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Dear Sir,

As the County Councillor representing the area of Maidstone South East, I had hoped to be able to give evidence in person concerning the Maidstone Local Plan and the undoubted impact that this plan will have on the nearly 14,000 residents that I am elected to represent. I understand that a personal appearance is not possible for technical reasons but I hope you will accept this letter and its contents as evidence and that it will receive your fullest consideration in reaching your conclusions.

Maidstone South East covers the Parishes of Leeds, Otham and Downswood with part of Boughton Monchelsea and the urban areas of Park Wood, Senacre and Shepway South. I am also the cabinet member at Kent County Council with responsibility for corporate and democratic services.

Sir, I wish to express my own and my constituents' serious concerns over the Maidstone Local Plan. We find it utterly unacceptable that a disproportionate and excessive amount of housing is being crammed into the most severely congested part of the urban area of Maidstone, namely the south and south east area. This has now been the case for a number of years, but most unjustifiably since July 2015 when evidence became available to the Borough Council that highway capacity was a constraint to be applied to growth in this particular area. Subsequent planning decisions taken by the Borough Council in the face of strong objections from KCC as Local Highway Authority and local Parish Councils have caused many to conclude that the Borough Council are simply determined to deliver housing regardless of the consequences on the residents of the Borough. Many question the Borough Council's decision to hire their own consultants to justify private development and to contradict the views of the Highway Authority.

South East Maidstone and in particular the village of Leeds has needed a bypass (sometimes called the South East Maidstone Strategic Link) for years. KCC have been working on a scheme since the early 1990's. Originally the strategic link was intended to support an urban extension of the Town out and into the more rural areas. Sadly this did not happen and what residents are facing is effectively the Urban Extension but without the appropriate mitigating highway improvements. On

behalf of ALL my residents I urge you to ensure that the Local Plan contains whatever policies and reviews are needed to bring forward this desperately needed piece of infrastructure at the earliest possible opportunity. Please restore some confidence in the planning system in this part of the south east and stop this Plan perpetuating decades of poor decisions by a planning authority that is failing its residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Cooke', with a large, stylized flourish underneath.

**Gary Cooke**  
**Elected Member for Maidstone South East**  
**Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services, Kent County**  
**Council**