



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter I: Employment Statement

Introduction

- I.1 A sustainable Garden Community should provide for a vibrant, diverse and affordable community – with the provision of a range of employment, community facilities and a range of housing opportunities.
- I.2 Without this, new garden communities run the risk of becoming dormitory commuter suburbs – something that is the antithesis of the original Garden City idea.
- I.3 In examining this, it is important to recognise that both the Government and TCPA do not consider there is a “*single template*” or “*one size fits all*” and that it is important for “*local areas to adopt innovative approaches and solutions to creating great places, rather than following a set of rules.*”
- I.4 The TCPA is very clear that its Garden City principles “*are not a blueprint or rigid set of rules*”, but rather “*a framework for good place-making*” and upon which “*innovation and imagination should be applied to the specific context of individual projects and locations.*”
- I.5 The starting point in this exercise is to first establish an understanding of the existing employment patterns of local residents, and then secondly, to understand the wider context within which other local employment opportunities are available.

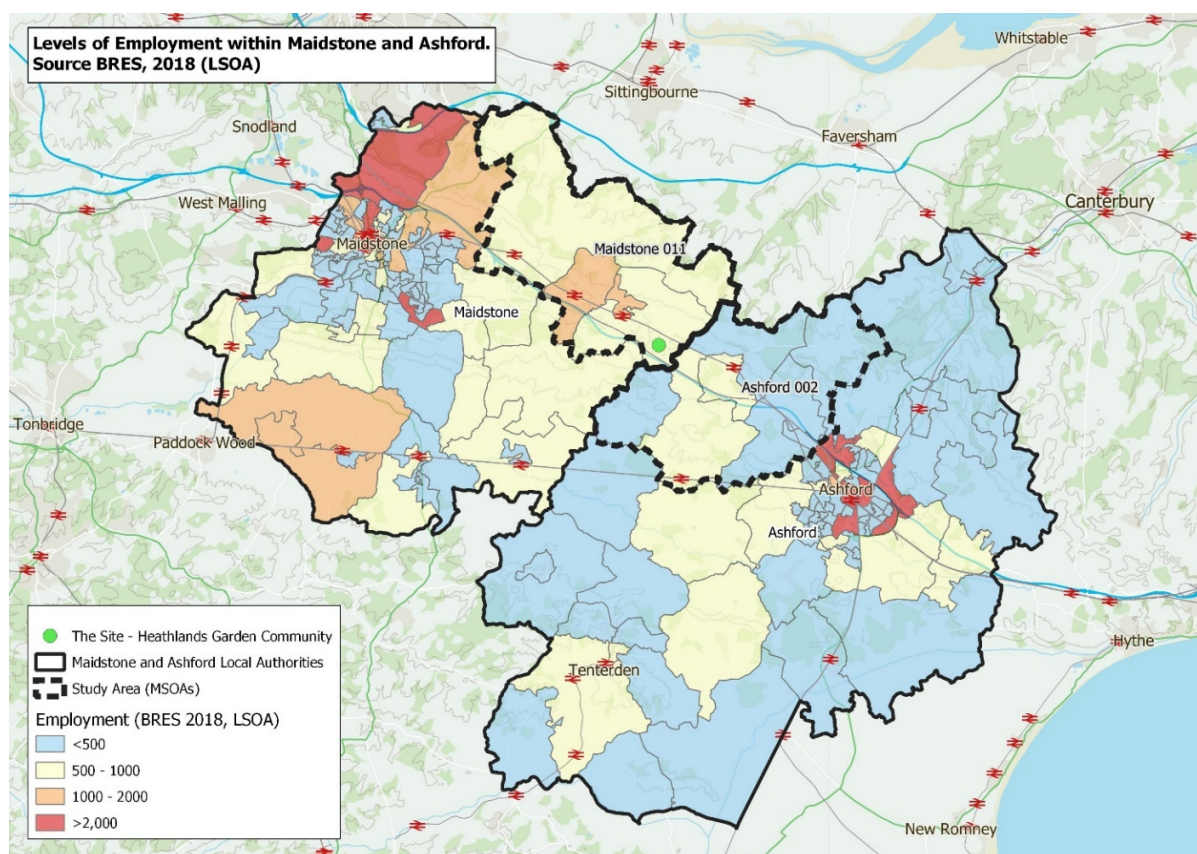
Existing Employment Patterns

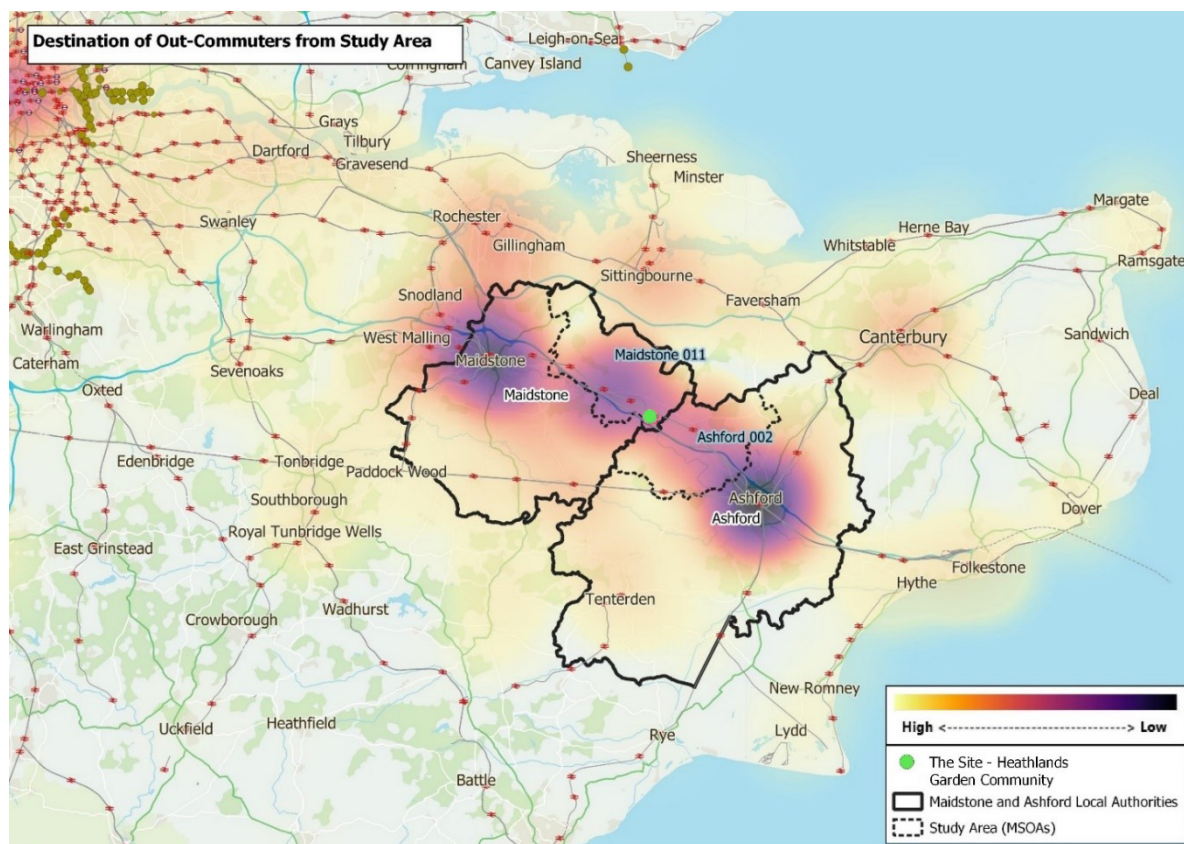
- I.6 The first part of our response establishes the context for employment at Heathlands, based on the relationship between place of residence and place of work revealed by the last Census.
- I.7 The Census analysis is focused on the Lenham and Charing area, settlements that sit either side of the proposed location for Heathlands, using data collected at middle super output area¹ Maidstone 011 and Ashford 002.

¹ Output areas contain in the region of 110 to 140 households and are the building blocks of Census geography. Census data is made available at ‘super output area’ level, which are groups of output areas. ‘Lower super output area’ (LSOA) are smaller groupings and ‘middle super output area’ (MSOA) are larger groupings.

- I.8 In common with the Borough-wide position for Maidstone and Ashford, the Census analysis reveals a degree of self-containment that contradicts popular opinion that these are dormitory settlements for long distance commuters. Of Lenham/Charing's working population (age 16+) in 2011 (about 7,600 persons), the workplace destinations were as follows:
- a) 19% mainly worked at or from home
 - b) 10% had no fixed place of work (e.g. trades/construction workers)
 - c) 40% worked within Maidstone or Ashford district (including 12% who worked locally to Lenham and Charing)
 - d) 32% worked further afield (long distance commuters, widely dispersed; 20% in other parts of Kent and 9% working in Greater London)
- I.9 The workplace distribution of Lenham/ Charing residents is mapped at Figure 1. Note the influence of Maidstone and Ashford, where the concentration of employment opportunities in each town define the extent of a "dumbbell-shaped" area of influence, connected by a less significant (in numerical terms) concentration of more local workplace destinations along the M20/A20 corridor.

Figure 1: Place of Work Destination for Lenham/Charing Residents





Source: Barton Willmore and ONS 2020

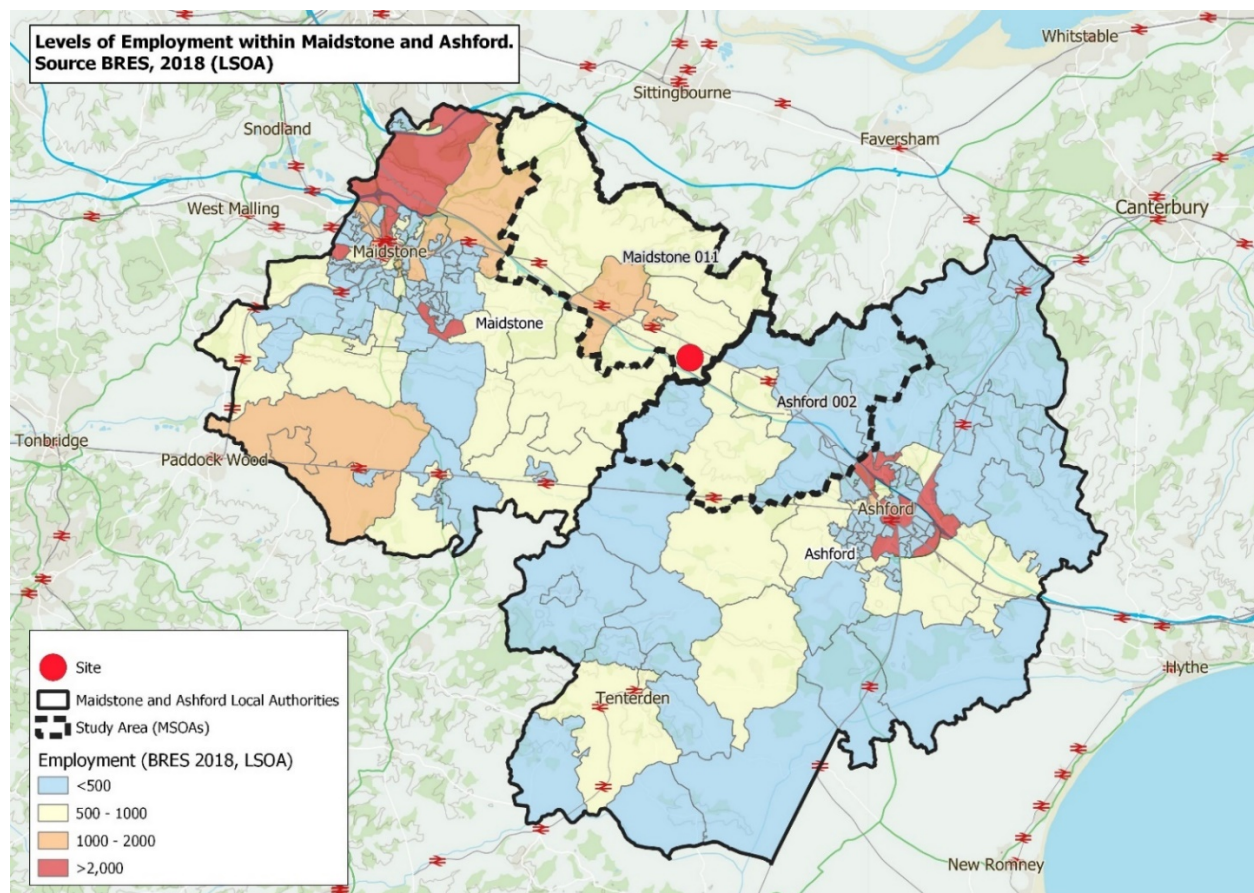
Wider Employment Opportunities

- I.10 The Lenham/ Charing Census analysis establishes a sound starting point for understanding the potential relationship between residents of a new community at Heathlands and their place of work.
- I.11 Heathlands lies almost equidistant from Maidstone (15km) and Ashford (12km), and between Lenham Station (4km) and Charing Station (4km). From Lenham and Charing, the centres of Maidstone and Ashford can be reached in about 15 minutes by rail. A rapid bus service from Heathlands could connect to the local stations at Lenham and Charing in under 10 minutes. A Heathlands rail stop would reduce travel time further.
- I.12 To put the accessibility to the major local centres of employment from Heathlands in context, average commuting times for Ashford and Maidstone residents is 31 and 35 minutes respectively (ONS, 2016).

- I.13 The significance of Maidstone and Ashford is best understood by reference to survey data² collected on behalf of ONS that provides the basis for estimated job number in each town:
- The Maidstone urban area accommodates an estimated 54,000 jobs, over 70% of the Borough;
 - Similarly, the Ashford urban area accommodates over 35,000 jobs, 65% of the Borough total.
- I.14 In total, Heathlands would sustainably connect to circa 90,000 jobs today, a number that is predicted to increase over the next 10 years, by 7% in Maidstone and 8% in Ashford (Oxford Economics, April 2020).
- I.15 Forecast employment growth is the result of losses in some activities and gains in others. There are forecast to be gains in professional services, a grouping of activities that can be continued at home if necessary. In Maidstone, employment in professional services is forecast to increase by 11% and in Ashford by 12%.
- I.16 Essential to Heathlands being a sustainable and future proofed place, resilient to changing demographics and future growth, is the principle of enshrining and integrating smart technology measures into its design. Preliminary discussions have therefore been held with BT on how to integrate 21st Century thinking and technology into 21st Century Garden Villages.
- I.17 The installation of “high speed fibre” to the premises as standard at Heathlands will improve the ability to work from home, meaning that for residents who work in professional services, homeworking could become a more regular occurrence than before the present Coronavirus pandemic, increasing daytime activity with obvious benefits to local services and local economic resilience.
- I.18 Furthermore, Heathlands is also being designed in anticipation of the opportunities presented by technological change such as driverless cars and renewable energy measures.

² The Business register and employment survey (BRES), the official source of employee and employment estimates by detailed geography and industry.

Figure 2: The Local Concentration of Employment Opportunities in Maidstone and Ashford



Source: Barton Willmore and ONS 2020

- I.19 The Lenham/ Charing Census based position implies the following distribution of an assumed 4,000 employed residents.
- I.20 Commentary is added concerning the potential for this number to either be increased or reduced, based on our understanding of the local economy and emerging thinking on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic:
- 750 would work mainly at or from home; a figure we would expect to be greater if Heathlands existed today and remain relatively high until a coronavirus vaccine is available.

Thereafter, the ability to work from home, which is sector dependent, will have a bearing on the amount of time spent working at home;

- b) 390 would have no fixed place of work; it is reasonable to assume this remains constant;
- c) 1,580 would work within Maidstone or Ashford district; the potential for this to increase includes:
 - i. Heathlands employment land, the district and local centres at Heathlands (700 to 900 jobs);
 - ii. The employment allocation at Junction 8 M20 (800 to 1,200 jobs);
 - iii. Employment growth in (the towns of) Maidstone and Ashford, where the bulk of local employment is based (e.6,600 net new jobs over the next ten years under a baseline scenario);
- d) 1,280 would work further afield; a number we would expect to reduce if, i) the prevalence of home working increases and ii) the developments listed above (including serviced offices / workspace at Heathlands) create opportunities that our new residents are attracted to and able to take advantage of.

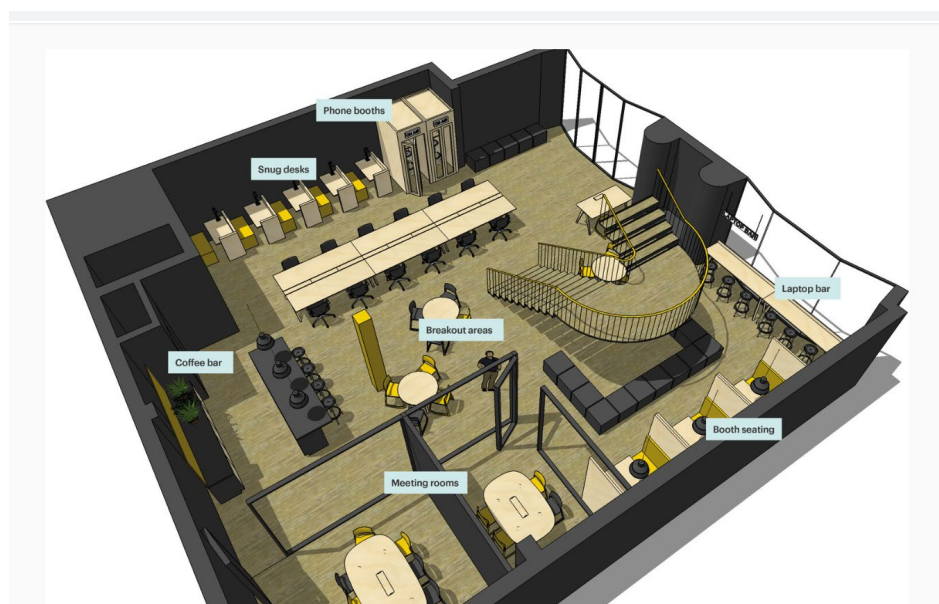
- I.21 A key issue; how many of the 1,280 (32%) 'long distance' commuters can we reasonably expect to retain more locally, either at home, regularly using serviced office space in the District Centre, working at our employment allocation, working at M20 J8 (Segro/Roxhill's development at Woodcut Farm), or working in either Maidstone or Ashford.
- I.22 We have already introduced the prospect of more working from home, by residents employed in professional services (in Maidstone and Ashford and further afield, but largely in Kent) who able to work from home.
- I.23 This would not necessarily impact upon the proportion of home or mainly home-based workers, but it could reasonably be expected to create a significant cohort of part home based employed residents, contributing to the daytime vitality of Heathlands.

The Proposed Employment Offer at Heathlands

- I.24 Just as the decision to promote land at Heathlands has been informed, amongst other factors, by the need to embrace sustainable commuting, a key objective of the employment offer is to improve upon the existing relatively high containment rate of about 70% of employed residents working in the tightly defined dumbbell shaped area of influence, bookended by Maidstone and Ashford and identified at Figure 1.

- I.25 To that end, the employment offer, supporting a total of 850 new jobs, will comprises the following:
- District and local centre:
 - 110 retail jobs (A1-A5) across 2,500 sqm GEA
 - 200 office jobs (B1a) across 3,000 sqm GEA managed workspace / offices
 - 120 jobs in the three primary schools (approximately 40 in each)
 - Employment land:
 - 420 B1c/B2/B8 jobs across 20,320 sqm GEA (80% B1c/B2; 20% B8)
- I.26 230 jobs at the District Centre and two Local Centres will ensure that Heathlands satisfies its own local retail and primary school place needs.
- I.27 In the District Centre, we propose office uses in premises to be operated as managed workspace. This will support self-employed residents, micro start-ups and residents who do not need to be permanently office based but require office services, facilities, or meeting space not available at home.
- I.28 We provisionally estimate that a 3,000 sqm purpose-built serviced office / workspace would have the capacity for about 200 users and we would expect relatively high turnover / casual use alongside some more permanent occupiers.
- I.29 An example of managed workspace offer envisaged is Contingent Works in Bromley, due to open this summer. The offer comprises hot desks, fixed desks, private offices and shared studios, a mix of spaces to suit a range of needs, plus meeting rooms, phone booths, refreshments, super-fast wifi, exhibition space and networking opportunities.

Figure 3: Contingent Works, Bromley



- I.30 Turning to the employment land, the Maidstone EDNS Stage 1 Report identifies that industrial demand tends to fall within a size range of between c.5,000sqft and 20,000sqft (460sqm – 1,900sqm), with smaller units generally sought for B1c/B2 uses. At the smaller end of the market, there is also reported to be pent up demand for freehold units between 1,500 and 2,500sqft (140sqm – 230sqm) for flexible B1c/B2/B8 uses. Demand for industrial space tends to increase with proximity to the M20 motorway and to centres of population, with the M20 corridor representing the prime location for demand within the Borough.
- I.31 The Stage 1 report adds that most demand is reported to come from locally based firms, seeking new premises for expansion and/or to upgrade. The Stage 2 report adds that just over two thirds of businesses expect to or possibly will expand or relocate during the next 5 years. Of these most hope to relocate to another site in the borough.
- I.32 We would expect Heathlands to attract locally based firms seeking to expand or upgrade, the site benefiting from its location along the M20 corridor, equidistant and easily accessible to both Maidstone and Ashford by road and rail. Employment for up to 420 could be supported across 20,000 sqm in a mix of small units of 140sqm to 230sqm and larger units up to 1,000 sqm, the majority (circa 60%) for B1c and B2 uses, the reminder for small scale B8.
- I.33 On some of the employment land workspace for small, clean industrial /environmental start-up and follow on businesses could also be developed. Examples of the workspace envisaged include the under-construction Maidstone Innovation Centre at the Kent Medical Campus and the Innovation Studios in Medway. Offering both large and small office and storage space, this workspace ensures that new businesses can be retained as they need to expand.

Figure 4: Medway Innovation Studios (left) and Maidstone Innovation Centre under construction (right)



- I.34 The Maidstone EDNS Stage 2 Report concludes that there is a need for at least 6.8ha and up to 22.7ha B1c/B2 employment land and 10.2 to 27.8 ha B8 employment land. On an 60/40 basis, Heathlands would account for 5% to 18% of B1c/B2 need and 3% to 8% of B8 need.
- I.35 Construction of Heathlands will create employment in construction and associated sectors. Assuming a construction cost of £1bn, we can expect approximately 500 direct full-time equivalent jobs and 500 indirect full-time equivalent jobs to be created and sustained over a 20-year construction period.



Concluding Comments

- I.36 The area local to Heathlands (Lenham, Charing and environs) creates a relatively narrow area of commuting influence, evidenced by the fact that in 2011, about 70% of residents either worked from home, had no fixed place of work, worked in the immediate surroundings or travelled to Maidstone or Ashford. Of the remainder, most worked elsewhere in Kent and 9% in Greater London.
- I.37 In employment terms, the vision for Heathlands is to increase that level of containment. This will be supported by new employment opportunities at Heathlands, at nearby Woodcut Farm and in both Maidstone and Ashford.
- I.38 The offer at Heathlands will enable people who are able to work from home to do so more often. It will provide a base for the self-employed and employed who require office services that may not be available at home. In this way it will enable more daytime activity, supporting local services and promoting well-being by reducing the need to commute daily, whether to Maidstone, Ashford or London.
- I.39 In addition, it will meet identified need for industrial premises and provide a base to start and incubate new business. In combination and supported by a new ped/cycle and bus link to Lenham Station, these factors will improve upon the extant high level of self-containment and support sustainable economic growth.
- I.40 The above reflects the present variation and flexibility of existing employment opportunities, and it is fully intended that such flexibility continues into the evolution of Heathlands. We will continue to engage with MBC Economic Development Team, Locate in Kent and LPA Officers in achieving an innovative and responsive employment offer.
- I.41 Such employment opportunities could be further expanded if we were to also explore the area north of the mainline railway and south of the A20 – as part of the “future development potential” areas identified on the latest masterplan.