

CALL FOR SITES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION





The Call for Sites Information Pack has 3 components;

A – This section - essential background information - comprising context and key information on the types of candidate sites and locations and which follows the council's preparations for this early stage of the Local Plan Review process.

B – New Garden Communities Prospectus – the council wishes to provide as much guidance as possible to those considering submissions for urban extensions and new settlements to enable the council to give full consideration to these forms of new development, given their potential scale and implications. The council's guidance aligns with the Government's approach to these forms of development.

C – Call for Sites submission form and guidance on making a submission – in order for submissions to be considered fully, they should be submitted on the Call for Sites submission form, having regard to the associated guidance.

1 Brief background on the Local Plan Review.

Maidstone Borough Council is starting a review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017). The review is needed to ensure the Local Plan remains up to date and addresses specific issues highlighted by the Inspector who examined it. Further, since the adoption of the plan, the Government has introduced a standard calculation for the number of new homes an area will need and this looks set to increase requirements for this and other boroughs in the south east. The new National Planning Policy Framework also directs that plans should be regularly reviewed – at least every 5 years – and that they should cover a time period of at least 15 years at adoption.

The council has agreed a timetable for the Local Plan Review - the 'Local Development Scheme'. A first 'scoping' style public consultation is scheduled for July-August 2019 with further consultations to follow in 2020 before submission of the Plan for examination 2021 with adoption to follow in 2022.

2 Purpose and scope of the Call for Sites.

This Call for Sites exercise is the starting point for a piece of key evidence for the Local Plan Review, the Strategic Land Availability Assessment. The purpose of the Call for Sites is to gain information about potential sites for inclusion (allocation) in the Local Plan Review.

The council is inviting submissions for sites which could be suitable for;

- Housing (including specialist housing e.g. housing for the elderly)
- Offices (use class B1a)
- Research & development (B1b)
- Light industry (B1c)
- General industry (B2)
- Storage & distribution (B8)
- Retail
- Commercial leisure uses (e.g. hotels, gyms, cinemas)
- Gypsy & Traveller/Travelling Showpeople accommodation
- Nursing and care homes

A submission could relate to an individual site or it could cover a more expansive area suitable for a new garden community with a mix of uses and a diversity of housing types and tenures to deliver a substantial, sustainable new community.

The submission of a site, or even a favourable assessment of a site, does not mean that the site will automatically go forward for inclusion in the Local Plan Review and/or that it will be granted planning permission in the future. The planning merits of the sites submitted will be assessed using a consistent methodology and criteria. The site assessments will be compiled into the Strategic Land Availability Assessment as an evidential study to inform the content of the Local Plan Review.

3

What do we know currently about the amount and type of development that will be needed?

Number and types of new housing: The Government's standardised method for calculating the number of new homes results in a **minimum 'working' figure of approximately 1,200 homes/year** for the borough. This figure, which will apply from 2022 when the Local Plan Review is adopted, is a significant uplift compared with the current Local Plan requirement of 883 homes/year. This inflated rate would need to be sustained for the council to maintain its 5 year housing land supply and to continue to pass the government's Housing Delivery Test.

The time horizon for the Local Plan Review will be to at least 2037 to give the plan a 15 year time period at adoption. It is possible it will extend beyond 2037, particularly if this fits with accommodating large-scale development with long lead-in times. The exact requirement figure is also likely to change as a result of data updates and, more fundamentally, because the Government intends to revise its standardised approach.

As part of the Local Plan Review, the council will also undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This will address specific and specialist housing needs, such as;

- Affordable housing
- Plots of land suitable for custom and self-build housing - there are currently 293 people on the Self-build Register who have expressed an interest in self-build in the borough. 41 of these have selected Maidstone borough as their first choice location. 3 associations, representing groups of potential self-builders, are also on the register.
- Housing for the elderly. This would include sheltered and extra-care housing but could also include housing which is designed, or can be easily adapted, so that older people can live in their own homes for longer.
- Build to Rent
- Care and nursing homes

If you consider that your site is particularly suited towards a specialist type of housing, please explain this in your submission.

Land and premises for business: As part of the Local Plan Review, the council will undertake work to help understand the nature and scale of future demand for new business land and premises.

Whilst information on exact requirements is yet to come, at this stage we can say that the Local Plan Review is likely to be particularly concerned with planning for offices (use classes B1a & b), industry (B1c and B2) and storage & distribution uses (B8), and also retail and commercial leisure uses (e.g. cinemas, gyms, hotels). The 2018 NPPF also highlights the potential for clusters or networks to be created of knowledge and data-driven, creative and high technology industries.

Land for Gypsy & Travellers' accommodation: The Call for Sites also encompasses land which could be suitable for Gypsy and Traveller and/or Travelling Showpeople accommodation. We will be undertaking a new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment which will confirm how many additional pitches will be needed over the plan period.

Those promoting housing sites and locations, including new garden communities, should positively consider how Traveller pitches could be incorporated within their proposals.

4 Types of candidate sites

Initial work undertaken by the council indicates that there are a number of site and broad location types which could be submitted through the Call for Sites exercise. It is possible, or even likely, that a blend of these types of sites and broad locations will feature in the Local Plan Review.

To provide context for submissions, the types of sites and broad locations are set out below;

Maidstone Town centre – sustaining the town centre as a focus for commercial activity – offices, shopping, entertainment and leisure – is likely to be instrumental to its future. The 2018 NPPF re-affirms a 'town centre first' approach to planning for 'main town centre uses'.

At the same time, increased levels of housing could help to revitalise the town centre – new residents would have easy access to the mix of attractions and facilities on their doorstep, whether they work in the town or use the good public transport links to work elsewhere.

The 2018 NPPF now incorporates a specific section about making the best use of land which, amongst other things, expects Local Plans to achieve significantly higher housing densities in town centres. A balance needs to be struck, however, between achieving increased densities and creating good quality places to live. Poor quality, high density development can lead to unacceptable issues in terms of internal space, access to outside communal green space and an unrealistic approach to parking demand for example.

The current town centre boundary can be found at page 32 of the adopted Local Plan

Those submitting town centre sites should actively consider how to address such concerns and also consider whether the site has particular potential for mixed use development.



Wealden Homes' development at Hollingbourne

Rest of Maidstone urban area – The ‘rest of the urban area’ comprises those parts of Maidstone beyond the town centre. The adopted Local Plan allocates a number of sites in this part of town, generally former institutional or commercial sites. There may be further such opportunities to be submitted through this Call for Sites exercise, including sites which are no longer suitable for their current use which could be re-purposed through the Local Plan Review, or ones which could be used more intensively.

We would also be interested to hear of housing estate renewal and regeneration schemes, likely to be led by Registered Providers, which could add to the number of new homes as well as upgrade the quality of existing housing stock.

Edge of Maidstone – sites at the edge of Maidstone could contribute to modest outwards extension of the town. Such sites are most likely to be greenfield in nature. If your submission includes development that would be classed as an urban extension, please refer to the New Garden Communities heading below and the separate Garden Communities Prospectus.

Possible issues that such sites could raise – and which those submitting sites should consider – include the ease of access to services and facilities and impact on the landscape setting of the town and countryside.

In and at the edge of the most sustainable villages – As part of the Local Plan Review, we will review the hierarchy of settlements by looking at available services and facilities. In the adopted Local Plan, the current hierarchy is as follows;

1. Maidstone town

2. Rural Service Centres

Marden, Staplehurst, Headcorn, Harrietsham, Lenham.

3. Larger Villages

Sutton Valence, Boughton Monchelsea, Yalding, Coxheath, Hollingbourne

Those submitting sites in or adjacent to one these villages, or elsewhere, should actively consider how accessible the site is to key services and facilities (schools, healthcare, shops, public transport etc) and how, if needed, this can be improved. The 2018 NPPF confirms that housing in rural areas “should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services” .

Countryside sites – new housing sites in the countryside, away from the identified villages and removed from services and public transport connections generally score more poorly in sustainability terms.

Those submitting such sites are recommended to clearly demonstrate how the sustainability shortcomings of their site will be addressed.

New Garden Communities – new settlements and major urban extensions are a potential way to help meet the housing challenge the borough faces. This is an approach which has not been followed in Maidstone borough previously and so the council has produced a New Garden Communities Prospectus to provide as much guidance as possible to those considering submissions for urban extensions and new settlements.

New garden communities need to be of a sufficient scale to deliver meaningful supporting infrastructure. The Government defines ‘garden villages’ as being of between 1,500 and 10,000 homes and ‘garden towns’ as being of 10,000+ homes .

The benefits of new garden communities could include:

- new settlements or neighbourhoods which can be comprehensively planned and co-ordinated from the outset;
- a single location where the houses will be built out over a number of years, resulting in a significant number of new homes overall;
- an integrated approach to the supporting infrastructure, facilities and mix of uses is achieved as part of the overall masterplanning for the new settlement or neighbourhood; and,
- the prospect of achieving mixed, balanced communities through the supply of a range of types and tenures of housing.

The council is keen to receive submissions for new garden communities, recognising that the 2018 NPPF specifically highlights the role that such an approach can play in areas of high housing demand like Maidstone.

Small sites - the 2018 NPPF includes a new requirement for Local Plans to identify sites for at least 10% of the housing requirement on small sites of 1ha or less. We would welcome the submissions for such small sites (noting that the lower site size threshold for submissions is 5 dwellings/0.25ha).

Brownfield sites – we would also welcome brownfield site submissions. The 2018 NPPF includes the expectation that best use will be made of brownfield sites.

5 Local Plan Review Spatial Strategy

The current, adopted Local Plan follows a 'dispersed' approach to the distribution of new development in the borough. Housing allocations are primarily focused in and at the edge of Maidstone town (67%) with lesser amounts at the borough's main villages (24%) and very limited numbers on sites in the countryside (8%). The plan identifies larger scale 'broad locations' at Lenham (1,000 homes) and Invicta Barracks (1,300 homes) and in the town centre (940 homes).

With this dispersed approach the Council is currently meeting and exceeding its requirements for both the housing delivery test and the 5-year housing land supply.

'Business as usual' i.e. this dispersed approach is, on the face of it, a potential option for the future. It is possible, or maybe even likely however, that a continuation of this current approach would not secure the uplift in supply needed as a result of the Government's new housing requirements. A different or adapted approach may be needed and this could include a new garden community or communities and indeed a 'blended' approach may be the way forward whereby a diversity of smaller sites in combination with a new community or communities ensures that the inflated annual rate of the supply of new homes can be sustained.



The table below shows how many homes have and will be built in the borough between 2011 and 2031 as a result of the adopted Local Plan compared with the 'baseline' at 2011. When the growth is 'annualised' it reveals the relative, average scale of growth year on year.

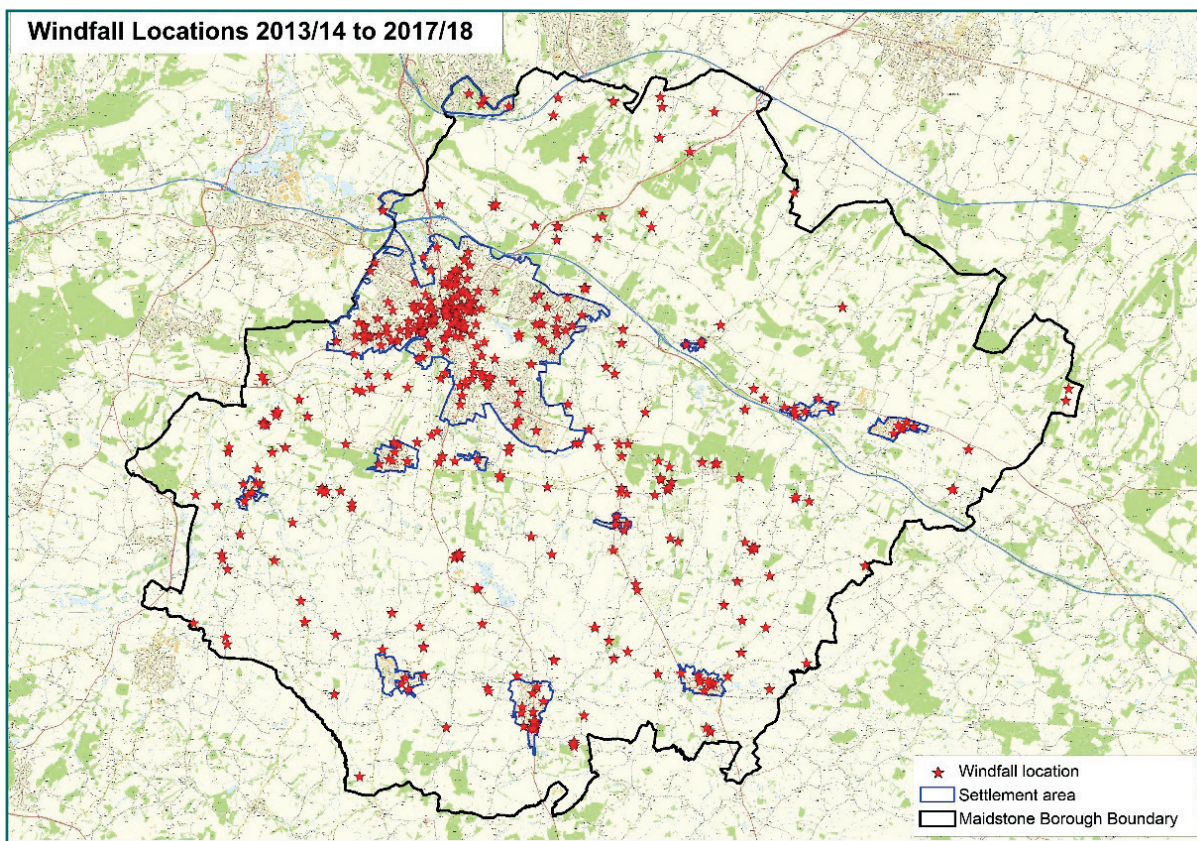
	2011 baseline number of homes	Estimated additional homes at 2031 (excl. future windfall)	Equivalent to x%/year	% share of additional homes
Maidstone Town Centre	1,195	2,174	9.1%	13%
Maidstone Urban Area	45,008	9,338	1.1%	54%
Rural Service Centres	5,832	3,512	3%	20%
Larger Villages	3,066	734	1.2%	4%
Countryside	12,489	1,456	0.6%	8%

Lenham Broad Location is an example where detailed plan-making is being progressed through a neighbourhood plan, led by Lenham Parish Council. The parish council has appointed its own expert support and is working positively to advance a neighbourhood plan which will provide for 1,000 new homes and associated infrastructure. Consultation on the 'pre-submission' neighbourhood plan finished in October 2018 and the parish council is on track to produce its draft plan early in 2019.

Further information is awaited from the Ministry of Defence in order that further planning around Maidstone Barracks can be undertaken and the council is continuing to work with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation in that regard. We are also now experiencing development coming forward at the Springfield sites at the edge of Maidstone Town Centre.

A key aspect of the Local Plan Review will be to identify and test alternative ways that the new development requirements can be met (i.e. the different spatial options). Work on potential strategies is ongoing and options will iterate and evolve as more information and evidence comes forward as the LPR progresses. Knowledge of the availability of sites revealed by the Call for Sites will be an important input to the decisions around what are reasonable and realistic spatial options.

It is also important to note that windfall (non-allocated) development makes an important contribution to Maidstone's housing land supply. The dispersal of windfall development generally matches the dispersed strategy contained in the adopted Local Plan and is illustrated in the following map.



6 Environmental constraints information

The council has undertaken work illustrating key national and local constraints which are material planning considerations and which may impact on future decisions about the selection of sites for the Local Plan Review. The map provided further on in this document illustrates the location of nationally significant environmental designations in the borough;

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Green Belt
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Conservation Areas
- Flood risk zones (FZ)
- Ancient woodland

You may also wish to refer to the Local Plan Policies Map, via the link below, which sets out the precise boundaries of these designations;

<http://maidstone.addresscafe.com/app/exploreit/Default2017.aspx>

The location and details of listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens can be searched for on Historic England's website using link below;

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search?clearresults=true>

Information on archaeological sites and buildings can be found here;

<http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.HeritageMaps.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx>

The 2018 NPPF confirms that veteran trees are an 'irreplaceable habitat'. It also signals, in respect of development on agricultural land, that areas of poorer agricultural land quality should be preferred to those of a higher quality (Grades 1,2,3a). The boundaries of the post 1988 agricultural land classifications and the agricultural land classification (provisional) can

be accessed from the Department for Environmental, Food & Rural Affairs interactive map, via the link below;

<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

The map provided further on in this document shows the location of designations which have a particular local significance;

- Landscapes of Local Value (LLV) designated in the current Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
- Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

The precise locations of the Landscapes of Local Value, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites can be interrogated on the council's interactive Policies Map, via the link below;

<http://maidstone.addresscafe.com/app/exploreit/Default2017.aspx>

The Maidstone AQMA boundaries can be viewed on the Department for Environmental, Food & Rural Affairs interactive map, via the link below;

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/maps>

Parts of the borough are identified as Minerals Safeguarding Areas in the Kent Minerals & Waste Local Plan prepared by Kent County Council. The plan setting out the implications of this designation and a map showing the extent of the safeguarding areas are available here;

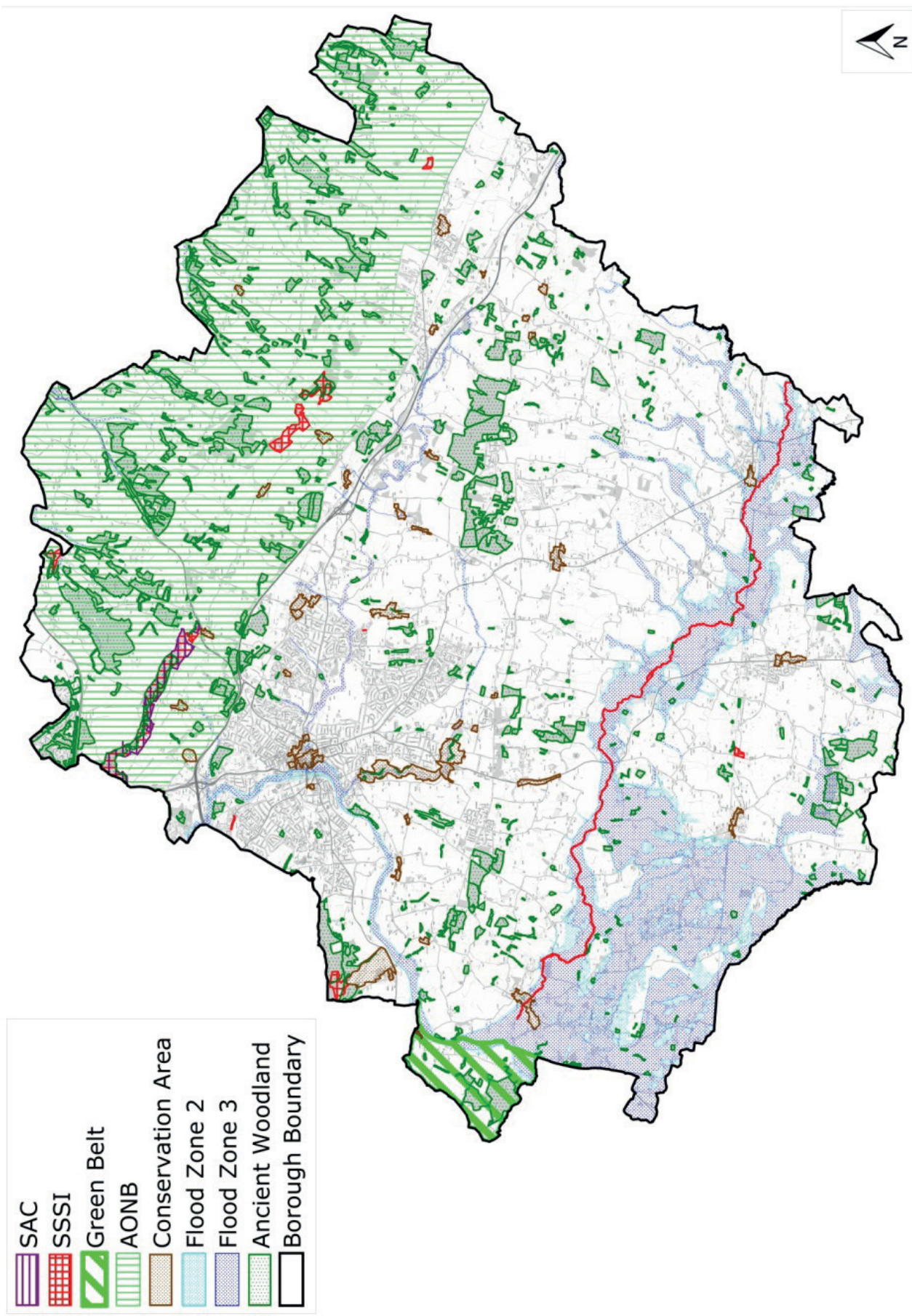
<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/planning-policies/minerals-and-waste-planning-policy>

Alternatively, the minerals safeguarding areas can be view via the Local Plan interactive map, via the link below;

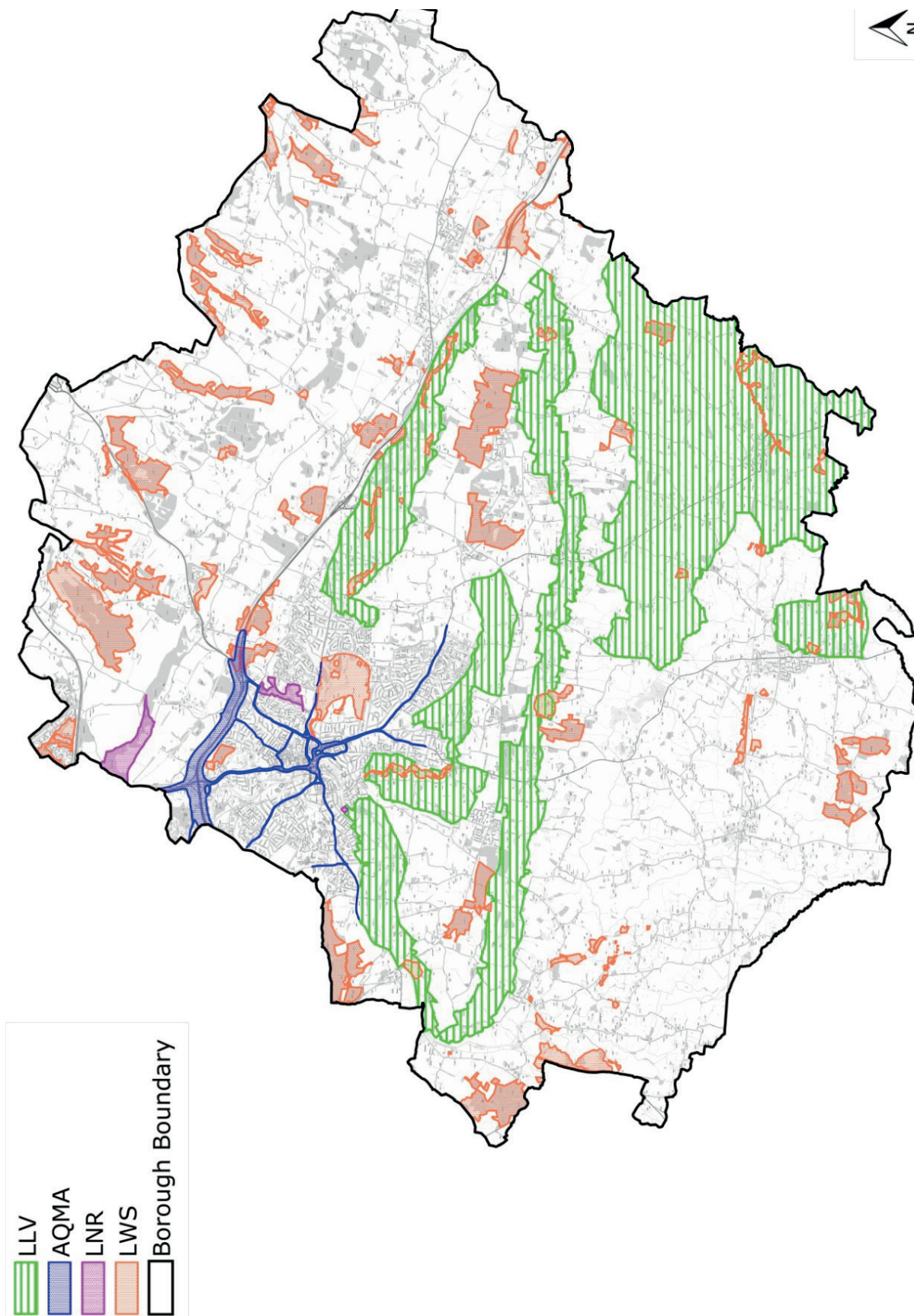
<http://maidstone.addresscafe.com/app/exploreit/Default2017.aspx>



Nationally significant environmental designations in the borough



Locally significant environmental designations in the borough



7

Other sources of supply

There are also several other forms of development supply that the Council will consider as part of the Local Plan Review and will feed into the Strategic Land Availability Assessment. This includes planning applications that have been refused or withdrawn, land in the local authority's ownership and surplus and likely to become surplus public sector land. The full list is set out in the government's National Planning Practice Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>

8

Next steps

The planning merits of the submitted sites will be objectively assessed using a standard, consistent approach. In due course, the submitted sites and assessments will be compiled into a comprehensive Strategic Land Availability Assessment which will be published as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review. The selected sites will be subject to full public consultation through future consultation stages of the Local Plan Review.

