

## **Cabinet**

**18 November 2025**

### **Lidsing Supplementary Planning Document**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration

Report from: Adam Bryan, Director of Place

Author: Catherine Smith, Head of Planning Policy

#### **Summary**

This report presents the Maidstone Borough Council consultation on its Lidsing Garden Community Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Due to the proximity of the planned development to Medway, there are specific considerations and anticipated impacts on Medway's communities, services and environment. Medway Council is seeking to work collaboratively with the neighbouring council in planning for sustainable development.

The report outlines the purpose and content of the consultation document. It identifies issues of concern for Medway and sets out the scope of the proposed response from the Council to the consultation. Members are asked to approve the content of the Council's response to the SPD consultation.

#### **1. Recommendations**

##### **1.1. The Cabinet is asked to:**

1.1.1. Support the Council's response to the consultation on the Lidsing Garden Community Supplementary Planning Document.

1.1.2. Delegate approval of the detailed consultation comments to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration.

#### **2. Suggested reasons for decision(s)**

2.1. To approve representations to the Lidsing Garden Community SPD to seek to influence planning for development, and mitigating the impacts on the natural environment, infrastructure and service delivery in Medway.

### 3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1. The Lidsing Garden Community SPD is a Maidstone Borough Council document. Medway Council is a consultee. However the planned development would have impacts on services and infrastructure in Medway and there are cross border considerations in coordinating development across the adjoining Lidsing and the Capstone areas

### 4. Background

- 4.1. In March 2024, Maidstone Borough Council adopted its Local Plan Review 2021-38 (LPR), which sets out planning policies and land allocations to 2038. This includes a strategic development allocation of Lidsing Garden Community in Policy LPRSP4(B) providing for:
- Up to 2,000 homes (including 40% affordable housing).
  - 14 hectares of employment land.
  - 3 form entry primary school and wider services.
  - An East-West road link and M2 Junction 4 connection.
  - Supporting infrastructure, including green spaces and small scale retail.
- 4.2. Medway Council objected to the proposed strategic allocation at Lidsing through the plan making process, due to concerns on negative impacts on Medway, and our emerging spatial strategy. Following the examination and adoption of the Maidstone LPR, the Council acknowledges that Lidsing is an approved development location, and Medway Members and Officers have engaged collaboratively with Maidstone Borough Council to secure sustainable development and effective cross border planning. Work has involved bespoke strategic meetings, participation in the Lidsing Stakeholder Steering Group, and Duty to Cooperate meetings between Planning officers in the two authorities. The Council supports ongoing liaison in planning for development at Lidsing and Capstone. As part of this ongoing collaboration, Medway Council is submitting comments to the Lidsing SPD consultation.
- 4.3. The Maidstone LPR Policy LPRSP4(B) requires collaboration between public and private sector organisations to produce an SPD proactively and collaboratively for the Lidsing Garden Community. SPDs should reduce uncertainty by clarifying expectations and improving application quality. For large sites, they help coordinate landowners, infrastructure providers, and development phases. SPDs cannot introduce new policies or impose additional burdens that go beyond the Plan policies.
- 4.4. The Lidsing Garden Community SPD is a planning guidance document which will support the delivery of the Lidsing Garden Community site allocation as set out in the adopted Maidstone LPR. It does not introduce new planning policy but provides further guidance on the adopted Local Plan to help shape delivery of the Garden Community. The SPD is not part of the statutory Development Plan but once adopted, it is a material consideration in decision making on planning applications. SPD's can also help stakeholders to understand the policy requirements so there is clarity on outcomes.

- 4.5. The purpose of the SPD is not to repeat the Maidstone LPR policies. Instead, it sets out broad principles to show how the Garden Community should be designed, with the aim of translating the policy requirements in the Plan into a well-designed and successful place. It also provides detailed guidance which interprets the Local Plan Review policies in a manner appropriate to the site and how the policies should be implemented and interpreted. This will assist developers in preparing planning applications and enable Maidstone Borough Council to assess them robustly.
- 4.6. The SPD covers a range of topics including housing, employment, infrastructure, open space, and education. It includes chapters on vision and objectives, placemaking and design, and delivery framework. It does not provide detailed design guidance and refers to the preparation of a Design Code to follow an outline planning application.
- 4.7. The consultation draft SPD has been prepared by Maidstone Borough Council, as the local planning authority, in collaboration with the landowners and site promoters, their consultants, with some input from stakeholders and local communities as part of the early engagement in the preparation of the guidance.
- 4.8. The proposed draft Lidsing Garden Community SPD was considered by Maidstone Borough Council's Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee on 14 October 2025, followed by a report to its Cabinet the same day. Cabinet approved a six week consultation on the draft SPD. The SPD is published with a Transport Annex, Statement of Consultation, a Habitats Regulation Assessment/Strategic Environmental Assessment screening report/determination statement and an Equalities Impact Assessment.

## 5. Options

- 5.1. The purpose of this report is to consider the Council's response to the consultation on the Lidsing Garden Community SPD. There are limited options for consideration.
- 5.2. Respond to the consultation identifying areas for greater detail and amendment in the proposed SPD, to seek to influence the content of the final SPD and the delivery of development.
- 5.3. Object to the proposals for Lidsing Garden Community – the strategic allocation is approved as part of the adopted Maidstone Local Plan Review. This establishes the principle of development in this location. The SPD cannot set new policy but provide additional guidance on the implementation of the policy, such as design considerations.
- 5.4. It is recommended that the Council submit a detailed response to the Lidsing Garden Community SPD identifying areas for amendment and/or further detail.

## 6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. Although Medway Council acknowledges that the principle of development of Lidsing Garden Community has been established in the Maidstone LPR, our authority retains concerns over the potential impacts arising from the planned growth. Medway Council welcomes the production of an SPD to provide additional guidance to address key aspects of the development and secure greater clarity on the appropriate approaches and mitigations needed for sustainable development. The Council however views that the SPD could be stronger in its detail and scope to provide greater certainty on achieving the vision and objectives set out in plan policy. There are also concerns that the timing of a proposed Design Code is to follow an outline planning application, which could compromise the ability to achieve the quality sought in the vision.
- 6.2. The Lidsing development is proposed as a Garden Community and the SPD makes reference to the Garden City principles published by the Town and Country Planning Association. Medway Council questions if the planned development can achieve these principles and avoid being a car dependent suburban extension to urban Medway. The SPD has an important role in addressing this challenge, and many stakeholders, including the Council are reviewing the SPD with this objective.
- 6.3. Medway Council considers that the development at Lidsing will have significant impacts on services and infrastructure in Medway. These include strategic and local transport networks and services, education, health services, sports, leisure, community facilities, parks and other green spaces. The development will impact on the landscape setting, our green infrastructure, such as paths, flood risk and drainage, and green corridors for nature. Lidsing sits to the south of Medway, and there are important links between the Kent Downs National Landscape and biodiversity assets in Medway, such as Darland Banks and ancient woodland. These should be clearly reflected in the SPD.
- 6.4. The SPD has a limited assessment of the relationship of the planned development with the Medway area; particularly considering the context of existing communities, new development, such as at East Hill and emerging plans for Gibraltar Farm and the wider proposed strategic allocation of land in the Capstone Valley for growth as a component of the spatial strategy in the Draft Medway Local Plan. It is proposed that the response from Medway Council specifies matters and areas where the SPD could provide a more detailed assessment and sensitive response to Medway's characteristics. These include detailed comments on landscape, green infrastructure, open space provision and siting, key paths and links and stronger reference to the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy. There is scope to significantly expand the section in the SPD at paragraph 6.5.5 which considers the 'Medway Edge.' This single paragraph does not adequately address the complex and multi-faceted considerations in approaching place making and development in a cross-border location. The lack of detail in this critical consideration is a concern that the wider strategic issues and context

have not been given the attention required to achieve sustainable development.

- 6.5. There are particular concerns about the transport plans for Lidsing and how these account for impacts in Medway. A Transport Annex has been published with the consultation SPD, but this does not provide sufficient certainty on effective mitigation and timely delivery of the required transport schemes, both highways and sustainable transport modes. Concerns for impacts on the local road networks are key for local communities, both in Medway, and in the neighbouring areas, such as Boxley and Bredhurst in Maidstone. The Council will make specific representations in relation to the transport matters, and will continue to work with Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council, National Highways, the developers and key stakeholders in identifying and addressing the impacts arising from development and securing the delivery of transport infrastructure.
- 6.6. The SPD does not consider infrastructure needs in detail and refers to the Plan policy requirements and phasing. Further consideration will be at the planning application stage. Medway Council wishes to see greater acknowledgement of the anticipated impacts on its local services, and commitment to addressing the increased demands through securing developer contributions to upgrade capacity. The SPD is silent in a number of key areas, such as indoor sports centres, Capstone Country Park, and libraries where Medway facilities will be much closer to residents in Lidsing than services in the centre of Maidstone. The SPD as drafted does not give existing or new residents clarity on their local services, and what will be in place to meet the needs of the increased population.
- 6.7. Officers from services across the Council have been involved in reviewing the Lidsing Garden Community SPD and provided detailed comments, including planning for cross border education needs, landscape and green infrastructure, transport impacts and mitigations needed and sports and community facilities. Medway Council has also liaised with NHS partners in considering the cross border needs for health facilities in this location with committed and planned growth.
- 6.8. It is proposed that the matters identified in this report will be further articulated into a detailed response on the SPD consultation for submission by 15 December. At the time of drafting this report, the consultation materials and details of the scope and format for making comments have not been available. It is proposed that the final version of the detailed comments be approved by the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration.
- 6.9. Medway Council is committed to securing the best outcomes from the development at Lidsing for our communities and environment. The Council will continue to liaise constructively with Maidstone Borough Council through the planning processes, and more widely in the delivery of services and infrastructure. Our input to the SPD consultation seeks to secure greater certainty on the quality of new development.

- 6.10. The SPD follows the policy in the adopted Maidstone LPR which has been found sound and legally compliant through examination process. This is viewed as providing for sustainable development and the plan was informed by a Sustainability Appraisal.
- 6.11. As this report considers the Council's response to an external consultation, it does not include a Diversity Impact Assessment. Maidstone Borough Council produced an Equalities Impact Assessment for its governance processes.

## 7. Risk management

- 7.1. Maidstone Borough Council is responsible for the preparation of the Lidsing Garden Community SPD. Medway Council is a consultee in this process. The purpose of the SPD is to provide additional guidance to developers to implement the strategic allocation policy in the Local Plan Review. This should assist in meeting the objectives of the policy for sustainable development.
- 7.2. The main risk is mitigating the impact of the development on Medway's services and environment. It is important for the Council to engage constructively in the consultation process to represent Medway's interests and seek to influence the final content of the SPD and the delivery of development.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Poor quality development impacts negatively on Medway's environment and infrastructure and services.	Development at Lidsing does not adequately mitigate impacts on Medway, leading to pressures on services and degradation of the environment.	Robust response to SPD consultation and ongoing collaboration with Maidstone BC in planning for strategic development and service delivery.	CII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

## 8. Consultation

- 8.1. Maidstone Borough Council's Cabinet has approved a six week consultation on the draft Lidsing Supplementary Planning Document. The consultation will take place between 3 November and 15 December and will be led by Maidstone's Strategic Planning Team. At the time of drafting this report,

details of the consultation have not yet been published, including any specific questions or format for representations.

- 8.2. Medway Council officers and members have provided comments and support in preparing for the consultation. This includes assistance in promoting awareness of the consultation in Medway through use of our Council's communication channels, and ward members' local networks.
- 8.3. Details of the consultation process are set out in the Lidsing Garden Community SPD Consultation Statement (Appendix 3). This outlines the purpose and status of the SPD. It provides feedback on the informal consultation early engagement in the preparation of the SPD and how comments were addressed. It outlines how the Council will consult and engage with stakeholders, publicise the consultation and gather comments. The programme makes use of online resources and also includes staffed exhibitions and printed materials to view in local libraries (in both Maidstone and Medway) and council offices in Maidstone. Maidstone Borough Council has agreed to print additional copies of the consultation materials for display in Medway libraries closest to the Lidsing development. These are available to view in the libraries in Hempstead, Lordswood and Wigmore.
- 8.4. Maidstone Borough Council held an informal public consultation in March 2025 as an early stage of engagement in the preparation of the SPD. The Council sought comments from local residents, key consultees and wider stakeholders. Maidstone provided an early draft of the SPD for officer comments from Medway Council in Spring 2025. A Stakeholder Steering Group was set up to support the preparation of the Lidsing SPD. The group included Medway Council member and officer representatives in discussions on the development of the SPD. Initial comments received during the period of informal consultation in Spring 2025 noted many matters relating to impacts on Medway. These included availability of services, such as health care, including Medway Maritime hospital, schools, transport, green spaces and paths, and community facilities.

## 9. Climate change implications

- 9.1. The SPD has been prepared by Maidstone Borough Council as planning guidance following the strategic allocation policy in its adopted Local Plan Review. The adopted plan policies and the guidance in the SPD seek to deliver sustainable development. The SPD follows the adopted Maidstone Local Plan Review which includes a strategic planning policy on Climate Change and wider policies such as sustainable transport, energy use and carbon reduction, flood risk management and sustainable drainage, biodiversity and green infrastructure. These include a policy requirement for a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain from new development.

## 10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The Lidsing SPD is a planning guidance document that applies to the Maidstone Borough Council area. The costs of preparing the SPD have been met by that Council. There are wider and longer term financial implications for

Medway Council, that would result from the delivery of the development outlined in the SPD. The planned development and subsequent new residents will impact on services and infrastructure in Medway. This includes transport networks, schools, community and health facilities. The SPD makes limited reference to services in Medway. It is acknowledged that there will be cross border impacts and that some Lidsing developer contributions to mitigate the impact on services will be allocated to Medway Council. This includes meeting the costs of new secondary school in the Capstone area.

- 10.2. The Council will continue to liaise with Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council, where appropriate, in planning the delivery of services in this area and securing funding. The Council will provide further information on the impacts of services in Medway at the outline planning application stage, and subsequent detailed applications. The Council will seek to secure its position as a signatory to the S106 agreement.

## 11. Legal implications

- 11.1 The Lidsing Garden Community SPD is a planning guidance document which will support the delivery of the Lidsing Garden Community site allocation as set out in the Council's adopted Maidstone Local Plan Review 2021-38. The consultation meets the requirements of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Lidsing Garden Community Supplementary Planning Document, Consultation Draft

Appendix 2 - Lidsing Transport & Movement Annex

Appendix 3 - Lidsing Garden Community SPD Consultation Statement, August 2025

Note that the consultation is now live and the document link is:  
<https://maidstone.oc2.uk/document/1>

## Background papers

[Maidstone Borough Council Cabinet - Tuesday 14th October 2025, Agenda and papers.](#)