

BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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To All Members of the Council, press and public.

3rd October 2011

There will be a meeting of the **Environment Committee** on **Monday 10th October 2011** at **Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade** commencing at 7.30 pm when it is proposed to transact the following business;

1. **Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.** (7.30)
Members are required to declare any interests or lobbying on items in this agenda.
2. **Apologies and absences** (7.31)
To receive and accept apologies for absence.

To adjourn to allow members of the public to address the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the Meetings of 12th September 2011.** (7:32)
To consider the minutes of the meetings and if in order to sign as a true record (already circulated).
4. **Matters Arising From Minutes.** (7.35)
 - 4.1 Minute 2332/4.2 Boxley Road & Beechen Bank Road speed limit. A detailed costing for the work has been requested (29/9/11).
 - 4.2 Minute 2332/4.3 Inconsiderate parking Walderslade Village/Boxley Road. Cllr Pepper was arranging to discuss the matter again with the Walderslade PCSO. Cllr Wendy Hinder was arranging to contact the Medway Councillor.
 - 4.3 Minute 2334/10 Neighbourhood Development Plans. Office time has not been available to complete the other plans but it is hoped to do this for the November meeting.
 - 4.4 Minute 2334/17 land adjacent Weaving Roundabout. MBC has confirmed that the trees that are the backdrop to the site are on Weaving Heath land but without protected species on the site there is nothing, under current legislation, that MBC can do to further protect the site. Do members wish the parish office to approach KWT to see if they can investigate the site? It should however be noted that even if it was classified as a Local Wildlife Site this does not offer protection from it being cleared.

To adjourn to allow members of the public to address the meeting. (7.41)

5. **Planning Applications and Appeals for Consideration.** (7.50)
To consider planning applications. Members' are reminded to consider possible section 106 requests or to suggest any conditions.

MA/11/1070 Amended details (technical report regarding traffic movements) at The Kent Clinic, Bearsted Road. To ratify the Clerks response, after discussion with Cllr Ivor Davies, noted.

TA/0147/11 application for consent to crown thin and crown reduce one Hornbeam tree by 20% at 17 Forestdale Road, Walderslade 17/11/11.

6. **Planning applications taken to Planning Committee.** (8.00)
Planning rota – Cllr Spain 13th October 2011 and Cllr Pepper 3rd November 2011.
7. **Planning Applications and appeals decisions.** (8.02)
To note the Maidstone Borough Council’s planning application decisions and Secretary of State’s appeal decisions. Asterisk * indicates decision contrary to parish council views.
8. **Core Strategy consultation.** (8.04)
To consider the briefing note (page 3 - 16) on the MBC Core Strategy and to consider the response.
9. **Walderslade Woods and Volunteer Group** (8.28)
To receive a report and an update on the group.
10. **Highways and Byways.** (8.36)
 - 10.1 Meeting with Bryan Sweetland (KCC Cabinet Member for Highways) and Carol Valentine (Highway Manager West Kent). Verbal report on the meeting that took place on 3rd October 2011.
 - 10.2 Winter Maintenance Update. Salt Bins provided by KHS will be filled on an as and when required basis there are no set amounts.
The cost of Salt Bins purchased through the county member fund includes 3 consecutive fills. It has been confirmed that the mixture will again be sand and salt even though this blocks drains (this issue will be raised with the Area Manager and Cabinet Member when they meet the Clerk. It is then the responsibility of highways to fill thereafter. Salt bins purchased direct by Parish Councils must be identified either by wording or colour will be the responsibility of that PC to fill.
11. **Policy and procedures review.** (8.45)
None due for review.
15. **Review of 2011/12 Projects.** (8.46)
 - 15.1 Grant, benches at Weaving Heath. As per members decision a request for a full breakdown on the costs of installation has been requested (22.09.11). Cllr Pepper is meeting with MBC about an issue related to open spaces and will be asked to take this issue up if the information is not received before the Estates meeting.
 - 15.2 Trees Cobtree Country Park. Trees and plaque are being purchased by MBC. Invoice is awaited.
16. **Budget 2012/2013.** (8.48)
Members are reminded that they should notify the parish office of any projects that they wish to see included in the draft budget.
17. **Matters for information.** (8.55)
18. **Next Meeting.** (8.56)
Next environment meetings 7th & 14th November 2011 (full) at Beechen Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m.

In view of the confidential nature (personal details and data) on the Enforcement item about to be transacted, it is advisable that the public and press will be excluded from the meeting for the duration of or part of the item.

19 **Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC.**

(8.57)

To consider a confidential update, enclosed for members. Update on other outstanding issues requested 29.09.11.

Clerk to Boxley Parish Council

Returns to the agenda; Minute 2334/11 Strategy for dealing with highways issues 6 months (March 2012)

Item 9.1 Core Strategy. Purpose of item; members to decide on a response.

Clerks' comments: the Committee had originally set up a working group but in view of the fact that many councillors attended the meeting at Beechen Hall and the impending deadline the briefing note has been submitted to the committee. The Clerk has made suggested responses to aid members' discussions and these are based on previous comments, the discussions at the Core Strategy meeting, comments from Cllr Harwood and also CPRE.

As the MBC meeting on the 21st September became a chat rather than a presentation members asked for a copy of the MBC presentation wording (that explained the individual strategies) to be supplied to them. These have been received and incorporated into the briefing report under the relevant headings and are marked at the start and at the end of each inclusion by **. The interactive map is available at <http://maidstone.addresscafe.com>

****Maidstone Core Strategy Consultation 2011 - Presentation
Simple guide to the LDF system**

The planning system aims to maintain and improve society through planned development. Planning ensures that buildings and uses are appropriately located and that they are well designed. This is known as 'Sustainable Planning'.

- LDF replaces local plan system
- Incremental replacement of policies from 2000 Borough-Wide Local Plan
- No longer wholesale replacement of policies
- Some saved policies, some new policies
- Useful to think of LDF as a folder containing individual documents

All of these documents follow the overall direction set out in Core Strategy and this is the document we are talking about today.

LDS

Timetable of LDF preparation known as Local Development Scheme (LDS)

LDS proposes 3 primary documents:

- Core Strategy DPD
- Development Delivery DPD
- Central Maidstone AAP

Also supplementary planning documents (SPD)

- SPD provide further details about policies in the main documents
- SPD proposed are:
- Landscape Character Guidelines SPD

- Parking Strategy SPD
- Affordable Housing SPD

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy is important because it sets out how our borough will look and feel in the future. The planning system has to balance different views and often make difficult decisions but an integral part in producing an LDF is community engagement and consultation.

The Core Strategy must be a genuinely strategic document – it identifies general locations for development within a 20-year time period. The detail follows in future documents. This is a “Spatial planning” approach so there is coordination with other relevant strategies and programmes, and an emphasis on “delivery” of the strategy.

The Core Strategy sets the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives for the borough, which are illustrated on the Key Diagram and achieved through spatial policies set out in the document. Strategic locations are broad indications of areas for growth and are not site specific. Specific site allocations will be made in the Development Delivery DPD and the Central Maidstone AAP that will follow on from the Core Strategy.

Clerk’s comment; Some members have been supplied with the summary Core Strategy document and the full document is available from the MBC website or the parish office.

Question 1. Do you think we have got the Core Strategy right for Maidstone Borough?

Clerk’s suggested response: No, there are numerous weaknesses that need resolving prior to any adoption.

Actual Strategy wording. Spatial Vision

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

Question 2. Do you agree with the vision of the Core Strategy?

Clerk’s suggested response: Yes

Actual Strategy wording. Spatial Objectives

1. To provide for 10,080 new homes and 10,000 new jobs with an emphasis on increasing skilled employment opportunities in the borough alongside developing learning opportunities.
2. To focus new development mainly within the Maidstone urban area with:
 - i. 80% of new housing built within and adjacent to the urban area of Maidstone with appropriate sustainable greenfield development being well located in relation to existing services in the urban area.
 - ii. The aim of providing 60% of new housing across the plan period on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings.
 - iii. New employment land allocations to be exploited in Maidstone Town Centre first co-ordinated with opportunities on the most suitable greenfield sites to provide for a suitable mix of employment opportunities.

- iv. The creation of opportunities to provide for local power generation.
- 3. To transform the offer, vitality and viability of the town centre including office, retail, residential, further and higher education, leisure, cultural and tourism functions together with significant enhancement to the natural and built environment particularly in respect of the riverside environment.
- 4. To consolidate the roles of the rural service centres at Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst as the focus of the network of rural settlements with retained existing services and regenerated employment sites including expansion of existing employment sites where appropriate.
- 5. To support new housing in the smaller villages that meet local needs and is of a design, scale, character and location appropriate to the settlement and which supports the retention of existing services and facilities.
- 6. To safeguard and maintain the character of the district's landscapes including the Kent Downs AONB and other distinctive local landscapes whilst facilitating the economic and social well-being of these areas including the diversification of the rural economy.
- 7. To retain and enhance the character of the existing green and blue infrastructure and to promote linkages between areas of environmental value.
- 8. To ensure that new development takes account of the need to mitigate the impact of climate change and adapt to climate change and also to improve air quality by locating development to minimise the use of resources, to promote sustainable travel patterns, to develop a greater choice of transport measures, to support water and energy efficiency measures and to encourage renewable energy sources and sustainable drainage solutions.
- 9. To ensure that new development is of high quality design, making a positive contribution to the area including protection of built and natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 10. To provide for future housing that meets the changing needs of the Borough's population including provision for an increasingly ageing population and family housing, an appropriate tenure mix, affordable housing and accommodation to meet the needs of the local gypsy and traveller community.
- 11. To ensure that key infrastructure and service improvements needed to support delivery of the Core Strategy objectives and policies are brought forward in a co-ordinated and timely manner and that new development makes an appropriate contribution towards any infrastructure needs arising as a result of such new development.

Question 3. Do you agree with the aims and objectives of the Core Strategy? Yes/No

Clerk's suggested response: Yes but with reservations. It is understood that Maidstone Borough Council is following Government Policy to try to simplify the Core Strategy etc. however unless the individual strategies are backed up by clear standards and safeguards then it will be a developer's charter. Unfortunately this Parish Council considers that MBC does not currently have consistent and clear standards and it is unclear how day to day policy is set. It is considered that too much is left to individual interpretation of an application and strategies resulting in an inconsistent approach.

Core Strategy policies.

Actual Strategy wording. **CS1 – Borough Wide Strategy.** Between 2006 and 2026 land for 10,080 new dwellings will be delivered within the borough to support the achievement of 10,000 additional jobs and to respond to identified housing demand and need.

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

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

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

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

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

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

****CS1 – Borough-wide strategy**

- Seeks 10,080 dwellings from 2006 to 2026
- Some dwellings have already been completed between 2006 and 2011
- Some will be in the pipeline because they have an outstanding planning permission
- Some urban brownfield sites we know about
- Leaves a balance of about 3,200 dwellings to find on greenfield sites.
- Main focus is on the Maidstone urban area
- There are 2 strategic locations to the NW and SE of the urban boundary
- About 1100 homes will be built in and adjacent to 5 rural service centres of: Harrietsham; Lenham; Marden; Staplehurst; Headcorn.
- Employment development is proposed at M20 J8
- Medical research and development facilities at M20 J7 to support the new clinic
- Also be smaller opportunities for employment growth around the urban periphery and at the rural service centres

The strategy includes protection of rural character and the avoidance of coalescence between villages, and between villages and the urban area.**

Question 4. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: Development at junction 8 and junction 7 of the M20 will expand development into the countryside thus ignoring the passage "priority will be given to the protection of the rural character of the borough avoiding coalescence between settlements". Development of Junction 7 will connect Maidstone to Detling village as it will reduce the current green strategic gap to nothing.

Furthermore Maidstone Borough Council successfully fought off the KIG planning application and yet is now presenting the self-same area for development, knowing that it has no control over the type of industry that will be attracted if this is included in the Core Strategy.

Actual Strategy wording. **CS2 – Maidstone Town Centre**

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

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

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

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

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

****CS2 – Maidstone town centre**

- Regeneration is a priority
- Town centre is the preferred location for retail, office, leisure, cultural and tourism development, as well as higher and further education
- High quality design will be expected here and throughout the borough, and accessibility to and within the town centre will be increased
- Development will maximise green spaces
- The town centre boundary will be defined on the proposals map
- Central Maidstone AAP will provide the detail and make land allocations**

Question 5. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: It is considered that this strategy is too weak and should clearly state that large out of town retail development will not be allowed.

MBC should take a more positive and proactive approach in its protection of the retail character of the town centre by creating policy that stops large scale outlets that will attract shoppers from the town centre and rural villages. Maidstone is the County Town and yet is becoming undistinguishable from other towns in the area.

The strategy should also be strengthened to protect the riverside and to ensure that any further development especially on the west bank is of a higher quality than at present.

Actual Strategy wording. CS3 – Maidstone Urban Area

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

This will be achieved by:

1. The development and redevelopment or infilling of appropriate urban sites in a way that contributes positively to the locality's distinctive character
2. Retaining well located business areas in accordance with Policy CS8
3. Maintain the network of district and local shopping centres, supporting enhancements to these centres in accordance with the overall hierarchy of centres
4. Maintain and support the current network of transport infrastructure seeking enhancement in accordance with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan
5. Ensuring that the functions of the green wedges are sustainable and enhanced

6. Ensuring that development positively contributes to the setting, accessibility, biodiversity and amenity value of the River Medway and the River Len
7. Supporting development that improves the social, environmental and employment well-being of those living in identified areas of deprivation
8. The boundary of the Urban Area will be defined on the proposals map.

****CS3 – Maidstone urban area**

- Again about regeneration
- Development will be expected to contribute positively to the character of any given area
- District and local centres together with transport infrastructure will be maintained
- Development will contribute to the enhancement of the green wedges
- Any development in the vicinity of the rivers Medway and Len must make a positive impact
- Development will be supported in identified areas of deprivation **.

Question 6. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: It is felt that this strategy needs strengthening and that there should be a much clearer statement that development alongside the River Medway and River Len will only be allowed if the development positively contributes to the setting and MBC must identify now what are the minimum standard/requirements that must be met.

It is understood that Maidstone Borough Council is following Government Policy to try to simplify the Core Strategy etc. however unless the individual strategies are backed up by clear standards and safeguards then it will be a developer's charter. Unfortunately this Parish Council considers that MBC does not currently have consistent and clear standards and it is unclear how day to day policy is set. It is considered that too much is left to individual interpretation of an application resulting in an inconsistent approach.

Actual Strategy wording. CS4 – Rural Service Centres

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

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

****CS4 – Rural service centres**

- Harrietsham, Lenham, Marden, Staplehurst, Headcorn
- New development will be focused in and adjacent to the villages
- Local needs housing will be supported
- Existing employment sites will be retained and new employment encouraged
- Loss of local shops and facilities will be resisted
- Intention that development will assist in creating vibrant and sustainable communities**.

Question 7. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: MBC should be more positive and proactive in its protection of the retail character of the villages by creating policy that stops large scale outlets.

Actual Strategy wording. CS5 – Countryside

Development proposals in the countryside for the purposes of rural economic development or to meet community needs will only be allowed where proposals maintain and enhance the local

economy in such a way as to ensure that the character of the local landscape is protected and where possible enhanced.

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

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

****CS5 – Countryside**

- Development will be restricted to supporting the rural economy or meeting local community needs
- The local landscape will be protected and enhanced
- Development will not be permitted if it has an adverse effect on the local landscape character that cannot be mitigated **

Question 8. Do you agree with this policy? No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: Outside of the AONB there is no real protection for the Countryside and this strategy needs considerable strengthening to protect the countryside from developers and thus preserve Maidstone's rural character. Once again this Parish Council considers that MBC does not have the relevant documents to protect the countryside if this simple statement is adopted. This strategy should be rewritten to more clearly reflect the old policy ENV28 which clearly stated that planning permission would not be given if it harmed the countryside.

The Parish Council considers the removal of the Special Landscape Areas definition as a backward step and until the Local Landscape Character reports are produced and approved has grave concerns about MBC's commitment to the rural areas.

The Parish Council wishes to have areas of the parish defined as green wedges (especially at Beechen Bank ALLI) and is concerned that only a few urban areas have been defined as green wedges.

Actual Strategy wording. CS6 – Sustainable Design and Development

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

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

****CS6 – Sustainable design and development**

- Residential and commercial proposals need to respond to the local context and protect heritage assets
- Will be required to meet set sustainable construction standards **

Question 9. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: Regarding 6, why does Maidstone set this threshold so high, especially in the case of commercial properties?

Actual Strategy wording. **CS7 – Sustainable Transport**

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

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

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

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

Development proposals must show how:

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

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

****CS7 – Sustainable transport**

- Supports Maidstone's role as a regional transport hub
- Much of the work on modelling transport options has been completed
- Transport strategy will be prepared with the aim of facilitating growth, economic prosperity and improved accessibility **

Question 10. **Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.**

Clerk's suggested response: The Parish Council supports sustainable travel however it has little faith in the Travel Plans that are produced (and then passed) by KCC and MBC as they are often wrong for example stating that people will walk to work from a bus stop 1.8 miles away crossing motorway feeder roads where there are no safe crossing points etc.

Actual Strategy wording. **CS8 – Economic Development**

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

1. The retention, intensification and regeneration of existing business areas, sites and buildings in the Maidstone urban area and the Rural Service Centres. Planning permission for change of use on existing employment sites will be resisted.
2. Regeneration and modernisation of existing employment sites and buildings will be encouraged.
3. Enhancing Maidstone town centre and maintaining the hierarchy of retail centres.
4. Supporting proposals that encourage highly skilled residents to work in the borough to reduce out-commuting.

5. Granting planning permission will be granted for employment uses at or near to motorway junctions where it is proven that the development cannot be located within the town centre first, followed by edge of centre locations
6. Improving skills in the workforce in particular by promoting further and higher education provision within Maidstone's urban area with a preference for a town centre location.
7. Supporting improvements in information and communications technology to facilitate more flexible working practices.
8. Supporting proposals that aim to provide tourist related development in appropriate and suitable locations that are of an appropriate and suitable scale according to the location. Applications for local needs employment use in the countryside including for the expansion needs of existing sites will be supported in appropriate locations.
9. Allocations for employment use will be made in the Development Delivery DPD and the Central Maidstone AAP.

****CS8 – Economic development**

- EDS - 10,000 jobs are proposed to be created over the plan period
- 1900 of these have already been created
- Retention, intensification and regeneration of businesses are key to the success of the policy **

Question 11. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: Yes but with reservations. Regarding 5 again MBC is using vague statements "where is it proven that the development cannot be located within the town". What is the proof required? How will MBC whether the information that will be supplied by the developer is correct?

This strategy does not deal with the empty industrial sites that are around the Borough. There should be a clear policy on how to get these into use rather than release new sites. Areas such as Park Wood and Eclipse Park have vacant plots which have been so for a significant length of time. There is also concern that the industry being attracted is generally low wage and MBC's aspirations for high waged technology do not work (for example Eclipse Park).

Actual Strategy wording. CS9 – Housing Mix

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

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

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

****CS9 – Housing mix**

- Seeks to ensure the delivery of sustainable mixed communities
- Mix of tenures and property sizes
- Gypsy and traveller accommodation will be part of the affordable need in the borough **

Question 9. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: Yes.

Actual Strategy wording. CS10 – Affordable Housing

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

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

****CS10 – Affordable housing**

- Seeks 40% affordable housing on sites of 15 dwellings or more or ½ hectare or greater
- Integration of affordable housing is important
- Off-site provision will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances **.

Question 13. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: Yes but with reservations. Once affordable housing is placed on the open market it is no longer affordable. Why is MBC treating the urban communities differently from the rural communities? It is suggested that MBC looks into including an 'in perpetuity' statement as in CS11.

MBC needs to have a clear strategy to get the empty houses that exist throughout the Borough back into use rather than have to release land for new developments.

Actual Strategy wording. CS11 – Local Needs Housing

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

1. Have been proven necessary by a local needs survey undertaken by or on behalf of the parish councils concerned

2. Be restricted in perpetuity to occupation by persons with a proven residence, family and or employment connection to the settlement concerned.
3. Remain available in perpetuity to meet the purposes for which it was permitted. The initial and subsequent occupancy of the accommodation to be controlled via planning conditions and agreements as appropriate to ensure that this is the case.
4. Be provided on a site that enables an appropriate scale and setting in the built context of the surrounding development Local needs housing eligibility criteria
5. Family members living in the settlements for five years immediately prior to the completion of the development
6. The settlement having been the place of employment for the five years immediately prior to the completion of the development
7. Having resided in the settlement for the five years immediately prior to the completion of the development.

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

****CS11 – Local needs housing (or exceptions sites)**

- Need must be proven by a local needs housing survey
- Development will be restricted in perpetuity to those with local needs
- Shared ownership is restricted to 80%
- Policy includes eligibility criteria: the applicant must have family members residing in the settlement for 5 years, or lived or been employed in the settlement for 5 years themselves **

Question 14. **Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.**

Clerk’s suggested response: Yes.

Actual Strategy wording. **CS12 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation**

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

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

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

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

****CS12 – Gypsy and traveller accommodation**

- Pitch target for the period **2006 to 2016 of 71 pitches**
- Sites need to have good access to health and school facilities; avoid harm to the landscape (including through incremental growth of pitches); have safe access to the highway; and not be in an area liable to flood
- A new GTAA will be carried out shortly to identify the need beyond 2016 to 2026
- The Council is also pursuing a new public gypsy and traveller site **

Question 15. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: Yes

Actual Strategy wording. CS13 – Natural Assets

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

1. Protect areas of Ancient Woodland from inappropriate development and ensuring that Veteran Trees do not suffer any adverse impacts as a result of development;
2. Avoid inappropriate development within or adjacent to sites of designated nature conservation interest;
3. Avoid damage to and inappropriate development within or adjacent to Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats;
4. Retain, protect and enhance features of biological or geological interest and create and restore other habitats wherever practicable;
5. Provide for the long term maintenance of all natural assets associated with the development; and
6. Mitigate for and adapt to the effects of climate change including flooding Development proposals will be expected to:
7. Be accompanied by an ecological evaluation of development proposals and associated sites to take full account of the biodiversity present;
8. Positively contribute to the improvement of accessibility of natural green space within walking distance of housing, employment, health and education facilities and to the creation of a wider network of new links between green and blue spaces.

****CS13 – Natural assets**

- Seeking to enhance and protect by:
 - Protecting ancient woodland
 - Avoiding inappropriate sites within and adjacent to sites of nature conservation interest
 - Avoiding damage to priority habitats
 - Retaining and enhancing features of biological or geological interest
 - Adapting to the effects of climate change, including flooding **

Question 16. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: No this is a conflicting and weak strategy. The Parish Council welcomes the commitment to the 'green and blue spaces' however by allowing development in Ancient Woodland (number 1 of the strategy) MBC is effectively destroying and increasingly rare and extremely valuable natural resource (contrary to number 4 of the strategy).

Actual Strategy wording. CS14 – Infrastructure Delivery

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

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

The Community Infrastructure Levy will be used to secure contributions to help fund the strategic infrastructure needed to support the sustainable growth proposed in Maidstone. With the exception of affordable housing, all residential development will pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. Business development will also be expected to contribute towards strategic infrastructure,

particularly with regard to the transport infrastructure demand arising from their development proposals. The Community Infrastructure Levy rates will be set out in the Charging Schedule to accompany the Publication version of the Core Strategy.

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

****CS14 – Infrastructure delivery plan**

- Explains how the infrastructure required to support development will be delivered
- Draft infrastructure delivery plan schedule is attached as appendix 2 to the Core Strategy

The infrastructure schedule lists the total amount of infrastructure required to deliver the strategy and identifies funding sources. Any gap in funding will be funded by the community infrastructure levy, but any levy set by the council must be realistic and viable. The draft IDP is an unprioritised draft list (a wish list) of infrastructure, and further work will be required to produce the charging schedule that will form the basis for the levy **

Question 18. Do you agree with this policy? Yes/No. Comments.

Clerk's suggested response: MBC has used a vague description in the supporting information "meaningful proportion" and the further work undertaken must be extremely precise. The wish list (appendix 2) contains no reference to communities within this parish that have no open space provisions and the LDF department appear not to know that Boxley Parish Council has its own wish list although this has been provided to MBC every 6 – 8 months. It is hoped that MBC will involve the parishes when the further work is undertaken.

Grove Green (and possibly many other areas in the Borough) is blighted by the traffic problems however MBC only seems concerned about the town centre.

****Appendices**

Moving briefly on to the appendices:

- **Appendix 1** lists the policies from the South East Plan that are relevant for Maidstone
- **Appendix 2** is the draft IDP – previously referred to
- **Appendix 3** is a document called Policy Evolution which includes a series of papers that provide an explanatory link between the evidence base and some of the policies
- **Appendix 4** explains how the Core Strategy policies tie in with the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy
- **Appendices 5 and 6** set out the deleted and saved policies from the old local plan
- **Appendix 7** illustrates how the policies of the Core Strategy deliver its objectives
- **Appendix 8** includes a glossary of terms
- **Appendix 9** is the Sustainability Appraisal that is required to be undertaken to ensure the Core Strategy policies are as sustainable as possible
- **Appendix 10** is the Equalities Impact Assessment that looks at the impact of the Core Strategy on the community
- **Appendix 11** is the housing trajectory that shows how many dwellings are needed at any one point in time to meet the target over the remaining period of the plan

Next steps

This stage of **informal consultation** is known as public participation. There are still a number of events being held and the remaining dates are on the website.

We will consider all of the representations (or comments) received and amend the Core Strategy as appropriate. People are being encouraged to use the council's on-line system that handles representations, although all forms of submission are acceptable (as long as name and postal address are included).

We will undertake another [**formal stage of**] consultation on the Core Strategy next spring before submitting the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State in the summer. The Secretary of State will appoint an Inspector to preside over an Independent Examination (expected to be run next autumn), and (if all runs to timetable) the Core Strategy will be adopted in the spring of 2013.

Neighbourhood planning

- Run by town and parish councils, or neighbourhood forums
- If a parish council exists, they will run the plan process – if not the LPA decides who is the neighbourhood forum
- Agreed group to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood – **neighbourhood development plan**
- Also able to issue **neighbourhood development order** to permit some types of development without need for planning application
- Neighbourhood plans set strategic context for NDPs
- Neighbourhood development plans or orders will not take effect unless there is a majority of support in a referendum of the neighbourhood
- Set conditions before a plan can be adopted:
 - they must have regard to national planning policy
 - they must be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area (i.e. such as in a core strategy)
 - they must be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements
- Independent person checks that all conditions are met before a referendum is allowed
- NDP cannot reject development, but can propose more

Community Right to Build

The Localism Bill also allows for community organisations to bring forward a 'community right to build order' which is a type of neighbourhood development order.

This will allow certain community organisations to bring forward smaller-scale development on a specific site, without the need for planning permission. This reform would give communities the freedom to develop, for instance, small-scale housing and other facilities that they want.

Any benefit from this development will stay within the community and be used for the community's benefit, for example, to maintain their affordable housing stock or to provide and maintain local facilities such as playgrounds and village halls.

Community right to build orders will be subject to a limited number of exclusions, such as proposals needing to fall below certain thresholds so that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required. The proposals will be subject to testing by an independent person and a community referendum **.

Question 19. Further comments. Have we left anything out of the Core Strategy?

Clerk's suggested response:

Yes. Boxley Parish Council wished to see:

- A village envelope around Boxley Village and also around Sandling Village.
- The urban boundary at Walderslade amended to exclude the non-residential parts of Walderslade Woods and the land west of Gleamingwood Drive.
- Gardens classified as green spaces.

The Core Strategy has totally ignored the role that farmers play within the Borough and this should be addressed immediately.