7C was developed within the context of an emerging South East Plan, an adopted Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006, KMSP) and national policy that focused on the redevelopment of brownfield sites at high densities. The Preferred Option was subject to public consultation and was supported by 56% of those who responded to the consultation. However since 2007 a number of significant changes have occurred that need to be considered in the preparation of the Core Strategy.
- 1.6 Planning Policy Statement 12 (Creating strong safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning) and the introduction of a number of tests of soundness placed a greater emphasis on ensuring that a Core Strategy was deliverable. There were also changes to the planning regulations that instigated the need for a further round of public consultation.
- 1.7 The KMSP was superseded by the South East Plan (SEP) in May 2009. The SEP has imposed a housing target of 11,080 dwellings for the borough and the Core Strategy was progressed post 2009 with this target in mind. The Core Strategy is required to be in conformity with the SEP but must also be robust enough to stand on its own merits.
- 1.8 In light of these changes, in September 2010 the Council resolved to test 5 options for housing targets and distribution of development: 8,200

dispersed; 10,080 dispersed; 10,080 including an SDA; 11,000 dispersed and 11,000 including an SDA.

- 1.9 By February 2011 the position was as follows. The changes in how new development and supporting infrastructure could be funded, coupled with the fact that development that has been built or received planning consent since 2006 cannot contribute towards new infrastructure, cast doubt on the delivery of the 2007 Preferred Option. Less than expected greenfield land was needed for housing due to an increase in building rates between 2007-2010 on brownfield land. This meant the need for a strategic development area in the urban extension comprising of 5,000 dwellings was not required. Consequently, within the context of the total need for infrastructure to support new housing, employment and other development as identified through the emerging Infrastructure Delivery Plan, a strategic link road of an acceptable design (alignment and length) could not be paid for by the potential of Community Infrastructure Levy contributions, the New Homes Bonus and S106 Agreements by 2026.
- 1.10 In addition initial survey material emerging from work being undertaken on the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment and the Kent Habitat Survey indicated that a single large strategic development area to the south east of the urban area would have a negative impact upon the historic and wildlife-rich landscape persisting in this vicinity.
- 1.11 When the Core Strategy programme restarted in 2009, a potential **risk of a dip in the Council's rolling 5-year housing land supply** was identified whereby the majority of known brownfield sites could be completed before greenfield sites came on stream. Housing land supply data (2009/10) demonstrated this was no longer the case, so there was no requirement to consider allocating strategic housing sites in the Core Strategy, only to identify broad strategic development locations
- 1.12 It is highly probable that an SDA would not be developed until the latter part of the plan period and given building rates emerging throughout 2010 such a development would not be capable of providing 5,000 dwellings before the end of the plan period. Severe doubt has also been cast on the ability and viability of such a development as the SDA to securely fund the development of the strategic link road to the required specification, functional standards and operational capability. It is therefore considered that Option 7C has become unviable,

undeliverable and therefore no longer sound for inclusion with the Core Strategy.

10

1.13 Cabinet on the 9th February 2011 considered the 5 options that had been tested over the preceding months and adopted the Council's new preferred option, providing 10,080 dwellings in a dispersed pattern.

1.14 The council is mindful of the need to balance housing and employment development and has established a new approach to delivering the appropriate distribution of housing based on sound evidence that reflects community and borough priorities and that at the same time takes into account a wide range of factors. This thinking is reflected in the adoption of the new strategy, that of providing 10,080 dwellings in a dispersed pattern.

The South East Plan

1.15 The SEP comprises part of the development plan for Maidstone. Otherwise known as the regional strategy this document sets out high level figures for the provision of housing from 2006 to 2026. There is a Maidstone policy in the SEP which is of particular relevance to the Core Strategy and a number of other policies that influence the direction that the Core Strategy has taken. It is considered that all the cross cutting policies, CC1 through to CC9 will impact on the Core Strategy. A table that signposts those policies that will also impact on the Core Strategy can be found at Appendix 1².

1.16 The Core Strategy is required to be in 'General conformity' with the SEP. This was confirmed by the Court of Appeal in Cala.³The SEP requires the Maidstone Core Strategy to make provision for 11,080 dwellings. It is the considered opinion of MBC that the provision within the Core Strategy for 10,080 dwellings is in general conformity as it is within 10% of the required level. The Kent Planning Officers Group (KPOG) Housing Forecasts Group have confirmed in the draft document entitled "How to determine dwelling numbers in Local Development Frameworks"⁴ Paragraph 11 Page 6 that as of June 2011 the level of dwellings forecast across the whole of Kent is in excess of the levels of provision required by the South East Plan by a factor of 6,200 dwellings



² Appendix 1 South East Plan policies

³ [2011] EWCA CIV639

⁴ "How to determine dwelling numbers in Local Development Frameworks" KPOG Housing Forecast Group 24th June 2011

1.17 Due to the amount of time that has passed since the last consultation exercise on the Core Strategy, together with the changes in legislation and national guidance the council is now undertaking a further public consultation on its draft Core Strategy. This stage is now known as public participation. All comments received during previous consultations on the Core Strategy have been taken into consideration during the production of this document. The council is also mindful of the guidance to keep core strategies succinct and focused on local issues. This draft Core Strategy does not repeat national guidance and policies nor does it include material that can be found in other council documents.

Spatial policies, core policies, the key diagram and the delivery framework

1.18 The Core Strategy has been structured to first give a short explanation of the purpose of the document and to explain which national and local **policies and strategies have influenced the Core Strategy's development.** A Spatial Portrait follows that identifies the key issues and challenges facing the community. The Core Strategy vision is the spatial **expression of the council's corporate vision for Maidstone and is supported by a number of objectives that have emerged from consideration of the council's Sustainable Community Strategy and corporate objectives⁵.**

1.19 The Spatial Strategy policy explains the factors that influence the distribution of development throughout Maidstone Borough and a **key diagram** illustrates policies in the Core Strategy. The main part of the Core Strategy sets out the policy framework comprising four **spatial policies** to explain the quantity and location of development and nine **core policies** that focus on delivering the strategy and set criteria against which applications for development are determined.



⁵www.maidstone.gov.uk/PDF/Sustainable%20Community%20Strategy%20for%20Maidstone%20Borough%20adopted%20april%2009.pdf

The Delivery Framework

- 1.20 The final section of the Core Strategy focuses on infrastructure delivery. It explains the importance of the infrastructure delivery plan (IDP)⁶ and charging schedule that aim to provide an overview of where and when the strategic and local infrastructure that is needed to support new development will be provided, who will deliver it and how it will be funded. The charging schedule will be subject to an examination in public. The IDP underpins the delivery of a sound core strategy. The IDP will be a dynamic process that constantly responds to changes that affect its delivery so that it can be effective and up to date.

Appendices and the Interactive Proposals Map

- 1.21 In order to keep the Core Strategy brief a lot of information is contained in appendices to the main document. The appendices include an explanation of how the policies have evolved during the Core Strategy process; this document is known as Policy Evolution⁷. Further appendices explain how the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy have helped to shape the Core Strategy,⁸ a list of saved policies⁹ and a list that shows those policies that will be superseded¹⁰ on adoption of the Core Strategy, and how the success of new policies will be measured. A matrix to illustrate how the spatial objectives will be delivered is included as an appendix¹¹.
- 1.22 The council's interactive proposals map¹² is an ordnance survey based map that shows adopted LDF policies spatially. The map is amended each time a new LDF document is produced. The map has links to adopted policies and can be viewed on the council's website. Finally a comprehensive glossary¹³ has been included in the appendices to the Core Strategy to help in understanding the terminology and language that has been used.



⁶ Appendix 2

⁷ Appendix 3 Policy Evolution

⁸ Appendix 4 Sustainable Community Strategy Matrix

⁹ Appendix 5 Saved Policies

¹⁰ Appendix 6 Superseded Policies and Documents

¹¹ Appendix 7 Delivery of Spatial Objectives matrix

¹² <http://maidstone.addresscafe.com/app/exploreit/>

¹³ Appendix 8 Glossary

Public Participation

- 1.23 This public participation consultation is an important stage in preparing the Core Strategy and the council would like to know what the community thinks about its strategy. Comments can be made in a number of ways but the use of the **council's online** consultation page is encouraged. People can also complete the questionnaires on paper, write to the council, send emails or speak to officers at any of the participation roadshows that will be organised. Details of **Maidstone's commitment** towards consultation can be found in the Statement of Community Involvement
- 1.24 Participation will give every resident, business and interested party in the borough a clear opportunity to share their opinions on the draft Core Strategy and to contribute to its ongoing development. The consultation exercise will run for six weeks and will be well publicised. The council will use a number of approaches to enable the community at large to express their opinions in a way that best suits them. These approaches will include the following:
- Informal discussions at participation roadshows in village halls, libraries, supermarkets and other places that people use during their daily routines.
 - Using existing contact lists and databases to contact those who have shown an interest previously
 - Engaging with other organisations such as residents associations and neighbourhood forums.
 - Officers and members attending meetings of clusters of parish councils.
 - Using social networking opportunities such as Facebook and Twitter.
- 1.25 The following table sets out an indicative programme for the Core Strategy and explains how the community can participate in the Core Strategy process:

Plan Making Stage	Dates	Participation
Public participation consultation	Autumn 2011	Widespread events to reach the community and help people understand how to engage with the Core Strategy process. The council will consider all representations made and where appropriate amend the Core Strategy to reflect concerns.
Publication	Spring 2012	Further public consultation for the 'Publication' version of the Core Strategy . Formal representations are

		sought on the 'Soundness' of the Core Strategy. Major changes at this stage will result in additional consultation
Submission	Summer 2012	Formal submission to the Secretary of State who will appoint an Inspector to conduct an independent examination. There is no opportunity for public participation at this stage. The Inspector will determine those issues they want further discussion on at the Hearing, and will also decide on who will take part in the debate. The council do not determine any of part of this process and cannot influence who is invited to take part. The Inspector will also consider written representations and give them the same weight as issues considered at the hearing.
Independent examination	Autumn 2012	The public examination or hearing is open to all to attend and observe. Only those invited to take part can speak. Following the conclusion of the examination the Inspector will publish a report that may require the council to make some further changes to the Core Strategy.
Adoption	Spring 2013	The council will adopt the Core Strategy as a formal part of its LDF. The only objections that can be considered at this point would relate to procedural issues and these would have to be heard by the High Court. The community will not have any further opportunity to object to the content of the Core Strategy.

2 Key Influences

- 2.1 The council must take account of a number of relevant national and local plans and strategies when preparing its Core Strategy.

National Plans and Strategies

- 2.2 National policies are currently set out in Planning Policy Statements (PPS) or Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) published by the Government to explain statutory provisions and to provide guidance to both the community and local government about the operation of the planning system. These documents also explain the relationship between planning policies and other national policies that are important for development and land use. The Core Strategy does not repeat national policy but does explain how that policy has been applied to Maidstone Borough.

Regional Plans and Strategies

- 2.3 The Government has made clear its plans to revoke regional strategies through the Localism Bill. Despite the legal challenges that have been made to the various actions that the Government has taken, until such time as the Bill is enacted, the Regional Strategy known as the South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy for the South East **comprise a formal part of Maidstone's** statutory development plan.
- 2.4 The Government is intending to introduce new legislation for plan making including provisions for the transition period between the current and new regulations. In accordance with current government advice Maidstone Borough Council has decided to continue to produce its Core Strategy **under the current regulations to ensure that Maidstone's** policy framework is brought up to date.
- 2.5 The urban area was designated a Growth Point **due to Maidstone's** regional significance with connections to rail and road networks as well as its potential to accommodate high levels of development compared to other urban settlements. Additionally the Regional Strategy identifies Maidstone as a regional hub. The ability of Maidstone to continue to support a higher level of growth together with supporting infrastructure has been reviewed during the preparation of the Core Strategy, and emerging new local targets for growth are reflected throughout the document.

Local Plans and Strategies

- 2.6 The key local document that has helped to shape the Core Strategy is **Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)**. This sets out the **council's overall direction and long term vision for the social, environmental and economic well-being** of the area. Appendix 4 illustrates this via the matrix that demonstrates how the spatial objectives from the SCS have led to the objectives of the Core Strategy.
- 2.7 Other important local documents that have been taken into account in the formulation of policies in the Core Strategy include:
- **Maidstone's Strategic Plan**
 - Economic Development Strategy
 - Housing Strategy
 - Regeneration Statement
 - Local Transport Plan for Kent
 - Open Space Development Plan Document adopted 2006
 - Affordable Housing Development Plan Document adopted 2006

The Evidence Base

- 2.8 A comprehensive evidence base has been developed alongside the Core Strategy to support the policies within the Core Strategy. The evidence base comprises:
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
 - The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)
 - Demographic, employment and retail studies
 - Maidstone Town Centre Study
 - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)
 - Travelling Show People Study
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)
 - Outline Water Cycle Study
 - Sustainable Construction in Maidstone Study
 - Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)
 - Office Viability Study 2009 (GL Hearn)
 - Transport Modelling (Jacobs)
- 2.9 The Evidence Base will continue to develop as the Core Strategy progresses towards adoption. A more detailed explanation of how the Core Strategy has addressed the complex issues facing the borough are included within the Policy Evolution document included as Appendix 1.

Saved Policies and Plans

- 2.10 The development plan for Maidstone comprises a number of local and strategic documents including adopted development plan documents, Saved Policies from the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 (MBWLP), Saved Policies from the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans prepared by Kent County Council, and currently the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 2.11 The Saved policies of the MBWLP will be progressively phased out and superseded¹⁴ by policies in the Core Strategy and other new development plan documents. Adopted development plan documents and current supplementary planning documents will be reviewed at the relevant stages during the plan production process. Appendix 6 lists those Saved Policies or adopted policy documents that will be deleted or superseded by Core Strategy policies and Appendix 5 confirms those policies and documents that remain saved and still form part of the development plan. It is important to note that Saved Policies must not conflict with the policies of the emerging Core Strategy or with national policy and advice.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment

- 2.12 The Core Strategy must be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal¹⁵ that considers the impact of the policies on the community, the economy and the environment. The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report 2009 establishes a framework for assessing the Core Strategy policies so that the council is able to minimise adverse impacts from the strategy and maximise positive impacts. The Sustainability Appraisal incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) required by European legislation. The policies in the Core Strategy have been subject to sustainability appraisal and a full and detailed sustainability appraisal will accompany the Core Strategy.
- 2.13 **Maidstone's** Habitats Regulation Assessment has also been taken into account in the development of policies within the Core Strategy.



¹⁴ Appendix 5 List of Saved Policies, Appendix 6 List of Superseded Policies and Documents

¹⁵ Appendix 9 Sustainability Appraisal

Tests of Soundness

2.14 When the Core Strategy is examined by the appointed inspector it will be considered against a number of tests of soundness taken from guidance given to the inspectors by the Planning Inspectorate. Core strategies must be:

- Justified
- Effective
- Consistent with national policy

Justified means that policies must be founded on a robust and credible evidence base and the Core Strategy is the most appropriate strategy when considering reasonable alternatives. Effective means that the Core Strategy must be deliverable and flexible and that the policies are capable of being monitored. Text within the blue boxes next to each policy shows how that policy will be delivered and monitored. Consistent with national policy is self explanatory.

Equalities Impact Assessment

2.15 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is a tool to show how the proposed policies will impact on people depending on their race, gender, disability, age, religion, belief or sexual orientation. The council must prepare action plans if any adverse impacts or gaps in provision are found. An EqIA accompanies this Core Strategy¹⁶.

3 Spatial Portrait

- 3.1 The Borough of Maidstone covers 40,000 hectares and is situated in the heart of Kent. Maidstone is the County Town of Kent and of the population of 148,500, 72% live in the Maidstone urban area. The urban area, located in the north west of the borough, has a strong commercial and retail town centre with Maidstone comprising one of the largest retail centres in the south east. A substantial rural hinterland surrounds the urban area, a large part of which enjoys designation due to its high landscape and environmental quality. The borough encompasses a small section of the Metropolitan Green Belt and a substantial portion of the rural element of the borough forms part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 3.2 The borough is strategically located between the Channel Tunnel and London with direct connections to both via the M20 and M2 motorways. Three central railway stations in the town centre connect to London, the coast and to the Medway Towns. Maidstone Borough has a close interaction with the Medway Towns that provide a part of the **borough's** workforce. The town centre acts as the focus for retail development throughout the borough and has an important role to play in the visitor economy with the tourist information centre located at the Maidstone Museum. The Rural Service Centres of Harrietsham and Lenham lie on the Ashford International to Maidstone East to London Victoria line whilst Headcorn, Marden and Staplehurst lie on the Ashford to Tonbridge to London Cannon Street line. Although the Channel Tunnel link known as High Speed One (HS1) runs through the borough there are no stations to directly access the link. A number of main transport routes cross the borough including the A20, A229, A249, A274 and A26.
- 3.3 The borough is relatively prosperous with a considerable employment base and a lower than average unemployment rate compared to Kent and the South East. However the borough also has a low wage economy that has led to out commuting for higher paid work. The local housing market crosses adjacent district boundaries and is influenced by its proximity to London, resulting in relatively high local house prices. The annual need for affordable housing shown by the SHMA is double the annual number of all new dwellings to be built during the plan period. The council must also provide accommodation for families and the increasing elderly population as well as the gypsy and traveller communities.

- 3.4 There are parts of the borough that are in need of regeneration, mainly in central Maidstone with pockets of deprivation in some of the suburban areas as well. The Rural Service Centres provide services to the rural hinterland and some smaller villages also play a vital part in the rural economy. There are a number of significant centres of economic activity in and around some of the larger rural settlements and smaller commercial premises are dotted throughout the borough. Agriculture remains an important industry to Maidstone including the traditional production of soft fruits and associated haulage and storage facilities and infrastructure that are required.
- 3.5 The borough is fortunate to benefit from a number of built and natural assets including 41 Conservation Areas, over 2000 Listed Buildings, 28 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 15 parks and gardens important for their special historic interest. The rural area of the borough makes up part of the Kent Downs AONB and the Metropolitan Green Belt. The borough also has areas of ancient woodland, 59 local wildlife sites, 34 verges of nature conservation interest, 9 sites of special scientific interest, 2 local nature reserves and a European designated Special Area of Conservation. The River Medway flows through the borough and the town centre and, together with its tributaries, is one of the **borough's** prime assets. Protection of the **borough's distinct urban and rural heritage remains an** important issue for the borough.
- 3.6 MBC is making provision for new housing and employment growth together with associated infrastructure, whilst at the same time emphasising the County Town role of Maidstone for administrative purposes. Growth within the borough is constrained by the high quality environment, the extent of the floodplain within the area and the limitations of its existing transport systems and infrastructure. There is also likely to be increased pressure on the borough to compete with nearby designated growth areas of Kent Thames Gateway and Ashford to attract inward investment. The challenge for the Core Strategy is to manage the potential impacts of future growth to ensure that development takes place in a sustainable manner that supports the local economy whilst safeguarding the valuable natural and built assets.

Key Local Issues

1. Where, when and how much development will be distributed throughout the borough.
2. Maintenance of the distinct character and identity of villages and the urban area.
3. Protection of the built and natural heritage, including the Kent Downs AONB and its setting.
4. Provision of strategic and local infrastructure to support new development and growth including a sustainable integrated transport strategy, adequate water supply, sustainable waste management; energy infrastructure and social infrastructure such as health, schools and other educational facilities.
5. Improvements to quality of air within the air quality management area (AQMA).
6. Regeneration of the town centre and areas of social and environmental deprivation.
7. Redressing the low wage economy by expanding the employment skills base and improving higher and further education opportunities to target employment opportunities in green technologies including low carbon energy production.
8. Meeting housing needs of vulnerable groups including young people, affordable housing, local needs housing, accommodation for the elderly, accommodation to meet gypsy and traveller needs and accommodation to meet rural housing needs.
9. Promotion of the **multi-functional nature of the borough's open spaces, rivers and other watercourses.**
10. Ensuring that all new development is built to a high standard of sustainable design and construction.
11. Ensuring that applications for development adequately address the impact of climate change, especially the issues of flooding and water supply.

4 Spatial Vision and Objectives

Spatial Vision

- 22
- 4.1 The council's vision for the borough set out in its Sustainable Community Strategy and Strategic Plan seeks a prosperous and vibrant future for Maidstone's urban and rural communities whilst retaining and enhancing the borough's distinctive heritage, landscape and character. The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) seeks to create a model 21st Century County Town as distinctive place known for its dynamic service sector based economy. The Core Strategy is the spatial expression of the vision for the borough that sets out the development strategy needed to deliver the spatial vision and objectives.
- 4.2 By 2026 prosperity will be achieved through sustainable economic growth across the borough supported by the creation of high quality employment opportunities, the regeneration of key sites, continued investment in the Town Centre and improvements to access. The Town Centre will be a first class traditional town centre that will enable Maidstone to retain its role in the retail hierarchy of Kent by the creation of a distinctive, accessible, safe high quality environment for the community to live, work and shop in. The Town Centre will be transformed by encouraging a wide range of new development including shops, businesses, residential development and cultural and tourism facilities, educational opportunities and enhanced public spaces.
- 4.3 There will be an emphasis on sustainable transport access improvements to the town centre and across the borough through an integrated approach to the transport strategy to promote the role of the Maidstone as a transport hub with national and regional links. Measures will be sought to achieve the behavioural change that will be required to support the introduction of an integrated approach to sustainable transport solutions. The key to being successful in achieving this will be to promote the uptake of employee and business travel planning to enable a transport and services network that will support sustainable economic development and which aims to minimise transport emissions thereby also supporting the aims council's Air Quality Action Plan and within the Air Quality Management Area. By 2026 the general location of growth will help to bring about the step change in behaviours coupled with an increased use of public transport and other sustainable means of transport including the creation of new and improved cycle and pedestrian networks. The Transport Strategy will also need to take account of changes in technology allowing for specific infrastructure to support new and emerging technologies such as charging points for electric vehicles.

- 4.4 Maidstone urban area will be revitalised by the regeneration of key commercial and residential sites and areas of existing deprivation in both the urban and suburban parts of the borough. Another key component to the regeneration of the borough will be the development of a high quality network of blue and green infrastructure building on the assets that already exist. Regeneration of the town centre will be further explored in the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan.
- 4.5 It is intended to provide for a better mix and balance of housing provided in Maidstone with the density and location of development carefully considered to ensure that best use is made of previously developed land and to minimise the release of greenfield land unless it can be proved that development of greenfield land offers a more sustainable alternative. Development throughout the borough will be required to provide a mix of tenures to allow for the creation of sustainable communities and be of high quality using design that responds to the local character of areas and that incorporate sustainability principles. Development will be required to take account of the impact of climate change. The density and location of development will ensure the best use of previously developed land and buildings to help regenerate the borough and to minimise the release of greenfield land in total. This will enable the best use to be made of finite resources within the borough whilst at the same time protecting and **enhancing the borough's best built and natural heritage, including its rivers and other water bodies.**

Spatial Vision

- By 2026 Maidstone will be a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community benefiting from its exceptional urban and rural environment with a vital and viable Maidstone town centre
- The Core Strategy will deliver sustainable growth and regeneration whilst protecting and enhancing the **borough's natural and built assets**
- Development will be guided by a sustainable and integrated transport strategy together with the timely provision of appropriate strategic and local infrastructure
- The character and identity of rural settlements will be maintained by directing suitable development and supporting infrastructure to the rural service centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst.
- Employment skills will be expanded to meet an improved and varied range of local jobs
- There will be a better balanced housing market to meet the needs of the community across the whole borough
- Development will be of high quality sustainable design and construction to respond to climate change and to protect the environment.

Spatial Objectives

- 4.6 A number of spatial objectives have been derived from the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Plan to ensure that the Core Strategy Vision is achieved.

Spatial Objectives

1. To provide for 10,080 new homes and 10,000 new jobs with an emphasis on increasing skilled employment opportunities in the borough alongside developing learning opportunities.
2. To focus new development mainly within the Maidstone urban area with:
 - i. 80% of new housing built within and adjacent to the urban area of Maidstone with appropriate sustainable greenfield development being well located in relation to existing services in the urban area.
 - ii. The aim of providing 60% of new housing across the plan period on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings.
 - iii. New employment land allocations to be exploited in Maidstone Town Centre first co-ordinated with opportunities on the most suitable greenfield sites to provide for a suitable mix of employment opportunities.
 - iv. The creation of opportunities to provide for local power generation.
3. To transform the offer, vitality and viability of the town centre including office, retail, residential, further and higher education, leisure, cultural and tourism functions together with significant enhancement to the natural and built environment particularly in respect of the riverside environment.
4. To consolidate the roles of the rural service centres at Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst as the focus of the network of rural settlements with retained existing services and regenerated employment sites including expansion of existing employment sites where appropriate.
5. To support new housing in the smaller villages that meet local needs and is of a design, scale, character and location appropriate to the settlement and which supports the retention of existing services and facilities.

CONTINUED

Spatial Objectives (continued)

6. To safeguard and maintain the character of the district's landscapes including the Kent Downs AONB and other distinctive local landscapes whilst facilitating the economic and social well-being of these areas including the diversification of the rural economy.
7. To retain and enhance the character of the existing green and blue infrastructure and to promote linkages between areas of environmental value.
8. To ensure that new development takes account of the need to mitigate the impact of climate change and adapt to climate change and also to improve air quality by locating development to minimise the use of resources, to promote sustainable travel patterns, to develop a greater choice of transport measures, to support water and energy efficiency measures and to encourage renewable energy sources and sustainable drainage solutions.
9. To ensure that new development is of high quality design, making a positive contribution to the area including protection of built and natural heritage and biodiversity.
10. To provide for future housing that meets the changing needs of the **Borough's population including provision for an increasingly ageing** population and family housing, an appropriate tenure mix, affordable housing and accommodation to meet the needs of the local gypsy and traveller community.
11. To ensure that key infrastructure and service improvements needed to support delivery of the Core Strategy objectives and policies are brought forward in a co-ordinated and timely manner and that new development makes an appropriate contribution towards any infrastructure needs arising as a result of such new development.

5 Spatial Strategy

A Spatial Strategy for the Borough of Maidstone

- 5.1 One of the principal aims of the Core Strategy is to set out clearly the **council's proposals for the spatial distribution** of development within the borough based on the vision and objectives outlined elsewhere in this document. This part of the Core Strategy describes the approach to the strategic distribution of development across the borough including within Maidstone Town Centre. The justification of the **council's approach** has been derived from government policy and the substantial evidence base that has assessed:
- Demographic and labour supply forecasts.
 - Land availability (SHLAA, ELR, Maidstone Town Centre Study, Strategic Sites Assessment).
 - Constraints (SFRA, LCA, AONB, HRA).
 - Ongoing and wide-ranging consultation including with infrastructure providers during the evolution of the evidence base and the Core Strategy.
- 5.2 A total of approximately 10,000 additional dwellings will meet the needs of the current residents over the plan period till 2026 and will also allow for a measure of in-migration based on previous trends. The council has adopted 10,080 additional dwellings as the appropriate local target. The Housing trajectory that is based on this target can be found in the appendices¹⁷ to the Core Strategy.
- 5.3 The scale of new job creation proposed in the Core Strategy has emerged from the assessment of employment potential in the Economic Development Strategy. It is anticipated that the additional 10,080 dwellings would increase the resident labour supply by approximately 5,000 between 2006 and 2026. The resident labour supply will meet half the targeted 10,000 additional jobs within the borough over the same period. It is further anticipated that the remaining jobs would be filled by changes in travel to work patterns including reducing the levels of out-commuting, allowing more residents to live and work in the borough.

Spatial Distribution of Development

- 5.5 Development must be delivered at the most sustainable towns and villages where employment, key services and facilities together with a range of transport choices are available. The spatial distribution of development has taken account of such factors in determining a settlement hierarchy.

County Town

Maidstone

Rural Service Centres

Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden, Staplehurst

Maidstone Urban Area

- 5.6 The County Town of Maidstone provides the most service and employment opportunities as well as the best range of transport options in the borough. For this reason it is to be the focus for a significant proportion of new housing, employment and retail development in the borough. Cultural and tourism facilities are an important contributor to the success of the town centre and opportunities to retain and enhance such facilities in the town centre and the wider urban area should be an important consideration. A fundamental objective of the **council's strategy for the Maidstone urban area is to ensure that the town's growth brings about the regeneration of the town centre and other areas in need of regeneration.** Optimum use must be made of the development and redevelopment opportunities that exist within the urban area. The Town Centre and its immediate surrounds will be the subject of an Area Action Plan (AAP) that will aim to deliver regeneration through a series of site specific measures and other policies that will aim to make provision for and encourage suitable development and development that enhances the river environment corridors.
- 5.7 The urban area of Maidstone cannot accommodate all the growth that will be required on existing urban sites and it is likely that planned development at the edge of the urban area would prove to be the most sustainable. Strategic greenfield locations for housing development have been identified adjacent to the north west and south east of the existing urban area in order to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and to minimise the impact on landscape and habitats. North Maidstone has also been identified as a suitable strategic location for business development requiring good motorway access. The principle of development for certain types of industry and employment **uses at or near to the borough's**

motorway junctions has been established. The needs of traditional manufacturing and distribution uses to locate close to the motorway network need to be taken into account in considering the distribution of development. Such uses are not necessarily appropriately located within the town centre. Significant office floor space is already permitted at Junction 7 at the Eclipse Business Park which provides choice for investors. The Town Centre should be the focus for new development in line with national guidance and the Economic Development Strategy. Planning permission also exists for the development of clinic facilities at Junction 7 of the M20. Medical research and development associated with the clinic will also be acceptable as a cluster of associated knowledge-driven industries that need to be in close proximity to one another.

Rural Service Centres

- 5.8 Rural Service Centres (RSCs) provide an appropriate level of services to serve the surrounding villages and rural hinterland. It is important that these centres are allowed to continue to serve their local area by retaining vital services thereby reducing the need to travel. Provision for some limited development which supports the role of the RSCs to provide for a choice of deliverable housing locations should be made. Appropriately scaled employment opportunities will also be allowed, building on and expanding existing provision in these locations.

Countryside

- 5.9 It is important that the quality and character of the countryside outside of settlements in the hierarchy is protected and enhanced whilst at the same time allowing for opportunities for sustainable development that supports traditional land based activities and makes the most of new leisure and recreational opportunities that need a countryside location. Individual identity and character of settlements should not be compromised by coalescence.

Land Availability

- 5.10 The council has carried out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and a Strategic Sites Assessment to assess land availability and site constraints. The studies show that the local housing target and proposed broad distribution for the borough can be met from within the existing built up area and on sites with the least constraints at the edge of Maidstone and the Rural Service Centres. Similarly the Employment Land Review and the Maidstone Town Centre Study demonstrate the availability of opportunities in the town centre for retail and business development.

Infrastructure

5.11 Central to the delivery of sustainable development is the delivery of key pieces of infrastructure which must be carefully planned, co-ordinated and funded. Infrastructure may comprise:

- Improvements to motorway junctions.
- Other transport improvements.
- Utilities infrastructure.
- Communications infrastructure including broadband.
- Education provision.
- Community.
- Open space.
- Public realm improvements.
- Health infrastructure including doctor and dentist practices.
- Energy including opportunities for combined heat and power (CHP).

CS1 – Borough Wide Strategy

Between 2006 and 2026 land for 10,080 new dwellings will be delivered within the borough to support the achievement of 10,000 additional jobs and to respond to identified housing demand and need.

New development will be focused within and next to **Maidstone's urban area**. Regeneration will be prioritised and delivered within the urban area to make the best use of brownfield land with significant development within an expanded and regenerated Town Centre which will continue to be the primary retail and office location in the borough. To ensure market choice and flexibility of provision limited office development to meet the overall requirement will be provided at appropriate, well connected locations beyond the town centre.

Strategic housing locations providing for more substantial housing development are identified on the Key Diagram at north west Maidstone to deliver some 975 dwellings and south east Maidstone to deliver some 1,000 dwellings.

The Key Diagram identifies strategic locations for employment development, including industry and warehousing at Junction 8 of the M20, and medical research and development associated with the approved clinic at Junction 7 of the M20.

Appropriate Greenfield sites will be located at the edges of Rural Service Centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst to deliver in the order of 1,130 dwellings, alongside suitably scaled employment opportunities.

Priority will be given to the protection of the rural character of the borough avoiding coalescence between settlements including Maidstone and surrounding villages and Maidstone and the Medway Gap/Medway Towns Conurbation.

Infrastructure will be brought forward in a timely way to provide for the needs arising from development. Financial contributions will be sought from the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Agreements as appropriate and other appropriate funding streams as they emerge through the plan period.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

Policies CS2 to CS13 set out development proposals consistent with the general distribution of development in Policy CS1

The Development Delivery DPD and Central Maidstone AAP will include specific site allocations for housing, employment and retail amongst other uses and will ensure that an appropriate tenure mix is achieved.

The Core Strategy will be accompanied by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and subsequently a Charging Schedule as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Monitoring

- The net number of houses completed will be compared to the housing trajectory.
- The net amount of employment land delivered compared to the Employment Land Review May 2011.
- The number of jobs created.

Targets for this policy are

- An average completion rate of 504 dwellings per annum over the plan period.
- 80% of new housing across the plan period to be built within and **adjacent to Maidstone's urban area**.
- 60% of new housing across the plan period to be built on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings.

Development Brief

In order to guide development around Junction 8 a Development Brief will be produced and adopted for development management purposes. The Brief will provide guidance on such issues as access matters; bulk, height, massing and design of any built structures and will require any application for development to take account of the landscape setting. Additionally the Brief will set parameters for the scale of development to come forward and will seek to guide a solution for the complete development. The Brief will also list the contributions that will be expected from developers for such matters as any off site highways works that may be required, any work required to protect, enhance and further diversify biodiversity assets and other contributions that may be required.

6 Spatial Policies

Maidstone Town Centre

- 6.1 Maidstone has a successful town centre with a significant amount of retail development that serves a catchment population of some 200,000 people including people from outside the borough as well. It is the County Town for Kent and provides substantial amounts of office floor space. It supports a wide range of leisure, cultural and tourist attractions and **enjoys an active night time economy. The combination of the centre's historic fabric, riverside environment and accessible green spaces helps give the town it's distinct and attractive character.**

The Future Role of Maidstone Town Centre

- 6.2 The future role of Maidstone as one of the principal town centres in Kent in continuing to act as the County Town will be guided by a vision of what the centre will be like by the end of the plan period.

Town Centre Vision

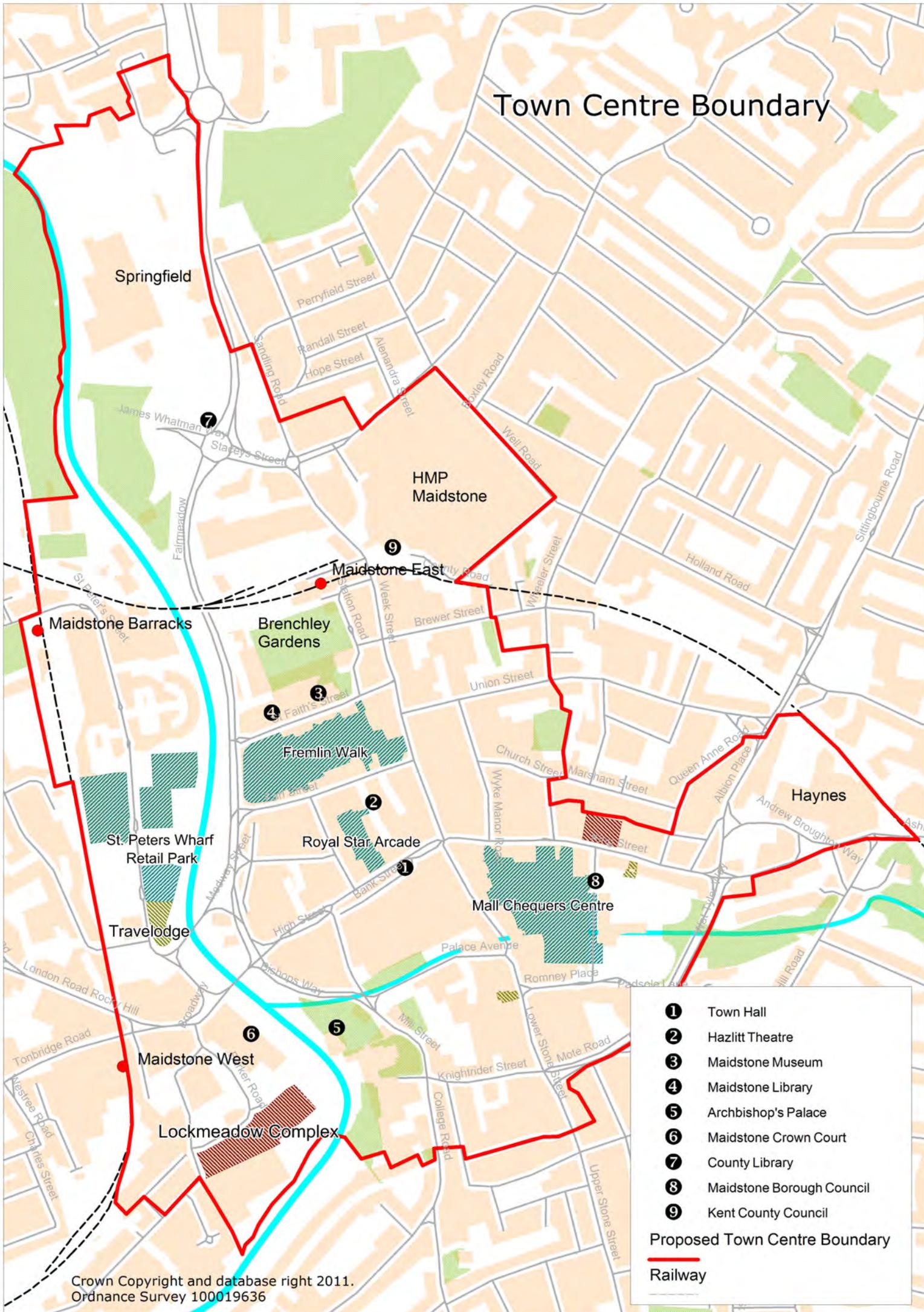
By 2026 a regenerated and sustainable Maidstone town centre will be a first class traditional town centre at the heart of the 21st Century County Town that has maintained its place as one of the premier town centres in Kent by creating a distinctive, safe and high quality place that has:

- Retained its best environmental features, including the riverside and the enhanced public realm.
- Provided a variety of well-integrated attractions for all ages including new shopping, service sector based businesses, leisure, tourism, education and cultural facilities.
- Improved access for all.

Key Components in Realising this Vision are:

- Creating a highly sustainable location resilient to future climate change
- Establishing the town centre as an attractive hub for business building **on the town centre's assets and environment.**
- Enhancing the diversity of the retail offer, supporting a continued balance between independent and multiple retailers.
- Creating a stronger mix and balance of uses within the centre to support long term viability including where appropriate residential development.

Town Centre Boundary



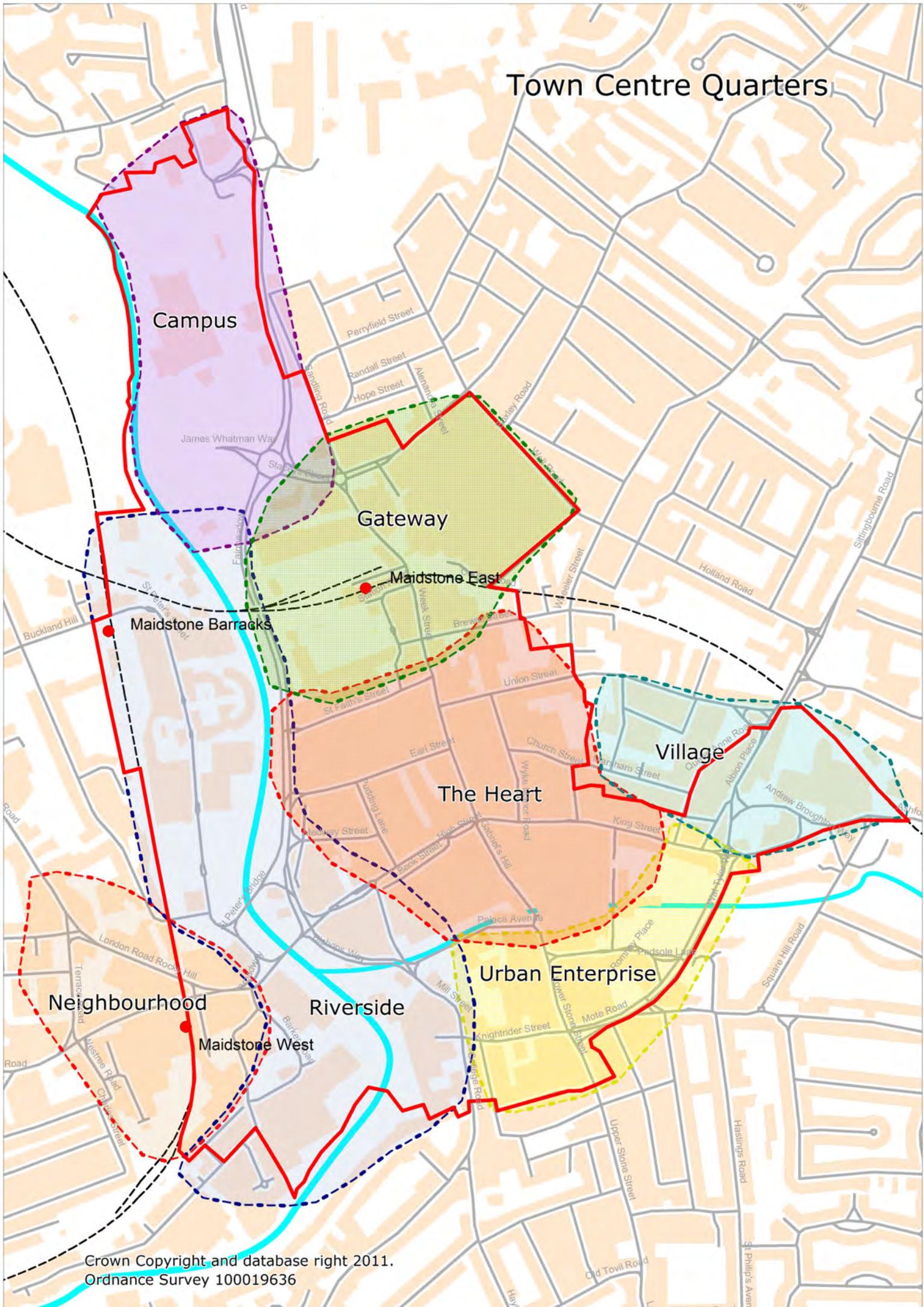
- ① Town Hall
 - ② Hazlitt Theatre
 - ③ Maidstone Museum
 - ④ Maidstone Library
 - ⑤ Archbishop's Palace
 - ⑥ Maidstone Crown Court
 - ⑦ County Library
 - ⑧ Maidstone Borough Council
 - ⑨ Kent County Council
- Proposed Town Centre Boundary
- Railway

- 6.4 The town centre will be the focus for retail, office and leisure uses. The Town Centre Study identified capacity for up to 34,500m² of floor space for comparison retailing, up to 31,300m² of B1 offices and some 380 dwellings in the period up to 2026 with selected opportunities for additional convenience shopping, leisure, culture and tourism uses in response to demand. The requirement for Grade A office space will be predominantly met in the town centre. Analysis in the Employment Land Review concludes that a 70:30 split between office floor space in town centre compared with beyond centre locations would be reasonable.
- 6.5 The future pattern of development that will be detailed in the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan (AAP) will fit within an overall **framework of "Quarters" that have emerged from an analysis of the** different characters of the specific localities as well as an assessment of their potential future role. The AAP will introduce the step changes that will be achieved through public realm improvements and transport improvements and will incorporate measures identified by the infrastructure delivery plan to bring clarity and certainty for investors in the town centre.

Town Centre Quarters

- **The Heart** – centred on the main retail core of the town centre along the axis of **Week Street, High Street, King Street and Gabriel’s Hill**. Through development there is the opportunity to support and enhance existing retail and office development and the historic core in a manner consistent with its Conservation Area status.
- **Campus Quarter** – includes the Springfield area and represents a significant and long term opportunity for either a business park form of development and or educational development with secondary uses of residential and small scale retail.
- **Gateway Quarter** – centred on Maidstone East Railway Station with the potential to reinvigorate the entry to the town. Primary uses would be retail where this is well related to the retail core and offices with some secondary residential development.
- **Riverside Quarter** – including All Saints and Lockmeadow offers the opportunity to better use the riverside environment. There may be opportunities for additional comparison retail development on St Peters Street when current warehouse units reach their operational lifespan. Culture and recreation uses are also important uses within this quarter.
- **Urban Enterprise Quarter** – with offices particularly concentrated in the Lower Stone Street/Wat Tyler Area and the potential for mixed use development and public realm improvements. Live/work units are particularly suited to the opportunities within this quarter.
- **Village Quarter** – straddles Albion Place has a mix of commercial buildings and housing where the focus will be on regeneration through select redevelopment to improve the visual character of this entry point.
- **Neighbourhood Quarter** – including Maidstone West Railway Station and the area at the end of London Road and Tonbridge Road with the opportunity to provide housing especially for families and some small business space.

Town Centre Quarters



- 6.6 Detailed proposals for the Town Centre will be brought forward through the Central Maidstone AAP. There are likely to be further selected opportunities for regeneration and redevelopment at locations outside but next to the town centre and the AAP will look to ensure that these opportunities are able to be delivered and that they co-ordinate with development within the town centre boundary.

CS2 – Maidstone Town Centre

Development and regeneration of Maidstone Town Centre is a priority and the town centre will be the preferred location for significant retail, office, leisure, cultural and tourism development with the opportunity for higher/further education uses. Town Centre sites will be identified in the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan to provide for 29,950 sqm comparison retail floor space and some 380 new dwellings in addition to substantial provision for high quality office space

Schemes will need to demonstrate a quality of design that makes a positive contribution to the distinctive character of the town centre ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic fabric.

Accessibility to and within the town centre supported by a choice of transport means should be increased including through the implementation of travel plans. Development on land adjoining the Rivers Len and Medway should make a positive contribution to their setting, accessibility, biodiversity and amenity value.

Development in the town centre should maximise the opportunities to **enhance green spaces, and access to them, and to further 'green' the town centre** and its streets including the creation of new spaces to form a network and through adaptations for climate change.

The town centre boundary will be identified on the Interactive proposals map.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

The Central Maidstone AAP will detail the strategy set out in Policy CS2 including the allocation of specific sites and levels of development setting the parameters for development. Proposals will be delivered through the granting of consents and the improvements set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Monitoring

- Adoption and implementation of the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan
- Net additions to the amounts of comparison retail and office floor space and number of new dwellings

Maidstone Urban Area

- 6.7 Policy CS3 is specifically concerned with the built up area of Maidstone that is outside the identified town centre boundary but within the urban boundary shown on the interactive proposals map. This area has a varied mix of housing, shopping and community facilities, a range of business locations, a number of attractive green spaces and good transport links that all act in combination to make Maidstone an attractive place to live and work.
- 6.8 As the town has grown over the centuries areas of distinct architectural character have emerged. During the Core Strategy plan period change within the urban area will tend to be incremental in nature due to in-filling and select redevelopment of appropriate urban sites.

Green Wedges

A characteristic of Maidstone is the way tracts of rural and semi-rural land penetrate into the urban area. This feature results from the way the town has developed from its centre along radial routes and river corridors enveloping the land of former country estates. These Green Wedges have the following functions:

- They contribute to the setting of the town
- They provide residents with access to open green space and the wider countryside
- They provide biodiversity corridors

Green Wedges are identified on the Key Diagram.

Regeneration

- 6.9 Four neighbourhoods in the town, Park Wood, High Street, Shepway North and Shepway South have been identified as being in need of regeneration. These areas currently fall within the 20% most deprived in the country and a cross-cutting theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy is to tackle health, education and employment inequalities in these areas of relative disadvantage. Development within these locations will look to close the gap between these areas and other parts of Maidstone. Site specific allocations will be made in the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan and the Development Delivery DPD as appropriate.

CS3 – Maidstone Urban Area

Outside the town centre boundary identified in CS2 and within the defined urban boundary Maidstone will continue to be a good place to work and live. This will be achieved by:

1. The development and redevelopment or infilling of appropriate urban **sites in a way that contributes positively to the locality's distinctive character**
2. Retaining well located business areas in accordance with Policy CS8
3. Maintain the network of district and local shopping centres, supporting enhancements to these centres in accordance with the overall hierarchy of centres
4. Maintain and support the current network of transport infrastructure seeking enhancement in accordance with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan
5. Ensuring that the functions of the green wedges are sustainable and enhanced
6. Ensuring that development positively contributes to the setting, accessibility, biodiversity and amenity value of the River Medway and the River Len
7. Supporting development that improves the social, environmental and employment well-being of those living in identified areas of deprivation
8. The boundary of the Urban Area will be defined on the proposals map.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

- Allocation of sites and designations within the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan and the Development Delivery DPD
- Adopted Character Area Assessment SPDs
- Development management processes

Monitoring

- Adoption of further character assessment SPD
- Improvement in deprivation measures in identified wards

41

Rural Service Centres (RSC)

- 6.10 The planned development and maintenance of sustainable communities underpins the **council's approach to rural areas where the primary aim is to direct development towards rural settlements that can best act as service centres for their surrounding hinterland.** Rural Service Centres (RSC) play a key part in the economic and social fabric of the borough and contribute towards its character and built form. They act as a focal point for trade and services by providing a concentration of public transport networks, employment opportunities and community facilities to minimise car journeys. Development in the RSCs is for more sustainable growth rather than the indiscriminate ad hoc growth of smaller settlements.
- 6.11 The RSCs of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst have been relatively successful in economic and social terms in recent years and have experienced growth as a result. The vision for the service centres is that they will continue to be focal points for their surrounding rural communities where a pattern of infrastructure led development will reduce the need to travel by providing essential local services. It is important to consider the distinctive character of each settlement designated as a RSC.

Harrietsham

- 6.11 Harrietsham has the population to support key services. Schools and community facilities in the village are considered to be adequate. Infrastructure providers have determined that water supply and waste facilities have capacity to accommodate some growth. Excellent public transport linkages connect the village with Maidstone and other retail and employment centres. A recent affordable housing survey (2010) identified the need for a small number of mixed sized affordable dwellings in the village. There is also local aspiration for replacement almshouses to support the local elderly population and for additional play facilities to further support the future sustainable development of the village.

Headcorn

- 6.12 Headcorn has a diverse range of services and facilities in the village centre which are easily accessible on foot or by cycle. There are local employment opportunities and there is a local wish to ensure that existing employment sites are kept in active employment use. There is a regular bus service running between Headcorn and Maidstone and good rail linkages to other retail and employment centres with good onward rail links to London. Based on discussions with infrastructure providers further housing and employment growth in Headcorn will require improvements to waste water infrastructure which is nearing capacity at present. Flooding is also an issue as the town is surrounded on three sides by the functional floodplain of the River Beult and its tributaries. As a result the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment advises strict controls on the location of development in the village. An affordable housing survey in 2006 identified substantial need for 2 and 3 bedroom houses, although most of this need is being met at present due to recent housing development in the village.

Lenham

- 6.13 Lenham has all the key services and facilities including local retail and good transport links to Maidstone and other retail and employment centres by bus and rail. There is a local aspiration for a small level of housing development in the village to sustain the thriving village centre and local businesses in general. The need for housing is centred on young people to ensure long term sustainability. A local needs housing survey (2010) supports this aspiration by identifying the need for a number of affordable, particularly 2 bed dwellings in the village.

Marden

- 6.14 Marden has strong key community facilities, services, employment opportunities and frequent rail connections to London and other retail and employment centres. However public transport connections to Maidstone are less frequent. A local needs housing survey is due to commence for Marden in 2011. In terms of Infrastructure the SFRA notes that the sewer system is nearing capacity and highlights that a number of surface water flooding incidents have occurred during heavy rainfall. As a result the SFRA recommends strict controls on the location of new development and that such developments should include the implementation of sustainable urban drainage systems. (SUDS) Local wishes for Marden centre on a desire for mixed use development where possible to better support local community development and to ensure future sustainability.

Staplehurst

- 6.15 Staplehurst is the largest of the rural service centres in terms of population and size, and has a number of key services and facilities. Current transport infrastructure in Staplehurst is good but there is room for improvement to cope with high levels of demand at peak times. Groundwater flooding is not an issue in Staplehurst but the SRFA notes that surface water flooding does occur on occasions due to inadequate drainage. Any development in Staplehurst should be used as an opportunity to assess and improve the current surface water drainage system. Local aspirations for Staplehurst express a need for improvements to highways infrastructure in line with any new large scale housing development. The Local Housing Needs Survey (2010) highlights a need for 24 dwellings in the village.

CS4 – Rural Service Centres

At the designated Rural Service Centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst defined on the interactive proposals map the Council will:

1. Focus new housing and employment development within or adjacent to village settlements, and ensure that a mix of house types and tenures are provided
2. Support applications for local needs housing on appropriate sites in accordance with Policy CS11
3. Retain and enhance existing employment sites and encourage new employment opportunities
4. Resist the loss of local shops and facilities, whilst supporting new retail development to meet local need
5. Ensure development assists with the creation of vibrant and sustainable communities
6. Ensure that development does not cause harm to natural assets and that development is not located in areas liable to flooding

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

Policy CS 4 will be delivered through the Development Delivery DPD which will include identified housing and employment sites.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will set out the key infrastructure requirements to facilitate development

Monitoring

- Local needs housing development delivered compared to demand outlined in local housing needs surveys for each of the RSCs.
- Net number of houses completed
- The net amount of employment land delivered

The Countryside

- 6.16 Maidstone Borough is predominantly rural with a large proportion of the population living in villages as well as on the fringes of the urban area. The rural landscapes are of high quality as are the agricultural resources within the borough. The countryside areas are highly accessible to those living and working in the urban areas and they also act as a major asset to attract new investment into the borough. However this proximity to the urban area also results in an increased level of demand for houses, recreation and jobs in the countryside.
- 6.17 The Countryside has an intrinsic level of value that must be protected for its own sake. There is a need to support farming and other aspects of the countryside economy and to maintain mixed communities in a way that maintains and enhances the distinctive character of the more rural part of Maidstone.

Rural Environment

- 6.18 Natural assets within the borough include the Kent Downs AONB, ancient woodland and the Medway River system amongst others. These are important natural resources that contribute towards the **borough's** environmental, economic and social values and that also act as key landscape features within the borough. The landscape within the borough acts as a visual record of past activities and as a tangible link to our cultural heritage. In line with the European Landscape Convention the whole of the landscape will be viewed as a resource to be protected rather than just designated sites.
- 6.19 A large part of the borough lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is a visually prominent landscape

that contributes significantly to the borough's high quality of life. It is an important amenity and recreation resource for both Maidstone residents and visitors and forms an attractive backdrop to settlements along the base of the Kent Downs scarp. Designation as an AONB confers the highest level of protection and one which the council has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance. Within the AONB the Management Plan provides a framework for objectives to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Open countryside to the immediate south of the AONB forms the setting for this designation. In Maidstone this is a sensitive landscape that is coming under threat from inappropriate development.

- 6.20 Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment AND Landscape Guidelines 2000 has been reviewed to take into account updates to relevant guidance as well as the ratification of the European Landscape Convention. Landscape conservation and management objectives need to be fully integrated with development objectives of the Core Strategy. Maidstone will use the LCA to form the basis for a Supplementary Planning Document.

Rural Economy

- 6.21 **Maidstone's rural economic character is diverse and complex in nature** comprising of agriculture, construction, tourism and leisure, service and manufacturing industries, real estate, transport and communications. Small and micro businesses are a particular feature of rural areas, as is homeworking and home-based businesses. The number of rural and agricultural businesses found in villages and RSCs account for just under 30% of all firms in the borough and these make an important contribution towards the overall success of the local economy according to the Economic Development Strategy.

Economic Development Strategy

- 6.22 Agriculture fulfils a number of important and varied roles in the countryside contributing to the local economy and managing and maintaining much of the valued landscapes. In line with other businesses agriculture needs to be able to react to new and changing markets and developments in technology if the rural economy is to continue to make its valuable contribution. Rural businesses have begun to diversify away from traditional rural activities primarily through the re-use of farm and other buildings for commercial non-agricultural purposes. This has not only helped to retain economic activity within rural areas but has enabled a number of farms to remain operational. A more recent trend in agriculture is the response to demand for produce to be available on a year round basis. This leads to land being put under intense pressure for

almost industrial scale development that can have an adverse impact on assets that require protection within the landscape. Further advice and guidance on the landscape implications of commercial agricultural activities will be given in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines SPD.

- 6.23 Tourism is of great importance to the local rural economy with the countryside providing leisure and recreational opportunities. As well as sustaining many rural businesses these industries are a significant source of employment and help support the prosperity of rural settlements and sustain historic country houses, local heritage and culture.

CS5 – Countryside

Development proposals in the countryside for the purposes of rural economic development or to meet community needs will only be allowed where proposals maintain and enhance the local economy in such a way as to ensure that the character of the local landscape is protected and where possible enhanced.

Development proposals will need to have regard to the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.

Development proposals will not be permitted where they lead to adverse impacts on local landscape character for which mitigation measures appropriate to the scale and nature of the impacts cannot be achieved.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

This policy will be delivered through the implementation of positive management measures set out in the Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines SPD to be produced and in the Development Delivery DPD.

Monitoring

- Number of buildings re-used for residential purposes.
- Number of replacement dwellings in the countryside.
- Number of planning applications refused for landscape reasons within the AONB.

7 Core Policies

Sustainable Design and Development

- 7.1 A distinguishing feature of Maidstone Borough is the high quality of its **natural and built environment. The borough's urban areas and countryside** contain a number of listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, scheduled ancient monuments and sites of archaeological interest. Coupled with the Kent Downs AONB and other areas of the borough identified through the landscape character assessment process, **all of the borough's communities benefit from being set within distinctive** and attractive landscapes. High quality well designed development can enhance the sense of place and identity within an area, and can bring significant benefits to the local environment and economy.
- 7.2 Maidstone Borough has many active local communities that want to actively shape the places in which they live. Village Design Statements (VDS) currently act as the documents to detail the wishes of these communities. As the Localism Bill passes through the legislative process it may be that future concerns are more appropriately recognised in neighbourhood plans.
- 7.3 A major factor in future design will be the changing climate. New developments will need to incorporate mitigating, climate based measures, while still achieving the high quality designs that make Maidstone Borough a desirable place to live and work. Of particular concern in Maidstone Borough is the stress placed on water resources.
- 7.4 The national legal requirement is set by the Climate Change Act 2008 which sets two binding targets, a 34% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, leading to an 80% emissions cut by 2050, both of which are set against a 1990 baseline. In energy efficiency terms alone the national agenda set in 2006 by Building Regulations is seeking 44% more efficient homes by 2013 and 100% more efficient homes by 2016.
- 7.5 The Borough Council considers the Code for Sustainable Homes (residential) and the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) (non-residential) to be the most appropriate assessment methods by which to judge and require increased sustainability standards in new developments.

CS6 – Sustainable Design and Development

Development proposals in the borough will take into account the following design principles. Proposals will:

1. Respond to their local context in a positive, forward looking manner, and help to establish or maintain local distinctiveness, while remaining appropriate for their purpose.
2. Take into account any adopted or endorsed supplementary design guidance, with a view to optimising the potential of any site, both internally and in relation to surrounding uses.
3. Seek to enhance the townscape or landscape in which they are set, while affording protection to any identified heritage assets.
4. If residential; achieve a minimum of Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 from April 2013. A minimum of level 5 will be achieved from April 2016.
5. If non-residential of 1000m² (gross) and above; achieve BREEAM very good from April 2013. BREEAM excellent will be achieved from April 2019.
6. If residential of 10 units and above, or non-residential of 1000m² (gross) and above; provide 10% of their energy from decentralised, energy from waste, renewable and/or low-carbon energy sources. Where applicable this requirement will count towards (4) and (5) above.
7. [Relating to 4, 5, and 6] achieve a reduced standard, to be negotiated with the council, only if it can be demonstrated on the grounds of viability that the above standards are unattainable.
8. Appropriate crime prevention measures will be considered at the earliest stage of the design process.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

This policy will be delivered using relevant supplementary guidance included in SPD and endorsed supplementary guidance. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Kent Design Guide
- Character Area Assessment SPD
- Residential Extensions SPD
- Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans
- AONB Management Plan

The Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM are independent design standards.

Monitoring

- % of development constructed to meet Code for Sustainable Homes requirements
- % of development constructed to meet BREEAM requirements
- % of development that makes provision for 10% of energy needs to come from decentralised, renewable and/or low carbon energy sources

A random sample of development proposals to assess design standards implemented, to see how any issues were addressed.

Sustainable Transport

- 7.6 A significant amount of development is concentrated within the urban areas where the main transport issue is congestion at busy times, particularly in the morning peak on the main radial approaches to the urban area and around the town centre. There is also congestion around Junctions 5, 6 and 7 of the M20 at peak times. Maidstone has good rail links but improvements to frequency of services would encourage higher passenger usage.

Peak Hour Travel Modes in Urban Maidstone

- Car – 65-67%
- Bus and rail – 23-25%
- Walk and cycle – 12%

- 7.7 Modelling studies have indicated that growth in the number of homes and jobs in the borough will require an upward step change in the use of

sustainable transport modes if the worsening of traffic congestion and air quality are to be avoided. Decisions about the location, scale and mix of development are also key to the patterns and amount of movement generated. National and local policies seek a reduction in the growth of car usage and the introduction of more sustainable modes of transport. The capacity of the existing road infrastructure to accommodate levels of growth proposed for the borough and the cost of new road infrastructure means that sustainable solutions must be developed alongside key highway improvements. Transport is a major contributor to air quality problems and the whole of the urban area of the Town is a declared Air Quality Management Area. The Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) to be produced in partnership with Kent County Council will look to reduce the growth of future traffic levels and seek to address areas of high air quality pollution in support of the Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan. The ITS will consider the issues of bus priority, new and existing Park and Ride bus routes and sites as well as parking management initiatives and the development of low carbon transport infrastructure. These will be combined with a range of sustainable transport measures including travel planning and other schemes that will encourage active transport.

- 7.8 The Local Transport Plan for Kent 2012 – 2017 currently in preparation by the Highways Authority makes it clear that the early provision of improvements to the **borough's transport infrastructure is a pre-requisite for growth**. The Economic Development Strategy identifies investing in transport as a priority action to strengthen the competitiveness of the **borough's economy**. **Improved access in, out and around the town centre is seen as critical to strengthening the town centre's position as a retail and leisure destination and to revitalising the office market**.

Parking

- 7.9 Overall there are a number of strands that need to be drawn together in a comprehensive parking strategy. It is intended to produce a Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document. The parking strategy will consider:
- management of off-street MBC owned public parking including consideration of the appropriate quantity
 - management of other public parking
 - on-street residents preferential parking
 - park and ride services including parking for users
 - creation of local parking standards.

The Central Maidstone AAP will look in detail at measures to achieve reductions in maximum parking standards on commercial development as improvements to public transport are implemented.

Rail and Bus

- 7.10 There are three rail routes through the borough serving a total of 13 stations. The principal route serving Maidstone Town Centre is the London Victoria to Ashford International Line. The average journey time from the town centre to London is around one hour. In addition the Medway Valley line links Strood in the Medway Towns to Paddock Wood via Maidstone West connecting a number of rural settlements to the town and other destinations. The Ashford International to London via Tonbridge line runs across the south of the borough connecting the villages of Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden to the capital.
- 7.11 In the Maidstone area the main alternative to use of the private car is the bus. Although the area has a well established bus network, provided principally by Arriva, but also in part by NuVenture and a number of other operators there has been a steady decline in service to the south of the borough due to cuts in central government subsidy. It offers a vital range of services to the public, being a combination of high frequency suburban routes within the town, and longer distance routes that connect rural areas of the borough to the town and neighbouring communities. Commercial **services are complemented by the Borough Council's Park and Ride** services (providing some 1,500 spaces over three sites), and by County Council subsidies for some socially important routes, mainly evening and Sunday services.
- 7.12 A voluntary quality bus partnership between Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Arriva has been in existence since 1999 and has helped to co-ordinate investment, particularly on the key corridors (Parkwood, Senacre, Shepway, Maidstone Hospital, London Road and Chatham Road), resulting in service improvements and increased usage. Many thousands of people use bus transport every day, including scholars, workers and concessionary ticket holders. These movements support the prosperity of the town and rural areas of the borough.
- 7.13 Bus priority at traffic signal junctions in the town is given by the Urban Traffic Management and Control system that manages the road network as efficiently as possible. It provides bus service information via real time passenger information signs at bus stops and information to all drivers via variable message signs. There are approximately 100 services that run within the borough boundaries, and at peak hours there are some 40 buses using the stops in each direction in the High Street.

Cycling and Walking

- 7.14 The urban area's network of cycle routes connects many residential areas within the town centre but connections across the town centre are limited. The provision of adequate, attractive and safe walking and cycling including cycle parking will be incorporated within a cycling strategy which aims to increase the proportion of trips made by walking and cycling from 12% to 15% of all trips made in the borough by 2026. The developing network of routes throughout the borough requires integration and improvements to surfacing, signage and maintenance. Equally high quality pedestrian networks are also needed. Cycling levels in Kent are monitored from inner urban cordons and automatic traffic counts. This data provides year on year monitoring of cycling trips.

Assessing the Transport Needs of Development

- 7.15 Development proposals in the urban area have the potential to generate considerable volumes of traffic in the future. Improvements to public transport, walking, cycling and highways improvements need to be designed to ensure that the increase in demand for movement will not lead to unacceptable traffic conditions. It is essential that vehicular trip generation from new developments is kept to a minimum particularly at peak times. The adequacy of all modes of transport to serve new developments needs to be assessed and planning applications for major development will be expected to be accompanied by Transport Impact Assessments that include assessment of how accessible by public transport the development is. Housing and commercial development in Maidstone will also be expected to make contributions towards transport measures as part of the infrastructure necessary to serve new development in accordance with Policy CS14.

CS7 – Sustainable Transport

The Borough Council, working in partnership with Kent County Council and the Highways Agency together with infrastructure providers and public transport operators to support Maidstone's role as a regionally important transport hub will ensure that improvements to the public transport infrastructure, network and services are secured.

An Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) will be prepared in partnership with Kent County Council as the Highways Authority with an aim of developing and implementing a number of schemes to deliver better accessibility.

Installation of cycle counters will be required at strategic locations in the urban area to monitor trips by cycle. A key aspect of the ITS will be to facilitate growth, economic prosperity and good accessibility to the urban realm, built and natural heritage and Maidstone's urban area and to enhance connectivity in the Borough contributing to the overall health and well being of the Borough.

Development policies within the Core Strategy will guide the location of development in order to reduce the need for private transport.

Development proposals must show how:

1. They do not create an increased risk to road safety.
2. They will cope with impact of increased heavy goods movements particularly on rural roads unless they are well related to the main road network.
3. Show how all highways, public transport, walking and cycling needs arising from development will be satisfied and that all infrastructure required as a result of the development will be delivered in a timely manner.

Major planning applications will require a Transport Impact Assessment and a **Travel Plan in accordance with Kent County Council's guidance on Transport Assessments and Travel Plans.**

Delivery and Monitoring

Monitoring

- Traffic cordon flows – to be less than 30% above the 2007 levels by 2026 (less than 10% above by 2016 and less than 20% above by 2021)
- Target times from Urban Traffic Management and Control System to restrict the increase in 2026 am inbound travel times to be less than 50% above 2007 levels and outbound pm peak to be less than 25% above 2007 levels.
- To monitor the increase in public transport patronage by bus/rail at peak times to at least 30% of all trips.
- Cycling and walking trips to reach 15% of total trips made in the borough by 2026 and to be monitored by automatic cycle counters at strategic locations in the urban area
- Air quality exceedences to be monitored according to DEFRA requirements and the Air Quality Action Plan. "Hotspot" sites to be individually monitored.

Economic Development

- 7.16 Retail development makes a big contribution towards the economic health **of the borough and reinforces Maidstone's role as the County Town for Kent**. Maidstone Town Centre acts as the primary focus for retail development within the borough with the RSCs providing appropriate local levels of retail provision as set out in the Centre Hierarchy. Retail provision elsewhere in the borough currently comprises district centres and a degree of out of town development. Future development will be located in accordance with guidance provided in Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth. The contribution that the retail sector makes towards the economy of the borough is acknowledged throughout this Core Strategy. It is expected that the retail sector will provide an additional 950 jobs over the plan period.
- 7.17 For Maidstone Borough to grow in a sustainable manner the increase in house building needs to be matched by growth in the number of jobs available locally and for those jobs to be accessible by sustainable means of transport. Between 2006 and 2026 the Economic Development Strategy seeks to create a net increase of 10,000 jobs. This target can be met through a range of provision and for the purposes of the Core Strategy economic development is regarded to include the following uses:
- Uses within Class B of the Use Class Order including offices, warehouses and industry
 - Public and community uses

- Town centre uses such as retail, leisure, entertainment, arts, cultural and tourism development.
- Green technologies and low carbon industries

The Employment Land Review¹⁸ estimates that some 6000 jobs should be created by business development (B Classes). A number of jobs have already been provided within the plan period and other jobs will be created through retail development, tourism, social infrastructure provision such as education and social care, construction and other small scale opportunities that will not necessarily require the allocation of land such as home working and the conversion or extension of rural buildings.

- 7.18 The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) **aims to build on Maidstone's** advantages of good public services, environmental quality, skills base and to focus on priority sectors, increasing the **borough's innovative capacity** and create high value jobs. The focus on Maidstone Town Centre is also supported by the EDS with the critical issues of the supply of high quality office space, the future scale and type of retail development, and attracting a stronger further and higher education presence also requiring resolution. Higher paid jobs and jobs in green technologies and low carbon energy production are to be encouraged throughout the borough.
- 7.19 The Core Strategy needs to safeguard and enhance the town centre as a primary regional centre. Additions to the retail offer will be made in the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan. The council is aiming to create the right conditions for growth in the town centre through a comprehensive approach to masterplanning, improving accessibility, enhancing the public realm and encouraging a range of retail, leisure and office development. This will be achieved via the Central Maidstone Area Action Plan which will also look at the issues of vacant office stock and appropriate alternative uses for such stock.
- 7.20 Although warehousing, distribution and logistics are not a priority within the current EDS the ELR (2011) identifies a need for additional warehousing growth (15.2 Ha) above that already permitted. Development will also be required for additional industry, warehousing and distribution needs that require good motorway access that avoids congestion and preserves local amenity. Development will need to be designed to avoid significant adverse impact on the AONB and the wider countryside. There will be smaller scale opportunities at the rural service centres for additional storage, warehousing and industrial development.

- 7.21 Within the countryside and away from existing settlements the emphasis for economic development will be on the conversion and extension of existing suitable buildings, farm diversification and tourism with development for proven local needs purposes being supported. There is also a trend towards to greater homeworking which allows for a reduced impact on transport resources.
- 7.22 The ELR (2011) advises that whilst there is a significant supply of permitted and vacant office and warehousing floor space that demand is likely to be more significant towards the end of the plan period. Site allocations will be made for such uses through the Development Delivery DPD. As the ELR concludes that with the exception of some of the secondary office stock within the town centre, existing business sites are an important and appropriate part of the business stock for the future and the Core Strategy will seek the retention, intensification and regeneration of such areas primarily within the Maidstone urban area and the RSCs.
- 7.23 There is an ongoing need to allow for businesses located in the countryside to be allowed to expand for local needs employment use only.

Centre Hierarchy

Primary regional town centre – Maidstone town centre

District centres – will serve a wider catchment area than a local centre and will cater for weekly resident needs. Such a centre will comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.

Existing district centres include:

- Mid-Kent Centre, Castle Road, Allington
- Grovewood Drive, Grove Green
- Heath Road, Coxheath
- High Street, Headcorn
- The Square, Lenham
- High Street, Marden
- High Street, Staplehurst

Local centres are defined as centres that include a range of small shops of local nature, serving a small catchment. Local centres may include a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office, and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway.

- 7.24 There is scope for further tourist related development in the borough and policies give support for hotel development within Maidstone town centre, and small scale initiatives that support the rural economy. The council will also promote education, leisure and cultural facilities within the urban area of Maidstone to retain a higher proportion of young and well educated people within the borough and in turn enhance the prospects of creating a dynamic local economy.

CS8 – Economic Development

The Council is committed to improving the economy of the Borough and delivering the vision and objectives set out in the Economic Development Strategy including the provision of sustainable employment opportunities that will be sufficient to create 10,000 jobs over the plan period. This will be achieved by:

1. The retention, intensification and regeneration of existing business areas, sites and buildings in the Maidstone urban area and the Rural Service Centres. Planning permission for change of use on existing employment sites will be resisted.
2. Regeneration and modernisation of existing employment sites and buildings will be encouraged.
3. Enhancing Maidstone town centre and maintaining the hierarchy of retail centres.
4. Supporting proposals that encourage highly skilled residents to work in the borough to reduce out-commuting.
5. Granting planning permission will be granted for employment uses at or near to motorway junctions where it is proven that the development cannot be located within the town centre first, followed by edge of centre locations
6. Improving skills in the workforce in particular by promoting further and **higher education provision within Maidstone's urban area with a preference for a town centre location.**
7. Supporting improvements in information and communications technology to facilitate more flexible working practices.
8. Supporting proposals that aim to provide tourist related development in appropriate and suitable locations that are of an appropriate and suitable scale according to the location. Applications for local needs employment use in the countryside including for the expansion needs of existing sites will be supported in appropriate locations.
9. Allocations for employment use will be made in the Development Delivery DPD and the Central Maidstone AAP.

Delivery and Monitoring

The Central Maidstone AAP and the Development Delivery DPD will define detailed boundaries of employment sites that are suitable and appropriate for retention, intensification and regeneration and will allocate sites to meet the future needs of business and retail development, provide suitable site(s) for further and higher education and define the boundaries of district and local centres.

Monitoring

- Creation of 10,000 new jobs with an average increase of 500 new jobs per annum over the plan period.
- Net increase in B1, B2 and B8 employment and retail floor space.
- Unemployment rates in total and relative to Kent and South East England
- Proportion of the workforce with 5 A to C GCSE, A level and degree qualifications relative to Kent and South East England

Meeting Housing Need

Housing Mix

- 7.25 The key characteristics of a mixed community are a variety of housing, particularly in terms of tenure and price, and a mix of different households such as families with children, single person households and older people. Maidstone Borough Council recognises that to truly promote sustainable communities there must be a mix of types of housing that are provided in any given development or existing area. In doing so, housing developments will be made accessible to different household types. Gypsy and traveller accommodation will form part of the general housing need and mix, the council recognises that it has a duty to provide such accommodation.

59

The Local Housing Picture in Maidstone Borough

The Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2010) identified that the following types of households cannot access the housing market generally:

- 66% of all lone parent households
- 33% of all single non-pensioner households
- 25% of all single pensioner households
- 25% of all households with 2+ adults and 2+ children

The SHMA identified that requirements for housing generally come from:

- Households with children
- Couples without children
- Single non-pensioners

- 7.26 This picture translates into a situation whereby the greatest demand across the borough is for three and four bed houses although there is a variation within this demand for instance there is a sizeable need for affordable one bed provision within the urban area. Setting specific targets within policy could result in a less flexible situation where imbalances begin to occur. The housing register which informs the SHMA provides an instant snapshot of housing requirements at any one time and where affordable housing is required then the housing register may provide additional guidance. It should also be noted that the private rented sector is providing for increasing levels of accommodation across the borough.

CS9 – Housing Mix

Maidstone Borough Council will seek to ensure the delivery of sustainable mixed communities across new housing developments and within existing housing areas throughout the Borough. A mixture of house sizes and tenures will be sought that reflects the needs of those living in Maidstone now and in years to come as evidenced by the SHMA. Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirements are detailed in Policy CS12 and in part will form part of the borough need for affordable housing.

The Council requires that developers refer to the accommodation profiles detailed within the SHMA in order to assess the characteristics of house sizes likely to be required in both urban and rural areas, and across market and affordable housing. Developers should provide a clear explanation of how this information has been used to justify the proposed mix.

Tenure mix requirements applicable to affordable housing are detailed in Policy CS10.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

Supporting statements will accompany development proposals of 10 dwellings or more that indicate how the latest household profile information has been incorporated.

Monitoring

- Annual dwelling size percentages related to the changes required in the SHMA.

Affordable Housing

7.27 MBC has a clear affordable housing need. Since the end of 1999 average house prices in the borough have more than doubled. Almost a quarter of households in the borough cannot afford open market housing to purchase or rent. The annual net need for affordable housing in the borough is twice the annual target for all dwellings. A specific element of affordable housing is that required by the gypsies and travellers community. Many gypsy and traveller households have low incomes according to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) carried out in 2006. The two existing public gypsy and traveller sites in the borough are fully let and the low turnover rate means that pitches become vacant and available for rent on an intermittent basis. To address this need for affordable pitches additional public site(s) will be required over the timeframe of the Core Strategy.

7.28 Providing public pitches on housing sites could create a dispersed pattern of small public gypsy and traveller sites that would make site management very difficult. For this reason financial contributions will be sought and pooled to fund additional affordable gypsy and traveller pitches. Whereas off site provision in the form of a financial payment is considered appropriate for gypsy and traveller pitches, off site provision for other forms of affordable housing will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Such exceptional circumstances are difficult to anticipate but may include economic viability or cases where the developer can prove that alternative provision will be of a higher quality. Any proposals for offsite provision must be made at the time of the application. Viability calculations must be undertaken by the DVS arm of the Valuation Office Agency or an equivalent independent body.

CS10 – Affordable Housing

The Borough Council will seek the provision of affordable housing in residential development and mixed use developments that incorporate housing in the following manner:

1. For developments of 15 dwellings or more, or 0.5ha or greater affordable housing will be required to address the **borough's housing** need consisting of both:
 - a) A target of 40% of the total number of dwellings provided on site
 - b) A financial contribution (rate to be confirmed) towards the provision of affordable pitches for gypsies and travellers.
2. In circumstances where the viability of a development is proven to be negatively affected will a lower percentage dwelling requirement or financial contribution be accepted
3. Tenure split – Not less than 24% of the total number of dwellings provided will be affordable/social rented housing, the balance of up to 16% of the total number of dwellings will be intermediate housing.
4. Initial and subsequent occupation of affordable homes is to be controlled through legal agreements to ensure that the accommodation remains available to meet the purposes for which it was permitted. If for any reason this restriction is lifted any subsidy will be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.
5. Affordable housing will be integrated on site with open market housing and applications for development will be expected to reflect this. With the exception of affordable pitches for gypsies and travellers, off site provision will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. The provision will take the form of
 - a) Alternative serviced sites provided by the developer with the benefit of appropriate planning permission
 - b) The purchase of suitable existing accommodation and transferred by the developer to an registered provider of affordable housing
6. Where off site affordable housing provision is agreed to the calculation of such provision will have regard to the full amount of Market housing that is now achievable on the original site.
7. Affordable housing will comply with the HCA minimum floor area standards. All affordable housing will be constructed to Lifetime Homes standards with a further percentage to be designed for wheelchair use.
8. Sites will be expected to provide affordable housing at the appropriate rate on a whole site basis. Sub divisions of a site that would bring any particular application under the affordable housing threshold will be aggregated to ensure delivery of affordable housing is maximised across the entire site.

9. Commuted sums are to be regarded as a measure of last resort.
10. Developers will be expected to pay for all costs associated with the assessment of viability of proposals.
11. An affordable housing SPD will be produced to expand on how these proposals will be implemented

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

This policy will be delivered primarily through affordable housing requirements placed on new residential developments. The Development Delivery DPD together with the Affordable Housing SPD will provide more detail.

Monitoring

- % of developments where full affordable housing is secured
- % of affordable housing secured across all developments
- Amount of financial contribution secured towards gypsy and traveller sites relative to requirement
- Tenure composition of new affordable housing across new developments
- % of developments where off site provision is agreed to
- % of affordable housing meeting standards detailed in Policy CS11

Local Needs Housing

- 7.29 The reality of the affordable housing supply in the borough is that need is growing faster than provision can possibly match. The SHMA indicates that the annual need for affordable housing exceeds the supply of all housing by around 100%. This need is often felt acutely in rural communities where because of low existing housing stock the affordable supply is very limited. For the this and the reasons set out in Policy CS1 it is not intended that the majority of rural settlements will receive any planned market housing at all as this would exacerbate the problem.
- 7.30 The result of this situation is that in the rural areas Maidstone cannot rely on the market alone to produce the sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities it wishes to see develop. Maidstone Borough Council will work in close partnership with parish councils, particularly in light of the localism agenda to ensure that a range of housing sites can be identified that may be permitted for local needs housing. Local needs housing provides for affordable housing in otherwise unlikely locations and its

occupation is tied to people that meet specific eligibility criteria defined in the policy.

64

CS11 – Local Needs Housing

The Council will work with parish councils and local stakeholders to bring forward sustainably located local needs housing in its communities. This housing will:

1. Have been proven necessary by a local needs survey undertaken by or on behalf of the parish councils concerned
2. Be restricted in perpetuity to occupation by persons with a proven residence, family and or employment connection to the settlement concerned.
3. Remain available in perpetuity to meet the purposes for which it was permitted. The initial and subsequent occupancy of the accommodation to be controlled via planning conditions and agreements as appropriate to ensure that this is the case.
4. Be provided on a site that enables an appropriate scale and setting in the built context of the surrounding development

Local needs housing eligibility criteria

5. Family members living in the settlements for five years immediately prior to the completion of the development
6. The settlement having been the place of employment for the five years immediately prior to the completion of the development
7. Having resided in the settlement for the five years immediately prior to the completion of the development.

Where any units are to be made available for shared ownership leasing the occupiers shall not be permitted to staircase above 80% of the value of such units at the date upon which the right to staircase is exercised unless the units fall under the rural repurchase scheme.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

This policy seeks to guide the delivery of local needs housing rather than seeking to deliver the housing itself.

Monitoring

- Delivery of local needs housing where a need is identified and acceptable sites have been put forward
- Identification of sites that meet the criteria listed in CS12
- Retention in perpetuity of local needs housing delivered under the guidance of CS12

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

- 7.31 Accommodation for gypsies and travellers is a specific type of housing that councils have the duty to provide for under the Housing Act (2004).¹⁹ Gypsies and travellers historically resorted to the Maidstone area because of their involvement in agriculture, particularly hop and fruit picking. These patterns have prevailed, especially in the Weald area, and the borough has a significant number of gypsy pitches mostly on small, privately owned sites. Going forward the aim for the Core Strategy is to contribute towards the creation of sustainable communities by making an appropriate scale of pitch provision which balances the reasonable need for lawful accommodation with the responsibility to protect the intrinsic character of the countryside.
- 7.32 The GTAA²⁰ assessed the local need for pitches arising in the borough from 2006 to 2011. Using this evidence as a basis the target for the number of pitches to be provided in the borough between 2006 and 2016 is set at 71 pitches to meet identified need. A revised GTTA is being sought to bring the pitch allocation level up to date and in line with current guidance. Allocations necessary to make this provision a reality will be set out in the Development Delivery DPD. A target for the post 2016 period will also be set following an evidential review of need and supply, again with site specific allocations being made in the Development Delivery DPD.
- 7.33 There are three travelling show people sites (one is vacant as at 01/04/11) in the borough with no revealed need²¹ for additional plots for



¹⁹ The Housing Act 2004

²⁰ Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Ashford, Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells Councils (2005/6)

²¹ North and West Kent Travelling Showpeople Study 2007

travelling show people for the same period. In light of these circumstances a target for the provision of travelling show people plots has not been set and any proposals would fall to be considered by the normal development management and planning application process. This situation will be kept under review and appropriate action taken if a need is determined.

- 7.34 Whilst the government has indicated its intention to delete Circular 01/2006²² whilst it is still in force it provides clear guidance on the sequential approach that should be adopted in looking at site selection. Allocated sites should be used before windfall sites, and brownfield sites are also sequentially preferable to greenfield sites. Sites must be demonstrably available for the use proposed.

CS12 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

The borough need for gypsy and traveller pitches will be addressed through the granting of planning permissions and the Development Delivery DPD to deliver the pitch target of 71 pitches for the period 2006 to 2016

Financial contributions will be sought for the provision of affordable pitches for affordable rent as set out in Policy CS10 as part of the overall affordable housing requirement.

Planning permission for gypsy and traveller and travelling show people accommodation will be refused unless the following criteria are met:

1. The site is suitably connected preferably by sustainable modes of transport to a settlement with health and school facilities
2. The impact of development including in combination with existing caravans would not harm the landscape and rural character of the area, in particular in the Kent Downs AONB and the Metropolitan Green Belt.
3. The site can be safely accessed to and from the highway
4. The site is not located in an area liable to flood as shown on the latest information from the Environment Agency
5. In addition to the above criteria the following applies to travelling show people accommodation only:
 - a) The site should be suitable for the storage and maintenance of show equipment and associated vehicles

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

Delivery of gypsy and traveller pitches and pitches for travelling show people will be delivered by:

- Allocation of sites within the Development Delivery DPD
- Through the granting of planning permissions
- Through the provision of affordable pitches via the application of Policy CS12

Monitoring

This policy will be monitored through the implementation of planning permissions and via the annual caravan counts.

Natural Assets

- 7.35 **Maidstone's natural assets** comprise a fundamental part of the borough's economic and social wealth and well being. In order to make sure that the borough remains prosperous it is essential to ensure that its natural asset base and the ecosystems that derive from it remain healthy and viable.

Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI)

- 7.36 Maidstone Borough contains a wide range of green open spaces and a number of rivers and streams that together comprise the basis for a network of green and blue infrastructure. Individually these sites comprise a dispersed patchwork of provision that would benefit from the additional provision of some planned linkages. A linked network would increase both the amenity value and the intrinsic value of green spaces, provide sustainable transport routes and take advantage of better opportunities to create other types of environmental capital.
- 7.37 Green and blue infrastructure has the capacity to deliver a wide range of positive outcomes in line with the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy including:
- Helping to attract and retain higher paying employers;
 - Helping in the creation of an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system
 - Helping to tackle climate change
 - Creating healthier communities.

Green and blue infrastructure also represents a means to positively tackle the issues of surface water and flood management. Flooding is a natural outcome of variations in climate and rainfall. Natural systems adapt to the consequences of flooding through the creation of floodplains and wetlands. Adverse changes to these natural systems can result in increases in damage to property and compensation costs. A green and blue infrastructure approach can offer alternative flood mitigation strategies such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and the recreation of water meadows.

- 7.38 Green and blue infrastructure is considered to be of such vital importance to the borough going forward in tackling climate change and adaptation that a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBIS) will be produced. This strategy will seek positive ways of incorporating the promotion of linkages between the existing network of green and blue infrastructure and will also seek to illustrate the engaged partnership approach that the council is taking. The strategy will also highlight the spatial differences in approach that the council is adopting with the

strategy in urban areas focusing on creating links for people and wildlife whilst in the rural areas the emphasis will be on managing green spaces and creating habitat networks. The strategy will also seek to identify those areas of the borough where deficiencies exist and look to provide guidance on how these can be overcome.

- 7.39 The GBIS will look to acknowledge the importance of green and blue **infrastructure for tourism and recreation's contribution to the borough's** economy. A standard GBIS objective for the whole borough is the development of green access routes to better link the primary access routes already in existence. In Maidstone these largely follow an east-west direction making north to south walking and cycling routes very difficult. By improving the green and blue infrastructure within the borough this will help in promoting it as a destination for quiet forms of recreation.
- 7.40 **Key assets that help provide the basis of Maidstone's green and blue** infrastructure include the Kent Downs AONB, the Rivers Medway and Len, the distinctive green wedges which help shape Maidstone Town, and a number of other assets within and near to the urban area such as Mote Park and Leeds Castle. The roles played by these assets in providing reservoirs of biodiversity and quiet recreation and acting as corridors for the movement of animals, plants and people will be acknowledged by the GBIS.

Biodiversity

- 7.41 Maidstone is a biodiverse district endowed with a wide variety of wildlife and landscapes. Biodiversity has value in its own right and also due to the social and economic value it provides. Maidstone enjoys a variety of habitats including heathlands and chalk downlands; orchards and ancient woodland, river valleys and ponds, wildflower meadows and parklands. This broad spectrum of habitats forms an extensive network across the rural areas, within urban areas and on previously developed land. These sites are important for their nature conservation interest and their geological interest and range from sites of national importance such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to areas of international importance such as the Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Designations are noted on the Interactive Proposals Map.
- 7.42 As a result of increasing development pressures many of the **borough's** biodiversity assets have been lost or damaged. In response to this decline Maidstone Borough Council has acted in partnership with other bodies to prepare a Draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). The Maidstone LBAP is being supported by survey work being undertaken into the **borough's habitats and ancient woodlands. A key element of the LBAP**

will be the establishment of a lined network of sites and corridors on a landscape scale. By reconnecting fragments of habitats to form a mosaic, the natural environment is provided with the means to become self-sustaining as well as being better able to respond to and adapt to climate change.

CS13 – Natural Assets

To enable Maidstone to retain a high quality of living and to be able to respond to the effects of climate change, developers will ensure that all new development protects and enhances natural assets by incorporating measures to:

1. Protect areas of Ancient Woodland from inappropriate development and ensuring that Veteran Trees do not suffer any adverse impacts as a result of development;
2. Avoid inappropriate development within or adjacent to sites of designated nature conservation interest;
3. Avoid damage to and inappropriate development within or adjacent to Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats;
4. Retain, protect and enhance features of biological or geological interest and create and restore other habitats wherever practicable;
5. Provide for the long term maintenance of all natural assets associated with the development; and
6. Mitigate for and adapt to the effects of climate change including flooding

Development proposals will be expected to:

7. Be accompanied by an ecological evaluation of development proposals and associated sites to take full account of the biodiversity present;
8. Positively contribute to the improvement of accessibility of natural green space within walking distance of housing, employment, health and education facilities and to the creation of a wider network of new links between green and blue spaces.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

Policy CS14 will operate alongside other policies to fulfil aims such as environment and landscape protection and enhancement and regeneration. The primary vehicle for delivery of this policy will be the creation of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. It will also be positively delivered by the development management system via applications for development.

Monitoring

- Rivers of good or fair chemical and biological water quality
- Area under stewardship schemes
- Percentage of development incorporating SUDS
- Percentage of development within Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGST)
- % change of MBLBAP habitats
- % SSSIs in favourable condition

8 The Delivery Framework

Providing the Infrastructure and Community Facilities Needed to Support Growth

- 8.1 Infrastructure includes physical infrastructure (such as transport projects, Maidstone Town Centre public realm improvements and sports centres); social infrastructure (such as schools; libraries; youth facilities and adult social services) and green infrastructure (such as play spaces; natural and semi-natural open space, parks and sports pitches). Provision of affordable housing is dealt with in Policy CS10 and Policy CS11.
- 8.2 The provision of adequate infrastructure to support development is a fundamental aim of the government. The distribution of development included in the Core Strategy seeks to make the best use of existing infrastructure capacity whilst other policies seek to reduce the demand for infrastructure by promoting behavioural change. Even with such initiatives in place there is still a need for additional capacity to support growth and where this is necessary to deliver the Core Strategy this will be provided by extending existing or providing new infrastructure.
- 8.3 The council has actively engaged with the main providers of infrastructure and has a good understanding of existing infrastructure and its associated constraints to development. The Outline Infrastructure Delivery Plan sets out the location and phasing of the supporting infrastructure

required to support the overall strategy for development in the Core Strategy. It also details those who would have responsibility for delivering the infrastructure and potential funding sources.

- 8.4 It is likely that the budget setting process of some of the infrastructure providers may mean that lower levels of information may be available when the Core Strategy is being prepared than would be ideal. It is therefore of vital importance that the Core Strategy makes proper provision for uncertainty surrounding future funding regimes and does not place undue reliance on critical elements of infrastructure whose funding is unknown and uncertain.
- 8.5 Funding is likely to comprise a number of components:
- Existing resources potentially available i.e. Section 106 Contributions
 - New Homes Bonus
 - Mainstream public funding
 - Future site specific provision (Including Section 106 contributions)
 - Community Infrastructure Levy.

It would be extremely unlikely that the finance arising from all of these resources would be sufficient to fund the total amount of infrastructure provision that is being sought. There will be a need to prioritise key infrastructure projects to ensure that the overall strategy within the Core Strategy can be delivered. To allow for initial consultation, an unprioritised list of key infrastructure projects provided by the infrastructure providers that would support the Core Strategy is included in the Outline Infrastructure Delivery Plan that accompanies the Core Strategy.

- 8.6 Site specific infrastructure requirements arise when there is a direct link between development and supporting infrastructure that is required to make the development happen. It will usually be provided within the development site boundary or exceptionally may be provided in an offsite location or in the last resort by in-lieu contributions including the necessary links to access the infrastructure.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 8.7 The Core Strategy focuses development at the Maidstone urban area. Infrastructure is needed at a strategic level to support this growth. Strategic elements of the infrastructure required will be provided for by the Community Infrastructure Levy. This could include:
- **Improvements needed to the area's transport system**

- Additional education facilities required
- Community wide leisure and community facilities
- Open space requirements
- Environmental improvements to Maidstone Town Centre

The Community Infrastructure Levy has been designed to fill the funding gaps that exist once existing resources (to the extent that they are known) have been taken into account.

- 8.8 New development will add incrementally to the need for strategic infrastructure. The Community Infrastructure Levy allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new development within the **council's area**. **Some types of development are automatically** exempt from charge and the council can determine whether to charge the levy for other forms of development. The current definition of liable development includes commercial development, residential development, tourism and leisure development. As Maidstone Borough Council moves towards developing its Community Infrastructure Levy it will need to make decisions about which types of development it wishes to place the charge on. Proceeds from the levy will be applied to identified projects within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, with contributions being pooled and generally applied on an off-site basis. The council will be required to allocate a meaningful proportion of the revenues raised by the levy in the area in which the levy has been raised retaining a link between development and the infrastructure needed to support it.
- 8.9 Maidstone Borough Council will produce a Charging Schedule setting out the levy rates to accompany the Publication version of the Core Strategy. The Charging Schedule will comprise part of the Local Development Framework but it will not be part of the Statutory Development Plan. The levy will be set at a rate that will not put at serious risk the overall development strategy proposed in the Core Strategy. The council will draw on the infrastructure planning that underpins the development strategy for the area and strike an appropriate balance between the desirability of funding infrastructure from the levy and the potential impacts of the levy on the viability of development across the borough. Exceptionally where developers face genuine abnormal costs or consider that paying the Community Infrastructure Levy would seriously threaten the viability of a development the council will be prepared to consider reductions in the amount of levy charged subject to there being complete and open transparency on behalf of the developers in revealing the basis for their calculation and subsequent claims.

CS14 – Infrastructure Delivery

Development should in the first instance make most effective use of existing infrastructure. Where development creates a requirement for new or improved infrastructure beyond existing provision, developers will be expected to provide or contribute towards the additional requirement being provided to an agreed delivery programme.

Detailed specifications of the site specific contributions required will be included in the Development Delivery DPD and the Central Maidstone AAP. Development proposals should make provision for all the land required to accommodate any additional infrastructure that will be required arising from that development. Dedicated Planning Agreements will be used to provide the range of site specific facilities which will normally be provided on site but may in exceptional circumstances be provided in an offsite location or as a last resort via an in-lieu financial contribution.

The Community Infrastructure Levy will be used to secure contributions to help fund the strategic infrastructure needed to support the sustainable growth proposed in Maidstone. With the exception of affordable housing, all residential development will pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. Business development will also be expected to contribute towards strategic infrastructure, particularly with regard to the transport infrastructure demand arising from their development proposals. The Community Infrastructure Levy rates will be set out in the Charging Schedule to accompany the Publication version of the Core Strategy.

Exceptionally where developers face genuine abnormal costs or consider that paying the Community Infrastructure Levy would seriously threaten the viability of a development the Council will be prepared to consider reductions in the amount of levy charged subject to there being complete and open transparency on behalf of the developers in revealing the basis for their calculations and subsequent claims.

Delivery and Monitoring

Delivery

The Outline Infrastructure Delivery Plan sets out the lead agency responsible for the delivery of each project. Where each agency will be responsible for delivering the relevant projects the Borough Council will monitor the timely delivery of all projects. Partnerships such as the Local Enterprise Partnership will also be involved in effective project delivery.

Monitoring

The Borough Council will be required under the regulations regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy to publish a report each year stating how much money has been collected under the levy and where it has been spent. The Council will also continue to monitor the effectiveness of Section 106 Legal Agreements to ensure that they continue to be directed to specified relevant local projects directly related to the specific development from which they arose.

List of Appendices

76

Appendix 1	South East Plan Policies
Appendix 2	Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan
Appendix 3	Policy Evolution
Appendix 4	Sustainable Community Strategy Matrix
Appendix 5	Saved Policies
Appendix 6	Superseded Policies and Documents
Appendix 7	Delivery of Spatial Objectives
Appendix 8	Glossary
Appendix 9	Sustainability Appraisal
Appendix 10	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 11	Housing Trajectory

Maidstone Borough Key Diagram

