

# Ashford Borough Council: Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **17 March 2023**.

## Present:

Cllr Bartlett (Chairman)  
Cllr Bell (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs Mrs Bell, Ledger, Spain, and Sparks.

## In attendance:

Spatial Planning Manager; Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Deputy Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure; Principal Solicitor - Strategic Development; Senior Planning and Development Solicitor; Member Services Officer.

## 1 Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1. Apologies had been received from Cllrs Blanford and Harman, and from the Director of Place, Space and Leisure.

## 2. Notes of the last Meeting

### 3.1 Resolved

The Notes of the meeting of 3 February 2023 were received and noted.

## 3. Review of other Local Plan progress in Kent

- 3.1 One of the Team Leaders – Plan Making and Infrastructure introduced the item, outlined the key points in the report, and confirmed there was no significant updated information since its production.
- 3.2 The item was opened up for discussion and questions. Following a query regarding the timetabling for ABC's Local Plan review, it was confirmed that this would begin in the summer in line with the agreed Local Development Scheme.
- 3.3 A Member requested sight of the Officer response to the Canterbury Local Plan consultation. This is appended to these notes as Appendix A.

**Resolved**

That the report and Table 1 be received and noted.

#### **4. Neighbourhood Plan updates**

- 4.1 The other Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure referred to the report which showed the number of Plans currently in progress. The referendum on the Charing Neighbourhood Plan had recently been undertaken, and it had been well supported.

**Resolved**

That the report be received and noted.

#### **5. Maidstone Regulation 18 consultation on Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Plan**

- 5.1 The item was introduced by the first Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure, who gave a presentation, appended to these notes as Appendix B. He explained that the future accommodation needs of the travelling community was being addressed in a separate Development Plan document. The need had been calculated at circa 600 additional pitches.
- 5.2. The item was opened up for discussion and questions. Members expressed the view that ABC should engage with Maidstone Borough Council at relevant stages of the plan-making process.

**Resolved**

#### **The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group**

- **Noted the summary of Maidstone Borough Council's Regulation 18 Consultation: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document in the report and presentation;**
- **Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Planning and Development to finalise and agree a response in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the Chair of Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group;**
- **Endorsed the Portfolio Holder to lobby central government for guidance and to open dialogue with neighbouring authorities.**

#### **6. Member Tracker**

- 6.1 It was agreed this would be managed and reviewed by the new Members of the Task Group after the May elections.

## **7. Date and time of the next meeting**

To be confirmed after the May elections.

Councillor Bartlett  
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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## Appendix A

# Planning and Development

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Date: 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Dear Andrew,

### [Canterbury Local Plan 2045 - Regulation 18 Consultation](#)

Thank-you for inviting Ashford Borough Council (ABC) to comment on Canterbury's draft (Regulation 18) Local Plan to 2045.

The Council has now had the opportunity to review the draft Local Plan and supporting evidence; and wish to make the following comments and/or observations:

### **Development Requirements**

The Council acknowledges and broadly supports Policy SS3 (*Development strategy for the district*) that sets out the development requirements and preferred spatial strategy, which aims to steer future development to the most sustainable settlements within the District with the principal focus being Canterbury and the urban areas of Whitstable and Herne Bay.

In particular, the Council supports and welcomes the fact that the draft Canterbury Local Plan intends to meet the minimum average housing requirement of 1,252 dwellings per year to 2045 (as calculated using the standard method); in full and within the District's administrative boundaries.

In terms of employment land, the Council notes that the draft Canterbury Local Plan allocates 172,220 sqm of new employment floorspace in line with the 'Labour Demand'

scenario. Whilst no concerns are raised in principle with the proposed employment strategy at this time, the Council observes that there is an approximate 60,000 sqm over-supply of the minimum requirement identified by the the Labour Demand Scenario in overall quantitative terms. The Council accepts the need to plan positively for growth and that this isn't unduly constrained by a lack of site capacity; however, it will continue to monitor the current position and give consideration as to how this may fit into Ashford's employment strategy as part of its own future Local Plan review.

The Council has no comments in regards to the identified retail needs and strategy.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation**

The Council notes that draft Policy SS3 (*Development strategy for the district*) sets a need for 26 pitches for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation across the plan period.

The supporting 'Development Topic Paper' provides an updated position, taking account of recent planning permissions, to conclude that there is an outstanding requirement of 9 residential pitches to 2045.

The Council notes that no Gypsy and Traveller allocations are being proposed as part of the draft Local Plan and that the outstanding need is to be addressed in essence through a windfall policy set out in draft Policy DS5 (specialist housing provision) criteria 7.

The GTAA (2022) has not been published alongside the draft Local Plan during the consultation period. Therefore, the Council wishes to reserve the right for future comment on the overall residential pitch requirement; as well as any transit pitch provision which may result in a requirement for cross-boundary working between Ashford, Canterbury and other Kent authorities as part of a wider strategy, until such time that the GTAA is made available for inspection.

### **Infrastructure**

The Council notes draft Policy SS5 (*Infrastructure Strategy for the District*) and in particular criteria 2(e), which requires new development to make provision for, or appropriate contributions towards, any new or improved infrastructure including to a new a new or improved Kent and Canterbury Hospital. This is reflected in other policies such as Policy C5 (*South West Canterbury*), which states 'Four allocated sites (Policies C6 to C10) will together deliver: New hospital facilities at the Kent and Canterbury Hospital;'.  
'

However, elsewhere in the document it is acknowledged that this proposal is not confirmed:

'1.27 .. and the delivery of a new or improved Kent and Canterbury Hospital which remains on the shortlist of options being considered by the NHS.'

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'2.8 The NHS is currently considering proposals for a new and improved Kent and Canterbury Hospital within this SDA, and these allocations would help to facilitate the hospital provision and a new direct access from the A2.'

This is reiterated in the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Oct 2022), which has no entry in the accompanying schedules for a new or enhanced hospital.

This raises a concern in the sense that developer contributions are being sought for a piece of infrastructure that may not yet be forthcoming. Whilst appreciating that this matter might be resolved by the time the Regulation 19 consultation takes place, the uncertainty should be flagged up more clearly and there should be some additional text explaining what alternatives might have to be considered if the hospital facilities are not improved in this location.

Assuming the proposals do go ahead the Council would like to have greater clarity of the implications that a new hospital may have on the diversion of health services and resources away from the William Harvey Hospital; as well as any potential effects on the local highway network within Ashford Borough and with Canterbury District as a result.

### **Stodmarsh**

Like Ashford Borough, a significant part of Canterbury district is situated within the River Stour catchment; and consequently there is a requirement for the Local Plan to address the issue of nutrient neutrality to prevent further deterioration of the internationally important Stodmarsh Lakes.

Draft Policy SS1 (*Environmental strategy for the district*) criteria 3, seeks to work with its partners to support and sustain the full recovery of the Stodmarsh Nature Reserve designated site and to meet its targets for water quality and improve biodiversity. The Council is keen to continue working actively with Canterbury City Council (and other affected LPAs) to address the Stodmarsh issue through the delivery of a catchment wide strategy to respond to nutrient neutrality.

Additionally, Ashford is supportive of the proposed district mitigation strategy set out in draft Policy DS17 (*Habitats of international importance*) and supported by draft Policy C24. The approach is broadly consistent with Ashford's own proposed borough-wide strategic response, in that larger development sites are required to deliver on-site mitigation wherever possible. However, where an off-site solution is necessary, land has been allocated and/or safeguarded for the creation of strategic wetlands (at Sturry and along the river corridor) to provide opportunities for strategic mitigation with sufficient capacity to accommodate planned growth over the plan period.

### **Stour Valley Regional Park**

The Council highlights draft Policy SS1 (*Environment strategy for the district*), criteria 8, which makes reference to the City Council working with partners to promote a 'Stour Valley Regional Park'.

The Council acknowledges that the scale and location of a new proposed regional park is yet to be determined, but would welcome the opportunity to be involved in any future discussions with the City Council in moving forward in order to help tackle any cross-boundary issues that may result as a consequence of any future Regional Park designation.

### **Broad Oak Reservoir**

The council wishes to place on record its support for draft Local Plan Policy R26 (*Broad Oak Reservoir and Country Park*), proposes the creation of a new reservoir at Broad Oak.

The reservoir is supported through South East Water's emerging Water Resources Management Plan; and will play a crucial role in helping to relieve issues related to water supply/scarcity within the East of Kent.

Yours sincerely,

Ian

Ian Bailey  
Team Leader Plan Making and Infrastructure

## Presentation for the LP&PP Task Group

Maidstone Borough Council

**Gypsy, Traveller  
and Travelling Showpeople  
Development Plan Document**

SCOPING, ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION  
DOCUMENT (Regulation 18a)

FEBRUARY 2023

17<sup>th</sup> March 2023



## Purpose and Timing of this Consultation

- The Maidstone Local Plan is at the Examination stage, but the future accommodation needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities are being addressed in a separate Development Plan Document.
- This exercise is described as a 'Regulation 18a consultation' and is more of a scoping document setting the scene for future work.
- The need for new pitches and plots is expected to be significant, but is subject to further work and no new sites are proposed at this stage.
- The timing suggests this is more about demonstrating to the Local Plan Inspector that progress is being made.

## Key Points

- Responses are invited up until 17<sup>th</sup> April.
- There are 17 set questions mainly relating to the content and scope of the DPD and the criteria for identifying and assessing sites for suitability.
- There are no questions seeking assistance from neighbouring Authorities to help meet the needs, although the consultation document indicates that this will be an option under the Duty to Cooperate.
- The question and quantum of unmet need will be known by the second Regulation 18b consultation expected to take place this time next year.

## The 17 set questions

Q1 – ARE THERE KNOWN INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS WHICH YOU RECOMMEND WE CONSULT WITH?

Q2 – IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING EVIDENCE REQUIRED AS PART OF THIS DPD PROCESS?

Q3 – DO YOU AGREE WITH THE SCOPE OF THE DPD?

Q4 – DO YOU AGREE WITH THE AIMS OF THE DPD?

Q5 –WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIC ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED THROUGH STRATEGIC POLICIES?

Q6 –WHAT SITE-SPECIFIC ISSUES SHOULD SITE ALLOCATION POLICIES SEEK TO ADDRESS?

Q7 –WHAT DO YOU THINK THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES SHOULD CONTAIN?

Q8 – IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE ASSOCIATED WITH NEED THAT WE ARE UNAWARE OF THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION?

Q9 – DO YOU AGREE WITH THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO SEEK TO MEET THE FULL CULTURAL NEED IDENTIFIED THROUGH THIS DPD?

Q10 – ARE THERE ANY OTHER METHODS OF SITE IDENTIFICATION THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER?

Q11 – IS THE PROPOSED ASSESSMENT PROCESS CORRECT? IF NOT, WHAT ALTERNATIVE METHOD COULD BE USED?

Q12 – HAVE WE USED THE CORRECT SIFTING CRITERIA TO ASSESS THE POTENTIAL SITES? IF NOT, WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD BE USED?

Q13 – HAVE WE USED THE CORRECT DETAILED ASSESSMENT CRITERIA TO ASSESS THE POTENTIAL SITES? IF NOT, WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD BE USED?

Q14 – DO YOU AGREE WITH THE USE OF A PITCH DELIVERABILITY ASSESSMENT TO SEEK TO MEET SOME/ALL IDENTIFIED NEEDS ON SUITABLE EXISTING SITES?

Q15 – ARE THERE ANY OTHER OPTIONS THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER TO FIND SUITABLE, AVAILABLE AND DELIVERABLE SITES?

Q16 – DO YOU OWN OR KNOW OF ANY SUITABLE SITES WHICH ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP MEET THE COUNCIL'S FUTURE NEED FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS?

Q17 – ARE THE MONITORING INDICATORS SUITABLE AND SUFFICIENT?

## The emerging level of need

- An Interim Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) prepared in January 2023 identified the following gross needs for pitches and plots for the plan period 2019-2040:

	Pitches	Plots
<b>PPTS need</b>	325	5
<b>Undetermined</b>	132	2
<b>Not visited</b>	113	0
<b>Cultural need<sup>21</sup></b>	36	0
<b>TOTAL NEED</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>7</b>

*Table 1: Future need identified in Interim GTAA*

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<sup>21</sup> This includes those who 'do not meet planning definition'. See Interim GTAA January 2023.

## Potential Implications

- The consultation document notes that 106 permanent pitches have been granted planning permission in Maidstone Borough since the start of the plan period in 2019, which would leave a net need of 500 pitches to plan for.
- Further work will be carried out to refine and confirm the needs and there will be a further call for sites exercise. However, with such significant levels of need to plan for it is likely that Maidstone will be seeking help in due course.

## Responding to the Consultation

- As it is likely Ashford will be preparing the next Local Plan under the current planning system, it will be important to be seen to respond proactively to a neighbouring Authority's DPD consultation.
- However, most of the 17 set questions relate to the overall approach and site selection criteria, which are not particularly relevant at this stage.
- The proposed approach to meeting those needs in full within Maidstone Borough is welcomed, but in the event that significant unmet needs remain a robust response explaining Ashford's challenges in meeting our own needs and that we are at an early stage of plan making should be made clear.