
Extraordinary Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 29 April 2026 from 7.00 pm - 7.50 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney, Hayden Brawn (Vice-Chair), Charles Gibson (Chair), Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Substitute for Councillor Simon Clark), James Hunt, Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington (Substitute for Councillor Julien Speed) and Mike Whiting.

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Mike Baldock .

OFFICERS PRESENT: Natalie Earl, Emma Gibson, Joanne Johnson, Onawale Kuforiji, Tim Neal and Stuart Watson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Simon Clark and Julien Speed.

893 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

894 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

895 **Built-Up Area Boundary Review 2026**

The officer introduced the report and explained that the review had last been undertaken in 2014 as part of preparation of the Bearing Fruits Local Plan. The current review set out the methodology used and the proposed changes arising from approved planning applications and allocated sites in both Local and Neighbourhood Plans. Of the 32 built-up areas in Swale, the review proposed 15 boundary expansions, four reductions and one boundary error correction. Members were advised that the proposed changes would be consulted upon as part of the Regulation 19 Local Plan, prior to examination in public.

Members raised comments and questions including:

- whether the approach of closely following existing built form could attract criticism for lacking a more strategic approach;
- whether inclusion within a built-up area boundary could reduce design standards, particularly where outline permissions had been granted;
- concerns about irregular boundary shapes and the perception among residents that land outside the boundary would be protected from development;
- whether the review risked creating a precedent for development beyond existing boundaries;
- clarification on specific sites and mapping, including inconsistencies in place naming and minor errors in report annotations; and
- whether certain sites with planning permission should have been included within the boundaries.

Officers responded and advised that:

- the review was an evidence-based, point-in-time exercise which mapped boundaries tightly around established built form, following a clearly defined methodology;
- this approach was intended to provide clarity and robustness, rather than a

strategic allocation function;

- built-up area boundaries did not determine design standards, which would continue to be assessed in full at both outline and detailed stages regardless of boundary location;
- open space and non-residential land within outline permissions had intentionally been excluded from the boundary where appropriate;
- the review did not create precedent for future development, noting that boundaries could be both expanded and trimmed as circumstances changed;
- boundary reviews were standard practice as part of Local Plan preparation and ensured boundaries reflected development on the ground; and
- minor factual and mapping errors identified by Members would be checked and corrected where necessary, and site-specific points could be further considered through the forthcoming Regulation 19 consultation.

The Chair noted that certain sites were likely to generate significant public interest during consultation, particularly where legal proceedings were ongoing, but acknowledged that sites with extant planning permission were required to be included at this stage.

Councillor Bonney proposed the recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Harrison.

Resolved:

(1) The Review of Swale's Built-Up Area Boundaries Report and comments made be noted.

896 High level Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) findings for newly identified sites

The officer introduced the report and explained that it related to sites which had come forward since the HELAA had been considered by PTPWG in January. The purpose of the report was to ensure transparency and confirm that all newly submitted sites had been subject to a high-level assessment. Members were advised that 11 new sites had been identified, of which four were assessed as potentially suitable. These included one reduced parcel of a previously assessed site to the south of Faversham that had been previously considered by members for allocation but not chosen and three small urban sites. The three small urban sites had a combined potential capacity of 21 dwellings. It was noted that the urban sites were Council-owned land but were likely to be complicated to deliver and would likely come forward later in the Local Plan time frame. Members were advised that the findings would be incorporated into the next comprehensive update to the HELAA, that would be prepared to support the submission of the Local Plan for examination.

Members raised questions and comments including:

- whether sites deemed unsuitable for housing could be considered for employment land use, including clarification on how existing employment sites were treated;
- the relationship between HELAA conclusions and planning decisions taken in the context of an absent five-year housing land supply;
- whether potentially suitable sites could still be considered for allocation at a later stage in the plan-making process;
- concerns about infrastructure constraints, particularly in Sittingbourne town

- centre, and whether such issues should be reflected in the Local Plan; and
- whether alternative funding mechanisms, including future consideration of a Community Infrastructure Levy, could assist with infrastructure delivery.

Officers responded and advised that:

- sites already in existing employment use continued to count towards employment land supply and would not generate additional capacity if allocated;
- HELAA assessments applied different weightings to constraints than development management decisions, reflecting the distinction between plan-making and the aspiration of the Council going forward and planning decision-making that weighed up local and national planning requirement at that moment in time;;
- sites with planning permission were excluded from the HELAA process;
- any newly identified site proposed for allocation would need to follow the same decision-making route as previous allocations, including consideration by Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council;
- infrastructure projects could only be included in the Local Plan where there is evidence they are needed to mitigate the impact of proposed development within the Local Plan, and could be delivered through securing funding; and,
- whole-plan viability work was being updated ahead of Regulation 19 consultation, which could further inform infrastructure and funding considerations.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the high level HELAA findings for newly identified sites and to agree their inclusion in the next comprehensive update to the HELAA.***

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel