



The countryside charity

Kent

15th July 2022

Louise St John Howe
Programme Officer,
PO Services,
PO Box 10965,
Sudbury, Suffolk
CO10 3BF

Dear Louise

Maidstone Local Plan – status of additional evidence anticipated to be submitted

We are aware you have been contacted by representatives of Lenham Parish Council raising concerns with respect to the extent of additional material anticipated to be submitted by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) between now and the Stage 1 Local Plan hearings.

It is their view that this evidence should have been undertaken ahead of the Regulation 19 consultation and therefore MBC are using the examination process to avoid proper public consultation. Significantly, it is their view that producing further evidence between now and Stage 1 hearing sessions may amount to procedural unfairness.

CPRE Kent share these concerns.

In particular, we are concerned that the current timetable allows MBC to submit information which may be pertinent to the Stage 1 hearings **after** the written statement deadline of the 18th of August. This disadvantages groups such as CPRE Kent who do not necessarily have the resources to ensure oral evidence can be given across all 3 weeks of the Stage 1 hearings and may instead prefer to provide written statements.

Further, the current ad-hoc nature in which new evidence is just appearing on the Councils website is already causing us practical difficulties. For example, it is not clear to us whether Examination Documents ED9 and ED10 which appeared on the examination website on the 14th July 2022 have been formally submitted into the examination at the Inspectors approval and therefore the status of this new information. Likewise, its not clear what further relevant evidence may appear between now and the statement deadline and therefore when we can be confident that all relevant evidence upon which we may need to comment will be available.

Within the Inspectors letter of 27th June 2022 (ED5), we understood from paragraph 5 that any new evidence would be subject to the Inspectors scrutiny before publication. With new evidence just appearing on the examination website, it is not currently clear whether this is the case.

More significantly, it was understood that we as representors would be given sufficient opportunity to respond to such evidence. If it is the case that the emerging evidence identified within Table 1 of ED5

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is to just appear on the examination website broadly in line with the loose timetable given, it is similarly not currently clear how this will be possible.

We would therefore respectfully call for clarity as to exactly which of the ongoing work listed within Table 1 of ED5 will be submitted into the examination ahead of the Stage 1 hearing, along with firm dates we could expect to see such published upon the website. Linked, we would ask what arrangements will be made to ensure we and others have sufficient opportunity to respond to any new information?

Whilst mindful of the Inspectors request to avoid commentary on the timetable at this stage, we would trust the time-sensitive nature of our questions is recognised and look forward to a response in due course.

Yours sincerely

Richard Thompson

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