Consultation period:
21 September to 13 December 2015

kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway
1. Introduction

In 2008, Maidstone Gateway opened in King Street, Maidstone. Since then, people have visited the Gateway to access a range of Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and partner services.

Now, seven years on, it is time to consider whether this is the right location from which to provide KCC services. While the services that Kent County Council provide will not change, it is possible that they could be accessed from alternative locations. This would cut costs, and help towards offsetting the unprecedented financial challenge that the Council faces.

The following pages explain the new locations under consideration. We’d like to hear your opinions on this possible relocation. Details of how to tell us what you think can be found on page 14.
2. Background

What is a Gateway?

A Gateway is an easy to access location where local residents can access a range of services from different organisations in one place, including services provided by Kent County Council (KCC), Maidstone Borough Council and partner organisations.

KCC provides or commissions the following services from the Maidstone Gateway:

- Kent Supported Employment clinics
- Health Trainer service
- an Age UK helpdesk
- a Deaf Services drop in clinic

Maidstone Gateway staff are able to signpost customers to the most appropriate service, helping them with their enquiries. Please see section 4 of this document for more information about all the services that are currently available from Maidstone Gateway.

Why move away from the Gateway?

Our mission is to improve lives by ensuring every pound spent in Kent makes a difference - for our residents, our communities and our businesses. To achieve this we must review the services we provide, and where we provide them from, to make sure we get the best value for money.

We know that customers frequently visit Maidstone Gateway to access services provided by both Maidstone Borough Council and the voluntary and community sector partners. However, they rarely use it to access KCC services.
Out of 50,406 recorded visits to the Gateway in 2014:

- 88% were for Maidstone Borough Council services
- 8% were for other partner services
- 4% (2,919 of visits) were for KCC services (or those that we commission or partly fund)

Every year KCC pays 50% towards the annual property costs of the Maidstone Gateway which amounts to £162,600. We believe that keeping KCC services in Maidstone Gateway no longer represents best value for money.

By moving our services to other locations we would no longer need to contribute 50% towards the Gateway’s property costs. This would help us to make the essential savings needed to support our frontline services.

If, following this consultation, we decide to relocate away from the Gateway we would deliver our face-to-face services from other KCC buildings within Maidstone. This includes the services we commission or partly fund. We would ensure that those who currently use the Gateway to meet with our staff for specific services and clinics (such as Kent Supported Employment or Deaf Services) will still be able to do so in person in the future.
3. Have your say

We want to know how moving KCC services from Maidstone Gateway would affect you.

The following pages detail the services currently provided at Maidstone Gateway and consider possible future locations that could fulfil the same roles.

Please tell us what you think about these new options.

How can I take part?

Before we make a decision on relocating these services, we want to hear your views. You can do this by completing the questionnaire available at kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway or at the end of this document. Your comments will be taken into account when the final decision is made.

Equality Impact Assessment

We have also carried out an Equality Impact Assessment, looking at the wider impact of our proposals. We will review and update this during and after the consultation period, and will also use it to help make the final decision on KCC’s future in Maidstone Gateway.

You can read the Equality Impact Assessment online by visiting: kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway or ask a member of staff at Maidstone Gateway.
4. Current services in Maidstone Gateway

Between January and December 2014, customers accessed a range of services from Maidstone Gateway. These include services provided by Maidstone Borough Council, local voluntary and community sector organisations, KCC and partner services which are commissioned or partly funded by KCC.

Maidstone Borough Council services:
Maidstone Borough Council offers advice on the following services from the Gateway:

- Housing and Council Tax Benefit
- Council Tax • Business Rates
- Housing • Homelessness
- Private Housing • Parking
- Building Regulations
- Environmental Services
- Environmental Health
- Environmental Enforcement
- Job vacancies
- General Enquiries • Electoral Register
- Pension Credit applications
- Heritage, Landscape and Design

There are also duty officers from some departments who offer more in depth advice at certain times. These are:

- Licensing taxi officer
- Homeless drop in sessions
- Pension signing

Kent County Council services:
- General enquiries, including Blue Badge applications, Highways Services, and Kent Support and Assistance Services
- Kent Deaf Services helpdesk
- Kent Supported Employment

Partner Services KCC commission or partly fund:

- Age UK helpdesk
- Health Trainer service

Voluntary and Community Sector services:

- Hi Kent
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Domestic Violence One Stop Shop
- Kent Advice Service for Single Homeless
- Royal British Legion
- Victim Support
- Migrant Helpline

Other partner services:

- Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs

Tell us what you think: Go to p14 to complete the consultation questionnaire or visit kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway
This consultation is limited to the relocation of services provided or commissioned by KCC from the Gateway. These are the services shown within the Kent County Council Services box in the diagram on page 7.

Any other changes will be communicated by the relevant body in the future.

A detailed look at KCC’s Gateway services

**Kent Supported Employment clinics**
Kent Supported Employment help people who face additional barriers to employment. This service uses the Gateway to hold pre-booked face-to-face clinics with customers. These take place in the Gateway from Monday to Friday.

Kent Supported Employment need the flexible booking of meeting rooms in public facing buildings in Maidstone.

**Kent Deaf Services**
Kent Deaf Services provides help, support and advice to deaf people aged over 18 whose first language is British Sign Language. Customers can visit the service’s desk in Maidstone Gateway on the second Monday of each month from 9.30am - 1pm.

Kent Deaf Services need a desk in a public facing building in Maidstone.

**Age UK**
Age UK provides an information and advice service from a desk in Maidstone Gateway. Customers can also visit the Age UK desk to pick up an application form for the Disability Travel Voucher scheme. The Age UK helpdesk is open in the Gateway every Tuesday from 8.30am - 3.30pm.

Age UK need a desk in a public facing building in Maidstone.

**Health Trainer service**
A Health Trainer is in the Gateway every Monday from 9.30am - 2.30pm and all day every Wednesday for pre-arranged appointments. Health Trainers carry out health checks on patients who have been referred by their doctor.

The Health Trainer clinics need to be located in a meeting room in a public facing building in Maidstone.
5. What about general enquiries?

We know that some people come into the Maidstone Gateway with a general service enquiry. For example, to find out how to apply for a bus pass, or Blue Badge or to report a problem on Kent’s roads.

Gateway staff can help by, signposting to the right team or member of staff at KCC. In many cases, they will give you our website address or a telephone number to contact the team directly.

The Gateway also offers:

- Seven computers which can be used to access the internet free of charge for an hour a day
- Document scanners
- A Blue Badge application form collection point, with staff on hand to help fill them in

But this isn’t the only place (or way) to find the service information and help you need.

There are a number of other ways to get in touch with us and access information about KCC services. You can ask the reception teams based in other buildings in Maidstone and other parts of Kent who have the same access to information and ability to assist.

In addition to visiting us in person, you can ask for information about KCC services via our Contact Centre or by visiting kent.gov.uk.
## Comparing service and facility locations for general enquiries

### Maidstone Gateway: the facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Type of enquiry</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Accessible toilet</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Accessible parking</th>
<th>Computer/telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Maidstone Gateway      | • General KCC enquiries  
• Blue Badge applications  
• KCC service helpdesks and clinics (see section 4) | Building is fully accessible | Accessible with Radar key | Pay and display car parks nearby    | Accessible parking spaces on the Gateway roof level managed by Maidstone Borough Council | Yes, 7 public computers with free internet access for an hour a day               |

### Other buildings in Kent: you can visit to ask about KCC services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Type of enquiry</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Accessible toilet</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Accessible parking</th>
<th>Computer/telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sessions House, County Hall  | Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, ME14 1XQ | • General KCC enquiry  
• Blue Badge applications | Main entrance and reception can be accessed by either steps or a ramp | Accessible WC available via fold down stair lift. Key available for lift from reception staff | Multi-storey car parks and pay and display car parks nearby | Accessible bays are available on County Road, managed by Maidstone Borough Council | Public telephone                                        |
| Kent History and Library Centre | James Whatman Way, Maidstone, ME14 1LQ                         | • General KCC enquiry  | Public services and reception located on ground floor. Steps and ramps available up to main entrance | Yes | Pay and display car parks nearby | Two accessible parking bays on street in front of the building, managed by the library | 25 computers with free internet access                  |

You can also visit your local Library to ask about KCC services.
6. Relocation options

We are considering relocating the following services to alternative locations in Maidstone:

- Kent Supported Employment clinics
- Health Trainer service
- Age UK helpdesk
- Deaf Services helpdesk
- General KCC enquiries

If the decision is taken to relocate services, these changes will be made from October 2016. Where possible, the days and times for accessing the services will remain the same.

The list below provides details of alternative locations being considered. All venues will need to cater for a wide variety of users.

Please note, it may not be possible to relocate all of the services in one place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Accessible toilet</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Accessible parking</th>
<th>Reception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent History and Library Centre</td>
<td>James Whatman Way, Maidstone, ME14 1LQ</td>
<td>Public services and reception located on ground floor. Steps and ramps available up to main entrance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pay and display car parks nearby</td>
<td>Two accessible parking bays on street in front of building, managed by the library</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidstone Adult Education Centre</td>
<td>St Faith's Street, Maidstone, ME14 1LH</td>
<td>Main entrance and reception can be accessed via steps or platform lift located at front of building</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Multi-storey car park nearby</td>
<td>No disabled parking at St. Faiths street but can arrange a drop off</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Buildings List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Accessible toilet</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Accessible parking</th>
<th>Reception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coxheath Library</td>
<td>Heath Road, Maidstone, ME14 4EH</td>
<td>Single storey building with step free access to main entrance and reception and library areas</td>
<td>No accessible WC facilities</td>
<td>Free parking within site boundaries</td>
<td>Currently no accessible parking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allington Library</td>
<td>Allington Library, Castle Road, Maidstone, ME16 0PR</td>
<td>Single storey building with step free access to main entrance and reception and library areas</td>
<td>No accessible WC facilities</td>
<td>Free parking within site boundaries</td>
<td>No accessible parking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the buildings listed above, there are some service-specific relocation options. These are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Accessible toilet</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Accessible parking</th>
<th>Reception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent Supported Employment clinics</td>
<td>Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone</td>
<td>Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone, ME 14 1XX</td>
<td>The ground level where the clinics would be located is accessible</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pay and display carparks nearby</td>
<td>Accessible parking located at the public front of the building</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age UK helpdesk</td>
<td>Age UK Office, Maidstone</td>
<td>11 Mill Street, Maidstone, ME15 6XW (This building is not managed by KCC.)</td>
<td>The ground level where the helpdesk would be located is accessible</td>
<td>No WC facilities</td>
<td>Multi-storey car parks and pay and display car parks nearby</td>
<td>Two accessible parking bays directly outside</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Services British Sign Language drop in clinic</td>
<td>Hi Kent Offices, Maidstone</td>
<td>18 Brewer Street, Maidstone, ME14 1RU (This building is not managed by KCC.)</td>
<td>Yes via a ramp on the side entrance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Two pay and display carparks nearby</td>
<td>Yes accessible parking bays on the street outside</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tell us what you think:** Go to p14 to complete the consultation questionnaire or visit [kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway](http://kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway)
7. How to get involved

We want to know what you think about our proposals. No decision has been taken yet and your views will be vital to help us make the final decision.

The consultation runs for 12 weeks from the 21st September to the 13th December 2015.

You can get involved by:

- Filling in the consultation questionnaire online at: kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway
- Or by completing the questionnaire on page 14 of this consultation document and placing it in the drop in box in Maidstone Gateway. The address for Maidstone Gateway is King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ.
- By visiting Maidstone Gateway during one of our six drop in sessions and speaking to us directly. We will be in the Gateway to answer your questions on the following dates:
  - Monday 21 September 9am - 12pm
  - Tuesday 6 October 1pm - 4pm
  - Wednesday 21 October 9am - 12pm
  - Thursday 5 November 1pm - 4pm
  - Friday 20 November 9am - 12pm
  - Monday 7 December 1pm - 4pm

Easy Read and Word versions of this document and the questionnaire are available on our website: kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway or by request via e-mail to alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or at Maidstone Gateway. If you require this or any of the consultation documents in any other formats please request these via e-mail to alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or by telephone on 03000 421553. This number is monitored during office hours and there is an answering machine at other times.

Next steps

After the consultation closes, your feedback and the full Equality Impact Assessment will be used to inform our decision on KCC’s future in Maidstone Gateway. A decision will be made in early 2016 and information will be made available online and in the Gateway.

If we decide to relocate the KCC services in the Gateway, any changes will be in place from October 2016.
8. Questionnaire

This questionnaire can be completed online at:
kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway.

Alternatively complete the following questionnaire and return to Maidstone Gateway (King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ).

Please ensure your questionnaire is completed and submitted by 13th December 2015.

Privacy

Kent County Council collects and processes personal information in order to provide a range of public services. Kent County Council respects the privacy of individuals and endeavours to ensure personal information is collected fairly, lawfully, and in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
Q1. Are you completing this questionnaire on behalf of:

Please select one box.

☐ Yourself (as an individual)
☐ Yourself as a member of KCC or Gateway staff
☐ A Voluntary or Community Sector Organisation (VCS)
☐ A Service partially or fully funded by KCC
☐ A District/Town/Parish Council
☐ A Business
☐ Other, please specify: _______________________________

Q1a. If you are responding on behalf of a VCS organisation/ Council/Service/Business, please tell us the name of the organisation:

If you are responding as an Individual or as a member of KCC staff please continue to answer questions 2, 3 and 4. If you are responding on behalf of an Organisation please go straight to question 5.

Q2. What is your postcode? _______________________________
Q3. How often do you visit Maidstone Gateway?

Please select one box.

☐ More than once a week
☐ Weekly
☐ Once or twice a month
☐ More than once a year
☐ Once a year or less
☐ Never

Q4. Do you visit Maidstone Gateway for any Kent County Council (KCC) services, or those services partially or fully funded by KCC?

Please select all boxes that apply.

☐ General Enquiries (including Blue Badge applications, Highways services, and Kent Support and Assistance services)
☐ Kent Deaf Services helpdesk
☐ Kent Supported Employment clinic
☐ Age UK helpdesk
☐ Health Trainer service
☐ Other, please specify: _________________________________
Q5. The Consultation Document provides details of the possible options for accessing KCC services in future. Do you have any comments on these proposals?
Q6. We have drafted an Equality Impact Assessment on the relocation options. An EqIA is a tool to assess the impact any policies or strategies would have on race, age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief and carer’s responsibilities. We welcome your views.

To view the document, go to kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway or ask a member of staff at the Maidstone Gateway.

Please add comments below:

Q7. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on our proposals?
Future Engagement and Communication

If you would like to receive feedback on the outcome of the consultation please provide your contact details below. Our preferred method of communication is by email, however if you do not have an email address then please provide your postal address.

Name: ____________________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________________

Postal address: _____________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

*You only need to answer these questions if you have responded as an Individual or as a member of KCC staff. It is not necessary to answer these questions if you are responding on behalf of an Organisation.*

About You

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally, and that no one gets left out. That’s why we’re asking you these questions.

We won’t share the information you give us with anyone else. We’ll use it only to help us make decisions, and improve our services.

If you would rather not answer any of these questions, you don’t have to.

**Q8. Are you.......?**

Please select one box.

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] I prefer not to say

*Tell us what you think: Go to p14 to complete the consultation questionnaire or visit kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway*
Q9. Which of these age groups applies to you?

Please select one box.

- [ ] 0 - 15
- [ ] 25-34
- [ ] 50-59
- [ ] 65-74
- [ ] 85 + over
- [ ] 16-24
- [ ] 35-49
- [ ] 60-64
- [ ] 75-84
- [ ] I prefer not to say

Q10. To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong? (Source: 2011 census)

Please select one box.

- [ ] White English
- [ ] White Scottish
- [ ] White Welsh
- [ ] White Northern Irish
- [ ] White Irish
- [ ] White Gypsy/Roma
- [ ] White Irish Traveller
- [ ] White other*
- [ ] Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- [ ] Mixed White and Black African
- [ ] Mixed White and Asian
- [ ] Mixed other*
- [ ] Other ethnic group*
- [ ] Asian or Asian British Indian
- [ ] Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- [ ] Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
- [ ] Asian or Asian British other*
- [ ] Black or Black British Caribbean
- [ ] Black or Black British African
- [ ] Black or Black British other*
- [ ] Arab
- [ ] Chinese
- [ ] I prefer not to say

*If your ethnic group is not specified in the list, please describe it here:

__________________________________________________
The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted, or is likely to last, at least 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

Q11. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

Please select one box.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I prefer not to say

Q11a. If you answered Yes to Q11, please tell us the type of impairment that applies to you. You may have more than one type of impairment, so please select all that apply. If none of these apply to you, please select Other, and give brief details of the impairment you have.

☐ Physical impairment
☐ Sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both)
☐ Longstanding illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy
☐ Mental health condition
☐ Learning disability
☐ I prefer not to say
☐ Other*

*If Other, please specify:_______________________________________

Tell us what you think: Go to p14 to complete the consultation questionnaire or visit kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway
Q12. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion or belief?

Please select one box.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I prefer not to say

Q12a. If you answered Yes to Q12, which one applies to you? Please select one box.

☐ Christian
☐ Hindu
☐ Muslim
☐ Buddhist
☐ Jewish
☐ Sikh
☐ Any other religion, please specify: ____________________________

Q13. Are you...?

Please select one box.

☐ Heterosexual/Straight
☐ Gay woman/Lesbian
☐ Bi/Bisexual
☐ Gay man
☐ Other
☐ I prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.