

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

DRAFT PLAN FOR SUBMISSION (REGULATION 19)

OBJECTION TO SOUNDNESS ON BEHALF OF LENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

LACK OF FLEXIBILITY IN DELIVERY

LPC SEVENTEEN

1. Paragraph 4.28 (page 43) of the September 2021 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report concluded as follows:

“The scenarios that performed most strongly were scenarios three a to c (one garden settlement approaches).”

2. Paragraph 4.28 goes on to give reasons supporting the above judgement experience from elsewhere:

“Suggests that garden settlements can often be car dependent.”

3. The Inspector’s letter in relation to the Uttlesford Examination is dated 10th of January 2020. Under the heading” delivery” the Inspector’s comment as follows:

“The current strategy which relies on the garden communities to deliver 4190 dwellings in the period 2023/4 - 2032/3 (the end of the Plan period), against a target in this period of 7190 dwellings carries with it significant risks and lack of flexibility”.

4. In the case of Maidstone, the two garden communities (Lidsing and Heathlands) are to deliver 2700 dwellings within the plan period to 2037. This is set against a target of 5064 dwellings also within the plan period to 2037.
5. Paragraph 113 of the Uttlesford letter notes that the garden community approach predetermines the strategy long beyond the plan period and so is unduly inflexible.
6. The reason given in the Maidstone SA for selecting a two garden community approach, as opposed to an approach with a higher number of garden communities, is the inherent ‘risk management’ problem associated with such a strategy (SA para 4.21, page 39). Given that reasoning, the question has to be asked as to why the Maidstone plan does not adopt a one garden community approach is recommended by its own sustainability appraisal work?
7. Lenham Parish Council believes the Maidstone two garden community approach carries a similar risk and lack of flexibility, as was identified as a weakness in the approach which was adopted at Uttlesford.

8. The Maidstone SA at paragraph 4.47 notes that Heathlands performed least well across the range of sustainability objectives.
9. As a consequence of the risk to delivery and lack of flexibility both in the short-term and beyond the end of the plan period Lenham Parish Council concludes that Heathlands garden community should be deleted from the plan in its entirety.
10. The Uttlesford draft local plan was submitted for examination in January 2019. The Inspectors reported in their letter dated 10th of January 2020. The current Local Development Scheme (LDS) for Uttlesford was approved by Cabinet on 20 October 2020. Paragraph 2.2 of the LDS states that consultation on preferred options for a new plan are anticipated early in 2022.
11. It is apparent that the problems contained within the plan submitted for Uttlesford have led to a delay of some three years in the programme for adoption. Lenham Parish Council suggests that a similar delay might result from Maidstone Borough Council continuing with its current plan.
12. As a consequence, Lenham Parish Council feels that the current Maidstone local plan should be withdrawn. There should be a radical rethink in relation to the entire spatial strategy before a legally compliant local plan, supported by a legally compliant sustainability appraisal, can be prepared for public consultation.