



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter E: Maidstone Borough Council 2nd Stage Masterplan and Explanation of Evolution

- E.1 The “original” masterplan was prepared/submitted in response to the LPA’s “call for sites” in May 2019. This represented the preliminary thoughts of the Borough Council in terms of what “could” potentially be provided for and was largely based upon a desk-based exercise at the time due to the embryonic stage of the Local Plan process. The illustrative layout that accompanied the submission at the time was purely indicative, and this was made very clear in all documents at that time.
- E.2 The LPA subsequently sought further information from our Client (in Oct 2019), which in the main comprised survey information and using their findings to justify (or indeed amend) the intended red-line and project scope. Following a procurement process, our Client commissioned a series of technical studies – RSK – and they provided their draft reports in late Feb/March 2020. These survey findings indicated that the initial masterplan, which was purely illustrative, would need to be updated (ie. the 2nd Stage masterplan) so as to respond to the various opportunities and constraints identified by RSK.
- E.3 The primary matters that have evolved relate to the following:
- *Potential new motorway junction & HS1 stop* - RSK Transport advised against a motorway junction and HS1 stop, and instead advocates a sustainable transport strategy to include making use of Charing and Lenham stations via a guided bus loop, with the possibility of a new station between them in the future. This reflects subsequent discussions with Highways England, who would not support a new access onto the motorway for a new settlement less than 10,000 dwellings.
 - *Areas of high archaeological potential* – RSK Heritage (and KCC Archaeology) advised of an area of significant archaeological interest in the central part of the site, between

Chapel Farm (Royton Manor) and Mount Castle Farm – that should ideally be kept free from development (and preserved in-situ).

- *Need for new Secondary School* – subsequent engagement with KCC Education have indicated there is substantial spare capacity (circa 50%) at the existing Lenham Secondary School, which should be utilised in advance of the consideration of any new provision. Secondary provision is now proposed in the form of off-site financial contributions (i.e. CIL).

E.4 The above matters give rise to the subsequent main changes in the evolution of a (technically informed) 2nd Stage masterplan:

- *New vehicular links to/from the A20* – in the absence of a new motorway junction, vehicular access will need to be gained via the A20. RSK Transport has advised this should be in the form of 2No new junctions heading southwards to the proposed new settlement south of the mainline railway. They also advise the need for 2No new rail bridges, in addition to the existing Forstal Road bridge.
- *Potential new mainline rail station/halt* – in the absence of a potential new HS1 station, RSK Transport advocates an enhanced sustainable transport strategy, inc the potential for a new mainline station/halt in the medium/longer term. This will require enhanced links to Lenham Railway Station in particular, both for buses and ped/cycle routes in the western part of the Site.
- *New "Royton Manor Town Park"* – in seeking to fully respect the area of highest archaeological interest, it is proposed to retain this extensive area for a "Town Park", and it will create a new focus for the central part of the scheme. This area was also identified as having significant "landscape views" looking out from the Site, and its enhancement as a Town Park will capitalise upon such views. It will be carefully landscaped designed and also provide for substantial biodiversity net gains. It will become a "green heart" at the centre of the new Garden Community.
- *Relocated "Country Park"* – in the absence of a new motorway junction, any new development south of the M20 would require significant new infrastructure over the M20 and CTRL/HS1. This would not only likely be costly prohibitive but would also result in a more segregated form of development from the "main core". In the light of

this, and the proposed new “Town Park” in the centre of the scheme, and the need to provide for

enhanced bus/ped/cycle links from the western part of the scheme, it is proposed to relocate the Country Park to the area south of the M20. This would form part of an integrated network of blue and green infrastructure, following the Great Stour, enhancing some of the existing wetlands in this location and utilising existing footpaths/bridges to create circular links to the core of the development.

- *Western parcel* – following the relocation of the previously proposed Country Park (for the reasons above), this area now provides for an increased level of development:
 - In the southern part, this will respect the extant mineral allocation (at Chapel Farm) in forming the latter phase of development;
 - a suitably designed “cordon sanitaire” will be provided to the existing sewage treatment works;
 - an enhanced biodiversity corridor to the Great Stour River (at twice the distance recommended by RSK Ecology);
 - In the northern part (ie outside the extant mineral allocation), this will form an early phase of development in order to ensure the enhanced bus/ped/cycle links to Lenham Station and Secondary School from the outset.

E.5 In addition to the above major changes, the following principles are also reflected in the “revised” masterplan:

- *Retention of existing Rose Lane Industrial Estate* – this is now shown to be retained and extended to provide for new employment area. This would also utilise the eastern new access road from the A20.
- *Retention of all existing properties* – all existing properties (within the red-line) are shown as being retained. We have also provided for a “10m green buffer” to each retained property.
- *Revised red-line* – we have excluded areas of land where we have been advised that landowners do not wish to form part of the proposed scheme, ie most notably the area to the south of Lenham Heath Road and Hubbard’s Farm (south of the M20).
- *“Green hubs”* – in the light of RSK Heritage comments, we have created extended formal/informal “green spaces” at “The Forstal” and in the vicinity of “Crabbe Farm”.

- E.6 The reasoning and evolution behind the above changes and subsequent reflections upon the 2nd Stage Masterplan are also set out in the accompanying booklet: "Heathlands Design Concept" (June 2020).