

Maidstone Borough Council Core Strategy Strategic locations – potential development sites pro-forma

Following consultation on the Maidstone Borough Council Core Strategy in September and October 2011, the council is seeking information on what sites may potentially be available for development within the proposed strategic locations at:

- North west of Maidstone urban area (proposed for housing)
- South east of Maidstone urban area (proposed for housing)
- M20 junction 8 (proposed for employment)

To be able to identify sites for development in the Core Strategy the council needs to understand and assess information returned to the planning department in this pro-forma.

Please be aware that the submitted details cannot be treated as confidential.

Section 1 – Your contact details

Date 15 June 2012

1	Name	David Jarman
2	Company	Hobbs Parker
3	Address	Romney House, Monument Way, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent TN24 0HB
4	Phone number	01233 506201
5	Email	david.jarman@hobbsparker.co.uk
6	Client (if appropriate)	Mr N Leggat and Mr C Leggat
7	Are you?	
	Agent/planning consultant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Go to 9
	Landowner	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 10
	Registered provider	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 9
	Developer	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 9
	Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 8
8	If 'other', please specify below	

9	If you are not the landowner, do you have authority from the landowner to promote this site for future development?		
	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Go to 10
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to 10
10	Please provide contact details of the person with whom access to the site should be arranged. david.jarman@hobbsparker.co.uk		
	David Jarman, Hobbs Parker Property Consultants LLP Tel 01233 506201 Romney House, Monument Way, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent TN24 0HB		

Section 2 – Site details

SITE PLAN – WE CANNOT ASSESS YOUR SUBMISSION WITHOUT A SITE PLAN

Please enclose a site plan on an Ordnance Survey base (preferably 1:1250 scale), showing:

- Site boundaries.
- Access point/s to serve the proposed development.
- Surrounding features (e.g. road names) to ensure that the site can be clearly identified.
- The extent of any different ownerships and the extent of any land options.

11	Site address	Land at Woodcut Farm, Ashford Road, Maidstone
12	Which strategic location is this site in?	Junction 8 M20 Employment
13	Area (hectares)	28ha (18ha for development)
14	What type of development are you proposing on this site?	
	Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 15
	Employment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Go to 17
	Mixed use	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 19
15	Does the site have planning permission for housing development?	
	Yes – current consent	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 16
	Yes – expired consent	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 16
	No	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to 21

16 Please provide details of the housing permission on this site (application reference number, number of dwellings, expiry date etc.)

17 Does the site have planning permission for employment development?

Yes – current consent

Go to 18

Yes – expired consent

Go to 18

No

Go to 21

18 Please provide details of the employment permission on this site (application reference number, floorspace, expiry date etc.)

19 Does the site have planning permission for mixed use development?

Yes – current consent

Go to 20

Yes – expired consent

Go to 20

No

Go to 21

20 Please provide details of the mixed use permission on this site (application reference number, number of dwellings/floorspace, expiry date etc.)

Section 3 – Land ownership and control

21 Is the site, including the proposed means of access, in a single ownership or control?

Yes

Go to 23

No

Go to 22

22 Please show the extent of the different ownerships and the extent of any land options on a site plan.

23 | Has a developer expressed interest in the site for residential or employment development?

Yes – current

Yes – previously

No

Section 4 – Site constraints and considerations

24 | Please provide information in the following categories and indicate yes or no if there might be a constraint to development on the site.

Access/transport issues | Yes No

Details | See attached Transport overview

Access to services (public transport, education, health, shops etc.) | Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Adjacent uses | Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Agricultural quality | Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Air quality | Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Archaeology | Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Current use | Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Ecology		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement and Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report		
Flood risk/zone		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement		
Heritage (inc. listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments etc.)		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement and Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report		
Landscape (inc. long distance views)		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Details	Development proposals are landscape led, to address views to and from AONB, see Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report		
Land contamination		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement		
Noise		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement		
Planning and other designations		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement; little weight to be attached to Local Plan SLA designation.		
Public rights of way		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement and Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report		
Trees (inc. TPO)		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details	See attached Planning Statement and Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report		

Utilities Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Other Yes No

Details | See attached Planning Statement

Section 5 – Infrastructure

25 | Please use this space to detail any contact that you have had with infrastructure providers regarding the potential development of this site. If you have separate documentation please submit this also.

Contact made with services providers as follows:

- Electricity – available on edge of site, new substation to be provided
- Gas – available on edge of site
- Water – main on site boundary
- BT Open Reach – available on Ashford Road

High pressure gas main crosses eastern corner of site; to be retained on existing alignment.

Section 6 – Capacity and timing

26 | Based on your answer to 14 (type of development proposed), please specify the number of dwellings, the indicative floorspace, or mix of the two that you consider achievable on this site. You may wish to specify alternative options.

B8 Storage and Distribution: 25,000m²
 B1 Light Industrial/B2 General Industrial 20,000m²
 B1 Innovation Centre/Offices 3,750m²

27 | When, by your assessment, would this site be available for development?

2012 – 2016

√

2016 – 2021

2021 – 2026

Beyond 2026

Section 6 – Additional information

27 | Please provide any additional information below. Attachments welcomed, preferably in electronic format.

Re: following documents are attached.

- Covering letter
- Site Plan
- Planning Statement
- Landscape Statement
- Landscape Masterplan
- Transport Statement

Thank you for this information. Please return your completed pro-forma, **preferably by email**, to reach the council by **17:00 on Friday 15 June 2012**.

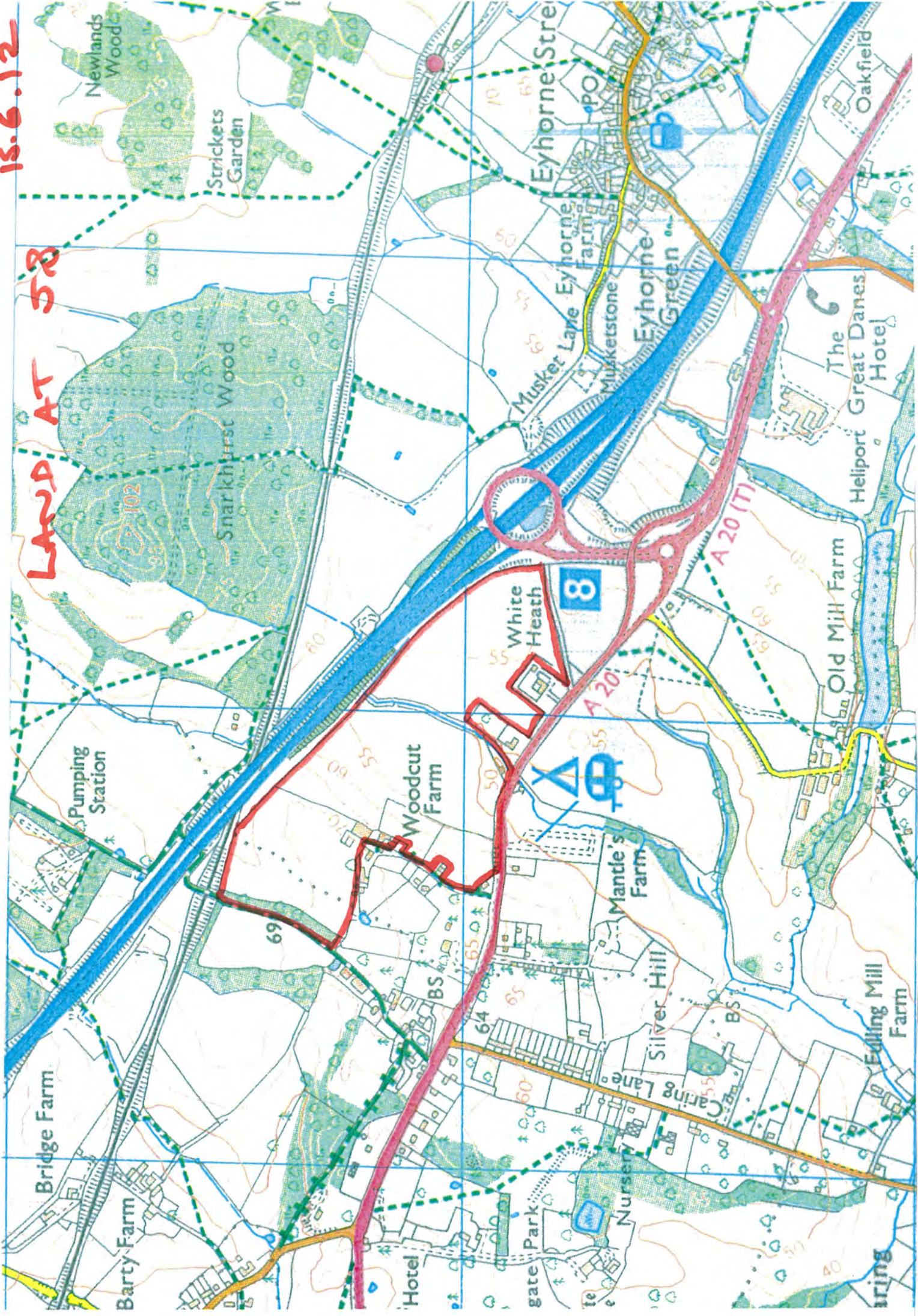
By email: ldf@maidstone.gov.uk

By post: Darren Bridgett, Principal Planning Officer, Spatial Policy, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6JQ.

Please do not forget to enclose a clear site plan.

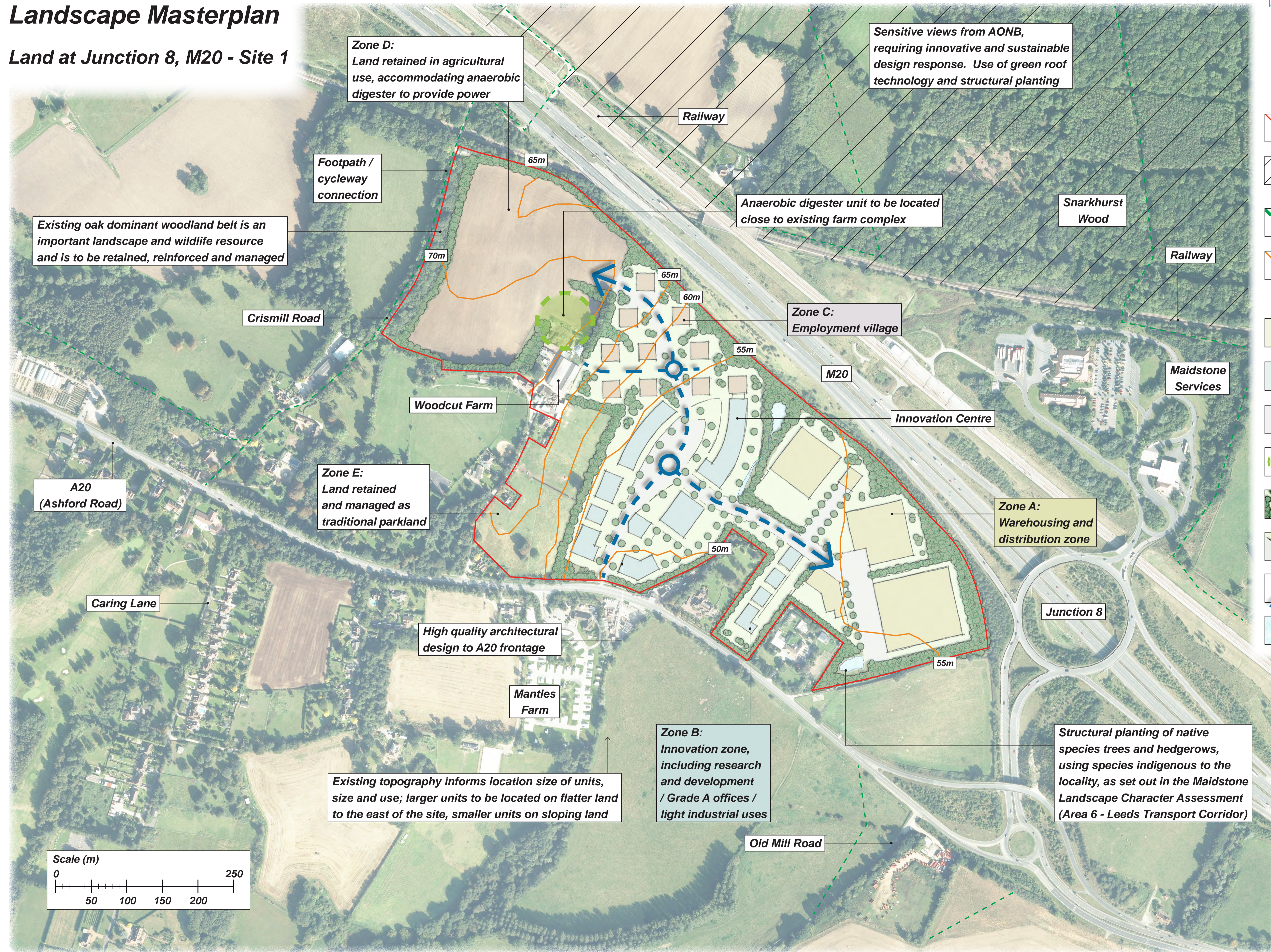
15.6.12

LAND AT 58



Landscape Masterplan

Land at Junction 8, M20 - Site 1



Zone D:
Land retained in agricultural use, accommodating anaerobic digester to provide power

Sensitive views from AONB, requiring innovative and sustainable design response. Use of green roof technology and structural planting

Existing oak dominant woodland belt is an important landscape and wildlife resource and is to be retained, reinforced and managed

Footpath / cycleway connection

Anaerobic digester unit to be located close to existing farm complex

Snarkhurst Wood

Crismill Road

Zone C:
Employment village

M20

Maidstone Services

Woodcut Farm

Innovation Centre

Zone E:
Land retained and managed as traditional parkland

Zone A:
Warehousing and distribution zone

A20 (Ashford Road)

Caring Lane

High quality architectural design to A20 frontage

Mantles Farm

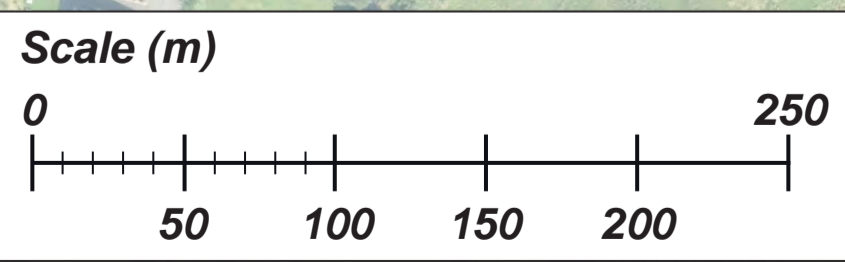
Zone B:
Innovation zone, including research and development / Grade A offices / light industrial uses

Structural planting of native species trees and hedgerows, using species indigenous to the locality, as set out in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (Area 6 - Leeds Transport Corridor)

Existing topography informs location size of units, size and use; larger units to be located on flatter land to the east of the site, smaller units on sloping land

Old Mill Road

Junction 8



Legend:

- Site Boundary
- Kent Downs AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
- Public Rights of Way
- Existing Contours
- Proposed Buildings:**
- Zone A
- Zone B
- Zone C
- Anaerobic Digester Unit
- Proposed Structural Landscape Treatment
- Parking / Circulation Space
- Access
- Water / Attenuation Features

drawing no. 2080 / D01
client and project. James Leggat & Son
Land at Junction 8, M20 - Site 1

drawing title. Landscape Masterplan

status. PLANNING
scale. 1:2500 at A1 drawn by. PW
date. 12.10.11 checked by. JB

lloyd bore
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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT SCOPING REPORT

LAND AT J8, M20
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND FOR EMPLOYMENT USES
JAMES LEGGAT & SON

REF. NO. 2080 / R01

JUNE 2012

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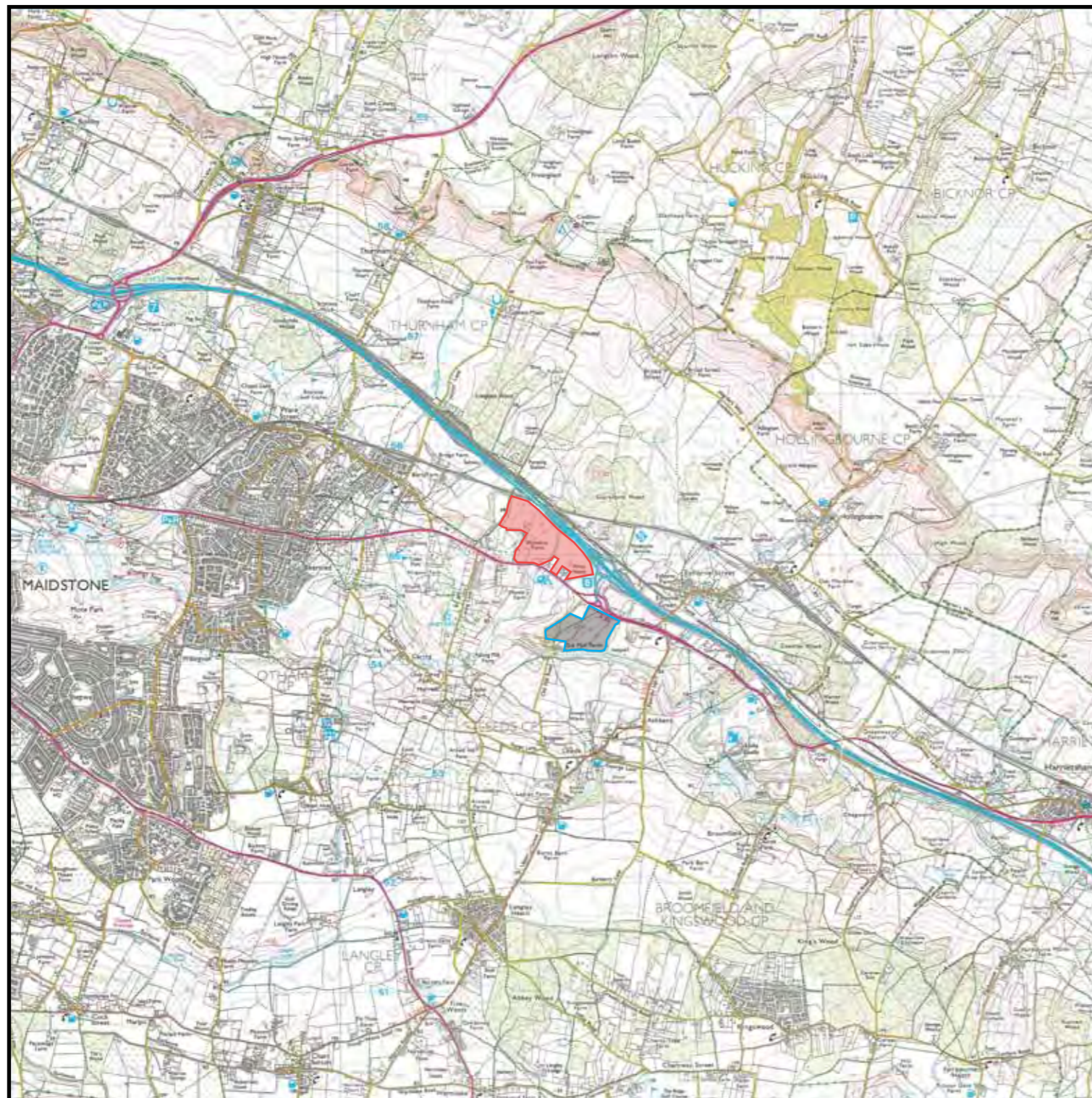
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Author:	AC
Checked by:	PW
Approved by:	



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of the Local Development Framework process, Maidstone Borough Council have identified the area in the vicinity of Junction 8, M20, as potentially suitable for development for employment uses, due principally to its strategic location close to the national motorway network and the Channel Ports and Tunnel.
- 1.2 Despite having been significantly impacted by the construction of major transportation routes between the continent and London, land along the M20 corridor is sensitive due to its proximity to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and other landscape elements of high value, such as the valley of the River Len. Maidstone Borough Council planning officers have therefore requested that landscape and visual impact scoping work be undertaken to identify the key landscape and visual issues that need to be considered in taking the planning decision-making process further.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to set out the key landscape and visual impact issues that will need to be properly addressed in assessing the relative merits of two proposed alternative development sites being promoted for employment use in the vicinity of junction 8 of the M20 Motorway, near Maidstone, Kent. This report is not a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).
- 1.4 This report has been commissioned by the owners and agents of land referred to as Site 1, which is land located on the northern side of the A20, west of Jct8. The competing site, Site 2, is to the south of the A20, and of Jct8. These two sites will share many of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics, due to their close proximity to one another. This report concentrates upon potential landscape and visual impacts of Site 1, but will include an examination of the potential impacts of Site 2.
- 1.5 This work undertakes an initial examination of the baseline conditions of the candidate sites and the surrounding landscape, and identifies potential landscape and visual issues relating to their proposed development. The location of the Application site is shown in **Figures A and B, Appendix 3.**
- 1.6 Landscape and visual assessments are independent but related issues; landscape assessment identifies changes to an environmental resource of the landscape in terms of its character, quality and value; visual assessment relates to the interrelated effect on population. Accordingly, a landscape and visual assessment identifies:
- Landscape effects derived from changes to the physical landscape of discrete character areas and/or character types comprising features possessing a particular quality or merit, which may lead to changes in its character and how it is experienced and hence may in turn affect its perceived value.
 - Visual effects relating to changes that arise in the composition of available views from visual receptors, to people's response to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

2. SITE LOCATIONS



LEGEND

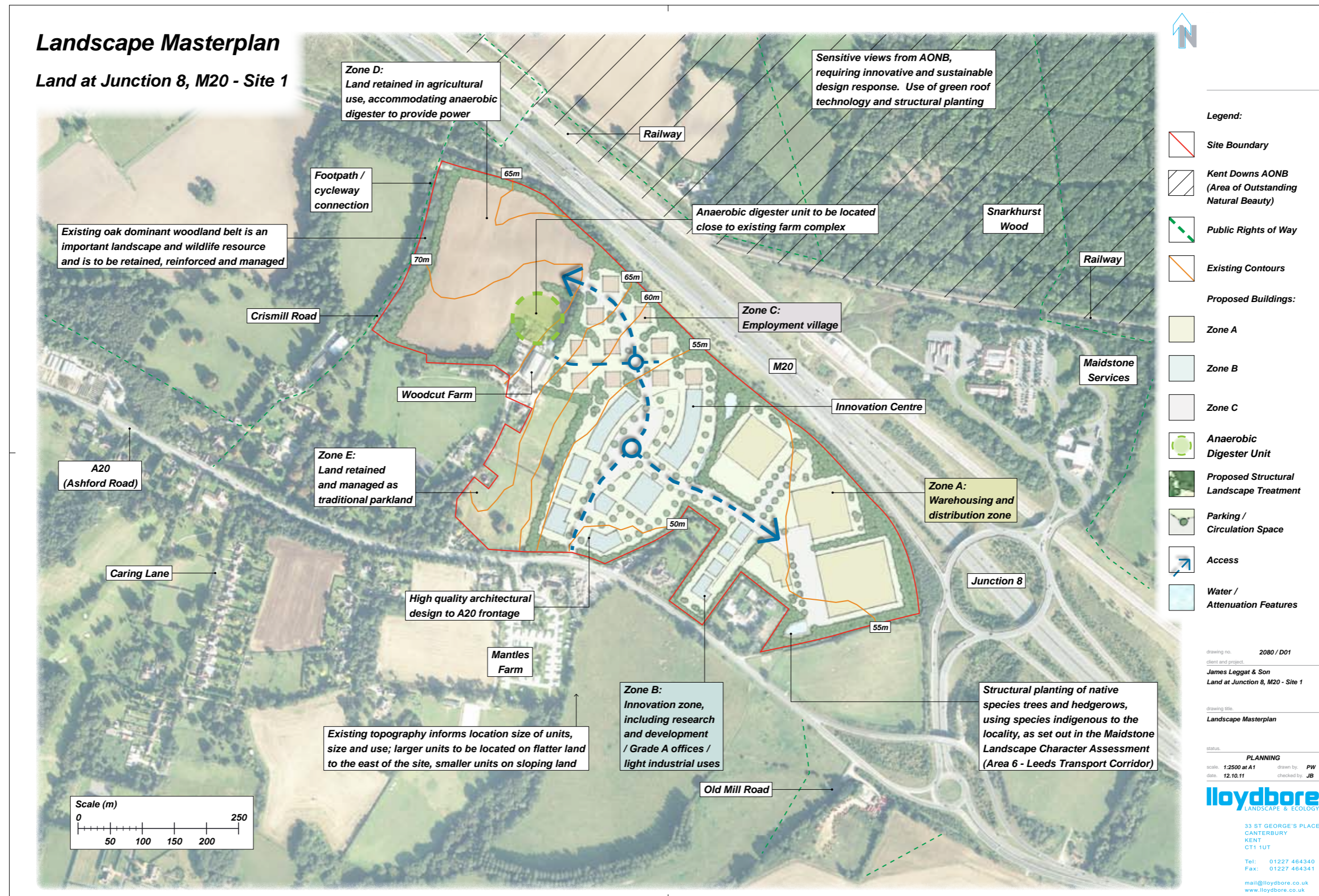
-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary



0 200 400 600 800 1000
Scale 1:50000 @ A3

REPRODUCED FROM ORDNANCE SURVEY EXPLORER MAP 148 © CROWN
COPYRIGHT (2004), ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. LICENCE NUMBER 0100031673

3. CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT SITE 1



4. CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT SITE 2



5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1 In October 2007 a planning application was submitted for a major rail / road interchange with freight handling facilities and B8 and B1 uses, on land between Junction 8 of the M20 and Bearsted, taking in land both north and south of the Ashford to Maidstone railway line. This project was known as the Kent International Gateway Rail Freight Interchange (KIG). That planning application was dismissed at Appeal by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of the Planning Inspector.
- 5.2 Site 1 occupies land at the eastern extremity of the former KIG site. The KIG site extended to 112.3ha. By comparison Site 1 is approximately 28ha in area, of which approximately 18ha would be given over to development of employment uses, and the remaining 10ha retained in agricultural use as a buffer between the Junction 8 development and Bearsted. The competing site to the south of Junction 8, Site 2, is approximately 17ha in area.
- 5.3 In making his recommendations, the Inspector made a number of comments in connection with the countryside, the Special Landscape Area and the AONB, which are relevant to both Sites 1 and 2.
- 5.4 Since the Inspector's report the Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation, which was saved policy ENV34 in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan following the (anticipated) demise of the South East Plan, is now afforded far less weight under the National Planning Policy Framework. The LDF Core Strategy does not propose a similar policy, and therefore very little weight should be attached to the SLA.
- 5.5 The Inspector's report referred to The Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), which has since been updated (2012). This scoping report will make reference to the updated assessments. Sites 1 and 2 are geographically very close to one another. In the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012 they are located in the same generic LCA; the 'Leeds Castle Parklands', but in separate, contiguous sub-zones.
- 5.6 The Inspector's conclusions in connection with landscape and visual character are summarised below:

The Countryside and Landscape Character

- 5.7 The Inspector was of the view that the majority of the appeal site was attractive open countryside. Despite the presence of the M20 motorway and HS1, there are extensive views across most parts of the site into the AONB to the north. He considered that the site's undulating landform and watercourses were a visual continuation of the topography of the AONB. Existing woodlands and smaller trees were visible from a distance and attractive in their own right. The KIG site was seen as a buffer between the built-up area of Bearsted and the M20/HS1, and gave a strong sense of passing through open countryside for users of the motorway. Whilst noise of the M20/HS1 was considered a negative feature of the area, the appeal site was considered by the Inspector to have a strongly rural character and atmosphere.

- 5.8 The Inspector came to the conclusion that the loss of open countryside resulting from the development of a major strategic rail freight interchange would cause significant harm, which would be exacerbated by the scale and straight lines of the very large warehouses, HGV and car parking areas and gantry cranes, all of which would be alien to the countryside and the built form of Bearsted. He was of the view that the undulating topography of the site would be largely destroyed by the creation of level development platforms, and that therefore the site's relationship with the landform of the AONB would be substantially lost.
- 5.9 The Inspector also commented that the KIG proposal would extend the built-up area of Maidstone northwards from Bearsted to the M20, and as far east as J8, and that this huge extent of new development would represent a major encroachment into open countryside, causing substantial harm to the open countryside character and appearance of the site.

The Special Landscape Area

- 5.10 Site 1 lies within the boundary of the old Special Landscape Area policy designation. At the time of the KIG Inquiry the Inspector stated that this policy should carry full weight as a Local Plan policy for the purposes of the appeal, but only 'until such time as the continued need for it has been considered as part of the formulation of the emerging Maidstone Local Development Framework.' It is clear now that this policy will not be carried forward into the LDF Core Strategy, and therefore very little weight is to be attached to it.

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

- 5.11 At the appeal it was common ground that although the appeal site was not within the Kent Downs AONB, it was within its setting, and that there would be views of the proposed interchange and associated development from many points within it. The Inspector concluded that there would be clear views of the very large industrial units being proposed from these elevated positions, emphasising in particular the overall scale and straight lines of the warehouses on their levelled platforms. The Inspector concluded that this part of the AONB contained part of the North Downs Way, easily accessible from Maidstone, and that views of the proposal would significantly harm visitors' enjoyment of this part of the AONB.
- 5.12 In concluding that the proposals would cause substantial harm to the setting of the AONB, the Inspector made specific reference to the appearance and scale of the proposal, which he considered would be alien and out of character with the countryside and the existing built form of neighbouring settlements.

COMMENTARY ON INSPECTOR'S CONCLUSIONS RELATIVE TO SITES 1 AND 2

- 5.13 The two sites at J8 currently being put forward for employment development are substantially smaller than those proposed for KIG, and are completely different in scale and type. The KIG proposal included significant earthmoving to create huge, artificially levelled platforms for development. It included vast warehouse structures of up to 1.29 million square feet, extensive road and rail infrastructure construction, gantries and lighting. The Inspector pointed out that the KIG proposal would have extended for 2.5 km along the M20 corridor.

- 5.14 For the above reasons the two candidate sites would certainly not generate the same degree of landscape and visual impact as KIG. The Site 1 proposal, for example, would occupy far less of the M20 corridor than KIG, would involve far less loss of countryside, and would include a substantial tract of undeveloped land on its western side to act as a permanent buffer between Bearsted and the M20/HS1.
- 5.15 The contending sites address key landscape and visual impact issues in different ways. Proposals for Site 1 accept that there will inevitably be visual impacts as a result of the development, including some views from the AONB, but that the site is strongly related to existing infrastructure and is well-contained by existing physical boundaries, being located between the M20 and A20. Visual impacts would be mitigated by careful treatment of the architectural form of development, responding to existing topography, by sensitive use of materials and colours, and by structural landscape works.
- 5.16 Proposals for Site 2 intend to address the issue of visual impact by excavating into the natural topography to hide the proposed development within a 'quarry,' and by creating artificial embankments to contribute further screening. Site 2 is not so well related to existing development patterns and projects more into open countryside than Site 1. In effect, proposals to mitigate visual impact issues for Site 2 would result in significant landscape impacts.

6. BASELINE MAPPING

- 6.1 Initial baseline mapping has been undertaken for Sites 1 and 2 using information available from the following sources:
- Kent Landscape Information Service Web site - <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm>
 - Maidstone Borough Local Plan
 - Google Earth and BING.
 - Magic Maps
- 6.2 The following baseline conditions have been reviewed and mapped and are shown in **Figures No. 1 to 15, Appendix 2.**
- **Local Area Ordnance Survey Map**
 - **Local Area Aerial Image**
 - **Topography**
 - **Public Rights of Way**
 - **Protected and Designated Landscapes including:**
 - **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**
 - **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)**
 - **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**
 - **Local Nature Reserves (LNR)**
 - **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)**
 - **Ancient Woodlands (AW)**

- **Historic Landscape Features including**
 - **Conservation Areas**
 - **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**
 - **Listed Buildings**
 - **Historic Parks and Gardens**
- **Kent Landscape Character Area Assessment**
- **Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012**

7. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 7.1 Landscape character assessments covering land at Sites 1 and 2 have been undertaken at national, county and local levels. Whilst the national assessment is by nature very general in its scope and terms of reference, the County and Borough level assessments provide far more useful data for the purposes of a landscape and visual impact assessment. The Kent County Council / English Heritage document 'Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation' 2001 also provides a useful historical context. The North Kent Downs AONB Handbook characterisation includes the 'Hollingbourne Vale' character area, which covers the North Downs escarpment, and is therefore also relevant to an assessment of the candidate sites.
- 7.2 The availability of this information means that it should be unnecessary for detailed, or project-specific LCA's to be undertaken for either of these sites in taking the planning process further.
- 7.3 The texts from the available LCA's, insofar as they relate to land in the vicinity of M20 Junction 8, including key landscape characteristics, are included in **Appendix 1**

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

NATIONAL LEVEL - NATURAL ENGLAND NATIONAL LCAS NO 119 - NORTH DOWNS AND 120 - WEALDEN GREENSAND

Commentary

- 7.4 In Natural England's National landscape character areas 119 (North Downs) and 120 (Wealden Greensand) reference is made to the landscape being marked by modern human influence (major towns, communications routes), and the noise and visual intrusion from new roads and railway lines following the vale below the North Downs scarp. Communications routes follow the natural topography and therefore influence the character of the landscape. The LCA 119 text, referring to the North Downs, makes specific reference to quarrying which has '*dramatically altered the appearance of the landscape.*'

COUNTY LEVEL - LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF KENT 2004 (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL).**LEEDS - LENHAM FARMLAND***Commentary*

- 7.5 Again the fact that the land below the North Downs escarpment functions as a transport corridor features prominently in the County level LCA. There is a reference to a narrow belt of mixed farmland east of Bearsted, which probably includes both candidate sites, with the geological boundary running along the Len Valley. The sensitivity of Leeds Castle and its setting is also noted.
- 7.6 In this LCA poor condition, combined with low sensitivity generate recommended actions to 'Create', defined as '*actions that create new features or areas where existing elements are lost or in poor condition.*'
- 7.7 These actions are summarised as:
- Create a coherent framework for isolated hamlets
 - Create a coherent framework for the transport corridor
 - Create a network of semi-natural woodland and heathland habitats
- 7.8 In this context Site 1 offers opportunities to strengthen the landscape framework along the transport corridor by providing structural landscape works. It also would provide opportunities for creating areas of semi-natural woodland on the site boundaries, and by bringing fingers of new woodland planting into the interior of the site.

LOCAL LEVEL - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 2012 - LCA NO. 49 - LEEDS CASTLE PARKLANDS*Commentary*

- 7.9 The sensitivity of the Leeds Castle site features prominently in this LCA, together with the importance of the vegetation cover and ecological value of the Len Valley (the Leeds Castle Parklands come under the 'valleys' category in this LCA).
- 7.10 The LCA refers to the major infrastructure corridor of the M20, HS1 and the A20, which are audible from the surrounding landscape and reduce the sense of remoteness. It also refers to the size and dominance of this infrastructure where it crosses minor routes.
- 7.11 The sporadic development pattern along the A20 is noted, including visual detractors such as the commercial sites.
- 7.12 In this LCA moderate condition, combined with high sensitivity generate recommended actions to 'Conserve and Restore', defined as '*actions that encourage the conservation of distinctive features and features in good condition, whilst restoring elements or areas in poorer condition and removing or mitigating detracting features.*'
- 7.13 These actions are summarised as:
- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
 - Conserve the traditional parkland character of the landscape

- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve and appropriately manage the pocket of lowland dry acid grassland to the northwest. Conserve and restore tree cover, which helps to screen views of major infrastructure routes
- Ensure continuity of mature isolated trees through planting new stock
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where they have been removed
- Resist field segregation, avoiding fenceline boundaries

7.14 The final three bulleted actions are relevant to Site 1, whose landscape strategy in responding to these points might include for planting of new trees, reinforcing boundaries, and respecting existing boundaries in the landscape. This would also address part of the fourth bulletpoint, as the structural planting works would help to screen views of the infrastructure routes.

7.15 With regards to Site 2, which is located immediately adjacent to the Len Valley, this LCA includes specific guidelines for land within river valleys (p393 of the Maidstone Borough Council assessment), aimed at encouraging good quality water and flow, promotion of sensitive management, enhancement of rivers by creating protected corridors, increasing habitat connectivity, planting of appropriate species and conserving rural skylines.

7.16 With regard to the above, and to the LCA action point to 'conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting,' it would need to be properly established whether Site 2 could be developed in the manner proposed whilst still achieving these objectives.

LOCAL LEVEL - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 2012 - LCA NO. 49 - LEEDS CASTLE PARKLANDS: SITE 1 IS WITHIN SUB-DIVISION LCA 49-2 WHITE HEATH FARMLANDS

Commentary

7.17 This sub-division of LCA no. 49 makes particular references to the sensitivity of the Len Valley. Site 1 is in the northern part of the LCA, some distance from the Len Valley, and therefore these references are not strictly relevant. Site 2 is located in a different sub-division, and is directly contiguous to the Len Valley. Other key characteristics mentioned in the LCA text; namely the major infrastructure, the urban / suburban influences, including car dealership and modern development, are directly relevant to Site 1, but less so to Site 2, which is in a more rural location, and away from these influences.

7.18 In this LCA poor condition, combined with moderate sensitivity generate recommended actions to 'Restore and Improve', defined as '*actions that restore distinctive features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.*'

7.19 These actions are summarised as:

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Improve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB through avoiding further urban edge influences and expansion of motorway services to the north of the M20

- Improve ecological connectivity between existing woodland blocks
- Restore, improve and appropriately manage ancient woodland and dense vegetation belts along drains

7.20 Site 1's location in the northern part of the LCA means that the valley influence is limited, and therefore the generic valley guidelines are not strictly relevant. The action relating to the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB is more relevant to Site 1, although the proposals do not involve development to the north of the M20. Development of Site 1 would represent the introduction of new urban uses, but these would be contained by strong physical boundaries, would involve significant new structural planting along its northern boundary close to the AONB, and would include a retained tract of open countryside to the east of Bearsted as a buffer against further urban edge influences.

LOCAL LEVEL - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 2012 - LCA NO. 49 - LEEDS CASTLE PARKLANDS: SITE 2 IS WITHIN SUB-DIVISION LCA 49-3 - ASHBANK FIELDS

Commentary

- 7.21 Site 2 is located within the western part of this sub-division of the Leeds Castle Parklands (LCA no. 49). The text relating to this LCA refers to the dominance of the transportation corridor and makes specific reference to the arable field which forms Site 2: *'The southern section comprises a large arable field to the west and a hotel with extensive grounds to the east.'*
- 7.22 The text also refers to the openness of views, and the closeness of the North Downs in views, interrupted by the transportation corridor. It also states that *'The restoration of this rural landscape is a priority.'*
- 7.23 The LCA text stresses the value of the biodiversity of the Len Valley, stating that *'The lines of mature trees provide potential habitat for nesting birds and commuting corridors for mammals such as bat as well as various reptile species. The riverside aquatic habitat has the potential to support protected species which may include otter and watervole.'*
- 7.24 In this LCA poor condition, combined with moderate sensitivity generate recommended actions to 'Restore and Improve', defined as *'actions that restore distinctive features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.'*
- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
 - Restore and improve the rural setting to the Kent Downs AONB north of the M20 by avoiding expansion of development
 - Improve the integration of infrastructure through native planting where practicable
 - Conserve traditional buildings and the rural setting of Hollingbourne – Eythorne Street Conservation Area

- 7.25 As Site 2 is located immediately adjacent to the Len Valley, this LCA's specific guidelines for land within river valleys would be applicable (p393 of the assessment), aimed at encouraging good quality water and flow, promotion of sensitive management, enhancement of rivers by creating protected corridors, increasing habitat connectivity, planting of appropriate species and conserving rural skylines.
- 7.26 The action relating to the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB is relevant to Site 2, although again the proposals do not involve development to the north of the M20. Development proposals for Site 2 involve excavating into the natural landform in order to address visual impact issues. Apart from the major landscape impacts this would generate, it would represent the expansion of development into an area of open countryside, with the prospect of opening up new areas for development by providing the first section of the South East Maidstone Strategic Link Road.

NORTH KENT DOWNS AONB HANDBOOK

- 7.27 In 1995 the Countryside Commission published a Landscape Assessment of the Kent Downs AONB. This document classified the Kent Downs into 13 distinct LCAs. The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook took this classification further, using the 2004 county assessment to create further local sub-divisions. Each is assessed in terms of its key characteristics, and design guidance is offered relating to each LCA.
- 7.28 Sites 1 and 2 are not within the Kent Downs AONB, but the LCA most relevant to these sites in terms of its proximity to the AONB is LCA 7 (Hollingbourne Vale), which includes the south west-facing scarp of the Downs. Key characteristics of LCA 7 were identified as:
- Yew dominated scarp woodlands in the west,
 - open cultivated fields on the scarp in the east with many hedgerow trees,
 - extensive views from the scarp,
 - large arable scarp foot fields.
 - Some mixed farmland.
 - Predominantly grassland on scarp.
 - Thick hedges along Pilgrim's Way.
 - Historic springline villages.
 - Scarp crossed by considerable number of roads and footpaths (some, former drove-ways).
- 7.29 Overall Landscape Character Objectives were identified as:
- To restore a strong hedgerow network on the scarp foot based on remaining field boundaries, and to return cultivated areas of the scarp to species rich chalk grassland.
 - Conserve, create and manage a good hedgerow network, including patches along Pilgrim's Way.
 - To reduce the impact of the existing road and railway network on the landscape.

- 7.30 Whilst Sites 1 and 2 will have no physical impact upon this LCA, the extensive views from the scarp are identified as a key characteristic, and the fact that the scarp is crossed by a number of roads and footpaths will increase the sensitivity of these views. Site 1 will be visible from a number of publicly accessible vantagepoints on the scarp, seen in the context of the M20/HS1/A20 corridor. Site 2, once excavated, would be less visible from the north, but potentially open to view from the north east.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON KEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER COMPONENTS

- 7.31 Significance of landscape impact is a measure of the sensitivity of the landscape resource or receptor set against the magnitude of change. Development of Sites 1 or 2 will have various impacts on sensitive landscape character components, and this is discussed below.

TOPOGRAPHY

SITE 1

- 7.32 The construction of the M20, junction 8 and HS1 has already significantly altered the topography in the vicinity of Site 1, creating cuttings and embankments in the landscape.
- 7.33 The majority of Site 1 is virtually flat, requiring very little in the way of topographical modification to achieve flat land for access and development. Access is proposed from the A20 Ashford Road, at a position where levels are at grade.
- 7.34 The north western part of Site 1 rises westwards towards Woodcut Farm. This provides an opportunity to create a distinctive form of development which responds to the underlying landform, rather than flattening it, requiring less modification of topography. Topographical changes would be relatively minor, allowing a sustainable balance of materials, with no surpluses leaving site or fill needing to be imported. Any topographical impacts would therefore be contained within the site boundaries.
- 7.35 An attractive area of rolling landscape is to be retained as parkland between Woodcut Farm and the A20, and between Woodcut Farm west to Crismill Road a substantial tract of land is to be retained in agricultural use as an undeveloped buffer east of Bearsted. There would be no topographical impacts on this land.
- 7.36 A small stream crosses the site and passes under the A20 close to 'Chestnuts.' This is a shallow feature but would need to be crossed by an access road. Any modification of this natural drainage channel would represent a potential topographical impact.

SITE 2

- 7.37 Site 2 is more distant from the engineering works of the M20, junction 8 and HS1. Although the Site's northern boundary is close to the A20, the remainder of the site projects southwards into the rolling countryside north of Leeds.
- 7.38 Proposals for Site 2 involve a major excavation of up to 15m (approx 50ft) into the landscape, to create flat land for development, because the natural landform rises significantly from east to west. This will be supplemented by additional bunding works to accommodate excavated spoil. It is intended that the proposed development would sit in the base of this excavation.

- 7.39 This would represent a significant, permanent and adverse impact on the natural topographic character of the landscape.
- 7.40 These engineering works would take place immediately adjacent to the ecologically important Len Valley, south of Site 2. Not far to the east the Len Valley has very high historical and cultural significance - forming the valley setting of Leeds Castle.
- 7.41 If a balance of cut and fill is achievable on this site, topographical impacts would be contained within the site boundaries. The amount of excavation work proposed is extensive however, and if all excavated materials could not be accommodated on site, and would need to be moved elsewhere, topographical impacts would not be contained within the site boundaries, and there would be further impacts elsewhere on receptor sites.
- 7.42 Two access options for Site 2 are suggested. One is shown to be taken direct from the A20 / J8 link roundabout. This would require cutting through a high embankment on the A20, representing another topographical impact, although this is an artificial embankment created at the time of the construction of the roundabout.
- 7.43 A second suggested access position is indicated close to the eastern site boundary, adjacent to the Mercure Maidstone (formerly Great Danes) Hotel site. This is immediately adjacent to a small stream valley, a tributary of the Len, which contains ponds. The detail of this possible access is unknown at this stage, but there is potential to impact on topography.

SOILS AND DRAINAGE

SITE 1

- 7.44 Development of Site 1 will have an impact on soils and drainage, as a result of physical movement of soils to create suitable land for construction, and by altering the natural free drainage of an agricultural site to one that is developed.
- 7.45 Usually natural soils are stripped independently of subsoils and stored during the construction process, for replacement in landscape areas as part of the completed scheme, and it is expected that this would be the case for Site 1.
- 7.46 As described above, there are potential impacts on the shallow watercourse that crosses the site, although there is no reason why this feature should not be accommodated in the proposed development.
- 7.47 Any development proposal for the site would need to be fully compliant with Environment Agency requirements for drainage, including sustainable management of surface and ground water.

SITE 2

- 7.48 It is almost certain that development of Site 2 will have a much more significant impact on soils and drainage than Site 1, simply as a result of the much greater extent of excavation works required to create a flat base for construction. As for Site 1, development of Site 2 will also change the natural free drainage of an agricultural site to one that is developed. Due to the proximity of Site 2 to the River Len system (with notable waterbodies to the south east and south of the site, and with

significant cultural and historical interest associated with Leeds Castle upstream), and the extent of excavation works proposed, the development of Site 2, however, would potentially have profound impacts on movement of ground water, with possible implications for the ecology of the Len Valley. These potential impacts would need to be fully investigated as part of a detailed environmental impact assessment.

- 7.49 Usually natural soils are stripped independently of subsoils and stored during the construction process, for replacement in landscape areas as part of the completed scheme, and it is expected that this would be the case for Site 2.
- 7.50 Any development proposal for the site would need to be fully compliant with Environment Agency requirements for drainage, including sustainable management of surface and ground water.

VEGETATION COVER AND ANCIENT WOODLAND

SITE 1

- 7.51 Site 1 is virtually devoid of mature trees, shrubs or hedgerows, with the exception of the narrow band of mixed vegetation crossing the site north-south along the line of the stream. Although there is access for agricultural vehicles across this line of vegetation, a proper vehicular access will need to be created, which will involve the removal of a section of hedgerow.
- 7.52 There is also a line of mature trees and a hedgerow running north from Woodcut Farm, which are to be retained. Hedgerows and trees associated with the retained parkland to the south of Woodcut Farm are also to be retained.
- 7.53 There is considerable vegetation cover on the periphery of the site, beyond the ownership boundary. Most of this is associated with planting works undertaken in connection with the motorway construction. There is also some garden vegetation within the domestic curtilages of White Heath and Chestnuts.
- 7.54 The nearest Ancient Woodland to Site 1 is Snarkhurst Wood to the north east, separated from the site by the M20/HS1 corridor. It is considered very unlikely that development of Site 1 would have an adverse impact upon ancient woodland.
- 7.55 There will be no significant impacts on vegetation cover as a result of the development of Site 1. As a matter of routine a full tree and vegetation survey should be undertaken as part of the planning design process, indicating measures to be undertaken to protect retained vegetation.

SITE 2

- 7.56 The interior of Site 2 is completely devoid of mature trees, shrubs or hedgerows. The principal vegetation interest is on the boundary of the site, associated with the waterbodies and watercourses along the Len Valley. Beyond the site boundary there are also trees and hedgerows on the embankment along Old Mill Lane, on the boundary with the Biffa site to the north, and on the northern boundary with Ashford Road. There is also garden vegetation within private curtilages in the vicinity of Old Mill Farm, to the south.

- 7.57 There will be no direct impacts on vegetation cover as a result of the development of Site 2, unless the access to the site is taken direct from the J8/A20 link roundabout, which would require a breach in the embankment and removal of some trees. The potential for indirect impacts on surrounding vegetation of value should be investigated, as a possible consequence of the significant excavation works, and the potential this might have to change natural ground water conditions and drainage beyond the site boundary.
- 7.58 As there are no trees on the site a tree survey would not be warranted, unless development were likely to impact on trees beyond the site boundary.
- 7.59 The nearest Ancient Woodland to Site 2 is located close to the south western boundary of the site, within the Len Valley, running west from Old Mill Road. For the reasons given above in connection with potential changes to ground water conditions, potential impact of the development of Site 2 on areas of adjacent ancient woodland would need to be investigated as part of a more detailed environmental assessment.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

- 7.60 Public Rights of Way in the vicinity of Sites 1 and 2 are shown on Fig. 4

SITE 1

- 7.61 No public rights of way cross Site 1. There will be no requirement to modify or extinguish public footpaths or bridleways, and therefore there will be no landscape character impacts on Public Rights of Way as a result of the development of Site 1.

SITE 2

- 7.62 Public Footpath KH181 crosses the western part of Site 2, connecting Old Mill Farm and Old Mill to the south with the A20 to the north. This crosses what is currently an attractive open field in a rural area, on part of the site shown to be excavated as part of the Site 2 development, and as such it is assumed would need to be diverted or extinguished. Irrespective of the procedural and practical issues associated with attempting to achieve a footpath diversion or extinguishment, any physical change to the route of a public right of way represents a significant landscape character impact. Public Rights of Way are of historical and cultural importance, reflecting patterns of use and connectivity, and therefore a fundamental part of the development of landscape character. If the development of Site 2 would require modification of the public right of way, this would represent a major landscape impact. Public footpaths are also noted for their sensitivity in terms of visual amenity, and this will be addressed below.

CONSERVATION AREAS

- 7.63 Conservation Areas in the vicinity of Sites 1 and 2 are shown on Fig.11.

SITE 1

- 7.64 The closest Conservation Area to Site 1 is Hollingbourne - Eyhorne Street, at a distance of approximately 750m to the east, and separated from the site by the M20 and HS1.
- 7.65 The second closest Conservation Area to Site 1 is the Leeds Lower Street Conservation Area, to the south. This is approximately 1.4km from the Site 1 boundary.

SITE 2

- 7.66 The closest Conservation Area to Site 2 is Hollingbourne - Eyhorne Street, at a distance of approximately 600m to the north east, and separated from the site by the M20 and HS1.
- 7.67 The second closest Conservation Area to Site 2 is the Leeds Lower Street Conservation Area, to the south. This is approximately 750m from the Site 2 boundary.
- 7.68 Site 2 is closer to both Conservation Areas than Site 1, but it is considered that there will be no direct impacts upon Conservation Areas as a result of development of either of these sites.

*AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)**SITES 1 AND 2*

- 7.69 Neither site is within the AONB, but Site 1 is closer to the AONB boundary than Site 2. North west of Site 1 the AONB boundary follows the north eastern edge of the M20/HS1 corridor. To the east it follows the route of the Ashford - Maidstone railway line, from a point where the two routes cross. Site 1 is separated from the AONB boundary by these transportation corridors, and by a tract of land which widens eastwards, incorporating the Maidstone services site and Eyhorne Street.
- 7.70 Although not within the AONB, Sites 1 and 2 clearly form part of its setting. The Inspector made reference to the undulating landform and watercourses of the land forming the KIG site as 'a visible continuation of the topography of the AONB. Although Site 2 did not form part of the land-take for KIG, the Inspector's comments are applicable to both sites. Site 2 possesses a strongly undulating landform, and important watercourses just beyond its boundaries. Its natural valley-side landform projects northwards into the AONB east of Snarkhurst Wood.
- 7.71 Development of Sites 1 or 2 would not have any direct physical impact upon the AONB, but would have the potential to impact upon its landscape character, largely as a result of visual effects.

*ECOLOGICAL INTERESTS**SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI)**SITES 1 AND 2*

- 7.72 The nearest SSSI to both sites is the Hollingbourne Downs SSSI to the north east. At a distance in excess of 2km for both sites it is very unlikely that development of either site would adversely impact upon SSSI's.

*SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)**SITES 1 AND 2*

- 7.73 The nearest SAC to both sites is the North Downs Woodlands SAC to the north west. At distances in excess of 3.6km (Site 1) and 5.1km (Site 2) it is very unlikely that development of either site would adversely impact upon the SAC.

LOCAL NATURE RESERVES (LNR)

SITES 1 AND 2

- 7.74 The nearest Local Nature Reserve is Vinters Valley Park. At a distance of approximately 3.9km from Site 1 and 4.5km from Site 2, it is very unlikely that development of either site would adversely impact upon the LNR.

LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES (LWS)

SITE 1

- 7.75 The nearest Local Wildlife Site to Site 1 is Snarkhurst Wood LWS. This is located north of Site 1, and separated from it by the M20, the HS1, the Ashford - Maidstone railway line and the Maidstone Services complex. It is very unlikely that development of Site 1 would adversely impact upon the LWS.

SITE 2

- 7.76 Site 2 is more remote from the Snarkhurst Wood LWS than Site 1, but its south western boundary immediately abuts a Local Nature Reserve close to Old Mill Farm within the Len Valley. The importance of the Len Valley for its historical and cultural interest is referred to above, but it is also important for its wet woodland ecology. Any proposed works that have the potential to change local drainage and ground water regimes, and therefore might impact adversely on the Local Wildlife Site habitat, would require proper investigation and if necessary mitigation.

ECOLOGY - GENERAL COMMENT

- 7.77 At the KIG Appeal the Inspector concluded that the scheme would not cause harm to most biodiversity and ecological interests. Although the appeal raised some issues in connection with potential impact on skylark and brown hare, both of which are BAP species, the Inspector concluded that this should carry only a little weight in the overall planning balance.
- 7.78 Over periods of time ecological populations can change, but it is expected that Site 1 would not be heavily constrained by ecological considerations. This would be confirmed by detailed ecological survey work undertaken at the appropriate time.
- 7.79 With regard to Site 2, the site is under intensive agricultural use and it is unlikely that populations of protected species would be present within the worked field area. Due to the nature of the surrounding habitat, however, especially in the Len Valley to the south, there is likely to be more potential for impacts upon ecological interests, although this again would only be confirmed by detailed survey work to be undertaken at the appropriate time of year.
- 7.80 A search of available biological records indicates the presence of great crested newts in the vicinity of both sites, but not within their respective development site boundaries. There are records of grass snake and slow worm on Site 2, but none on Site 1, although this does not mean they are not there. There is a record of a bat maternity roost close to Site 2, but no records close to Site 1. The close proximity of Site 2 to the river increases the potential for commuting and foraging activity by bats. Lighting impacts and disturbance along the river could be a potential issue with regard to Site 2.

- 7.81 Water voles are likely to be present in the river and ponds close to Site 2, as there are recent records from Leeds Castle. The potential for disturbance and impacts upon water vole populations and their habitats could be an issue in connection with the proposed development of Site 2.
- 7.82 Irrespective of the above data, a detailed assessment of anticipated development impacts (construction and operational phases) upon ecology, would need to be undertaken for either site, in accordance with accepted methodologies, as part of a wider environmental assessment. This would include strategies for mitigation of ecological impacts.

SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS (SAMS) AND LISTED BUILDINGS

SITES 1 AND 2

- 7.83 The nearest SAM to Site 1 is Ripple Manor (a Medieval moated site), at a distance of approximately 1.1km. The nearest SAM to Site 2 is Leeds Priory at a distance of approximately 1km. Development on either site would not physically impact upon these Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- 7.84 Leeds Castle is Grade 1 Listed. The closest part of Site 1 to the main castle structure is approximately 2.1km away. The closest part of Site 2 to the main castle structure is approximately 1.5km away.
- 7.85 Woodcut Farm House, Grade 2 listed, is located close to the western boundary of Site 1, but separated from it by existing structures and vegetation, as well as the proposed retained parkland. Further to the west is Chrismill Manor, and to the south Mantels Farmhouse, both Grade 2 listed, and again both separated from Site 1 by intervening vegetation, landform and structures. Olde England Cottage, Grade 2 listed, is located immediately to the east of Site 2, on the opposite side of the A20, with direct views into Site 2.
- 7.86 In assessing the relative merits of these development proposals it will be necessary to consider the settings of these SAMs and Listed Buildings, the extent to which their setting will be impacted, and the degree to which impacts can be mitigated.

HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

SITES 1 AND 2

- 7.87 Leeds Castle is listed on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The Castle is a Grade 1 Listed building. The closest part of the Castle grounds to Site 1 is approximately 900m away. The closest part of the Castle grounds to Site 2 is approximately 500m away, separated from it by the grounds of the Mercure Maidstone Hotel and a parcel of open parkland.
- 7.88 For the purposes of this scoping report it has not been assessed whether there is direct intervisibility between the Leeds Castle grounds and Sites 1 and 2, although the Inspector noted that part of the KIG site was visible from parts of the castle grounds. Development of either of these sites would nevertheless increase the quantum of developed land in the vicinity of a nationally important park / garden, and in assessing the relative merits of these development proposals it will be necessary to consider the settings of these SAMs and Listed Buildings, the extent to which their setting will be impacted, and the degree to which impacts can be mitigated.

8. VISUAL CHARACTER

SENSITIVITY OF VIEWS

- 8.1 Significance of visual impact is a measure of the sensitivity of the visual resource or receptor, set against the magnitude of change.
- 8.2 In landscape and visual impact assessment work, views gained from major transportation routes and interchanges are generally assessed to be lower in sensitivity than those gained from, for example, public rights of way, where the viewer is more likely to be engaged in recreational activity. For these reasons a landscape and visual impact assessment would allocate a higher sensitivity to those views from public rights of way within the Kent Downs AONB or on land to the north of Leeds, or indeed the public right of way crossing Site 2, than views from the M20 or A20. For a given magnitude of change, a higher sensitivity will generate a more significant impact.
- 8.3 A number of photographs taken in the vicinity of Sites 1 and 2 are included in Appendix 4. These were taken in June 2012. These are intended as an illustrative record of typical and representative views that might be gained in the area, viewing towards either, or both of the candidate sites. To assess the merits of a planning application for either of these sites a detailed EIA would be required which would include a full appraisal of views from representative vantagepoints, together with accurate CGI imaging of the proposed development for assessment, and proposals for mitigation if appropriate, with an assessment of residual impacts.

VIEWS FROM THE KENT DOWNS AONB

- 8.4 Views south and south-westwards from elevated positions on the North Downs escarpment are generally gained towards the sun, which often impairs the clarity of the view, especially when conditions are misty or humid, or during the winter months when the sun is low in the sky. Even under bright, clear conditions, viewing into the sun will result in the foreground landscape appearing as a dark silhouette. As a result, under these conditions some landscape detail can be lost, and instead it is quite common for distant glasshouses or polytunnels to become disproportionately prominent in the view, due to the reflective qualities of their materials.
- 8.5 Along the M20, moving vehicles are readily apparent in the landscape, especially high-sided, light-coloured trucks. The HS1 is less prominent, being a narrower feature, with 'traffic' infrequent. From the limited photographic survey undertaken (Appendix 4), in views from the North Downs escarpment Site 2 appeared to be more apparent than Site 1. This was partly due to the prominence of the bright red 'Biffa' containers located beyond Site 2's northern boundary, which made Site 2 easier to locate in the landscape, and partly due to the pronounced topography of Site 2 in the broader panorama. In many views from the North Downs the two sites were not readily apparent, and specific vantagepoints were sought in an attempt to locate the sites. The correct methodology is to select representative views, not contrived views. The selection of representative viewpoints for assessment will be critical in assessing the relative merits of the two sites in terms of their visual effects, and ideally should be agreed with the local planning authority in advance.

VISUAL ACCESSIBILITY AND SENSITIVITY

SITE 1

- 8.6 Site 1 is likely to be assessed as having a high degree of visual accessibility, due to its location between the M20 and A20 corridors. It is also likely to be visible from specific elevated vantage points on the public right of way network within the AONB to the north, where viewpoints will be sensitive. Views from lower elevations to the north, including those from Pilgrim's Way, are generally restricted by intervening topography, the M20/HS1 engineering works, and by woodland blocks such as Longham Wood to the west, Snarkhurst Wood and Newlands Wood.
- 8.7 Development on Site 1 would be viewed generally in the context of the existing transportation infrastructure beyond its northern, southern and eastern boundaries.
- 8.8 Approaching Site 1 along the M20 from the west, however, the raised landform and tree belt near Woodcut Farm prevents views from being gained into the site. Approaching from the east, emerging from the J8 intersection, the site is visible to the left (south). Although the motorway embankments and verges have been densely planted in places, this has not developed sufficiently to screen views into the site.
- 8.9 Views can also be gained into the site from the A20, between roadside vegetation and the sporadically developed plots that characterise the northern side of the road. Views from the A20 overpass, taking eastbound traffic over the M20 J8/ A20 link, are gained in an easterly direction, and not towards Site 1.
- 8.10 There are no public rights of way crossing Site 1, so no sensitive publicly accessible views within the interior of the site, and none on land immediately to the south of the A20. There is a public right of way from the A20 along the access to Woodcut Farm to the south west of the site, which offers views eastwards towards Site 1 over the retained parkland area.
- 8.11 There are potential views into Site 1 from private curtilages at White Heath and Chestnuts, although these have sizeable gardens and boundary vegetation.

SITE 2

- 8.12 Site 2 is also likely to be assessed as having a high degree of visual accessibility, due to its visibility from the A20 corridor westbound, and the fact that a public right of way crosses the site. Approaching the site from the east, passing the Mercure Maidstone Hotel site, the rising topography of Site 2 is prominent in the left of the view. The visual impact of the proposed change in topography caused by excavating into the valley-side landscape would be substantial from this viewpoint, without the benefit of extensive mitigation works.
- 8.13 Although screened from the immediate north by an embankment, Site 2 is likely to be visible from specific elevated vantage points on the public right of way network within the AONB to the north east, where viewpoints will be sensitive. As for Site 1, views from lower elevations, including those from Pilgrim's Way, are generally restricted by the M20/HS1 engineering works, local raised topography, and by woodland blocks such as Longham Wood to the west, Snarkhurst Wood and Newlands Wood.

- 8.14 Site 2 is well screened to view from the west by a vegetated embankment on the eastern side of Old Mill Road; the highest face of the proposed excavation would be located beyond this feature to the east.
- 8.15 The rising land of Site 2 is visible from viewpoints to the south, especially from the lanes and public rights of way to the north of Leeds, in the vicinity of Forge Lane, Brogden and Old Mill Lane (KH243 and KH 236). The visual impact of the proposed change in topography would be high from these sensitive viewpoints, without the benefit of extensive mitigation works. In these views the rising topography of Site 2 tends to obstruct views of Site 1, which is lower in elevation.
- 8.16 KH181 follows a route directly across Site 2 and provides clear views across the open field. These views would change significantly if the site were to be developed in the manner proposed, and the footpath would need to be diverted or extinguished. This would represent a very high magnitude of change in a view from a highly sensitive 'receptor', potentially resulting in a significant visual impact.
- 8.17 There are potential views into Site 2 from private curtilages at Old Mill Farm.
- 8.18 Although there is a belt of trees associated with a waterbody separating Site 2 from the privately owned Mercure Maidstone Hotel site to the east, there is a degree of intervisibility between the sites especially in winter, as the vegetation is deciduous.

9. DESIGN AND MITIGATION ISSUES

- 9.1 The following section discusses the relative merits of the candidate employment sites in terms of design and opportunities for mitigation

LOCATION

- 9.2 By restricting development to land east of Woodcut Farm, the Site 1 proposal provides a logical physical and visual link with existing infrastructure at Junction 8, including the Maidstone Services. The A20 is already characterised by sporadic development of sites on both northern and southern boundaries, a characteristic noted by Maidstone Borough Council's landscape assessment. Development of Site 1 would represent a logical infilling of land east of Woodcut Farm as far as Junction 8.
- 9.3 Development of Site 1 allows a strong landscape buffer to be maintained west of Woodcut Farm, between the site and Bearsted. Its location between the M20 and A20 corridors means that development is naturally contained by strong, permanent boundaries.
- 9.4 By contrast Site 2 would bring substantial new development into the attractive open countryside between the A20 corridor and Leeds. It is poorly related to the existing urban area east of Maidstone, and would appear as an outlier of development, largely surrounded by undeveloped land. Promotional documents supporting the inclusion of Site 2 in the LDF state that Site 2 can deliver the first section of the South East Maidstone Strategic Link (Leeds-Langley bypass). If this were to be the case, development of Site 2 would clearly bring further pressures for development into this pleasant tract of open countryside.

RESPONSE TO NATURAL TOPOGRAPHY AND EXISTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

- 9.5 The Inspector at the KIG appeal made strong references to the inappropriateness of excavating into the natural topography of the landscape, which forms part of the AONB setting, to create flat land for development. Proposals for Site 2, within the AONB setting, will do precisely that, by excavating 15m down into the natural landform. This will destroy any topographic relationship with the natural landform of the AONB, and the surrounding landscape.
- 9.6 Excavating land to place a building artificially down into the landscape is likely to reduce the visual impact of an elevation when viewed from above, but it will correspondingly increase the visual impact of the roof, which for B8 uses is usually larger in area than an elevation. An elevated viewpoint will see more of the roof of a 'dug-in' structure than the same building placed at a natural (higher) level.
- 9.7 By contrast, the Site 1 proposal is designed to respond to contours, by placing the larger B8 units on flat land close to J8, with built form fragmenting into smaller units on the gently rising land to the west. An appropriate landscape response is proposed, whereby a landscape framework is developed to take reference from underlying landscape character, in this case by reinforcing the general south-west to north-east grain of the landscape (contours and vegetation belts), which have been so damaged by the construction of the M20/HS1 to the north of the site.

SCALE

- 9.8 The geographical extent of the proposed development sites 1 and 2 is significantly smaller than that proposed for KIG. At Site 1 it is proposed that a variety of unit sizes would be offered, responding to different functional demands for employment floorspace, and to the physical properties of the site. Although no detail has been made available regarding how Site 2 might be laid out, the Core Strategy submission supporting Site 2 made reference to the largest building being (possibly) of 40,000m² (430,000+ sq ft), which is substantially larger than anything proposed for Site 1, and with a correspondingly larger roof potentially visible from elevated vantagepoints.

LAYOUT, ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND USE OF MATERIALS

- 9.9 The KIG Inspector made particular reference to the long, straight architectural lines that would result from the construction of the vast warehouse structures proposed at the time, and the visual impacts this would generate, especially to views from the AONB. Key to the success of accommodating new structures in a sensitive landscape is a proper consideration of layout, architectural form and use of materials, before the introduction of any 'mitigation' measures (such as excavations, embankments or screen planting).

LAYOUT

- 9.10 The layout of new development should be designed to respond to natural topography and existing landscape features of value. Consideration should be given to how buildings can screen parking and circulation areas, and how, in many cases, buildings can screen other buildings. If Site 1 were to be brought forward for development, there would be no intent to fully screen the new development from view; it would be designed to have a visual presence. New buildings would therefore need to be designed to a high architectural standard, set within a landscape framework derived from its underlying natural features. In places the new buildings would be specifically placed and designed to address the approach to Maidstone westbound along the M20.

- 9.11 The proposal to sink Site 2 into the ground would reduce its visual impact to views from certain quarters, but at the expense of significant landscape impacts. The quality of buildings and landscape spaces on the site, were it to be developed, might be constrained or diminished by these engineering works, due to the visual presence of steep quarry faces and the potential shadow effect of a 15m high excavated wall on its western side.

ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND USE OF MATERIALS

- 9.12 Large, flat expanses of single colour, reflective or single textured materials are more prominent in the landscape than low-key, graduated colour schemes, textured surfaces and non-relective materials. The visual prominence of bright, or light-coloured, reflective structures in the landscape when viewing southwards from the AONB is referred to above. This is an important issue.
- 9.13 For the same reason, car and lorry-parking areas should be screened to view from key visual receptors, either by buildings or landscape treatment. Highly relective and coloured car finishes and windscreens can be very prominent, even from a distance, under certain natural lighting conditions.
- 9.14 The functional requirements of B8 use inevitably dictates the need for large structures. Elevations of these structures should be articulated to avoid the effect of long straight lines (ridges and eaves), whilst roofs would require special attention due to the potential for elevated views from the AONB, especially if buildings are to be sunk into the ground. Flat, long and unrelieved elevations and roofscapes are more likely to be prominent in these views than gables or end-on barrel-vaulted roofs, whilst there may be opportunities to introduce green roofs to provide visual texture.

LIGHTING

- 9.15 Low-escape lighting technology is highly advanced, but nevertheless lighting is a sensitive issue, in terms of spillage and reflectivity of materials and surfaces. Parts of the A20 and the A20/M20 J8 interchange are already supplied with streetlighting, but the M20 is not in this locality. Employment sites, roads and junctions are illuminated on winter afternoons and at night, creating potential for lightspill impacts. The KIG appeal Inspector made reference to the potential impact of lighting, when viewed from the AONB, although that proposal was of course significantly larger than either Site 1 or 2, and very different in terms of land use and function. Nevertheless, potential lighting impacts will need to be addressed as part of a detailed impact assessment.

LANDSCAPE TREATMENT

- 9.16 Soft landscape works should be simple and unfussy, using principally native species plants indigenous, or already represented in this part of Maidstone Borough, creating visual connectivity with features beyond the site boundary. An employment allocation of this size should allow sufficient land-take for substantial areas of structural woodland planting, both within the site and on sensitive boundaries. The indicative masterplan for Site 1 shows extensive planting works aimed at reinforcing existing planting along the southern M20 verge and at the boundary with Junction 8.
- 9.17 The use of large canopy trees in large blocks at Site 1 would have the effect of mitigating the scale of the larger employment units, as well as visually breaking up the appearance of elevations and rooflines. The full beneficial impact of mitigation planting takes many years to take effect, so short term impacts will become progressively less adverse over time.

- 9.18 It is assumed that soft landscape treatment of Site 2 would involve planting of the raised embankments surrounding the excavation, combined with some planting internally to the site.

CONSTRUCTION PHASE IMPACTS

- 9.19 In assessing the relative merits of the two candidate sites, consideration will need to be given to construction phase impacts.
- 9.20 Apart from the normal impacts that might be expected from a construction project, which would be applicable to both sites, it would be reasonable to expect that construction phase impacts for Site 2 would be significantly greater than for Site 1, due to the amount of material to be excavated here to form a flat site. This would involve noise and vibration, dust generation, additional traffic movement from heavy vehicles, physical impacts on roads and emissions, in a location very close to the Len Valley and its important ecological habitats.

10. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

10.1 A detailed landscape and visual impact assessment for either of the proposed development sites will be necessary as part of an Environmental Statement. This would identify principal landscape and visual impacts, and put forward mitigation strategies to address them.

10.2 This scoping document has identified the following as the most likely impacts that would need to be addressed:

LANDSCAPE IMPACTS:

10.3 Impact on key landscape characteristics identified in the published LCA material

- Both candidate sites will impact on key landscape characteristics to a degree. Site 1 is well related to existing development patterns, being located between the M20/HS1 and A20 corridors. Site 2 is less well related to existing development patterns and projects more into the countryside south of the A20, with potential landscape impacts on the setting and ecology of the Len Valley as a result of the proposed excavation works.

10.4 Impacts on topography, drainage and soils

- Normal construction works for development of employment uses on either site would have impacts on topography, drainage and soils. Impacts would be much more significant for Site 2, however, because of the extent of excavation work that is proposed into the natural topography.

10.5 Impacts on Public Rights of Way

- The development of Site 1 would not have any physical impacts upon Public Rights of Way. The development of Site 2 would require the diversion or extinguishment of Public Right of Way K181.

10.6 Impacts on historic landscape and cultural heritage features, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- Neither site will impact physically upon historic landscape or cultural heritage features, although Site 2 is closer to Leeds Castle and its grounds than Site 1. There are Listed Buildings in the vicinity of both sites, and it would be necessary for any development proposals to demonstrate that the settings of listed buildings are protected.

10.7 Impacts on protected landscapes, including AONB

- Neither site is within the AONB. Site 1 is closer to the AONB boundary than Site 2. Both sites are within the setting of the AONB, forming part of the visual continuation of its topography. Proposals for Site 2 would involve significant alteration to the natural topography of this setting.

10.8 Impacts on vegetation and woodland (including ancient woodland)

- Neither site will cause significant direct impacts on vegetation and woodland. The potential for indirect impacts on the woodland and ecology of the Len Valley resulting from the proposed excavation works at Site 2 will need to be assessed.

10.9 Impacts on habitats and nature conservation designations

- Neither site will cause significant direct impacts on habitats and nature conservation designations. The potential for indirect impacts on the habitats and ecology of the Len Valley resulting from the proposed excavation works at Site 2 will need to be assessed.

VISUAL IMPACTS; IMPACTS FROM SENSITIVE VISUAL RECEPTORS:

10.10 Views from the Kent Downs AONB and the north

- Both sites have the potential to generate visual impacts from sensitive locations within the AONB. Site 1 is closer to the AONB and is not designed to be excavated into the landscape, so has the potential to be more visible to these viewpoints. Responding to the potential for views to be gained from the AONB, Site 2 will be excavated up to 15m into the landscape, but it will still be open to views from the AONB to the north east.

10.11 Views from the south

- Site 2 is more prominent in views from the south than Site 1, in particular in views from public vantagepoints north of Leeds, including public footpaths. The landform of Site 2 is higher than Site 1, which therefore obstructs views of Site 1 from these vantagepoints.

10.12 Views from the west

- Site 2 would be well screened to views from the west, due to the presence of an existing vegetated embankment and the proposal to locate the proposed development at the base of an excavation below the embankment. Site 1 is well screened to views from the west due to the rising topography and vegetation in the vicinity of Woodcut Farm.

10.13 Views from the east

- Site 1 is readily visible from the M20 corridor emerging from the cutting west of J8. It is also visible from parts of the westbound J8 slip road, where gaps in the vegetation allow. Views into the site can also be gained from sections of the A20 westbound. Site 2 is less visible from the M20 corridor, but is prominent to view from the A20 westbound.

10.14 Views from transportation routes

- Less sensitivity is to be afforded to views from main transportation routes than from public rights of way. Site 1 is readily visible from the M20 corridor and from parts of the A20. Site 2 is less visible from the M20 corridor, but is prominent to view from the A20 westbound. Should an access be taken into the site through the embankment on the northern boundary, this would open up direct views into the site from the north.

10.15 Views from private residential areas

- Both sites are generally remote from major concentrations of private housing. There are a small number of properties along the A20 which are likely to gain views into Site 1. Properties at Old Mill Farm, Olde England Cottage and Elsfeld Cottages have the potential to view into Site 2.

- 10.16 Proposed development of either site has the potential to impact upon important landscape resources and publicly accessible and sensitive visual receptors and viewpoints within the wider landscape. The significance of any impact will depend ultimately upon the visual characteristics of the proposed development, its layout, appearance, scale, colour and massing, and on the effect of any mitigation (structural planting, excavation or bunding) included within the detailed design.
- 10.17 Site 1 has good potential for the development of a sensitive and high quality site layout and design, to include the provision of structural mitigation planting where necessary. This would be designed to mitigate for identified adverse impacts from publicly accessible locations surrounding the site, including the AONB to the north, and have the capability of enhancing ecological interests. Complete screening of development on Site 1 would not be achievable, or necessarily desirable, and if it were to be developed, views would be gained of parts of it from certain locations in the AONB. If this proposal were to be selected as the preferred employment site, it could be promoted as a high quality 'gateway' development, presenting itself to the M20 on the approach to Maidstone from the east. This has implications for quality of architectural design and layout, choice of materials and landscape treatment.
- 10.18 The mitigation strategy for Site 2 is to excavate it into the ground, with potentially significant and irreversible landscape impacts. Even then, this would not necessarily screen development to view, especially views from the AONB to the north east. If it is considered necessary to go to such lengths to mitigate visual impacts, it would suggest that Site 2 may be not an appropriate location for this form of development, which requires large areas of flat land. Site 2 is not flat, but attractively undulating. Excavating into this landform and setting the proposed development at its base, with further bunding proposed on the periphery of the site, would suggest that the design strategy for Site 2 is aimed at achieving a total screen. If this is the case there may be little to encourage high quality design, for what should be an important, strategic employment site, which would need to announce its presence visually.
- 10.19 From this scoping analysis of the baseline conditions of the candidate sites and the surrounding landscape, it is concluded that a planning application for the proposed development of either site will need to be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment as part of a full Environmental Statement.

11. TECHNICAL APPENDIX 1 - EXTRACTS

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS ASSESSMENT - NATURAL ENGLAND

Character Area
119



North Downs

Key Characteristics

- Dramatic and distinctive Chalk downland with a continuous and steep scarp giving extensive views across Kent and Surrey towards the South Downs.
- The broad dip slope gradually drops towards the Thames and the English Channel. The dip slope is incised by a number of valleys or 'coombes' of the rivers Stour, Medway, Darent and Mole.
- Chalk soils on the scarp, at the base and in the dry valleys, support areas of high-quality unimproved chalk grassland. Clay-with-flints soils on the upper parts of the dip-slope supports oak/ash woodland and scrub with beech/ash/maple is common on the valley sides, such as on Box Hill.
- Land use includes a few pockets of traditional downland grazing but (especially in Kent) it is largely dominated by arable fields. These fields at the base of the scarp have extended their regular pattern up the sides of the Downs.
- The North Downs are a rural landscape with scattered flint-walled farmhouses and large houses. Towards London, while some valleys of species-rich grassland are still retained, the character changes to urban, with the topography masked by the built-up areas.
- The south-eastern end of the Downs becomes increasingly open and more intensively farmed as it widens before ending abruptly at the distinctive chalk cliffs of Dover. In places, it is undulating with dry grassed valleys and ridgetop woodlands.
- In some areas, major motorway and railway corridors introduce a discordant feature into an otherwise quiet and peaceful rural landscape.
- In the east, the lower dip-slope is characterised by high quality, fertile, loamy soils that support extensive tracts of cereals, root and other horticultural crops.

- Woodland and shaws cover much of the dry valleys and, in places, they are a characteristic of the ridgetop.
- Lanes follow the lines of old drove roads in many places.

Landscape Character

The North Downs escarpment is a striking and dramatic feature in the surrounding landscape. The Downs run from the narrow ridge of the Hog's Back in west Surrey, into south London and across Kent, widening eastwards to end abruptly at the distinctive landmark of the White Cliffs, between Deal and Folkestone.

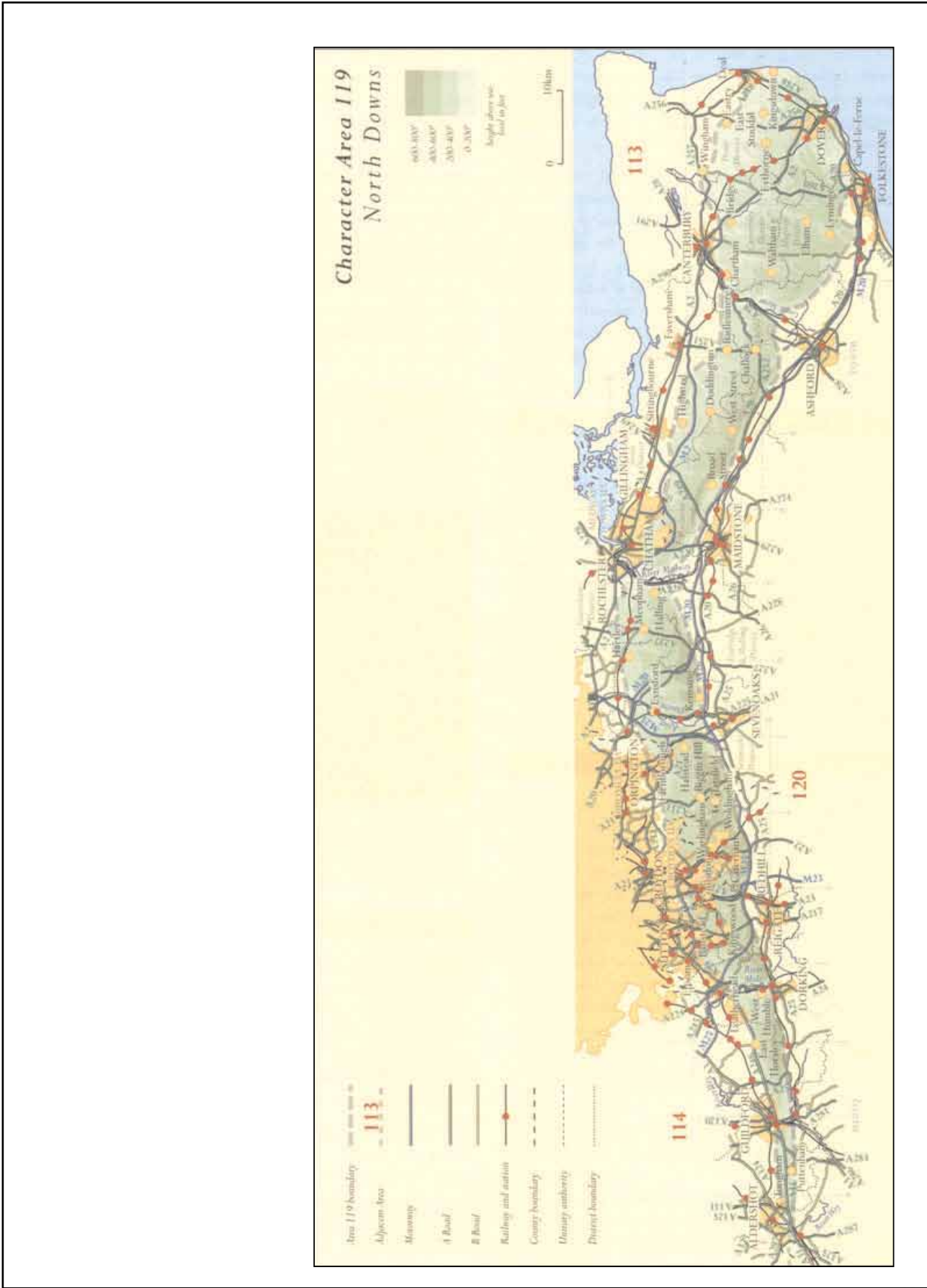
On the wide northern dip slope in east and mid-Kent, the North Downs merge into the plateau of the North Kent Plain and become urbanised in many places, such as south of Croydon or at Chatham. Farther to the west in Surrey, the Hog's Back marks the narrow divide between the Thames Basin Lowlands to the north and the Wealden Greensand to the south. The steep south-facing scarp of the North Downs rises to over 180 metres above the Greensand and is still more than 150 metres above sea level at Folkestone on the south Kent coast.



Arable farming is common on the more fertile soils of the gently undulating dip slope.

MIKE WILLIAMS/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY





The feature that gives unity to the character of the North Downs landscape is the strong Chalk topography and the open expanses of rolling downland. This strong landform is emphasised further by the pattern of woods and shaws which cover the numerous dry valleys.

Much of the North Downs has remained isolated and undeveloped as a result of the steep topography. The area contains a few large towns such as Chatham or Guildford but the majority of the major roads skirt the hills, leaving most of the area secluded and unspoilt. Bisecting the Downs at Rochester, the river Medway is associated with busy transport routes, industry and mineral extraction which detract from the rural and unspoilt character. The rivers Mole and Wey also cut narrow passages through the Downs at Leatherhead and Guildford.

Physical Influences

The Chalk forms the backbone of the North Downs which constitute the northern rim of the Tertiary London Basin. To the south lies the Wealden anticline exposing older Cretaceous strata.

The steep south-facing scarp face of the Downs is incised by a number of dry valleys which form wide gentle coombes dominated by the chalk soils. In contrast, the upper part of the dip slope is capped with extensive drift deposits of clay-with-flints. The rivers Stour, Medway, Darent, Wey and Mole also cut through the scarp to form deep valleys, showing evidence of river capture in many places.

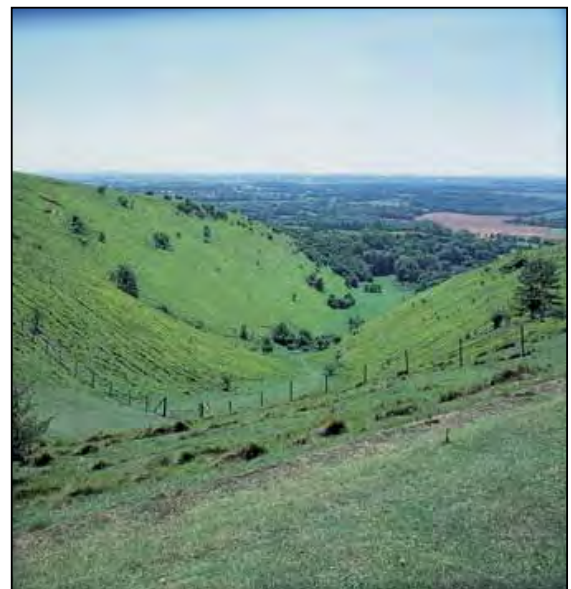
Historical and Cultural Influences

In prehistoric times much of the region, including the Downs, was likely to have been covered in dense, deciduous woodland. Evidence of early human activity or settlement within the area is provided by the prehistoric megaliths on the scarp in western Kent. The main areas of significant settlement are thought to have developed primarily along the river valleys as traces of Roman, and possibly earlier, habitations show. A slow colonisation of the poorer lands on the exposed upper Downs occurred up to the Middle Ages and it is this historic settlement pattern of parishes – with boundaries that take in an area of downland, scarpfoot and chartland – that form the basic framework for the present network of settlements found in the area.

The open nature of the Downs owes its appearance to the once widespread regime of grazing by stock and the development of drove roads to move animals to summer pastures or market. Other well-used tracks exist: the North Downs Way which follows the ancient path across the ridge and the Pilgrim’s Way taking the righteous to Canterbury.

To the east the Downs still show evidence of their importance as defensive sites; hill forts (such as Bigbury) and second world war remains are relatively common features.

The North Downs landscape has inspired numerous well-known writers and artists who collectively found the area to be a rich source of ideas for their work. For instance, Godmersham Park in the Great Stour Valley between Ashford and Canterbury is believed to have been the setting for Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*. The dramatic and distinctive White Cliffs of Dover feature not only in Shakespeare’s play *King Lear* but also came to symbolise the whole country during the second world war through the famous Vera Lynn wartime song.



PIRE WILLIAMS/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

The Devil’s Kneading Trough near Wye is one of a number of dry valleys that incise the steep scarp slope. Where traditional grazing practices are no longer maintained, scrub is invading the important chalk grasslands along the scarp face.

Buildings and Settlement

The North Downs is a rural landscape punctuated by a few large settlements such as Guildford, Chatham and Dover. The Kent part is marked by a scattering of small villages. However, where the Downs underlie London towards Croydon and Sutton, they are increasingly dominated by urban development interspersed with a number of species-rich grassland valleys.

Tree-lined tracks and lanes run diagonally down the scarp linking the Downs with the Wealden Greensand to the south. The enclosed lanes are narrow, twisting and steep-sided. Overhung with yew, wayfaring tree and whitebeam, they offer only restricted in contrast to the extensive views possible from the top of the scarp.



KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Toward the east, the land becomes more open and intensively farmed, before ending with the renowned white chalk cliffs between Deal and Folkestone.

Buildings of local materials are a significant feature in the landscape of the North Downs, with the use of flint, from the Chalk, as a building material providing a link between the physical and cultural landscapes. The rich orange-reds of Wealden bricks have been commonly used for the corners and door and window surrounds, framing the cool greys and whites of the flints being used in walls.

The Channel Tunnel terminal development dominates the views from the escarpment at the eastern-most end of the Downs where it widens before ending abruptly at the White Cliffs of Dover. The M25 and M20 transport corridors cut through the North Downs (and run parallel in Kent) introducing a discordant feature – plainly visible from the scarp – into an otherwise quiet and peaceful rural landscape.

Land Cover

The land cover of the North Downs is relatively homogenous being largely influenced by soil derived from the extensive occurrence of chalk and clay-with-flint.

The North Downs are more wooded than many other southern Chalk areas, particularly in west Kent and the eastern parts of Surrey between Guildford and Leatherhead. Oak and ash are typical of the upper part of the dip-slope while a mix of beech, ash and maple are commonly found on the chalk soils of the dry valley sides. Much of the upper scarp is wooded with woodland or hawthorn scrub extending onto the dip-slope. In Surrey, extensive areas of



STEPHEN DAVIS

On parts of the dip slope, such as here in Kingswood, Challock, sweet chestnut coppice dominates, with often spectacular carpets of bluebells.

yew with box woodland exist giving a distinctive dark green appearance to parts of the scarp.

Many parts of the Downs retain tracts of species-rich unimproved chalk grassland and, towards the eastern end, traditional grazing is still practised. In contrast, there are also large areas of the chalk grassland on the scarp and valley sides that have been ploughed for arable use.

The Changing Countryside

- Increasing pressures on farmland due to the expansion of urban areas, fragmentation of holdings and pressure from intense recreation use near urban areas; vandalism, fly-tipping and erosion of footpaths are typical issues.
- Scrub invasion of unimproved chalk grassland due to a reduction in grazing levels on the scarp face.
- Removal and lack of active management of trees and woodlands.
- Increased traffic congestion, pressure on car parking facilities and litter are significant problems associated with increasing recreation.
- Noise and visual intrusion from development of new roads and railway lines with extensions to existing routes particularly affecting the scarp; planting associated with highway improvements has resulted in loss of characteristic views from roads along the Downs – for example, along the Hogs Back.
- Storm damage to escarpment woodlands.
- Chalk pits and quarries have dramatically altered the appearance of the landscape. Scars on the scarp face have arisen from past chalk extraction forming highly visible features within the surrounding landscape. Potential adverse impact on the landscape from working of chalk pits for agricultural lime.



RICHARD BARTLEWYTE VILLAGE DESIGN GROUP

Flint from the chalk soils is a characteristic building material of the scattered farmhouses and large houses of the north Kent Downs.

Shaping the Future

- The restoration of suitable arable areas to chalk grassland and traditional management regimes should be considered, together with the conservation of existing unimproved chalk and remnant grassland.
- The wooded character of the scarp face and elsewhere depends on continued management and regeneration.
- Retaining and recreating views from the scarp crest and from highways would emphasise the open character of the Downs.
- Restoration of habitats previously lost to past chalk extraction and the enhancement of disused sites and spoil heaps would assimilate them more fully into the character of the Downs landscape.
- Many historic parklands are in need of restoration.
- Positive planning and design guidelines are needed to assimilate major transport corridors into the landscape.
- The character of the Downs landscape and its settlements would be enhanced by working with communities and promoting good design.

Selected References

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Glossary

shaws: strip of trees or bushes forming the border of a field

Character Area
120



Wealden Greensand

Key Characteristics

- Large belt of Greensand typified by its scarp/dip-slope topography and by extensive belts of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch together with more recent coniferous colonisation and plantations.
- Large sections of the winding Upper Greensand escarpment are noted for their steep 'hanger' woodlands with areas of remnant heath and wet heath.
- Settlements are generally scattered villages and hamlets linked by deep, overhanging, winding lanes with some small, irregular fields remnant of Saxon clearances.
- The Wealden Greensand in Hampshire and West Sussex comprises areas of high ground supporting a mosaic of open heath, beech/ash or oak/hazel/ash wooded hangers – or pine forest in Sussex – and rough grazing. There are broad river valley plains which support arable farming on light soils with large geometric fields.
- In the western Surrey area, the Wealden Greensand is flat with much heathland and former heathland. Towards the east, the slopes become steeper and are generally densely wooded with an extensive oak/birch/pine cover, numerous small woodlands and also 18th century conifer plantations. Farming is predominantly mixed with dairy pastures in small irregular fields with well-maintained hedgerows and shaws. The latter give a wooded feel to the area.
- In east Surrey and western Kent, there are many wooded commons ('charts') with oak/birch woodland.
- Tree-lined winding sunken lanes connecting small settlements built of sandstone or malmstone and the overall undulating and organic land form combine to give a sense of intimacy to the landscape.

- In the east of Kent, the Wealden Greensand has a gentler and more open aspect than the wooded west. This part of the area is also more marked by development with the presence of major towns and communication corridors such as the M26/M25/M20 and railway lines.
- Fruit growing is still a characteristic feature of the Kent Greensand.
- Older deer parks and more recent 18th century parklands are a distinctive feature of the Wealden Greensand with extensive views out over the Low Weald.

Landscape Character

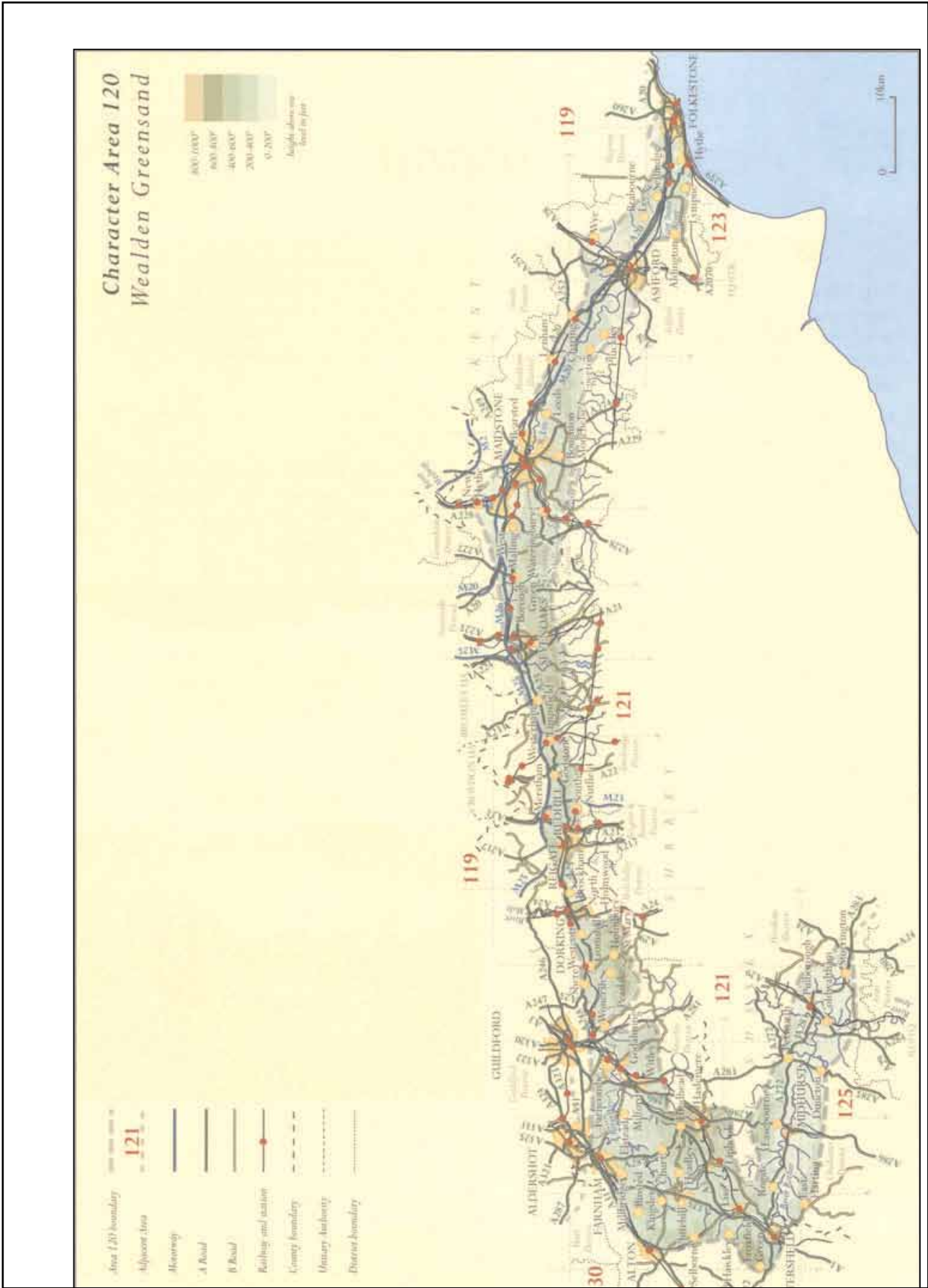
This long, curved belt runs across Kent parallel to the North Downs and through Surrey, moving south to adjoin the Hampshire Downs before curving back eastwards to run parallel with the South Downs in West Sussex. Its local character varies as a result of changes in local topography, soils and land use but it is unified throughout the area as a result of underlying geology, scarp/dip-slope topography and the distinctive springline settlements below the Downs.



Rural cottages display the estate colours.

Extensive belts of woodland, both ancient mixed woods of hazel, oak and birch and more recent coniferous plantations, give the area a well-wooded feel in many





places. The dramatic 'hangers' of East Hampshire are a dominating local influence, within the Wealden Greensand. Contrast is provided by more open areas of sandy heath and wet heath found on the acidic soils, by the rivers and also by the mixed farming found throughout the belt.



JOHN TYLER/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

Wooded slopes form the backdrop for pasture valley bottoms with tree lined rivers.

To the west in Hampshire, Sussex (and west Surrey), the Greensand forms an intimate landscape with a diverse character. Landforms of the western Wealden Greensand vary from the more-or-less parallel sandstone ridges to the dramatic and steep scarp slopes and the rounded clay vales containing river valleys with broad plains. This variety is evident for example, in the Upper Greensand bench at the foot of the Downs in Hampshire. The small pasture fields and linear woodlands of the ridges give way to larger and more regular field patterns where the Greensand merges into the Gault clay. This arable landscape of large geometric fields is encouraged by the light fertile soils of the river Rother plain which cut through the sandstone. It provides a local contrast with the more intimate nature of the sandy soils dominated by small pasture fields. These sandy soils on the higher ground support some extensive heathland. The area is a mosaic of open heath (with some pine encroachment), beech/oak woodland and rough grazing. A few areas of high quality heather heath remain, such as at Iping Common. Other areas of former heath have reverted to rough grazing or have been planted with conifers. Sand and sandstone are quarried and exposed on the Lower Greensand ridges below which springs, fed by the sandstone aquifer, occur at fairly frequent intervals.

A notable feature of the southern arm of the Wealden Greensand is the extensive Northlands of West Sussex, in particular those associated with the river Arun and Amberley Wildbrooks where the water levels are

controlled by sluices and the flat, treeless landscape is given vertical interest by the numerous reed-filled ditches.

Further north and east from Hampshire into Surrey, the slopes become steeper and are typically densely wooded; the steep 'hanger' ash or beech woodlands, of East Hampshire being a locally dominating feature. Some of the woodlands are of oak/birch/pine but there are also conifer plantations which introduce harsh lines into an otherwise undulating and unstructured landscape. There are many small woodlands scattered through the area. Farming is mixed, with a high proportion of dairying. Hedgerows are in good condition and mark the boundaries of the small irregular fields.

The intimate, almost secretive, feel of much of the west of the Wealden Greensand (that is Hampshire, Sussex and west Surrey) is reinforced by the deep stream-cut gulleys and tree-lined winding sunken lanes leading to small settlements built of sandstone, or more locally, malmstone. Even the larger settlements retain a link with the landscape, not least through the use of local building materials.

This mixed intimate character continues across Surrey with woodland cover increasing. This is the most wooded part of the area with a high proportion of ancient mixed wood. Much of the woodland is, however, the result of conifer plantations on former heathland. Open heath is left only on commons such as Reigate Heath or at Frensham. Wooded commons known as 'charts' are a characteristic feature of this part of the Greensand as it moves into western Kent where the wooded topography intensifies and is particularly dramatic. Besides the woodland, the Surrey Greensand is characterised by open rolling farmland. In the south a traditional farmscape of small fields and thick hedgerows is retained. On flatter land, however, arable use is more common resulting in a loss of typical character. Some of the farmland in this heavily populated area is given over to small holdings and pony paddocks which can appear scruffy and unkempt, particularly where hedgerows are damaged and replaced with wire fences. The main river valley is the river Wey which cuts a broad watery plain with open meadows and typical waterside vegetation, including willow and alder. The Surrey Greensand is particularly important for recreation, as it is easily accessible from London and many of Surrey's major towns. The overall landscape, although mixed, is unified by the wooded character engendered by the many woodlands and shaws. In many areas the settlements and gardens bring a suburban feel and some smallholdings can often appear out of place, This can sometimes diminish the more natural character but provides contrast and variety within the landscape.

Further east, into Kent, and beyond the dramatic wooded topography, the Greensand becomes less distinctive. Although sunken lanes and hidden valleys are a feature of

the area around Sevenoaks and Maidstone, the landscape here, being less wooded, does not give such an impression of intimacy unless contained by remaining hedgerows and shelterbelts. The area is also more marked by modern human influence with major towns such as Maidstone, Sevenoaks and Ashford and numerous communication routes. Notable among the latter are the M25 and M26 near Sevenoaks and the M20 and rail lines around Ashford which follow the vale below the North Downs scarp. Generally the Kent Wealden Greensand in the east has a sandy and heathy feel and the landscape is relatively more open with mixed farming. The central area of the belt near the Medway, where lighter loams occur, is a major fruit growing area with orchards and associated windbreaks, plus chestnut coppice for hop poles. These introduce a more regular pattern of straight lines into the landscape. Hop growing is particularly common around Maidstone. Further east, however, both orchards and hops are being replaced by arable fields which are often irregular in shape reflecting the changes in landform. At its south eastern extreme the Greensand forms a notable scarp, formally a sea cliff, giving extensive views over Romney Marshes. Panoramic views across the Low Weald are frequent and extensive from the Greensand ridge above the scarp face.



JOHN TYLER/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

Designed parkland is a common feature within the greensand. Much of it is threatened by fragmentation through lack of appropriate management.

Physical Influences

This region includes the outcrops of Upper Greensand, Gault and Lower Greensand. In general terms the Upper Greensand and Lower Greensand form escarpments, separated by a clay vale formed on the Gault Clay.

The wide range of lithologies, from clay to sandstone in close proximity, give rise to many localised variations of

land use, and woodland cover. The soil ranges from poorly-drained alkaline over the Gault to free-draining acidic over the Folkestone Beds.

In the west, below the chalk escarpment of the North Downs, a low bench of Upper Greensand at the foot of the chalk escarpment is deeply incised in places by springline streams. Further away from the chalk escarpments, Gault Clay lowlands give way to the Lower Greensand rocks which include Folkestone Beds, Sandgate Beds and Hythe Beds. The coarse-grained, acidic and free-draining Folkestone Beds form a broad escarpment often associated with tracts of heaths and commons. The Sandgate Beds which give rise to heavier and wetter soils are often dominated by pasture. Major rivers such as the Rother flow in narrow alluvial floodplains across the easily eroded Sandgate Beds. The most elevated and steeply undulating relief is formed by the resistant calcareous sandstone (known as ragstone) of the Hythe Beds which form the main part of the escarpment. They support lime-tolerant plant communities in the otherwise generally acidic soil conditions of the Greensand region.

Areas of soft sandstone are easily eroded producing distinctive sunken lanes in the Greensand, cut deeply into the rock below the surrounding land surface. These lanes are historical and characteristic features of the landscape and are also used as part of the modern road system.

In contrast to the North Downs, surface water is an important feature on the Greensand. Streams and rivers drain off the dip-slope and there are many flooded quarry, workings which are commonly hidden by trees from distant views.

Historical and Cultural Influences

The Wealden Greensand has been occupied since earliest times. Evidence of early occupation at Oldbury Hill in Kent is provided by the presence of palaeolithic flint tools and, at Abinger, traces of a neolithic hearth from c5000 BC suggest that this could be the oldest village in England!

Bronze Age tumuli are evident near Petersfield and are common on the higher ground of heathlands in Sussex. Iron Age forts exist, for example at Holmbury, Anstiebury and at Oldbury Hill. The Pilgrim's Way prehistoric track of the North Downs runs parallel to the Greensand and is closely associated with these features.

In contrast to the winding, eroded, sandstone lanes of the wooded west, Roman roads radiate from Canterbury to Ashford and Lympne and thence to Maidstone.

The Wealden Greensand area has significant woodland and estate parkland. The former has always been diverse, the lighter heathy soils of areas like Leith Hill having been planted with conifers and the heavier soils supporting



MIKE WILLIAMS/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

Walkers get a sense of seclusion walking along the sunken lanes and overgrown paths.

coppice and mixed woodland. There has been a considerable reduction in the amount of heathland since the 19th century.

The woodland provides a backdrop to the many landscaped parks of the area and has been used by designers such as Capability Brown to frame 18th and 19th century landscapes. Petworth in Sussex, Knole, Squerries Court and Leeds Castle in Kent are particular examples of the genre, together with Albury Park designed by John Evelyn, the ‘father of silviculture’ and many smaller gardens influenced by Jekyll and Lutyens. Artists such as Samuel Palmer, who had links with the Darent Valley, reflected the area in their paintings and Gilbert White, at Selborne in Hampshire, created his own small-scale designed landscape at his home using the dramatic hanger woodlands as his backdrop.

There are numerous quarries for local distinctive building stone, Ragstone or Bargate Stone and there is a history of disturbance to the landscape through mineral and sand abstraction. Other industry has concentrated along the river

valleys with the use of water power and charcoal. Iron workings, based on the local occurrence of ironstone, used Wealden timber and the associated hammer ponds are plentiful along the foot of the northwest escarpment. Water mills and some windmills were a source of energy and industry in the Tillingbourne and Rother Valleys.

Prosperity arrived in the 19th century with improvements in road and rail travel, turning much of the northern segment of the Wealden Greensand into a commuter belt. Original communication links ran in a strong east-west alignment along the lighter soils and ridge lines. North-south links remain relatively poor, whilst east-west links have strengthened. The south-east railway connected London to Dover in 1844 and subsequent links through the M20 and M26 have reinforced this particular transport corridor.

Small settlements are dispersed throughout the western and south western segment of the character area, linked by historic, sunken lanes. Rural buildings are typically of local

tile-hung ragstone or malmstone. Continued building has left a scattering of modern houses and large gardens, introducing urban influences into rural areas.

Buildings and Settlement

In the eastern Greensand, timber-framed buildings are a feature of the local landscape, as is weatherboarding. Many of the typical Greensand cottages and houses date from the 17th century or earlier. They typically have walls of tawny-brown sandstone, laid in rubble courses, often patterned by tiny pieces of dark carrstone in the mortar between the stones. This process known as ‘galletting’ was imitated in the late 19th century Arts and Crafts houses which also have elaborate large chimneys and intricate corner and window details of tile creasing.

Large houses set within extensive gardens are also found all over the Greensand. The gardens, often extensively wooded, screen the houses from view and contribute to the general impression of dense woodland.

The Hythe Beds provided hard stone for local buildings whereas the Folkestone Beds are a source of sand used in building. This has resulted in numerous quarries which are visible from elevated viewpoints. Malmstone and hearthstone in the Upper Greensand have also been quarried for building stone in East Hampshire. The Hythe Beds provide hard building stone in the form of ragstone or bargate stone which is extracted from numerous quarries particularly visible from the North Downs scarp. This stone is a distinctive feature of local buildings in Kent and significant in Surrey, particularly in rural areas.

Much of the eastern linear Greensand belt is heavily dominated by modern developments including substantial urban settlements, major road and rail networks and other forms of economic activity.

Land Cover

Away from the Gault Clay, the Wealden Greensand is generally noted for its cover of broadleaved and coniferous woodland within a network of pasture with hedgerows, arable land and heathland.

The diversity of soils is reflected in a similar range of woodlands. On the Gault clay there are semi-natural ancient woodlands which were formerly, traditionally managed woods. Oak standards and birch are prevalent on the lower Greensand while ash and hazel dominate the gault clays and upper Greensand with dogwood, elm, some small-leaved lime and sycamore, some oak and a diverse ground flora. Banks and ditches are frequent in these woods, together with occasional large ash stools, all evidence of the wood’s age. Where the soil becomes more acid, holly, hawthorn, bramble and bracken begin to be found.

The outcrops of the Folkestone Beds produce more acidic sandy soils and the woods are generally oak and birch, associated with former heaths. Other species such as Scots pine, sweet chestnut, holly, rowan, hawthorn, bilberry and elm are also present. In all woods, wetter areas have willow and, to a lesser extent, alder, with ash, hawthorn, oak, hazel, birch and nettles.

The character and content of hedges also, to some extent, reflects their soils. On the Gault clay, hedges tend to be species-rich: dense at the base, they occasionally, have a few oak trees distributed along their lengths. On more acidic soils hedges have fewer species and often consist of only blackthorn or hawthorn. These are dense and trimmed low, with occasional oak trees, but are sometimes gappy. Without management, these hedges have grown into lines of tall shrubs, often comprising belts of ash, sycamore, oak, hawthorn or hazel hedgerow trees. Few hedges and unstructured fields is the pattern discernible in the north-west of Sussex where small rough pastures are used for horse grazing.

Ancient semi-natural woodland on the Wealden Greensand survives mainly on river valley, floors and on steep slopes. Ancient woodland is scarce on the Greensand plateau itself. These woodlands on the steep slopes of the scarp in the west of the area, comprise the hangers landscape for which the Greensand is renowned. The wooded commons (charts) of Kent and Surrey are also known local landscape features and can be considered ancient woodland.

Up to the early 20th century the area was much more open with extensive heathland but new conifer plantations and scrub invasion on a wide scale have reduced the area of heath. Forestry plantations are a dominant land use within the Greensands, significantly contributing to the overall wooded character.

Traditional agricultural practices in the area include the fruit growing orchard belt where fields are separated with alder and poplar windbreaks. Recent conversion to arable farmland has reduced this area. Hops and chestnut coppices producing hop poles are also traditional of the area. Mixed farming, permanent pasture and arable farming is seen amongst the woodlands, commons and heaths. It is a zone of medium- and small-sized irregular fields and enclosed strip fields with a diminished hedgerow component.

The Changing Countryside

- Loss of heath; open heathland commons are compromised by encroaching birch, oak and pine scrub due to a decline in traditional management regimes which eventually obscures the characteristic open views from tops of hills.
- Past planting of conifers in ancient woodland has altered the character of these important features.

- The visual intrusion of mineral extraction operations has significantly affected certain parts of the Greensand – for example, sand extraction above Seale is very prominent when viewed from the Hog’s Back in the adjacent North Downs character area.
- Old landfill sites within former sand pits do not enhance the local landscape.
- Loss or neglect of traditional woodland coppice, fruit orchards and hedgerows.
- Localised damage from the 1987 storm.
- Potential landscape impacts arising from the development of the Channel Tunnel High Speed Rail Link and motorway widening schemes.
- Former commons and heaths associated with large military establishments have been to some extent protected from pressures often associated with public access and agricultural intensification. However, in other areas, military land use has resulted in significant landscape change.
- Fragmentation and degradation of designed parklands.
- General degradation of major river-floodplain landscapes.
- New roads and improvements often lead to the erosion of the enclosed and winding character of the local road network.

Shaping the future

- There are opportunities for the restoration of heathland by scrub and tree removal. Land, formerly, owned by the Ministry of Defence, may provide scope for increased conservation of heaths.
- The conservation of woodlands, fruit orchards, hop gardens and traditional coppice should be addressed.

- The sensitive design, layout and routes for major communications development is important within the character area.
- Many existing mineral extraction sites and landfill sites in former sand pits need assimilating into the landscape.
- The enhancement of hedgerows and other features needs consideration through appropriate agri-environmental land management schemes.
- Many historic and designed parklands are in need of restoration.

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Glossary

hanger: a wood on the side of a steep hill

shaws: strip of trees or bushes forming the border of a field

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF KENT - KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (2004)

LEEDS-LENHAM FARMLAND



This is generally an undulating rural landscape of narrow lanes of mixed farmland of medium sized arable fields and pastures and small copses developed on the well-drained sands and loams of the Folkestone Beds. It includes slivers of land to the north of Maidstone at Sandling, including Cuckoo Wood, and further east around Newnham Court Farm. Along the streamlines to the south through Vinter's Park and along the railway line the soft Folkestone Beds have been eroded away to expose the harder Hythe Beds below.

East of Bearsted this character area includes a narrow belt of mixed farmland as far east as Sandway. The landscape is distinguished from its neighbours to the south by a higher percentage of pasture and few if any orchards due to the poorer quality of the sandy soils. Traditionally cereals, potatoes and field vegetables would have been grown as well as extensive pasture.

The soils give rise to distinctive flora such as woodrush, broom, foxglove and creeping hair-grass in Pope's Wood. At Leeds Castle sessile oak is dominant on the acid, sandy soils with the pedunculate oak found on the wetter Gault. The farmlands at Leeds Castle exploit the generally good, loamy soils of the Hythe Beds with the poorer quality sandy soils being under woodland or forming the ancient deer park. The geological boundary runs roughly along the line of the Len.

Leeds Castle forms just one of many fine parklands that exploit the free-draining loams of the Folkestone Beds, where enhanced by marshy alluvial streams feeding the river Len.

Settlement consists of scattered farmsteads working the thin soils, although there is also a long tradition of extraction for the fine sands and several sand pits are found close to Charing. More recently, however, the rural and tranquil nature of the area has been shattered by the alignment of the M20 and Channel Tunnel Rail Link which cuts through the north of the character area. A single carriageway by-pass is also proposed for the villages of Leeds and Langley Heath which may affect the western end.

next >>

LEEDS-LENHAM FARMLAND

<p>PHOTOGRAPH</p>  <p>CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES Undulating farmland development on well-drained sandy loams. Small copses with heathy characteristics. Historic parklands. Mineral extraction. Transport corridor.</p>	<p>CONTEXT Regional: Greensand Belt</p> <p>Condition</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>good</td> <td>REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE & REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>moderate</td> <td>CREATE & REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE & CREATE</td> <td>CONSERVE & RESTORE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>poor</td> <td><u>CREATE</u></td> <td>RESTORE & CREATE</td> <td>RESTORE</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>low</td> <td>moderate</td> <td>high</td> </tr> </table> <p>Sensitivity</p>	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE	poor	<u>CREATE</u>	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE		low	moderate	high
good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE														
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE														
poor	<u>CREATE</u>	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE														
	low	moderate	high														
<p>LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS</p> <p>Condition</p> <p>The small scale landscape pattern, which has areas of dramatic local relief, is fragmented by the CTRL. Road and rail transport corridors and areas of mineral extraction produce many large scale visual detractors. The visual unity of the area is significantly interrupted. Networks of semi-natural habitats are also physically fragmented - the remaining pockets of woodland and mature trees are vulnerable. Heritage hedgerows are widespread, but many are unmanaged and appear redundant. Built form has a moderate positive impact on the landscape and includes some vernacular housing, but some hamlets are now isolated by the transport corridors. The condition of the area is very poor.</p>	<p>SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS</p> <p>Condition Very Poor.</p> <p>Pattern of elements: Incoherent. Detracting features: Many. Visual Unity: Significantly Interrupted. Cultural integrity: Poor. Ecological integrity: Weak. Functional Integrity: Very Weak.</p>																
<p>Sensitivity</p> <p>The inherent landscape characteristics are mainly historic, with more ancient overtones of woodland and highways. The effect of fringe development and physical fragmentation of the area has resulted in the loss of many of the distinguishing features, in particular highways and woodlands. The land form is apparent and views are intermittent. The sensitivity of the area is considered to be low.</p>	<p>Sensitivity Low.</p> <p>Distinctiveness: Characteristic. Continuity: Recent. Sense of Place: Weak. Landform: Apparent. Extent of tree cover: Intermittent. Visibility: Moderate.</p>																
<p>LANDSCAPE ACTIONS</p> <p>Create a coherent framework for transport corridors using small scale copses and parkland features. Create new settings for fragmented and isolated settlements so that they develop a new focus and identity, using small woodland and small scale land use with much enclosure by trees and hedgerows.</p>	<p>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS</p> <p>CREATE. Create a coherent framework for isolated hamlets Create a coherent framework for the transport corridor Create a network of semi-natural woodland and heathland habitats</p> <p style="text-align: right;">previous <<</p>																

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2012) - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

49. Leeds Castle Parklands



- KEY CHARACTERISTICS**
- Artificial landform as part of golf course at Leeds Castle
 - Historic Leeds Castle and surrounding parkland
 - Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland
 - Mature parkland trees including oak, horse chestnut and pine
 - River Len to the south
 - Severance caused by the M20, HS1 and A20

Location
49.1 Leeds Castle Parklands are situated to the east of Maidstone, and encompass a section of the Len Valley. The major infrastructure corridor comprising the M20 and HS1 lies to the north, but it is the transition between loam and clay soils which broadly defines this boundary. The western boundary is formed by the eastern extent of Maidstone's urban area, and the eastern boundary is defined by the edge of Harrietsham.



49. Leeds Castle Parklands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

49.2 Tree cover is scattered across the landscape, in the form of small blocks of mixed woodland, mitigation planting along transport corridors and ribbons of vegetation along the River Len to the south and other minor water courses. More significant woodland cover is concentrated around Leeds Castle and its surrounding grounds. Isolated oak, ash and pine trees feature in open grassland and define the route along Broomfield Road, and blocks of mixed woodland give a mature parkland character to the landscape. A pocket of lowland dry acid grassland occurs to the north west of Leeds Castle grounds.

49.3 To the south, the narrow and subtle River Len is less well defined than the deeper valley landscape which contains the River Medway to the west of Maidstone. Sections of the River Len are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Much of the valley comprises a narrow floodplain covered in dense alder carr with willow, elder, hazel and ash along the drier perimeter. A small amount of woodland is situated on the slopes above the floodplain on the northern side, where oak standards, hazel, alder and chestnut coppice form the canopy above bramble, bluebell, wood anemone and red campion. The river corridor provides a wildlife habitat, and is especially rich in birdlife. Meadows and ancient woodland between the A20 and the M20 are also designated as a Local Wildlife Site, which include a disused sand quarry with an exposed sand cliff that is used by a colony of sand martins.

49.4 The field pattern is very irregular because the landscape comprises a significant amount of open parkland, little arable land and is severed by major infrastructure routes. However the grounds at Leeds Castle are

notably open in comparison with other areas, such as the smaller field pattern to the west where the land has been subdivided into private parcels around the periphery of Maidstone. Although tree cover provides a sense of enclosure and restricts views, the major infrastructure corridor of the M20, HS1 and the A20 are clearly audible from the surrounding landscape and reduce the sense of remoteness. Where minor routes pass over or under the M20 and HS1, the size and dominance of the infrastructure becomes most apparent.

49.5 Built development is sparsely scattered along the A20 and adjoining roads and to the east near Harrietsham. A notable amount of commercial development is situated along the A20, with a large hotel, caravan park, garden centre and car cleaning facilities. North of the M20, Eyhorne Street comprises a particularly distinctive settlement with exceptionally strong local vernacular, which is recognised as a Conservation Area. Timber framed houses, cottages of red and grey chequered brick, ragstone and weatherboarding line the southern traditional section of Eyhorne Street. To the south the grand, moated Leeds Castle is recorded on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Set in 500 acres of parkland, some of which is now used as a golf course, the grade I listed ragstone castle was built in 1119 on the site of a Saxon Manor by Robert de Crevecoeur for one of William the Conqueror's Lords. In later years, Leeds Castle was held by numerous Medieval queens and in Tudor times, Henry VIII visited frequently. From approximately the 16th century it has been in private ownership, and has been used as a garrison, prison and has also been home to several affluent families.

49. Leeds Castle Parklands

Geology, soils and topography

49.6 The solid geology predominantly comprises Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds. Within the Len Valley to the south, the solid geology comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds and Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay forms the base of the river. There are minor drifts of head and Fourth Terrace River Gravel. Soils are mostly well drained loams over sandstone, although heavier seasonally wet deep clay and fringes of loam over limestone are found to the south around the River Len.

The topography is undulating, and generally rises northwards away from the Len Valley.

Views

49.7 Views are generally restricted by intervening vegetation throughout this landscape, although there are some longer views across the open parkland landscape surrounding Leeds Castle. Wider panoramic views of the North Downs are available from higher vantage points, such as along Old Mill Lane.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

49.8 The major infrastructure routes of HS1, the M20 and A20 cause a significant degree of fragmentation to this landscape, and create an incoherent pattern of elements. Despite these routes being reasonably well integrated into the landscape in visual terms, the audibility of traffic degrades the remote and rural character. In addition to infrastructure, there are many other visual detractors including caravan parks, equestrian grazing and associated facilities, and numerous commercial developments along the A20. The ecological integrity is strong. Woodland and other native vegetation is scattered across the landscape, particularly around Leeds Castle and its golf course, and isolated mature trees and vegetation belts along roads provide a reasonable habitat network. There is limited arable land, and although major infrastructure routes sever connectivity, many parts of the landscape are recognised for their ecological diversity. The cultural integrity is variable. Tree cover is reasonably extensive and is well managed and varied in age structure, with newer planting across the golf course. Traditional field boundaries comprising woodland blocks and tree belts, are generally in good condition, although infrastructure routes have caused significant severance to the original field pattern. The built environment is also generally in good condition and there are many examples of local vernacular, which brings an element of consistency to the landscape.

Sensitivity

49.9 Infrastructure routes, recent development and the recent golf course landscape slightly weaken local distinctiveness and fragment the continuity. However overall, Leeds Castle and the surrounding parkland landscape, with frequent isolated mature trees, are very distinctive and create a very strong sense of place. There is a regularity in vernacular styles and materials throughout many of the traditional buildings, which provides continuity across much of the built environment. Visibility is moderate, with much screening provided by intervening vegetation.



49. Leeds Castle Parklands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS			
Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Many	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Significantly Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

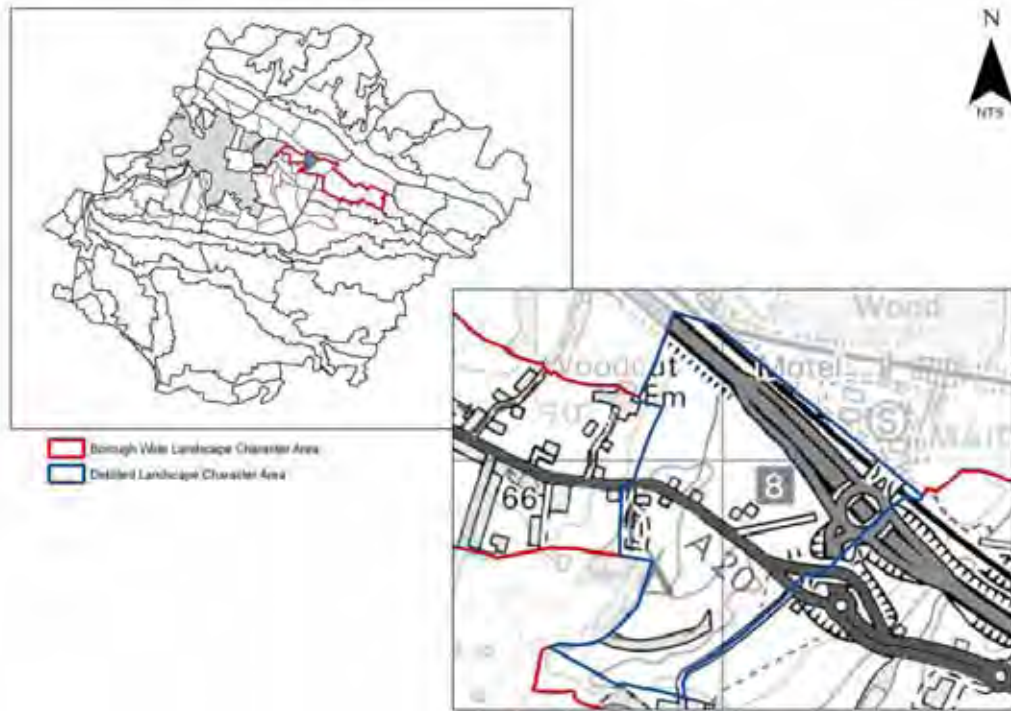
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND RESTORE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the traditional parkland character of the landscape
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve and appropriately manage the pocket of lowland dry acid grassland to the northwest. Refer to Maidstone’s local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009 – 2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Conserve and restore tree cover, which helps to screen views of major infrastructure routes
- Ensure continuity of mature isolated trees through planting new stock
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where they have been removed
- Resist field segregation, avoiding fenceline boundaries



49-2. White Heath Farmlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Major infrastructure
- Vegetation belts along the head of the Len valley
- Urban influences including car dealership
- Modern development

Location

49.19 White Heath Farmlands are situated to the east of Maidstone. This area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Old Mill Road lies to the east and the M20/HS1 corridor borders the area to the north. Field boundaries border the area to the south and west, enclosing the large parcels of arable land.



49-2. White Heath Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

49.20 Fields are large and are used for a mixture of arable and pasture land. There is little woodland vegetation throughout the area, although significant swathes of vegetation line the drains which form the head of the Len Valley and sections of gappy hedgerow and vegetation belts remain in places. To the north the landscape is heavily influenced by the M20/HS1 corridor, and traffic is both visible and audible. The busy A20, Ashford Road, also dissects the area in an east west direction, increasing the impact of major infrastructure and fragmenting the landscape. There is little development within the landscape, although a few modern properties and a car dealership are situated along the A20 which give a slightly sub urban character.

Geology, soils and topography

49.21 The geology of the area is largely Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds with bands of Gault Clay located north of the M20 motorway and Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds underlying the tree-lined drainage channels in the south. There is no drift geology in the area. The soils are predominantly loam over sandstone with deep clay soils found in the north. The

landform is flat to gently undulating towards the head of the Len Valley. Artificial undulations line the transport corridor of the M20 and HS1.

Views

49.22 Views within the area are relatively open across the farmland, with the major infrastructure standing out. Views out of the area are limited, with the significant woodland block of Snarkhurst Wood to the north and dense vegetation along the River Len to the south. There are open views across slightly larger arable fields to the east, and glimpses of housing along Caring Lane to the east across subdivided fields and paddocks. There are wide views of the North Downs to the north.

Urban edge influence

49.23 The area is much influenced by the urban features, especially heavy road and rail infrastructure. The urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area, although recent development along the A20 gives a slightly sub urban character.

49-2. White Heath Farmlands

BIODIVERSITY

49.24 This area comprises improved and arable farmland with broadleaved trees occurring around the periphery of fields and properties. To the south there is a block of ancient woodland and a band of mature broad leaved trees. The arable and improved grassland areas may support breeding birds whilst field margins may potentially support species of reptile including slow worm and common lizard. The ancient woodland and mature trees may potentially provide suitable habitat for badger and hazel dormouse, as well as roosting, commuting or foraging bats and nesting birds. The lines of trees and hedgerow present throughout the site link with adjacent rural plots but do not directly connect to Maidstone town centre. Therefore the features of this area are primarily important in providing wildlife corridors in the countryside surrounding Maidstone.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

49.25 Fragmentation is caused by the heavy transport infrastructure. There are habitat opportunities to the south at the head of the Len Valley, although hedgerow boundaries have been removed in part. Although some of the woodland is designated as ancient woodland, there are few other heritage features.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment

Poor

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Poor
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity

49.26 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. Whilst the transport corridors and service area provide little in the way of local distinctiveness, the dense vegetation belts along the drains which form the head of the Len Valley form localised distinctive features.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

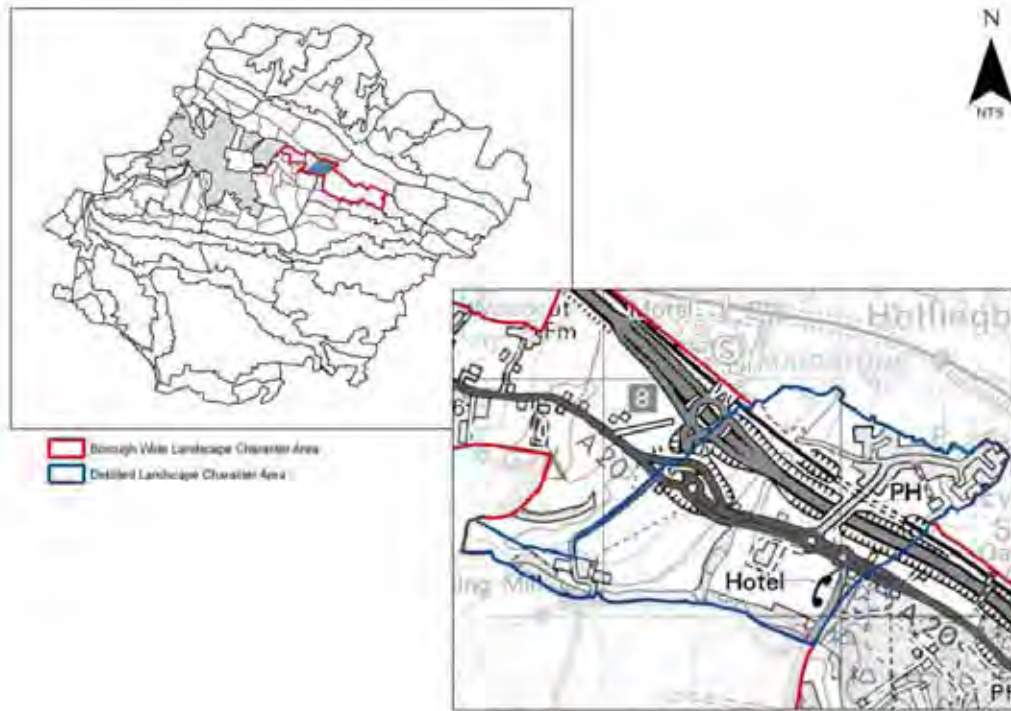
GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Improve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB through avoiding further urban edge influences and expansion of motorway services to the north of the M20
- Improve ecological connectivity between existing woodland blocks
- Restore, improve and appropriately manage ancient woodland and dense vegetation belts along drains

49-3. Ashbank Fields



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open views across arable fields and pasture
- Streams and ditches
- Lines of riparian woodland along streams
- Field boundaries marked by contours and watercourses

Location
49.27 This area lies to the east of Maidstone with HS1 at the northern boundary and the River Len to the south. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Leeds Castle land forms the eastern boundary and Old Mill Road defines the western boundary.



49-3. Ashbank Fields



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

49.28 This small area is dominated by the Rail Link and the M20 to the north and by the A20, with its associated infrastructure, which runs through the centre. Between the two roads is pasture, surrounded by a continuous belt of trees with a block of woodland through the centre. The southern section comprises a large arable field to the west and a hotel with extensive grounds to the east. There are a few scattered farmsteads and houses. A watercourse with small linear woodland crosses the centre from north to south.

49.29 Woodlands were formerly strong features of this area, marking the lines of the streams - some lines of riparian woodland are still evident on these lines. Internal field boundaries and enclosure are not characteristic of the low-lying areas: the field divisions directly relating to the contours and watercourses. Enclosure pattern is open and there is little seasonal variation.

Geology, soils and topography

49.30 The geology of the area is entirely Lower Greensand which is predominantly distributed as Folkestone Beds with small bands of Sandgate Beds and Hythe Beds occurring along the southern boundary. In

addition, there are three types of drift geology: a pocket of head on the site of the hotel, a central strip of alluvium underlying the watercourses, and two areas of Fourth Terrace River Gravel on the easterly side of the area. A loam soil type is found throughout the area. Topography is associated with a dished and rolling landform with watercourses at the base of the contours

Views

49.31 Views to the North Downs are very close but are interrupted by the transport corridor. Within the area itself, views are relatively open and uncluttered across arable fields and pasture, with the line of the streams or ditches marked weakly by landform and occasionally by vegetation.

49.32 There is high visibility across the area - this is an open rolling landscape in which riparian and ancient woodland has been largely cleared.

Urban edge influence

49.33 Infrastructure has a significant impact on the Kent Downs AONB, and on the wider context of the Len Valley. The restoration of this rural landscape is a priority.

49-3. Ashbank Fields

BIODIVERSITY

49.34 The site consists of improved grassland and arable farmland. There are some scrub areas and bands of broadleaved trees around the periphery of fields and along the M20 to the north. The River Len flows through the area with mature broadleaved trees growing along the banks. To the east of the river there is a leisure complex surrounded by amenity grassland. The rough grassland bordering the fields has the potential to support protected reptiles, such as the grass snake, slow-worm and viviparous lizard. The lines of mature trees provide potential habitat for nesting birds and commuting corridors for mammals such as bat as well as various reptile species. The riverside aquatic habitat has the potential to support protected species which may include otter and watervole. The field boundaries with associated tree and scrub vegetation may provide corridors for wildlife within the wider countryside but do not directly connect to the town centre or habitat areas designated as valuable.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

49.35 This is a coherent landscape, although heavy infrastructure provides many visual detractors. The water courses and small areas of woodland provide habitats for wildlife, but these are weak clusters and the remaining area is intensively farmed arable land.

Condition Assessment

Very Poor

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Many
Visual Unity:	Interrupted
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity

49.36 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. There are many recent features, although part of the woodland is ancient and Hollingbourne – Eythorne Street is designated as a Conservation Area.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - RESTORE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Restore and improve the rural setting to the Kent Downs AONB north of the M20 by avoiding expansion of development
- Improve the integration of infrastructure through native planting where practicable
- Conserve traditional buildings and the rural setting of Hollingbourne – Eythorne Street Conservation Area

KENT DOWNS AONB LANDSCAPE DESIGN HANDBOOK

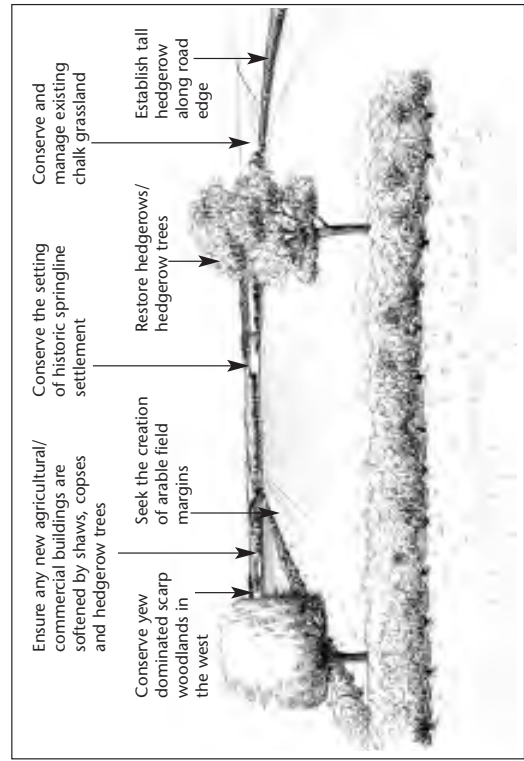
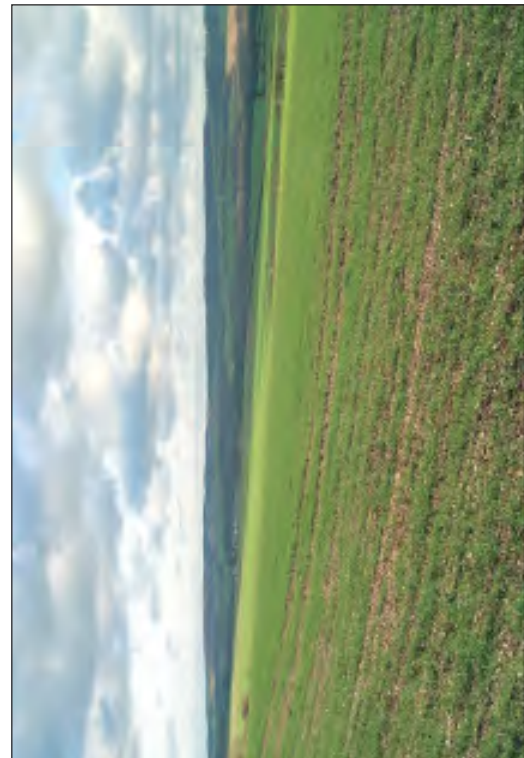
Hollingbourne Vale • Boxley to Westwell

Key Characteristics

- Yew dominated scarp woodlands in the west, open cultivated fields on the scarp in the east, with many hedgerow trees.
- Extensive views from the scarp.
- Large arable scarp foot fields.
- Some mixed farmland.
- Predominantly grassland on scarp.
- Thick hedges along Pilgrim's Way.
- Historic springline villages.
- Scarp crossed by considerable number of roads and footpaths (some, former drove-ways).

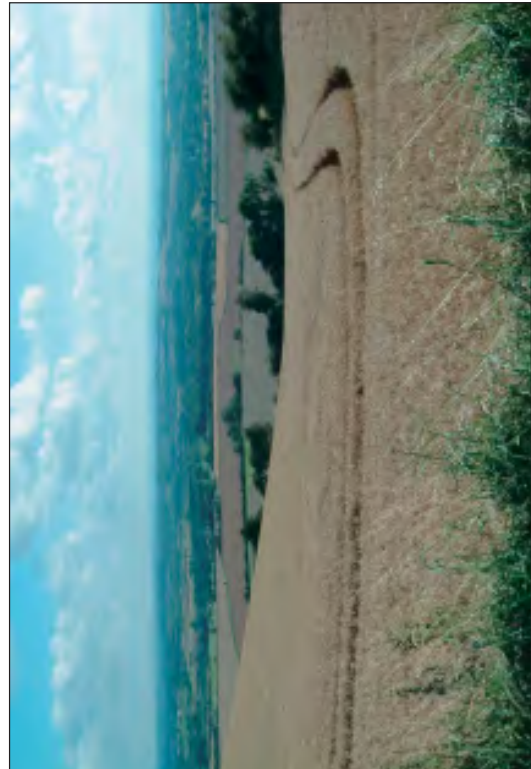
Overall Landscape Character Objectives

- To restore a strong hedgerow network on the scarp foot based on remaining field boundaries, and to return cultivated areas of the scarp to species rich chalk grassland.
- Conserve, create and manage a good hedgerow network, including patches along Pilgrim's Way.
- To reduce the impact of the existing road and railway network on the landscape.



**Boxley to Westwell
 Design Guidelines**

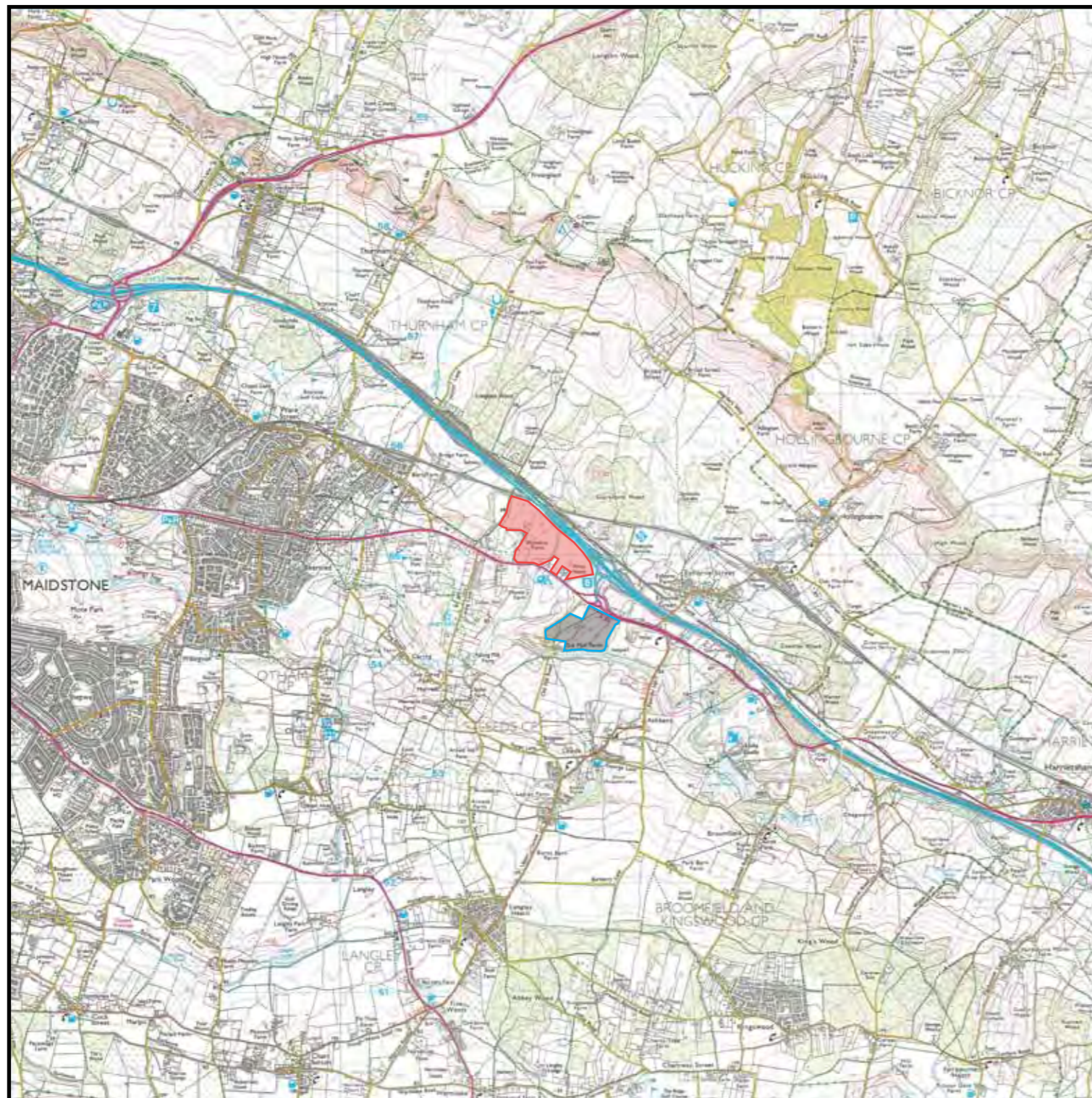
- Conserve and manage existing wooded areas of the scarp, including yew dominated scarp woodlands in the west.
- Conserve and manage existing species rich chalk grassland and encourage restoration of arable scarp slopes to chalk grassland.
- Conserve, manage and restore scarp shaws and hedgerows as well as beech avenues along roads where they are a distinctive local feature.
- Encourage sensitive management of arable and pasture farmland in the vale.
- Create new corridors of streamside vegetation.
- Conserve the setting of historic springline settlements and ensure any new development is integrated with hedgerow/hedgerow tree and copse planting.
- Soften the visual impact of existing poor quality agricultural buildings and housing development.
- Restore thick well managed hedgerows to highways.
- Seek the use of sympathetic local materials – red brick, tile hanging, weatherboarding, flint and ragstone.
- Seek the creation of arable field margins.





Landscape character area design guidance

12. TECHNICAL APPENDIX 2: BASELINE MAPPING

Figure 1 – Study Area - OS map



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary





0 200 400 600 800 1000
Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 2 – Study Area - Aerial Photograph



LEGEND

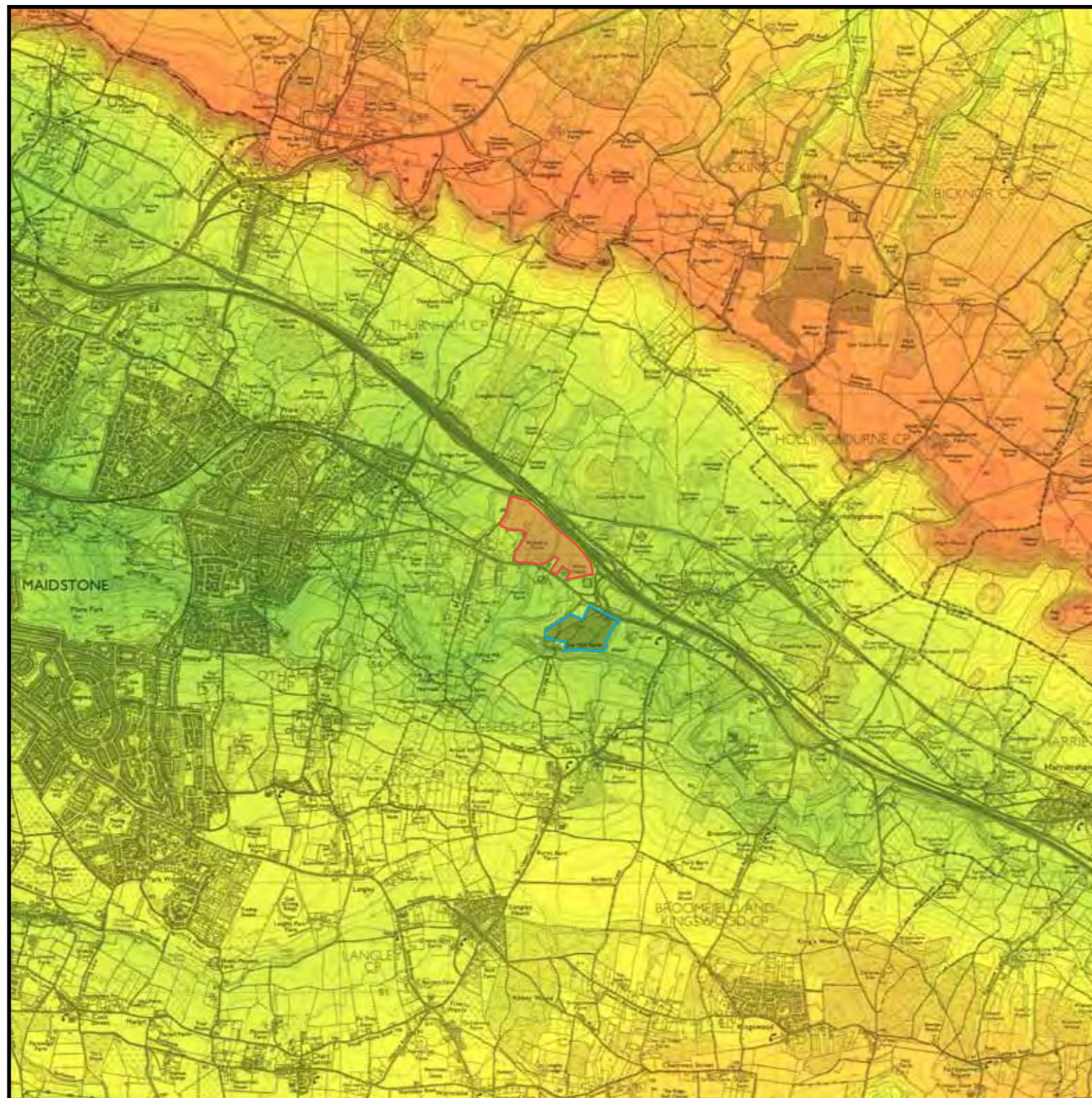
-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary



0 200 400 600 800 1000
Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 3 – Topography



LEGEND



Site 1 Boundary



Site 2 Boundary

■	-13.50 - -4.07
■	-5.36 - 12.70
■	12.70 - 20.04
■	20.04 - 27.37
■	27.37 - 35.76
■	35.76 - 43.09
■	43.09 - 50.43
■	50.43 - 58.82
■	58.82 - 67.20
■	67.20 - 75.58
■	75.58 - 83.97
■	83.97 - 92.35
■	92.35 - 100.74
■	100.74 - 109.12
■	109.12 - 117.51
■	117.51 - 125.89
■	125.89 - 134.27
■	134.27 - 142.66
■	142.66 - 151.04
■	151.04 - 159.43
■	159.43 - 167.81
■	167.81 - 176.20
■	176.20 - 184.58
■	184.58 - 192.97
■	192.97 - 201.35
■	201.35 - 209.73
■	209.73 - 217.07
■	217.07 - 224.41
■	224.41 - 231.74
■	231.74 - 240.13
■	240.13 - 254.80
■	Out of Range

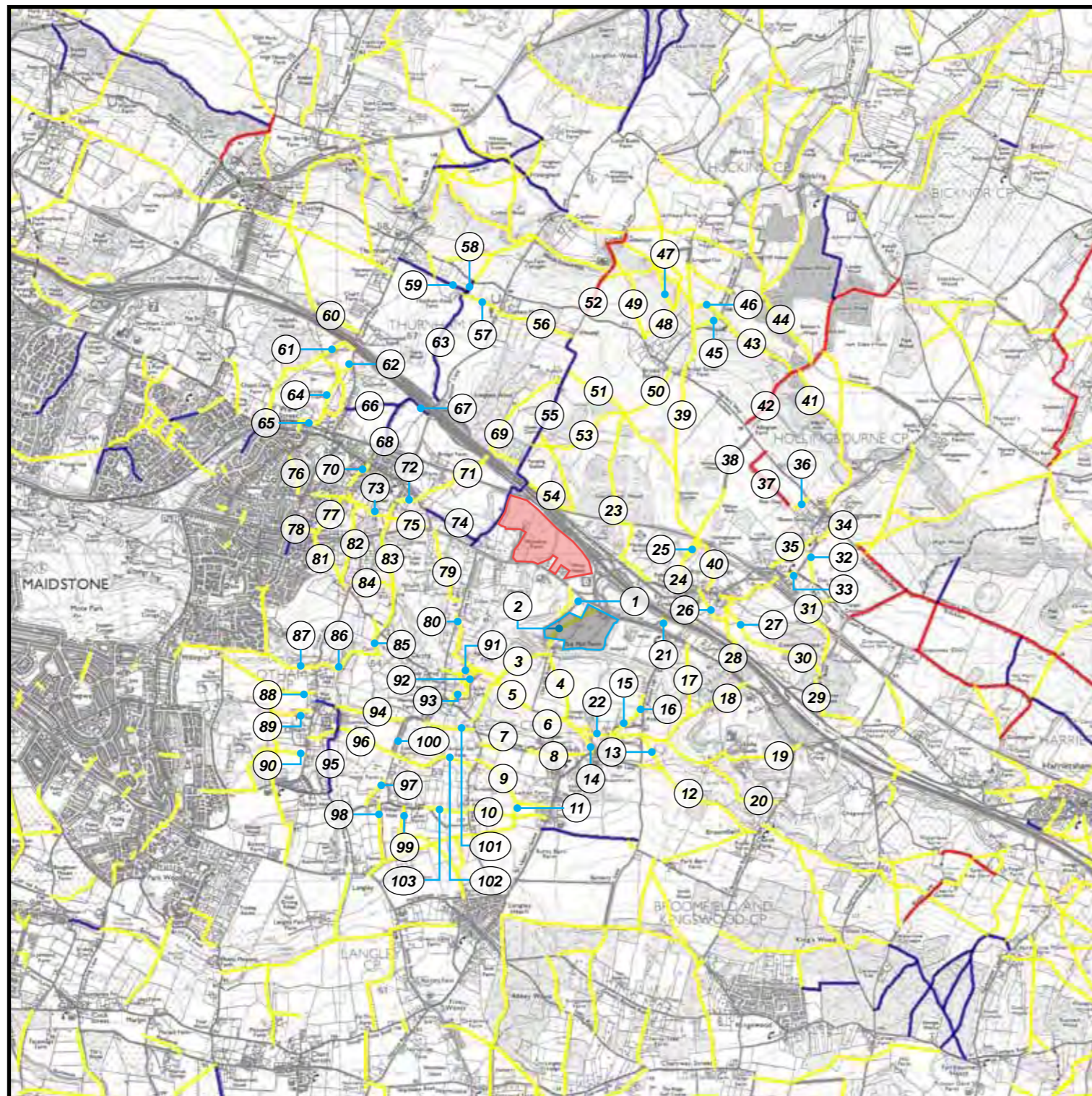
Ordnance Survey (Colour)









0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 4 – Public Rights of Way



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Public Footpath
-  Public Bridleway
-  Byway Open to All Traffic
-  Other - Restricted Byway

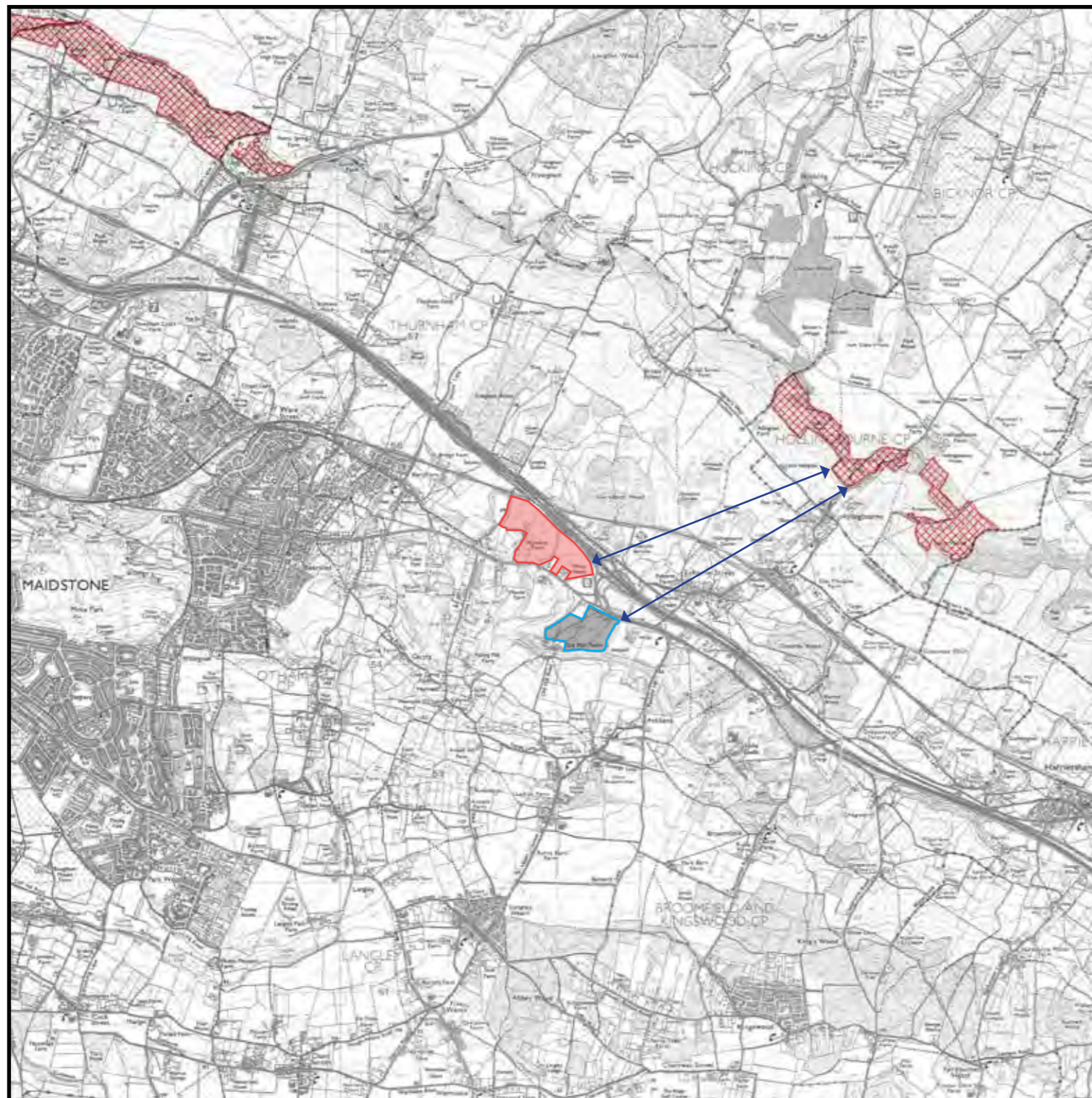
1	KH180	36	KH188	71	KH131
2	KH181	37	KH189	72	KH127
3	KH253	38	KH183A	73	KM75
4	KH243	39	KH154	74	KH35
5	KH140	40	KH185	75	KH136
6	KH236	41	KH142A	76	KM73
7	KH266	42	KH164	77	KM77
8	KH244	43	KH640	78	KM76
9	KH245	44	KH142	79	KH139
10	KH246	45	KH192	80	KH140
11	KH247	46	KH639	81	KM77A
12	KH237	47	KH191	82	KM85
13	KH238	48	KH147	83	KH138
14	KH262	49	KH147A	84	KM84
15	KH242	50	KH132A	85	KH257
16	KH241	51	KH186	86	KM96
17	KH240	52	KH167	87	KM86
18	KH239	53	KH132	88	KM132
19	KH236A	54	KH141	89	KM90
20	KH308	55	KH134	90	KM87
21	KH197	56	KH125	91	KH256
22	KH236	57	KH124	92	KH254
23	KH132A	58	KH126	93	KH255
24	KH183	59	KH123	94	KM97
25	KH184	60	KH71	95	KM95
26	KH199	61	KH116	96	KM92
27	KH200	62	KH115A	97	KH361
28	KH198	63	KH123	98	KH362
29	KH201	64	KH115	99	KH363
30	KH200	65	KH129	100	KH264
31	KH202	66	KM81	101	KH252
32	KH211	67	KM123A	102	KH251
33	KH654	68	KM82		
34	KH210	69	KH130		
35	KH187	70	KM83		






0 200 400 600 800 1000
Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 5 – Protected & Designated Landscapes



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI

'Hollingbourne Downs' SSSI. Located approximately 2.36 km from Site 1.
 'Hollingbourne Downs' SSSI. Located approximately 2.4 km from Site 2.



0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3


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Figure 6 – Protected & Designated Landscapes



LEGEND

 Site 1 Boundary

 Site 2 Boundary

 Special Area of Conservation - SAC

'North Downs Woodlands' SAC. Located approximately 3.6 km from Site 1

'North Downs Woodlands' SAC. Located approximately 5.1 km from Site 2






0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 7 – Protected & Designated Landscapes



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
 -  Site 2 Boundary
 -  Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB
- 'Kent Downs' AONB. Located approximately 0.1 km from Site 1
 'Kent Downs' AONB. Located approximately 0.8 km from Site 2






0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 8 – Protected & Designated Landscapes



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Local Nature Reserve - LNR

'Vinters Valley Park' LNR. Located approximately 3.7 km from Site 1

'Vinters Valley Park' LNR. Located approximately 4.3 km from Site 2






0 200 400 600 800 1000
Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 9 – Protected & Designated Landscapes



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Local Wildlife Site - LWS

'Sharkhurst Wood' LWS. Located approximately 0.1 km from Site 1

'River Len Millpond and Carr' LWS. Contiguous with boundary of Site 2






0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 10 – Protected & Designated Landscapes



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Ancient Woodland

'Snarkhurst Wood' AW. Located approximately 0.1 km from Site 1
 'Len Valley' AW. Adjacent to south-western corner of Site 2






0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 11 – Historic Landscape Features



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Conservation Area

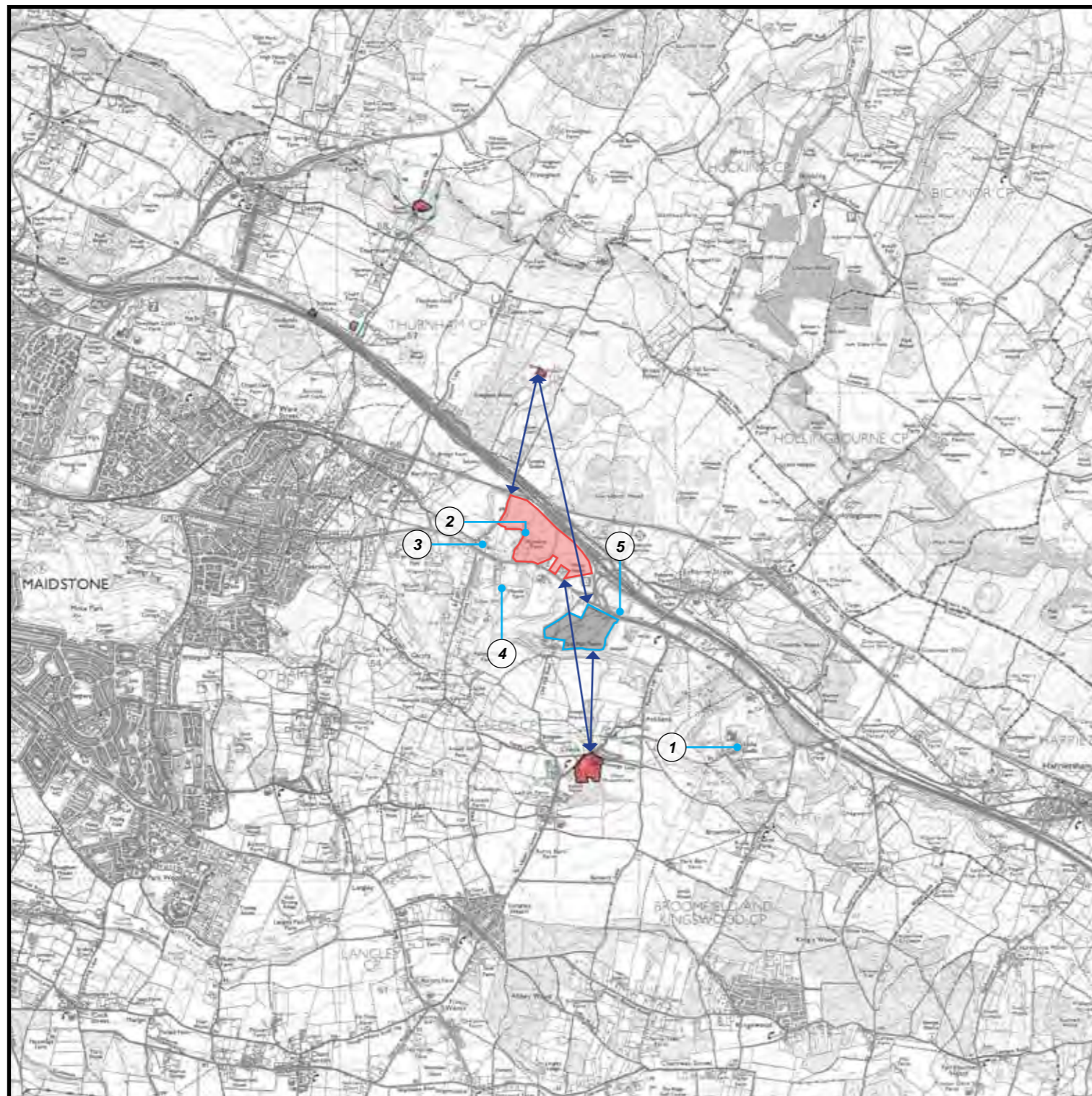
'Hollingbourne - Eyhorne Street' CA. Located approximately 0.75km from Site 1
 'Hollingbourne - Eyhorne Street' CA. Located approximately 0.6km from Site 2






0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 12 – Historic Landscape Features



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Scheduled Ancient Monuments

'Medieval Moated Site, Ripple Manor' SAM. Located approximately 1.1 km from Site 1
 'Medieval Moated Site, Ripple Manor' SAM. Located approximately 2.1 km from Site 2
 Leeds Priory. Located approximately 1.6 km from Site 1
 Leeds Priory. Located approximately 1 km from Site 2

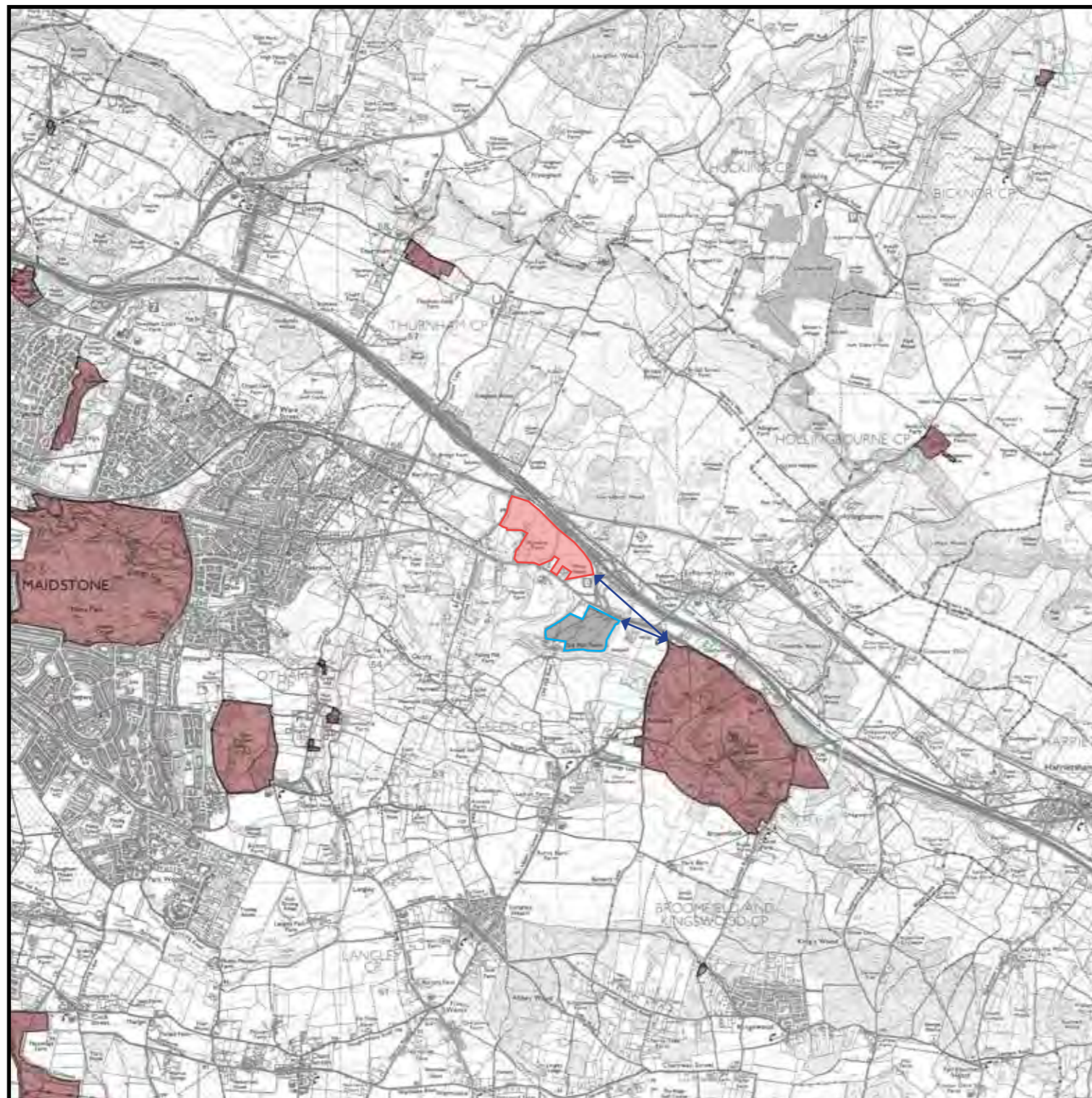
-  Listed Buildings
-  Leeds Castle. Grade 1 Listed Building. Located approximately 2.1 km from Site 1
 Located approximately 1.5 km from Site 2
-  Woodcut Farm House. Grade 2 Listed Building
-  Chrismill Manor. Grade 2 Listed Building
-  Mantels Farmhouse. Grade 2 Listed Building
-  Old England Cottage. Grade 2 Listed Building






0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 13 – Historic Landscape Features



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Historic Parks & Gardens

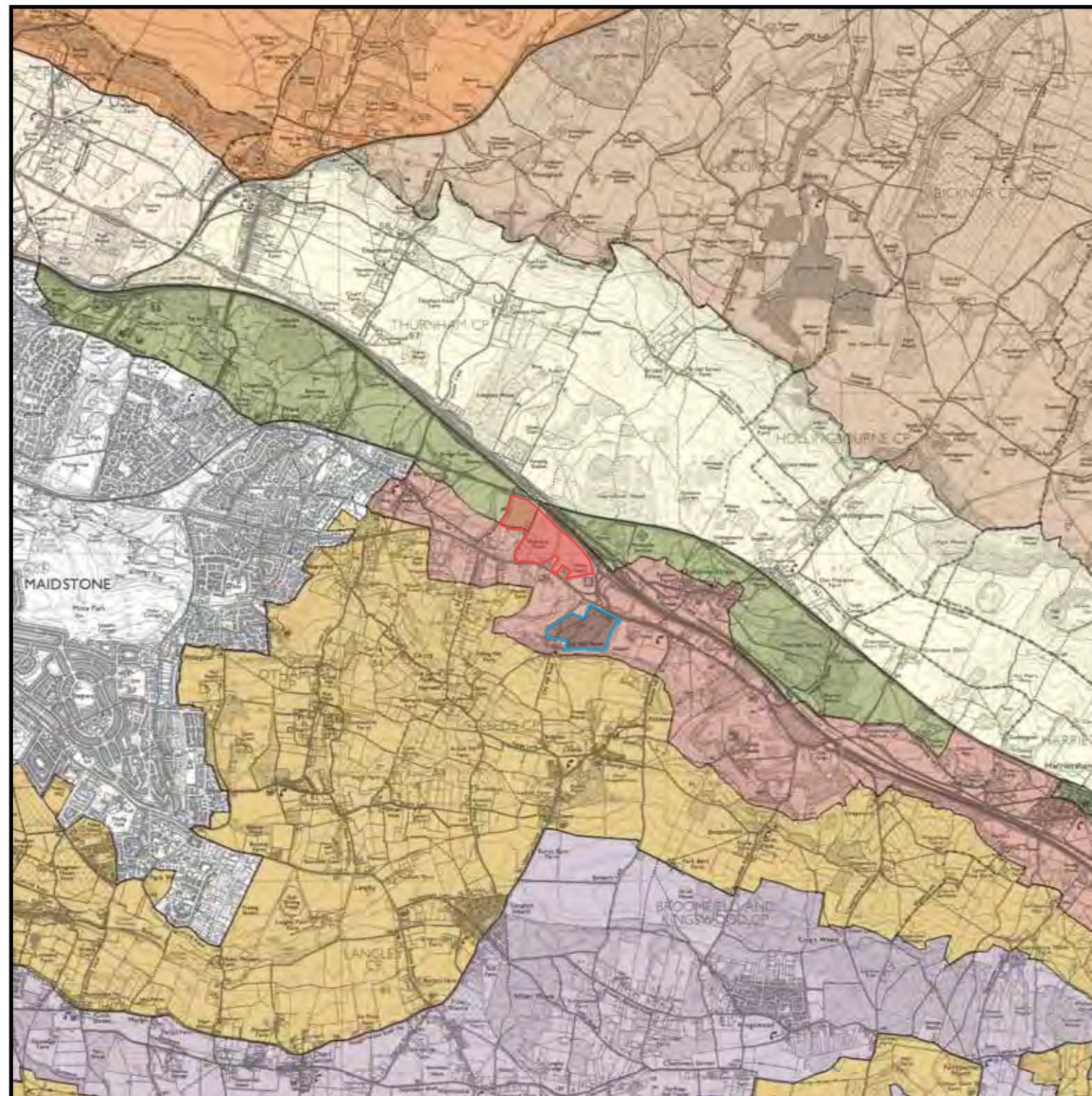
'Leeds Castle' HP&G. Located approximately 0.8 km from Site 1
 'Leeds Castle' HP&G. Located approximately 0.5 km from Site 2



0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 14 – Landscape Character Assessment (Kent)



LEGEND

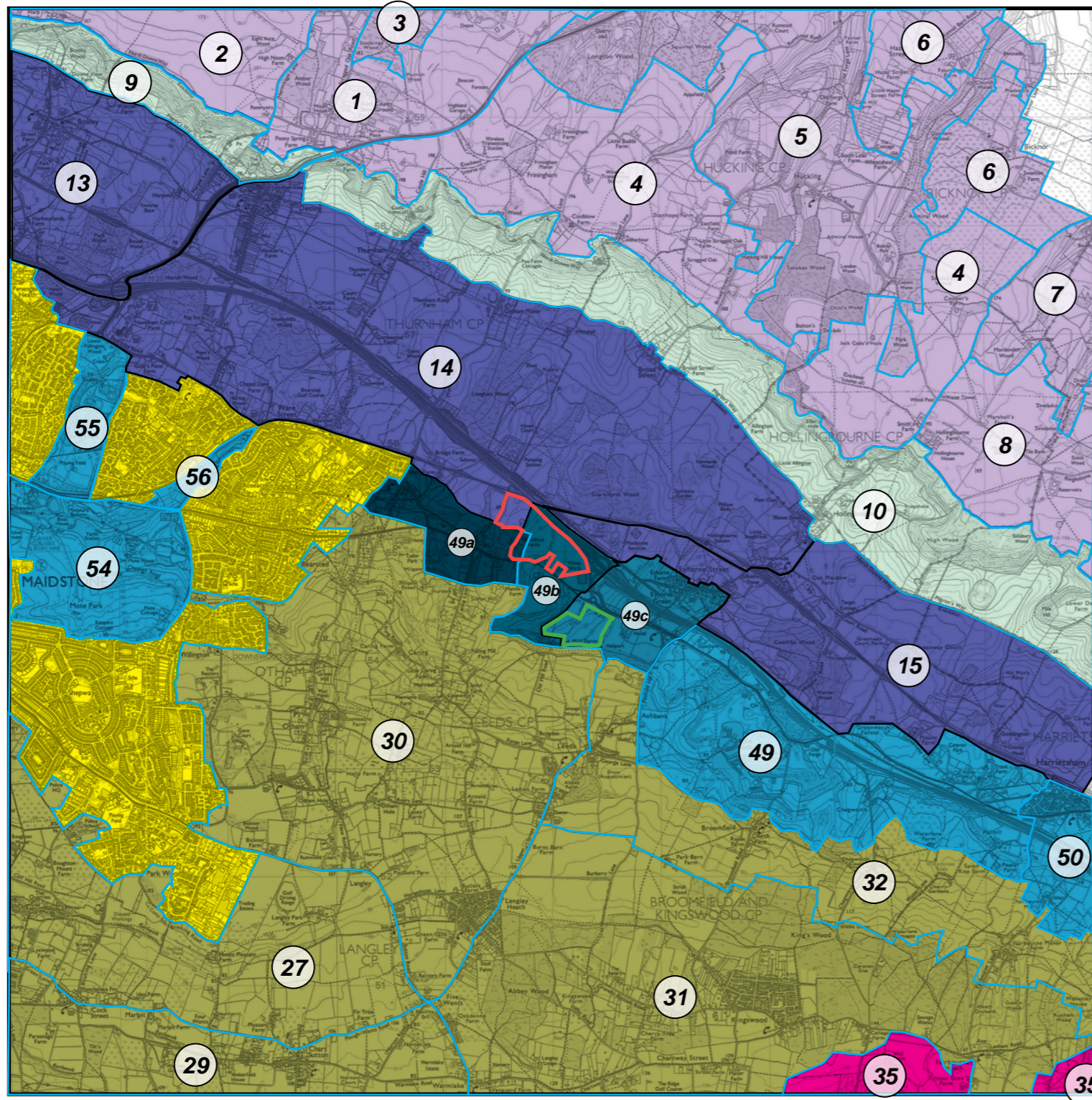
-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs
-  Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs
-  Hollingbourne Vale
-  Boxley Vale: Medway
-  Hollingbourne Vale West
-  Leeds-Lenham Farmlands
-  Greensand Fruit Belt - Maidstone
-  Coxheath Plateau Farmlands
-  Greensand Ridge - Maidstone



0 200 400 600 800 1000
 Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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Figure 15 – Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Dry Valleys & Downs
-  Chalk Scarp Landscape
-  Gaut Clay Vale
-  Greensand Orchards & Mixed Farmland
-  Greensand Ridge
-  Urban Area
-  Valleys
-  Valleys
-  Valleys
-  Valleys

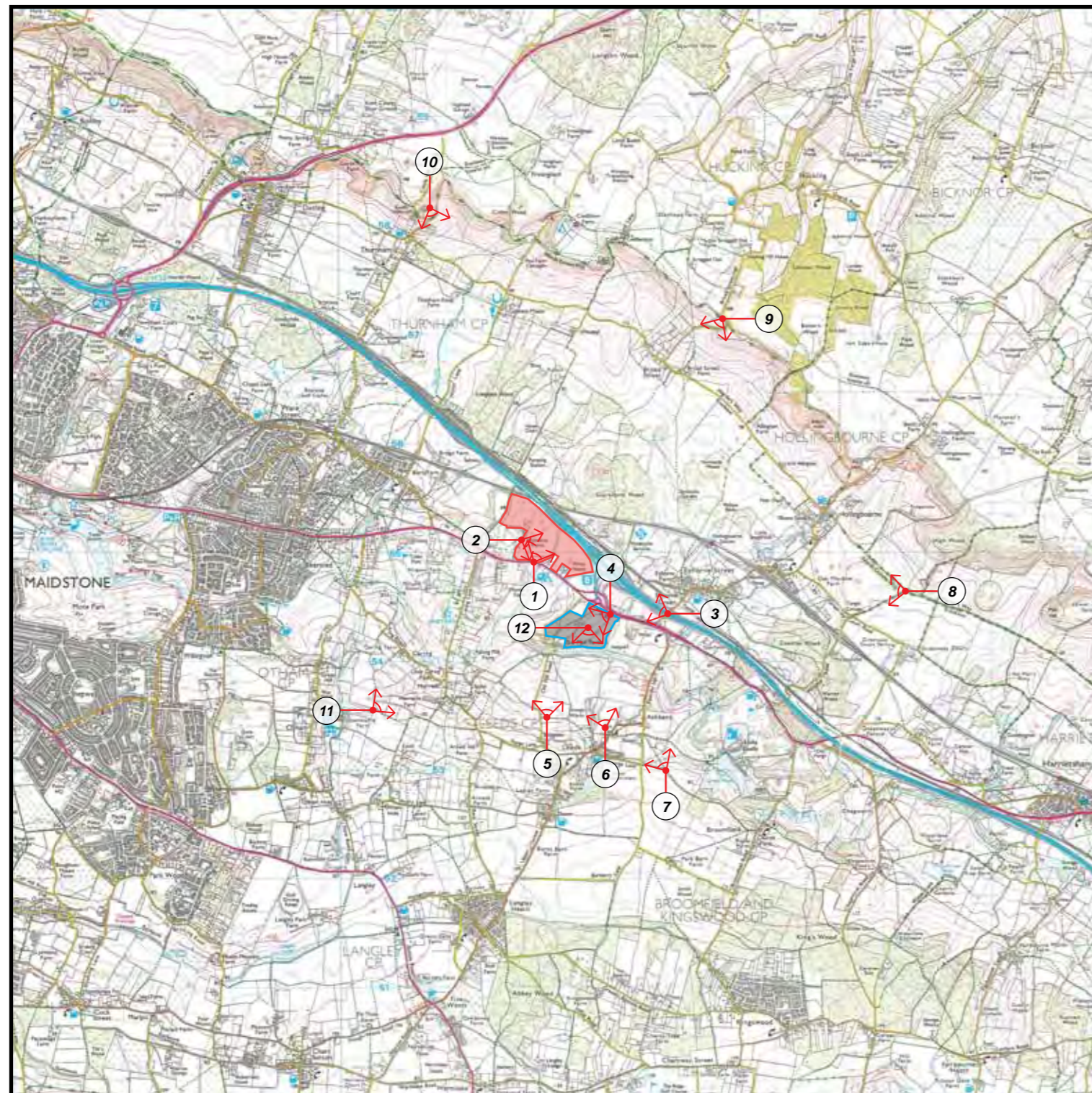
- 1 Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs
- 2 Westfield Sole Downs
- 3 Bredhurst Dry Valleys
- 4 Friningham Downs
- 5 Hucking Dry Valleys
- 6 Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards
- 7 Wormshill, Frinstead and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys
- 8 Ringlestone Downs
- 9 Boxley Scarp
- 10 Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp
- 13 Boxley Vale
- 14 Thurnham Vale
- 15 Eyhorne Vale
- 27 Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt
- 29 Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau
- 30 Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands
- 31 Kingswood Plateau
- 32 Broomfield Undulating Farmlands
- 35 Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge
- 49 Leeds Castle Parklands
- 49a Caring Pastures
- 49b White Heath Farmlands
- 49c Ashbank Fields
- 50 Harrietsham Vale
- 54 Mote Park
- 55 Vinters Park
- 56 Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow)






0 200 400 600 800 1000
Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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13. TECHNICAL APPENDIX 3: VIEWPOINTS: LOCATION MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS



LEGEND

-  Site 1 Boundary
-  Site 2 Boundary
-  Viewpoint Location



0 200 400 600 800 1000
Scale 1:50000 @ A3

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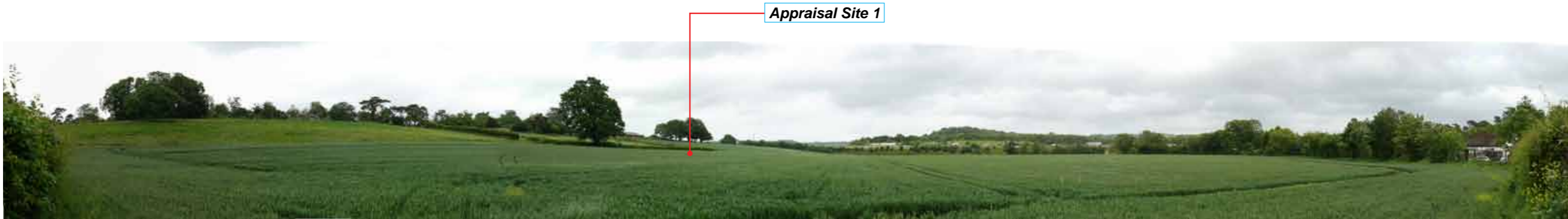


PHOTO 1a

VIEWPOINT 1A
 LOCATION: VIEW OF APPRAISAL SITE 1 LOOKING NORTH FROM ENTRANCE GATE LOCATED ON THE ADJACENT ASHFORD ROAD (A20).
 DESCRIPTION: CONTINUOUS OPEN VIEW OF SITE FRAMED BY HEDGEROWS AND TREES. SEMI-RURAL SETTING WITH FAST MOVING TRAFFIC ALONG THE A20, AND TRAFFIC NOISE FROM THE M20 MOTORWAY.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
 TIME: 11.35
 ELEVATION: 53M
 BEARING: 0°
 DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 0M
 N 051.26409
 E 000.60600



PHOTO 1b

VIEWPOINT 1B
 LOCATION: VIEW OF APPRAISAL SITE 1 LOOKING NORTH FROM ASHFORD ROAD (A20).
 DESCRIPTION: CONTINUOUS OPEN VIEW OF SITE FRAMED BY HEDGEROWS AND TREES. SEMI-RURAL SETTING, WITH FAST MOVING TRAFFIC ALONG THE A20 AND TRAFFIC NOISE FROM THE M20 MOTORWAY.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
 TIME: 11.41
 ELEVATION: 54M
 BEARING: 0°
 DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 21M
 N 051.26384
 E 000.60601

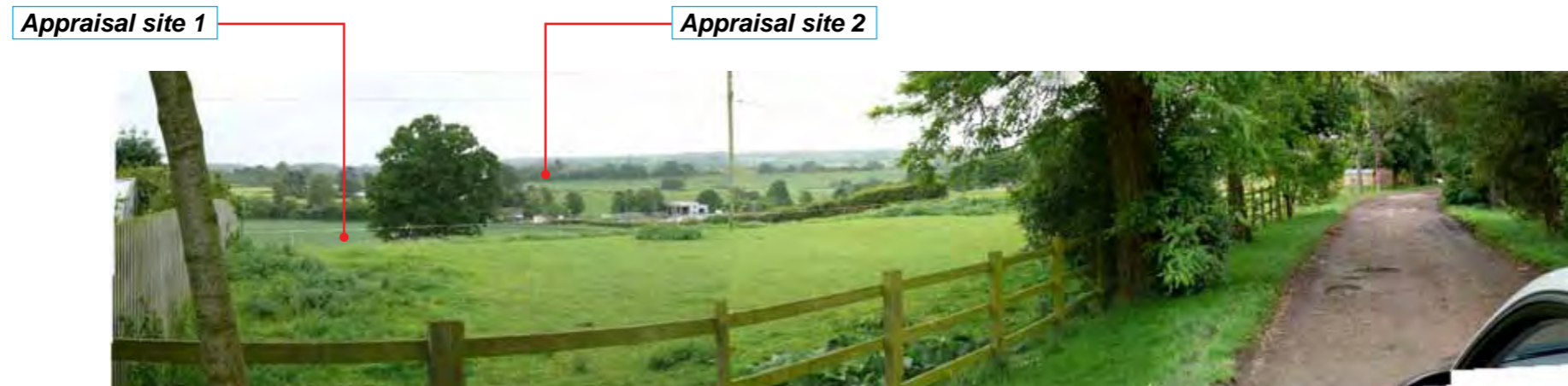


PHOTO 2

VIEWPOINT 2
LOCATION: VIEW OF APPRAISAL SITE 1 LOOKING SOUTH EAST FROM PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY KH
DESCRIPTION: CONTINUOUS, OPEN, ELEVATED VIEW. RURAL RESIDENTIAL SETTING WITH TRAFFIC NOISE FROM THE NEARBY M20 MOTORWAY.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 11.47
ELEVATION: 67M
BEARING: 155°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 244M
N 051.26585
E 000.60460



PHOTO 3

VIEWPOINT 3
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING NORTH WEST FROM EYTHORNE STREET BRIDGE CROSSING M20.
DESCRIPTION: APPRAISAL SITE 1 IS JUST VISIBLE IN DISTANCE BEYOND JUNCTION 8. APPRAISAL SITE 2 MORE VISIBLE IN MIDDLE DISTANCE, PARTIALLY SCREENED BY DECIDUOUS TREE BELT. FAST MOVING TRAFFIC ALONG MOTORWAY.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 12.09
ELEVATION: 68M
BEARING: 295°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 1.31KM
N 051.25932
E 000.62331



Appraisal site 2

PHOTO 4

VIEWPOINT 4
LOCATION: VIEW OF APPRAISAL SITE 2 LOOKING SOUTH FROM ENTRANCE GATE LOCATED ON ASHFORD ROAD (A20).
DESCRIPTION: CONTINUOUS OPEN VIEW OF SITE FRAMED BY TREES, SEMI-RURAL SETTING WITH FAST MOVING TRAFFIC ALONG THE A20, WITH SOME TRAFFIC NOISE FROM THE M20 MOTORWAY.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 12.19
ELEVATION: 57M
BEARING: 308°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 1.31KM
N 051.25933
E 000.61606



Appraisal site 1

Appraisal site 2

PHOTO 5

VIEWPOINT 5
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING NORTH FROM INTERSECTION OF OLD MILL ROAD AND FOOTPATH KH236.
DESCRIPTION: TRANQUIL RURAL LOCATION. APPRAISAL SITE 1 IS JUST VISIBLE IN FRONT OF M20 MOTORWAY. A LARGE PROPORTION OF APPRAISAL SITE 2 IS VISIBLE. NORTH DOWNS ESCARPMENT PROMINENT ON HORIZON.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 12.30
ELEVATION: 80M
BEARING: 001°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 1.44KM
N 051.25105
E 000.60626



PHOTO 6

VIEWPOINT 6
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING NORTH FROM PUBLIC FOOTPATH KH236 ADJACENT TO 'LEEDS & BROOMFIELD C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL' PLAYING FIELD.
DESCRIPTION: VIEW ACROSS VALLEY TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES IS OBSCURED BY DECIDUOUS TREE BELT. GLIMPSES OF BOTH SITES MAY BE POSSIBLE ESPECIALLY IN WINTER. TRANQUIL RURAL VILLAGE SETTING.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 12.52
ELEVATION: 78M
BEARING: 342°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 1.71KM
N 051.249540
E 000.61417



PHOTO 7

VIEWPOINT 7
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING NORTH FROM FOOTPATH KH237 WITHIN LEEDS CASTLE GROUNDS
DESCRIPTION: VIEW ALONG VALLEY TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES IS OBSCURED BY TREE BELT. TRANQUIL RURAL SETTING. NORTH DOWNS ESCARPMENT VISIBLE ON HORIZON

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 13.51
ELEVATION: 83M
BEARING: 331°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 2.27KM
N 051.24638
E 000.62234



PHOTO 8

VIEWPOINT 8
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING WEST FROM THE 'PILGRIMS WAY' BYWAY.
DESCRIPTION: VIEW TOWARDS SITE IS OBSTRUCTED BY RISING LAND IN FOREGROUND. TRANQUIL RURAL SETTING. POOR VISIBILITY DUE TO RAIN IN VALLEY.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 14.16
ELEVATION: 101M
BEARING: 278°
DISTANCE TO SITE: 3.45KM
N 051.26038
E 000.65481



PHOTO 9

VIEWPOINT 9
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING SOUTH EAST FROM FOOTPATH KH639.
DESCRIPTION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES IS OBSCURED BY TREE BELTS WOODLAND AND LANDFORM

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 14.39
ELEVATION: 1.86M
BEARING: 222°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 2.82KM
N 051.28320
E 000.63238



PHOTO 10

VIEWPOINT 10
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING SOUTH FROM THURNHAM CASTLE.
DESCRIPTION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES IS OBSTRUCTED BY TREE BELTS AND WOODLAND. TRANQUIL RURAL SETTING.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 15.07
ELEVATION: 187M
BEARING: 166°
DISTANCE TO SITE: 3.38KM
N 051.29331
E 000.59280



PHOTO 11

VIEWPOINT 11
LOCATION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES LOOKING NORTH EAST FROM FOOTPATH KM97.
DESCRIPTION: VIEW TOWARDS APPRAISAL SITES IS OBSCURED BY TREE BELTS, WOODLAND AND POLYTUNNELS. TRANQUIL RURAL SETTING.

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 08.06.2012
TIME: 15.43
ELEVATION: 83M
BEARING: 50°
DISTANCE TO SITE 1: 2.02KM
N 051.25254
E 000.58332



Appraisal site 2

PHOTO 12

VIEWPOINT 12
LOCATION: VIEW NORTHWARDS ACROSS SITE 2 FROM PUBLIC FOOTPATH KH181
DESCRIPTION: ATTRACTIVE OPEN AND PANORAMIC VIEW WITH THE FIELD AND TREE BELT FORMING AN INTERMEDIATE HORIZON, AND NORTH DOWNS ESCARPMENT IN THE DISTANCE IN CLOUD

PHOTO DATA

DATE: 11.06.2012
COORDINATES NOT RECORDED: TQ 842 543



PHOTO 12b

VIEWPOINT 12B
LOCATION: ENTRANCE TO PUBLIC FOOTPATH KH181 FROM OLD MILL ROAD



LAND AT JUNCTION 8, M20

Proposed Development of Land for Employment Uses

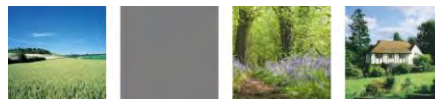
Maidstone Borough Council Core Strategy Strategic Locations Site Submissions

Planning Statement

on behalf of Mr N Leggat and Mr C Leggat

HPPC Ref: 30531

Date: June 2012



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2. Proposal for Employment Development, Land North of A20, Junction 8, M20
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6. Conclusion

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning statement is submitted in support of the proposal for the identification of land north of the A20, and west of Junction 8, as a strategic employment site. The land put forward is shown on the site plan attached as Appendix A to this statement.
- 1.2 Representations were previously submitted in October 2011, in response to the Maidstone Borough Council Core Strategy 2011 Regulation 25 Public Participation Consultation; this statement develops the proposals in greater detail, as further specified below, and responds to the specific information requests contained within the development sites pro-forma, which is submitted in conjunction with the statement.
- 1.3 The proposals for the site are also supported by a Transport Statement (Peter Brett Associates), and Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report (Lloyd Bore Limited).
- 1.4 Section 2 of this statement sets out details of the proposals for the site, including the master plan approach to its development, the type and amount of employment floor space proposed, anticipated phasing proposals, and estimated number of employees.
- 1.5 Section 3 then sets out the key issues to be considered in determination of the most appropriate site to be allocated for employment purposes at Junction 8, which are identified as:
- Appropriateness of location, including relationship to existing urban form;
 - Deliverability of employment proposals;
 - Landscape impact (local, and in relation to Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the North);
 - Transport considerations
- 1.6 Section 4 then sets out commentary on other planning issues, with specific regard to the topics to be addressed in the site pro-forma (Section 4, Site Constraints and Considerations).
- 1.7 Section 5 then sets out our brief commentary on the relative merits of the site put forward, and the alternative site put forward on the south side of the A20 (the Gallagher site), with particular regard to landscape impact, relationship to existing urban form, and other relevant planning considerations.
- 1.8 Section 6 then sets out our conclusions.

2. PROPOSAL FOR EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT, LAND NORTH OF A20, JUNCTION 8, M20

- 2.1 The plan attached at Appendix A shows the land in the ownership of Mr N Leggat and Mr C Leggat; the site is presently in agricultural use. The site has a total area of approximately 28 hectares; it is proposed that approximately 18 hectares will be given over to development of employment uses, with the remaining 10 hectares retained in agricultural use as a buffer between the proposed employment development, and Bearsted to the west.
- 2.2 The landowners have selected Roxhill Developments Limited as their development partner for the site; Roxhill Developments Limited are very experienced specialist developers of employment floor space.
- 2.3 The land within the ownership of Mr N Leggat and Mr C Leggat was previously part of the land comprised within the KIG proposal, for which planning permission was refused at the Public Inquiry in 2010. The proposal for employment uses now put forward is for a very small fraction of the size of the KIG proposal; the area proposed for built development (18 hectares), comparing to 112.3 hectares for the KIG site, representing just 16% of the KIG proposal.
- 2.4 The proposal to include a further 10 hectares of land as retained agricultural land would be formalised through a legally binding Section 106 Agreement, to ensure that this land was retained as a buffer in perpetuity.
- 2.5 The Public Inquiry into the KIG proposals involved a significant amount of technical work, which led to the inspectors conclusions; through this process, a significant number of potential land use, environmental and transport considerations were dealt with through the deliberations of the inspector. Matters on which no outstanding issues remain to be addressed or resolved include:
- Suitability of the location in transport terms, with regard to highway access, and impact on the highway network, including impact on Junction 8.
 - Impact on biodiversity considerations.
 - Potential impact on the strategic gap designation, which was not found to be a matter of weight in the decision making process.
 - Drainage considerations – drainage proposals were found to be acceptable.
 - Impact on residential amenity, which was not found to be a significant consideration.
- 2.6 The Inspectors conclusion that planning permission should be refused for the KIG scheme was, to an overwhelming degree, based on the specific proposals for the KIG strategic rail freight interchange, the proposal being contrary to the Development Plan (there being no site specific

designations for the site, nor specific policies favouring such a use), and arising directly from his consideration of the specific impacts of the proposal, which were inevitably drawn from the detail of the proposal, in particular their scale and visual effect.

2.7 Nevertheless, certain aspects of the inspectors deliberations are considered material to how proposals should be developed for the land north of the A20, at Junction 8, these being:

- Landscape impact, including in particular impact on views from the AONB, which lies to the north.
- Wider impact on the countryside, including the relationship of the proposal to Bearsted.
- Certain aspects of heritage impact, including views from Bearsted Conservation Area towards the proposal, and the impact, albeit very limited, on the setting of Listed Buildings.

2.8 These considerations, together with the specific requirements of the emerging Core Strategy for a site to deliver a strategic employment land allocation of 11 hectares, have been worked through to form the basis for the proposals which are now put forward. Account has also been taken of further guidance provided in the draft Core Strategy 2011 which states (page 32):

“in order to guide development around Junction 8 a Development Brief will be produced and adopted for development management purposes. The Brief will provide guidance on such issues as access matters; bulk, height, massing and design of any built structures, and will require any application for development to take account of the landscape setting. Additionally the Brief will set parameters for the scale of the development to come forward and will seek to guide a solution for the complete development. The Brief will also list the contributions that may be expected from developers for such matters as any offsite highway works that may be required, any work required to protect, enhance and further diversify biodiversity assets and other contributions that may be required.”

2.9 The Core Strategy section on economic development (paragraph 7.16 – 7.22 inclusive) notes the key conclusions of the Employment Land Review 2011 prepared by GVA; noting that there is a need for additional warehousing growth (15.2 hectares) above that already permitted. Development will also be required for additional industry, warehousing and distribution needs that require good motorway access that avoids congestion and preserves local amenity. Development will need to be designed to avoid significant adverse impact on the AONB and the wider countryside.

2.10 The proposals which are now put forward include areas to be allocated for development for warehousing and distribution purposes, in accordance with the strategic requirement; but including also land to be allocated for other employment uses, including light industry and research and development within use class B1, and general industrial purposes in use class B2.

- 2.12 The proposals which are illustrated on the landscape master plan attached at Appendix B reflect these requirements and principles, but have been developed first and foremost from an appreciation of the landscape implications of development of the site, on both the site, and on views from surrounding areas. In summary, larger buildings, in terms of both footprint and height, which are functionally necessary for storage and distribution uses, are located on the least sensitive site zone, this being the part of the site closest to Junction 8, which is relatively low lying and level; the central and western parts of the site, which have a greater landscape sensitivity, are considered suitable for buildings of a smaller size, in terms of both footprint and height.
- 2.13 This approach enables the proposed development to respect the existing landscape, and land form, recognising that these are important factors in minimising both local and more distant landscape impacts. Existing site topography is respected; significant cut and fill, to create large level development platforms, is minimised, and restricted to the least sensitive part of the site. Building sizes reduce within the site, moving from east to west, with siting and scale respecting existing land forms.
- 2.14 This approach has led to the identification of three development character areas, comprising Zone A (warehousing and distribution zone); Zone B (innovation zone, including research and development/Grade A offices/light industrial uses; and Zone C (employment village) which will accommodate smaller scale buildings, for a variety of uses similar to those in Zone B.
- 2.15 The indicative floor space areas for each zone are:
- Zone A: 25,000 sq metres
Zone B: 17,500 sq metres
Zone C: 6,250 sq metres
- 2.16 Within Zones B and C, the indicative breakdown between offices/research and development and light industry/general industrial uses is:
- Research and development/offices/innovation centre – 3,750 sq metres
Light industrial Class B1, general industrial use class B2 – 20,000 sq metres
- 2.17 These indicative areas may vary, in accordance with demand for different types of employment floor space; however, the degree of flexibility will be restricted, to ensure firstly that buildings appropriate to their siting, in terms of landscape sensitivity, are provided; and secondly that land is reserved, for a reasonable period of time, for a mixture of employment uses, to ensure that the strategic site can provide for a variety of employment needs, over the plan period.

- 2.18 With regard to phasing, Phase 1 of the development (years 1-3, assuming start date in 2014) will provide a first phase of the use class B8 storage and distribution floor space, which is required to meet the immediate need identified in the employment land review. Phase 1 will also include the first stages of infrastructure, including the provision of the spine road, and all necessary utilities and services; it is also proposed that a first phase of the innovation centre (research and development/offices/light industrial floor space) will be provided as part of Phase 1.
- 2.19 The second phase (years 4-6, i.e. 2017-2019, assuming 2014 start) will provide for development of the remaining part of the innovation centre, and the employment village; land will be serviced and available for these uses, with units being built to meet specific occupier demand, particularly in the light of the experience of the level of demand for the first phase of the innovation centre.
- 2.20 The land comprising Zone B (innovation zone) and Zone C (employment village) will be retained for these purposes only, until the end of year 6; after this date a more flexible approach is proposed to be adopted, with regard to the nature of employment uses to be accommodated. However, employment uses will continue to respect the master plan approach, and thus Zone C in particular is not suitable for large footprint buildings.
- 2.21 To reflect the landscape issues, and site constraints, maximum unit sizes are proposed of:

Zone A	15,000 sq metres
Zone B	5,000 sq metres
Zone C	1,000 sq metres

- 2.22 On the basis of the indicative floor space figures for each zone set out above, and utilising the employment densities from the Employment Land Review 2011, indicative employment numbers for each zone are as follows:

25,000m ²	B8 Storage and Distribution	357 Jobs
20,000m ²	B1/B2 Light/General Industrial	556 Jobs
3,750m ²	B1 Innovation Centre/Offices	313 Jobs

Total estimated employment numbers: 1,226 Jobs

Deliverability

- 2.23 The site is in a single ownership, with Roxhill, a major specialist employment floor space development company, as selected development partner.

2.24 There are no overriding constraints to development of the site, all issues having been examined in great detail during the course of preparation and consideration of proposals for KIG; our detailed commentary on these issues is set out in the following sections 3 and 4 of this statement.

2.25 The site itself is considered to be exceptionally well located as a site for employment uses, due to its close relationship to Junction 8 of the M20, while retaining good access to the urban area of Maidstone, both by public and private transport; strong occupier interest is anticipated, from initial enquiries by the selected developer partner.

2.26 Accordingly, we consider that the site is clearly deliverable.

3 KEY PLANNING ISSUES FOR SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE SITE FOR STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION, JUNCTION 8, M20

3.1 Four key planning issues are considered to be significant, in selecting the most appropriate site for allocation for strategic employment purposes, at Junction 8 of the M20. These are firstly, the location of the site, with particular reference to relationship to existing built form, and accessibility considerations; secondly, the deliverability of the site, to meet the strategic employment needs of the Borough, within the plan period; thirdly, landscape impact, with particular regard to views of, and from, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and fourthly, transport considerations.

A. Site Location and Accessibility

3.2 In terms of location in relation to existing built form, the proposed employment site is considered to be appropriate. The site is contained on three boundaries (M20 to the north, M20 Junction to the east, A20 to the south), and the detailed proposals included provisions for land to be retained as buffer zones, through legally binding obligations. To the north of the M20 lies the existing built development at the Maidstone Services. Accordingly, the proposed development site is well related to other built development, including transport infrastructure, and includes provisions for firm boundaries to development to be established.

3.3 With regard to accessibility, the site offers excellent access to the primary road network, with a junction direct to the A20, and excellent access to the M20 Junction 8. The A20 also offers public transport links via bus to the urban area of Maidstone.

B. Deliverability

3.4 The proposed strategic employment site is in a single ownership, and Roxhill a specialist developer

has been selected as development partner . There are no significant infrastructure constraints on development, as further specified in Section 4 below, and the site, through its location, will be attractive to potential occupiers.

C. Landscape Impacts

3.5 The submissions for land north of the A20, at Junction 8, are the subject of a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report, which deals in detail with the landscape impact of the proposals for employment development, for the site; together with a comparative analysis of landscape impact, with regard to the Gallagher site, to the south of the A20. Section 5 of this statement summarises the respective merits of the site put forward north of the A20, with the site to the south of the A20; concluding that the land north of the A20 enjoys significant advantages over the alternative site to the south.

3.6 With regard to landscape impact of the land north of the A20, and the approach which has been taken in framing the development proposals having regard to these considerations, the Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report concludes:

- The site has good potential for the development of a sensitive and high quality site layout and design, including the provision of structural mitigation planting where necessary.
- Planting would be designed to mitigate for identified adverse impacts from publically accessible locations surrounding the site, including the AONB to the north, and have the capability of enhancing ecological interests.
- The development proposals for the site are designed to respond to contours, by placing the larger B8 units on flat land close to Junction 8, with built form fragmenting into smaller units on the gently rising land to the west. An appropriate landscape response is proposed, whereby a landscape framework is developed to take reference from underlying landscape character, in this case by reinforcing the general south west to north east grain of the landscape (contours and vegetation belts), which have been so damaged by the construction of the M20/HS1 to the north of the site (paragraph 6.7).
- The layout of new development should be designed to respond to natural topography and existing landscape features of value; consideration should be given to how buildings screen

parking and circulation areas, and how, in many cases, buildings can screen other buildings. It would not be appropriate to fully screen the new development from view; it will be designed to have visual presence, with new buildings designed to a higher architectural standard, set within a landscape framework derived from its underlying natural features. In places the new buildings would be specifically placed and designed to address the approach to Maidstone westbound along the M20 (paragraph 6.10).

- 3.7 The Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report also addresses the detail of architectural form, use of materials, lighting, and landscape treatment, to minimise any potential adverse landscape impacts.

D. Transport Considerations

- 3.8 The submissions for the site north of the A20 are accompanied by an initial Transport Overview, which considers the current indicative proposals for additional employment floor space, as set out in Section 2 above, in the context of the previous detailed transport studies carried out for the KIG proposal, and in the light of changes since that assessment work was carried out.
- 3.09 The KIG proposals were for a substantially larger site, as noted earlier, and the inspector concluded in that instance that the proposals, including mitigation measures proposed, would not have an unacceptable impact on either the local highway network, or the M20, including Junction 8, forming part of the national highway network.
- 3.10 The current mix of employment uses proposed would have a significantly lower traffic impact than the KIG proposals, 25%-35% at peak hours, notwithstanding that it includes elements with higher traffic generation potential, on a unit for unit basis, comprising the innovation centre/office and light/general industrial uses, than warehousing and distribution uses. This is of course seen as a positive benefit, with regard to the additional employment created at the site.
- 3.11 The Transport Overview notes that the site is well served by public transport, in terms of bus routes into the urban area of Maidstone, and is accessible to local services in the surrounding area.
- 3.12 As detailed proposals are prepared, these will be accompanied by a Travel Plan, designed to encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling, for access to jobs, and local services; the site offers the opportunity for car sharing, as part of the travel plan proposals.
- 3.13 The previous KIG proposals included provision for a new slip road onto the M20 motorway, at

Junction 8; the Transport Overview notes that more modest mitigation measures would both deal with additional impact on Junction 8, and achieve some betterment. These measures could include all or some of the following:

- Dedicated left turn provision at the M20 Junction 8 Junction on to the A20 to M20 north westbound on slip.
- Partial traffic signal control at the M20 Junction 8 Roundabout.
- Improved lane markings and traffic management on the circulatory carriageway.
- Dedicated lane markings (“spiral markings”) to enhance capacity and increased gap acceptance opportunities on the M20 Junction 8 Roundabout.
- Ramp metering on the north western on slip merge.
- Segregated two lane merge at the north westbound on slip merge (type C merge).

4 OTHER PLANNING ISSUES

4.1 This section of the statement addresses other planning considerations, included in Section 4 of the Site Constraints and Considerations section of the Potential Development Sites pro-forma, which accompanies the submissions.

a. Access/Transport Issues

4.2 See attached Transport Overview, and summary of conclusions in Section 3 above.

b. Access to Services (Public Transport, Education, Health, Shops etc)

4.3 See comments at Section 3 above.

c. Adjacent Uses

4.4 The most significant uses adjoining the proposed employment and development site are the strategic transport routes, comprising the M20, Junction 8 to the M20, and the A20, to the north, east and south respectively. There are a small number of existing residential uses, on the southern site boundary; the proposed employment site layout will take full account of the inter-relationship with residential properties, to ensure that there is no adverse noise impact. This can be achieved through

siting of buildings to screen potential noise from service/delivery areas, in conjunction with acoustic screening where necessary.

d. Agricultural Quality

4.5 The proposed employment development site falls within Grade 3 agricultural quality (source: published National Survey).

e. Air Quality

4.6 This issue was examined at the KIG Public Inquiry; Maidstone Borough Council raised no concerns regarding the impact of the operational development on air quality in and about Bearsted; and the inspector noted that the Health Impact Assessment carried out considered the impact of predicted changes in air quality on the health of neighbouring residents, concluding that the effect would be insignificant (source: paragraphs 18.78 and 18.79 Inspectors Report). These conclusions were accepted by the Inspector, accordingly we conclude that there are no air quality issues with regard development of the much smaller employment site now proposed.

f. Archaeology

4.7 Significant archaeological studies were carried out in connection with the previous KIG proposal; a combination of geophysical surveys and trial trenching were carried out, the Inspector noting that the work undertaken was not insubstantial and that both field surveys were undertaken by acknowledged experts in their field. The work carried out did not find any nationally important remains, nor were other remains found of sufficient importance to warrant in situ preservation. The Inspector concluded that the potential for the site to contain archaeological remains that were justified are in situ preservation was no more than modest, and that this possibility was not a matter which should attract significant weight in arriving at the overall planning balance (source: paragraphs 18.122 and 18.123, Inspectors Report). Accordingly, we conclude that potential archaeological interest at the site is not a significant constraint on its development for employment purposes.

g. Current Use

4.8 The land is currently in agricultural use; this use would cease in the event that the land allocation for employment purposes were to be confirmed.

h. Ecology

4.9 The Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report submitted with this statement includes a brief

appraisal of ecological interest in the local area, concluding that development of the site would be very unlikely to have any adverse impact on either Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the nearest Special Area of Conservation, local nature reserves, or local wildlife sites. It considers that development of the site would not be heavily constrained by ecological considerations, having regard to the Inspectors conclusions at the KIG appeal (see paragraph numbers 4.72 to 4.79, Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report).

i. Flood Risk/Zone

- 4.10 The site does not lie in an area at risk from flooding. The KIG inquiry process considered the potential impact of the development (on a much greater scale than the current proposal) on flood risk down stream; the Inspector noted that the Environment Agency was content that this would not occur, with appropriate detention ponds and other drainage structures. (see paragraphs 18.154 to 18.159, Inspectors Report).

j. Heritage (including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments etc)

- 4.11 Woodcut Farm House, adjoining the western boundary of the proposed development area, is a Listed building; the part of the proposed development closest to Woodcut Farm House has been designed to include smaller scale buildings, following the contours of the existing land form. The Inspector in considering the KIG Appeal considered that the substantial scale and nature of the warehouse buildings close to the farm house, and barn, would result in some harm to the setting of the Listed buildings, however he concluded that this would be only modest. Given that the current proposals are for buildings of a much more modest scale, we do not consider that impact on Listed buildings is a significant constraint on the proposed development.
- 4.12 The Bearsted Green Conservation Area is a significant distance from the proposed development site, and would not in our view be adversely affected by the proposed employment development. With regard to scheduled ancient monuments, the remains of Thurnham Castle, and their setting, were considered at the KIG Inquiry; the Inspector concluded that the proposal (for a much larger development) would not result in harm to the setting of Thurnham Castle.

k. Landscape (including Long Distance Views)

- 4.13 Landscape considerations are covered in detail in the Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report which accompanies these submissions, and as referred to in Section 3 above.

l. Land Contamination

4.14 There is no evidence or indication of any issues of land contamination for the proposed site.

m. Noise

4.15 The proposed employment uses would not be considered noise sensitive, and in any event are capable of being designed in terms of siting and specification to avoid any potential for nuisance from noise from the adjoining M20, Junction 8 and A20.

4.16 The detailed site layout and specification will take into account the need to prevent any potential noise nuisance to the small number of adjoining residential properties.

n. Planning and Other Designations

4.17 The proposed employment site lies within an area defined as a Special Landscape Area (SLA) in the adopted Maidstone Local Plan 2000; under the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, very little weight should be given to plan policies prepared prior to the date of 2004.

o. Public Rights of Way

4.18 There are no Public Rights of Way within the site.

p. Trees

4.19 Existing trees at the site are covered in the Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report; which notes that the site is virtually devoid of mature trees, shrubs or hedgerows, with the exception of the narrow band of mixed vegetation crossing the site north-south along the line of the stream, a line of mature trees and a hedgerow running north from Woodcut Farm, which is to be retained; together with considerable vegetation cover on the periphery of the site. The proposals shown on the Landscape Master Plan indicate that there will be no significant impacts on vegetation cover as result of the development of the site (source: paragraphs 4.51 to 4.55, Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report).

q. Utilities

4.20 Initial enquires have been made of the main statutory undertakers, with regard to the provision of necessary utilities, these have not indicated any significant constraints to development of the site, as noted on the pro-forma. Similar enquires were undertaken with regard to the KIG proposal, covering a much larger site area. There is an existing gas pipeline running through the eastern part of the

site; detailed site proposals will avoid impact on this pipeline, within the overall master planning approach to the site.

r. Other

4.21 We are not aware of any other constraints which would affect the development of the site for employment purposes.

5 RELATIVE MERITS OF PROPOSED EMPLOYMENT LAND ALLOCATION NORTH OF A20 (WOODCUT FARM), AND LAND SOUTH OF A20 (GALLAGHERS SITE)

5.1 The land north of the A20 is considered to have significant advantages over the potential alternative site to the south as it is:

- Better related to the existing urban area
- Contained by existing boundaries (M20/A20/Junction 8), and
- Proposals include buffer zone to the west, providing for land to be retained in open uses
- The proposal for a mixed employment development offers the opportunity to work with the landscape, rather than against it, with larger buildings on the lower lying ground, and smaller buildings on the rising ground, which work with the existing land form
- The mix of uses, including an Innovation Centre, offers the opportunity for a higher quality of development, in terms of design and materials, than is feasible for a solely Use Class B8 Storage & Distribution Development

5.2 In comparison, the site to the south of the A20 is characterised by:

- Outlying area, poorly related to existing urban form
- No natural boundaries to the development to the east, west or south
- Significant landscape impact of major excavation works – up to 15 metres on the basis of submissions previously made
- Impact on public footpath crossing the site

- Development in this location would be likely, in due course, to lead to development of Woodcut Farm in any event – which would become effectively “infill”

5.3 The Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report contains a detailed assessment of the respective landscape impacts of the land north of the A20, and land south of the A20, referred to as Site 1 & Site 2 respectively; concluding that development of Site 2 land south of the A20, would have a significantly greater landscape impact, having particular regard to:

- Nature of excavation and engineering operations would represent a significant, permanent and adverse impact on the natural topographic character of the landscape (Paragraph 4.39, LVI Scoping Report)
- Diversion or extinguishment of public footpath crossing the site would represent a major landscape impact (Paragraph 4.62 LVI Scoping Report)
- Development of the site would bring substantial new development into the attractive open countryside between the A20 corridor and Leeds, being poorly related to the existing urban area east of Maidstone, and appearing as an outlying development, largely surrounded by undeveloped land (paragraph 6.4, LVI Scoping Report).
- The proposals for site 2, by excavating 15 metres down into the natural land form, destroy any topographic relationship with the natural land form of the AONB and the surrounding landscape; this being a matter considered to be of significance, by the Inspector at the KIG Appeal. While excavating land to place the building artificially down into the landscape is likely to reduce the visual impact of an elevation when viewed from above, it will correspondingly increase the visual impact of the roof, which for B8 uses is usually larger in area than an elevation. (Paragraph 6.5 and 6.6 LVI Scoping Report).

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The proposed development site will make a significant contribution to the strategic employment needs of the Maidstone Borough Council area, with the opportunity to contribute up to 1226 new jobs, over a period of perhaps 6 to 10 years.

6.2 With regard to the key planning considerations, the proposals are appropriate in terms of the location of the site, and relationship to existing urban form; deliverable; and have been designed to minimise landscape impact, through development of a landscape led master plan, respecting the existing topography of the site.

- 6.3 The proposals would not have an adverse impact on local traffic conditions, and offer the opportunity for improvements to both local transport infrastructure, and, through an appropriate travel plan, improvements to public transport accessibility in the locality.
- 6.4 The proposals offer significant advantages over the alternative development site understood to be put forward on the south side of the A20, with particular regard to:
- Better related to the existing urban area
 - Contained by existing boundaries (M20/A20/Junction 8)
 - Buffer zone to be provided to the west, land to be retained in open uses
 - Proposals work with the existing landscape character and form, rather than against it
 - Site offers the opportunity for a high quality development, reflecting the nature of employment uses proposed
- 6.5 The Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report concludes that development of the alternative site south of the A20 would have a greater landscape impact, with particular regard to the significant excavation works involved, and loss of existing site topography, together with visual impact of large roof areas.
- 6.6 Accordingly, we conclude that the land north of the A20 should be the preferred site, for identification through the Core Strategy Strategic Site Allocation process, for inclusion in the forthcoming publication version of the Core Strategy for the Maidstone Borough Council area.

TECHNICAL NOTES



Job Name: Land north of A20 & west of M20 Junction 8
Job No.: 27201
Date: 13th June 2012
Subject: Transport Overview
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A proposal has been made for the inclusion of a strategic employment site, to predominantly cater for local warehouse and distribution needs, as a strategic allocation in the forthcoming Maidstone Core Strategy. The proposals recognise the work that was done in respect of the KIG proposals, which were rejected at a Call-in Planning Inquiry in 2010.

Although the KIG proposals were rejected, many of the principles of development in this location were established, and the smaller and more local nature of the current proposals reflects and responds to the issues that were of concern to the Inspector. Therefore, it is relevant in considering the strategic allocation of the site to address issues that would require updated technical assessment, in the context of the more modest proposals.

This paper therefore sets out the background to the transport issues that would need to be considered in tandem with any strategic allocation, and the means by which the requirement for any mitigation could be assessed and implemented.

Traffic Generation

The proposed allocation would be for a series of employment land uses, but predominantly configured around general industrial uses along with distribution and warehousing activities. The breakdown of land uses is indicative at this stage, but for the purposes of preliminary appraisal, the following has been assumed:

Land use	Quantum
B1 office	3,750 sq.m
B1/B2 industrial estate	20,000 sq.m
B8 warehousing	25,000 sq.m

Using typical TRCS database trip rates for these uses would suggest a peak hour trip generation as follows:

Land use	0800-0900		1700-1800	
	Arrivals	Departures	Arrivals	Departures
B1 office	47	5	3	38
B1/B2 industrial estate	90	39	22	77
B8 warehousing	17	11	7	19
TOTALS	155	54	33	134

This volume of trip generation is considerably lower than the much larger development included in the KIG proposals. The KIG proposals adopted a first principles approach to traffic generation, and suggested that as many of the buildings on the site would operate on a shift basis, that the peak traffic generation for the KIG site would not occur at the traditional highway network peak hours.

Even allowing for this shift of traffic away from the highway network peak periods, the current proposals represent only 25% - 35% of the highway network peak traffic generation predicted for the KIG development. On this basis it can be seen that the current proposals, and the opportunity to make a strategic allocation in the terms suggested, is not similar to the scale and impact of the KIG proposals.

M20 Junction 8

The Call-in Inquiry for the KIG proposals, and the technical work undertaken to support it, suggested that there would be a need for upgrades to this junction. The technical work suggested that, allowing for a future design year of 2016, that this upgrade would be required with or without the KIG development.

The position at M20 J8 will need to be revisited as part of any strategic allocation of the type now proposed. A series of circumstantial changes mean that the situation is different now than may have been contemplated at the KIG Inquiry, as follows:

- The recessionary economic environment since 2008 has seen a substantial reduction in traffic growth patterns;
- The nature of the proposals is considerably smaller in scale;
- There is considerably less funding available for capital projects, and the Highways Agency is increasingly seeking cost effective and innovative traffic management measures to enhance capacity and safety on its networks – it has adopted the “Managed Motorway” approach;
- Taken together, these effects suggest that a comprehensive traffic management proposal can be implemented at M20 J8 to deal with both the background growth issues and the effects of any new development.

The KIG proposals did not define precisely what work should be implemented at M20 J8, although it was noted that the north-westbound on-slip road was likely to operate above its design capacity. A proposal to consider the introduction of a lane drop / lane gain arrangement on the north-westbound M20 was contemplated, to achieve the Type F merge that it was suggested would be required with KIG.

It is considered that this approach would not be appropriate for the current proposals. The Highways Agency's policy requires that developments that impact on the Motorway or Trunk Road network should achieve a nil detriment impact. The effect of the current proposals will be small on the M20 J8, and even smaller on the north-westbound on-slip merge, and can be quantified as follows adopting a similar trip distribution to the KIG proposals:

Route	0800-0900		1700-1800	
	Inbound	Outbound	Inbound	Outbound
A20 west	28	10	6	24
A20 east	12	4	3	11
M20 west	98	34	21	85
M20 east	17	6	3	13
J8 services	0	0	0	0

Based upon the trip generation outlined above, there would be 155 development trips passing through J8 during the morning peak period, which equates to 5%, and 122 during the evening, which equates to 4.7%. This is based upon the 2001 census distribution used for KIG and would be subject to updated distribution analysis based upon forthcoming 2011 census data due later this year.

However, it is clear that the impact on M20 J8 would be within manageable limits, and could be mitigated on a nil detriment basis. Indeed, it is likely that a scheme could be derived that would deliver nil detriment and a betterment to the operation of the M20 J8 junction and the north-westbound on-slip merge.

It is likely that a package of mitigation measures that would achieve some betterment could include some or all of the following, subject to detail assessment in due course:

- Dedicated left-turn provision at the M20 J8 junction on the A20 to M20 north-westbound on-slip
- Partial traffic signal control at the M20 J8 roundabout
- Improved lane markings and traffic management on the circulatory carriageway
- Dedicated lane markings ("spiral markings") to enhance capacity and increase

- gap acceptance opportunities on the M20 J8 roundabout
- Ramp metering on the north-westbound on-slip merge
- Segregated two lane merge at the north-westbound on-slip merge (Type C merge)

These measures would be sufficient to mitigate the modest percentage effects of the peak period traffic generation from the development, and it is likely, as these measures cannot easily be implemented by degrees, that an overall betterment would be achieved.

It is unlikely that public funding would be available to deal with the additional M20 lanes that were suggested by the technical work undertaken as part of the KIG proposals. This would be a substantial commitment by the DfT / HA and other priorities are likely to prevail for the foreseeable future.

Therefore, the mitigation approach that could be offered by a strategic allocation would be able to go some way towards achieving operational improvements at the M20 J8 and the important north-westbound on-slip road. Such a betterment would be a valuable pragmatic benefit of strategic allocation.

Site Access

The proposed allocation would gain access from the A20, a short distance to the west of the M20 J8. Detailed consideration for this access has not been undertaken as yet, but it is likely that it would take the form of either a roundabout or a traffic signal junction.

At this stage it is considered that either option would provide benefits to the operation of the A20. The access junction could be configured to limit the attractiveness of movements towards the west along the A20, towards Bearsted. In addition, a carefully designed junction – especially a roundabout, would provide a traffic management measure at all times of the day that would reduce speeds of traffic on this section of the M20.

Sustainable Access

It will be important for the development to be able to demonstrate strong credentials in terms of sustainable access and movement.

Clearly the core warehouse, distribution and industrial uses will be reliant on road based transport for deliveries and dispatch of goods. This impact will need to be catered for on the surrounding highway network and so the mitigation and management measures that would form part of the proposals will be important in this regard. It is envisaged that these would be secured through appropriate planning obligations, and that these would be tied to particular triggers to ensure that mitigation measures were in place before the full effect of any impacts occurred.

For employees at the site there will be the opportunity to encourage travel by

sustainable modes. Walking and cycling routes alongside the A20 are not well developed, and consideration would be given to developing better connection for these modes, especially between Bearsted / Madginford and Hollingbourne.

The 10X bus route operates an hourly service on weekdays along the A20, and passes the site entrance. Maidstone services 8 and 19 serve Downswood and Bearsted respectively, and may provide opportunities for service extensions that would link the development directly to Maidstone. Service 8 operates half-hourly during weekdays, and service 19 is hourly. The 19 service already serves Bearsted railway station, and so this would be an important link for employees and visitors to the site.

Hollingbourne Station lies a short distance to the east of the site, and is closer than Bearsted. It may be practical to provide, or extend, a connection to this station. Although on the same railway line as Bearsted, it would be worthwhile to consider the opportunity to use the proposed allocation site to form a stepping stone for bus services between the eastern side of Maidstone and Bearsted to Hollingbourne.

It is envisaged that the site would be subject to an employee Travel Plan, which would provide a framework for sustainable travel initiatives. This should be developed as the site is occupied, and be able to respond to particular circumstances on the site. However, it is likely that the Travel Plan would include the following types of measures, which are particularly appropriate to the land uses on the site:

- Car sharing database and management between occupiers on the site;
- Facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at buildings on the site – showers, lockers, drying facilities, secure cycle parking and so on;
- Regular, timely and up-to-date provision of public transport information;
- Subsidies and interest free loans for season ticket purchase, cycle purchase etc.

Summary

Overall, it is considered that the allocation of the site is unlikely to result in impacts on the transport network that cannot be mitigated. In respect of the highway network impact, the preliminary assessment suggests that the proposal would be able to achieve a nil detriment case.

It is considered likely that the type and nature of improvements that would be contemplated, especially at the M20 Junction 8 and north-westbound on-slip merge would represent a betterment over the nil detriment situation – although they may not wholly address issues related to background traffic effects.

The development could provide a catalyst for more comprehensive public transport and sustainable travel initiatives in the area, providing the opportunity to enhance the connections between the Bearsted / Madginford districts of Maidstone and Hollingbourne to the east.

9 July 2012

By email

Building Height Information

Zone A Distribution and Warehousing

Maximum height to eaves 12 metres; maximum height to ridge line 15 metres.

Zone B Industrial Floor Space and Offices

Typical height to eaves 6 metres, ridge line 8 metres; but with scope within part of the site for a higher building as part of Innovation Centre – for example, 3 storey office building, 9 metres height. Siting to be agreed, in terms of location within Zone B.

Zone C

Mixture of small industrial units and small office/service units; more domestic in scale, with smaller footprints; typical heights to eaves 6 metres, ridge line 8 metres. No buildings within this zone higher than this.