

Statement of Common Ground with Maidstone Borough Council

Submission Document

Medway Council

Regulation 22
December 2025


Versions

Version	Name	Date
1	Initial Proposed Composite Statement of Common Ground with Strategic Bodies	12 June 2025
2	First Draft Statement of Common Ground with Maidstone Borough Council	25 September 2025
3	Second Draft Statement of Common Ground with Maidstone Borough Council	22 October 2025
4	Third Draft Statement of Common Ground with Maidstone Borough Council	27 October 2025
5	Submission Statement of Common Ground with Maidstone Borough Council	16 December 2025


Status of the Statement of Common Ground

This document presents a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between Medway Council and Maidstone Borough Council.

On behalf of Medway Council

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Position	Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration
Signature	
Date	17 December 2025

On behalf of Maidstone Borough Council

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Date	18 December 2025

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1 Introduction

1.1 Definition, purpose and structure

- 1.1.1 A statement of common ground (SoCG) is a written record of agreements that have, or have not, been reached on key strategic matters, including the process for reaching agreements.
- 1.1.2 The first version of this document (June 2025) presented an initial proposed composite SoCG with strategic bodies. However, it has been agreed that a separate SoCG be prepared between Medway Council and Maidstone Borough Council.
- 1.1.3 This SoCG will set out the strategic context, strategic matters, governance arrangements and ongoing cooperation between Medway Council and Maidstone Borough Council.

1.2 Terminology

- 1.2.1 The initial proposed composite SoCG with strategic bodies presented all matters as “Under discussion”. Strategic matters have been discussed to resolve or refine the extent of disagreement.
- 1.2.2 This iteration of the SoCG presents matters as “Agreed”, “Under discussion” or “Not agreed”.

1.3 Strategic context of the Medway unitary authority area

- 1.3.1 Medway sits at the mouth of its great river on the north Kent estuarine coast, bordered by the Thames to the north and the Kent Downs to the south. The five historic towns linked by the A2 form a complex urban conurbation, which retains the distinct identities of the individual towns. The urban area is surrounded by a network of villages on the Hoo Peninsula and the Medway Valley, alongside marshes and mudflats, wooded hills, productive farmland and strategic energy and minerals operations built up around the wharves. Much of the countryside and estuary is of international and national importance for its environmental qualities, including designated Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and the Kent Downs National Landscape. Land to the west of Medway forms part of the London metropolitan Green Belt.
- 1.3.2 The River Medway is a key asset, providing a strong sense of place and identity. However, the river bisects the area and movement is constrained by four crossings. The severance caused by the river, established commuting flow patterns and travel behaviour, the legacy of post-war development designed for the car, generous car parking provision in dense employment areas and the existing public transport offer make for a challenging environment in which to accommodate Medway’s development needs. Medway’s location in north Kent gives rise to additional opportunities and challenges associated with wider growth.

- 1.3.3 Medway Council is the local planning, transport, minerals and waste authority for the unitary authority area.
- 1.3.4 Medway's local housing need, as a direct output from the Standard Method, is 1,636 per annum, or 26,176 over the new plan period, i.e. 2025/26 to 2040/41.
- 1.3.5 Medway Council commissioned a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA).¹ A subsequent letter from the contractor, dated 11 June 2025, identified the need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation in Medway as:
- 41 pitches for households that met the planning definition.
 - up to 15 pitches for undetermined households.
- 1.3.6 The GTAA identified the plot needs for travelling showpeople as:
- four plots for households that met the planning definition.
 - up to four plots for undetermined households.
- 1.3.7 The 2025 Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA) identified the following minimum need for employment floorspace:
- 204,000 sqm of industrial floorspace.
 - 36,500 sqm of office floorspace.
- 1.3.8 The Maidstone borough borders Medway to the south, adjacent to the urban communities of Lordswood, Hempstead and Wigmore and the countryside in the Capstone Valley. The rural communities to the north of the Maidstone borough, such as Lidsing and Bredhurst, have links to Medway. Figure 1 shows the location of Medway in relation to neighbouring local planning authorities.

¹ Paragraph 6.10.7 of the 'Medway Local Plan 2041: Proposed Submission Draft, Regulation 19 (June 2025)' stated the need for 31 pitches for households that met the planning definition. This predates the 'Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment – Addendum', which identified the need for 41 pitches for households that met the planning definition.

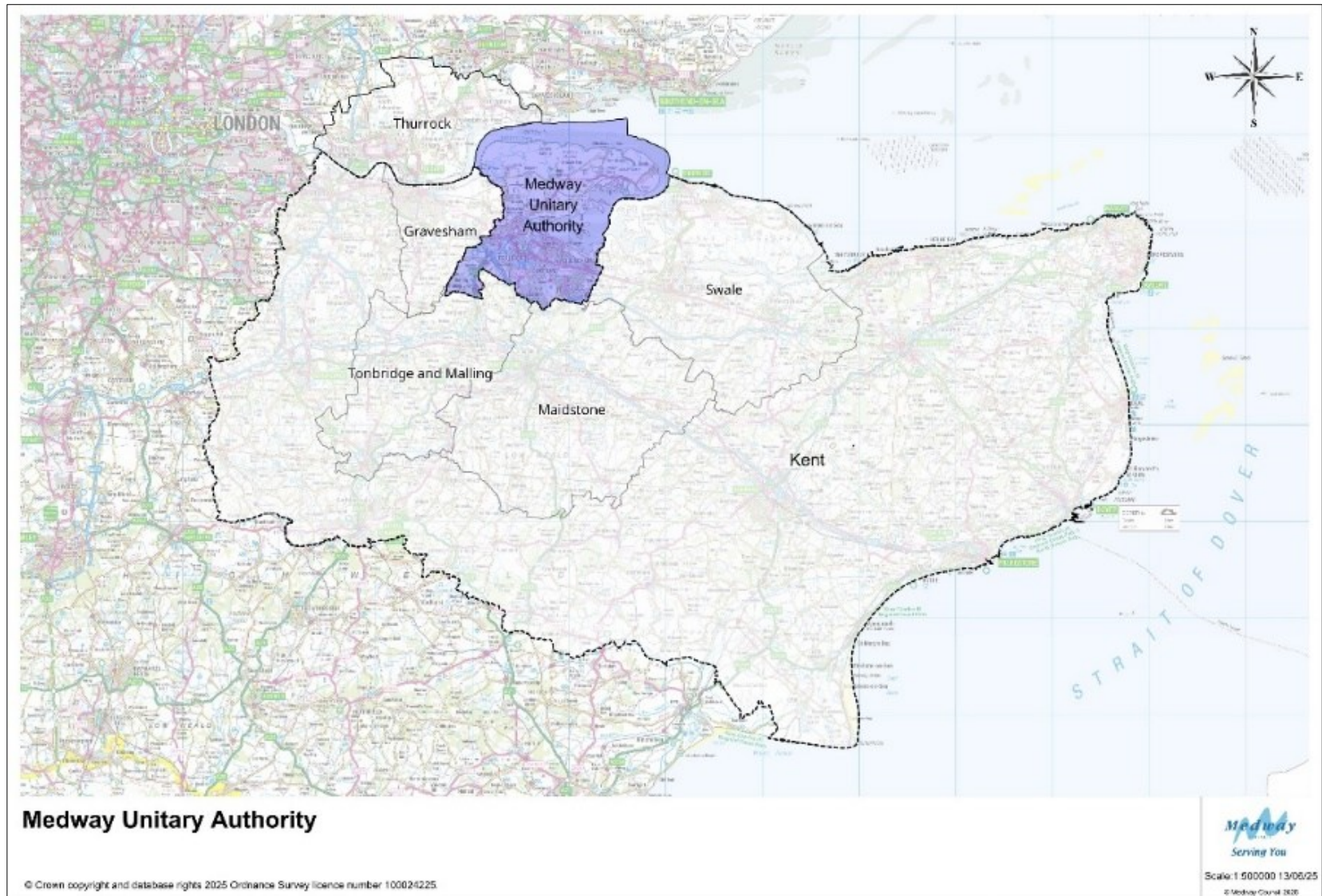


Figure 1: Location of Medway

1.4 Strategic context of the Maidstone borough

- 1.4.1 The borough of Maidstone covers approximately 40,000 hectares and is situated in the heart of Kent. Maidstone is the County Town of Kent and approximately 75% of its 171,800 population live in the urban area. The Maidstone Urban Area, located in the north west of the borough, has a strong commercial and retail town centre, with Maidstone comprising one of the largest retail centres in the south east. A substantial rural hinterland surrounds the urban area, part of which enjoys designation due to its high landscape and environmental quality. The borough encompasses a small section of the Metropolitan Green Belt (1.3%), and 27% of the borough forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- 1.4.2 The borough is strategically located between the Channel Tunnel and London with direct connections to both via the M20 and M2 motorways. Three central railway stations in the town connect to London, Ashford, Tonbridge and to the Medway Towns. The borough has a close interaction with the Medway Towns that provide a part of the borough's workforce. There is also a significant commuting flow from the borough to the Medway Towns. The town centre acts as the focus for retail development throughout the borough and has an important role to play in the visitor economy with the tourist information centre located at Maidstone Museum.
- 1.4.3 Maidstone Borough Council is the local planning authority for the borough. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review was adopted in March 2024 and covers the period to 2038.
- 1.4.4 Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment, based on 2021 data, identified a local housing need for 1,157 dwellings per annum, which equates to 19,669 dwellings over the 2021-2038 plan period.
- 1.4.5 Maidstone Borough Council intends to consult on a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document in November 2025.
- 1.4.6 Maidstone Borough Council's Economic Development Needs Study identified the minimum floorspace required to meet need based on job growth forecasts (labour demand) of 101,555 sqm (gross) for employment uses over the period 2022-2037. Extrapolating these figures to account for an extra year at either end of the plan period, the floorspace need over 2021 to 2038 is 119,250 sqm.

2 Strategic Matters

2.1 Local Housing Need

- 2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework expects strategic policy-making bodies to apply the standard method when assessing local housing need. This method calculates a minimum annual need by starting from the local housing stock baseline and then increasing it to account for local affordability pressures. The figure produced by the standard method represents an unconstrained estimate of homes needed to inform plan-making; it is a minimum housing need indicator, not a fixed housing requirement.
- 2.1.2 Medway's local housing need, derived from the Standard Method, is 1,636 per annum, as calculated in June 2025.
- 2.1.3 In Duty to Cooperate meetings, Medway Council has consistently stated its intention to meet local housing need, subject to the evidence base emerging at the time.
- 2.1.4 The housing requirement is the minimum number of homes a local plan aims to deliver during the plan period. After calculating local housing need, local planning authorities should then estimate how many new homes can be provided in their area, supported by evidence on land availability, development constraints and any other relevant factors. The Council's housing requirement is supply-led. In other words, the extent to which Medway can meet its need and potentially contribute towards unmet need arising elsewhere is guided by the Land Availability Assessment, the Sustainability Appraisal and the site selection process. Medway's housing requirement reflects local housing need, derived from the Standard Method, which is 1,636 per annum.
- 2.1.5 Medway Council's Land Availability Assessment demonstrates a sufficient housing land supply.

2.2 Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople

- 2.2.1 On the 12 June 2025, an application to convert a former park and ride site in Wigmore was granted on appeal by a planning inspector. Planning conditions limit occupation of the site 10 touring caravans.
- 2.2.2 At the time of writing, a retrospective application to facilitate the extension of an existing gypsy and traveller site for an additional eight pitches at High Halstow is to be determined.
- 2.2.3 Medway Council will explore the potential for more provision at its Gypsy and Traveller site at Cuxton through intensification and/or expansion through the development management process.
- 2.2.4 Maidstone Borough Council anticipate consulting on the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document – preferred policies and potential sites (Regulation 18C) in November 2025.

- 2.2.5 At the time of writing, it is unlikely that Maidstone Borough Council will be able to meet its full identified accommodation needs and therefore expects to approach neighbouring authorities to seek assistance in this regard, under the Duty to Cooperate.
- 2.2.6 The respective needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople remains a matter **under discussion**.

2.3 Employment land

- 2.3.1 It is noted that there are significant commuting flows between the two boroughs. Maidstone Borough Council's representations noted inconsistencies in Medway Council's pre-submission draft plan (Regulation 19) concerning employment land needs.
- 2.3.2 The 2025 Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA) identified the following minimum need for employment floorspace:
- 204,000 sqm of industrial floorspace.
 - 36,500 sqm of office floorspace.
- 2.3.3 There is a large pipeline of consented employment land, but this is in remote locations at Kingsnorth and the Isle of Grain, which provide for specific needs, and there is a shortage of built stock. Additional sites for employment uses have been allocated to provide for the wider employment market needs and support sustainable growth.
- 2.3.4 For the avoidance of doubt, Medway Council can meet its needs for employment land; therefore, this matter is **agreed**.

2.4 Retail need

- 2.4.1 The Medway Retail and Town Centres Study 2025 did not recommend a quantitative need for retail floorspace. Rather, new retail floorspace will be directed to designated town centres, while areas of large-scale growth will provide new local centres.
- 2.4.2 Hempstead Valley district centre is unique amongst the Medway centres in that it comprises, in its entirety, a purpose-built indoor shopping centre. Although a district centre in retailing terms, the lack of a 'high street' and the relative shortage of non-retail facilities means that Hempstead Valley functions in a different way to the 'traditional' district centres. There is ample free car parking and there are advantages over the traditional town centres in Medway in that expansion and/or reconfiguration is much easier for modern stores.
- 2.4.3 There have been proposals for expansion at Hempstead Valley, with a particular focus on commercial leisure uses in recent years. New proposals will be considered on their own merits and in terms of its role and function in the retail hierarchy.
- 2.4.4 Hempstead Valley will support the proposed growth of the Lidsing Garden Community. This matter is **agreed**.

2.5 Strategic sites

- 2.5.1 Medway Council and Maidstone Borough Council have cooperated on land in the Capstone Valley and the adjacent areas. This has included cross border meetings with the Leaders of the two authorities in planning for sustainable development, infrastructure delivery and connectivity and resilience in the natural environment.
- 2.5.2 The Maidstone Local Plan Review 2021-2038 (adopted 2024) allocated land adjoining the Medway administrative area at Lidsing for mixed-use development, including 2,000 homes. Maidstone Borough Council is preparing a Lidsing Garden Community Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 2.5.3 Medway Council's Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan includes a site allocation policy for large-scale development in the Capstone Valley to the north of Lidsing and the M2. By 2041, the Capstone Valley will comprise a sustainable urban extension of up to 3,958 new homes, a primary school, a secondary school and a local centre. The site allocation policy is supported by a concept plan, which includes an indicative layout for Lidsing.
- 2.5.4 However, Maidstone Borough Council's representations noted that the concept plan in Medway Council's pre-submission draft plan (Regulation 19) needs to be updated to reflect the latest emerging masterplan for the Lidsing Garden Community. This matter is **agreed**; it could be resolved through modifications to the plan.
- 2.5.5 The concept plan shows multi-functional green infrastructure corridors extending across the areas of Medway and Maidstone. The applicant will produce a landscape-led masterplan, to be approved by Medway Council, to guide subsequent planning applications and further approval of details. The masterplan will be informed by a green infrastructure strategy and an open space strategy, which takes account of the wider environmental context, including the Kent Downs National Landscape and Darland Banks, and the planning proposals for the Lidsing Garden Community.
- 2.5.6 It is noted that there are strong links between the planned Lidsing Garden Community and the proposed development in the Capstone Valley area in Medway. The authorities support collaboration on cross border planning and service delivery, including healthcare which is **under discussion**, to achieve a comprehensive strategic approach to development. Key cross border matters include the natural environment, schools and the road network; these matters are set out in more detail at 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8 respectively.
- 2.5.7 North Dane Way will connect to M2 Junction 4 via a spine road through the Lidsing Garden Community. This is an opportunity to improve east-west bus connections serving the wider area. In the design and layout of adjacent sites (i.e. the Lidsing Garden Community, Abbotts Court Farm and Gibraltar Farm), streets should be designed to the appropriate standard and be capable of being altered in the future. This will enable a durable, connected and permeable street layout. This matter is **agreed**.

2.6 Natural environment

- 2.6.1 Both administrative areas include land of designated importance for biodiversity and landscape and the two authorities support planning for healthy and resilient nature. The connectivity between the Kent Downs National Landscape and Darland Banks is recognised as a shared objective. The councils agree to coordinate work on cross border planning of green infrastructure networks and sustainable drainage. These matters are **under discussion** through Maidstone Borough Council's anticipated Lidsing Garden Community SPD consultation.
- 2.6.2 Traffic and air quality modelling undertaken in support of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review demonstrated that adverse air quality effects on the integrity of North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) can be avoided, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The modelling approach took account of mitigation associated with traffic calming along Boxley Road / Lidsing Road, and the new link road for Lidsing Garden Community. Similarly, as part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Medway Local Plan, adverse air quality impacts at the North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) have been identified. A strategic approach to transport mitigation at the SAC is likely to reduce these impacts. The need for mitigation resultant from the cumulative impacts of the Maidstone Local Plan Review 2021-38 and subsequent draft Medway Local Plan for submission, as identified by the Medway Council Habitats Regulations Assessment will not affect the Lidsing Garden Community coming forward independently. This will require ongoing cooperation (see section 4), therefore this matter remains **under discussion**.

2.7 Schools

- 2.7.1 A new secondary school of at least 6FE, which will be part-funded by the Lidsing Garden Community, is required early in the plan period. The need for the secondary school is generated by planned development at Lidsing and in the Capstone Valley area. Abbotts Court Farm, which is owned by Medway Council, has been identified as the optimum site to accommodate a new secondary school, subject to compensation for the loss of development value.
- 2.7.2 At the time of writing, Medway Council is engaged in negotiations with the land owner of the majority of site allocations in the Capstone Valley, F D Attwood & Partners, regarding this matter. Medway Council is cooperating with the neighbouring Local Education Authority, Kent County Council.
- 2.7.3 The delivery of a new secondary school, as cross border strategic infrastructure, remains a matter **under discussion**.
- 2.7.4 In addition to a primary school as part of the East Hill development, a new primary school, phased in the latter part of the plan period, is likely to be located within the Mill Fields site. A new primary school is proposed within the Lidsing Garden Community within the Maidstone borough.

2.8 Strategic Road Network and Major Road Network

- 2.8.1 Improvements to M2 junction 4 (fourth arm) will be funded and delivered by the Lidsing Garden Community development in the Maidstone borough. A connection between North Dane Way and M2 Junction 4 will provide for an orbital bus route traversing both administrative areas.
- 2.8.2 Maidstone Borough Council's representations noted that Medway Council's pre-submission draft plan (Regulation 19) Policies Map should safeguard land for improvements to M2 junction 4 and the North Dane Way access. This matter is **agreed**; it could be resolved through modifications to the plan.
- 2.8.3 National Highways' and Kent County Council's Regulation 19 representations queried the reliance of site allocations in the Capstone Valley on Lidsing to deliver the improvements to M2 Junction 4; for example, if the Lidsing site is not started or stalls ahead of the delivery of improvements to M2 Junction 4.
- 2.8.4 National Highways' and Kent County Council's representations noted that future development in the Capstone Valley depends on the Lidsing Garden Community coming forward. Medway Council will need to demonstrate how future development in the Capstone Valley could come forward if the Lidsing Garden Community, and the associated M2 junction 4 scheme (fourth arm), does not come forward. Medway Council intends to commission a 'Monitor and Manage Mitigation Strategy' to address the evolving certainty of off-site highway mitigations and local impacts, including at Bredhurst and Boxley. Medway Council's consultants have identified an interim scheme that would be within capacity; however, at the time of writing, Medway Council's consultants have not set out indicative costings.
- 2.8.5 According to work by Charles & Associates on behalf of F D Attwood & Partners, the existing M2 Junction 4 could accommodate up to 600 additional vehicle movements before the need for the new scheme. Analysis of a combined housing trajectory indicates that the scheme is required early in the plan period.
- 2.8.6 Given that the area of the works is less than the Development Consent Order threshold of 15 hectares, it will be progressed under a funding agreement between the development promoter and National Highways under Section 278 of the Highways Act. The timeline for a Section 278 agreement involves several stages, from initial application to completion and maintenance, and can take several months to complete.
- 2.8.7 Medway Council has requested an update from all parties regarding the progress of the proposed scheme. The delivery of improvements to M2 Junction 4 remains a matter **under discussion**.

3 Governance Arrangements

3.1 Duty to Cooperate

- 3.1.1 The Duty to Cooperate places a legal duty on local planning authorities and county councils in England, and prescribed public bodies, to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of local plans.
- 3.1.2 Medway Council's Duty to Cooperate Statement sets out strategic planning matters subject to ongoing cooperation. However, Medway Council's Local Plan Implementation Group may identify other strategic planning matters that would require ongoing cooperation with Maidstone Borough Council.

3.2 Main points of contact

- 3.2.1 The respective local plan-making teams have acted as the main points of contact between neighbouring local planning authorities in coordinating work towards the final SoCG.

4 Timetable and Ongoing Cooperation

4.1 Timetable

4.1.1 A final SoCG will be signed prior to the submission of Medway Council's Local Plan.

4.1.2 The table below shows a combined plan-making timetable for Medway Council and Maidstone Borough Council.

Local Planning Authority	Date of adopted development plan documents	Review start date	Regulation 18 date(s)	Regulation 19 date	Submission date
Medway	Medway Local Plan 2003 Kent Waste Local Plan 1998 Kent Minerals Local Plan 1997: Chalk and Clay Kent Minerals Local Plan 1997: Oil and Gas Kent Minerals Local Plan 1993: Construction Aggregates Written Statement Kent Minerals Subject Plan 1986: Brickearth Written Statement	April 2023	September 2023 July 2024	June 2025	November 2025
Maidstone	Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review 2021-38 (2024) Kent County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-30 (2025)	Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD in early 2025	Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD in February 2023, October 2024 and November 2025	Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD in June 2026	Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD in December 2026

4.2 Ongoing cooperation

- 4.2.1 Medway Council will consult Maidstone Borough Council in the applicant's preparation of a green infrastructure strategy, an open space strategy and an approved masterplan for the Capstone Valley.
- 4.2.2 Representatives from Medway Council have attended Lidsing Garden Community SPD meetings and will continue to support wider collaborative working between the authorities. This will include engagement in planning for infrastructure and services, such as education and health, which will serve communities in both administrative areas.
- 4.2.3 Medway Council will respond to the Lidsing Garden Community SPD public consultation and Lidsing Garden Community planning applications. Medway Council and Maidstone Borough Council will strive to achieve sustainable development outcomes for new communities.
- 4.2.4 Monthly meetings will continue to be held between representatives of the National Highways Spatial Planning Team and Medway Council and their respective traffic modelling consultants, if required. On occasion, representatives from Kent County Council and neighbouring local planning authorities will continue to be invited to the monthly meetings.
- 4.2.5 Medway Council's traffic modelling outputs for local plan-making will continue to be shared with representatives of National Highways, Kent County Council and neighbouring local planning authorities.
- 4.2.6 The Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Medway Local Plan recommends a strategic mitigation approach to ensure effective and coordinated reduction of air quality impacts at the North Downs Woodlands SAC.
- 4.2.7 Paragraph 6.89 of the Maidstone Local Plan Review sets out the requirements of a planning application, an associated project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment and a Mitigation Strategy to be agreed with Natural England, in consultation with the relevant highway authorities. Paragraph 6.90 of the Maidstone Local Plan Review sets out a package of eleven potential mitigation measures, which should not be taken as exhaustive in preparing a planning application.
- 4.2.8 Medway Council and Maidstone Borough Council will be engaged in ongoing cooperation to determine a strategic mitigation approach, however any such approach shall not affect the Lidsing Garden Community and draft Medway Local Plan site allocations coming forward independently of each other.