



BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL
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Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent. ME5 9RU
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Clerk Mrs Pauline Bowdery **Assistant Clerk** Mrs Melanie Fooks

A G E N D A

To All Members of the Council, Press and Public

There will be a meeting of the **Environment Committee** on **Monday 8 February 2016 at St John's School, Provender Way, Grove Green ME14 5TZ** commencing at 7:00pm when it is proposed to transact the following business:

- 1 **Apologies and absences** (7.00)
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
- 2 **Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying** (7.01)
Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.
- 3 **Minutes of the Meetings of 11th, 18th and 25th January 2016 - DECISION** (7.03)
To consider the minutes of the meetings (11th & 18th already circulated) and if in order to sign as a true record. Minutes of 25th January meeting are enclosed (page 3).
- 4 **Development at KIMS Medical Campus** (7.05)
Presentation from applicant's agent DHA see report (page 4).

To adjourn to allow members of the public to address the meeting see report (page 4).

5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes** (7.40)
 - 5.1 Minute 2828/4.2 Advertising boards at Roundwood roundabout see report (page 4)
 - 5.2 Minute 2828/4.3 HGV parking. To receive any update on the progress of getting changes.
 - 5.3 Minute 2828/4.4 Installation of hard standing/apron at Boxley Road noticeboard. KALC has been approached again about the prospect of getting KCC to cancel or amend the charge for parish councils to work on its verges.
 - 5.4 Minute 2828/4.5 Weaving Street Speed Reduction see report (page 4).
 - 5.5 Minute 2828/4.7 Maidstone Enterprize Zone see report (page 4).
 - 5.6 Minute 2830/7.2 Inconsiderate parking Provender Way. A request for yellow lines at the junctions has been submitted to KCC.
 - 5.7 Minute 2830/7.4 Old Chalk New Downs Project. Cllr Bob Hinder to attend consultation on 8th March.
 - 5.6 Any other matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda.
- 6 **Planning Applications for Consideration - DECISION** (7.46)
To receive and decide on responses to planning applications (pages 4-5).
- 7 **Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions - INFORMATION** (8:00)
To receive any updates.
MC/14/2395 - Gibraltar Farm, Ham Lane, Hempstead. Gillingham ME7 3JJ. Planning permission refused by Medway Council.
- 8 **Highways and Byways - DECISION** (8:01)
To consider any issues.

- 8.1 Bollards on verge adjacent to Boxley Rd/Travertine Rd junction see report (page 5).
- 8.2 Resident petition to have speed reduction and junction improvements on Walderslade Woods Road. Members are notified that, due to the recent crashes, one has been started and details will be supplied to the committee as it develops.
- 8.3 Resident petition to have speed reduction and traffic calming Lidsing Road. Members are notified that, due to the recent crash, one has been started and details will be supplied to the committee as it develops.
- 8.4 Parking problems Autumn Glade, Lordswood. Residents are discussing proposals to resolve the parking issues and details will be supplied to the committee as it develops.
- 8.5 Lower Thames Crossing Route Consultation 2016 – Have Your Say. Consultation closes on Thursday 24 March 2016. This consultation is now open www.lower-thames-crossing.co.uk and will be an item on the 14th March Environment Committee agenda.
9. **NPPF Consultation- DECISION** (8.28)
To consider a response see report (pages 5-13).
10. **KCC Consultation- Making the best use of the Mobile Library Service** (8.45)
To consider whether to make a response see report (pages 13 -15).
11. **Volunteer Groups - INFORMATION** (8.50)
To receive any reports from volunteer groups associated with the parish council.
12. **Policy and Procedures - REVIEW** (8.55)
Inconsiderate parking advice notes, rescheduled to next meeting.
13. **Maidstone Local Plan - INFORMATION** (8.56)
The Local Plan public consultation and the draft Integrated Transport Strategy consultation will run for 6 weeks from 6 February until 18 March and a briefing will be included on the next agenda.
14. **Matters for Information - INFORMATION** (9.00)
Annual Planning Conference on Monday 7 March 2016 at Lenham Community Centre. All day event. Cost £72.
15. **Next Meeting** (9.01)
Next Environment Committee meeting 14th March 2016 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7:30pm. Items for the agenda must be with the parish office no later than 29th February.

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.

16. **Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC** (9.02)
To receive a confidential update.

Pauline Bowdery

Pauline Bowdery
Clerk to Boxley Parish Council

Date: 2 February 2016

In accordance with policy the meeting should close no later than 9:30pm but the Chairman has devolved powers to extend it by 30 minutes.

Items to be returned to agenda: Yelsted Lane request for Not Suitable for HGV signs March 2016. Legislation allows for meetings to be recorded by anyone attending. Persons intending to record or who have concerns about being recorded should please speak to the Clerk.

Supporting agenda papers for the Environment Committee Meeting 8th February 2016. The Chairman will assume that these have been read prior to the meeting. Councillors wishing to suggest changes to any policy or procedure document in this agenda should notify the office, in writing, at least three working days in advance of the meeting to allow details to be circulated at the meeting (or in advance if particularly contentious).

Item 3 Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 25th January 2016 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade ME5 9RU commencing at 9.25 pm.

Councillors present: Mr P Dengate (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mr Ivor Davies, Mr B Hinder, Mr D Hollands and together with the Clerk and Cllr Clarke.

1 Apologies and absences

Cllr Hinchliffe (holiday), Cllr Wendy Hinder (MBC meeting) and Cllr Maureen Waller (previous commitment).

2 Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying

The meeting was not adjourned as no members of the public were present.

3 Planning Applications for Consideration

15/509438/FULL Erection of a single storey rear extension and retrospective partial conversion of garage at 13 Galena Close, Walderslade.

Do not wish to object.

15/510627/ADV Advertisement Consent for No.2 internally illuminated aluminium painted fascia with acrylic Scania letters and logo, No.2 internally illuminated aluminium painted fascia with acrylic Scania Maidstone letters, No. 1 aluminium totem with acrylic Scania text and logo (Internally illuminated text and logo only), No.1 Double sided painted aluminium directional sign with acrylic Scania text and logo and applied vinyl text (Internally illuminated Scania text and logo) at Scania Gb Ltd Brooklyn Park Chatham Road Sandling Kent.

Do not wish to object however wish to express concerns that the 6.5m totem pole (no. 3) is immediately adjacent to the M20 and would cause a distraction to drivers. It is suggested, if permitted, that the lighting reflects that of the motorway so that the illumination is turned off when the motorway lights are. Concerns are also raised about the potential adverse impact on the AONB.

16/500287/TPO - TPO application to 1no multi stemmed Hornbeam, 2no. Hornbeam, 1no. multi stemmed Sweet Chestnut, 1no. Silver Birch, 1no. Willow and 1no. Maple - Crown raise to approx. 6 metres at Orbit Close.

Do not wish to object defer to the views of the Landscape Officer.

15/508978/FULL Amended details change of use from agricultural land to equestrian use and construction of a 20m x 60m outdoor riding arena at Stone House, Sandy Lane.

No objection to the amendment.

4 Next Meeting

Next full environment meeting 8th February at St John's School, Provender Way, Grove Green commencing at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 9.37 pm.

Item 4 Development at KIMS Medical Campus and adjournment to allow the public to speak Purpose of item: INFORMATION/DECISION

The plans for the proposed development are with MBC but it is not clear whether they will be validated (and so made available on the MBC website) in time for the meeting. Arrangements will be made to have information at the meeting with the doors opening at 6.30 pm to allow this to be viewed. If possible a copy of the plans will be placed on the parish council's website before the meeting.

It is proposed to follow the presentation by DHA with parish councillor questions and then the Chairman will adjourn the meeting to hear from any members of the public attending. ALL questions must be through the chair.

The meeting is open to the public and for legal reasons must be adjourned to allow any members of the public to speak. During the adjournment priority will be given to Boxley parishioners to make comments and if time permits, then comments from the wider community will be welcomed. All comments and questions must be made to the Chairman who will request clarification or response from the applicant's agent. Once the meeting has been reconvened no further comments or questions will be taken from members of the public.

Item 5 Matters Arising from the Minutes. Purpose of item: INFORMATION AND DECISION

Item 5.2 Advertising boards at Roundwood roundabout. MBC is reluctant, to the point of refusal, to initiate any action to have these removed as they are on KCC land. KCC has again been contacted however its previous stance was that the signs were behind the highway boundary line and were not causing an obstruction in visibility so no action would be taken. As a third sign has now appeared KCC has been contacted again. KCC has written to the companies giving them 21 working days to remove the signs. If however KCC then chooses not to take further action then it is suggested that either a formal complaint to KCC Highways, either the head or cabinet member, is made or the issue is escalated to County Councillor Paul Carter.

Item 5.4 Weaving Street Speed Reduction. The Estates Committee is organising an additional barrier at WDJO. Permission, as there has been no petition or letters of support received concerning a reduction in the speed limit, is sought to remove this item from the agenda until additional requests or information is received.

Item 5.5 Maidstone Enterprize Zone. As this is a developing situation it is suggested that the written information received at the parish office is made available at meetings taking place at Grove Green.

Item 6 Planning Applications for Consideration. Purpose of item: DECISION

16/500303/FULL Single-storey front extension; Rear extension to garage; Alterations to driveway at 41 Timber Tops Boxley Kent ME5 8XQ. Deadline 10 February 2016.

16/500340/FULL Demolition and removal of existing conservatory and erection of single storey side and rear extension incorporating additional living areas with utility room, wet room, study and front porch at 7 Bakery Cottages Chatham Road Sandling Kent ME14 3BE. Deadline 12 February 2016.

16/500421/FULL Demolition of existing dwelling and greenhouse, and erection of a replacement dwelling; Part demolition and alterations to existing outbuildings; Re-alignment of existing driveway at Park Croft The Street Boxley Kent ME14 3DL. Deadline 17 February 2016.

16/500486/FULL erection of a single storey side and rear extension with internal alterations at

Hillside, Harbourland Close, Boxley. Deadline 19 February 2016.

16/500663/TPO TPO application to 2no. Sycamore - Reduce by 50% and remove deadwood at 7 Bellgrove Court Boxley Kent ME5 9PQ. Deadline 17 February 2016.

MC/15/3781 | Construction of a proposed 4 bedroom dwelling with detached garage and associated parking. land adjacent to 803 Lordswood Lane, Lordswood, Chatham, ME5 8JP. Revised design details and positioning of proposed development.

Item 8 Highways and Byways. Purpose of item: Decision/guidance

Item 8.1 Bollards on verge adjacent to Boxley Rd/Travertine Rd junction.

An estimate, £425, for the purchase and installation of 6 x 150mm, 900mm high timber bollards has been received from Kent Landscape Services. In addition to this sum £370 will have to be paid for the KCC licence to undertake the work.

The bollards could be placed approx. 6 feet apart and, on the advice of Kent Landscape Services, a foot from the kerb starting immediately adjacent to the junction. It has also been suggested that small no parking on the verge signs are installed and these can be purchased.

Item 9 NPPF Consultation. Deadline for response 11.45 pm on 22 February 2016. Purpose of item: DECISION

KALC has sent the following summary
Dear Member Councils

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has issued a consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-consultation-on-proposed-changes>

The deadline for responses is Monday 25 February 2016.

DCLG advise that the consultation is proposing changes in the following areas:

- broadening the definition of affordable housing, to expand the range of low cost housing opportunities for those aspiring to own their new home
- increasing residential density around commuter hubs, to make more efficient use of land in suitable locations
- supporting sustainable new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites, and delivery of housing allocated in plans
- supporting delivery of starter homes

Briefing note.

Clerk's note: above each question or set of questions is a brief summary (generally taken directly from the Government document and so shown in a different font) of the proposed change and where appropriate* a suggested response (in italics and bold) has been included. * Members or the committee have expressed previous views that could be incorporated etc.

Summary of consultation document and questions

a) Affordable Housing

We propose to amend the national planning policy definition of affordable housing so that it encompasses a fuller range of products that can support people to access home ownership. We propose that the definition will continue to include a range of affordable products for rent and for ownership for households whose needs are not met by the market, but without being unnecessarily constrained by the parameters of products that have been used in the past which risk stifling innovation. This would include products that are analogous to low cost market housing or

intermediate rent, such as discount market sales or innovative rent to buy housing. Some of these products may not be subject to ‘in perpetuity’ restrictions or have recycled subsidy.

We also propose to make clearer in policy the requirement to plan for the housing needs of those who aspire to home ownership alongside those whose needs are best met through rented homes, subject as now to the overall viability of individual sites. By adopting the approach proposed, we are broadening the range of housing types that are taken into account by local authorities in addressing local housing needs to increase affordable home ownership opportunities. This includes allowing local planning authorities to secure starter homes as part of their negotiations on sites.

In parallel, the Housing and Planning Bill is introducing a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the delivery of starter homes, and a requirement for a proportion of starter homes to be delivered on all suitable reasonably-sized housing developments. We will consult separately on the level at which this requirement should be set. The Bill defines starter homes as new dwellings for first time buyers under 40, sold at a discount of at least 20% of market value and 8 at less than the price cap of £250,000 (or £450,000 in London). Support is available through the Help to buy ISA to help purchasers save for a deposit.

We are carefully considering the equalities implications of these proposals and have published a draft Equalities Assessment alongside this consultation. We would welcome views on the draft assessment, and in particular any additional evidence that we should take into account in deciding the way forward

Q1. Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposal to amend the definition of affordable housing in national planning policy to include a wider range of low cost home ownership options?

Suggested response: *Initiatives and programmes to address the needs of affordable housing in all guises are welcomed.*

Q2. Do you have any views on the implications of the proposed change to the definition of affordable housing on people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010? What evidence do you have on this matter?

Suggested response. Clerk’s comment; this is a statistical analysis and more suited to a response from the LPA. So it is suggested that there is *no response.*

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b) Increasing residential density around commuter hubs

Paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework enables local planning authorities to set appropriate density levels for new housing development to reflect their local circumstances. Local planning authorities have a number of different approaches to setting policy on density. Some Local Plans continue to set overall density targets, other plans set out proposed density levels on specific sites, while some plans do not set any targets and determine density levels on a site-by-site basis to ensure that development is sensitive to the local context.

There are significant benefits to encouraging development around new and existing commuter hubs - reducing travel distances by private transport, making effective use of private and public sector land in sustainable locations, and helping to secure the wider regeneration and growth of the local area. In this context, we are keen to support higher density housing development around commuter hubs to help meet a range of housing needs including those of young first-time buyers. For example, there is an opportunity to use non-operational railway land near existing stations to help deliver more housing. Adopting the nationally described space standard, where viable, could be one way of helping ensure high density development is of a high quality.

We are proposing a change to national planning policy that would expect local planning authorities, in both plan-making and in taking planning decisions, to require higher density development around commuter hubs wherever feasible. We propose that a commuter hub is defined as:

- a) a public transport interchange (rail, tube or tram) where people can board or alight to continue their journey by other public transport (including buses), walking or cycling; and
- b) a place that has, or could have in the future, a frequent service to that stop. We envisage defining a frequent service as running at least every 15 minutes during normal commuting hours

Q3. Do you agree with the Government’s definition of commuter hub? If not, what changes do you consider are required?

Suggested response: *Yes.*

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Given the potentially significant benefits, we are also interested in any further suggestions for proposals to support higher density development around commuter hubs through the planning system.

In proposing this policy change, we do not envisage introducing a minimum density requirement in national policy. We consider that it is important for density ranges to be decided locally to be aimed at local needs. Setting a minimum density would be unnecessarily prescriptive, and could fail to take account of local character and increase the risk of lower quality development.

Q4. Do you have any further suggestions for proposals to support higher density development around commuter hubs through the planning system?

Suggested response: *Developers must include “future needs” planning in their designs e.g. bus stop laybys even if there is no current service, cycle path etc.*

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Q5. Do you agree that the Government should not introduce a minimum level of residential densities in national policy for areas around commuter hubs? If not, why not?

The number of additional homes that can be delivered depends on both the density and the definition of commuter hubs. To provide an assessment of impact, we have considered all major train stations in built up areas with a population greater than 25,000. Where stations were within 0.5 miles of one another they were combined into a single transport hub. This gives around 680 potential transport hubs in England. We estimate that in 2013/14 34,000 homes were built within 0.5 miles of a transport hub at an average density of 34 dwellings per hectare³. If the average density at which these homes were built was increased to 40 dwellings per hectare, this could deliver an additional 6,000 homes within the same land area.

Suggested response: ?

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c) Supporting new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites, and delivery of housing agrees in Local Plans

Paragraph 52 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognises that local planning authorities may plan for the supply of new homes through larger scale developments such as new settlements or urban extensions. In doing so they should consider whether this is the best way of achieving sustainable development and consider, where appropriate, whether to establish Green Belt around or adjoining such settlements.

We propose to strengthen national planning policy to provide a more supportive approach for new settlements, within locally led plans. We consider that local planning authorities should take a proactive approach to planning for new settlements where they can meet the sustainable development objectives of national policy, including taking account of the need to provide an adequate supply of new homes. In doing so local planning authorities should work proactively with developers coming forward with proposals for new settlements in their area.

Q6. Do you consider that national planning policy should provide greater policy support for new settlements in meeting development needs? If not, why not?

Clerk's note. I felt you needed something to work on but I am not sure whether the following is the right stance but I have based it on comments that I received during or after the Lordswood Urban extension public inquiry.

Suggested response: *No. With NPPF policy being in favour of development there is enough support for developers without it being expanded. The meaning of the term “Locally led” plans is not clear, does this refer to LPA Local Plans or Neighbourhood Development Plans? Currently local communities and the existing infrastructure are struggling to cope with normal planning applications and permissions resulting from these and it is felt that the suggested change is putting too much power into LPA and developers hands at the expense of people currently trying to live in and cope with inadequate infrastructure in the current area.*

As many new settlements will be on greenfield sites the adverse impact on the countryside and local amenity will be major. It is felt that developers see the financial benefit for large new settlements and the need for the LPA to provide more houses runs roughshod over existing communities and services. Large building companies and supermarkets have brownfield land banks that are not being released as it is cheaper and higher prices can be charged for the types of buildings being built on greenfield sites.

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We have already made clear our priority for ensuring as much use as possible of brownfield land in driving up housing supply. The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning should encourage the effective use of land by reusing brownfield sites provided they are not of high environmental value, and that local councils can set

locally appropriate targets for using brownfield land. In the Housing and Planning Bill, we have set out our intention to require local planning authorities to publish and maintain up-to-date registers of brownfield sites suitable for housing. It is our intention that brownfield registers will be a vehicle for granting permission in principle for new homes on suitable brownfield sites. Our ambition is for 90% of brownfield land suitable for housing to have planning permission by 2020.

To ensure that all possible opportunities for brownfield development are pursued, we propose to make clearer in national policy that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of using brownfield land for housing (in effect, a form of ‘presumption’ in favour of brownfield land). We propose to make it clear that development proposals for housing on brownfield sites should be supported, unless overriding conflicts with the Local Plan or the National Planning Policy Framework can be demonstrated and cannot be mitigated.

Small sites of less than 10 units play an important role in helping to meet local housing need, and the majority of these sites are on brownfield land. In the year to June 2015, planning permission was granted for 39,000 dwellings on small sites, accounting for 16% of all dwellings granted planning permission. However, in 2014 there were only 2,400 registered house builders who build between 1 and 100 homes per year compared to 5,700 in 2006. Building new homes on small sites, whether in rural or urban locations, can deliver a range of economic and social benefits, including:

- providing opportunities for small and medium-sized companies to enter the development market, helping to promote competition and quality in the housebuilding market;
- increasing build out rates in local areas;
- creating local jobs and sustaining local growth, particularly in rural areas; and
- making effective use of developable land

Q7. Do you consider that it would be beneficial to strengthen policy on development of brownfield land for housing? If not, why not and are there any unintended impacts that we should take into account?

Suggested response: *Yes strongly agree with the need to strengthen policy on the use of brownfield sites*

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In light of the clear benefits set out above of enabling development on small sites, we want to ensure that all proposals for sustainable development on small sites of less than 10 units are strongly supported by national policy. This will complement the measures in the Housing and Planning Bill to make it easier for applicants to secure permission in principle for development on small sites. Most Local Plans include clear policies supporting small windfall sites, but there continue to be concerns about the challenges and uncertainty associated with identifying small sites. We propose to apply the approach described above for brownfield land to other small sites, provided they are within existing settlement boundaries and well-designed to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. In doing so we will retain protection against unwanted development of back gardens. We also intend to make clear that proposals for development on small sites immediately adjacent to settlement boundaries should be carefully considered and supported if they are sustainable. We would welcome views on how the proposed policy change to support small sites could impact on the calculation of local planning authorities’ five-year land supply, and any clarification that may be needed on this point.

Q8. Do you consider that it would be beneficial to strengthen policy on development of small sites for housing? If not, why not? How could the change impact on the calculation of the local planning authorities’ five-year land supply?

Suggested response: *Yes as development of small scale sites often means that they are closer to local amenities. However care needs to be taken that a single developer cannot choose to split sites into two or three small builds thus avoiding section 106 payments. There are also issues about the impact that lots of small site developments can have on a small community as the section 106 payments are often smaller and so do not adequately cover the improvements that are needed to the local school etc.*

Q9. Do you agree with the Government proposal to define a small site as a site of less than 10 units? If not, what other definition do you consider is appropriate, and why?

Suggested response: ?

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Q10. Do you consider that national planning policy should set out that local planning authorities should put in place a specific positive local policy for assessing applications for development on small sites not allocated in the Local Plan?

In the year to June 2015, 52,800 planning decisions were made by local planning authorities concerning residential development on small sites of less than 10 units. Of these, 13,600 applications were refused. It is roughly estimated

that around 5,000 of these refused applications may have been supported under the proposed more positive policy (drawing on DCLG analysis of decisions made by local planning authorities).

Suggested response: *Each of the developers of the 5,000 applications referred to in the consultation document had a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. If the appeals failed then the reasons given for refusal were valid, clearly defined and that these were backed up by the Local Plan. In view of this it is not considered that the NPPF should be changed to effectively over ride and weaken local plans.*

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Ensuring housing is delivered on land allocated in plans

While more needs to be done to ensure all areas have an up-to-date Local Plan in place, 83% of local planning authorities have now at least published a plan and 66% have an adopted plan in place. Across the country, provision has been made in plans for over 200,000 housing units each year, although in some of the areas of highest demand provision is below the level that would be needed to meet objectively assessed need. In the year to June 2015, planning permission was granted for 242,000 new homes. However, there is a significant shortfall between the number of homes that we need to build to keep up with housing requirements and the net additions to the housing stock.

We recognise that there may be many reasons why homes cannot be built out at the anticipated rate of delivery, and it is important that there are sufficient incentives and tools in place to support the timely build out of consented development.

Driving up delivery rates depends on all partners playing their part. Local planning authorities can help to ensure that homes delivered match local requirements in a number of ways, including: allocating a good mix of sites in their Local Plans; efficient discharge of planning conditions; helping to resolve other blockages to development (such as other consents required); shortening the timescale by which development must begin; and ensuring a sufficient pipeline of deliverable planning permissions. Developers can also play their part, and we are discussing with house builders and others what steps should be taken to drive faster buildout.

One approach we are looking to take forward is to amend national planning policy to ensure action is taken where there is a significant shortfall between the homes provided for in Local Plans and the houses being built. Our proposal, announced at Autumn Statement 2015, is to introduce a housing delivery test. We envisage this approach working by comparing the number of homes that local planning authorities set out to deliver in their Local Plan against the net additions in housing supply in a local planning authority area.

Understanding and identifying under-delivery relies on accurate and timely information prepared and made publicly available. The department publishes National Statistics on net supply of new homes by local authorities every year. This could provide the benchmark against which delivery rates are assessed. However, we would welcome views on the baseline against which local housing delivery should be assessed. Existing options include data in Authority Monitoring Reports against Local Plan targets; or proposed housing trajectories. One approach could be to express significant under-delivery as a percentage below expected delivery. We envisage the assessment being made over a two-year period so that it is not distorted by short-term fluctuations. To strengthen the incentive for delivery on consented sites, we propose to amend planning policy to make clear that where significant under-delivery is identified over a sustained period, action needs to be taken to address this. We would welcome views on what steps should be taken in these circumstances.

One approach could be to identify additional sustainable sites if the existing approach is demonstrably not delivering the housing required. These would need to be in sustainable locations, well served by infrastructure, and with clear prospects for delivery which could be specifically set out as part of any future planning consent. A range of sites may be appropriate, which could include new settlements. In such instances local planning authorities may need to consider whether a review or partial review of their plans are needed, or whether such settlements can be delivered through additional development plan documents – such as Area Action Plans. Such an approach would present an opportunity for local planning authorities, working with developers and their local communities, to undertake rapid and targeted policy reviews, including appropriate consultation, so that additional land in sustainable locations can come forward.

Q11. We would welcome your views on how best to implement the housing delivery test, and in particular:

- What do you consider should be the baseline against which to monitor delivery of new housing?
- What should constitute significant under-delivery, and over what time period?
- What steps do you think should be taken in response to significant under-delivery?
- How do you see this approach working when the housing policies in the Local Plan are not up-to-date?

Suggested response: *It is considered that this is that this is an extremely dangerous proposal. There are many valid reasons why housing delivery targets are not reached. This proposal would rely on developers playing their part when in fact they have an incentive, the additional sites for housing being identified, not to deliver the development permissions they already have. There is nothing in this proposal to stop developers playing the system and delaying housing delivery if it suits their business needs. Rather than have the onus on LPAs to make the targets achievable change the legislation so that developers have to cooperate:*

- ***After three years of receiving planning permission all principle of development on a site is lost and unless there is clear evidence that it was beyond the developers control no planning application would be accepted for a further 12 months.***
- ***Require development companies to publish details of any land ownership, in a single LPA, and require them to develop any brownfield sites that they own before being allowed to put in an application for any additional greenfield sites.***
- ***Ban any developer from submitting additional land sites if it has a record of not delivering housing on land it has received permission on.***

Q12. What would be the impact of a housing delivery test on development activity?

Suggested response: *It will potentially slow the system down due to additional targets and administrative pressures. If it failed to work the Government would then try to tinker with the system and would weaken the Local Plan to achieve targets, thus playing into the hands of developers.*

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Supporting delivery of starter homes

Unviable and underused commercial and employment land

National planning policy is clear that the planning system should support sustainable economic growth and local planning authorities should plan positively to meet the business development needs of their areas. A balance needs to be struck between making land available to meet commercial and economic needs, and not reserving land which has little likelihood of being taken up for these uses. Paragraph 22 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that where there is no reasonable prospect of land allocated for employment uses in the Local Plan coming into use, such land should not be subject to long term protection.

The Productivity Plan set out our intention to bring forward proposals to extend the current exception site policy, and strengthen the presumption in favour of Starter Home developments, starting with unviable or underused brownfield land for retail, leisure and institutional uses. It also set out our commitment to consider how national policy and guidance can ensure that unneeded commercial land can be released for housing.

We want to ensure that unviable or underused commercial and employment land is released under the exception site policy for starter homes. We propose to amend paragraph 22 of the Framework to make clear that unviable or underused employment land should be released unless there is significant and compelling evidence to justify why such land should be retained for employment use. At a minimum, this would include an up-to-date needs assessment and significant additional evidence of market demand. As set out in Planning Practice Guidance, appropriate consideration should also be given to trends in land values for commercial and employment uses, against land values for other uses including residential. To avoid uncertainty on land availability, we wish to ensure our policy is as robust as possible. We are interested in views on the level and type of evidence which would justify retention of employment and commercial land. We are considering the merits of expecting local planning authorities to adopt a policy with a clear limit on the length of time (such as 3 years) that commercial or employment land should be protected if unused and there is not significant and compelling evidence of market interest of it coming forward within a 2 year timeframe. We would welcome views on this approach.

There is no comprehensive data on the amount of underused or unviable employment land across England as a whole. Data suggests there were approximately 850 hectares of greenfield land allocated for employment use in the West Midlands in 2012-13. If a similar situation were replicated across England, this would equate to roughly 13,000 hectares in England. However, many of these sites are likely to be in the process of being developed or there may be clear market interest in developing them, but we do not know how many or the extent the sites would be viable for residential development. As an illustration, if around 10% of the 13,000 hectares of allocated employment land were vacant or underused and around 50% of such sites could be viably developed, this could free up an additional 650 hectares for housing.

Q13. What evidence would you suggest could be used to justify retention of land for commercial or similar use? Should there be a fixed time limit on land retention for commercial use?

Suggested response: Residential land is generally more profitable than commercial and yet there is an urgent need for both. LPAs are best placed to decide on time limits and whether a commercial land site should be developed and so the power to decide should be given to them.

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Alongside these proposals, we propose to widen the scope of the current exception site policy for starter homes to incorporate other forms of unviable or underused brownfield land, such as land which was previously in use for retail, leisure and non-residential institutional uses (such as former health and educational sites). This will provide clarity about the scope of the exception site policy for applicants and local planning authorities, and release more land for starter homes.

Q14. Do you consider that the starter homes exception site policy should be extended to unviable or underused retail, leisure and non-residential institutional brownfield land?

Suggested response: Yes subject to relevant tests or proof to show that the units/site are truly unviable.

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The current exception site policy states that a planning application for a Starter Home development on an exception site should be approved unless the local planning authority can demonstrate that there are overriding conflicts with the National Planning Policy Framework that cannot be mitigated. The interpretation of this policy has created uncertainty for applicants seeking to bring forward the first Starter Home applications.

To ensure there is greater certainty that planning permission will be granted for suitable proposals for starter homes on exception sites, we propose to be clearer about the grounds on which development might be refused, and to ensure that this is fully embedded in national planning policy. Specifically, we propose to amend the exception site policy to make it clearer that planning applications can only be rejected if there are overriding design, infrastructure and local environmental (such as flood risk) considerations that cannot be mitigated.

Q15. Do you support the proposal to strengthen the starter homes exception site policy? If not, why not?

Suggested response: Yes.

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We are keen to understand whether there is the potential to encourage a greater proportion of housing in general and starter homes in particular within mixed use commercial developments across the country, for example new town centre developments or existing town centre regeneration. As shopping patterns have changed, so have the shape of our town centres. Bringing starter homes into those centres will not only bring footfall, but help drive the regeneration of those towns, benefitting the wider community and helping to safeguard the future of town centres.

In cases where existing mixed use commercial developments contain unlet commercial units, we consider that where appropriate they could usefully be converted to housing including as starter homes. There would need to be clear evidence that the unit has remained unlet for a reasonable period or there is little likelihood of the unit being let for a commercial use.

Q16. Should starter homes form a significant element of any housing component within mixed use developments and converted unlet commercial units?

Suggested response: Residential development is generally more profitable than commercial and yet there is an urgent need for both. LPAs are best placed to decide on whether a commercial unit could be developed but it would be sensible, so as not to encourage small businesses to be forced out, to have a limit on how many such units on a particular site can receive such planning permission.

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Encouraging starter homes in rural areas

The Government's Rural Productivity Plan set out priorities for growing the rural economy and the need to increase the availability of housing in rural towns and villages to enable them to thrive. The use of rural exception sites is an established means for supporting sensitive housing growth where it is locally supported and meeting local needs.

Starter homes can provide a valuable source of housing for rural areas and, if classified as affordable housing, then we consider it should be possible to deliver starter homes through the existing rural exception site policy. Local planning authorities have been bringing forward rural exception sites for a number of years. Data on affordable housing units built on rural exception sites is collected by the Department for Communities and Local Government. In 2013/14 there were 1,642 units built. Rural exception sites are a useful tool for local planning authorities in rural areas to help meet a local community need.

We propose that starter homes on rural exception sites should be subject to the same minimum time limits on resale (5 years) as other starter homes to ensure local people are able to maximise the value of the home and secure a long term place in the local housing market. However, we also propose that local planning authorities would, exceptionally, have the flexibility to require a local connection test. This would reflect the particular needs of some rural areas where local connections are important and access to the housing market for working people can be difficult and would be consistent with existing policy on rural exception sites.

Q17. Should rural exception sites be used to deliver starter homes in rural areas? If so, should local planning authorities have the flexibility to require local connection tests?

Suggested response: Yes

Q18. Are there any other policy approaches to delivering starter homes in rural areas that you would support?

Suggested response: ?

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Enabling communities to identify opportunities for starter homes

Neighbourhood plans prepared by local communities present a further opportunity to provide housing for young people wishing to enter the housing market. We want them to consider the opportunities for starter homes in their area as they develop their plans.

National planning policy currently considers limited affordable housing for local community needs as “not inappropriate” in the Green Belt, where this is consistent with policies in the Local Plan. This does not give express support neighbourhood plans which seek to allocate land in the Green Belt to meet housing need, where this is supported by the local community. We consider that the current policy can hinder locally-led housing development and propose to amend national planning policy so that neighbourhood plans can allocate appropriate small-scale sites in the Green Belt specifically for starter homes, with neighbourhood areas having the discretion to determine the scope of a small scale site. This will support local areas in giving affordable home ownership opportunities to young people and young families by enabling a small level of development that is sympathetic to local concerns and is clearly supported by local people.

Q19. Should local communities have the opportunity to allocate sites for small scale starter home developments in their Green Belt through neighbourhood plans?

Suggested response: Yes but with additional protection so that it is allowed only for occupiers with local connections and an increased (10 years) minimum time limit on resale.

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Brownfield land in the Green Belt

We are firmly committed to making sure the best possible use is made of all brownfield land that is suitable for housing, to reduce the need as far as possible to release other land. This could potentially include some brownfield land that sits within the Green Belt that already has buildings or structures and has previously been developed.

We are committed to protecting the Green Belt, and are maintaining the strong safeguards on Green Belt set out in national planning policy. These policies set a high bar against inappropriate development in Green Belt, while recognising that some parts of the Green Belt contain living and working communities that need to thrive. National planning policy sets out that most development in the Green Belt is inappropriate and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Only 0.1% of land in the Green Belt is previously developed brownfield land suitable for housing, often with structures or buildings in place. Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of such land – where this would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development - is already deemed not inappropriate.

Since introduction of the initial exception site policy for starter homes in March 2015, we have given further consideration to the potential release of brownfield land in the Green Belt as part of our overall approach to delivering 200,000 starter homes. The Autumn Statement 2015 set out that we will bring forward proposals to amend national planning policy to allow for the development of brownfield land in the Green Belt providing it contributes to starter homes. We propose to change policy to support the regeneration of previously developed brownfield sites in the Green Belt by allowing them to be developed in the same way as other brownfield land, providing this contributes to the delivery of starter homes, and subject to local consultation. We propose to amend

the current policy test in paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework that prevents development of brownfield land where there is any additional impact on the openness of the Green Belt to give more flexibility and enable suitable, sensitively designed redevelopment to come forward. We would make it clear that development on such land may be considered not inappropriate development where any harm to openness is not substantial.

Based on data from the 2010 National Land Use Database, we estimate that across England there were 500 to 600 hectares of brownfield land in the Green Belt viable for starter homes development and not on open land. There is no data to indicate how much of this land has subsequently been built on (including potentially commercial or industrial units), or how much further land of this type may have become available.

Q20. Should planning policy be amended to allow redevelopment of brownfield sites for starter homes through a more flexible approach to assessing the impact on openness?

Suggested response: ?

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d) Transitional arrangements

We have considered whether to propose introducing transitional arrangements for the changes set out in this consultation document. We recognise in particular that a change in the definition of affordable housing in national policy will require local authorities to consider their Local Plan policies in the context of relevant evidence. They may need to develop new policy as a result, and carry out a partial review of the Local Plan. The Planning Inspectorate has introduced a fasttrack process for carrying out partial reviews of Local Plans which is intended to help local planning authorities make changes to their policies more easily. We propose to introduce a transitional period for the amended affordable housing definition so that local planning authorities can consider making amendments to their local policies. We would welcome views on the appropriate length of the transitional period to enable reviews to be undertaken. We envisage that a period of six to twelve months should be sufficient.

The Housing and Planning Bill is introducing a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the delivery of starter homes, and a requirement for a proportion of starter homes to be delivered on all suitable reasonably-sized housing developments.

We have carefully considered whether it would be appropriate for a transitional period to be introduced for any of the other proposed policy changes. Having considered the extent of their likely impact on plans that have already been adopted and plans that are in preparation, we have not identified a strong justification for transitional arrangements.

Our planning reforms since 2010 have placed Local Plans at the heart of the planning system. The Productivity Plan and subsequent Written Ministerial Statement made clear our commitment to ensuring that local planning authorities produce a Local Plan by early 2017. We do not intend that these policy proposals should slow down the preparation of existing Local Plans, nor do we consider it necessary for Local Plans now in the examination process to be revisited. However, we would welcome any views on this point.

Q21. We would welcome your views on our proposed transitional arrangements.

Suggested response: ?

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f) General questions

Q22. What are your views on the assumptions and data sources set out in this document to estimate the impact of the proposed changes? Is there any other evidence which you think we need to consider?

Suggested response: ?

Q23. Have you any other views on the implications of our proposed changes to national planning policy on people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010? What evidence do you have on this matter?

Suggested response: ?

Item 10 KCC Consultation - Making the best use of the Mobile Library Service

Purpose of item: DECISION

The consultation has been advertised by KCC with residents who regularly use the mobile library service receiving a letter. KALC has sent the following summary

Dear Member Councils

Some of you may already be aware of this consultation, but just in case we wanted to highlight that KCC is currently undertaking a consultation on its mobile library service. The consultation is entitled "Making best use of the Mobile Library Service" and can be downloaded using the following link: <http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/mobilelibraries/consultationHome> . **The deadline for comments to KCC is 5pm on Friday 4 March.** KCC advise that no decisions have been taken and that they want to hear what you think of their proposal.

As you will see, the consultation includes information on why KCC is re-designing the mobile library service, the criteria they are proposing when reviewing stopping locations and the impact it would have on the current service. The consultation document proposes to withdraw stops that have only had, on average, 2 or less visitors over the period October 2014-September 2015. The consultation document shows that this would reduce the number of stops from 651 to 283. Page 8 of the consultation document reports that redesigning routes would allow KCC to implement a number of proposed improvements and changes to the stops:

- Each stop would be on a new, fortnightly schedule
- Increasing the minimum stop time from 10 minutes to 30 minutes,
- improving the stop length for more than half of the stops
- Changing the days we operate to Tuesday through to Saturday
- to mitigate the impact of Bank Holiday Mondays on our current
- schedules and to increase opportunity for wider use
- In addition, we expect the redesigned routes will result in better fuel
- efficiency and improve the environmental impact of the Mobile Library
- Service.
- It will also deliver a saving for KCC.

The consultation document predicts that 80% of the current visits and 77% of the current book issues would still be delivered through the proposed mobile network (see page 9 of the consultation document for further details of the impact of the proposed changes). To see what this means for your specific local stop please use the following link: <http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/mobilelibraries/consultationHome>.

If your Council does respond, could you please send us a copy of your reply.

Briefing note.

KCC has a Home Library Service brings library materials directly to people's door and now has a Touch a New World scheme. "Following a trial with some of our Home Library Service customers, we now offer the Touch a New World scheme. The aim is to get people online through the help of a volunteer and, if required, the loan of an iPad for ten weeks. Once able to use the internet and with a permanent means to go online, customers can use their library card and pin number to reserve items of their choice from our online catalogue. Home Library Service customers items are then dropped off and collected from your home".

Decision required.

Members must decide whether to make some comments to some of the relevant questions on the consultation document. Suggestions (bold and italics) have been given below.

Q4. We are proposing to use one criterion to assess the future of mobile library stops: Criterion: Stops that have had 2 or less visitors on average over the period October 2014 to September 2015 To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed criteria? Please indicate by placing an X in appropriate box below:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know

Comment. ***If mobile library stops are cancelled due to lack of use then the few users should be identified and targeted for Home Library Visits or the Touch a New World Scheme.***

Q4a. Are there alternative or other criteria you think we should use?

Q5. Frequency of visits to each location. We are proposing to change the frequency of visits to each location to every two weeks.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know

Comment. ***If this preserves the service then it is reluctantly accepted.***

Q6. Changing the days we operate. We are proposing to change the days we operate the Mobile Library Service from Monday to Friday to Tuesday to Saturday. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know

Q7. Increasing the minimum stopping time We are proposing to change the minimum stop time, increasing this from 10 minutes to 30 minutes.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know

Q10. Anything Else? If you still have concerns about how you would access the library service in the future, or have any other comments, please let us know.