



**Exploration of the ‘Broad Location’ Allocation at
Lenham Village, Kent
For Maidstone Borough Council**

Prepared by

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Exploration of the ‘Broad Location’ Allocation at
Lenham Village, May 2016

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1	Background to the study.....	4
2	Lenham Village Today	8
3	Village-wide Infrastructure Needs and Capacity	13
4	Site Selection Criteria.....	16
5	Broad Location Allocation.....	18
6	A Possible Option	22
7	Managing Design Quality	27
8	Conclusion.....	29

Appendix A – Stakeholders Workshop

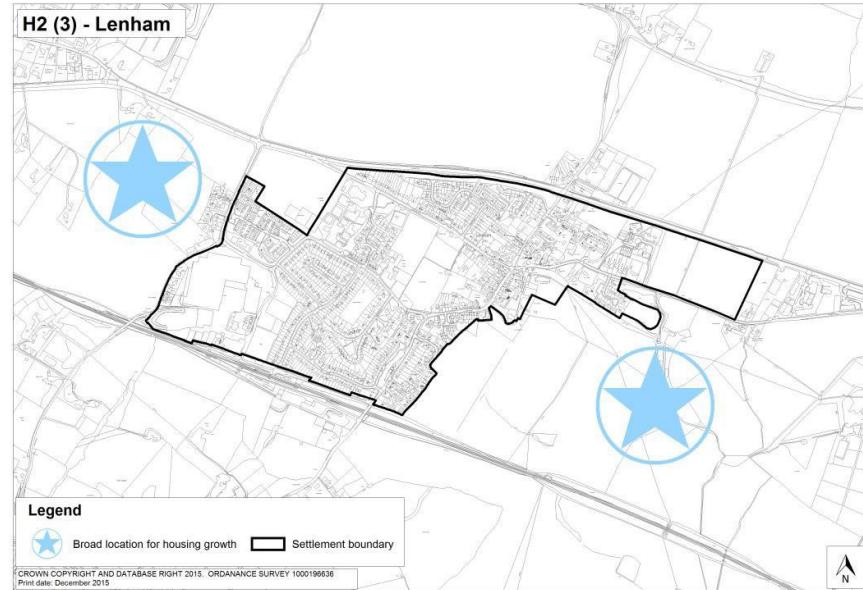
Appendix B – Density Study

Exploration of the ‘Broad Location’ Allocation at Lenham Village, Kent

1 Background to the study

The Maidstone Borough draft Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19, February 2016) outlines the need to accommodate forecast housing growth throughout the borough, and it identifies three ‘broad locations’, one of which is Lenham village. As set out in Policy H2(3) Lenham is a rural service centre, and the draft Local Plan identifies its potential to deliver up to 1,500 homes towards the end of the plan period (2026–2031), along with appropriate infrastructure provision. The draft Local Plan shows Lenham’s ‘broad location’ for growth as two stars – east and west of the village today.

The objective of this study is to explore this allocation further for future site allocations. It reviews the locations for potential growth at Lenham, the likely deliverable housing numbers, and other issues to be considered further.



1.1 Key Local Plan Policies

The policies which are relevant to the ‘broad location’ at Lenham are:

- *Policy SS1 – Maidstone Borough Spatial Strategy*, which prioritises rural service centres for housing development, in order to maintain and enhance their role and the provision of services for the local community. Lenham has a very popular village centre, a secondary school and primary school, good public transport links and a railway station, health and community facilities including the community centre, GP surgery, dentists and the social club.
- *Policy SP5 - Rural Service Centres*, focusing new housing and employment development within existing settlements, resisting the loss of local shops, community facilities and green spaces, and supporting new retail development, community services and green spaces to meet local needs.
- *Policy SP9 - Lenham Rural Service Centre*, as a sustainable location to accommodate growth. This includes:
 - two allocated sites to deliver approximately 165 dwellings (policies H1(47) Tanyard Farm, Old Ashford Road (155 dwellings), and H1(48) Glebe Gardens (10 dwellings);
 - Gypsy and Traveller accommodation (policy GT1(8));
 - three existing sites as Economic Development areas to maintain employment opportunities locally (policy DM21);
 - highway and transport infrastructure improvements, and sustainable transport infrastructure;
 - a one form entry primary school expansion (at Lenham or Harrietsham); plus,
 - approximately 1,500 dwellings, with landscape and ecological mitigation, and supporting physical, social and green infrastructure.
- *Policy DM 18 - District centres, local centres and local shops and facilities*, to maintain and enhance the existing retail function and supporting community uses in Lenham.
- *Policy DM 21 – Retention of employment sites*, designating Lenham Storage, Marley Works, and Ashmills Business Park, Lenham as Economic Development Areas for B1, B2 and B8 uses. Changes of use or redevelopment are not permitted unless there is no prospect of their re-use by other B1-8 uses in the medium term.
- *Policy SP17 – The Countryside*, to conserve, maintain and enhance the distinctive character of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and its setting, the setting of the High Weald AONB, and the extent and openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- *Policy DM22 - Publicly accessible open space and recreation*, to deliver publically accessible open space to specified standards.

These policies place a high value on Lenham as an existing thriving settlement to be supported and sustained in the long term, and with

protection for functioning employment sites, and its strong landscape setting.

1.2 Site Identification Processes

In response to its objectively assessed need for housing, Maidstone Borough Council has a target of delivering 18,560 dwellings within the new Local Plan period to 2031. In order to be proactive in finding suitable sites, guidance recommends that councils carry out a ‘call for sites’ as well as seek to identify potential development sites, drawing on local knowledge of previously promoted sites.

The potential sites for housing growth identified to-date have come forward through Calls for Sites in 2012-3, 2014 and 2015 as part of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) prepared by Maidstone Borough Council. The Strategic Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessment Combined Report (SHEDLAA, January 2016) brings together all of the site assessments between 2013 and 2015.

This process has elicited interest on three sides of Lenham village. The Council has historically not favoured land put forward which is south of the Ashford-London railway line, nor north of the A20 Ashford Road in the AONB. The preferred focus for growth has been to the east at Tanyard Farm (SHEDLAA ref. H03-264), and west between Ham Lane and Dickey Wood (H03-202 and H03-195).

In parallel with this, in November 2012 Maidstone Borough Council approved the designation of a Neighbourhood Area for the Parish of Lenham. Since then, the Parish Council and its Neighbourhood Plan

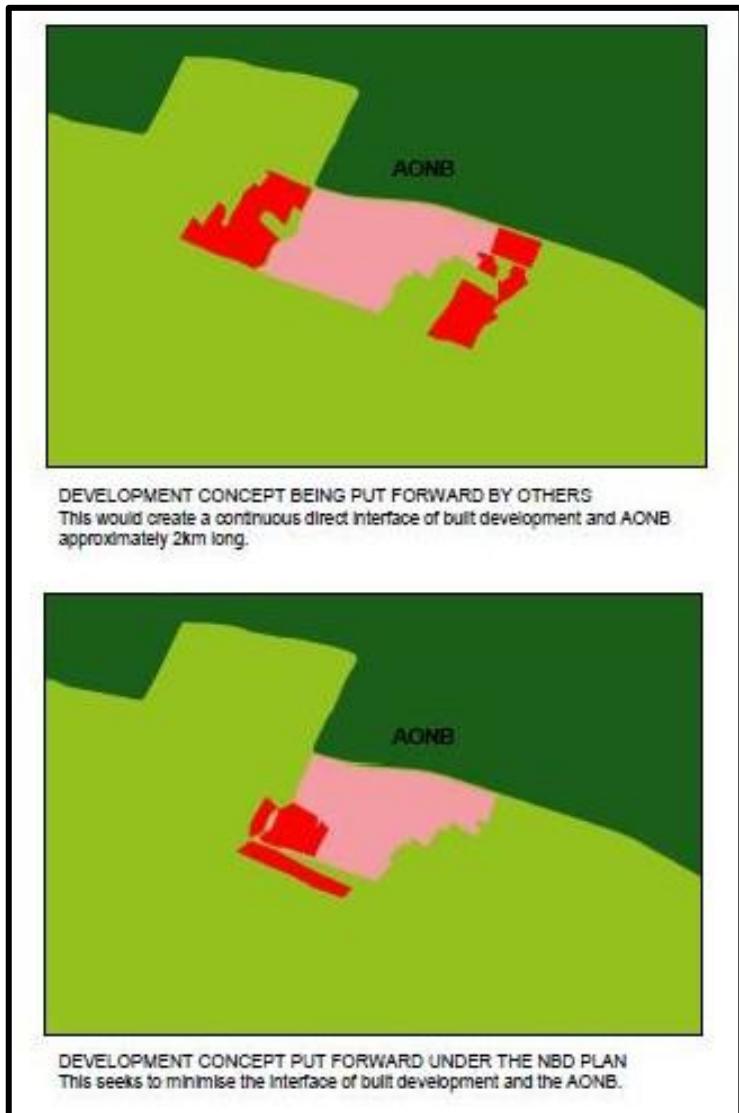
Steering Group have developed the draft Neighbourhood Plan, and which has been formally consulted upon during 2015 and 2016.

This process has reviewed and assessed the land around Lenham, including drawing upon the Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity and Site Assessments (January 2015) prepared by consultants Jacobs on the capacity of sites in the SHLAA to accommodate development. The draft Neighbourhood Plan favours the redevelopment of brownfield sites first (i.e. Lenham Storage and the Marley sites), with some minor development to the west and south of the village.

The Borough Council considers that these employment sites are not deliverable, firstly as their redevelopment for housing would result in the loss of employment land, and secondly because the sites have not been promoted through the SHLAA process and are not therefore available.

As a result there are considerable differences between the Regulation 19 Consultation draft Local Plan and the Consultation Draft Neighbourhood Plan, which were both consulted upon during February-March 2016. The diagram extracted from the draft Neighbourhood Plan illustrates this well.

This study reviews the evidence gathered to-date and explores the potential development land around the village, in order to add more detail to the ‘broad location’ allocation about land which should be considered for development. It is based upon current Local Plan policies and standards, and draws upon the evidence base available at the time of preparation.



Extract from the draft Lenham Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

1.3 Existing planning interest

In the previous Calls for Sites, several village locations were put forward for development including the cricket pitch and allotments. As these form part of today’s local community facilities, lying centrally within the village, and have been rejected in both the draft Local Plan and draft Neighbourhood Plan processes, these have been omitted from this assessment.

Other smaller sites - at the United Reform Church, Grove Paddock and Groom Way - are current planning applications or consents. As these sites are likely to be delivered before 2026, they have not been included in this process. If they have not been developed at a later stage of the Local Plan period, they could form part of the housing numbers needed in the future.

1.4 Stakeholders Workshop

Given the different views held by many with a keen interest in the village, a key part of this review process has been the involvement of stakeholders in a workshop, held on 15 April 2016. This included Lenham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members and Parish councillors, local land owners, developers and their advisors, representatives of local organisations, and officers from MBC and Kent County Council. In mixed groups, the participants looked at local infrastructure issues, how to prioritise site selection criteria, and potential development land parcels. The ideas that emerged from the workshop have informed this study, and are summarised in Appendix A.

2 Lenham Village Today

2.1 Structure and shape

Lenham village developed as an historic crossroads settlement on the Maidstone-Ashford-Faversham-Headcorn roads. The village ‘bypass’, the A20, and the AONB which lie north of that have limited growth across Ashford Road considerably.

The unique historic village market square leads to more contemporary developments along Old Ashford Road, High Street, Ham Lane and Maidstone Road. Large modern housing areas have been added to the west of the village centre, along with the secondary and primary schools, leaving the village Square off-centre today. The new community centre and GP surgery at Groom Way has added to this sense of the heart of the village being off-centre, as they lie almost at the edge of the current settlement boundary.

Given the setting of St Mary’s Church, the Tithe Barn and the Conservation Area, and long distance views from the AONB (at the Lenham Cross memorial in particular), the eastern side of the village has seen far smaller developments. The area is characterised by busy east-west traffic routes (Old Ashford Road and the A20), and a network of fields; these are either very open or hidden by hedgerows and trees along field boundaries, and lead south to the railway line and the very prominent fields beyond. Development in this area has been linear following Old Ashford Road, and there are clear views from the AONB of the community centre and Ashmills Business Park in the foreground, and the solar farm south of Oxley Wood in the distance.

To the west, Lenham has seen far more change, with housing developments from different periods evident today. The position of Swadlands Secondary School’s playing fields creates a green entrance to the village from the A20 at Ham Lane, and is seen locally as part of a ‘green wedge’ running westwards towards Dickley Wood. More recent development along Ham Lane has a piecemeal feel, and creates a poor view from the A20 Ashford Road, along the edge of the open land towards Dickley Wood. While there is concern about potential coalescence between Lenham and Harrietsham, Dickley Wood creates this buffer most visibly today, as the green gap along Ham Lane is already peppered by views of recent housing developments, and the landscape does not have a strong character given its lack of field boundaries. Views from the AONB are a consideration in this area, particularly along the northern edge.

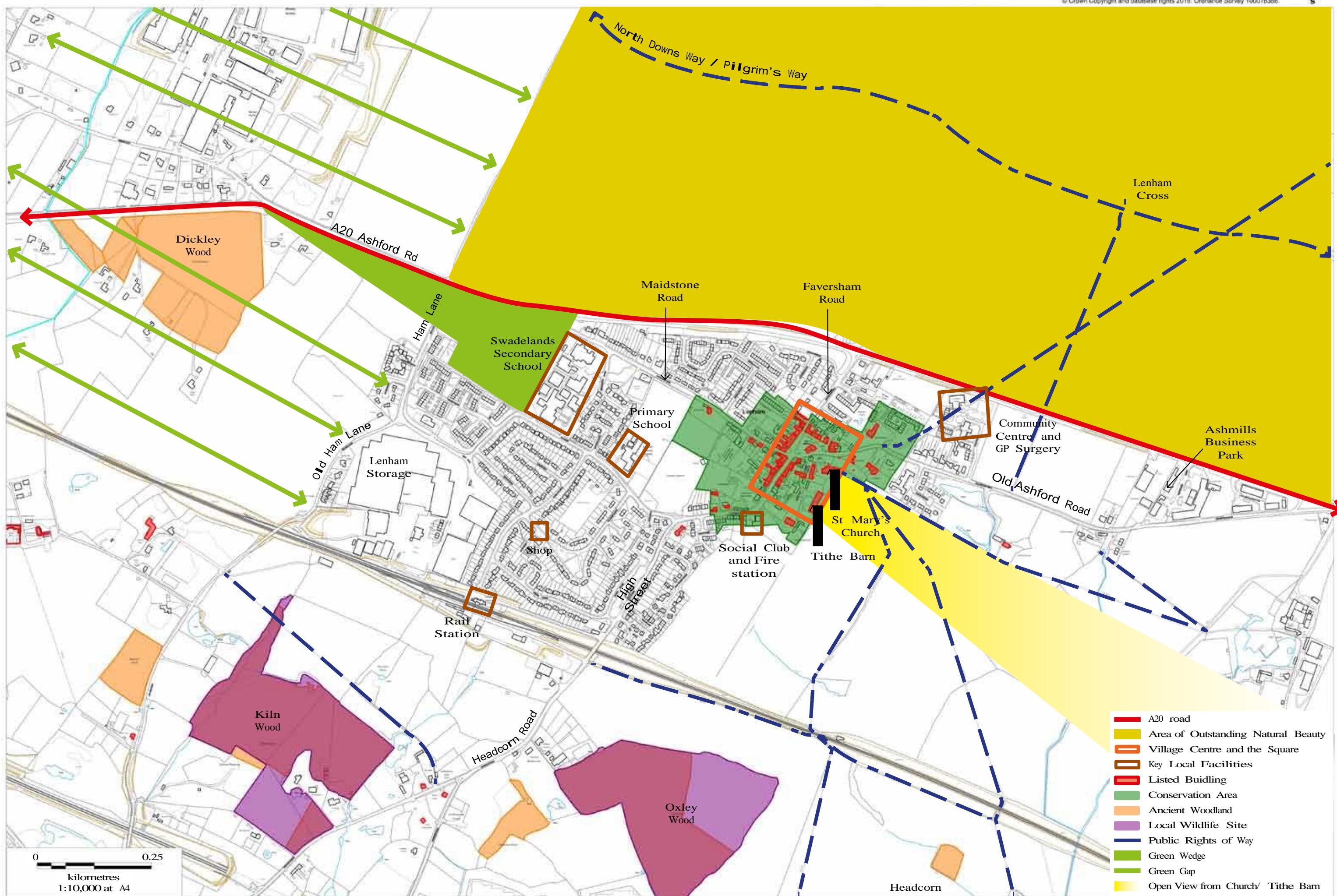
A current planning application for 82 homes on the west corner at Ham Lane (H0-46) is the subject of a planning appeal. Adjacent to this is the site of the recently refused housing application west of Loder Close and Westwood Close (H03-195).

To the south, Lenham runs up to the Ashford-London railway line, with the historic station buildings still evident on both sides of the tracks. South of the railway line are small industrial and employment sites, with access from Headcorn Road, although the recent consent at appeal for housing on the Old Goods Yard site (H0-11) sets a new precedent for this area. Beyond this the landscape is open and flat, and not evident from the AONB to the north due to the village’s position in-between, and the strong landscape edge along the railway line. Kiln Wood and Oxley Wood both create a clear natural edge to this openness either side of Headcorn Road.

Lenham Village 2016



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Old Ham Lane which links this area to the western side of the village is a narrow road lined by trees within Lenham Storage and the hedgerows opposite. The narrow road bridge rises up over the railway line and leads south past Lenham Court, which is set back within extensive private grounds.

2.2 Access and walkability

Lenham village lies adjacent to the A20 road between Maidstone and Ashford, and has four T-junctions or cross roads which provide access to the village. From west to east, the first T-junction is at Ham Lane and serves the west of the village and Lenham Storage which includes HGV traffic. Ham Lane runs through the village, and joins Old Ham Lane over the railway line to the south.

The second T-junction at Maidstone Road leads directly to the housing area north of Swadlands Secondary School, but is aligned as a slip road towards the east onto the A20.

The third and main junction serving the village centre is the cross roads at Faversham Road, which leads directly to the historic village Square, and to the High Street and Headcorn Road further south. To the north it joins rural lanes to the AONB, Faversham and long-distance public rights of way (e.g. the Pilgrim’s Way). As this junction leads directly to the village Square, it is not suitable for additional traffic as it would attract more vehicles through the Square, making that area less attractive for pedestrians and cyclists, and potentially deterring more sustainable local trips into the village from the surrounding residential areas.

The fourth T-junction lies at the end of Ashmills Business Park to the east, and links Old Ashford Road to the A20. There are proposals to extend the

30mph limit on Old Ashford Road to the allocated sites, and provide a footway on the northern side of the road.

Lenham is well served by a variety of public transport services linking it to Maidstone, Ashford and London, as well as other towns and villages.

These are:

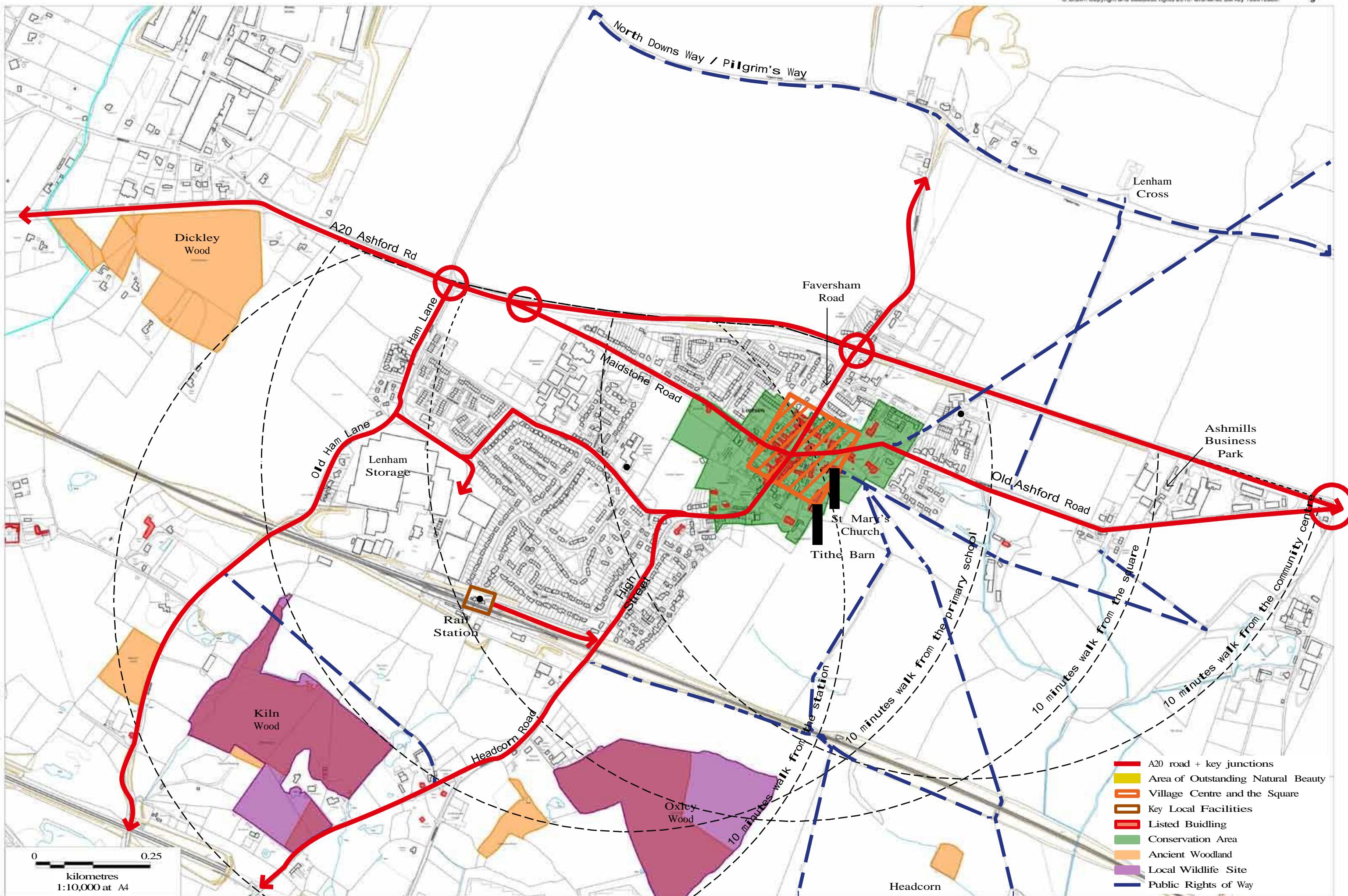
- By train: London Victoria/ St Pancras International to Ashford/ Canterbury West services, running every 30 minutes (or less) and operated by Southeastern Trains. Additional services to London Blackfriars run two trains per day at peak times.
- By coach: 737C Poplar-Lympne or South Willesborough-Eyborne service, running two journeys per day, Monday-Fridays and operated by Buzzlines.
- By bus: 10X Ashford-Maidstone service, with 5-12 journeys per day Monday-Sunday and operated by Stagecoach, and T11 Lenham-Maidstone with one service on Mondays only, operated by Arriva Kent & Surrey.
- School bus – 1 Swadlands Secondary School bus, services at least once a day in each direction in term times, and operated by AJ and NM Carr.

The facilities at Lenham railway station and access to it are very limited, with informal parking arrangements and limited cycle parking; bus stops are not nearby. However, there is concern locally that Headcorn Station to the south (on the London Charing Cross-South East coast line) offers far better services to London, and so attracts commuters from Lenham. This is thought likely to continue so that future residents would drive south to Headcorn unless train services via Lenham can be improved, and the station made more accessible on foot and by public transport.

Lenham Village Access & Walkable Scale



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2.3 Village Centre Location

Due to the unusual shape of the village today, the distances to the shops and facilities in Lenham are at least 5-10 minutes’ walking time (or 400-800m radius) from many areas of the village. This is regarded as a reasonable walking distance to access local facilities (as set out in *Manual for Streets*, 2007). This local accessibility could be improved by better pedestrian and cycle options – e.g. more direct routes, new or wider pavements, cycle lanes, better lighting and better crossings.

There is a concern locally that congestion in the Square and a lack of car parking in the centre are already a problem, and so options to ‘park and walk’ from nearby areas would encourage residents to travel differently and not expect to park in the centre itself. Traffic management could also help to divert village-wide through-traffic away from the Square. The public realm and road in the Square could be radically re-designed to shift priority away from through traffic, and back to people sharing the space.

2.4 Density Study

As part of this review, a density study has been undertaken on housing areas around the village. It looks at the characteristics of housing areas and the aspects of design that influence perceptions of density. This is included in Appendix B. The main observations from the study are that even across the wide-range of housing developments in the village, Lenham’s housing is around 27-37 dwellings per hectare (dw/ha or dph). Newer housing schemes have a higher density, and use the land more prudently to provide on-plot or formal parking arrangements, a good quality public realm and smaller front gardens; private back gardens are reduced as a result.

The draft Local Plan (Regulation 19) policy DM12 sets out a housing density for rural service centres like Lenham at 30 dw/ha, and the SHEDLAA report also uses this density level (which was used in the earlier Regulation 18 Policy H2). More recent high quality housing schemes are typically 35 dw/ha and above. This slightly higher density figure means that less land would be needed for new homes without a loss of housing quality. There are well-known design principles which can be used to define the characteristics of new development to ensure that it fits the local context well.

While local open spaces for amenity and play areas are typically included as an integral part of housing areas (in the net density figure), the provision of strategic open space is calculated on a pro-rata basis so that it is provided by new housing developments and may be adjacent or offsite at set distances. Strategic open space includes allotments, parkland and natural areas, and outdoor sports pitches.

3 Village-wide Infrastructure Needs and Capacity

The population of Lenham Parish is approximately 3,370 and Lenham village has around 2,197 residents (2011 Census data); therefore there are c.1,000 homes in Lenham. If Lenham is to accommodate up to 1,500 homes, this is the equivalent of attracting 3,750 new residents to the village (using 2.5 people per household, also based on 2011 Census data). The existing infrastructure in and around the village will need significant investment in order to cater for this larger population, and the H2(3) policy outlines these as requirements to accompany any housing growth.

At the Stakeholder workshop concerns were voiced about infrastructure as follows:

- the road access and capacity from the M20, on the A20 and at the main local junctions and the impact on the Square;
- the quality of train services, access to the station, and the need for more car parking;
- the need for more parking to support the village centre;
- protecting the water quality in aquifers and surface water drainage;
- health, primary school education and opportunities for employment (retained existing or alternatives).

As part of its evidence gathering, Maidstone Borough Council is assessing the following infrastructure capacity and requirements.

3.1 Access by road and road junctions

The Maidstone Borough Council Draft Integrated Transport Strategy (February 2016) identifies that future housing growth can be

accommodated with mitigation measures for the key junctions. The Lenham Transport Mitigation Study by Mott MacDonald (April 2016) has reviewed the capacity of the road network and local junctions to accommodate housing growth in the area. It examines the optimum location for development based upon forecast future traffic levels, and the capacity of the different road junctions on the A20, to identify potential improvements.

As the majority of car trips from the village are heading towards Maidstone, its recommendations are that to avoid putting extra pressure onto the centre of the village, development would be best located towards the west. The recommended new types of junctions needed are:

- Ham Lane/ Ashford Road (A20) – traffic signals with additional traffic lanes;
- The Square (Faversham Road/ Maidstone Road/ Old Ashford Road/ High Street) – a mini roundabout; and
- Ashford Road (A20)/ Old Ashford Road – traffic signals.

3.2 Access for pedestrian and cyclists

The Maidstone Borough Council Draft Integrated Transport Strategy (February 2016) has identified the need for:

- greater leisure cycling facilities and routes from Lenham to the surrounding villages, and across the North Downs to Lenham (RMB4,6, 7 8);
- cycle routes to and cycle parking at schools, railway stations and local amenities (health, retail and recreation destinations); and
- Lenham Sustainable Transport Package to improve local access options (RMB13), with detailed proposals to be established.

3.3 Public transport services

As the rail services serving Lenham station have been identified as not as attractive as those to other stations nearby, it will be important to identify what future changes may be planned, as well as measures to improve local access to the station by car, public transport, on foot and by bicycle.

The local bus services, which link Lenham to Ashford and Maidstone, will need to be reviewed to ensure that they serve new housing areas, with additional loops as necessary.

3.4 Education

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan Publications Infrastructure Delivery Plan (February 2016) outlines Kent County Council’s plans to provide an additional one form entry at either Harrietsham or Lenham Primary School (timing and location to be confirmed), and a further two form entry primary school in Lenham to cater for the needs associated with new housing.

There is currently no forecast need to expand the capacity of Swadeldens Secondary School to accommodate housing growth; however this will be reviewed by Kent County Council as future pressure on secondary school places may increase from 2019 onwards.

3.5 Healthcare & Community Space

Lenham has a GP surgery which will need to be extended and upgraded to cater for future residents. The need for more community meeting space has not yet been determined, and if needed, could be located within a new local centre if the existing facilities cannot be expanded

satisfactorily. The capacity of the library may also need to be increased, and is to be determined by Kent County Council.

3.6 Retail demand

With a growth in housing in Lenham, there may be a proportionate need for further retail space – for both convenience (groceries) and comparison shopping. This will need to be forecast and carefully planned to ensure that priority is given to supporting the village centre with new retail space wherever possible, followed by other local retail areas.

The remainder of any new convenience retail floorspace could be accommodated in a new local centre close to new housing. An indicative area of up to 1 hectare for this has been assumed at this stage, and it could include other community facilities that cannot be accommodated elsewhere.

3.7 Employment opportunities

Given the location of Lenham Storage in the village and the Marley Sites nearby and the Local Plan policies safeguarding these employment sites, it may be useful to identify other smaller scale employment space demand. Stakeholders reported the high take-up of small scale business space in rural locations, and so assessing the likely future demand for workspace within the village will help to clarify that.

If there is potential unmet need, this could be addressed by new ‘flexible use’ units within a local centre, making them sustainable locations for small businesses or conversion to other uses over time as needs change.

3.8 Public open space

The village is currently served by strategic open spaces, such as the cricket pitch (Lenham Cricket Club), Ham Lane allotments, William Pitt

playing fields, and smaller local open spaces such as the playground on Ham Lane, and skate park at the playing fields, as well as local amenity spaces. It will be important to determine whether there are deficiencies or an overprovision in open space, and which can be addressed as part of planning housing growth in the village.

The Local Plan policy DM22 requires that new housing development will provide open space for new residents on a *pro rata* basis:

Open space type	Draft standard (ha/1,000 population)	Minimum size of facility (ha)
Local Open Space		
Amenity green space	0.7	0.1
Provision for children and young people	0.25	0.25
Strategic Open Space		
Publicly available outdoor sports	1.6	To standards by Sport England or sport governing bodies
Allotments and community gardens	0.2	0.66
Natural/Semi-natural areas of open space	6.5	0.2

These spaces will need to be within key distances to ensure that local people can access facilities easily. If space cannot be found locally, the following maximum distances would apply to spaces away from housing sites:

Open space type	Accessibility standard (radius from open space)
Local Open Space	
Amenity green space	400m
Provision for children and young people	600m
Strategic Open Space	
Publically accessible outdoor sports	1000m
Allotment and community gardens	1000m
Natural/semi natural areas of open space	300m (2ha site), 2km (20ha site), 5km (100ha site), 10km (500ha site)

3.9 Utilities

3.9.1 Sewage management

As the broad location for housing growth at Lenham is planned for post 2026, there is no immediate capacity constraint on wastewater treatment. Southern Water will use the Local Plan, once adopted, to inform its forecast for Lenham Wastewater Treatment Works. This will then guide subsequent investment planning reviews in 2019 and 2024, to plan, fund and deliver the necessary wastewater treatment capacity at the right time, in collaboration with the planning authority and developers.

3.9.2 Water supply

There are no known capacity constraints in the future.

3.9.3 Flood management

There are no known capacity constraints in the future.

3.9.4 Electricity

There are no known capacity constraints in the future.

3.9.5 Gas

There are no known capacity constraints in the future.

3.9.6 Telecoms and Broadband

There are no known capacity constraints in the future.

4 Site Selection Criteria

In order to explore and develop the ‘broad location’ allocation at Lenham, 10 criteria were identified from different sources (including good urban design practice):

- Maidstone Borough Council draft Local Plan 2016 (LP)
- Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (AECOM 2016)
- Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council Draft Integrated Transport Strategy 2016 (ITS)
- Draft Lenham Neighbourhood Plan (LNP)
- Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study (Jacobs 2015)

These are indicated with initials or references where appropriate.

The criteria have been used as initial broad guidelines, and the ideas shown are the result of a ‘best fit’ approach to the wide ranging issues. In no particular order, the criteria were reviewed against the premise that *“The land identified for development will need to...”*

- Be within walking distance (5-10 mins) of the village centre, community centre, the primary and secondary schools, the train station or new facilities. Existing facilities are dispersed around the village, and there will be a need for new facilities too (AECOM 2016);
- Have direct access to a main route: Ham Lane, Old Ham Lane, Headcorn Road, Maidstone Road, High Street, Faversham Road, Old Ashford Road. New housing sites should not use existing residential side streets to reach a main route and the A20;
- Be less visible land as seen from the Kent Downs AONB and Lenham Cross in particular. Many areas are hidden from view due to

- structural landscaping, or the topography (LNP, Jacobs 2015, AECOM 2016);
- Maintain the setting of St Mary’s Church, the Tithe Barn and the Conservation Area. There are key local and longer distance views at the centre of the village to be preserved (LNP, Jacobs 2015, AECOM 2016);
 - Have direct and improved access to the train station. The station access is currently poor, with informal parking arrangements, no direct bus access, and access on only the north side of the station (AECOM 2016);
 - Be deliverable by 2031 to meet actual housing needs, in order to fulfil the draft Local Plan requirements (LP);
 - Maintain a green ‘gap’ between Harrietsham and Lenham, retaining a sense of village identity and preventing coalescence between the settlements (LNP, Jacobs 2015);
 - Link current and proposed housing areas together better, so that future access on foot and by bicycle is encouraged for the village (ITS);
 - Re-provide relocated existing land uses or open spaces locally. Where an existing land use could be relocated, this needs to be close to its existing location and within the village itself; and
 - Offer opportunities to support other village needs (extra parking, etc.), to address local concerns as part of plans for the future (LNP).

4.1 Stakeholder Preferences

At the Stakeholders Workshop, participants were given these suggested criteria and invited to prioritise and refine them if necessary. The criteria that were ranked most highly by the four groups were:

1. Be less visible land as seen from the AONB/ Protect the setting of the AONB/ aquifers/ leisure areas and habitats areas;
2. Maintain the setting of St Mary’s Church, the Tithe Barn and the Conservation Area;
3. Have direct access to a main route: Ham Lane, Old Ham Lane, Headcorn Road, Maidstone Road, Old Ashford Road – but not High Street and Faversham Road;
4. Maintain a green ‘gap’ between Harrietsham and Lenham;
5. Have direct and improved access to the train station;
6. Be within walking distance (5-10 mins) of the village centre, community centre, schools or new facilities;
7. Be deliverable by 2031 to meet actual housing needs.

The remaining criteria were not ranked as highly. These seven key criteria have been used to look at land that has been proposed in the ‘broad location’ allocation in order to explore its potential further.

5 Broad Location Allocation

The ‘Broad Location’ Allocation plan shows the land which is in line with the Regulation 19 allocation. It focuses development to the west and east of the village, and looks at sites that have been proposed in the Call for Sites process, as well as where there has been recent developer interest.

5.1 East of Lenham

Existing site allocations: Given the allocation of sites H1-47 (Tanyard Farm north of Old Ashford Road) and H1-48 (Glebe Gardens), and recent development at Groom Way, Lenham is already growing eastwards along Old Ashford Road. The direct and close relationship of this area to the village Square, the GP surgery and the community centre means that Old Ashford Road will be improved for pedestrian and cycle access. The foreground views from the AONB of the village will also be different in the future, with a swathe of development along the road. The allocated site H1-47 could include ‘park and walk’ overflow parking for the village centre.

Strategy: To the east, the ‘broad location’ land includes the Tanyard Farm sites running from its frontage on Old Ashford Road south to the railway line. The land immediately south and east of St Mary’s Church and the Tithe Barn (east of the High Street, Old School Close, and The Millers) has been excluded from consideration as the landowner has indicated that it is not available for development. Furthermore the options for access - via these existing residential streets or the fire station/ social club area – would not be desirable. Development in these three fields would

have an impact on both long distance views as well as the immediate setting of the Conservation Area and listed buildings.

By focusing the ‘broad location’ land to the east of these fields, it seeks to maintain the setting of St Mary’s Church, the Tithe Barn and the Conservation Area. Where it interrupts the long views eastwards from St Mary’s Church and the Tithe Barn, this could be mitigated with a green corridor running east-west through the development. This area has strong public rights of way linking it directly to the centre of the village nearby and the Stour and Len Valley walks to the south, which would need to form part of its overall structure.

Development in the eastern area however does not fulfil the primary criteria identified at the Stakeholders Workshop of being the less visible land, as seen from the AONB, protecting the setting of it, the aquifers, and leisure and habitats areas. Some fields are less visible than others due to more extensive tree planting along field boundaries, and design layouts will need to identify where further structural planting is required.

It is important to note that the nearby allocated sites may change views from the AONB, and so some of this visibility may be different. Due to the limitations of this review, the importance placed on the relationship with the AONB - through the Stakeholders Workshop - does not necessarily reflect how impacts in other nearby areas have been assessed.

Lenham Village Broad Location Allocation

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Development to the east may increase the traffic pressure on the village centre (as set out in the Lenham Transport Mitigation Study) as the Faversham Road cross roads with the A20 is the closest junction. This would need traffic management measures to require traffic to travel east to join the A20, whether east or westbound.

Importantly, most of the development would be within walking distance (10 minutes) of the village centre, community centre, GP surgery and primary school; and it is deliverable by 2031 to meet housing needs. The proposed development area is 26 hectares and could accommodate 910 homes at an average of 35 dw/ha.

Strategic Open Space: An allocation of land for 1,500 homes would also require land for strategic open space uses - either adjacent to or within agreed access distances of new housing areas. This requirement would equate to 31 ha, and land would need to be identified to accommodate this.

Potential options in the east could be to include more land along Old Ashford Road and south of Ashmills Business Park. The nature of the open space provided here will need to be assessed so that the accessibility range required for certain open space uses is met, but also so that the land is used for more natural informal uses, rather than formal flood lit sports pitches, to suit its visibility from the village and AONB.

5.2 West of Lenham

Existing planning interests: With developer interest at the northern end of Ham Lane (HO3-233 and HO3-195), the nature of the green gap between Lenham and Harrietsham today may change regardless of any strategic growth planned for Lenham. Given the existing incremental and

piecemeal housing developments along Ham Lane, there is an opportunity to clearly delineate housing land and a green gap.

Strategy: To the west, this is land along Ham Lane, with a green buffer identified along the A20 Ashford Road. The land adjacent to Loder Close is included and William Pitt playing field area is relocated further west to provide a green buffer to Dickley Wood, and new housing along Ham Lane. The land south and west of the playing fields and Dickley Wood (down to the railway line) is also included.

As both the eastern and western areas are equidistant from Lenham Primary School, but the land to the west is furthest from the village’s amenities, and the west would be the best location for a combined local centre and new two form entry primary school, which would require 2.2ha. Up to 1 ha has been assumed for a local centre to provide additional community, retail and flexible use space.

The land in the west has direct access to a main route - Ham Lane, and the area could have improved access to the train station, being within 10 minutes’ walk (800m) of it.

However, the land to the west does not maintain a large green ‘gap’ between Harrietsham and Lenham but provides space for a green buffer along the A20 road and to mitigate the foreground views from the AONB. It relocates the existing playing field to form part of a green buffer alongside Dickley Wood, which is unchanged.

The land to the west would not be within 10 minutes’ walk of the village centre, community centre and GP surgery, but would have the new primary school and potentially a local centre. Development to the west

would be the optimum location to avoid increasing traffic pressure on the village centre as traffic heading for the A20 would use Ham Lane as the closest junction.

Importantly the sites considered for housing development are available, and hence deliverable by 2026 to meet Maidstone borough’s housing needs.

This development area is 22 hectares, and could accommodate up to 590 homes (at an average of 35 dw/ ha), plus the relocated playing field, and 3.2ha for local facilities.

Strategic Open Space: As set out above 1,500 homes would also require 31ha for strategic open space. Potential options in the west include more land west of Dickley Wood or south of the railway line to serve the two sides of the village. Some of these locations may be beyond the accessibility range required for certain types of open space, which will need to be carefully assessed.

5.3 Housing Numbers

Looking at the land discussed above, this could provide:

- East: 910 homes, or 61% of homes
- West: 590 homes, or 39% of homes, plus William Pitt playing field relocated to the west, and the 2FE primary school and local centre (3.2ha).

In total this would be c. 1,500 homes on 42ha, with the local amenities (as above), and 31ha of strategic open space is required. A density of 35

dw/ha has been used throughout. More detailed site studies may reduce the overall site density possible, as more information is known.

6 A Possible Option

One of the key activities at the Stakeholders Workshop was a discussion around potential alternative sites for development. The feedback from the discussions has been used to consider a possible option for the ‘broad location’ allocation.

Opportunities to combine housing areas with strategic open spaces have also been sought, local accessibility considered and long term green buffers illustrated. Some of the land needs further examination due to: its visibility from the AONB; relationships to the village’s Conservation Area; known ‘unavailability’ within the Plan period; and, the local desire to maintain a green gap between settlements. The recommendations are summarised here.

6.1 Lenham Village

One of the key tenets of the draft Neighbourhood Plan is the future reuse of the Lenham Storage land as a large brownfield site. Lying within the settlement boundary, Lenham Storage’s premises appear out of context with the small-scale residential character of the village, and the HGV traffic along Ham Lane affects the quality of the local environment there. However, to-date, there has not been any formal indication from the land owners that the site might become available, and Maidstone Borough Council currently has policy in place to safeguard it and other similar areas for future use for employment. Unless either of these factors changes within the Local Plan period, it cannot be considered for new housing development.

In the Stakeholders Workshop, relocating the Secondary School’s playing fields to the west was raised as a means of accommodating a new two

form entry primary school or new housing, as well as a second option of rebuilding a new secondary school on another site locally. The key issue for primary school planning is to provide a walkable catchment area to local homes, and so the new primary school should be located with new housing.

On relocating the secondary school to a less central site, the current site is approx. 6.7ha, and a new school would require 11ha to meet design standards. It would therefore be necessary to establish whether this option is economically viable as it requires more land than at present, plus the cost of providing new school buildings. If it were redeveloped, the aspiration for a ‘green wedge’ from the school playing fields out to Dickley Wood along the A20 would also be lost. For all of these reasons, the secondary school has been omitted from considerations.

6.2 East of Lenham

Existing site allocations: As discussed in section 5.1, the allocation of sites H1-47 (Tanyard Farm north of Old Ashford Road) and H1-48 (Glebe Gardens), and recent development at Groom Way mean that Lenham is already growing eastwards along Old Ashford Road. The close relationship of this area to the village Square, the GP surgery and the community centre means that Old Ashford Road will be improved for pedestrian and cycle access. The foreground views from the AONB of the village will also be different in the future, with a swathe of development along the road.

Lenham Village Possible Option

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Possible alternative strategy: Three areas of land have been identified in the east. Development could take place where Tanyard Farm (south of Old Ashford Road) fronts Old Ashford Road. This small parcel land has been submitted as part of the previous Call for Sites, and would also provide access to land to the south.

One of the less visible sites at Tanyard Farm is the south westerly field, as it has strong landscape planting along its north and east boundaries. This could be accessed from Old Ashford Road, and could potentially have a lower density than other locations (e.g. at 30 dw/ ha) to add more structural landscaping. The adjacent fields (to the south east and east), one of which runs south to the railway embankment and underbridge, are more visible from the AONB. This area has strong public rights of way linking it directly to the centre of the village nearby and the Stour and Len Valley walks to the south.

In the Stakeholders Workshop, this area was widely discussed and was unpopular due to its visibility. Therefore this visibility would need to be reviewed as the allocated sites (H1-47, H1-48) could reduce what is visible in the future.

Further along Old Ashford Road running parallel with Ashmills Business Park is a newly considered land parcel, which could provide housing in the lee of the industrial estate from the AONB. This is within 10-15 minutes’ walk of the village centre, and could contribute to Old Ashford Road’s improvement for non-car users to reach the village, including employees at the business park.

The design of all sites in this area would need to include structural landscaping to take account of views from the AONB, and provide green

rights of way through the development to link the AONB to land further south.

This smaller housing area in the east would be consistent with the findings in the Lenham Transport Mitigation Study (Mott MacDonald 2016), so that less traffic would seek to pass through the Square, and could be directed to the Old Ashford Road junction instead.

Strategic Open Space: Most of Tanyard Farm could accommodate Strategic Open Space uses in order to create a long-term green edge to the settlement, ensuring that development does not spread into these areas in the future, and providing open space within reach of new housing. The open space uses could be more informal and rural areas, rather than flood lit sports pitches, but the land south of Ashmills Business Park might be suitable for sports pitches such as football or hockey, as it is potentially less visible.

Next Steps: As the land running parallel with Old Ashford Road south of Ashmills Business Park has not been included in previous discussions, its availability will need to be established. The visibility of the site from the AONB should also be assessed.

6.3 West of Lenham

Existing planning interests: As discussed in section 5.2, developer interest at the northern end of Ham Lane (HO3-233 and HO3-195) may mean that the nature of the green gap between Lenham and Harrietsham today changes regardless of any strategic growth planned for Lenham. Given the existing incremental and piecemeal housing developments along Ham Lane, there is an opportunity to clearly delineate housing land and create a large green gap with strategic open space uses.

Possible alternative strategy: Housing could front Ham Lane and Old Ham Lane, and the playing fields could be relocated into the green gap behind it to add to the land’s future open space use. This would mean that the housing between Ham Lane and the open space is still at a distance from Dickley Wood.

Ham Lane and Old Ham Lane would both need to be improved for non-car users, and to overcome the barrier created by the regular HGV traffic to Lenham Storage. This development area would also ensure that these improvements create frequent safe crossing points to the housing and the public open space beyond.

The western area would be the best location for a new two form entry primary school and local centre with shops, to ensure that local trips on foot are encouraged.

Strategic Open Space: The area of open space between the housing and Dickley Wood could include a wide range of activities including new and replacement sports pitches further south, away from the AONB views in the north.

6.4 South of Lenham

Existing planning consent: With the recent approval at appeal of housing at the Old Goods Yard site, Maidstone Borough Council’s historic preference of restricting development south of the railway line is subject to additional consideration. Given this area’s proximity and potentially

improved access to Lenham train station nearby, and limited visibility from the AONB, it could be considered for new housing.

Possible alternative strategy: Previous Calls for Sites have indicated a willingness by some landowners for their land to be considered, and four linked areas have been identified.

With access from Old Ham Lane, the land running parallel with the railway line and defined by its southern edge with Kiln Wood (Ancient Woodland) could be suitable for development. It would need significant improvements to the narrow elevated railway bridge on Old Ham Lane for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as managing two-way traffic north of the railway line.

As Kiln Wood lies to the south, a buffer would need to be determined for this area, and strategic open space could be located adjacent to it to soften development edges to the south and east (towards the listed building at Lenham Court).

Directly south of the existing train station platforms and with the potential to link to a new pedestrian bridge to the station, another area of land could accommodate housing and potentially be well located for access to the station. A new bridge could be either to the east via the new housing scheme on the Old Goods Yard site, or via the Knight Asphalte site if it became available, where the former station platform buildings are still visible.

The land would require access to Old Ham Lane, and via the Old Goods Yard site or south of that to Headcorn Road. Improvements would be

required along Headcorn Road for safer pedestrian and cycle access to the railway station, and the informal parking arrangements on the Station Approach Road reviewed. Dennett’s Shaw with its mature trees and hedgerows is nearby, and so buffers to this area would need to be determined. Both areas have the potential to include additional station parking on its south side if a pedestrian bridge were provided.

A newly considered area lies directly south of the Old Goods Yard site, and would have direct access to Headcorn Road. The position of Inkstand Meadow Farm opposite could correspond to a southern edge for development. The availability of this land would need to be determined.

Traffic management measures would be needed on the High Street to direct traffic from the south away from the village Square and the existing residential part of Ham Lane, to reach the A20. This would need to be through the land south of the railway line.

East of Headcorn Road and south of the railway line is a fourth area of land which is newly considered. It is well located for access to the High Street and railway station on foot and by bicycle, and is not prominent in views from the AONB due to the strong landscape along the railway line. However the land is part of Court Lodge Farm, and has not been put forward in previous Calls for Sites. If it were to become available, it would be well placed for access to the village centre.

The Old Ham Lane bridge would be a key link for new residents in the south to reach local facilities in the west, and its capacity to accommodate additional traffic has not yet been tested. A solution would need to be identified, and developers would need to justify this in due course.

Strategic Open Space: Public open space in this area could provide a green buffer between Kiln Wood and Dennett’s Shaw and new housing, and so would be suitable for more informal natural uses rather than sports pitches.

Next Steps: The integration of the southern area would be most successful if pedestrian access to the rail station is direct via a new bridge, and this will depend upon Network Rail and the availability of land adjacent to the station, i.e. at Knight Asphalte land or the Old Goods Yard site.

Improvements to the station car parking area, and pedestrian and cycle access from Headcorn Road via the existing lane would also be needed. In order to ensure that new residents use Lenham station, it will be important to safeguard and seek improvements in rail services and passenger facilities and to link bus services with the station in the future, to discourage trips to Headcorn station instead.

6.5 Housing Numbers

Looking at the land discussed above, this could provide:

- East: 480 homes, or 32% of homes
- West: 420 homes, or 28% of homes, plus William Pitt playing field relocated to the west, and the 2FE primary school and local centre (3.2ha),
- South: 600 homes or 40% of homes.

In total this would be c. 1,500 homes on 42ha, with the local amenities (as above), and 31ha of strategic open space, as required. A density of 35

dw/ha has been used throughout, except for part of Tanyard Farm, where 30 dw/ha was used. More detailed site studies may reduce the overall total slightly, as more information is known.

7 Managing Design Quality

As the draft Neighbourhood Plan identifies, it will be important to seek high quality design for Lenham’s growth and put mechanisms in place to manage it. The Urban Design and Density Study (Appendix B) looks at key design characteristics that can affect how places are perceived and whether they appear to be in keeping or at odds with the local context. These are largely about a development’s relevance to its location; whether it has a logical layout for access and links between places; and, includes variety and uniformity in the design of the homes, streets, and incidental spaces.



More specifically this would apply to:

- Housing types – including all forms of houses and flats to make street scenes, rather than homogeneous housing estates;
- Storey heights – identifying places where varying building heights will signal more important spaces or local landmark locations to help orientation, and other areas where a uniformity of building storeys would create a more cohesive view;
- How much landscape within housing developments is visible from public realm, and whether this should be minimal in central areas, and more generous in edge locations;
- Streets, public spaces and how parking arrangements work to ensure that cars do not dominate the street scene;
- Front gardens – what are typical sizes in the vicinity (the setback from the pavement to building fronts), their role (e.g. planting, parking), and plot boundaries (e.g. hedgerows, low walls, fencing, railings, open across several plots).
- Building features and overall form – the proportions of buildings and roofs, with porches, bay windows, chimneys, and balconies which may be added, and window proportions.
- Materials and colours – how different materials are used for key features such as porches, bay windows, exposed gable ends, and whether the colours are harmonious or contrast with natural materials found locally.

It is important to recognise that the architectural style of new housing does not need to be traditional in order to fit the context, but the proportions of the buildings and the spaces around them will provide clear visual links between the old and new.

There are many mechanisms for promoting, defining and controlling high quality design. These are:

- Via Local Plan policies, which may already be in place
- Via Neighbourhood Plan policies, and specific to Lenham or parts of the village
- Development briefs (SPDs) written especially for individual sites and in detail
- Area-based Design Guides, identifying the design characteristics of the wider area
- Site specific design codes, defining the key characteristics which would apply to one or a number of local sites, and
- Design Review Panels – whether led by Maidstone Borough Council, or part of how the Parish Council responds to planning applications. Design review panels invite external and local experts to examine and advise on proposed schemes.

In many cases, it is the availability of resources which determines which approach is used, and whether design issues and expectations are set out in advance, or once planning applications submitted. There are considerable advantages in establishing in advance what developers are expected to deliver, and the scale of the potential growth at Lenham warrants a comprehensive strategy from the outset for what is to be expected in detailed design proposals.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Overview

The objective of this study has been to explore the ‘broad location’ allocation at Lenham in more detail than was indicated in the draft Local Plan. It has reviewed the locations for potential growth at Lenham, and the likely deliverable housing numbers.

The ‘broad location’ allocation can accommodate 1,500 homes in the village, and which are deliverable towards the end of the Local Plan period (2026-2031). There are further studies to be undertaken to understand its potential impacts, infrastructure needs, and the precise capacity of different areas further.

8.2 Additional information needed

The earlier chapters outlining potential development land highlight a number of areas where further information would be needed. These are:

- As the size of the future village population could be equivalent to Lenham’s population today, it will be important to undertake a retail capacity study. The village shops are already popular with those living outside the area and passing tourists, and so planning for the needs of future demand is essential. It is possible that some of this extra retail demand (for grocery or convenience shopping) can be accommodated at a local centre closer to some of the new housing, without detracting from the village centre’s strengths.

- The village has existing open spaces for a variety of uses, and new development will provide proportionate strategic and local open spaces (calculated per head). However, it is important to assess the existing open space needs, so that any shortfall or overprovision in facilities or spaces can be addressed through the changes associated with new development.
- The Jacobs Landscape Character Study (2015) does not include all of the sites identified in this review, and does not comment upon future visibility issues from site allocations. This study should be updated in order to have a comparable evidence base for all potential sites.
- A detailed study and discussions with Network Rail about Lenham Station should be undertaken in order to establish the feasibility of and best location for a new pedestrian bridge. Options for improving ground level access to the railway station by car, on foot, by bus and by bicycle need to be explored and from both the north and south sides. This should also include future rail services and whether in the future Lenham is likely to be a more attractive station, or effective connections to other stations for non-car users would be appropriate.