



HELEN WHATELY MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Alison Broom
Chief Executive
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House, King Street
Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6JQ

HW/ML/105701

30 September 2019

Dear Alison,

Local Plan Review: Scoping themes and issues

As one of the Members of Parliament for the Borough of Maidstone, I would like to contribute to the scoping themes and issues stage of the Local Plan Review. I have consulted with parish councillors and residents and have the following points to make based on my informal consultation:

- **Community involvement and communication of the Local Plan Review**
Given the importance of the Local Plan Review and its ability to affect all our lives for many years to come, I think the council could do more to publicise the process and various consultations within the process more widely to encourage as many people as possible to take part in shaping our community.
- **Infrastructure**
In and around Maidstone infrastructure such as roads, rail, doctors' surgeries and schools (ranging from nursery provision upwards) is lagging behind housing development which is impacting on peoples' quality of life.

It is important that the local plan review takes a holistic approach to infrastructure and community facilities that not only meet today's needs but future needs as well. It needs to plan in the infrastructure needed for a growing population, and for new technologies such as electric vehicle charging points.

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If you would like to find out more about what I am doing in Faversham and Mid Kent, please do sign up to my newsletter on my website.

All personal data you share with me will be processed and stored securely in confidence. I may allow access to your data to authorised staff, and share it with third parties where it will help your case. I may contact you from time to time to keep you informed. You can read my full privacy notice at: helenwhately.org.uk/privacy
Hard copies are available upon request. Please let me know if you have any questions about these arrangements.



- **Financing infrastructure**

It is important that Maidstone Borough Council charges enough, collects and spends all developer contributions on infrastructure to support new and existing development. Some councils allocate a percentage of total CIL to local town and parish councils to spend on ultra-local projects such as improved footpaths, or to add to larger projects - such as a school or GP surgery. I think this is something that Maidstone Borough Council should consider as it helps to tie the developer contribution to the locality of the development.

The government makes available large sums of money for infrastructure and it would be good to see Maidstone taking more advantage of opportunities available to local authorities.

- **Development**

Some people have contacted me to say that their preferred option for the Local Plan Review to meet our housing need and to ensure adequate infrastructure would be to build a garden village, rather than constantly sprinkling development around existing communities without the adequate infrastructure to support it. I am mindful of these concerns. There has been too much development on the outskirts of Maidstone without sufficient infrastructure, particularly roads & public transport. I have been told that businesses and shoppers now avoid Maidstone because of the traffic, which is clearly detrimental to the local economy - as well as a reflection of the hours residents how spend stuck in traffic.

If a garden village is to be built, it needs to be in the right location with existing access to road and rail links, as well as access to broadband which enables home working and takes the pressure off road and rail.

The Local Plan Review needs to build the homes that local people need. People tell me there is an excess of executive (four to five bedroom) homes in parts of the borough, and a shortage of affordable homes as starter and family homes. Smaller homes are higher density so not only better meet local housing need but protect more of the countryside.



Affordable homes need to be built in sustainable locations near family and community support networks as well as transport links and other facilities. Having a 40% affordable housing contribution in remote rural areas, and 20% in urban areas results in people with lower incomes not being near the support they rely on including transport links and jobs.

There needs to be a bigger focus on retirement housing and two-bedroom homes that can be used by down-sizers and new families. Building more retirement accommodation not only encourages older people to live in more suitable accommodation that is often less isolated, cheaper to heat, with fewer hazards that can cause falls- but it also frees up much needed family homes.

In the interests of balanced communities new developments need to contain a mix of all types of homes. Within this mix Gypsy and Traveller sites and pitches that should not be concentrated in isolated locations such as Headcorn and Ulcombe. A more dispersed approach is needed to prevent 'ghettos of the future'.

- **Garden Village – East of Lenham**

Although I am not against a garden village in principle as a solution to Maidstone meeting its housing figures I am concerned about the proposals to locate this at Lenham Heath.

The Local Plan Review is an excellent opportunity for Maidstone Borough Council to take a holistic approach to planning in partnership with the local community. The plan should not only aim to provide for housing, but do so in ways that protect and enhance:

- o integrated, strong local communities
- o health and wellbeing
- o Local character and heritage
- o sustainability
- o biodiversity and the natural environment

by including these themes as major planning considerations.



In any event, it is imperative that the next iteration of the local plan includes infrastructure to support the growing local population, to make sure that growth improves quality of life for my constituents rather than worsening it. I hope the council takes this chance to involve as many residents as possible in its design so that our new Local Plan is one that the whole community can support.

Tom. He

Helen Whately MP

Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

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