

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

CPRE Kent is the Kent Branch of the Campaign to Rural England which is part of the national CPRE charity. It is our objective to retain and promote a beautiful and thriving countryside that is valued by everyone and we believe the planning system should protect and enhance the countryside in the public interest for the important contribution it makes to peoples' physical and mental wellbeing, as well as its vital role in feeding the nation. It is our position that local planning authorities should seek to ensure that the impact of development on the countryside, both directly and indirectly, is kept to a minimum and that development is sustainable in accordance with national planning policy.

This response has been prepared jointly by the Kent Branch office of CPRE Kent and by the Maidstone District Committee of CPRE Kent, but for brevity our comments are expressed as being from 'CPRE Kent' throughout this response.

The draft Local Plan has been produced in advance of the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) having been finalised – a point that we raised in the covering letter to our representations dated 7 May 2014. This is a fundamental piece of the evidence to inform the Plan and it is difficult to see how the spatial strategy has been determined without it given that the Spatial Vision states that *"development will be guided by the delivery of the Integrated Transport Strategy"*. Without the ITS being available, it is impossible to see whether or not this is the case, but it seems to be a matter of 'putting the horse before the cart'. Other than having a further round of consultation when the ITS is finalised, before the Plan itself is finalised, it is difficult to see how this apparent contradiction can be addressed.

Section 2. Policy SP5 – amendments to landscape and landscapes of local value

Paragraph / Policy section	CPRE Kent Response
Paragraph 2.12 Design	Supports the new sentence included at the end of the paragraph regarding landscape and Visual and Impact Assessments.
Paragraphs 2.16 & 2.17	Supports the new paragraphs regarding the setting of the Kent Downs AONB.
Paragraph 2.18	Supports the new section on the High Weald AONB.
Paragraph 2.19	Supports the inclusion of 'enhance' in the first line, and the inclusion of the 'High Weald AONB and their settings' in the second line.
Paragraph 2.23	Supports the new paragraph on the Low Weald.
Policy SP5: 2(i)	Supports the inclusion of 'siting, materials', 'mass', and 'including landscape features'.
Policy SP5: 5	Support the inclusion of the setting of the High Weald AONB.
Policy SP5: 6 & map on page 10 'Landscapes of Local Value'	Support the inclusion of the Low Weald in the policy and on the Map setting out the boundaries of landscapes of Local Value. However, CPRE Kent considers that land included in the Special Landscape Area south of the Greensand Ridge from Yalding through to the Borough's eastern boundary as shown on the Adopted Local Plan 2000 Proposals Map should be included with the Low Weald Local Landscape Area. This reflects the former Countywide designation and we can see no reason why this should not prevail as a Local Landscape Area. We ask that consideration is given to including land between the two separate elements of the Low Weald LLV creating a single designation area.
SP5	Adopted Maidstone Local Plan Policy ENV28 resists proposals that would harm the amenities of surrounding occupiers and it would be helpful if this could be included in the Policy SP5.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

Section 3. Proposed new housing sites

As a general point CPRE Kent is concerned at the level of residential development being allocated in villages and locations such as Marden, Boughton Monchelsea and Coxheath which will have an adverse impact on the character of the village, and result in increased traffic on rural roads. The cumulative impact of multiple sites on villages must be included as a major consideration.

Proposed new housing site allocation		CPRE Kent Response
Number	Address	
H1(51)	Bridge Industrial Centre, Wharf Road, Tovil	No objection
H1(52)	The Dunning Hall, off Fremlin Walk, Maidstone	No objection
H1(53)	18-21 Foster Street, Maidstone	No objection
H1(54)	Slencrest House, Tonbridge Road, Maidstone	No objection
H1(55)	The Russell Hotel, Boxley Road, Maidstone	It is noted that the site has planning consent for 14 dwellings.
H1(56)	180-188 Union Street, Maidstone	No objection
H1(58)	Tovil Working Men's Club, Tovil Hill, Maidstone	No objection
H1(59)	Bearsted Station Goods Yard, Bearsted	Object on the grounds that the existing station car park is inadequate and the site should be used to provide additional station parking.
H1(62)	Land at Boughton Lane Loose/ Boughton Monchelsea	Object on the following grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a greenfield site. • The site is identified as Grade 2 agricultural land classification on the London and South East Region Agricultural Land Classification Map. • The impact on the rural / countryside character of the area, and even more so particularly when combined with site H1(63). This point was acknowledged by the 2000 Local Plan Inspector, which remains a valid concern. • The site lies within an area defined as the Loose Landscape of Local Value on page 10 of the October 2015 consultation which draft policy SP5 The Countryside (6) states will be protected. • The site lies within the Southern Anti-Coalescence Belt as shown on the Adopted Local Plan 2000 and saved Policy ENV 32 states that within the defined Belt development which significantly extends the defined urban area will not be permitted. • Consideration must be given to the cumulative impact of proposed allocations H1(63), (70), (71), (76) in this consultation and H1(23) in the 2014 consultation.
H1(63)	Boughton Mount, Boughton Lane, Boughton Monchelsea	Object on the following grounds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The southern part of the site is greenfield site. 2. The southern part of the site is identified as Grade 2 agricultural land classification in the London and South East Region Agricultural Land Classification

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

		<p>Map.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Impact on the rural / countryside character of the area and even more so particularly when combined with site H1(62). This point was acknowledged by the 2000 Local Plan Inspector, which remains a valid concern. 4. The site lies within an area defined as the Loose Landscape of Local Value on page 10 of the October 2015 consultation which draft policy SP5 The Countryside (6) states will be protected. 5. The site lies within the Southern Anti-Coalescence Belt as shown on the Adopted Local Plan 2000 and saved Policy ENV 32 states that within the defined Belt development which significantly extends the defined urban area will not be permitted. 6. Consideration must be given to the cumulative impact of proposed allocations H1(62), (70), (71), (76) in this consultation and H1(23) in the 2014 consultation.
H1(66)	Land south of the Parsonage, Goudhurst Road, Marden	<p>Object on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is an inappropriate location. 2. It is a greenfield site. 3. The site is identified as Grade 2 agricultural land classification on the London and South East Region Agricultural Land Classification Map. 4. The site lies within the Staplehurst Low Weald Landscape Character Area for which the Condition Assessment is Good and the Sensitivity Assessment is High and where the Character Area Assessment Actions are for conservation and enhancement. It would have a harmful effect on landscape character. 5. It is backland development. 6. The impact on the setting of buildings to the south of the site. 7. Marden village is now entirely surrounded by new developments of large estates, including the MAP site, Parsonage Farm, Stanley Farm, north of Howland Road, and the Hockey Ground. The cumulative impact on residents and infrastructure should be considered.
H1(68)	Land to the north of Henhurst Farm	<p>Object on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a greenfield site. 2. It is predominantly in agricultural use. 3. The site is identified as Grade 3 agricultural land classification on the London and South East Region Agricultural Land Classification Map. 4. The site lies within the Staplehurst Low Weald Landscape Character Area for which the Condition Assessment is 'Good' and the Sensitivity Assessment is High and where the Character Area Assessment Actions are for conservation and enhancement. It would have a harmful effect on landscape character. 5. It is backland development. 6. No access is shown for the site.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

		<p>7. Concerned about the potential impact that the residential development and open space provision could have on village roads.</p> <p>8. Concern that given the location and size of the proposed open space to the south of the area to be developed this development will set a precedent for further future development on greenfield land to the north and west of the land identified for housing.</p>
H1(70)	Land at Church Street / Heath Road, Boughton Monchelsea	<p>Object on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Loss of Woodland. 2. The site lies within Landscape Character Area No. 29 Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau where one of the summary of actions is “improve the sense of place between swathes of development”. Development of this site would not meet this objective. 3. Concerned about the potential impact that the residential development on Church Street and Heath Road, including their junction. 4. Consider about safety issues for pedestrians given the proximity of Boughton Monchelsea Primary School opposite. 5. Boughton Monchelsea Primary School is oversubscribed. 6. Consideration must be given to the cumulative impact of proposed allocations H1(62), (63), (71), (76) in this consultation and H1(23) in the 2014 consultation.
H1(71)	Land at Lywood Farm, Green Lane, Boughton Monchelsea	<p>Object on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The site is in an unsustainable location. 2. Concern about increased traffic on Green Lane. 3. Consideration must be given to the cumulative impact of proposed allocations H1(62), (63), (70), (76) in this consultation and H1(23) in the 2014 consultation.
H1(72)	Land adjacent to The Windmill PH, Ethorne Street, Hollingbourne	<p>Object on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a greenfield site. 2. It is agricultural land. HO3-189 Site assessment indicates that the site is part Grade 2 and Part Grade 3 Agricultural Land Classification. 3. Incongruous backland development. 4. It will set an unacceptable precedent for land between the site and rear of properties on Eyhorne Street. 5. It does not have good access, including for pedestrians.
H1(73)	Brandy’s Bay, South Lane, Sutton Valance	<p>Object on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Majority of the site is greenfield. 2. Is backland development. 3. Would result in over development of the area: 4. There is pressure on local doctor’s surgery and local schools. 5. Access onto A274 is under stress. 6. Is outside the village envelope.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

		<p>7. The site provides the rural setting for the settlement.</p> <p>8. Is in the Special Landscape Area as defined on the Adopted Local Plan where policy ENV34 provides protection and conservation of the scenic quality and distinctive character of the area and gives priority to the landscape over other planning considerations.</p> <p>9. Is in the lea of the Greensand Ridge.</p> <p>10. It is understood that a stream runs through the site and have concerns about flooding, both on site and elsewhere if the site is developed.</p>
H1(74)	Wren's Cross, Upper Stone Street, Maidstone	No objection subject to the protection of the listed buildings and heritage assets and their setting, and access is onto Lower Stone Street.
H1(75)	Land north of Heath Lane (Older's Field) Coxheath	No objection subject to the deletion of H1(45) Forstal Lane, especially as planning permission has been granted for site H1(44) Heathfield.
H1(76)	Hubbards Lane, Boughton Monchelsea	<p>Object on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is an inappropriate location. 2. It is a greenfield site. 3. It is in agricultural use. 4. The site is identified as Grade 2 agricultural land classification on the London and South East Region Agricultural Land Classification Map 5. Is ribbon development. 6. Concern that allowing development in this location will set a precedent for continued ribbon development southward along Hubbards Lane as well as eastwards along Heath Lane from its junction with Hubbards Lane. 7. Consideration must be given to the cumulative impact of proposed allocations H1(62), (63), (70), (71) in this consultation and H1(23) in the 2014 consultation.
H1(77)	Bentletts Yard, Laddingford	No objection so long as the site is allocated for no more than 10 residential units.

Section 4 Housing site allocations proposed for deletion

Proposed deletion		CPRE Kent Response
Number	Address	
H1(12)	Haynes, Ashford Road, Maidstone	Disappointed to learn that this urban brownfield site is no longer available
H1(25)	Tongs Meadow, West Street, Harrietsham	Support the deletion
H1(31)	Ham Lane, Lenham	Support the decision
H1(48)	Heath Road, Boughton Monchelsea	Support the decision

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

Section 5: Housing site allocation proposed for amendment

Policy Reference	CPRE Kent Response
Policy H1(10) South of Sutton Road, Langley	Objects on the following grounds. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The site is identified as Grade 2 agricultural land classification on the London and South East Region Agricultural Land Classification Map and the NPPF dissuades the use of higher quality agricultural land. 2. Part of the site is used as a golf driving range and plant nursery both with limited associated development the land could be returned to agricultural use and does not therefore need to be allocated for housing. 3. It forms part of a green gap between the eastern side of the Maidstone conurbation and Langley Heath. 4. It is unsustainable in terms of additional traffic on the Sutton Road, regardless of the proposals for highway improvements on the A274 5. The cumulative impact of the site in conjunction with the other housing allocations in this area.

Section 6: Proposed new employment site allocation

Policy Reference	CPRE Kent Response
EMP1(5): Woodcut Farm, Ashford Road, Bearsted	<p>The October 2015 Regulation 18 Consultation document does not give any reasoned explanation why the site has been identified as a new employment site allocation.</p> <p>Planning history for the development of employment locations at and around M20 Junction 8 shows that this is a controversial area for development, first with the Kent International Gateway application and then more recently with the Waterside Park application.</p> <p>The site was part of the Kent International Gateway application which was refused at Inquiry, largely on environmental grounds.</p> <p>More recently the planning appeal for employment uses on land to the south at Waterside Park has recently been refused. The Inspector raised concerns regarding the visual and landscape impact, including the setting of the AONB; the loss of countryside; harm to the setting of heritage assets; the impact of development reducing gaps between existing scattered developments to give the appearance of a mass of development which would be detrimental to the wider landscape and rural character; that workers would predominantly access the site by private car / motorcycle; the high sensitivity of walkers using the public rights of way in the AONB. These concerns also apply to the Woodcut Farm Site.</p> <p>The Inspector at paragraph 94 writes ‘I consider the need for developments on these scales in this location and consequent loss of greenfield land within the countryside had not been fully justified’ and ‘while there does appear to be a need for more employment land allocations, it has not yet been demonstrated that these will necessarily result in the allocation of land in the countryside.’ The Inspector at paragraph 95 continues ‘Even if this proves to be the case I consider that it has also not been shown, for the reasons set out above, that Waterside Park would be an acceptable location for developments of this size.’ Given that the Woodcut Farm allocation (25.8ha) is significantly larger (61%) than the larger Waterside Park application (16.1ha) a similar conclusion can be drawn for the proposed allocation at Woodcut Farm.</p> <p>The Planning Inspector for the Waterside Park appeal at paragraph 62 highlights the fact that ‘there is available industrial floor space in neighbouring boroughs and this will need</p>

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

	<p>to be taken into account under the 'duty to co-operate' set by the Framework when determining the precise requirement that Maidstone will need to provide' (paragraphs 160 and 182). The response to the recent call for housing sites by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council indicates that there are vacant employment sites within the Medway Gap area of Tonbridge and Malling Borough (T&MBC) which have good transport links with Maidstone. The Council should discuss with T&MBC whether there are opportunities for these sites to make provision towards Maidstone's employment land requirements.</p> <p>CPRE Kent objects specifically on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The site is in an inappropriate location.2. It is a greenfield site within a wider swathe of greenfield land.3. It is a working farm.4. It will result in encroachment into the open countryside.5. Development in this location would have an adverse effect on the setting of the North Downs AONB contrary to paragraph 2.17 and draft Policy SP5 which seek to rigorously protect the setting of the AONB. NPPF paragraph 110 states that plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.6. The site lies within the Special Landscape Area to which Policy ENV 43 applies. The policy gives particular attention to the protection and conservation of the area where priority will be given to the landscape over other planning considerations.7. The Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study Site Assessments (January 2015) assessment of the Woodcut Farm site identifies the site as having a low capacity to accommodate economic development.8. The impact on the setting of Old English Cottage, Maidstone Road.9. The NPPF encourages plans to allocate land which can accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies; give priorities to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities; and consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport (paragraph 35). Given its location beyond the Maidstone conurbation (the site is 1.5km from the nearest edge) it is not well located for pedestrians, cyclists or people with disabilities; it has a limited bus service with an hourly weekday service to Ashford. Given these factors it is more than likely that people working at the site will travel there by car or motorbike. This point is accepted at paragraph 6.14 of the consultation document. NPPF paragraph 37 states that planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment. The allocation of this site is contrary to the NPPF guidance.10. The Sustainability Appraisal Technical Appendix B: Employment Site Options Interim Sustainability Findings September 2015 considers the site (for 49,300 sq.m. employment floorspace) and concludes: "The SA has raised the following issues which will need to be considered in allocating the site, or in taking it forward for development in the future:<ul style="list-style-type: none">•This site is located on a Greenfield site and not previously developed land•This site is located within close proximity to a LWS and the Kent Downs AONB and is adjacent to an Ancient Woodland/Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, an area identified with significant archaeological features/finds and to the setting of a listed building.•This site is not easily accessible to a cycle route, train station, bus stop or the Maidstone Urban area."11. The allocation includes provision for office floorspace. NPPF Paragraph 23 requires local planning authorities to follow a sequential approach in the allocation of office sites: first within a town centre, then edge of centre and to only consider sites elsewhere if sufficient sites cannot be identified, and that
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

	<p>these sites should be well connected to the town centre. The site is not within the town centre or in an edge of centre location – it is some 1.5km beyond the eastern edge of the residential area of Bearsted and 6km from the town centre. It has poor public transport connection as set out in point 9 above.</p> <p>12. Allocating Woodcut Farm could set a precedent for further development at Junction 8, including land at the refused Waterside Park application site.</p> <p>All of which CPRE Kent consider are sound reasons for not allocating the site.</p>
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Section 7: Proposed new Gypsy and Traveller site allocations

We did not make representation on the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site allocations at the Regulation 18 Consultation 2014 as we considered that there was no sound evidence of need. This was because the GTTSSA issued in March 2012 was carried out under the requirements of the 2004 Housing Act and that since then the definition had been changed for planning purposes by DCLG in March 2012 and that in light of this CPRE Kent did not feel able to comment on specific sites in advance of a new GTTSSA being undertaken. Since submitting our representation in May 2014 DCLG has further refined the definition along with guidance (i.e. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, August 2015). We consider that that a new GTTSSA may result in a reduction in the number of sites needed. In light of this CPRE Kent's view remains unchanged, namely that we consider that there is no sound evidence of need to justify the allocated sites and do not therefore feel able to comment on specific sites in advance of a new GTTSSA being undertaken.

Section 8: Proposed new open space allocations

It is noted that the following new open space allocations are associated with housing allocations to which we have responded either in our representation dated 7 May 2014 or in this representation above, as follows:

Site address	Policy OS1 Policy Ref	Policy H1 Policy Ref	CPRE Kent Response
North of Henhurst Farm, Staplehurst	12	68	See H1(68) above
North of Heath Road (Older's Field) Coxheath	15	75	See H1(75) above
Boughton Lane Loose and Boughton Monchelsea	17	62	See H1(62) above
Boughton Mount Boughton Monchelsea	18	63	See H1(63) above
Lyewood Farm Boughton Monchelsea	19	71	See H1(71) above
East of Hermitage Lane	1	1	See representation dated 7 May 2014
Oakapple Lane Barming	2	4	
Langley Park Sutton Road	3	5	
Bicknor Farm Sutton Road Otham	4	9	
South of Langley Road Langley	5	10	
South of Ashford Road Harrietsham	6	26	
Church Road Harrietsham	7	28	
Tongs Meadow West Street Harrietsham	8	25	
Hen & Duck Farm Marden Road Staplehurst	10	36	
Fishers Farm Fishers Road Staplehurst	11	37	
Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank Headcorn	13	39	
South of Grigg Lane Headcorn	14	41	

With regard to the housing allocation sites that include associated public open space that we have supported at the 2014 Regulation 18 Consultation and this consultation, and in the event that the Council chooses to include housing allocation sites with associated public open space that we have objected to it is important that the public open space is provided.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2015

Response from CPRE Kent

Should the Council decide to include these sites as public open space they should not be used as justification for allowing enabling development, or additional residential development in the vicinity.

Section 9: Open Space and Recreation

Policy Reference	CPRE Kent Response
DM11 1(i) – Open Space and Recreation	<p>It is not clear how the draft standard (ha/1000 population) will be implemented. How will residential developments be translated into population, and will people employed in mixed use development schemes count towards the population figure? It is noted that employment sites are excluded from the policy even though employees may generate demand for recreational space.</p> <p>It would therefore be helpful for the policy or preamble to the policy to set out how a development will be translated into a population figure.</p> <p>It would also be helpful for the policy at 1 to include employment development sites.</p>
DM11 – Open Space and Recreation	<p>It is noted that in footnote 4 on page 137 that ‘where accessibility to children’s and young peoples provision is poor, for example outside a reasonable walking distance or where the crossing of major roads is necessary, smaller areas of open space may be justified on site.’ It is important that children’s play space is provided on site.</p>

Section 10: Nursing and care homes

Policy Reference	CPRE Kent Response
DM42 Nursing and care homes	Welcome and support this policy.
DM 42 2. Nursing and care homes	Nursing and care homes will result in trips from delivery vehicles and ambulances and hospital passenger transport vehicles. It will be important that sufficient space is provided on site for delivery vehicles and ambulances to turn and park en-site.

Section 11: Park and Ride site allocations proposed for deletion

Policy Reference	CPRE Kent Response
PKR1(1) Linton Crossroads	Welcome the deletion.
PKR1(2) Old Sittingbourne Road	Disappointed that this site will be deleted, as this is a popular facility.
Policy Reference	CPRE Kent Response
DM15 2 Park and Ride	<p>The provision of new park and ride facilities should only be considered where existing public transport services cannot be improved. This is to prevent users of existing public transport serving rural areas and communities driving to park and ride facilities and as a consequence reducing the viability of rural bus services.</p> <p>New facilities should be located on brownfield sites.</p>