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Date: 08 February 2017

Dear Ms Smith

## **MEDWAY COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2012-2034 – DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS REGULATION 18 CONSULATION**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this stage of the Medway Local Plan. As you may be aware, Maidstone Borough Council received the Inspector's Interim Findings in December 2016, and has within the last couple of weeks completed the last scheduled session of the Examination in Public hearings. A series of Main Modifications to our Local Plan will now be subject to public consultation during spring 2017.

In regards to the Medway Local Plan Development Options consultation, the Borough Council wish to make the following representations.

### Duty to Cooperate

MBC would like to confirm its agreement to the position set out in paragraph 2.30 of the Local Plan that states that Medway Council has engaged in 1:1 meetings with local planning authorities, insofar as MBC is concerned. Officers at MBC look forward to continuing to work closely and constructively with Medway Council on relevant cross boundary matters between the two authorities.

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## Housing Target and Strategic Housing Market Assessment

MBC notes the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) of 30,000 new homes within the North Kent Strategic Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (SHENA) and the Regulation 18 Local Plan sets a housing target commensurate with this to deliver sufficient land for up to the 30,000 dwellings. Paragraph 3.7 identifies a pipeline of 18,206 dwellings and the plan identifies a range of development options to meet Medway's housing needs over the plan period, including; maximising the potential of urban regeneration, suburban expansion, Hoo Peninsula focus (Rural focus) and Urban Regeneration and Rural Town. Whilst it is acknowledged that these options are a starting point for the consideration of the development strategy and allocations for the new Local Plan, we have some initial comments on the development options that are set out below. Going forward we welcome being consulted on more specific details at future stages in the plan making process.

MBC is supportive of Medway's approach to meet its needs within its administrative area and we agree with paragraph 3.9 which states that it is unlikely that the full range of development needs could be met solely in the identified regeneration areas on brownfield land. It is noted that three of the development options include development around Rainham and Hempstead, which could have a significant impact on M20/J7 and the southern end of the A249. This junction already suffers from traffic congestion at peak times and requires capacity improvements in order to accommodate planned growth in Maidstone borough. Development across Medway is likely to impact on the highway network at Bluebell Hill, M20 J6 and potentially at Boxley Road. It is important therefore that the potential impacts of Medway's proposed growth on the road network within Maidstone borough are properly assessed through the emerging Local Plan.

The promotion of the Capstone Valley as a green infrastructure allocation is welcomed by MBC. This allocation recognises the high quality landscape of the Capstone Valley and maintains the separation of Medway and Maidstone.

Medway Council will be aware of our previous concerns in regards to the housing market area geography analysis within the SHENA, as set out in our response to the Medway Council Issues and Options consultation and set out by email on 27 October 2015.

Paragraph 2.103 and 2.104 of the SHENA recognises that whilst there are strong relationships between Medway and Maidstone, they are however not consistent across the full local authority area. We welcome recognition in the SHENA that the

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strongest relationship is with the north of the borough. This is in line with the Maidstone Local Plan Inspector who has concluded in his Interim Findings (ED:110) that there is a small part of the Borough's existing stock that abuts the Medway towns, however there is little development potential in that area and it is appropriately included in the Maidstone HMA for the purposes of the assessment.

### Employment

It is noted by MBC that Medway commissioned an Employment Land Needs Assessment in 2015 that projected the growth of 17,000 jobs and the need of 90ha of employment floorspace in Medway over the plan period. The findings indicate that although there is a potential surplus of employment land available, this existing land supply does not align well to business needs. Paragraphs 5.19-5.21 suggests that the employment needs could be met through retention of existing employment sites, support for enhancing and consolidating current sites to better meet the market's requirements, by making better use of existing sites, and by identifying additional locations. It is noted that the legend for the development options shows 828ha of new/enhanced employment land however we would welcome clarification on the potential quantum and location of new employment floorspace.

As you will be aware from our DtC discussions earlier this week, the MBLP Inspector has highlighted the need to consider the strategic implications of employment provision across the relevant Functional Economic Market Area and we attach a copy of the Interim Findings report and our update paper in response to this matter for your information.

We would welcome more detailed discussions through the DtC if the sites in the Lordswood area and at M2 J4 are progressed. These areas are close to the boundary with Maidstone and development of these areas could have implications in terms of infrastructure provision, including potential highway impacts, within Maidstone borough in the future.

The proposed policy approach for employment states on page 47 that Medway will support actions, amongst other things, to accrue benefits for Medway's economy from strategic developments of infrastructure, housing and employment sites outside the Medway area. The implications of this statement for development in Maidstone are unclear and we seek clarification on this matter.

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## Transport

MBC notes section 11.8 of the Plan which states that Medway Council has commissioned a new strategic transport model to support the emerging Local Plan, which is anticipated to be completed by spring 2017. This model will be used to assess the cumulative impact of development and associated mitigation strategies for the plan period. As set out above, we would expect that the potential impacts on Maidstone borough would be appropriately assessed through the modelling work.

MBC supports the ambitions contained within this chapter to increase sustainable modes of transport, such as public transport provision and improvements to the walking and cycling network. Medway and Maidstone have good transport connections through both rail and bus services and we welcome further discussions on potential improvements to transport networks between Maidstone and Medway.

## Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

It is noted that Medway Council is seeking to refresh its evidence base for the assessment of the need for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation, in line with the Government Policy issues since the 2013 Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was produced. MBC's position is that identified needs will be met through permanent consents, site allocations, turnover of the two public sites in the borough and an allowance for consents coming forward on unidentified sites.

Thank you again for consulting the borough council and we looking forward to on-going, productive discussions with yourselves as our plans progress.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Egerton  
Planning Policy Manager

# **INTERIM FINDINGS FROM THE EXAMINATION OF THE MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN**

**22 December 2016**

**Robert Mellor BSc DipTRP DipDesBEnv DMS MRICS MRTPI**

**An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

## **The scope of these findings**

This paper has been produced to address a number of main matters which have been discussed at examination hearings to indicate where main modifications may or may not be required to make the Plan sound. It does not cover every matter but it provides a broad overview. It is also intended to assist in identifying where further work may be needed to support an update of the proposed changes that have already been prepared by the Council and which will form the basis of draft main modifications to the Plan (to be supported by revised sustainability appraisal) which would then be subject to public consultation. Such main modifications are also likely to include additional and typically more detailed matters which have previously been the subject of changes proposed by Maidstone Borough Council. These have been the subject of discussion at Examination hearings.

These are interim findings only. Final and fuller conclusions on the matters and issues referred to below will be set out in the Final Report at the end of the Examination process.

## **Matter 1: Duty to Cooperate**

*Issue – Whether the Local Planning Authority and other relevant persons have complied with the Duty to Cooperate?*

1. S33A of the P&CPA sets out a statutory 'Duty to Cooperate' (DtC) which here applies to Maidstone BC and other local planning authorities, to Kent County Council, and to other persons prescribed by Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012 (the Regulations).
2. The duty requires those persons to cooperate with other persons to 'maximise the effectiveness' with which named activities are undertaken. Those activities include the preparation of development plan documents (such as this local plan) and activities that support that activity 'so far as relating to a strategic matter'. A strategic matter is defined by S33A(4) in summary as: (a) 'sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas' (a planning area in this case is the area of a borough or district council); and (b) 'sustainable development or use of land in a two tier area' (as this is) 'if the development

or use (i) is a county matter, or (ii) has or would have a significant impact on a county matter'. County matters broadly relate to minerals and waste and associated developments as defined by Paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

3. S33A(7) requires persons subject to the DtC to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State about how the duty is to be complied with. In that regard Paragraph ID 9-004-29140306 of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) confirms amongst other things that the duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree albeit that local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross border matters before they submit local plans for examination.
4. A number of Representors have claimed that MBC as the local planning authority has not complied with the DtC. These claims are made mainly in relation to the following broad subject areas:
  - Cross border housing needs and supply
  - Cross border provision for economic development and employment
  - Provision of strategic infrastructure, especially transport
  - Cross border strategic gaps in development
  - Minerals Planning Issues
5. MBC has issued a Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement [SUB 005] as recommended in paragraph ID 9-011-20140306 of the PPG. This was published after the closing date for representations on the submission plan and thus was not available when Representors were preparing their representations. It lists the relevant bodies and the forms and methods of cooperation undertaken over many years. This demonstrates that there has been extensive engagement notwithstanding that the minuting of meetings and their outcomes is sometimes incomplete.
6. The DtC Statement sets out the 4 strategic areas where there has been active cooperation under the following headings:
  - The homes needed in the area
  - The provision of employment, retail and commercial development

- The provision of infrastructure (includes transport)
  - The natural and historic environment
7. There has not been agreement between the Borough Council and all the persons with which there has been engagement under the DtC and that has impaired the ultimate effectiveness of cooperation. However the above national guidance confirms that there is not a duty to agree. Whether a lack of agreement raises an issue of soundness may be of relevance to other interim findings.

**The evidence of the DtC Statement and supplementary evidence provided during the examination supports my conclusion that the Borough Council has engaged with neighbouring authorities and prescribed bodies to address strategic matters and has sought maximum effectiveness. It has therefore met the statutory duty set out in section 33A of the 2004 Act.**

**Matter 2: Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN)**

8. The National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 47 provides amongst other things and in summary, that to boost significantly the supply of housing local planning authorities should:

*‘Use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period’.*

9. Based on the 2015 Update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) the submitted Local Plan identifies an Objectively Assessed Housing Need for 18,560 dwellings over the full Local Plan period between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2031 (928 dwellings per annum).
10. The Housing Topic Paper [[SUB 005] records that 2,860 dwellings had been completed by 31 March 2016 and that there were extant planning permissions at 1 April 2016 for 5,475 dwellings (including a 5% non-implementation discount). That would leave a residual need for 10,225 dwellings.

11. A significant number of additional dwellings have either been permitted since 1 April 2016 or are the subject to a resolution to permit subject to the completion of a Section 106 planning obligation.

Issue - Whether the OAHN is based on the appropriate Housing Market Area

12. The Housing Market Area (HMA) for Maidstone as employed in the SHMA overlaps into Tonbridge & Malling Borough to the west. The Ashford HMA extends into Maidstone from the east. The SHMA has been commissioned jointly to assess needs in all 3 areas. Whereas a small part of the Borough's existing stock abuts the Medway towns there is little development potential in that area and it is appropriately included in the Maidstone HMA for the purposes of this assessment.

13. Housing Market Areas may need to be adjusted in the future to reflect changing migration patterns. However that is not necessary at this stage.

**The Housing Market Areas have been appropriately assessed for the purposes of the SHMA.**

Issue - What may be the contribution of local needs to the OAHN by comparison with migration from outside the Borough

14. Only about one quarter of the anticipated population growth in Maidstone is expected to come from natural growth of the existing population. The remainder is expected to result from net migration with about half of the total accounted for by internal migration from elsewhere in the UK including from London and from other Kent Boroughs or Districts. The remaining one quarter would come from international migration. The Annual Monitoring Report July 2016 records that the average total net migration inflow per year in the ten years up to 2014 was 1,317 people. That would equate to 13,170 persons over that period. The overall population rise in Maidstone between 2005 and 2015 is estimated at 21,146 persons including natural growth.
15. To seek to assess only those needs arising from the existing population would be ineffective in that continued migration from London or other areas could not be prevented and local people would likely be outbid in the market by those moving from higher value areas.
16. Whilst some Representatives suggest that international migration will reduce as a result of Brexit, the current ONS projections only assume net international in-migration of 180,000 persons per year. The current rate of net

international in-migration is running at about 330,000 persons per year of which more than half are from outside the EU. That does not suggest that an early net reduction below 180,000 can be relied upon or that there is any reliable basis to amend the forecast need in Maidstone.

**The OAHN has made an appropriate assessment of local needs and of those arising from migration from outside of the Borough.**

Issue - Effect of the 2014-based household projections

17. Whereas the SHMA is based on the 2012 household projections, the ONS has since published 2014 based projections. These indicate a modest increase in need. However national PPG at 2a-016-20150227 makes clear that a new projection does not automatically mean that housing assessments are rendered outdated every time new projections are issued.

**Whilst the latest information would need to be taken into account at the date of a Plan review, I do not consider that it is necessary to alter the assessment at this stage to reflect the 2014-based household projections and to do so would only delay the delivery of that housing for which the need has already been identified.**

Issue - Whether the OAHN should be reduced because of a claimed previous over-supply of housing

18. Some Representors have argued that there has been a past 'spike' in housing delivery as a result particularly of high density flatted developments on brownfield sites at a time when there was a moratorium on greenfield development. That is claimed to have distorted the trends that have informed the ONS population and household projections. They point to advice in national Planning Practice Guidance at paragraph ID 3-036-20140306 that consideration can be given to evidence that the Council has delivered over and above its housing need in previous years and that past high delivery rates are no longer realistic.

19. However the South East Plan targets for Maidstone were not based on an objective assessment of needs in this Borough but were instead informed by wider regional and sub-regional assessments with individual targets for local areas that took into account a deliberate redistribution of population and households. Also there is no evidence that past delivery rates, which in any case were lower than now proposed, will not be maintained or exceeded. Office to residential conversions in Maidstone and other redevelopment are likely to continue to make a significant contribution to housing supply including high density flats. The SHEDLAA has identified extensive supply

elsewhere including greenfield development which had previously been precluded.

**It would not be appropriate or necessary to reduce the OAHN because of alleged past over-supply of housing.**

Issue - Whether additional provision should be made for increased population as a consequence of changing migration patterns with London or other migration from areas where supply may be constrained.

20. Representors have raised an issue as to whether adequate provision has been made for migration from London or from parts of West Kent where there are particular development constraints, notably the Metropolitan Green Belt.
  
21. There are disputes as to whether London is able to meet its own housing needs within its defined Housing Market Area in accordance with the London Mayor's previously stated intention. This relates both to whether those needs have been appropriately assessed and whether the London Boroughs have the capacity to meet the assessed requirement. An important consideration is whether insufficient housing supply in London or affordability issues will result in an uplift in migration from London to the rest of the South East including Maidstone.
  
22. The SHMA Update 2015 gave consideration to the potential effect of higher migration from London than that assumed in the ONS projections. Past migration figures at Table 28 of Document HOU 004 show that the net annual population flows from London to Maidstone averaged 760pa before 2008 but only 467pa in the period between 2007-2012 which is the period used for the ONS 2012 Sub National Population Projection. On the basis of a forecast that there may be a return to higher levels of movement in between these 2 rates a sensitivity analysis indicates that this could add demand for an additional 5.1% households in Maidstone. However the London Mayor has not requested that authorities outside London accommodate higher levels of migration and no additional allowance for higher migration has been included in the Maidstone OAHN.
  
23. The west Kent Boroughs of Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks have particular constraints on development including extensive areas of Green Belt. If they do not plan to meet their own assessed needs (including migration from London) then there could be increased migration to other areas such as Tonbridge & Malling (which has an overlapping housing market area) and

Maidstone. However whilst those Boroughs have identified an OAHN significantly above the annual housing requirement previously set by the South East Plan, they have yet to determine what their housing requirement should be in future years.

**Whilst it is not impossible that increased migration from West Kent or London would place pressure on areas such as Maidstone with transport links those areas, this is a matter which would best be considered at the first Review of the Local Plan when policy provisions for London and west Kent will be clearer.**

Issue - Whether the OAHN is based on an appropriate Average Household Size

24. Household size can significantly affect the projected need for dwellings. A long term trend towards smaller household sizes was arrested in recent years. This probably results from the suppression of household formation because of weak affordability, particularly for young people. However the planned uplift in the supply of market and affordable housing should improve affordability with a return to the trend towards smaller households.

**The OAHN is based on appropriate Average Household Size.**

Issue - Whether the OAHN should include a market signals adjustment for housing affordability

25. The OAHN figure of 18,560 dwellings in the submitted Local Plan includes an approximate 5% uplift for market signals. That equates to 45 dwellings per annum or a total of 900 dwellings over the full plan period.
26. At the examination hearings it was acknowledged by participants that the figure is arbitrary and lacks a scientific basis. The Home Builders Federation acknowledged that a 5% uplift would be too modest to make a difference to affordability and they sought a higher uplift. A modest uplift is unlikely to have a significant effect on market values, particularly if developers do not increase building rates by the same margin. In that regard representatives of the developer of the single largest housing site proposed for allocation told the Inquiry that they would be likely to deliver only 50 dwellings per annum rather than the 85 dwellings per annum previously advised. That 35dpa reduction alone would almost cancel out the 5% uplift which equates to only 45 dwellings per annum. Moreover new dwellings only account for a proportion of the total number of dwellings in the market which include many second hand properties.

27. A much more significant effect on market prices can be expected from the overall increase in past building rates that can be anticipated through the allocations in the plan. These are likely to at least double average completions during the early years of the remaining plan period. In these circumstances a still higher uplift is not justified.

**I do not consider that the 5% market signals uplift would have the desired effect or is justified in this case. The OAHN figure should accordingly be reduced by 900 dwellings.**

Issue – Whether a need for Additional Affordable Housing would justify and overall increase in housing provision

28. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies an affordable housing need for 5,800 dwellings from 2013 to 2031. The Housing Topic Paper 2016 [SUB 005] identified a supply of 5,350 affordable dwellings from completions, commitments, allocated sites, broad locations and local needs housing on exception sites. That figure has already required revision to 4,961 following the reintroduction of Government policy to raise the threshold for developments where affordable provision is required. It will require further revision to reflect other changes in supply including a reduced supply from the Broad Locations. However there will be an opportunity at the plan review stage to identify further provision from alternative allocations. Additional supply is also expected from the activities of registered providers of social housing.

29. What effect a redefinition of affordable housing to include starter homes may have is uncertain and awaits further Government guidance. The SHMA Update also refers to the significant role of the private rented sector in Maidstone. Those who cannot obtain a mortgage sufficient to purchase in the open market are likely to sort to private rented housing and will pay a market rent which may or may not be supported by housing benefit. However this is not relied upon in the plan as part of the supply of affordable housing.

**There is not a current justification to increase the overall housing need figure as a means of boosting the supply of affordable housing.**

### **Matter 3: Housing Supply**

Issue – Whether the housing supply proposed in the Local Plan is justified, effective, and consistent with national policy

Issue – Whether there are constraints on the supply of suitable sites that would justify a lower housing requirement which would not meet or exceed the OAHN

30. That England as a nation has for a number of years been building many fewer houses than are needed by a growing population and growing household numbers has been widely reported. The resulting pressures on the housing stock and associated issues of affordability are particularly acute in London and the South East. As one of the main urban areas in Kent, Maidstone town cannot be insulated from these pressures and must have a role in addressing them, including migration from other areas. It is also appropriate to consider the role that the Borough's other settlements can play, particularly those that already have supporting services and infrastructure, such as the railway stations that provide connections to London and other parts of the region.
  
31. A Core Planning Principle of the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 17 is that planning should: *'proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities.'*
  
32. More specifically in relation to housing, paragraph 17 provides amongst other things that: *'To boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should: use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.'*
  
33. In a letter to Helen Grant MP dated 24 September 2015 and attached to her Representation R19421, the then Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis, made reference to the above guidance and confirmed that the housing need identified for Maidstone in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is not the same as the housing requirement.

34. As the Minister pointed out: *'Once the need has been assessed the Council should prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment [as it has] to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and likely economic viability of land to meet the need for housing over the plan period, and in so doing take account of any constraints such as Green Belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need. Once these constraints are taken into account the Council can decide how many homes it can plan for. It is against this figure that the five year supply of land is calculated'*.
35. The Minister also pointed out that national planning practice guidance: *'makes it clear that local plans can pass the test of soundness where local planning authorities have not been able to identify sites or broad locations for growth in the years 11-15 of the plan period.'*
36. In the case of Maidstone the amount of brownfield land that is available for redevelopment falls well short of the assessed housing needs. In common with most towns in South East England the main town has grown organically in the past. Whilst that external growth was paused for several years in the early part of this century that position cannot be sustained if the town is to make an appropriate contribution to housing needs. There are nevertheless particular physical constraints on expansion which include the proximity to the Borough boundary to the west, the presence of the River Medway, and the physical barrier created by the M20 motorway to the north.
37. Unlike in much of west Kent, the Green Belt covers only a small part of Maidstone Borough and therefore does not represent a significant constraint on development across the Borough. The main potential constraints of relevance to national planning policy are rather: landscape (especially the Kent Downs AONB and its setting); transport and other infrastructure; agricultural land quality; flood risk; and the natural and historic environment. In some cases such as flood risk and agricultural land value national policy provides for a sequential approach to site selection. Other policy tests also provide in various ways for the weighing of any adverse impacts with any public benefits.

**Whilst development constraints are relevant considerations in Framework policies, they do not preclude all housing development or create a fixed capacity limit for the Borough. Rather it is necessary to assess locations individually and to apply judgements as to the impact of development there including whether what would be**

**significant adverse impacts can be adequately mitigated to allow development to proceed.**

**Because consideration of the relevant constraints involves judgements, there have been inevitable disagreements in the assessments of impacts as between the Council and those making representations on the Local Plan including those participating at the hearings.**

### Housing Strategy

*Issue – Whether the plan is the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence*

38. Whilst the submitted Local Plan includes a Spatial Strategy set out in a single Policy SS1, it also includes other spatial policies that are strategic in nature. Some of the allocation and Development Management Policies are also wholly or partly strategic but are not clearly identified as such. The Council has been asked to reorder and amend policies so that the strategic policies are more readily identifiable.
39. A core planning principle of the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 17 is that planning should: *' actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable'*.
40. The spatial strategy set out in Policy SS1 of the submitted Local Plan appropriately seeks that Maidstone town is the principle focus of development to include making best use of available sites within the urban area, the town centre as the primary office and retail location and with strategic development to the north west and south east of the urban area. 5 rural service centres are identified as second tier locations for development with 5 large villages as third tier locations and restraint elsewhere.
41. Accessibility to services and facilities by sustainable modes will inevitably vary between locations and not all villages or suburban locations will have all services and facilities close at hand. However distance to facilities cannot be the only consideration. Other matters include infrastructure

capacity, congestion and site specific considerations such as the natural and historic environment.

42. The physical layout of the Borough including the existing distribution of settlements, the location of rail and road routes and landscape, flood risk and other environmental constraints all limit the reasonable alternative strategies. The Sustainability Appraisal appraised 5 alternative strategies for the distribution of housing development of between 18,600 and 19,600 dwellings. Two strategies involved a new settlement to the east of Maidstone but that was rejected because of the need for extensive new infrastructure and the harm to the area's character. The other rejected alternatives involved differing amounts of development at the villages, including whether or not there would be major development at Lenham. I consider that the alternatives have been appropriately assessed.

**The Spatial Strategy set out in the Local Plan for housing development is consistent with national policy to manage growth patterns that favour sustainable means of travel whilst also taking account of other relevant factors.**

**The strategic policies in the Local Plan should be more clearly identified and distinguished from the non-strategic policies.**

#### South East Maidstone

43. Policy SP3 of the submitted Local Plan proposes a Strategic Development Location comprising 6 housing sites in South East Maidstone on either side of the A274 Sutton Road. A key issue for these sites concerns highways and transport infrastructure. Some Representors including Kent County Council consider inadequate transport infrastructure to be a constraint that makes this location unsuitable for that development.
44. Maidstone currently experiences unusually high rates of car ownership and use, encouraged by the town's close proximity to the motorway network with 4 motorway junctions. Like other radial routes in Maidstone town which converge on the town centre gyratory system, the A274 Sutton Road already experiences congestion, particularly in the peak hours, as do the side roads that connect south east Maidstone to the A20 and M20 to the north of the town, avoiding the town centre. That congestion also affects bus services including a high frequency route that connects south east Maidstone to the town centre.

45. Under the heading 'Promoting sustainable transport', Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides amongst other things that:

*'Plans and decision should take account of whether:*

- The opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure;*
- safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and*
- improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.*

46. Of the 6 housing sites included in the SP3 allocation, sites H1(5) and H1(6) were previously allocated for development in the current Local Plan that was adopted in 2000. Both sites are now under construction and will together provide some 886 dwellings. In each case the planning permission for the sites was granted in 2014 and gave effect to a unilateral planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which included a financial contribution to highway mitigation works on the A274. The works included bus stops, highway widening, bus prioritisation measures between the Willington Street Junction and the Wheatsheaf junction, and junction capacity improvements in the vicinity of Willington Street and Wallis Avenue. The need for such works had been identified in the adopted Local Plan and in Transport Assessment for each site.

47. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework those works include an identified opportunity for sustainable transport. This would improve the reliability and speed of the bus service during congested periods and make it a more attractive mode of travel. The obligations would have been taken into account as highways mitigation when the planning permissions were granted.

48. The Local Plan is required to have regard to the Local Transport Plan. The Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016 [Document ORD 013] (LTP3)

provides that the Maidstone Transport Strategy and an Integrated Transport Programme *'will be driven by the desire to preserve and enhance the accessibility of Maidstone town centre by sustainable means. The proposed level of development will be underpinned by a package containing a number of traffic management measures including the enhanced provision and priority of bus services through the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership involving the County and Borough Councils along with the town's principal bus operator, Arriva. These priorities will drive scheme delivery irrespective of the future development scenario, with the detail and phasing dependent on the specific sites that come forward through the Local Development Framework'*.

49. The Implementation Plan for the Local Transport Plan theme of a 'Safer and Healthier County (2011-2016)' identifies the sole method of air quality management as *'Provision of bus priority and traffic management measures to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow in Air Quality Management Areas.'*
  
50. Bus priority on the A274 Sutton Road would accord with those priorities and in any event had already featured in the adopted Local Plan of 2000. Whilst the Local Transport Plan refers to the then draft target of 10,080 dwellings in Maidstone Borough that referred only to a plan period ending in 2026, not 2031. In any case the Local Transport Plan states that the priorities will be retained irrespective of the future development scenario.
  
51. It is acknowledged that the Local Transport Plan 2011-2016 (LTP3) is due to be replaced by the Local Transport Plan 4 2016-2031(LTP4) which is currently at draft consultation stage [Document TRA 034]. The draft plan contains much less detail than LTP3. Nevertheless it does set out outcomes which include measures to improve air quality, reduce congestion and improve journey time reliability, and to promote affordable, accessible and connected transport. A relevant Countywide priority is to provide: *'Increased access to jobs, education and health by public transport, providing opportunities to Kent's residents without the need for a private car and therefore reducing road congestion. An integrated transport package remains a priority for Maidstone.*
  
52. The Examination was informed that payments specified in the above S106 obligations have already been made to Kent County Council as the local highway authority. However the County Council has stated that whilst it supports the junction capacity improvements it will not implement the bus

prioritisation measures on the grounds that they would disadvantage other road users. The County Council is seeking instead to divert the relevant funds to pay for exploratory work to develop a case for a new road from the A274 to the A20 which road it would join in the vicinity of Junction 8 of the M20.

53. Of the remaining 4 sites in the SP3 allocation, sites H1(7), H1(9) and H1(10) are the subject of resolutions by the Borough Council to grant planning permission subject to the completion of S106 planning obligations which would also include transport mitigation payments. These would include additional contributions to bus priority measures, the provision of new bus services connecting south east Maidstone to railway stations (including the main Maidstone East station which is to be a Thameslink terminus), and various junction capacity works including signalisation to address congestion at Junction 7 of the M20. There is no application as yet on the fourth housing site - H1(8).
54. Kent County Council has not objected to the allocation of sites H1(5) and H1(6) which in any event are already committed. In these circumstances it is unreasonable for the County Council to obstruct the bus priority measures in Sutton Road on which the decisions to permit those developments were based and which accord with:
- saved policies of the adopted Local Plan;
  - the Borough Council's Integrated Transport Strategy
  - the sustainable travel objectives of the County Council's own Local Transport Plan 3 - 2011-2016;
  - the similar objectives the County Council's emerging Local Transport Plan 4; and
  - paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
55. The installation of an extended bus lane in Sutton Road would certainly qualify as a sustainable transport mode which has previously been identified as suitable in this location and its installation would be cost effective in that developer funding is already available. It would accord with the objectives of the adopted Local Plan and both the current and emerging Local Transport Plans. It has been relied upon as mitigation for the already permitted developments. To divert those funds to a study of a relief road would at

best delay mitigation by up to 10 years and at worst may result in no mitigation if that road does not go ahead. Neither would that road promote sustainable travel or provide significant transport capacity for movements between South East Maidstone and the town centre.

56. The County Council has suggested that a bus lane would disadvantage other road users but has not produced substantive evidence to that effect. The A274 Corridor Study prepared for the Borough Council contradicts that stance. It demonstrates that a bus lane can be provided within the existing highway land whilst maintaining one running lane in each direction for other traffic as at present. A bus lane would enhance the speed and reliability of bus services and provide a strong incentive for modal shift from car to bus use that would benefit all road users including other car drivers.
  
57. The County Council has objected to the allocation of the remaining four sites within the SP3 Strategic Development Location. This is on the grounds that their interpretation of transport modelling is that after mitigation the residual cumulative impacts of development would remain 'severe'. That modelling included a series of junction improvements but did not include any bus priority measures. The Borough Council disagrees that the impacts would be severe.
  
58. There is no national definition of what may constitute a severe impact and the Secretary of State's decision in relation to the New Line Learning appeal in Boughton Lane (see below) does not provide one. That decision related to a particular development with access to the A229 and where adequate mitigation had not been identified. That decision has in any event been quashed and new transport evidence is likely to be before the Secretary of State when it is redetermined.
  
59. Whilst the various Sutton Road developments would generate additional traffic movements some mitigation measures have been agreed by the County Council to increase junction capacities.
  
60. The County Council wishes to develop a case for constructing a new road between the A274 and the A20 which would by-pass the villages of Leeds and Langley and provide relief to existing roads (including Willington Street and the B2163) with potential environmental benefits as well as reduced congestion. Modelling suggests it may also reduce the number of cars heading through the town centre to destinations beyond the town. Such a

road was included in the adopted Local Plan 2000 and was also considered in the context of a new settlement but proposals for that settlement and a road were later abandoned. A new road may follow a different route. The Borough Council is generally supportive but funding the road would be a significant challenge unless it were to support further major development. In any event it would be unlikely to be delivered until very late in the plan period or even outside the plan period. It would not support the provision of housing that is needed in the shorter and medium terms and to delay that housing on the basis that a new road could be a possibility would not be justified when other measures are already available to mitigate its transport impacts.

**The Policy SP3 South East Maidstone Strategic Development Location will generate additional traffic but the concentration of development close to the town allows alternative means of travel to be made available and the development proposals include measures to mitigate the travel impacts include highway capacity improvements, and improved bus services supported by bus priority measures.**

#### Other South Maidstone Allocations

61. Traffic congestion is also a key issue for housing allocations that would rely on access to the A229 road which joins the A274 at The Wheatsheaf junction. In particular this relates to allocations H1(29) New Line Learning and H1(53) Boughton Lane. Both sites would be served from the northern end of Boughton Lane which joins the A229 at its junction with Cripple Street (also known as The Swan junction) to the south of The Wheatsheaf junction. In the submitted Local Plan these sites are proposed for allocation for 220 and 75 dwellings respectively.
  
62. The Borough Council has proposed a series of changes (PC/27, PC/28 & PC/29) which would: reduce the H1(29) allocation to 180 dwellings (with associated density changes); amend the access arrangements from Boughton Lane; and require capacity improvements at The Wheatsheaf junction (in addition to those already required by the policy at The Swan junction).
  
63. In 2014 the H1(29) site was the subject of a refused planning application for 220 dwellings. The appeal Inspector recommended, and the Secretary of State agreed in early 2016, that the appeal should be dismissed for reasons which included that the proposed development would have a severe adverse impact on the highway network in terms of congestion and inconvenience to local residents and other road users and on the strategic transport planning

of the area generally, contrary to the aims of paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (App/U2235/A/14/2227839). That decision was subsequently quashed for unrelated reasons but is to be redetermined. The Highway Authority did not object to the original application but does now object to the proposal subject to the appeal redetermination.

64. Compared to that appeal scheme the H1(29) allocation including the proposed changes would amend the dwelling numbers and access arrangements within Boughton Lane. A scheme to alter The Swan junction has also been investigated as a means of improving its capacity. The Council has also proposed the addition of a policy criterion relating to capacity improvements at The Wheatsheaf junction. However one scheme to improve capacity by restricting access to the Cranborne Avenue arm of that junction has already been rejected. The alternatives would require land acquisition, road widening and the relocation of services which measures have not been agreed. The Kent County Council as Highway Authority now objects to the proposed allocation on the basis that the mitigation would not be sufficient to avoid a severe impact and it has particular safety concerns about the proposed Swan junction improvements.
  
65. The A229 already carries more traffic than the A274 and is also likely to attract additional movements due to development at villages to the south of Maidstone and the withdrawal from the Local Plan of proposals for a park and ride site at Linton Crossroads which would have diverted some trips. Unlike the A274 road there is insufficient room within the highway to create bus priority measures that would encourage modal shift. A lack of capacity at The Wheatsheaf junction is likely to contribute to queues backing up and obstructing the Swan junction. Moreover Boughton Lane is itself already anticipated to carry significantly more traffic due to school expansion.
  
66. In all of these circumstances I do not consider the allocation of the H1(29) site to be sound. The H1(53) site is proposed for 75 dwellings which would also generate significant movements in the northern part of Boughton Lane. Without adequate identified mitigation that allocation is also unsound and that site allocation should also be deleted.
  
67. The H1(54) Boughton Mount site is a brownfield site for only 25 dwellings. It was included on a list of sites in South Maidstone to which the Highway Authority objected in its letter of 16 December 2016. However it would generate fewer traffic movements than the H1(53) site to which the Highway

Authority did not then object and some movements would have been generated by the site's previous use. The allocation should be retained.

68. Another site H1(55) for 40 dwellings at the junction of Church Road and Heath Road in Boughton Monchelsea may also generate additional movements on Boughton Lane. However traffic from that site has the opportunity to disperse to other routes and is likely to do so depending upon congestion levels on each route. Its development has not been objected to by the highway authority in relation to traffic impacts. This allocation should also be retained.

**Having regard to the previous conclusions of the Secretary of State concerning development in Boughton Lane and because adequate mitigation measures for the impact on the A229 have not been demonstrated, allocations H1(29) and H1(53) should be removed from the Local Plan.**

#### Policy H2 Broad Locations for Housing Development

69. Paragraph 45 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides amongst other things that local planning authorities should identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing and to *'identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15'*. Footnote 12 provides that: *'To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged'*.

70. The submitted Local Plan relies on 3 Broad Locations for the delivery of 3,500 dwellings.

#### *H2(1) Town Centre Broad Location*

71. The submitted Local Plan defines the whole town centre as a broad location for approximately 700 dwellings. During the examination the Council clarified that this would not include the other specific allocations proposed within the town centre and that neither would it include all windfall

development. The Council has also proposed a change which would increase the estimated number of dwellings to 990 such that the total delivery from all 3 Broad Locations would rise to 3,790 dwellings.

72. As the town centre covers a large area and development could take a variety of forms, including high density and mixed development schemes, there is uncertainty about how and where this housing would come forward. In further evidence to the examination the Borough Council has agreed that the policy should be modified so that delivery is concentrated firstly on 2 locations where change is anticipated in the plan period – The Mall and the Riverside Quarter. Both were previously identified in the Town Centre Study [Document CEN 002]. The second main source of supply would be through office to residential conversions that would typically come forward through the prior notification process as permitted development. The scope for such development has previously been identified in Document ECON 002 and has been demonstrated by a stream of prior notification applications. The residual 50 dwellings on unidentified sites in the town centre would be removed from the Broad Location and added to the windfall allowance.

**The H2(1) Town Centre Broad Location should be amended to increase the amount of housing to 940 dwellings from the 700 proposed in the submitted Local Plan and to focus on the 2 areas of The Mall and the Riverside Quarter within which redevelopment is expected to deliver additional housing together with an allowance for office to residential conversions elsewhere in the town centre. 50 units should be added to the Borough wide windfall allowance in respect of other development on unidentified sites in the town centre that was previously part of the Broad Location allowance.**

#### *H2(2) Invicta Park Barracks Broad Location*

73. The second Broad Location identified for housing development in the submitted Local Plan is the Invicta Park Barracks site which at present remains in operational use. At the date of submission it remained uncertain whether the Invicta Barracks site would become available for development within the plan period. However the Ministry of Defence has since announced that the Barracks are to close in 2027. This is a brownfield site in a sustainable location. However it is improbable that all 1,300 dwellings proposed on the site could then be delivered before the end of the plan period. A more realistic figure would be 500 dwellings.

**The H2(2) Invicta Park Barracks Broad Location should be amended as only 500 of the anticipated 1300 dwellings are likely to be delivered within the Local Plan period.**

*H2(3) Lenham Broad Location and Allocations*

74. The submitted Local Plan proposed Lenham as a Broad Location to deliver 1,500 dwellings between 2026 and the end of the plan period in 2031. Lenham is unusually well provided with services and facilities including shops, a secondary school, a railway station and direct access to the A20. It is also in a housing market area which overlaps with that of Ashford. Nevertheless development on that scale would represent a very substantial increase in size for the village, the railway service is inferior to that on other lines, and the village is relatively distant from both Maidstone and Ashford. It would thus be improbable that housing could be delivered at the rate of 300 per annum implied by the policy.
75. There is no reason to delay delivery until 2026 (as proposed in the submitted Local Plan). However, as there is an available supply of planning permissions and proposed allocations in both Lenham and nearby Harrietsham, neither is it necessary or appropriate to bring development forward sooner than 2021, particularly as there are expected to be infrastructure constraints to be addressed including sewerage and waste water treatment capacity and the need for a new primary school.
76. The Council has agreed that 2 existing permissions for sites granted on appeal at Ham Lane and the Old Goods Yard should be deducted from the Broad Location figure. That would leave a need to identify sites for 1,350 dwellings. However I consider that it would remain unrealistic in this village location to deliver 135 dwellings each year for 10 years. I therefore consider that the Broad Location should be further reduced to 1,000 dwellings, equivalent to 100 dwellings per annum between 2021 and 2031.
77. There is controversy over where development should be located around Lenham and especially what effect housing development at Lenham would have on the Kent Downs AONB which borders parts of the village to the north. If development is to come forward after 2021 that would allow that the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan can determine what sites should be

allocated. In particular it can examine the scope for development south of the railway which the Borough Council no longer opposes in principle. To that end the Borough Council has agreed to delete an inset map from the submitted Local plan that suggested the Broad Location development would be both east and west of the village and not to the south. In any event that map does not accord with statute and national policy provisions relating to how proposals are to be shown on the Policies Map and Key Diagram. The Borough Council proposes instead to amend the Key Diagram to indicate that the village would be a Broad Location but without further identifying where land would be developed. The above reduction in total numbers would also create more flexibility for the allocation of sites. Should the Neighbourhood Plan not succeed in identifying suitable site allocations then it would fall to a review of the Local Plan to do so.

78. Landscape capacity assessments have recommended that sites around Lenham and especially to the east have a low capacity for housing development. However such an assessment by its nature can only consider landscape character impacts within the identified areas and not the many other considerations that need to be weighed in the planning balance.
79. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act requires that due regard be had to the purposes of the AONB designation when considering development that may affect an AONB. That would include relevant development within the setting of the AONB as Lenham is. However it does not constitute an overriding duty to conserve or enhance all views to and from the AONB without regard to other considerations.
80. Evidence at the examination was that the main concern relates to views to and from the scarp and the Pilgrims Way long distance footpath which passes close to a memorial cross on the hillside. The outward views from here already include the built up area of Lenham, where not screened by trees, and especially the prominent industrial estate to the east of the village. There are also wide and distant views beyond the village as well as across the open foreground within the AONB which would be retained.
81. In that context the identified low landscape capacity east of Lenham means that more housing development can be expected to result in some change to landscape character adjacent to the village and some adverse effect on outward views from the AONB - albeit mitigated by the design and landscaping of the development. Some views towards the AONB and towards the memorial cross may also be affected. However views are

already restricted in places by buildings and vegetation and important viewpoints can be protected in the design and layout of schemes. Neither does the ability to see development from within the AONB necessarily harm the purposes of the AONB.

82. Whereas the final siting of the Broad Location development would be a matter for the Neighbourhood Plan, or by default a Local Plan Review, the submitted Local Plan also includes proposed housing allocations at H1(42) Tanyard Farm and H1(43) Glebe Gardens.
83. The small H1(43) site is already the subject of planning permission and does not require further consideration here.
84. The H1(42) site is separated from the AONB only by the A20 road and it straddles a right of way that leads from Old Ashford Road up to the memorial cross and the Pilgrims Way and from which long views are available. Parts of the site have also been affected by ground water and surface water flows during periods of high rainfall. Whilst the H1(42) site would be visible from the AONB, just as the adjacent industrial estate is already visible, there is scope for mitigation in the design and landscaping of the development to soften the edge of the built development. The site is sufficiently distant from the Pilgrims Way and set at a lower level such that its impact on the wider available views would be limited. Views towards the AONB and the memorial cross would continue to be available from the right of way that leads through the site and development can be set back from this route to allow broader views. Whilst there would remain some residual effects on views to and from the AONB I consider that these would be outweighed by the benefits of early provision of needed market and affordable housing in a sustainable settlement. The ground water and surface water issues would require detailed assessment through the development management process but there is likely to be a suitable engineering solution.

**The H2(3) Lenham Broad Location should be reduced from 1500 to 1000 dwellings to be delivered between 2021 and 2031. That would be a more realistic delivery rate. The reduced total development within the Plan period would also allow more flexibility for its location. The allocations would be determined by a Neighbourhood Plan or, by default, in a Local Plan review before April 2021. The plans would need to address any infrastructure constraints. An additional 150 dwellings which would have been part of the Broad**

**Location will now come forward before 2021 as commitments following appeal decisions at Ham Lane and the Old Goods Yard.**

**The H1(42) Tanyard Farm allocation should also be retained in the Local Plan to support housing delivery before 2021.**

#### Other Rural Service Centres

85. Lenham is one of 5 Rural Service centres identified in the submitted Local Plan as second tier locations for growth. Harrietsham is close to Lenham and shares some of its characteristics.
86. Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden all lie on the same railway line south of Maidstone with particularly good rail connections to west Kent and London that would make them attractive for those migrating from those areas (including commuters and retirees) and offset their relatively weaker road links. There are also some local employment opportunities.

**The rural service centres are appropriately identified as second tier settlements for development.**

#### Large Villages

87. The third tier settlements are the large villages of Coxheath, Sutton Valence Yalding, Boughton Monchelsea and Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne).
88. Coxheath has a wide range of services and shares many characteristics with the Rural Service Centres. Whilst it lacks a railway station it is close to Maidstone.
89. Sutton Valence and Yalding have fewer services and are more constrained by heritage, landscape and (at Yalding) floodrisk.
90. The main mixed development proposed at the Syngenta site at Yalding would make use of a brownfield site and is much closer to the railway station than the main village. However its allocation would not be sound as the housing development needed to make the development viable would conflict with the floodrisk and there is a lack of evidence that the risk could be adequately mitigated without worsening flood risk elsewhere in an area that has experienced severe local flooding and where the Environment Agency has

been unable to devise the means to prevent repeated flooding. The allocation should be deleted as it would not be effective in delivering the allocated development but to make best use of this derelict site it should be replaced by a policy that positively seeks alternative uses that would be compatible with the site's Zone 3a flood status.

91. Only one other housing allocation is proposed at either Sutton Valence or Yalding. These should be retained to provide the limited housing growth identified for these villages. The Sutton Valence allocation already has planning permission. In each case there is the opportunity for an emerging neighbourhood plan to identify the additional smaller sites which the parish councils have indicated that they would prefer. However once the Local Plan is in place with an identified housing supply these and other villages will be in a stronger position to resist unallocated development outside the settlement boundaries except where it would accord with other Local Plan policies such as that to provide affordable housing to meet local needs.
92. Traffic issues relating to Boughton Lane affect some of the Boughton Monchelsea allocations and are addressed above.

**The large villages are appropriately identified and the amount of development is suitably related to the existing services and facilities which they possess. However due to floodrisk the RMX1(4) Syngenta site at Yalding should be deleted as an allocation for housing or specified employment use. The H1(53) Boughton Lane housing allocation at Boughton Monchelsea should also be deleted for traffic impact reasons.**

#### Windfall

93. The Borough Council has provided suitable evidence to support its estimate of the contribution to housing supply of windfall development on brownfield sites. It has reasonably excluded a windfall allowance for the early years of the plan as this would risk double counting with existing commitments. It has also reasonably concluded that the number of anticipated windfalls should be reduced in the middle years of the plan period as many sites have already been identified through the SHEDLAA and allocation processes. Whilst a higher annual windfall figure is indicated for the final 5 years of the plan period, that would need to be similarly adjusted in a plan review as further sites are identified and allocated.

**The windfall allowance as amended has been adequately justified.**

## The Housing Trajectory and the 5 year Housing land Supply

94. The revised housing need figure of 17,660 dwellings over the plan period would equate to 883 dwellings each year on average. As delivery in the first 5 years of the plan from 2011 to 2016 was at a lower rate there is an existing shortfall which needs to be made up. The national Planning Practice Guidance advises that, where possible, this backlog should be made up in the first 5 years of the plan period (also known as the Sedgefield Method). The trajectory seeks to reflect this.
95. The trajectory also takes account of the 5% buffer sought by paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework whereby supply is brought forward from later in the plan period. Some have argued for the application of a higher 20% buffer on the basis of alleged persistent under delivery of housing in the past. I disagree. Past delivery overall has exceeded the previous housing targets set out in the South East Plan and it would be unreasonable to apply higher housing need figures retrospectively that were only identified as recently as 2014.
96. Nevertheless, the combination of: a much higher housing need figure than the previous housing target; the Sedgefield method of addressing the backlog; and the 5% buffer together lead to a trajectory which oscillates from a low rate of delivery against currently assessed needs to a very high and possibly unachievable rate in the early years of the remaining plan period before reverting to a low rate. The latter low rate is exacerbated by a heavy and unrealistic reliance on high rates of delivery from 2 Broad Location sites. There is also some evidence of likely slippage in the delivery of some allocated sites early in the plan period.
97. There is a strong case for seeking a smoother and more realistic rate of delivery over the plan period. That would also provide more regular local employment in construction to accompany the uplift in housing provision. Such a smoothing of the trajectory would be most readily achieved by addressing the existing backlog over a 10 year period from April 2016 rather than over 5 years as currently proposed. However additional allocations on a greater variety of sites in the latter part of the plan period through the first plan review would also boost delivery then and especially in the final 5 years, avoiding overall under-provision against the assessed needs across the plan

period. If sufficient sites cannot be identified then the matter would need to be pursued through the duty to cooperate.

98. The recommended smoothing of the trajectory should strengthen the 5 year supply position as at 1 April 2016. That many additional planning permissions have been granted since that date indicates that the 5 year supply should also be strong at 1 April 2017 and in subsequent years.

**If the suggested changes to the allocations and broad locations are carried forward as main modification the housing trajectory would need to be amended pending any new allocations at the first review of the Local Plan. Spreading the existing backlog over the 10 years from 2016 to 2026 would allow for a more realistic rate of delivery of the allocations and provide steady employment in the construction industry as a contribution to the identified need for additional employment in the Borough.**

#### **Matter 4: Employment**

*Issue - Whether employment needs and existing supply have been appropriately assessed*

99. National Planning Practice Guidance advises that the assessment of economic development needs should relate to the functional economic market area. The Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land forecast 2014 [Document ECON 001] concluded that it is reasonable to define the functional economic area of Maidstone as focussed on the immediately surrounding districts. However whilst that document refers to a selection of plans and proposals in the adjoining targets and some of their targets for jobs and housing growth, it acknowledges that plans and proposals are being revised or finalised and could be subject to change. The Document does not contain any overall assessment of employment needs or provision across the neighbouring districts and does not relate employment growth to planned housing growth across that area in the light of commuting patterns.

100. MBC has issued an Employment and Retail Topic Paper 2016 [Document SUB 003] as supporting evidence for the Local Plan's employment policies. It explains that the Local Plan anticipates the creation of 14,400 jobs by 2031 in accordance with the aims of the *Maidstone Economic Development Strategy (2011-2031)* (EDS) [Document ORD 005]. This figure is derived

from the *Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land Forecast Final Report (February 2014)* [Document ECON 001].

101. The Economic Development Strategy indicates what sectors are relied upon to deliver that jobs growth.

Issue - Whether employment trends are appropriately taken into account when assessing housing needs.

Issue – What are the implications of the housing and employment targets for cross-border commuting patterns

102. The Economic Development Strategy acknowledges that Maidstone Borough has moved from being a slight net importer of labour to a net exporter. Information provided to the examination on commuting patterns in the 2011 census indicates that the net daily outward flow from Maidstone to London is 5,834 and that there is a net daily inflow to Maidstone from other mid and west Kent authority areas of 3,844 persons. The strongest net daily flows include 2,008 persons from Maidstone to Tonbridge and Malling and 3,413 persons from Medway to Maidstone.

103. Table 33 of the *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* [Document HOU 002] acknowledges that employment growth in Maidstone could partly support housing demand in the Medway Towns, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Swale. It might have also referred to Ashford from which there is also a significant net daily inflow of commuters.

104. Table 33 sets out what was then known about Housing and Employment Growth policies in the nearby authorities (including Ashford). However 3 of the 6 authorities then had no employment growth target and the only recent targets for the period ending in 2031 were then in the Swale Draft Local Plan of 2013. The Swale housing target has since been increased. Some updated information was provided in the Borough Council's written statement for Session 8.

105. In the examination hearings attention has been drawn to how the Maidstone housing target may relate to the employment target. It has been pointed out that the 14,400 jobs target is acknowledged as ambitious and yet at a current estimated employment rate of 1.3 jobs per household it may fall short of the numbers of employed persons that might be accommodated by the new dwellings proposed in the Local Plan.

106. Relevant factors could include changes in average household size including more single person households, and an increase in the proportion of retired persons and households no longer participating in the labour market. These trends would affect existing as well as new households.

107. What remains unclear is what impact cross-border commuting between Maidstone and neighbouring areas (and London) would have on job provision.

108. There is evidence that where the adjoining authorities have assessed their employment needs they consider that they can meet their needs within their own areas and in most cases are proposing new employment allocations to that end. However there are apparent disparities between the authorities concerning the number of jobs and the amount of employment land that is being proposed relative to the intended growth in housing in each area. It is also unclear how each authority is taking account of the effect of net cross-border commuting flows. Where flows are currently in equilibrium and likely to remain so this may not matter. However where an authority is planning for particularly high or low rates of job growth relative to the anticipated change in population or housing this could result in sharp changes in commuting patterns.

**It is necessary to establish both whether there is likely to be sufficient land overall to accommodate the employment needs and also what effect there may be on travel patterns, including net flows to London or elsewhere.**

**An assessment is therefore needed which updates the position on job targets and employment land provision in Maidstone and the adjoining Boroughs/Districts within the same economic area relative to the anticipated housing and population growth in those areas.**

Issue – Whether the employment allocations are justified and consistent with national policy and whether they would be effective in terms of deliverability

109. Only part of the growth in employment would be in B class business floorspace amounting to 3,732 jobs with a further 4,200 jobs at the medical

campus being developed at Junction 7. The Employment and Retail Topic Paper [Document SUB 003] and Proposed Change PC/2 corrected the employment floorspace requirements set out in the submitted Local Plan at Table 4.4 and identified a need for 24,000sqm of B1a office floorspace, 6,500sqm of warehouse floorspace and -15,600sqm of industrial floorspace.

110.EMP1(5) Woodcut Farm is identified as a strategic site that is critical to address a qualitative and quantitative need for high quality business space, notwithstanding that it is acknowledged that it would have adverse landscape impacts and that one scheme for the site has been refused planning permission mainly on landscape grounds.

111.The Employment and Retail Topic Paper suggested that the identified need for 24,000sqm of office floorspace would be met with 16,000sqm at Woodcut Farm and 8,000sqm at Mote Road in Maidstone Town Centre. However there are evident viability issues with both sites such that neither site is now expected by the Council to deliver this much space. Provision may be as little as half the figure of 24,000sqm. The suggested identification of 3,000sqm of office floorspace at Maidstone East would only partially make up the anticipated shortfall.

112.The Syngenta site at Yalding has been identified for 8,640sqm of business space. However floodrisk issues and the necessary deletion of a housing allocation that would have assisted development viability also mean that site is unlikely to be delivered in that form.

**Unless alternative provision is identified there is likely to be a shortfall in the delivery of office floorspace against the identified requirement. Alternative provision may involve mixing development with more lucrative land uses in the town centre.**

**In the town centre, reduced on-site parking requirements could improve viability where alternative parking and public transport are available.**

**Consideration should be given to safeguarding part of Woodcut Farm or other sites suitable for office development from other uses for a**

**period pending a recovery of office development values later in the plan period.**

### **Matter 5: Transport and Air Quality**

Issue: Whether the Local Plan is consistent with national policy in relation to air quality impacts.

113.Paragraph 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides amongst other things that in preparing to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.

114.An issue that has come to the fore during the Examination is that of air quality, especially in relation to road traffic emissions and their associated health impacts. This follows the intended quashing by the High Court of the National Air Quality Plan (AQP) and the direction that the Government should urgently replace it with a new plan by July 2017.

115.Maidstone town is designated as an Air Quality Management Area on the basis that air quality targets for Nitrogen Oxide emissions exceed limits set by an EU Directive and national regulations at a series of locations within the town. These locations include The Wheatsheaf junction and also Upper Stone Street which is part of the town centre gyratory and carries traffic towards the A274, A229(S), A20(E) and B2010.

116.An Air Quality Action Plan adopted for Maidstone in 2010 is referred to in the national AQP but has not yet succeeded in bringing emissions within the limits.

117.Whilst some have argued that the air quality issue warrants a moratorium on new development in the town, that would not solve the existing problem and would not be consistent with national policy. A solution is needed that both addresses the existing air quality problem and allows that the needs for housing and other development can still be met whilst minimising pollution.

118.The amount of emissions from road vehicles is affected by the number of vehicles and also by the means of propulsion. The number of vehicles is unusually high in Maidstone because of high levels of car use relative to

other modes such as public transport, walking and cycling. The proportion of diesel vehicles has also grown in recent years and is likely to have arrested what was previously a downward trend in emissions. A switch away from older diesel vehicles towards electric vehicles as range improves and costs reduce and might help. Heavy diesel vehicles such as lorries and buses also make a significant contribution to emissions although the introduction of low emission vehicles can achieve reductions. Moreover one bus can carry as many people as a large number of cars, resulting in less emissions overall. This further supports the need for a bus lane on Sutton Road to encourage modal shift in south east Maidstone, including by existing residents.

119. Even where they are physically possible, road capacity improvements may reduce congestion and pollution from stationary traffic but can also encourage more vehicle movements with their associated emissions.

120. The need to reduce emissions supports the aims of the Borough Council's Integrated Transport Strategy and the Walking and Cycling Strategy to encourage modal shift.

121. Additional measures are likely to be needed including the designation of low emission zones or clean air zones, additional bus priority, replacing or retrofitting existing buses to reduce emissions, encouraging the use of electric cars and electric bicycles by requiring charging places and storage provision at homes, and reviews of the amount of parking provision in the town centre and its costs relative to other travel modes, especially bus travel. The commitment in the Integrated Transport Strategy to increase long stay parking costs 50% by 2031 lacks sufficient urgency and is unlikely to prompt the necessary early shift to other transport modes that is needed to reduce congestion and improve air quality, particularly if bus and train fares rise at a similar or greater rate.

122. Park and Ride (or Park and Train) may also be part of the solution if it results in fewer vehicles entering the town centre and would be of most benefit to those travelling from locations outside Maidstone with poor public transport connections. However careful siting and pricing policies are needed if park and ride sites are not to encourage passenger transfer from service buses to cheaper park and ride services that depend on subsidy, especially if this would harm the frequency or viability of service buses.

123. That significant modal shift is possible is demonstrated by other towns in the south including Brighton, Poole and Oxford. Concentrating development in or adjacent to the town on high frequency bus routes and in those rural service centres with railway services as proposed in the Local Plan makes modal shift more likely to be achieved than if development were to be more dispersed or located in new settlements with fewer facilities or public transport services and which still relied heavily on access to Maidstone town by car for employment, services and facilities.

124. A land use plan like the Local Plan can only partially address the air quality issues. Other available measures include the emerging Low Emissions Strategy, the intended review of the Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan, and a review of the parking strategy. The national Air Quality Plan may propose other specific measures for local implementation.

**The need to address poor air quality within the Air Quality Management Area and especially at the exceedance locations would not justify a moratorium on development although it does emphasise the need for mitigation measures for individual developments. To achieve satisfactory air quality is likely to require a range of measures to address the existing problem whilst also allowing for necessary growth.**

*Issue - Whether the Local Plan is consistent with national policy for the avoidance of severe traffic impacts on the strategic road network resulting from development and is it supported by proportionate evidence*

125. Further modelling work has been undertaken during the examination to test the cumulative impacts of planned development in Maidstone and adjoining Boroughs on the strategic road network.

126. A Statement of Common Ground [Document ED 103] has been agreed between Highways England and Maidstone Borough Council which concludes in summary that proposed junction improvements at M20 junctions 5-8 can adequately mitigate development but that timely implementation and continued monitoring are necessary as well as the possibility of Plan B mitigation if the planning permissions that would provide mitigation are not implemented in a timely fashion. Changes to the Policies DM24 and ID1 are recommended in the Statement including the use of Section 278 agreements under the Highways Act 1980. Subject to these changes Highways England is content that its objections have been addressed.

**Severe traffic impacts on the strategic network are capable of avoidance through mitigation.**

**Matter 6: Monitoring and Plan Review**

127. During the examination, consideration has been given to when the Local Plan should be first reviewed and whether the timing of such a review should be adjusted to address particular issues that have arisen.

128. A commitment to an early plan review has been used elsewhere to deal with identified shortcomings in plans and to allow them to proceed to adoption. Advice by the Planning Advisory service in *'Early Reviews' and Local Plans* suggests that they should not be used to resolve matters critical to the Plan's strategy and that they are not a panacea for addressing the difficult issues.

129. In this case there are some issues which do need to be resolved before the plan is first adopted. However there are others, especially in relation to housing delivery at the end of the Local Plan period. These are less urgent because they do not impact on strategy in the first 5 years of the Local Plan. To delay the adoption of the Local Plan to resolve all of these matters would have other disbenefits including prolonged uncertainty about the 5 year housing supply position later in the plan period.

130. The submitted Local Plan indicated at paragraph 17.126 that a first review of the Local Plan *'will commence in 2022'*. A change proposed by the Borough Council (PC/59) would amend this to *'will commence by 2022.'* However there is no commitment to how quickly such a review would progress and no timetable for the necessary work. Moreover that would be too late to address the need to identify specific development site allocations in the Broad Locations (including any need to address a failure of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan to make such allocations). A review would also be needed in association with any decision by Kent County Council to go ahead with the Leeds-Langley Relief Road. Additional allocations will also be needed for the latter part of the plan period to supplement supply from the Broad Locations in order to provide necessary choice and to offset a reduced rate of delivery from those sites.

**The Local Plan should include a policy commitment to a review with a target adoption date by April 2021. That review process would accordingly need to start much earlier. The plan could then be rolled forward by 5 years from 2031 to 2036.**

*Robert Mellor*

INSPECTOR

## **Inspector's Interim Findings – additional employment matters**

The Council has prepared this further briefing note in response to the employment matters raised in the Inspector's Interim Findings (22 December 2016).

### **1 –WIDER EMPLOYMENT NEEDS/PROVISION**

#### **Interim Findings**

1.1 In the interim findings, the Inspector made the following request;

**It is necessary to establish both whether there is likely to be sufficient land overall to accommodate the employment needs and also what effect there may be on travel patterns, including net flows to London or elsewhere.**

**An assessment is therefore needed which updates the position on job targets and employment land provision in Maidstone and the adjoining boroughs/districts within the same economic area relative to the anticipated housing and population growth in these areas. (paragraph 108)**

#### **Council's response**

1.2 In response, the Council commissioned its economic consultants, GVA, to undertake an additional piece of analysis covering with the following matters;

- Understand the commuting assumptions used in the most up to date economic forecasting evidence published by Maidstone and its 5 neighbouring authorities
- Analyse the relationship between population growth, workforce growth, jobs growth and in/out commuting levels across the area covered by Maidstone and its immediate neighbours
- Conclude on the implications for employment land supply and overall commuting patterns across the area

1.3 GVA has prepared a briefing paper setting out its methodology, analysis and conclusions. This is included as Appendix A. The key findings are summarised in the following paragraphs.

1.4 The economic forecasts being used by Maidstone and its neighbours exhibit some variation in terms of the timing of their preparation and the brand of forecasting model used. Maidstone's strongest commuting relationships (excluding London) are with Tonbridge & Malling and Medway. These three authorities have used Experian forecasts in their evidence which indicates that economic relationship assumptions across these 3 areas are likely to be consistent.

1.5 Also, and importantly, commuting patterns from the census (be it 2001 or 2011) are an input to the models used by all the neighbouring authorities. This provides some overall consistency in terms of the baseline for how commuters' origins and destinations have been

accounted for across the wider area. The economic models do not, however, predict the exact destination of future out-commuters.

- 1.6 Further, from the analysis undertaken, it appears that none of Maidstone's neighbours are using an economic scenario for their plan making process which explicitly seeks to increase or decrease commuting rates as a policy objective ( a so-called 'policy on' approach). This confirms that none of the authorities are actively following a policy to alter commuting patterns which could have reciprocal impacts on other authority areas.
- 1.7 The table on page 7 of GVA's note presents a summary of the workforce-jobs-commuting balance for Maidstone and its neighbours. The aim is to provide a strategic overview of how individual authorities' proposals may affect this balance in the future. The table uses the commuting patterns from the 2011 census to help provide some consistent basis.
- Column A – OAN
  - Column B – total population growth
  - Column C – increase in workforce as a result of population growth (population-led)
  - Column D – increase in the number of jobs based on the capacity of the economy (economy-led)
  - Column E – number of out-commuters (2011 census)
  - Column F – proportion of people living and working in the same LPA (2011 census)
  - Column G – proportion of jobs in the LPA taken by people living in the same LPA (2011 census)
  - Column H – number of additional jobs needed if the increase in workforce as a result of population growth (column C) were to live and work in the same borough in the same proportion as was evident in the 2011 census (column F)
  - Column I – number of new jobs in the LPA (column D) which will be taken by people not living in the borough if the proportion of jobs taken by non-residents stays the same as was evident in the 2011 census (100%-column G)
  - Column J – number of new jobs in the LPA which will be taken by people living in the borough if the proportion stays the same as was evident in the 2011 census (D x G)
  - Column K – the workforce surplus/deficit (H – J)
- 1.8 The final column (K) shows that for Maidstone there will be 1,306 additional workers than jobs available in the borough, assuming 2011 commuting patterns. Tonbridge & Malling has a similar scale of 'surplus' workers. Whilst there is a complexity of factors which influence the balance between workers and jobs (such as economic activity rates, unemployment levels), in simple terms these workers could need to commute out of their resident borough for work, and for Maidstone this would represent an increase in out-commuting of

approximately 4% (K as a proportion of E). On the other hand, Medway, Swale, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford all show more jobs than workers in this analysis. When the jobs-workforce balance for the 6 authorities is looked at as a whole, this shows that an overall 'surplus' of just 1,724 workers across the 'sub region' could result from the combined authorities' plan proposals/emerging evidence bases. The scale of the potential increase in out-commuting from the sub region as a whole would be just 0.9% of the 2011 position (1,724 as a proportion of 195,674).

- 1.9 This is a highly marginal change both in absolute and proportionate terms. Also, the role that London plays as a highly significant source of employment for local workers cannot be discounted from this assessment and it can be expected that commuting to London will increase, as workers continue to capitalise on the good public transport links. The briefing paper highlights that for Maidstone the proportion of out-commuting to London increased from 10% of trips in 2001 to 20% in 2011. A further increase should therefore be expected as a continuation of this trend.
- 1.10 The briefing paper also provides an update of neighbouring authorities' B class land supply position relative to needs. The emerging Plans produced by Ashford, Medway, Swale and Maidstone indicate sufficient supply to meet their quantitative needs and all indicate a degree of over-supply to provide flexibility and choice. For Maidstone, Swale and Medway, additional allocations are stated to be needed to address qualitative issues. Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells are at an earlier stage in the Plan making process and have not yet affirmed how much additional land will be allocated. For Tonbridge & Malling the evidence indicates between 3 and 33ha additional land is needed depending on the economic scenario to be followed. Tunbridge Wells' evidence identifies a need for some 12.3ha of additional employment land.
- 1.11 Where positions have been confirmed, Maidstone and its adjoining authorities are allocating sufficient B class land to meet identified needs.
- 1.12 Overall, the analysis indicates that there will be sufficient land overall to accommodate employment needs in the wider area. The assessment of the relationship between population growth, workforce growth, jobs growth and in/out commuting levels across the wider area does not indicate any significant to change to the overall commuting balance.

## 2 – OFFICE FLOORSPACE

### Interim Findings

2.1 In the interim findings the Inspector made the following request;

**Unless alternative provision is identified there is likely to be a shortfall in the delivery of office floorspace against the identified requirement. Alternative provision may involve mixing development with more lucrative land uses in the town centre.**

**In the town centre, reduced on-site parking requirements could improve viability where alternative parking and public transport are available.**

**Consideration should be given to safeguarding part of Woodcut Farm or other sites suitable for office development from other uses for a period pending a recovery of office development values later in the plan period.**

### Council's response

#### Employment Floorspace Requirement (2016-31)

2.2 At the Modifications hearing on 1<sup>st</sup> December, the Inspector requested that Table 4.4 of the submission Local Plan setting out the net employment floorspace requirement be updated to an April 2016 base date. The Council has updated the table to include completions up to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and the updated table has been included in its schedule of Main Modifications/minor changes:

#### ***Update Table 4.4 of the Local Plan to take account of completions<sup>1</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016***

	Offices B1a/b (NIA)	Industry B2 (GIA)	Warehousing B8 (GIA)
Gross requirement (2011-31) sqm	39,830	20,290	49,911
<b>Net requirement (2014-31) sqm</b>	<b>24,000</b>	<b>-15,600</b>	<b>6,500</b>
<b><u>Net requirement (2016-31) sqm</u></b>	<b><u>24,600</u></b>	<b><u>-18,610</u></b>	<b><u>7,965</u></b>

2.3 The updated net requirement for offices and warehousing has increased because losses to other uses have exceeded gains. Conversely more industrial floorspace has been completed than has been lost.

<sup>1</sup> For B1a/b – all completions; For B2/8 – completions of 400sqm and above;

## Allocations

2.4 As an outcome of both the hearings and the Interim Findings, changes have been proposed to site allocations which will affect the overall employment land supply position. The changes are as follows;

- Policy EMP1(1) Mote Road - proposed Main Modification to state that the site is allocated for up to 2,000sqm of office floorspace as part of a mixed use development
- Policy EMP1(5) Woodcut Farm – proposed Main Modification to state that the site will deliver, as a minimum, 7,500sqm B1a/b floorspace. A further Main Modification proposes an additional criterion confirming that serviced land to accommodate a minimum of 3,300sqm of floorspace within Use Classes B1(a) and B1(b) will be provided before any units falling within Use Classes B1(c), B2 or B8 are occupied. These proposed changes are agreed with the developer
- Policy RMX1(4) Syngenta – proposed Main Modification to delete the allocation for housing and employment (B class uses)
- Policy RMX1(2) Maidstone East and Royal Mail Sorting Office – revision to the proposed Main Modification to state that the site will deliver 4,000sqm of office floorspace as part of the mixed used development. This is an increase of 500sqm from the 3,500sqm figure put forward at the Modifications Hearing based on further consideration of the capacity of the site in the interim. The revised Main Modification to Policy RMX1(2) is set out below. If agreed, this will need to be incorporated in the finalised schedule of Modifications.

Policy	Proposed change	Main Modification or Minor Change	Reason
Policy RMX1(2) – Maidstone East and Royal Mail Sorting Office and paragraph 13.12	Amend paragraph 13.12 as follows;  <u>13.12 Office uses will be an important component of the mix of uses on the site. The site is in a highly sustainable location adjacent to Maidstone East station which will benefit from improved services to London in 2018 and with good access to Junction 6 of M20.</u> Housing is <u>also</u> seen as an important supporting use on this site. Residential development could be delivered in separate blocks either to the west of the site or possibly south of the railway line fronting Brenchley Gardens, or on upper floors above the retail	Main Modification	To ensure consistency with national policy and to ensure the plan is positively prepared to meet identified needs.

	<p>development.</p> <p>Amend Policy RMX1(2) as follows;</p> <p><b>Maidstone East and former Royal Mail Sorting Office, as shown on the policies map, is allocated for development for up to 10,000m<sup>2</sup> comparison and convenience retail, <u>4,000sqm of offices (B1a)</u> and approximately 210 dwellings. In addition to the requirements of policy H1, planning permission will be granted if the following criteria are met.</b></p> <p><b>1 The provision of up to 10,000sqm of comparison and convenience shopping floorspace, <u>4,000sqm of offices (B1a)</u> and some 210 dwellings. <u>The submission of a retail impact assessment is required which demonstrates that the National Planning Policy Framework's impact test is met.</u></b></p>		
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2.5 These changes are incorporated into the table below which shows the amount of B class floorspace to be delivered on allocated sites in the Local Plan. Two of the allocated sites are in the town centre and will together deliver 6,000sqm of new office floorspace as part of mixed use schemes.

**Table 1 - Local Plan allocations providing B class employment floorspace**

	Office (B1a/b) sqm	Industrial (B1c/B2) sqm	Warehousing (B8) sqm
EMP1(1) Mote Road (will be a RMX1 policy)	2,000		
EMP1(2) Barradale Farm			5,500
EMP1(3) Land south of Claygate			6,800
EMP1(4) Land at Wheelbarrow estate			14,500
EMP1(5) Woodcut Farm	7,500		41,500
RMX1(2) Maidstone East	4,000		

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,500</b>	<b>68,300</b>
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### **Pipeline supply of offices (consents)**

- 2.6 There will be additional supply of office floorspace from planning consents granted between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. The Council previously provided an update on the supply of office floorspace from the main sites granted planning permission since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 in its 'Note on office floorspace' (ED 099).
- 2.7 A more comprehensive list of sites with extant consent at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 is set out below:

**Table 2 – Sites with consent for B1a at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 (>400sqm)**

MA/15/505504	Mandarin Chef, 35-37 Lower Stone Street	660sqm
MA/12/0867	Congelow Farm, Benover Road, Yalding	530sqm
MA/13/2059	Knight Ashphalt, Lenham	730sqm
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,920sqm</b>

- 2.8 This shows that there is a pipeline supply of some 1,920sqm of additional office floorspace. This is additional to the capacity within the designated Economic Development Areas and the Local Plan allocations.

### **Supply of B1a/b floorspace from windfall sites**

- 2.9 This pipeline supply of consents helps to illustrate that there will be other unidentified sites which will be developed for new offices over the remaining plan period. To date, no allowance for such windfall sites has been included in the Council's assessment of B1a/b supply.
- 2.10 The Council has undertaken an analysis of the amount of B1a and B1b floorspace completed in the 5 years between 2011/12 and 2015/16 on windfall sites. The list of applications is provided in Appendix B. To ensure only genuine windfall sites were included, the following approach was taken;
- Completions on allocated sites and within the designated Economic Development Areas (including ED1/ED2 sites in the adopted Local Plan) have been excluded; and
  - Completions where the office floorspace was ancillary to the primary use of the site/building have been excluded

- 2.11 The findings are included in Appendix B. This shows that in the preceding 5 years there has been a significant level of delivery of office floorspace on unidentified sites totalling 3,776sqm. The Council considers that a 5 year period represents a reasonable historic period from which to derive a trend and, whilst the annual rate of completions has fluctuated year on year, this should be expected as part of a natural economic cycle. On average, 755sqm has been completed per annum.
- 2.12 More than 50% of the completed floorspace is in the town centre. As offices are a specified town centre use, national policy and Local Plan policy (Policy DM17 in the submission Plan) would positively support further such development in the future. The most significant scheme was the conversion of the Maidstone Library building in St Faiths Street to 1,443sqm offices. An example of a similar type of site which could provide additional offices, most likely as part of mixed use proposals, is the empty Maidstone Post Office building on King Street PO Sorting office. This site was identified in the Town Centre Study (CEN 002) as an opportunity site (Figure 6.2, page 82, site 52). The Study concluded that the site would be appropriate for 2,740sqm additional retail (paragraph 11.167) with the opportunity for employment on upper floors (paragraph 11.159).
- 2.13 The schemes contributing to the completed floorspace in the rest of the borough fall into two broad types. Firstly, schemes for the extension of existing business premises in countryside and Policy DM41 (as proposed to be modified) will provide the framework for such proposals in the future. The remaining schemes were on sites within identified settlements where development is, in principal, acceptable.
- 2.14 Based on this trend, the council considers that it is reasonable to make an allowance for future supply on 'windfall' sites which will contribute to the forecast demand. To not make such an allowance would fail to take proper account of a source of future supply. As the sites which have come forward as windfalls are different in terms of nature and scale to the allocations for B1a/b space made in the Plan, the Council does not consider that the inclusion of the allocations in the Local Plan will alter the future incidence windfall sites to any significant degree.
- 2.15 In common with the approach taken to housing windfalls, no allowance is proposed for the first 3 years (2016/17 to 2018/19). For the twelve year period 2019/20 to 2030/31 an allowance of 750sqm/annum equates to some 9,000sqm of B1a floorspace to include in the overall employment land supply. The extant consents listed in Table 2 (which are all 'windfall' sites) help to further underline that this rate of supply is likely to continue in the future.
- 2.16 The revised Monitoring section of the Local Plan includes a monitoring indicator to measure the amount of B class floorspace delivered annually (indicator M18). This data will be used to assess delivery of office floorspace on windfall sites in comparison with the allowance to confirm that this level of supply is being achieved.

## B1a/b Land Supply

- 2.17 Taking account of the sources of supply identified in the preceding sections, the supply position is as follows

**Table 3 – B1a/b sources of supply**

<b>Requirement 2016-31 (sqm)</b>	<b>24,600</b>
<b>Supply (sqm):</b>	
Allocations	13,500
Consents @ 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2016	1,920
Windfall allowance (B1a)	9,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,420</b>
shortfall	-180

- 2.18 This shows a small shortfall of some 180sqm against forecast needs by the end of the Plan period. Overall this is de minimus and can be expected to be bridged given that the Local Plan has some 15 years to run. Indeed, since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, consent has been granted for a scheme a Turkey Court, Maidstone<sup>2</sup> (MA/16/502359) which would deliver an additional 816sqm B1a over and above that already assumed for this site in the Council’s evidence base (ECON 002). Implementation of this consent alone would overcome the numerical shortfall identified.
- 2.19 There is therefore a sufficient supply of land for B1a/b uses through allocations and consents in conjunction with a justified allowance for future windfalls to meet the evidenced need for the full Plan period to 2031.

## Local Plan Review

- 2.20 In response to the discussion at the hearings and the Interim Findings, the Council is proposing a Main Modification committing it to a first Local Plan Review with a target adoption date of April 2021. The proposed wording of the Review Policy LPR1 and the supporting text confirms that employment land provision (supply) and needs is one of the matters which the Review may need to address.
- 2.21 The updated Local Plan monitoring indicators which have been proposed provide a much more comprehensive framework for how the Council will monitor employment land supply (indicators M18-M21). If overall delivery is falling short of identified requirements, the monitoring framework underlines that the Council will need to consider changes to the employment land strategy as part of a Local Plan review.
- 2.22 The employment forecast that forms part of the Plan’s evidence base provides an assessment of needs for the full Plan period to 2031 (ECON 001). Inevitably the confidence

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<sup>2</sup> Site is within a EDA so no double counting with the windfall allowance

level of such economic projections reduces over time. Whilst there can be a higher level of certainty over the level of need in the earlier phases of the Local Plan, over the longer term performance needs to be monitored and updated to refine the understanding of need in the future. This is a further argument to review demand and supply as part of the first Local Plan Review.

- 2.23 The document ED 099 sets out how the need for additional office floorspace (B1a/b) is phased in the Council’s economic forecast (ECON 001). The table reproduced below shows the cumulative requirement in 5 year phases to the end of the Plan period.

**Table 4 – Office (B1a/b) need in 5 year phases (cumulative)**

	<b>2014-16</b>	<b>2016-2021</b>	<b>2021-26</b>	<b>2026-31</b>
<b>B1a/b Cumulative requirement (sqm)</b>	-235	8,094	16,602	24,000

- 2.24 Reading the supply position in Table 3 in conjunction with the phasing of needs in Table 4 reveals that there is sufficient supply on identified sites alone (allocations and consents) to meet needs up to the start of the 2025/26 monitoring year. This before any account is taken of the supply from windfall sites which the Council considers will form part of a sustained supply of office space over the Plan period. Also, the relative lack of current market interest in larger scale new office development suggests demand may actually be deferred more towards the end of the Plan period than the forecast suggests whilst the office market continues to go through a period of rebalancing with the loss of the poorer quality stock.
- 2.25 As part of the Local Plan Review, the Council will re-assess both the need (demand) for employment floorspace and the supply, including whether additional allocations or alterations to existing allocations are required.
- 2.26 Policy RMX1(1) allocates the Newnham Park site specifically for a medical campus of up to 100,000sqm. Criterion 1 of the policy specifies that 25,000sqm of this will be for associated offices and research and development. The site was granted outline consent for 98,000sqm of floorspace in April 2014 with the consent conditioned to state that the occupation of the office buildings shall be limited to those occupiers directly related to the provision of medical services (MA/13/1163). None of this consented floorspace currently counts as supply towards to the general requirement for additional office floorspace . There is a current application to renew the outline consent (MA/16/507292).
- 2.27 The Council considers that the Local Plan Review would be a timely point at which to review progress with the delivery of the medical campus. At this point it would be 5-6 years since outline consent was first granted and it would be an appropriate point to consider, in the round, if any adjustments to the policy framework for the site are justified. This could include assessing the prospects of the full 25,000sqm being developed out for medical

related offices or whether an element could go towards meeting more general office needs. Relevant to this assessment would be both an updated forecast of office needs for the borough and a fuller understanding of the demand for the medical specific office floorspace.

- 2.28 The allocation is for up to 100,000sqm of floorspace of which 98,000sqm has extant consent. There is a further area of land within the RMX1(1) allocation which is allocated for medical and associated uses which does not form part of the currently consented scheme. This area of land which is shown in the Plan in Appendix C lies between the shopping village and the new access road into the site and extends to some 3ha.
- 2.29 The medical campus as currently envisaged does not require this area of land. This additional area has the potential to accommodate additional general needs B1a/b floorspace. As part of the Local Plan Review, the allocation of this area should also be reviewed to determine if it should be identified for general office needs. Indicatively, the site is large enough to provide up to 15,000sqm of offices.
- 2.30 The Council is proposing a Main Modification to the Plan to signal the potential of the Newnham Park site to accommodate additional general needs B1a/b floorspace and for this to be further assessed as part of the first Local Plan Review.

Policy	Proposed change	Main Modification or Minor Change	Reason
RMX1(1)	<p>Add an additional paragraph after paragraph 13.9 as follows;</p> <p><i><u>13.x As the medical campus is a specific allocation for a specialist type of use, the first Local Plan Review will be a timely point at which to review progress with the delivery of the campus and to consider whether any adjustments to the policy framework for this site are justified. Specifically the Council will assess the site's suitability for an element of non-medical B1a/b uses which could be additional to, or a partial alternative to, the floorspace allocated in Policy RMX1(1). Factors which will inform this review will be progress with, and the prospects for, the implementation of medical-related office development on this site and an updated assessment of the need for additional B1a/b class employment floorspace in the borough to the end of the Plan period.</u></i></p>	Main Modification	To ensure the plan is positively prepared to meet identified needs.

	<p>Add an additional section to the end of Policy RMX1(1) to read;</p> <p><b><u>Through the first Local Plan Review the Council will assess the site's suitability for an element of non-medical related B1a/b uses. Factors which will inform this assessment will be progress with, and prospects for, the implementation of medical-related office development on the site and an updated assessment of the need for additional B1a/b floorspace in the borough to the end of the Plan period.</u></b></p>		
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# APPENDIX A



## Maidstone Borough Local Plan Examination

### Additional Analysis in Response to Inspector's Interim Findings: Matter 4 Employment

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- 1.1 This note provides additional analysis relating to the discussion of Employment Matters in the Inspector's Interim Findings from the Examination of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
- 1.2 This focuses on the following key points raised in the Inspector's Interim Findings:
- Updating the position on job targets and employment land provision in Maidstone and adjoining local authorities in relation to projected housing and employment growth
  - Considering the impact of cross-border commuting between Maidstone, neighbouring areas and London on job provision
- 1.3 It is worth noting that throughout the preparation of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan the Council has continued to engage with its neighbours on all matters, including the need for and provision of employment land. At no point have any of the neighbouring authorities raised any challenges or issues relating to the approach to employment matters proposed by Maidstone Borough Council.
- 1.4 In preparing its Local Plan and evidence base Maidstone Borough Council has taken into account the plans (at whatever stage they were at) of its neighbours. In preparation for the Local Plan Examination Maidstone Borough Council has undertaken further engagement with its neighbours to confirm its plan does not create issues with its neighbours. Through this process all neighbouring authorities have confirmed to the Council that they have no unmet employment land needs which they require Maidstone's Local Plan to address.
- 1.5 This further note has been prepared to assist the Inspector's understanding of the 'sub-regional' housing and employment context. In line with the existing evidence base this note considers the functional economic area within which Maidstone sits, encompassing the following local authority areas:
- Medway;
  - Tonbridge and Malling
  - Swale;
  - Ashford; and
  - Tunbridge Wells
- 1.6 It is clearly not appropriate for Maidstone Borough Council to 're-assess' the demand and supply for each local authority. Therefore this note provides a further review of the published evidence and policy direction for each district. It then considers the relationship between forecast population and

jobs growth in the sub-region and compares this at a strategic level with current in and out commuting rates.

- 1.7 By undertaking this analysis we have developed a high level understanding of the potential future impacts of housing and jobs growth (as planned) on the need for residents within the sub-region to commute to other locations to work.

## **Economic Forecasting Approach**

- 1.8 In understanding the potential impacts of growth on the need to commute we first confirm the approach taken by each local authority within their employment forecasts. Each forecasting model includes an assumption on commuting as a key input into the model in order to provide an understanding of the relationship between potential population growth and potential jobs growth.
- 1.9 Whilst all forecasting models differ in their detailed methodology, on review it is clear none use the existing commuting rate as an 'absolute', with the models internally balancing the demand for labour (jobs) and the supply of labour (population) in each local authority area. Where a local authority area is forecast to provide more jobs than the workforce its population creates the models assume in-commuting will increase, where jobs will be below the workforce models assume out-commuting will increase. In equilibrium the commuting rates are held constant.
- 1.10 However, whilst the 'standard' base models align commuting between authority areas, each local authority evidence base varies both the population and employment forecasts through their respective SHMA and ELR scenario tests, with the effect that different levels of in/out commuting could result. Therefore, there is potential for the commuting relationship to be different from that assumed in any base model.
- 1.11 Further, depending on the date of each evidence base, the initial commuting pattern assumptions will vary, with some based on older Census data where 2011 information wasn't published. It is therefore critical to understand the model used in each local authority area, any specific considerations of commuting used and any conclusions drawn. A summary for each is presented below. For Maidstone we also consider how commuting has changed between the 2001 and 2011 Census given the evidence base was prepared using 2001 data.

### **Maidstone**

- Base model used for economic forecasting: Experian Business Strategies (September 2013)
- In the Experian modelling approach used in the MBC Economic Scenario Testing & Employment Land Forecast Report, workplace and residence based variables are linked by the commuting relationship

derived from the 2001 Census, which is how the relationship between workforce and jobs is considered. 2011 Census data had not yet been released.

- Based on 2001 travel to work data;
  - 42,009 people live and work in Maidstone
  - Commuting inflow of 27,746, commuting outflow of 27,501. Therefore there is 60% self-containment (based on the 42,009 Maidstone residents who live and work in Maidstone, as a proportion of the 69,755 total Maidstone jobs).
- Based on 2011 travel to work data;
  - 30,693 people live and work in Maidstone
  - Commuting inflow of 29,999, commuting outflow of 31,095. Therefore there is 51% self-containment (based on the 30,693 Maidstone residents who live and work in Maidstone, as a proportion of the 60,692 total Maidstone jobs).
- In 2001 approximately 10% of trips by Maidstone residents to work outside of the authority area were to London. In 2011 this proportion had doubled, and approximately 20% of the trips to work outside of the authority area were to London. This increase is not surprising as London is a major jobs generator offering a range of employment opportunities, which means it is almost inevitable that residents will (increasingly) continue to commute to London from Maidstone, particularly where transport options have increased or services improved. This will (most likely) also be the case for other neighbouring local authorities in the South East region. It also suggests that the major factor behind the change in the 'self-containment' of the labour in Maidstone resulted from an increase in out-commuting to London rather than within the sub-region.

## Swale

- Base model used for economic forecasting in Swale SHMA (September 2015), which informs Employment Needs in Swale (2014-31) Report: Experian (September 2015) – Experian commissioned to run three forecasts, varying population (or housing) assumptions. This is cross-checked with the Oxford Economics EEFM model, Autumn 2014 release (which has adjusted migrations flows compared to the Experian model “to reflect the comparative strengths and weaknesses of local economies”, amongst a range of other variations in modelling assumptions (Swale SHMA, page 53)).
- In relation to the consideration of commuting patterns in this modelling approach, it is suggested in the Swale SHMA (page 49) that “where labour supply exceeds demand (for jobs) the model adjusts other labour market variables. For example increasing out commuting, increasing unemployment or suppressing economic activity rates”.
- In the Experian modelling approach workplace and residence based variables are linked by the commuting relationship derived from the 2011 Census, which is how the relationship between workforce and jobs is considered.

### **Ashford**

- Base model used for economic forecasting in Strategic Employment Options Report (2012): Cambridge Econometric's Local Economy Forecasting Model (LEFM), consistent with CE's Regional forecasts published in July 2011. Historical employment data in the baseline scenario is to 2009 so does not incorporate more up to date employment trends than this. The Baseline projection incorporates Ashford's economic structure, Ashford's past relative performance compared to the wider South East economy, trend based population growth, and macro-economic sector forecasts (July 2011).
- No specific information on the approach to considering commuting patterns is evident, however 2011 travel to work data could not have been considered as it was not yet published at the time this Report was produced.
- The SHMA Update (June 2015) uses the CE LEFM scenarios from the Strategic Employment Options Report (2012) in its modelling, and introduces an additional revised scenario incorporating CE's November 2013 forecasts. However, there is no information evident on the approach to considering commuting patterns in this revised scenario.

### **Tonbridge & Malling**

- Base model used for economic forecasting in Tonbridge & Malling's Economic Futures Forecasting Study (January 2014): Experian Economic Modelling (May 2013 model run of Experian UK Regional Planning Service (RPS)). As stated in the Study (page 14) "This reflects a range of standard assumptions about the way in which the national and regional economy is expected to perform, incorporating short and long term drivers".
- In the Experian modelling approach used in the Economic Futures Forecasting Study, workplace and residence based variables are linked by the commuting relationship derived from the 2001 Census, which is how the relationship between workforce and jobs is considered. As was the case for Maidstone's evidence, the 2011 Census data had not yet been released.
- An alternative approach, forecasting future labour supply, is also undertaken. This uses the demographic scenario for OAN from the SHMA, where the modelling "takes account of economic activity rates and future pension age changes outlined in current national policy" which facilitates a more nuanced understanding of both in and out commuting, including the relationship of out-commuting with the London economy.

### **Tunbridge Wells**

- Base model used for economic forecasting in the Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Economic Needs Study (August 2016): Oxford Econometrics' 2014 East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM), considering both the 2013 and 2014 EEFM datasets, but then focussing completely on the 2014 EEFM dataset.
- The net commuting assumption in this approach is "the residual between an area's residence-based and workplace-based estimates of number of numbers of people in employment". The residence employment

consideration in this model relies on a commuting matrix from the 2011 Census and assumes no change in commuting patterns over time (EEFM Technical Report 2014<sup>1</sup>, page 16).

### **Medway**

- Base model used for economic forecasting in the Medway Employment Land Needs Assessment (2015): Experian Business Strategies (finalised and published in May 2015), which “factors in demographic trends and future expectations and changes” (Medway Employment Land Needs Assessment 2015, page 3).
- In the Experian modelling approach workplace and residence based variables are linked by the commuting relationship derived from the 2011 Census, which is how the relationship between workforce and jobs is considered.

1.12 As shown above, whilst the model base varies Maidstone, Medway and Tonbridge and Malling are all based on Experian data. This suggests that in terms of Maidstone's strongest economic relationships assumptions in the model are likely to be consistent.

1.13 The above analysis also shows that despite differences in the base models used for economic forecasting, the approach of all local authorities in the sub-region is to use the latest available Census data related to commuting as the starting point for understanding employment growth needs. This provides a level of consistency in the commuting assumptions given it is not then deliberately adjusted to incorporate any subjective ‘policy on’ scenarios.

### **Relationship between Population, Workforce and Jobs**

1.14 Given there is no common forecast that ‘balances’ the demand and supply of labour across all the authorities outlined above it is helpful to consider, at a strategic level, the relationship between forecast population and workforce growth in relation to jobs projections in order to understand potential impacts on the need to commute.

1.15 It should be noted this only provides a broad understanding of potential commuting impacts given forecasts vary by time period and forecasting models are not identical. However, by understanding each local authority’s forecast position against current commuting patterns, an indicative change in commuting need can be established.

1.16 In the table below the first four columns (A – D) detail the most up to date projection figures for population, homes, workforce and jobs for Maidstone and its five neighbouring local authorities, sourced from the most up-to date evidence bases for each local authority (see source list at the end of this paper). The remaining columns (E – K) consider commuting trends, and possible out-

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<sup>1</sup> [http://atlas.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/EEFM/EEFM\\_2014\\_technical\\_report\\_January2015.pdf](http://atlas.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/EEFM/EEFM_2014_technical_report_January2015.pdf)

commuting influenced by the relationship between projected workforce and jobs growth (where 2011 commuting patterns are held constant).

- 1.17 Column E simply states the level of out-commuting observed in each local authority in 2011, combined as a total in the final row to show this for the whole economic sub-region. Column F calculates the proportion of local authority residents in 2011 who worked in their local authority area (local residents living and working in the LA / total workers in LA x 100). Column G calculates the proportion of LA jobs taken up by residents in that LA (residents living and working in the LA / total jobs in LA x 100).
- 1.18 Building on this analysis, column H determines the projected number of local jobs driven by the projected local workforce, which is calculated by multiplying the projected workforce by the 2011 proportion of local residents working in their LA, assuming this is held constant over the period ( $C \times F$ ). Column I then calculates the number of local jobs that will be taken up by non-LA residents, multiplying the projected jobs growth by the proportion of jobs taken by non-LA residents in 2011, again assuming this is held constant over the period ( $D \times (1 - G)$ ).
- 1.19 The projected jobs available for local residents is identified in Column J by subtracting the number of jobs taken up by non-LA residents from the projected jobs growth ( $D - I$ ) and the difference between columns H and J is indicated in the final column. This difference constitutes the local residents prepared to work in their LA, but who would not necessarily find a job in the LA and would therefore be likely to out-commute. This therefore provides a crude calculation of the change in out-commuting reflecting the relationship between workforce, jobs growth and 2011 commuting patterns.

	Projected homes	Projected population growth	Projected workforce growth	Projected jobs growth	2011 out-commuting	2011 residents working in LA (%)	2011 LA jobs taken by LA residents (%)	Workforce driven local jobs	Jobs growth taken by non-LA residents	Jobs available for Local Residents	Difference
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
<b>Maidstone</b> (2011 – 31)	928dpa	33,811	17,300	14,400	31,239	50%	51%	8650	7056	7344	1306
<b>Swale</b> (2014 – 31)	776dpa	25,000	7,870	10,900	22,825	55%	69%	4329	3379	7521	-3193
<b>Ashford</b> (2011 – 31)	727dpa	25,487	12,700	12,600	17,981	47%	49%	5969	6426	6174	-205
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b> (2011 – 31)	646dpa	23,635	12,500	7,400 - 8,700	30,624	29%	29%	3625	5716	2335	1291
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b> (2013 – 33)	648dpa	19,210	8,640	9,168	42,477	50%	52%	4320	4401	4767	-447
<b>Medway</b> (2012 – 37)	1,281dpa	58,600	22,676	17,200	50,528	51%	70%	11565	5160	12040	-475
<b>Whole Economic Area</b>	<b>5,006dpa</b>	<b>185,743</b>	<b>81,686</b>	<b>72,318</b>	<b>195,674</b>			<b>38565</b>	<b>32137</b>	<b>40181</b>	<b>-1724</b>

N.B. The relevant projection periods for each local authority have been used based on their most up to date forecasting evidence, so some variation in the time range is evident.

The figures used in this table have been sourced from the most up to date evidence base studies for each local authority, produced by a range of Consultants. There may therefore be some variations in the methodological and calculation approach of these figures.

- 1.20 As shown in the table above in total there is an under-provision of jobs within the sub-region when compared to the number of workers that will be generated by forecast population growth. Whilst the relationship differs in each local authority area in total there would potentially be 1,724 residents who would need to commute out to work who would otherwise have worked locally.
- 1.21 Whilst this is clearly a simplification of the complex inter-relationships between population growth, employment and commuting it does give a sense of the scale of impact that forecast growth may have on residents commuting outside of the sub-region to work. Overall it would potentially see a further increase in out-commuting of c.1%.
- 1.22 It is not possible to robustly project out-commuting and the nature of these flows in terms of destination. However, it is anticipated that commuting to London will continue to increase from Maidstone and neighbouring authorities considering the significant employment role of London and the strong public transport connections already in existence.
- 1.23 Considering the close in-commuting relationship between Maidstone and the five local authorities, the majority of the out-commuting from the whole economic sub-region is expected to be to London boroughs, particularly considering the doubling in the out-commuting trend to London from Maidstone from 2001 to 2011. However, the trend of out-commuting is likely to predominantly reflect

the employment opportunities provided by London and does not necessarily mean there is an under-provision (or increasing under-provision) of jobs for local residents within their local authority areas.

## Employment Land Provision

- 1.24 In terms of the employment land position across the whole economic sub-region it is evident that Maidstone and all local authorities are seeking to meet their quantitative employment need. The exceptions to this are Tonbridge & Malling which has not yet determined how much additional land will be allocated, and Tunbridge Wells which has not yet published a first consultation version of its new Local Plan.
- 1.25 A summary of the employment land position of Maidstone and the five neighbouring local authorities combined in the economic sub-region is as follows:

### Maidstone

- There is a quantitative requirement for additional employment land for office and distribution (B8) uses to meet the maximum jobs growth scenario in its evidence base. There is also an identified qualitative need for employment land to match the likely land requirement of future growth sectors, as detailed in the Examination submission and evidence base documents.

### Swale

- As indicated in the Swale Local Plan Examination Inspector's Interim Findings (March 2016); the ELR update translates projected jobs growth into floorspace requirements, and the monitoring of employment land indicates that the Borough continues to have sufficient employment land supply.
- The Borough's proposed main modifications to update its Local Plan evidence reference qualitative reasons for an oversupply of employment land (Main Mods 51/52/53), and allocations amount to an oversupply of 369,299sqm (Main Mods 58).

### Ashford

- The Ashford ELR Sites Report (April 2016) identifies that there is a quantitative over-supply of 26.7ha – 27.5ha of employment land.
- In the Ashford Local Plan the Council concludes that "in broad terms there is sufficient land allocated already within existing adopted Plans to meet the overall land requirements to 2030...."

### Tonbridge & Malling

- The Tonbridge & Malling Employment Land Review (December 2014) suggests a quantitative under-supply of employment land in the authority area to meet identified need to 2031. There is therefore a need to

identify 3 – 33ha of additional employment land alongside maintaining existing sites, in order to meet this identified need.

### **Tunbridge Wells**

- The Tunbridge Wells Employment Land Review (2010) found that the local authority had sufficient capacity to fully meet their identified employment land needs, with no demonstrable over supply.
- However, updated evidence in the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Economic Needs Study (August 2016), forming part of the evidence base supporting the emerging new Local Plan (at early evidence gathering stage), indicates that in quantitative terms there is a 12.3ha shortfall in employment land to accommodate growth up to 2033/2035. There is therefore a recommendation to address this through new land allocations, which will also support a qualitative case for increased choice of sites. As the new Local Plan is at a very early stage, the Council's response to addressing this shortfall has yet to be formalised, it is therefore unclear if this need will be met within the borough.

### **Medway**

- In its Development Options (Regulation 18) consultation document, Medway Council indicates it is planning to fully meet its quantitative need for 90ha of employment land over the plan period to 2037. Allocations in the previous plan would also provide additional capacity to meet qualitative requirements. The full employment land strategy will be clarified following the completion of the current Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation (16<sup>th</sup> January – 6<sup>th</sup> March).

## **Conclusion**

- 1.26 Whilst the analysis within this paper is only able to provide an indicative understanding of the relationship between projected population and employment growth and its implications for commuting, it is clear that based on current evidence, the impact would most likely be small.
- 1.27 Given trends in out-commuting to London (which have increased from most boroughs between 2001 and 2011) as well as significant jobs growth planned in other locations that are easily accessible (for example Ebbsfleet, London Paramount, Discovery Park) it is likely that the additional 1% in potential out-commuting would be absorbed elsewhere.
- 1.28 All local authorities within the sub-region have identified a need for additional employment land based on both quantitative and qualitative, only Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells are yet to identify sufficient land capacity to meet the identified requirements because of the stage they are at in the plan making process.
- 1.29 For Maidstone specifically there would be a deficit of c.1,300 jobs if in-commuting remains constant, this would potentially increase the level of out-commuting by approximately 4% over the plan

period. Given the level of growth in out-commuting to London between 2001 and 2011 (10%) this would not represent a significant increase in commuting trends.

## Sources

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Ashford ELR Sites Report (April 2016), found at: <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/local-plan-2030-evidence-base>

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[http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/94035/Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-Update-Affects-of-the-2012-Based-Household-Projections-2015.pdf](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/94035/Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-Update-Affects-of-the-2012-Based-Household-Projections-2015.pdf)

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Medway Employment Land Needs Assessment (2015):

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Medway%20Employment%20Land%20Assessment%20Final%20Report%20161602.pdf>

Medway Local Plan Cabinet Report, 20 December 2016

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgConvert2Pdf.aspx?ID=10094&T=9>

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[https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/134565/Economic\\_Futures\\_Forecasting\\_Study\\_Final\\_160114.pdf](https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/134565/Economic_Futures_Forecasting_Study_Final_160114.pdf)

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## APPENDIX B

### Calculation of Windfall Allowance for Offices

**Table 5: Completions contributing to calculation of windfall allowance (B1a)**

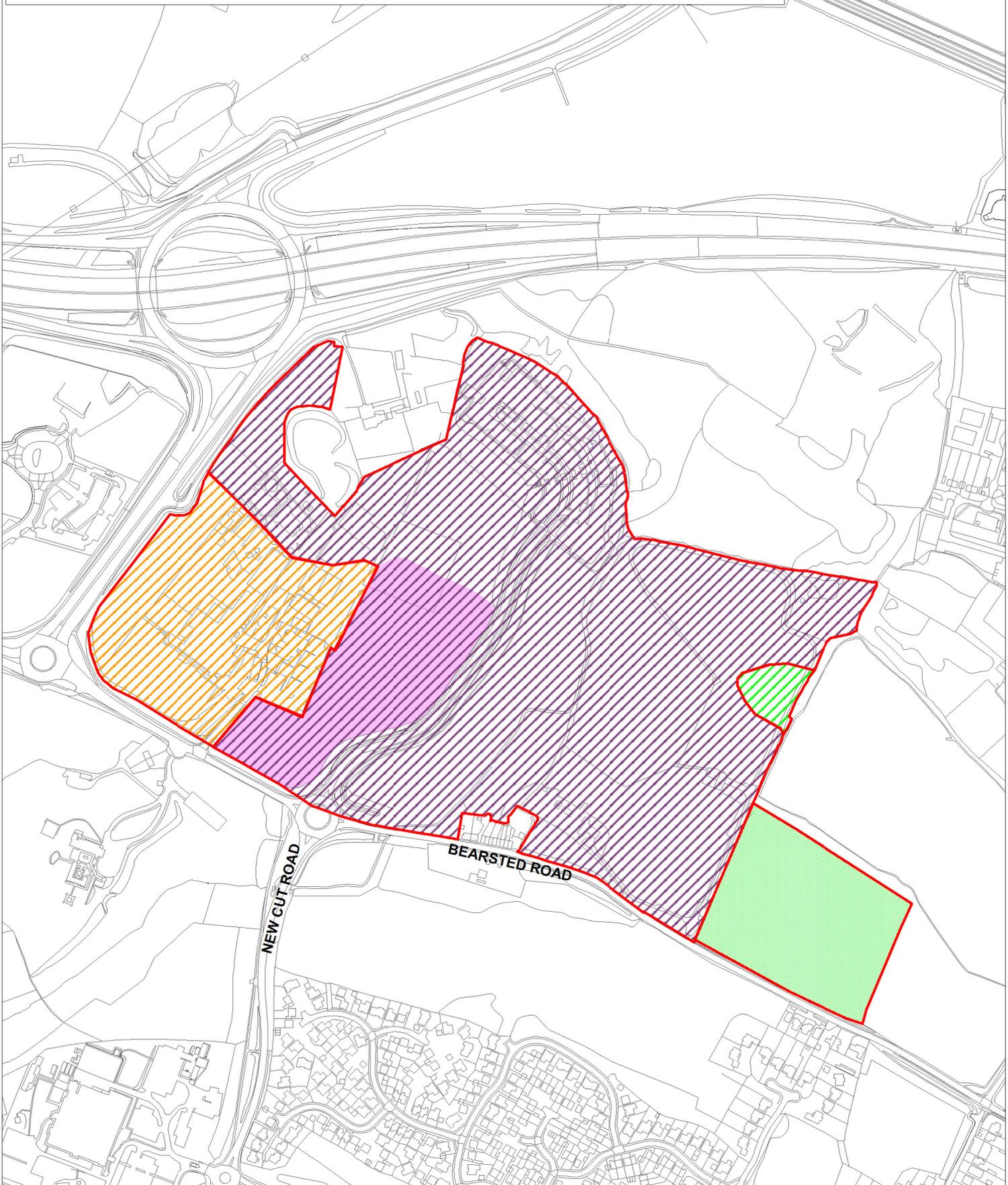
	Application	Town Centre Site/Rest of Borough	B1a Floorspace completed (sqm)	B1a floorspace completed /year (sqm)
<b>14/15 and 15/16</b>	MA/15/503384 Second Floor Sussex House 21 – 25 Lower Stone Street, Maidstone ME15 6YT	TC	225	1709
	MA/14/5285 Allington Marina, Castle Road, Maidstone ME16 0NH	RoB	41	
	MA/15/505223/FULL Maidstone Library St Faiths Street	TC	1443	
<b>13/14</b>	MA/11/1950 Rankins Farm, Linton Hill, Linton	RoB	139	215
	MA/11/1859 First floor, 89 Week Street, Maidstone ME14 1QX	TC	76	
<b>12/13</b>	MA/09/1150 South East Water, Hockers Lane Maidstone ME14 3JJ	RoB	153	567
	MA/10/1524 12 Marsham Road, Maidstone. ME14 1EP	RoB	118	
	MA/11/0995 3 -5 Brewer Street, Maidstone	TC	296	
<b>11/12</b>	MA/10/0140 Corbin Business Park Caring Lane Bearsted ME14 4NJ	RoB	1030	1285
	MA/09/1044 Senacre Housing Co-Op, Ascot House, Epsom Close	RoB	21	
	MA/10/1267 First floor, 17 Earl Street, Maidstone	TC	164	
	MA/10/2180 First floor, Lenham Library, The Square, Lenham.	RoB	70	
Total Town Centre				2,204
Total Rest of borough				1,572
<b>Total</b>				<b>3,776</b>
<b>Average /annum</b>				<b>755</b>

#### **Calculation**

Delivery of, on average, 750sqm of office floorspace over the past 5 years

12 years (2019/20 – 2030/31) @ 750sqm/annum = 9,000sqm

# RMX1 (1) - Newnham Park, Bearsted Road, Maidstone



## Legend

-  Retail allocation
-  Medical and associated uses allocation
-  Woodland Nature Reserve
-  'grassy knoll' area to be excluded from development
-  Area not covered by planning consent 13/1163

