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## Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 30 June 2026 from 7.00 pm - 11.05 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Hayden Brawn (Vice-Chair), Simon Clark, Alastair Gould, James Hunt, Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Charles Gibson), Julien Speed and Mike Whiting.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Gavin Ball, Natalie Earl, Emma Gibson, Joanne Johnson, Onawale Kuforiji, Chris Mansfield, Tim Neal, Anna Stonor and Stuart Watson.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Charles Gibson and Kieran Golding.

### 150 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 151 **Minutes**

The [Minutes](#) of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 29 April 2026 (Minute Nos. 893 – 896), and the [Minutes](#) of 27 May 2026 (Minute Nos. 48 – 54) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 152 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

### 153 **Local Plan Review – Transport and Air quality evidence base presentation**

The Project Manager (Policy) introduced the item and reminded Members that, at the previous meeting, it had been agreed that consultants would present an update on the transport and air quality evidence base supporting the emerging Local Plan.

The Project Manager (Policy) advised that additional work had been incorporated into the programme following requests from National Highways and a review of employment land assumptions used in the transport modelling. Members were advised that the work being undertaken would provide a robust and proportionate evidence base to support the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

Representatives from Jacobs delivered a presentation on the transport and air quality evidence base.

The presentation explained:

- the purpose of the transport and air quality work;
- how the various technical workstreams were integrated;
- the relationship between strategic modelling, junction modelling, mitigation design, air quality assessment and the Mode Share Strategy;
- the programme of work leading up to Regulation 19 consultation and plan submission;
- how strategic modelling would identify network-wide impacts and transport hotspots;
- how identified hotspots would be taken forward for detailed junction modelling

and mitigation assessment;

- how air quality impacts would be assessed using transport modelling outputs; and
- how evidence from all workstreams would be brought together to support the Local Plan.

Members were advised that not all evidence would be completed prior to Regulation 19 consultation. However, draft findings would be available to inform consultation and further assessment would continue in parallel ahead of Local Plan submission.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- concerns regarding the impact of development on rural roads, villages and rat-running;
- the need to assess road links as well as junction capacity;
- the potential implications of the Highsted Park planning application and whether sensitivity testing would be undertaken;
- existing congestion issues on the Isle of Sheppey and other parts of the borough;
- the importance of local knowledge when identifying pressure points in the network;
- how strategic modelling and junction modelling would interact;
- whether modelling was based solely on computer simulations or also incorporated observed traffic data;
- the collection and validation of traffic survey information;
- the need to ensure transport evidence remained realistic and reflected actual travel conditions; and
- potential consequences where viable transport mitigation could not be identified.

In response, the Jacobs representatives advised that:

- both junctions and road links would be assessed;
- a range of criteria including delays, capacity ratios and flow changes would be used to identify pressure points;
- a Highsted Park sensitivity test was included as an optional element within the work programme;
- strategic modelling would identify network impacts before more detailed junction modelling was undertaken;
- traffic models were built using validated observed data, including traffic counts, journey time surveys and turning movement counts;
- additional surveys had been commissioned where data gaps existed;
- local knowledge would be sought through a planned member workshop later this Summer and stakeholder engagement sessions; and
- should mitigation not be achievable at a location, discussions would take place with the relevant highway authorities and alternative options would be explored.

Members also discussed the relationship between transport mitigation, site viability and housing allocations.

Officers advised that:

- the Local Plan was now primarily reliant on a relatively small number of additional allocations beyond extant permissions and strategic sites;
- infrastructure requirements arising from new development would be considered through detailed assessment;
- mitigation requirements would subsequently be reflected within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and
- the overall approach was consistent with that being adopted by other local

planning authorities.

### **Modal Share Strategy**

Representatives from Jacobs then delivered a presentation on the emerging Mode Share Strategy.

Members were advised that the purpose of the work was to assess the potential for reducing private car trips through sustainable transport measures and to identify opportunities for modal shift associated with proposed allocations.

The presentation explained:

- the methodology used to group sites into geographical clusters;
- assessment of existing accessibility to services, facilities, public transport and active travel infrastructure;
- evaluation of future opportunities arising from planned infrastructure improvements;
- consideration of internal trip generation and self-containment within development clusters;
- how mode share assumptions would be incorporated into transport modelling scenarios; and
- potential measures capable of supporting modal shift.

The assessment concluded that:

- many proposed allocations remained heavily dependent on private car travel;
- locations within Sittingbourne were generally the most accessible by sustainable transport;
- opportunities for modal shift were more limited in rural locations and on parts of the Isle of Sheppey; and
- infrastructure, development scale and design quality would play a key role in influencing future travel behaviour.

During discussion, Members:

- questioned the realism of modal shift assumptions;
- highlighted the importance of schools, health facilities and public transport being delivered at the earliest stages of development;
- raised concerns about delays in the delivery of Section 106 funded infrastructure;
- discussed difficulties associated with encouraging walking and cycling on rural roads;
- referenced experiences from previous development schemes where travel plans had delivered limited behavioural change;
- discussed bus services, railway stations and wider rail infrastructure;
- raised concerns regarding the viability of modal shift on the Isle of Sheppey;
- highlighted the importance of good design, connectivity and active travel infrastructure; and
- suggested improved access and parking provision at Swale railway station, enhancement of Crown Quay Lane Bridge and a northern entrance to Sittingbourne railway station.

In response, the consultants advised that:

- the work had taken a conservative approach to assumptions regarding behavioural change;
- recommendations would differ according to site size and location;
- car ownership remained the dominant travel mode across Kent;
- substantial modal shift was generally easier to achieve within larger developments;

- recommendations would consider both infrastructure and behavioural measures; and
- the final report would contain site-specific and strategic recommendations.

The Working Group noted the presentation and update.

## 154 **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

The Principal Planning Officer (Policy) introduced the report and explained that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) formed part of the evidence base supporting the emerging Local Plan.

Members were advised that:

- a Level 1 SFRA had been completed;
- a Level 2 assessment was underway for sites with identified flood risk constraints;
- draft findings would be available ahead of Regulation 19 consultation;
- the completed assessment would be available prior to submission; and
- at this stage it was anticipated that proposed allocations could be accommodated with appropriate mitigation.

During discussion, Members:

- highlighted the importance of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
- raised concerns regarding the design and capacity of drainage infrastructure;
- questioned how cumulative impacts would be assessed;
- discussed groundwater protection, water supply and water quality issues;
- referenced flood risks on the Isle of Sheppey;
- discussed coastal defence infrastructure and long-term flood resilience; and
- raised concerns regarding evacuation and access arrangements in the event of significant flooding.

In response, officers advised that:

- major planning applications would continue to be assessed (with regards to sustainable urban drainage) by Kent County Council in its role as Lead Local Flood Authority;
- flood risk policies had been strengthened since the previous Regulation 18 consultation;
- cumulative effects formed part of flood risk assessment work;
- climate change projections and coastal change considerations had been incorporated into the evidence base;
- the Medway Estuary and Swale contribution zone would assist in supporting long-term flood resilience measures; and
- emergency planning arrangements existed to respond to major flood events.

The Working Group noted the report.

## 155 **Local Green Spaces**

The Planning Officer introduced the report and outlined amendments made following the previous Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group meeting and consultation with town and parish councils. Members were advised that corrections had been made to site mapping and ward references, including amendments to the Maylam Gardens site mapping, and that officers maintained their original assessments for a number of sites where they considered the assessments remained consistent with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) criteria.

During discussion, Members considered a number of sites which they felt warranted additional protection through Local Green Space designation.

### **Land between the A2 and Grove Park Avenue, Borden**

Councillor Baldock raised concerns regarding the assessment of the land between the A2 and Grove Park Avenue, noting that it had previously been incorrectly attributed to Bobbing rather than Borden. He argued that the site was heavily used by local residents for recreation, dog walking, children's play and wellbeing purposes and had previously been the subject of a village green application. Whilst acknowledging that the village green application had ultimately been unsuccessful due to the land's highway status, he considered that the site met the purpose and intent of Local Green Space designation. Following discussion, Councillor Baldock proposed that the site be included within the Local Green Space evidence base. The proposal was agreed unanimously.

### **Bapchild Village Green and Stones Farm Country Park**

Councillor Bonney queried the assessment of land identified as "Land at Bapchild" and sought clarification regarding whether the assessment related to the established village green area or land associated with Stones Farm Country Park.

Councillor Bonney advised that:

- Bapchild Village Green was of significant community value and regularly used for local events and recreation;
- the site was well established within the village and formed an important part of community identity;
- Stones Farm Country Park had been transferred into Council ownership and contained important natural features including a chalk stream and wet woodland habitat;
- the Country Park was widely used by local residents and supported a Friends Group with significant community involvement; and
- both sites met the criteria for Local Green Space designation.

Councillor Bonney proposed that both sites be included within the Local Green Space evidence base. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Whiting and agreed unanimously.

### **Beachfields (LGS80)**

Councillor Whiting raised concerns regarding the assessment of Beachfields and noted that previous discussions had suggested the site should be considered in separate parts. He argued that the inclusion of the leisure centre within the assessment affected the overall outcome and that the open space to the west of Beach Street should instead be assessed separately.

Councillor Bonney supported this view and considered that the leisure centre and surrounding operational land should be excluded from the assessment area.

Members agreed that officers should undertake a revised assessment of the site, separating the area of open space from the leisure centre land and reporting back through the Local Plan process.

The proposal was agreed unanimously.

### **Vincent Gardens (LGS79)**

Councillor Whiting questioned why Vincent Gardens had not been recommended for designation when another nearby site had been supported despite possessing very

similar characteristics.

He noted that:

- the site represented one of the few areas of open space within a densely developed residential area;
- it was of local significance to nearby residents; and
- it fulfilled the purpose of a Local Green Space designation.

Councillor Whiting proposed that Vincent Gardens be included within the evidence base. The proposal was agreed unanimously.

### **Land at New Cottages, Bapchild (LGS140)**

Councillor Bonney challenged the assessment of the site at New Cottages, Bapchild, particularly the conclusion that it was not demonstrably special to the local community due to a lack of public access.

She advised that:

- the site was highly visible from public footpaths and surrounding roads;
- it formed part of the wider landscape setting of the village;
- it was regularly enjoyed by walkers using nearby public rights of way; and
- the assessment underestimated its local value and visibility.

Councillor Bonney proposed that the site be added to the Local Green Space evidence base and that officers review the mapping and visibility information associated with the assessment.

The proposal was agreed unanimously.

### **Other Sites and Discussion**

Members also discussed:

- Local Green Space nominations in Hernhill, including the village green and recreation ground, and were advised that these could be promoted through the Regulation 19 consultation process;
- the treatment of ancient woodland sites and whether existing protections reduced the need for Local Green Space designation;
- the role of accessibility in assessing Local Green Space nominations;
- the importance of orchards, heritage landscapes and longstanding community assets;
- the distinction between publicly accessible sites and sites which derived community value from their landscape setting or visual contribution; and
- opportunities for additional sites to be submitted and assessed as part of the Regulation 19 consultation.

### **Resolved:**

That the Local Green Space evidence base be amended to include:

- land between the A2 and Grove Park Avenue, Borden;
- Bapchild Village Green;
- Stones Farm Country Park;
- a revised assessment of Beachfields with the leisure centre land excluded;
- Vincent Gardens; and
- land at New Cottages, Bapchild.

The Working Group noted the report and agreed the amendments to the Local Green Space evidence base.

**156 Local Plan Review – Regulation 19 Consultation Launch**

The Planning Manager (Policy) introduced the report and outlined the proposed Regulation 19 Local Plan, Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Members were advised that the Regulation 19 consultation was proposed to run from 10 August 2026 until 21 September 2026 and that representations at this stage must focus on matters of soundness and legal compliance. Officers explained that the draft documents reflected previous Working Group discussions, decisions of Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council, together with feedback received through earlier public consultation exercises.

The Planning Manager (Policy) summarised the recommendations before the Working Group, including proposed allocation updates, officer delegations required to accommodate outstanding technical evidence and the proposed consultation arrangements.

**Amendments to Site Allocations and Housing Capacity**

Members discussed a number of amendments proposed to allocation capacities and housing supply assumptions.

Concern was expressed regarding:

- the removal of allocations following the granting of planning permission;
- reductions to estimated dwelling capacities on allocated sites;
- the impact of overhead power line constraints on development capacity;
- reductions in anticipated delivery at Queenborough and Rushenden; and
- the cumulative effect of these changes on housing supply.

Officers advised that:

- sites with planning permission had been removed from allocations to avoid double counting within the housing supply;
- revised capacities reflected detailed site assessment work undertaken by officers;
- the reduced dwelling capacity on land west of Minster represented a realistic and deliverable solution given infrastructure constraints; and
- the proposed figure of 898 dwellings for the Queenborough and Rushenden regeneration area that included Homes England promoted sites reflected a consistent density-based assessment methodology for development that was used in the council's Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment and was considered defensible at examination.

Members requested that supporting text be updated to more clearly explain the reduction in dwelling numbers at Queenborough and Rushenden and the relationship between previous masterplanning assumptions and the proposed allocation.

**Transport and Air Quality Modelling**

Members discussed Recommendation 3, which related to outstanding transport and air quality evidence.

Concerns were expressed that:

- significant elements of transport modelling remained incomplete;
- the Working Group had not yet received the final modelling outputs;
- further work remained outstanding in relation to mitigation and transport testing; and
- Members wished to avoid creating an impression that all concerns regarding transport evidence had been resolved.

Officers advised that:

- meaningful draft evidence would be available to support the Regulation 19 consultation;
- further evidence would continue to be developed following consultation and prior to submission;
- Members would continue to receive updates as the work progressed; and
- further opportunities remained to amend the Local Plan before examination.

Following debate, Members agreed that the wording of Recommendation 3 should be amended.

### **Water Infrastructure and Utilities**

Councillor Speed welcomed amendments made to Policy C10 (Water Quality and Resources), noting that the revised wording now:

- explicitly addressed water supply as well as wastewater treatment;
- required adequate capacity or mitigation to be demonstrated before development could proceed; and
- reflected an infrastructure-first approach.

Officers advised that the revised wording had been prepared in response to previous Working Group comments and was considered more likely to withstand examination scrutiny.

Members also discussed engagement with South East Water and the need for greater involvement in future infrastructure planning. Officers advised that discussions with South East Water were now progressing positively and further engagement was planned.

### **Infrastructure Delivery Plan**

Members discussed the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and questioned whether a number of transport infrastructure aspirations should be included despite the absence of confirmed funding and evidence.

Particular discussion focused on:

- additional parking provision at Swale railway station;
- improvements to the road under Crown Quay Lane Bridge;
- improved pedestrian accessibility within Sittingbourne town centre; and
- provision of a northern entrance to Sittingbourne railway station.

Members argued that inclusion within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan would strengthen future funding bids and support discussions with Network Rail and rail operators.

Officers acknowledged that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan was a live document and advised that aspirations could be included and refined as further evidence became

available.

Following debate, Members unanimously supported the inclusion of the following strategic aspirations within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan:

- improved parking provision at Swale railway station;
- improvements and widening works at Crown Quay Lane Bridge; and
- provision of a northern entrance to Sittingbourne railway station.

### **Kent Science Park**

Members discussed the proposed policy wording relating to Kent Science Park and raised concerns regarding:

- the lack of a clear definition of science park uses;
- future expansion beyond the existing developed area;
- environmental constraints;
- impacts on surrounding rural areas; and
- the absence of a comprehensive masterplan.

Officers agreed to:

- review the definition of science park uses within the policy;
- investigate requiring a masterplan to support future development proposals; and
- consider additional wording associated with environmental safeguards and site planning.

### **Legal Challenge**

A member asked officers to update the Working Group regarding a recently received pre-action protocol letter relating to the Local Plan process.

The Head of Place advised that:

- internal and external legal advice had been obtained;
- officers and Counsel considered there were no grounds requiring the Local Plan process to be paused;
- the Council had formally responded to the correspondence; and
- the advice received supported continuing with the Local Plan timetable.

### **Outcome**

Following consideration of the report and amendments discussed during the meeting, the Working Group agreed to recommend the Regulation 19 Local Plan and supporting documents to Policy and Resources Committee, subject to the following:

1. Agreed that Recommendation 3 be amended to state:  
"To note that completion of the transport and air quality modelling is awaited."
2. Supported the inclusion of strategic transport aspirations within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, including:
  - improved parking provision at Swale railway station;
  - improvements and widening works at Crown Quay Lane Bridge; and
  - provision of a northern entrance to Sittingbourne railway station.
3. Requested that officers review and update supporting text relating to Queenborough and Rushenden, including:
  - clarification of the reduction in dwelling numbers from earlier masterplan assumptions;
  - updated information regarding infrastructure investment and Homes England proposals; and
  - explanatory text regarding education and health land within the masterplan

area.

4. Requested amendments to factual and technical references within allocation policies, including:
  - correction of references to the railway line serving the Faversham to Ramsgate branch of the Chatham Main Line;
  - replacement of references to a footbridge with the correct description of the pedestrian level crossing;
  - updating references to the Bobbing allocation to reflect its current planning status;
  - updating references relating to the Article 4 Direction and Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document; and
  - any consequential amendments arising from recent planning decisions and policy changes.
5. Supported further review of Policy C10 (Water Quality and Resources) and welcomed the strengthened wording requiring adequate water supply, wastewater capacity and mitigation measures to be demonstrated prior to occupation.
6. Requested officers investigate whether further policy wording could be introduced regarding the cumulative loss of high-grade agricultural land, subject to consistency with national planning policy.
7. Requested officers consider opportunities to strengthen the treatment of archaeological assets and heritage finds, including mechanisms for the retention and interpretation of locally significant discoveries where appropriate.
8. Requested further amendments to the Kent Science Park policy, including:
  - consideration of a requirement for a comprehensive masterplan;
  - review of the definition of "science park" uses;
  - consideration of environmental constraints and water protection issues; and
  - further clarification of development expectations for the site.
9. Noted the update provided regarding the pre-action protocol letter received in relation to the Local Plan process and the legal advice received by the Council.
10. Recommended the Regulation 19 Local Plan and supporting documents to Policy and Resources Committee, subject to the amendments and updates agreed during the meeting.

**Resolved:**

- (1) To recommend that Policy and Resources (P&R) and Full Council (FC) agree the changes to the proposed housing and employment allocations as set out in paragraphs 2.17 – 2.21;**
- (2) To recommend that P&R recommend that FC delegate to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group (PTPWG) Chair, any required updates to and/or deletions of sites with extant planning permissions;**
- (3) To note that the completion of the transport and air quality modelling is awaited.**
- (4) To note that the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment are due to be available in final draft form in advance of the Policy and Resources Committee, and that the drafts set out at Appendices II and III have provided PTPWG suitable reassurance to recommend that P&R recommend that FC delegate to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the PTPWG Chair, any required updates and/or deletions to policies (Development Management, Strategic or Allocation) if required, once the**

***transport and air quality modelling, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment are complete;***

- (5) To note that the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment may recommend mitigations which will need to be added to relevant allocation policies and to recommend that P&R recommend that FC delegate to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the PTPWG Chair, any required updates to policies (Development Management, Strategic or Allocation) if required, once assessment is complete;***
- (6) To recommend the Local Plan Regulation 19 document in Appendix I, the draft non-technical summary of the Sustainability Appraisal in Appendix II, the draft Habitat Regulation Assessment in Appendix III and the Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan in Appendix IV (subject to the amendments and updates agreed during the meeting as detailed in the outcomes section above) to P&R for recommendation to FC for approval for consultation purposes; and***
- (7) To recommend that P&R recommend that FC delegate to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the PTPWG Chair, any minor amendments and corrections to the Local Plan Regulation 19 document prior to the start of the consultation period.***

#### 157 **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned from 8:05 pm until 8:10 pm and from 9.44 pm until 9.55 pm.

#### 158 **Extension of Standing Orders**

At 9:55pm, 10:27pm and 10:57pm Members agreed to the suspension of Standing Orders in order that the Working Group could complete its business.

#### Vice-Chair

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