

# Maidstone Design & Sustainability Plan DPD

Maidstone Borough City Council

**Front cover to be updated**

March 2023

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## Foreword

I am again delighted to introduce the next stage of the Maidstone Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document. This is the second Regulation 18 consultation, which builds on the document consulted on in November and December 2022, and I would like to thank everybody who took the time to respond to that framework document, which has been important in shaping this next iteration.

The importance of quality design, is a topic which is gaining increased recognition, and Maidstone Borough Council is determined to place our Borough at the forefront of this. Likewise, the issue of sustainability is becoming more prominent in all facets of our lives and indeed the manner in which we conduct business, and Maidstone is equally determined to embed its commitment to sustainability as a key component of all of our policy and strategy work. This is why we have chosen to include the various ways in which we can ensure that our built environment reflects this commitment as a key tenet of this document.

It is the continued and growing importance of these topics to Maidstone's future that has led to us approaching this as part of a separate and freestanding Development Plan Document (DPD). This will sit alongside our existing Local Plan, which is currently being reviewed, and will carry the same weight as that Local Plan in terms of planning decisions, the negotiation of good design and high levels of sustainability within individual development proposals, and indeed the strength of our hand in fighting planning appeals when developers refuse to respect our Borough with the quality of development we feel it deserves.

The previous consultation on this DPD was high level, and sought feedback on some general themes and issues that were being considered for inclusion. We felt this to be important in ensuring that such a high profile document, and one which we hope will have a long shelf life in order to bring lasting and consistent benefits, reflecting the true priorities of the Borough's communities and other stakeholders.

The responses received have informed this document, which now develops our themes and issues into more detailed objectives, and expands upon the draft policies which we think will help us to ensure that our aspirations are underpinned by a robust technical approach which provides us with a high level of certainty and gives developers clear and unambiguous guidance around Maidstone's expectations of them.

Thank you again for your time, and we look forward to receiving your views.

Councillor Paul Cooper

Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure

# 01. Introduction

## 1.1 How to Comment

We want you to help us shape the future of the borough of Maidstone. We therefore encourage and welcome your comments on the approaches to design and sustainability set out in this document. To aid efficient analysis, please use the proforma that accompanies this document on the Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document (D&S DPD) webpage (LINK). Comments that do not use the proforma will still be accepted – please submit these as per instructions on the webpage linked above or email your comments to [ldf@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@maidstone.gov.uk).

The consultation runs from X at X and finishes on X at X.

## 1.2 About this Consultation

This document is the Preferred Approaches (Regulation 18b) for the Maidstone D&S DPD. It is the second public consultation on the development of this document, the first being the Scoping, Themes and Issues (Regulation 18a) document which underwent public consultation from October to December 2022.

This Regulation 18b D&S DPD builds upon the Regulation 18a document and develops the preferred approaches to key policy areas. Having considered responses and to the Regulation 18a consultation, the Preferred Approaches have been developed for the D&S DPD for the next round of public consultation.

## 1.3 Purpose of the D&S DPD

We are preparing this DPD because we want to ensure that all new development in the Borough is sustainable and of high-quality design. Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Priorities recognise their role in leading and shaping the borough as it grows. The Strategic Plan identifies the importance of high-quality housing supported by the necessary infrastructure; safe, clean and green neighbourhoods; safe and desirable homes which enable good health and wellbeing; and making Maidstone a thriving place which is open for business, attractive for visitors and an enjoyable and prosperous place to live. We are therefore creating this D&S DPD to acknowledge the value and significance of ensuring good quality design and sustainability in all future development proposals.

Promoting quality design of the highest standard for new homes and neighbourhoods, workplaces, town centres and employment areas is key to preserving and enhancing the character of urban and rural areas across Maidstone Borough. Therefore, the D&S DPD will enable the Council to set a new benchmark for the quality of development in Maidstone, helping to deliver the Maidstone Strategic Plan's priorities.

Equally, the Council is committed to delivering growth in a sustainable manner and the climate change agenda has become increasingly prominent both nationally and locally. The D&S DPD should, therefore, embed design and sustainability requirements across a series of geographic scales in adopted planning policy, delivering tangible actions that reflect the Borough's declaration of a Biodiversity and Climate Emergency in 2019.

The D&S DPD will be an illustrated document that will provide residents, developers, and other stakeholders with a clear and consistent understanding of the development standards necessary to meet policy requirements in Maidstone Borough.

## 1.4 Background of the Development Plan and the D&S DPD

This D&S DPD is a planning policy document that makes up part of Maidstone's Development Plan. Development Plans sit at the heart of planning and set out a vision and framework for the development of the area. In Maidstone Borough, the Development Plan is formed of the Local Plan, seven adopted Neighbourhood Plans, and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The Maidstone Local Plan Review has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination which commenced in September 2022 and is ongoing. Once formally adopted, the Local Plan Review will provide the overall strategy for the Borough along with a range of non-strategic policies, and the Neighbourhood Plans set out planning policies for the development and use of land in a local area.

Together with the other development plan documents, this DPD will be the basis for decision-making and the Council will assess planning applications against these policies, which complement the Local Plan but offer a finer grain of guidance on matters of design and sustainability (and it will provide a firmer basis for the negotiation of applications and the defence of planning appeals for approximately 15 years post-adoption).

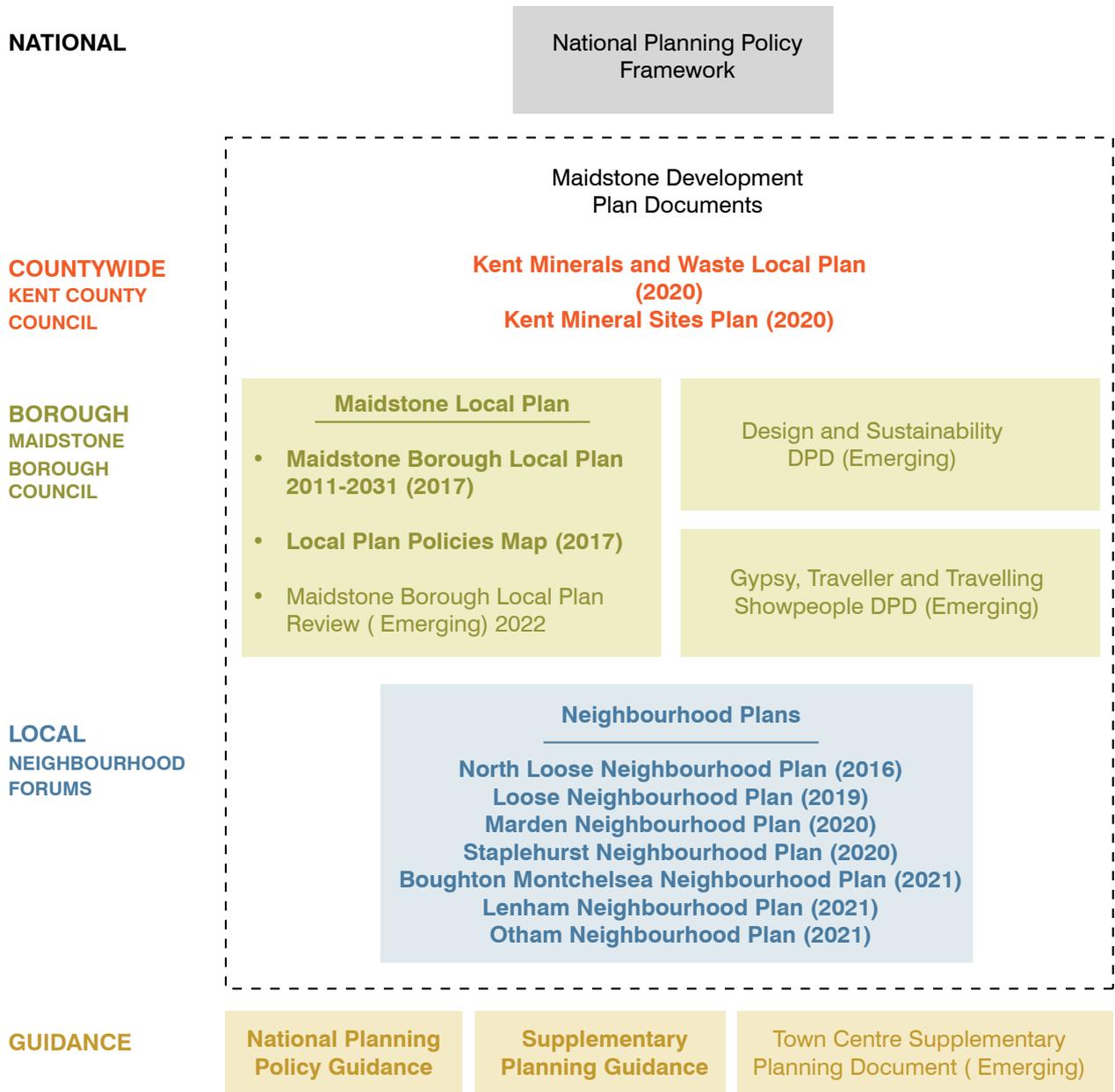


Figure 1: Planning framework diagram from 18a document.

## 1.5 DPD Preparation Process

Preparation of D&S DPDs follow a vigorous and extensive engagement and examination process, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The first stage, Regulation 18, specifies that the Local Authority must notify persons of the subject of the plan and invite them to make representations about what the plan should contain. Regulation 19, the second stage, requires that before submitting a plan to the Secretary of State, the Local Authority must make the consultees notified as part of Regulation 18 aware of the places and times at which the proposed submission documents can be inspected.

In the preparation of the D&S DPD, Regulation 18 has been divided into two phases, 18a and 18b, as illustrated in the diagram below. Maidstone Borough Council has already completed Stages 1 to 3 of the D&S DPD Process for the D&S DPD and is currently soliciting public views and comments as part of the Stage 4 Regulation 18b consultation process.

The Regulation 18b Preferred Approaches Consultation expands the key issues identified in Regulation 18a into proposed policies and supporting text. At Regulation 19 – Draft for Submission, we will publish a final version of the D&S DPD and invite you to make comments on whether you consider it to be justified and compliant with all existing obligations. All comments will then be submitted to the Secretary of State along with the final D&S DPD for independent examination, likely to be in 2024.

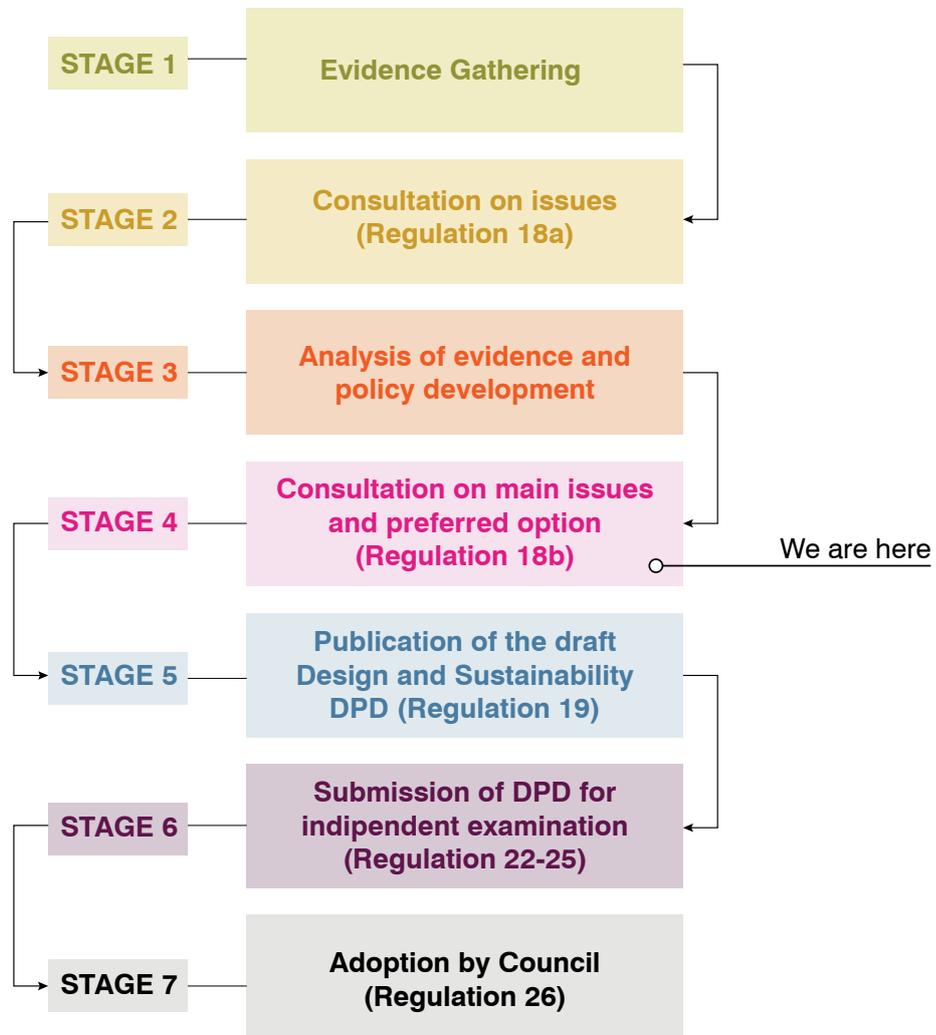


Figure 2: Flowchart diagram describing the preparation of the Design and Sustainability DPD

## 1.6 Justification and Evidence Base

The D&S DPD is underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence, which is proportionate to the policies concerned. Policy is also justified in terms of consistency with legislation and national policy and guidance. Overall Chapter 12 of the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**<sup>1</sup> paragraphs 126 -129 makes clear that all Local Planning Authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the **National Design Guide**<sup>2</sup> and **National Model Design**<sup>3</sup> Code , and which reflect local character and design preferences.

Design codes and guides are required to provide a framework for creating high-quality places. The NPPF also makes clear that the geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place and should allow a suitable degree of variety.

NPPF Paragraph 129 indicates that *“Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale, and to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents.”* This D&S DPD is produced at an area-wide scale and produced as part of the Development Plan.

Although the D&S DPD is reasonably detailed it is envisaged that further guidance in the form of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) or other guidance will be produced particularly for certain locations or sites such as the town centre and garden villages and that these will be linked to policy in the D&S DPD.

National Planning Practice Guidance sets out that non-strategic policies can be used to establish more local and/or detailed design principles for an area, including design requirements for site specific allocations. It suggests they can be prepared by Local Planning Authorities (or neighbourhood planning groups), and are most effective when based on appropriate evidence of the defining characteristics of the area, such as its historic, landscape and townscape character.

1. National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

2. National Design Guide <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals/national-model-design-code-accessible-version>

In terms of evidence, paragraph 30 of the National Model Design Code suggests that Local Planning Authorities will need to have an understanding of their area informed by up to date evidence such as characterisation studies or site analyses, with input from the community, to support design coding. The National Model Design Code suggests that Local Planning Authorities may already hold this information, so it is possible that they will not need to carry out further analysis for the purpose of producing a design code.

This Regulation 18b draft D&S DPD primarily draws on a combination of existing material through desktop studies and direct surveys to complete a characterisation of the Borough which is reported in the sections below as context for design decisions. The design principles are consistent with the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and where appropriate have been re-interpreted by a team of professional designers to have regard to Maidstone context. Material which has informed the approach includes:

- National Design Guide and National Model Design Code;
- Precedents/best practice from other authorities;
- Workshops with Maidstone Borough Council Officers across a range of disciplines and Elected Members to identify relevant design and sustainability concerns/priorities;
- Surveys of the Borough focussing on existing characteristics and areas of concern and success. These are reflected in images illustrating good and poor practice throughout the document;
- Technical topic papers on Biodiversity Net Gain and Sustainable Buildings produced in the context of the specific scope of this D&S DPD;
- Responses to the 18a Issues and Options consultation;
- Conservation area character assessments and management plans. Maidstone has 41 conservation areas to cover areas of special architectural or historic interest. Many of them have up to date appraisals and management plans<sup>4</sup>. These have directly informed the desk-based character study;

[4.Conservation Areas | Maidstone Borough Council](#)

- The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026<sup>5</sup> ;
- The Landscape Character Assessment Update 2020 of the Kent Downs AONB<sup>6</sup> ;
- The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Rural Street and Lanes: A design handbook, 2009<sup>7</sup> ;
- Kent Design Guide 2005<sup>8</sup>. Produced as part of a Kent Design Initiative this creates a showcase of buildings, memorable and attractive new places that reinforce Kent's distinctive character. The Kent Design Initiative was a partnership consisting of: Kent's local authorities, developers, builders, communities and interest groups;
- Kent Landscape Assessment, October 2004;
- Various secondary sources, including the Pevsner Guide (Buildings of England series); and
- Building Better Building Beautiful Commission Report and the Government's response<sup>9</sup> .

Policies suggested within the D&S DPD are also subject to viability testing as part of the Council's wider viability testing for the Local Plan and other DPDs.

5. <https://kentdowns.org.uk/landscape-management/management-plan/>

6. <https://kentdowns.org.uk/landscape-character-assessment-2020/>

7. Rural-Streets-and-Lanes-a-design-handbook.pdf (kentdowns.org.uk) <https://kentdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Rural-Streets-and-Lanes-a-design-handbook.pdf>

8. Kent Design Guide - Kent County Council <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/service-specific-policies/housing,-regeneration-and-planning-policies/regeneration-policies/kent-design-guide>

9. <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/building-better-building-beautiful-commission>

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## 02. The Maidstone Design & Sustainability Approach



## 2.1 National Context

The **NPPF**<sup>10</sup> is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which is broadly defined as: *“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*.

Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states *“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”*.

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that development that is not well designed should be refused permission, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and Government guidance on design. Conversely, it states that significant weight will be given to development which reflects local design policies and Government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and SPDs which use visual tools such as design guides and codes.

This D&S DPD is consistent with the principles set out in the **National Design Guide**<sup>11</sup> and **National Model Design Code**<sup>12</sup>, whilst reflecting local character and design preferences. **The National Model Design Code** forms part of the Government’s planning practice guidance and is read as part of the **National Design Guide**, and alongside the planning practice guidance notes referenced in Part 3 of the National Design Guide, **Manual for Streets**<sup>13</sup>, and other forthcoming guidance relating to the natural and environmental characteristics of development. While this guidance is not a statement of national policy the Government recommends that the advice in the guidance is followed.

10. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

11. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

12. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

13. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets>

## 2.2 Local Context

Maidstone Borough's Local Plan was adopted in 2017; it currently carries full weight in planning decision-making. It will be updated and replaced, in due course, by the emerging Local Plan Review (LPR) which is currently undergoing Examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The LPR establishes new policies in line with latest national policy, whilst also saving relevant policies from the 2017 Local Plan.

In their respective Spatial Objectives, both the adopted Local Plan and LPR expect high quality design of new development and to protect built, heritage, natural and landscape assets. The LPR expands these expectations by requiring that the distinctive character of the Borough's places is maintained (LPR Spatial Objective 2). It also shifts the focus from mitigating the effects of climate change to adaptation (LPR Spatial Objective 4) and highlights the need for high quality sustainable design and construction (LPR Spatial Objective 11).

On design, adopted Local Plan Policy DM1 (Principles of good design) stipulates that proposals consider accessible and permeable layouts, local, natural and historic character (supplemented by Policy DM4 on development affecting heritage assets), on-site biodiversity and geodiversity, neighbours' amenity, site topography and sustainability interventions, amongst other factors.

LPR Policy LPRSP15 (Principles of Good Design) builds on this adopted policy, requiring a modern design approach with vernacular materials (where appropriate), encourages on-site biodiversity and geodiversity protection and enhancement and adds the requirement for new streets to be tree lined, as well as maximising the provision of trees within proposals. LPR Policy LPRSP14B (The Historic Environment) also emphasizes the importance of positive planning for heritage assets, including in Neighbourhood Plans and through collaborative engagement with developers, communities and decision-makers.

On sustainability, the adopted Local Plan supports sustainably located development (in accordance with the settlement hierarchy), renewable and low carbon energy schemes subject to appropriate siting and landscape mitigation (Policy DM24), enhancement of blue-green infrastructure (Spatial Objective 7) and expansion of sustainable transport modes to improve air quality (Policy DM6). LPR Policy LPRSP14C (Climate Change) maintains these expectations.

On low carbon buildings, adopted Local Plan Policy DM2 (Sustainable design) sets specific thresholds for water, carbon and energy efficiency in new developments, using the Building Regulations optional requirements and BREEAM Very Good standards. While LPR Policy LPRQ&D1 (Sustainable design) maintains similar carbon and energy thresholds, it also promotes a 'fabric first' approach to building construction, tightens the threshold for water efficiency (reiterated by LPR Policy LPRSP14C (Climate Change)), sets an expectation for on-site renewables/ low carbon energy production and battery storage, and requires incorporation of biodiversity features into proposals.

On biodiversity, adopted Local Plan Policy DM3 includes specific requirements on protecting and enhancing the natural environment, including ecological habitats and green infrastructure, long-term maintenance and public access where appropriate. LPR Policy LPRSP14A (Natural Environment) strengthens this approach, by requiring a minimum 20% of on-site Biodiversity Net Gain for proposals.

On open space, Local Plan Policy DM19 (Publicly accessible open space and recreation) sets quantitative and qualitative standards for proposals to provide open space. LPR Policy LPRINF1 (Publicly accessible open space and recreation) maintains similar standards, adding emphasis on designing open spaces to encourage physical activity.

The Maidstone Public Realm Design Guide provides detailed guidance on public realm including parks, streetscene and street furniture. This document will be updated, and all relevant applications should take it into consideration.

## 2.3 The Value of Good Design

***The history and culture of a nation are written in its buildings, public spaces, towns and cities. Through their design and how we live our lives in them, we recognise what is special about our society and communities. Every new building and public space is an expression of our values and aspirations. The built environment is a cultural asset. It is essential to design it well and to manage and maintain it to high standards.*** (CABE – Good Design)

Delivering great places to live and work benefits both people and the environment. Good design does not necessarily cost more but will deliver desirable places to live and work, places that last and retain their quality for generations. Importantly it contributes social value by producing safe and inclusive places that boost civic pride, it improves environmental sustainability by reducing emissions and enhancing biodiversity, and brings long-term benefit through the longevity and resilience of development. Good design has also been proven to positively benefit the health of the people who inhabit them – both physically and mentally.

Setting the exemplar design and sustainability standards for new developments will create a lasting legacy with a tangible benefit to the quality of life of the people who live, work and visit the Borough. High quality planning, urban design and architecture is fundamental to achieving the objectives of the NPPF and creates places that are popular and attractive – ultimately, where people want to be. A well-designed place will:

- Enhance its surroundings, through being attractive and distinctive;
- Have recognisable and well-defined streets, framed by buildings and boundaries elements that are in proportion and appropriate to their surroundings;
- Increase biodiversity and green infrastructure that contributes to wellbeing and climate adaptation and mitigation;
- Provide open spaces that are safe, social and welcome all;
- Encourage people to use active travel modes, such as walking and cycling, as well as promoting a sense of community;
- Minimise impacts on the environment and climate in terms of construction and operation; and
- Be of a quality that ensures resilience and longevity of buildings and places<sup>14</sup>.

14. Adapted from the National Design Guide, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

## 2.4 Maidstone's Priority Outcomes for Good Design

The National Planning Practice Guidance advises that planning policies may set out the design outcomes that development should pursue as well as the tools and processes that are expected to be used to embed good design. Maidstone Borough Council has identified the following priority outcomes:



### Placemaking

Ensure that within Maidstone Borough we deliver attractive and distinctive places within which people want to live, work and play, creating safe and secure, lasting places and neighbourhoods where people of all ages want to spend time and which foster a sense of pride.



### Streets & Buildings

Ensure that new development in Maidstone Borough is of a high quality with a legible hierarchy of distinctive, safe and easy to navigate streets and public spaces that create identity and character and which encourage sustainable movement. Both new and enhanced streets and spaces shall provide a positive setting of buildings.



### Open Space and Nature

Ensure that development in Maidstone Borough takes the opportunity to integrate a network of green spaces and both green and blue infrastructure at every scale of design, and that these make a genuine, significant and lasting contribution to the creation of new habitat and net gain of biodiversity, the causes and effects of climate change, and the health and wellbeing of communities.



## Movement

Ensure that Maidstone Borough is delivering a connected network of streets that prioritises journeys by active and sustainable transport modes, whilst allowing the use of streets for essential private vehicle movements. Maidstone's streets should be attractive and safe for all users with a clear and legible movement hierarchy of primary, secondary and quiet streets.



## Sustainable Buildings

Ensure that new development in the Maidstone Borough is delivered with net-zero carbon, and that buildings are able to mitigate the effects and adapt to the rapidly changing climate.



## Design Quality

Ensure the delivery of great buildings and landscapes that are robust and adaptable enough to stand the test of time, enhancing the Borough's identity. This includes new homes that have sufficient space to allow for a good standard of living and meeting the needs of current and future lifestyles. High quality and robust materials should be used that ensure developments have a long lifespan.

What this document can't control, but which may influence the planning and design of development proposals includes:

- Building Regulations, including, for example, standards for insulation or energy use/management;
- Retrofit and renovation where no 'development' takes place that requires planning permission;
- Agricultural practices; and
- Environmental/land management.

## 2.5 Demonstrating a Design-Led Approach to Development

The NPPF recognises that a design-led approach to developing proposals is key to achieving exemplar sustainable development. Maidstone Borough Council will seek evidence from applicants that they have appropriately considered their scheme in the wider context in which it sits. This D&S DPD not only sets out the policy requirements for the design and planning process, but also provides the cues that applicants should look for and respond to from the local context to ensure that new development adequately responds to its built and natural environment. In practice a design led approach is likely to be iterative, but the key stages are set out below:

**a) Observe and Understand:** Where/what are the built and natural features of the site, its setting, its connections and the patterns that define its context ? Describe the significance of such and the sensitivities that will need to be addressed. The National Design Guide identifies a number of considerations, any assessment should consider but not be limited to the following:

The existing pattern and form of development, for example, urban grain, layout and scale; as well as details such as appearance and materials;

- Local heritage and cultural influences;
- Landform and topography, including key views and intervisibility;
- Landscape character, biodiversity and ecology;
- Land use and function, including deficiencies;
- Networks, access and movement, including barriers and opportunities;
- Environmental conditions such as noise, air quality, flood risk and microclimate; and
- Social and economic conditions and other infrastructure provision/deficiencies.

- b) Analyse:** Why are these characteristics, patterns and sensitivities important, how do they affect the site and what is their sensitivity to change?
- c) Interpret:** How will these contextual features, characteristics or connections influence the design? Develop strategies to respond to the patterns and sensitivities of the site.
- d) Propose:** What is the framework and form of the proposed development? Illustrate the vision and structure of the proposal and demonstrate how it has been informed by, and responds to, the robust interpretation of the uniqueness of the site. Demonstrate how new development both protects and enhances positive aspects of local identity.

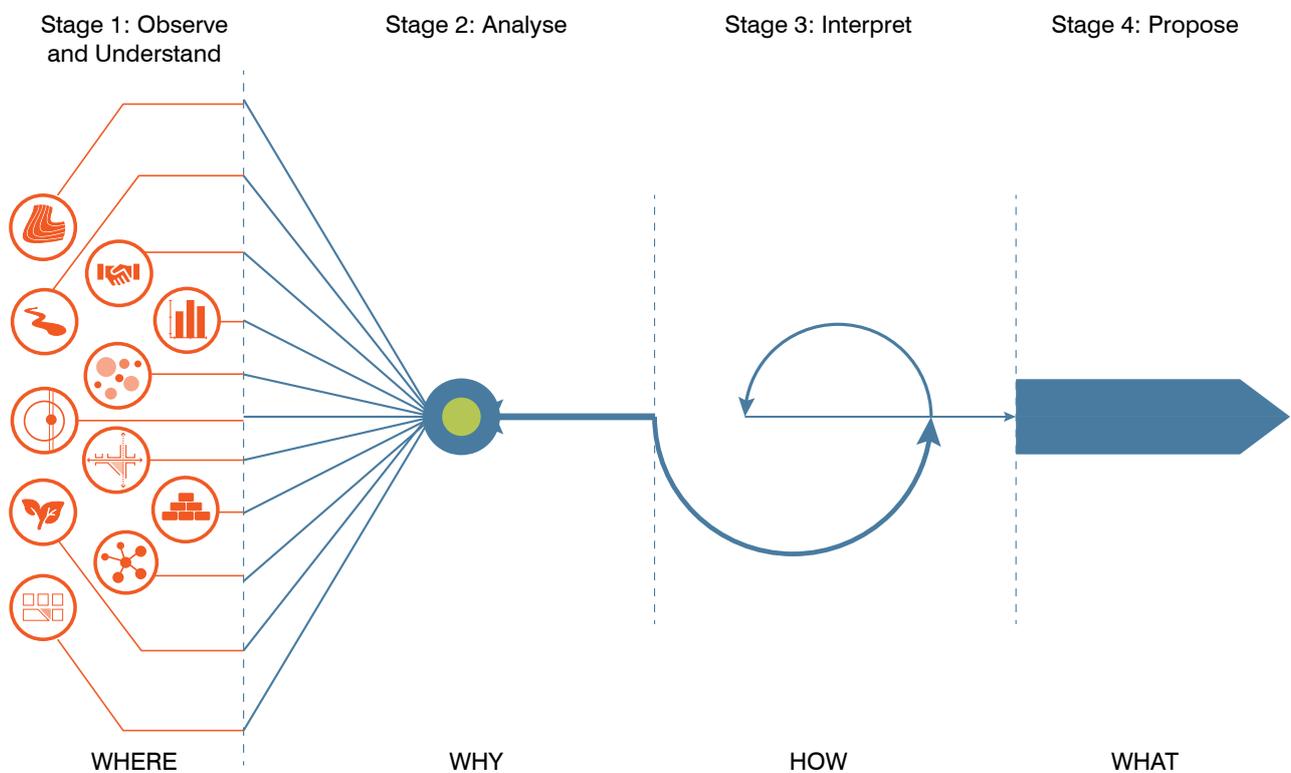


Figure 3: Diagram design methodology

## 2.6 How to Use This Document

This DPD has been developed to ensure that there is a place-based approach to the application of non-spatial policies to ensure that there is a consistently high quality of design throughout the Borough that relates to its varying local contexts.

In Part 3 of the document the key components and characteristics of Maidstone's places are described to provide a basis for applicants to develop their proposals, in response to the specificities of its location. This is intended to provide the key design cues and forms a baseline of information for proposals to respond to.

Part 4 sets out the requirements of development in the Borough of Maidstone and applicants should demonstrate how they have complied with all relevant policies that apply to their proposals. These requirements are (generally) non-spatial in their wording so where a policy refers to a response to local character, applicants should refer to the information in Part 3 that will inform the design development of their proposal.

In practice it is expected that through an iterative design process, and the development of Design and Access Statements, applicants will develop their own analysis of place, and demonstrate how proposals respond to this analysis. Therefore there should be a dynamic link between the characteristics in Part 3 and requirements in Part 4. The level of analysis and design iteration that accompanies a proposal should be proportionate to the scale and impact of the development.

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## 03. Maidstone's Places



## 3.1 Approach to Characterisation of Maidstone Borough

Maidstone is a diverse Borough, containing within it the vibrant County Town of Kent with its wide range of uses, surrounded by the wider urban area, as well as a network of rural settlements around which are scattered farmsteads and hamlets. It is extremely important that new development is woven into the existing fabric of a place, and integrates well with the existing streets and settlements.

The Borough's settlements vary in scale, function and prominence, as set out in the Maidstone Borough Settlement Hierarchy Study, and as such the spatial development strategy set out in the Local Plan Review distributes the majority of future housing growth in four broad types of location:

- Maidstone town centre;
- Maidstone wider urban area;
- Edge of larger rural service centres; and
- Two new Garden Settlements.

In the broadest sense, the character of the County Town of Maidstone is defined by its scale and urbanity particularly in the town centre, where its sub-regional function defines, for example, the scale of buildings, intensity of uses and associated activity. Practically, this means that you intuitively know you are in a large town as buildings and human processes have shaped all the elements in your foreground and midground experience. This urban character softens towards the edges of the urban area where development becomes lower in scale and density, with a suburban character and activity becomes lower intensity. The urban area also contains a number of natural assets, such as, for example, The Rivers Len and Medway, Mote Park and other local open spaces.

Beyond Maidstone Urban Area, the character of other settlements is defined by their relationship to the landscape and countryside beyond their edges. This has produced strong historic and cultural relationship between people and place in these areas. Practically this means that you intuitively know you are in a rural character settlement as natural features predominate in the midground of your experience, even if built features dominate the foreground of your experience. They vary from the larger villages that are defined as Rural Service Centres to smaller villages and hamlets that have no defined boundary. Each village possesses its own unique characteristics and form.

The planned edge of centre greenfield site and the new gardens settlements differ in that they do not possess existing urban characteristics but do have a strong relationship with their adjacent countryside. For these sites, new development must have regard to their transitional setting, demonstrating how development will be stitched into the adjacent development areas, whilst providing a sensitive edge to the countryside.

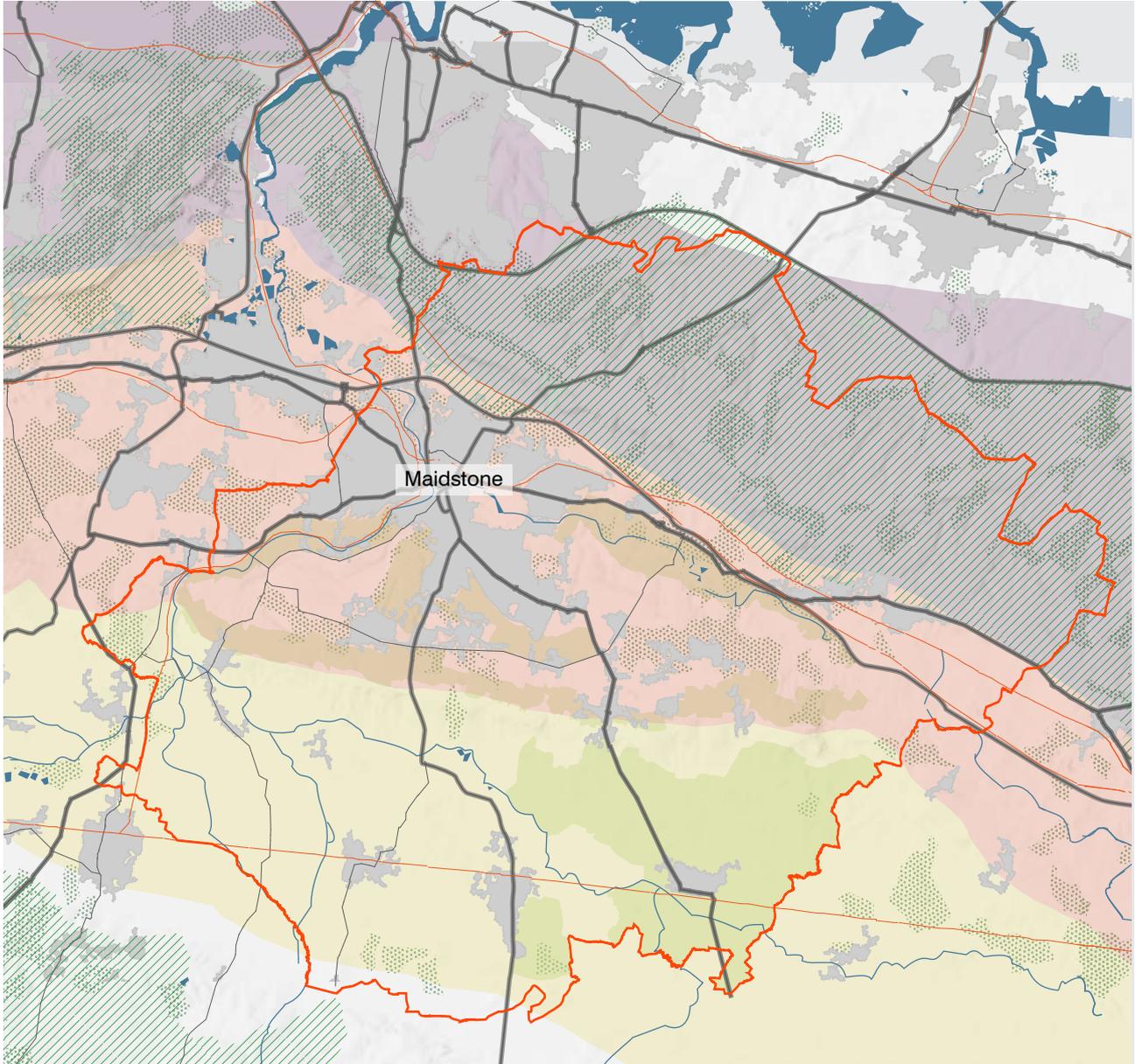
For the two planned garden settlements, the challenge is diverse. They represent an opportunity to start place-making from the very beginning, creating new places and identities, uses and connections; whilst ensuring that they are sensitively designed to take account of their wider rural setting and any existing built development that they will accommodate.

The following area characterisations describes at a high level the setting and some of the key features that define the character of these locations. Proposals that come forward, must be supported by a finer grain of contextual assessment that has regard to the particular characteristics of an individual site and its setting.

For the purpose of reviewing the settlements which lie outside of the urban area we have used the three National Landscape Character Areas as defined by Natural England, which are:

- Wealden Greensand
- North Downs
- Low Weald

These character areas do not necessarily reflect administrative or Parish boundaries, but assist in grouping villages by their key vernacular and landscape characteristics, which should form the basis of design cues when developing proposals.



- |                              |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| — Major Roads and Motorways  | Greenbelt                          | National Landscape Character Areas: |
| — Maidstone Borough Boundary | Landscape of local value           | Wealden Greensands                  |
| — Built Up Area              | Woodlands                          | North Downs                         |
|                              | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty | Low Weald                           |

Figure 4: An overview of Maidstone Borough boundaries, Character Areas and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## 3.2 Maidstone Town Centre

This section uses the town centre boundary as defined in Policy SP4 of the adopted Maidstone Borough Local Plan<sup>15</sup>, which the Local Plan Review does not seek to change. The limits of the town centre are broadly defined by the Maidstone East rail line and Prison / Maidstone east sites to the north, the secondary commercial edge of the conservation area and A249 highway to the east and south and the Maidstone West/Barracks rail line to the west.

Within these infrastructure boundaries, the town centre is distinguished by its historic fabric, much of which dates back to Medieval times, civic and civil functions such as Sessions House and Maidstone Prison function proximity to the River Medway and River Len.

The townscape is varied, both in terms of scale and quality, ranging from fine grain Victorian streets and much older Burbage plots, to large scale C20th developments. There are relatively few tall buildings within the urban area. Maidstone is intersected by the River Medway and the River Len, which flows into the Medway in the town centre. The Medway is a significant asset for leisure activities and is an opportunity to enhance the setting of new development; whilst the smaller scale Len is more vulnerable to development impacts. Both river corridors represent significant ecological assets that require protection and enhancement.

There are relatively few public green spaces of civic spaces of a significant scale. In particular, the River Medway corridor is recognised as a key natural landscape feature, providing a contrast to the urban townscape. However, its setting is underutilised and is dominated by highway infrastructure. Commercial sites to the west of the river do nothing to engage with its setting. Within the Town Centre, the River Len is lost below large scale developments, until emerging at the Mill Pond as it joins the Medway.

15. Maidstone Borough Council (2017). Maidstone Borough Local Plan, pp. 30-39. Available at: [https://maidstone.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/171149/Local-Plan-v2-November-2017.pdf](https://maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/171149/Local-Plan-v2-November-2017.pdf) [Accessed on 25/01/2023]

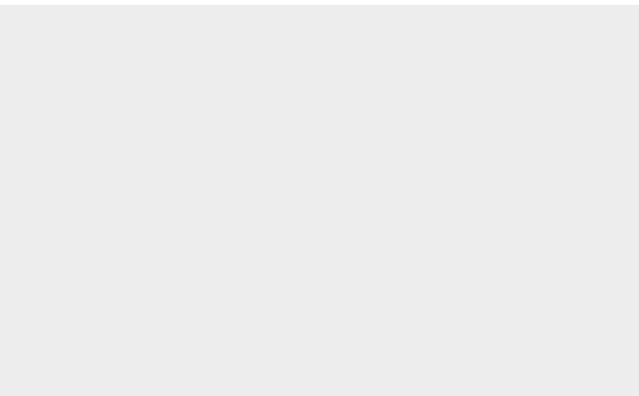
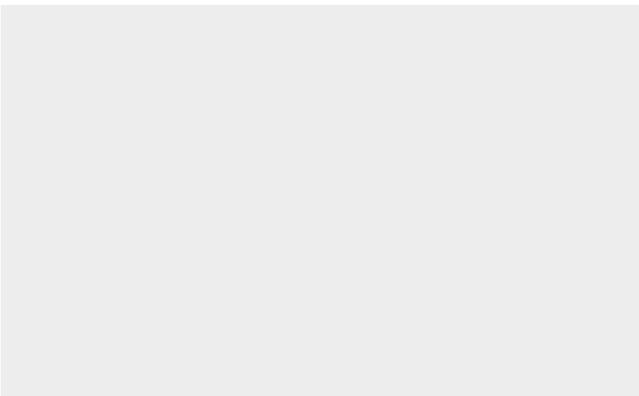
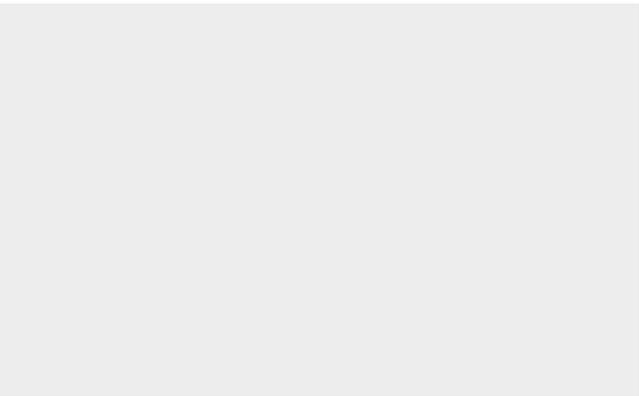
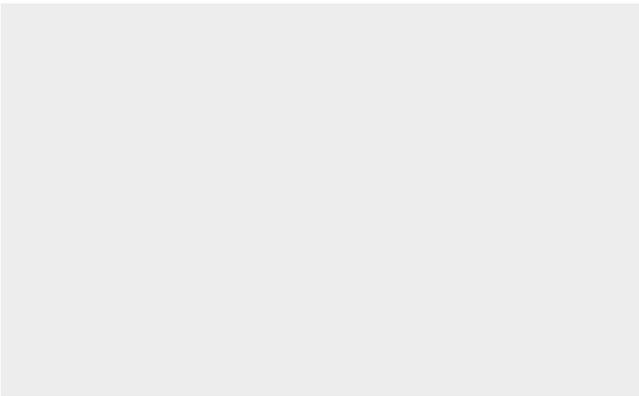
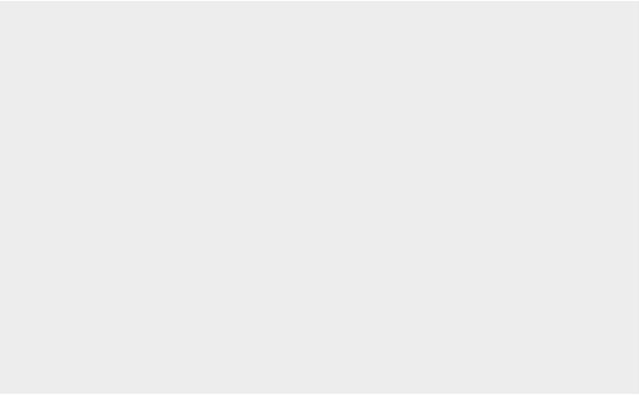
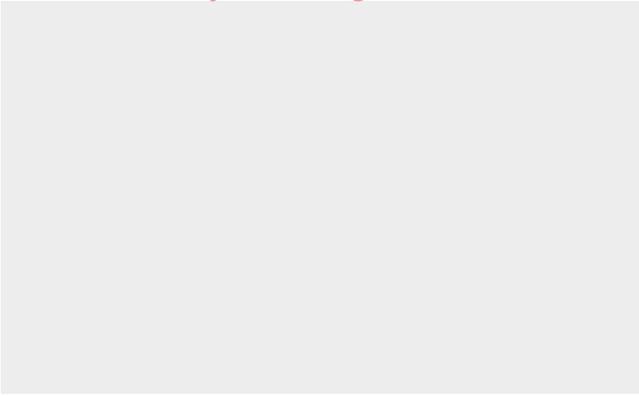
The core area of the town centre contains Maidstone's primary shopping area, which is tightly defined along Week Street and the two anchors of the Fremlin Centre and The Mall.. It contains a mix of major and independent retailers occupying both modern and older properties, including some listed buildings and the High Street Conservation Area. However, the commercial and retail functions of the Town Centre extend significantly beyond the defined core retail area, in particular along High St/Bank Street, where the urban grain and scale of uses is strongly influenced by built heritage.

The western area of the town centre (across the A229 dual carriageway and the River Medway) accommodates large modern retail, leisure and commercial units, alongside the listed former St Peters Church to the south Baltic Wharf to the north. These modern retail uses are land hungry, with extensive areas of surface car parking and are identified as an opportunity for redevelopment in the Local Plan, and will be assessed in the on-going Town Centre Strategy

The north area of the town centre (beyond the Maidstone rail line) comprises larger scale development, including the listed County Hall and Prison, both significant features in the civic development of the County town; together with the more modern red brick Invicta House and other office uses. The Maidstone East site includes a sizeable area of car parking and is generally underutilised, reflected in its designation as an 'Opportunity Site'.

While hop growing predominated in the vicinity of Maidstone town historically, this is now much diminished, although as detailed below, changing patterns of agriculture have had a significant impact upon the setting of its surrounding countryside. Similarly, much of the industry that was focussed upon the river corridors, such as engineering, brewing, tanneries and paper making has long gone, with relatively few remaining buildings to remind of that stage of the town's history.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



The town centre's historic features also notably include the Medieval cluster including ragstone Grade I listed Archbishop's Palace, Grade I listed All Saints Church and Scheduled Monument, College of All Saints. These form the "visual heart of the town" by the River Medway, albeit the adjacent A229 dual carriageway somewhat disrupts their setting.

Notably, the town centre is tightly bound by predominantly residential Victorian / Edwardian predominantly residential streets.

The town centre hosts activities typically associated with Maidstone's function as the County Town (as formalised in adopted Local Plan Policy SS1) and as an administrative centre. This includes key public bodies, including the County and Borough Councils, Kent Police and the HM Prison Service. There are also many financial and professional businesses, which make substantial contributions to the local economy. Additionally, the primary shopping area is a significant destination locally. It is interspersed with cultural attractions, such as Hazlitt Theatre and Maidstone Museum, and night-time entertainment, including restaurants and bars.

Maidstone town centre is served by three train stations, namely Maidstone East (to the north), and Maidstone Barracks and Maidstone West (both on the west town centre boundary). The town centre is also intersected by the A229 and A249, which connect to the M20 and M2, but notably result in significant 'through traffic' within the town centre. Both the roads and the associated traffic have a significantly adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the town centre and generate adverse environmental conditions through, for example, noise and air quality impacts. They are also feature which sever the town centre and impact upon pedestrian permeability into the town centre.

With its good accessibility to London and the wider sub-region, this generates significant pressures for growth, particularly housing. Similar to towns such as, Ashford and Folkestone, Maidstone expanded significantly in the 20th century to accommodate commuters, coinciding with notable expansion of the urban area and degradation of the urban fringe landscape.

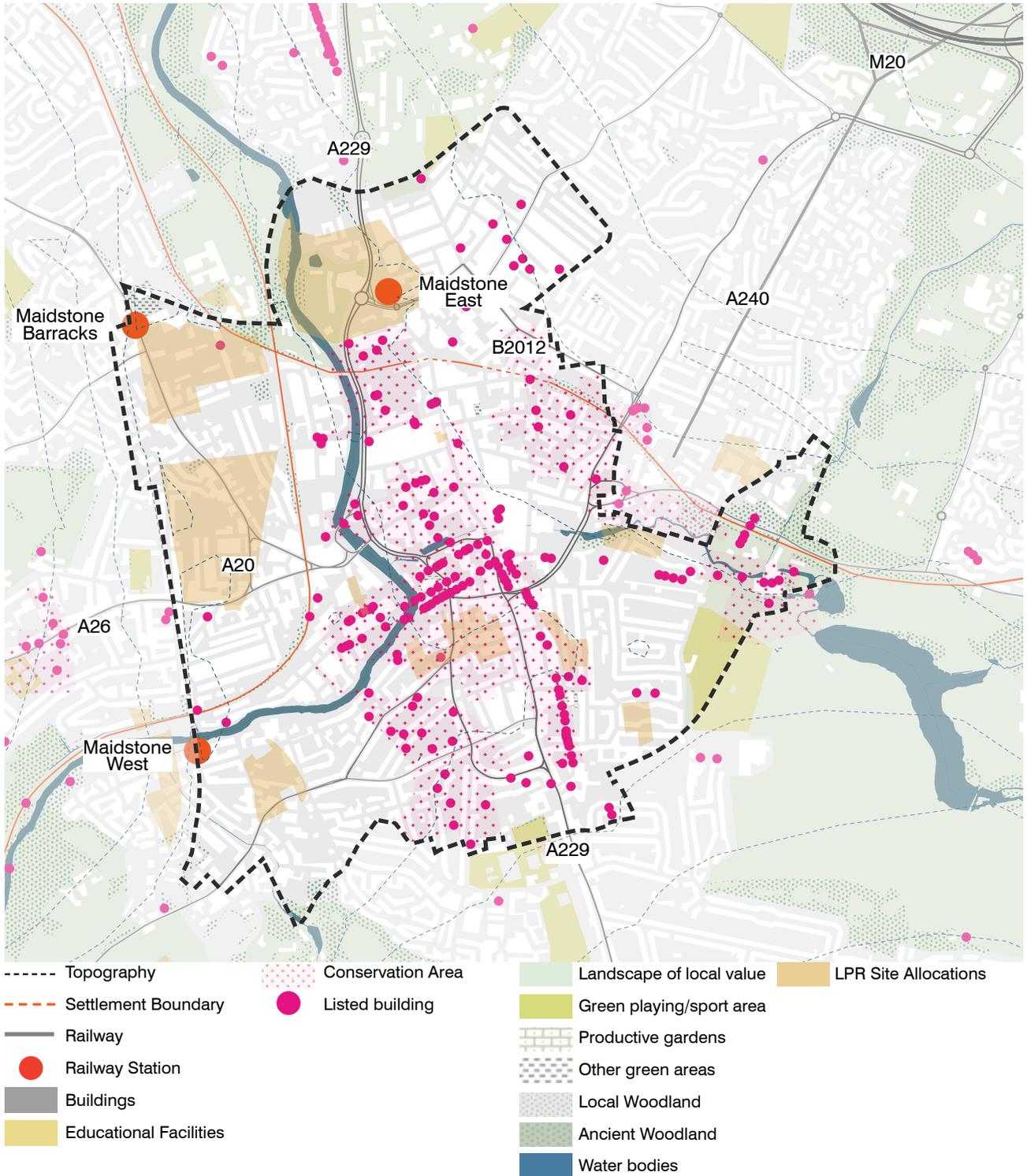


Figure 5: Plan of Maidstone Town Centre\_1:15,000



## 3.3 Maidstone Urban Area

This section refers to the built-up area of Maidstone, defined as the area outside the identified town centre boundary and within the urban boundary, as per Policy SP1 of the adopted Maidstone Borough Local Plan<sup>16</sup>.

Maidstone's urban area has grown along the main radial routes, extending from the town centre into the countryside via the A249 and A229 (north and south), A20 (east and west) the A26 (west) and . Visual connections to the countryside are still permitted in views from some locations, particularly towards the Medway Valley to the south east, the Loose valley to the south, the North Downs to the north and east and the Greensand Ridge to the south.

The setting of Maidstone comprises both coherent natural landscapes unified by regular patterns of natural and historic features, alongside fragmented landscapes impacted by peripheral urban development, including infrastructure, leisure facilities and housing.

Topography has a significant impact upon the character and quality of the surrounding landscapes, whilst also defining much of the setting of the town. There is a strong interaction between for example, development within the urban area and the setting of the North Downs Ridge, whilst to the south the significant rise towards the Greensand ridge is a defining feature in the townscape. The town centre's low-lying setting within the river valleys again creates a strong visual relationship between town centre and surrounding landscapes.

In terms of natural features, Maidstone's hinterland typically contains a mix of orchards, sweet chestnut coppices, mixed woodland blocks, parkland estates and arable land. Field patterns and sizes vary, given some have been adapted for intensive farming or disrupted by urban development. In a few locations, there are small pockets of willow trees.

Almost all landscapes around the Maidstone urban area are impacted by urbanising influences to a greater or lesser extent, including in views, where infrastructure has intersected natural landscapes and where there is, for example, dispersed recreational or commercial development. In some locations, the loss of habitats and historic field boundaries as a result of changing agricultural practices has diminished the sense of place and quality of landscape.

Lower rise, low-medium density housing predominates, as built throughout the 20th century. This resulted in villages being subsumed into the urban area, including Bearsted and Tovil. The largest purpose-built housing estate lies to the south-east, namely Shepway.

The urban area is pepper potted with buildings of historical and architectural merit, juxtaposed amongst the more modern residential

16. Maidstone Borough Council (2017). Maidstone Borough Local Plan, p22. Available at: [https://maidstone.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/171149/Local-Plan-v2-November-2017.pdf](https://maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/171149/Local-Plan-v2-November-2017.pdf) [Accessed on 26/01/2023]

development. To the west, there is a cluster of 19th century dwellings in the vicinity of London Road and Bedford Place, comprising a series of large detached villas and the grandiose palazzo style Rocky Hill Terrace.

To the south, there are clusters of Victorian and earlier buildings around the junctions of Loose Road with Paynes Lane, Boughton Lane and Sutton Road, associated with the town's historic industries including ragstone mining. These clusters expanded in the 20th century, with the establishment of a tram route, to form ribbon development along the length of Loose Road. Modern development has deepened the ribbon development along Loose Road, albeit avoiding the steeper river valley slopes.

The urban area also contains late medieval remnants, including Little Buckland Farm Cottage by Whatman Park and the Old Farm House on Chatham Road, both considered to be Wealden hall houses. Additionally, there are historic mill buildings, including Turkey Court and Mill to the south and Springfield Paper Mill on the River Medway to the north.

Among the most distinctive features in the vicinity of Maidstone, the River Medway valley establishes a consistent geographic reference. From vantage points to the south-west of Maidstone, there are expansive views across the valley, its undulating topography and orchards. These views are more limited to the river valley north of Maidstone as it is more enclosed, although wider views of the North Downs are permitted from higher ground. The setting of the river is highly urbanised as it passes through the Town Centre, however, its current setting is adversely affected by, for example, highway infrastructure and uses that do not engage with the waterway either physically or visually.

The rivers have had an impact upon both the historical and future pattern of development as, within both the urban area and villages and countryside, there are extensive areas that are liable to and do flood.

Parts of the north and east areas of Maidstone's hinterland lie within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and to varying degrees contribute to its setting. These areas comprise coherent landscapes of agricultural fields, narrow lanes, historic villages (including spring line settlements) and farmsteads. (The AONB Management Plan provides a detailed characterisation assessment, which is not repeated here.)

Geology is a defining characteristic and the distinctive North Downs scarp features in many views towards, over and from both the urban area and villages. There are extensive views both southwards and northwards from the scarp, the latter including views of the Thames Estuary.

Additionally, from Eyhorne Vale, there are extensive panoramic views, both of higher wooded landscapes to the north and of the Greensand Ridge from the Pilgrim's Way. From the Greensand Ridge itself, there are extensive views, again both to the north and south, the latter offering expansive views across the landscape.

Rural valleys and large historic parks intervene the urban townscape, most notably the sizeable Mote Park to south-east Maidstone. On the River Len, the Park contains a large serpentine lake and other leisure facilities. The 20th century Invicta Park Barracks also comprises extensive grounds and historic buildings and landscape and is situated on the northern edge of Maidstone.

The urban area of Maidstone also comprises a varied mix of housing, shopping and community facilities, as well as accommodating different businesses. These range from sporadic uses located throughout the wider urban area, to the two district centres in the urban area; Mid Kent Centre to the north-west and Grovewood Drive to the north-east. There are also thirteen local centres distributed across the urban centre, particularly in the east and south.

The Sutton Road corridor has an established commercial presence, with in particular the ParkWood industrial area being a significant employment location. Southeast Maidstone has also seen significant residential growth over the past decade.

To the northwest are the established 20:20 Business Park and Aylesford Industrial Estate, which benefit from close proximity to M20 J5; whilst north east of the town, adjacent to M20J7 are the Eclipse business park, which contains a range of office, retail and leisure uses and the Kent Medical Campus.

There is one train station within the urban area boundary, namely Bearsted on the north-eastern edge of Maidstone. The urban area is intersected by various roads, including the A20, A26, A229 and A249 and minor roads with connections to the surrounding villages.

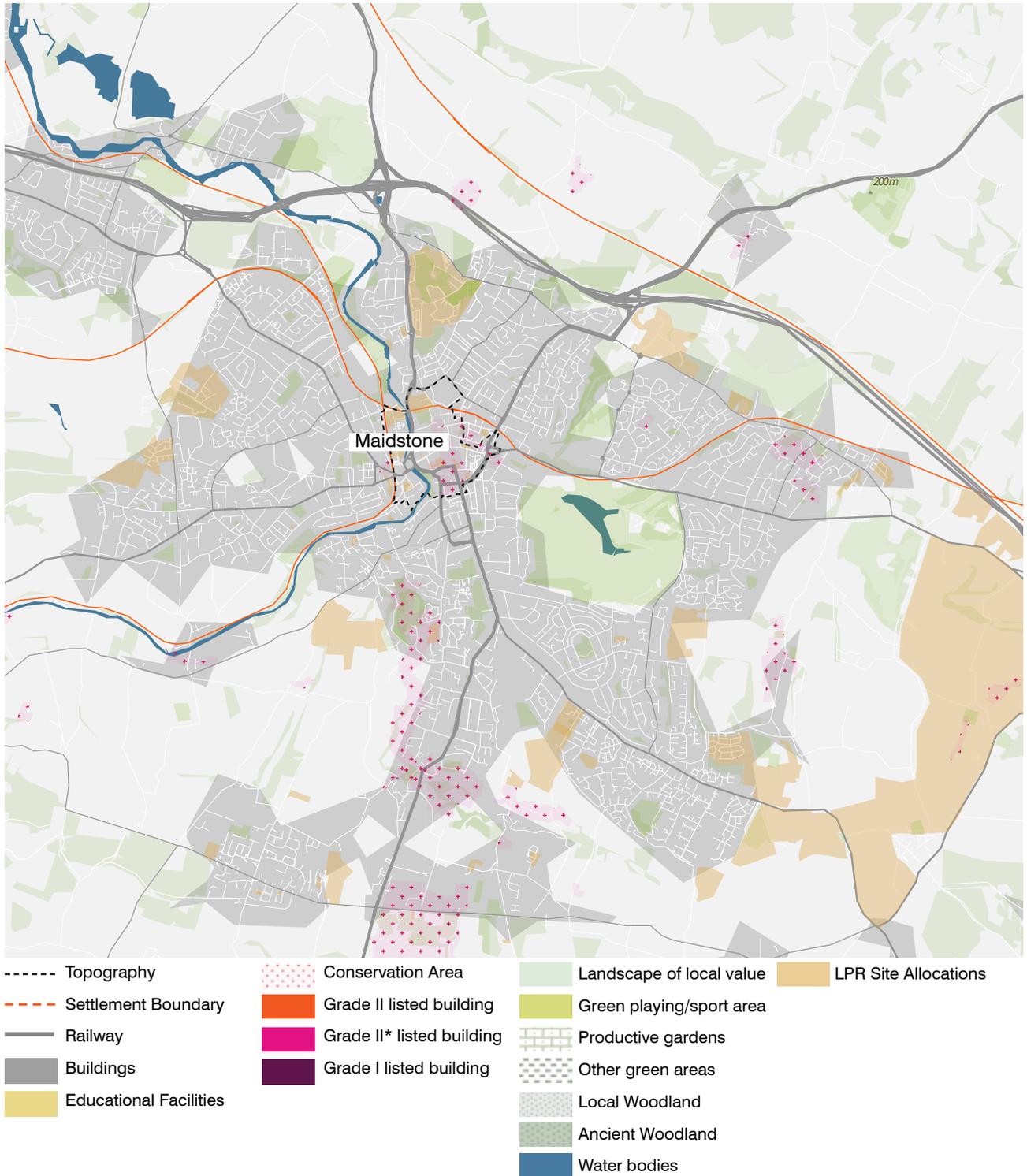


Figure 6: Plan of Maidstone Urban Area\_1:300,000



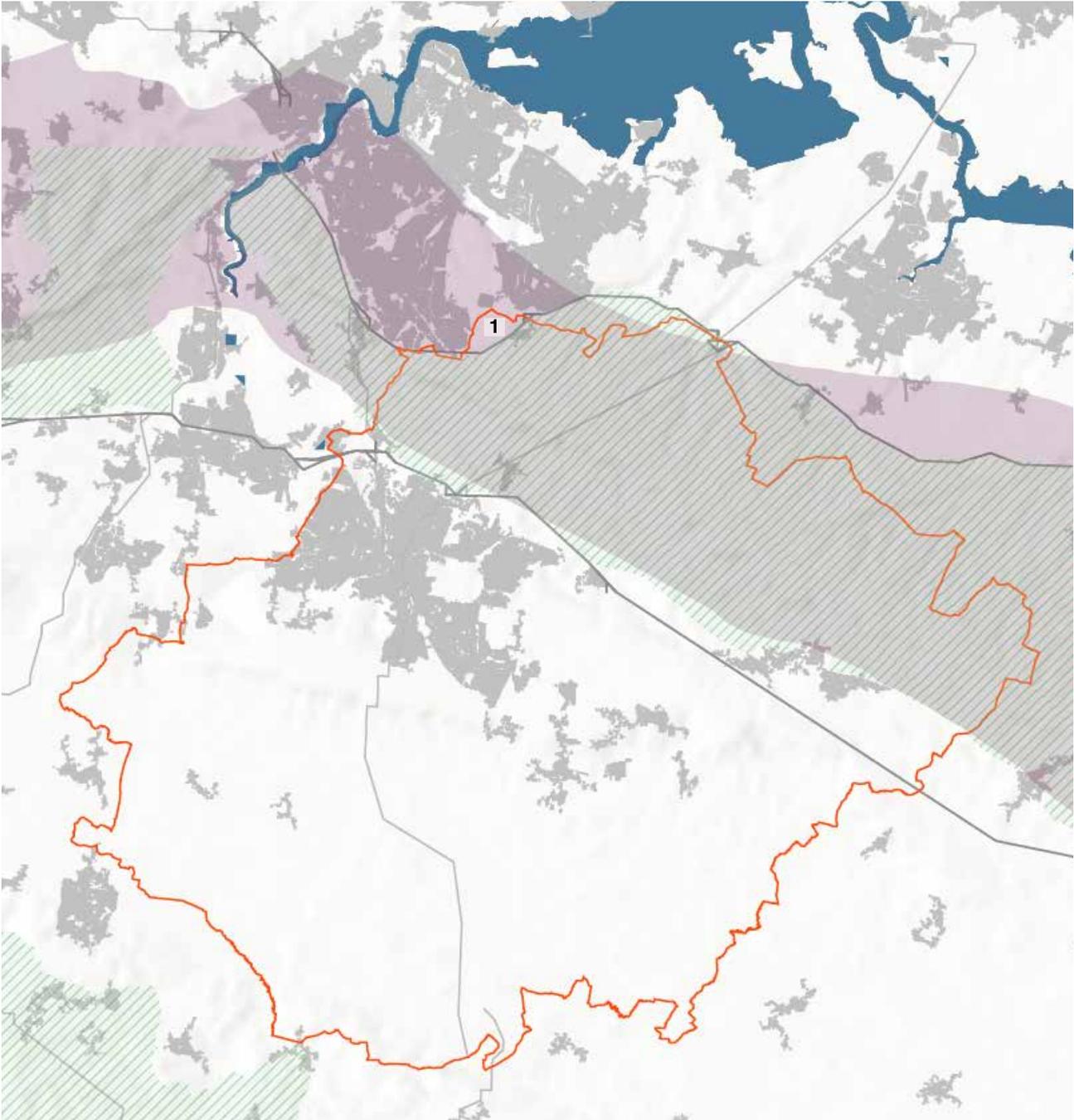
## 3.4 Villages in the North Downs

The North Kent Downs Landscape Character Area covers the northern part of the Borough and beyond, and contains the Kent Downs AONB within it. The landscape character has formed where a chalk bedrock forms the northern edge of the Medway basin and Wealden Greensand landscapes. The northern and central part of this LCA is designated within the Kent Downs AONB, defined by its highly valued woodlands, wooded hedgerows, parklands, and pastoral scenery. The most distinctive feature of the Downs landscape in Maidstone Borough is the distinctive chalk scarp which presents a steep south facing slope from which dry valleys flow (bournes) and hollow bowls have been formed (coombes). The scarp provides extensive views across the Borough and is a prominent visual element from across the Borough.

The northern part of the LCA is characterised by dry valleys that slope from the more prominent higher landscapes and interacts with the edges of the Medway towns. The southern part of the landscape character area is encompassed by Gault Clay Vale. This is situated at the foot of the North Downs chalk scarp, and so benefits from many panoramic views, albeit disrupted by the urbanising influence of Maidstone and neighbouring major infrastructure corridors. The landform is undulating and comprises numerous spring lined settlements and farmsteads. Large arable fields predominate, demarcated with species rich hedgerows and mixed ancient woodland blocks with hazel, ash and areas of coppice.

The settlement pattern in the North Downs, particularly in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is that of scattered farms, barns and oasts - some of which have grown over time to form small, nucleated villages at the foot of the scarp. The settlement pattern on the top of the scarp is even sparser, which contributes to its remote and tranquil character. These villages and hamlets are traditionally linked along strong primary routes which run perpendicular to and up main slopes, until the gradient becomes extreme and the route switches back on itself. Routes following contours tend to be secondary.

Characteristic ancient connections interact with the landscape in the form of holloways or dense vegetation such as tall hedgerows. The landscape is also criss-crossed with ancient paths, drove roads and trackways (which are often sunken). These paths include the North Downs Way, a ridgeway route which partly follows the Pilgrims' Way and is now a National Trail. Additionally, there are many historic defensive features including castles, hill forts, WWII installations and traditional parklands from the 18th and 19th centuries.



- Built up Area
  - Maidstone Bourugh Boudnary
  - North Downs National Landscape Character Area
  - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
1. Potential Lidsing Garden Settlement

Figure 7: Plan of North Downs



### **3.4.1. Potential Lidsing Garden Settlement**

On the north-west Borough boundary, beyond the boundary of the North Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Lidsing Garden Settlement has been identified as a potential strategic allocation in Maidstone's recent Regulation 18 'Preferred Options' Local Plan Review consultation. The main component of the strategic location lies within the North Kent Downs landscape character area but outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Lidsing contains an irregular pattern of clustered built form along Lidsing Road, partly screened by a deep buffer of vegetation. Three of the four clusters lie to the east side of Lidsing Road and appear to comprise light industrial and agricultural buildings, interspersed with a few dwellings.

At the settlement centre, the most distinctive built feature is The Harrow Inn public house, of traditional architecture and with two gable ends fronting Lidsing Road. To the west of The Harrow Inn, there is an area of ancient and semi-ancient woodland.

The potential Lidsing Garden Settlement lies where the chalk escarpment gradually descends northward, in an area known as Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs. It is largely characterised by open, expansive and rolling downland, thrown into relief by ancient woodland (including oak, ash and maple species) and shaws.

This masks the regular rhythm of dry valleys, which accommodate chalk grassland and grazing. Where there is more level ground, arable agriculture predominates. Additionally, there are extensive drifts of clay with intervening flints. Development is generally limited to a few small villages, isolated farmsteads and narrow winding lanes.

Overall, the Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs does not display a distinctive field pattern, prevailing type of agriculture or strong network of hedgerows and woodlands. Additionally, where the existing Lidsing settlement is situated, there is a combination of suburban development and woodland. The M2 motorway corridor also demarcates the Kent Downs AONB boundary to the south, although views of this are mitigated by the road being partly set down within the landscape.

Lidsing contains an irregular pattern of clustered built form along Lidsing Road, partly screened by a deep buffer of vegetation. Three of the four clusters lie to the east side of Lidsing Road and appear to comprise light industrial and agricultural buildings, interspersed with a few dwellings.

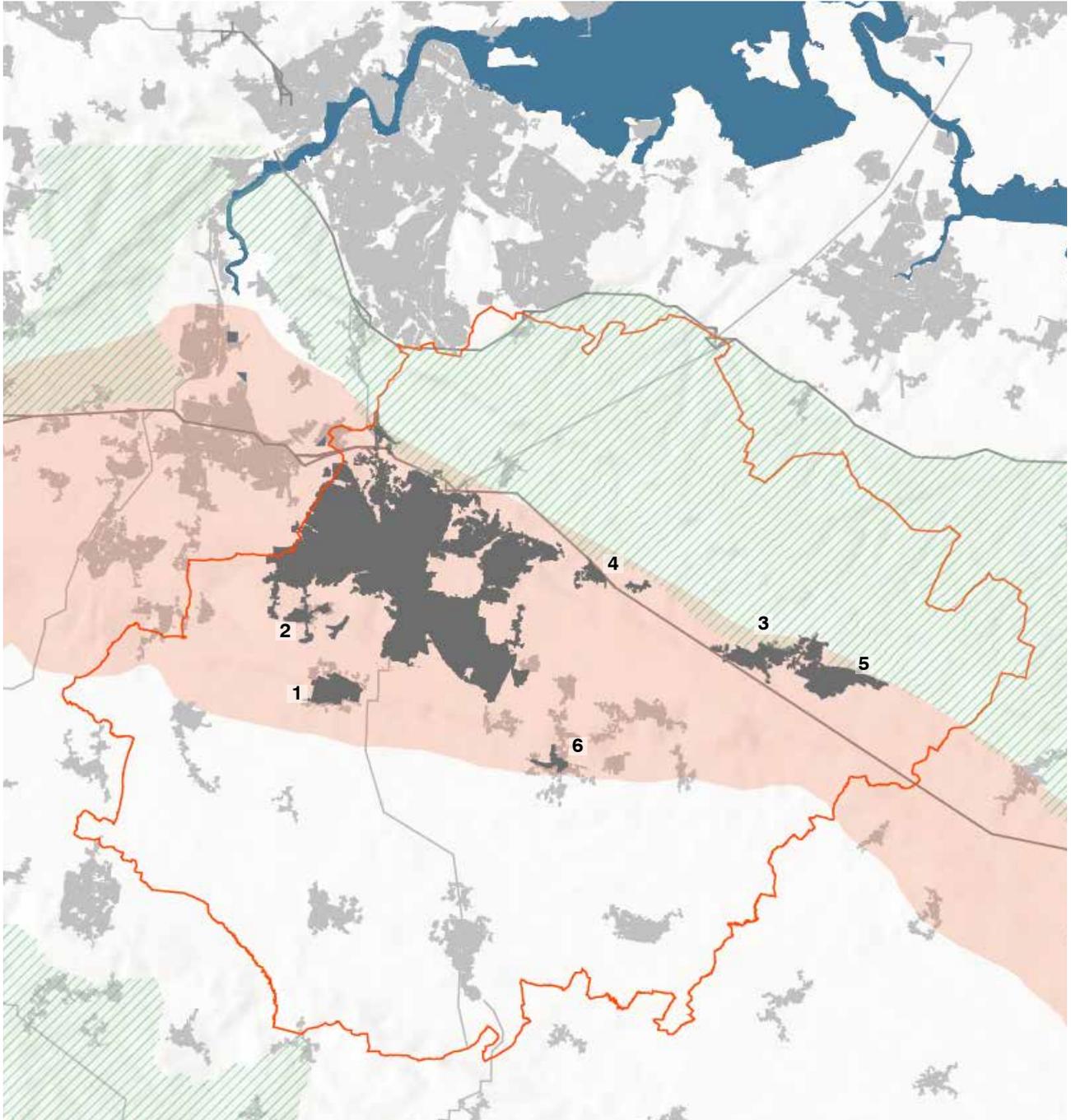
At the settlement centre, the most distinctive built feature is The Harrow Inn public house, of traditional architecture and with two gable ends fronting Lidsing Road. To the west of The Harrow Inn, there is an area of ancient and semi-ancient woodland.

## 3.5 Settlements in the Wealden Greensand

The wider Wealden Greensand character area forms an arc between the North and South Downs, extending north-eastwards from Surrey into Kent and eastwards across to the coast at Folkestone. Within Maidstone it essentially covers the area to the east of the town, north of the Greensand Ridge and extends along the A20/M20 corridor.

It is characterised by scarp-and-dip slope topography, giving rise to an undulating landform, with long views afforded from prominent scarp summits. It displays a notable diversity in character including extensive areas of woodland, and acid grasslands, parkland landscapes and a mix of agriculture. The area's geology has also informed building vernacular, for example, with locally sourced Ragstone featuring, including in many built heritage assets. The settlement pattern is typified by dispersed villages, hamlets and farmsteads, with some larger houses and parkland grounds.

The east part of the Wealden Greensand landscape has a gentler and more open aspect, containing less woodland than further west and more mixed agriculture, including orchards and arable fields. Farming is the predominant commercial activity and in many areas has resulted in the traditional small/medium sized field pattern being opened up as farming operations modernise and scale-up.



- |   |   |                   |
|---|---|-------------------|
|  | Built Up Area                                       | 1. Coxheath       |
|  | Maidstone Borough Boundary                          | 2. East Farleigh  |
|  | Wealden Greensand National Landscape Character Area | 3. Harrietsham    |
|  | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty                  | 4. Hollingbourne  |
|   |   | 5. Lenham         |
|   |   | 6. Sutton Valence |

Figure 8: Plan of Wealden Greensand

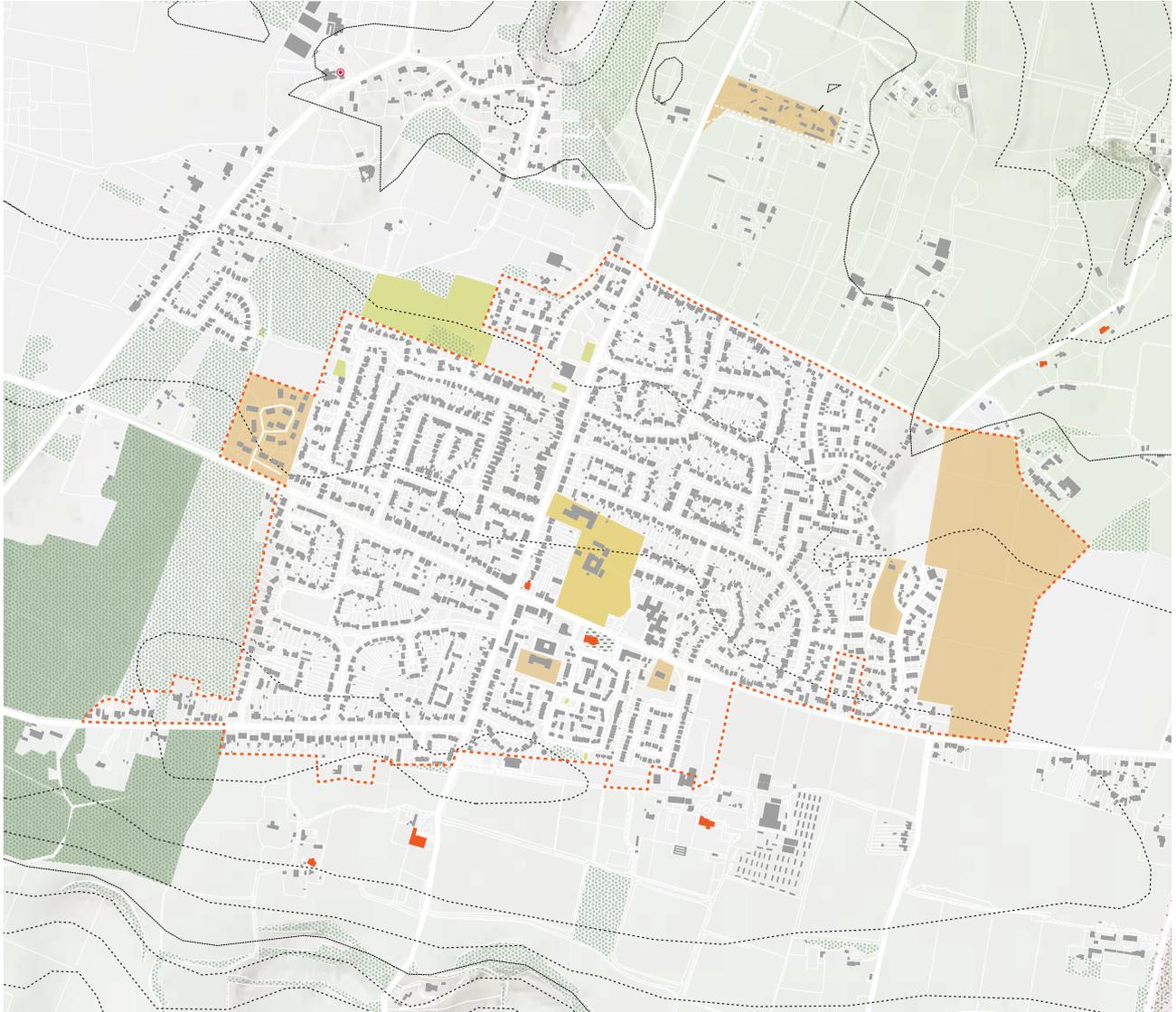


### 3.5.1. Coxheath

To the south/south-west of Maidstone, the village of Coxheath lies to the east part of the Coxheath Plateau, above the Greensand Ridge. Coxheath is identified in the Borough of Maidstone's Local Plan Review as a Rural Service centre, with services including a school, nursery, place of worship, community hall, library, recreation facilities and a bus service. There are also onward highway connections to the A229 highway.

The Coxheath Plateau's natural landscape is distinguished by orchard blocks and poplar shelterbelts, providing a traditional small scale enclosure pattern, albeit interspersed with some minor commercial development. However, to the south on the south facing scarp, substantial areas of polytunnels detract from the overall quality of the local landscape.

There are substantial swathes of woodland, including ancient woodland and sweet chestnut coppices, providing habitat for several small mammals and birds. This includes Amsbury Wood and Quarry Wood to the west of Coxheath, the latter of which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The woodland restricts long views, apart from vantage points in the north Plateau, where there are panoramic views of the Medway Valley and North Downs, and in the south Plateau, where there are long views across the Low Weald.



- |                               |                                    |                          |                      |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area                  | Landscape of local value | LPR Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building           | Green playing/sport area |                      |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building          | Productive gardens       |                      |
| Buildings                     | Grade I listed building            | Other green areas        |                      |
| Educational Facilities        | Area of Outstanding Natural beauty | Local Woodland           |                      |
|                               |                                    | Ancient Woodland         |                      |
|                               |                                    | Water bodies             |                      |

Figure 9: Plan of Coxheath\_1: 20.000

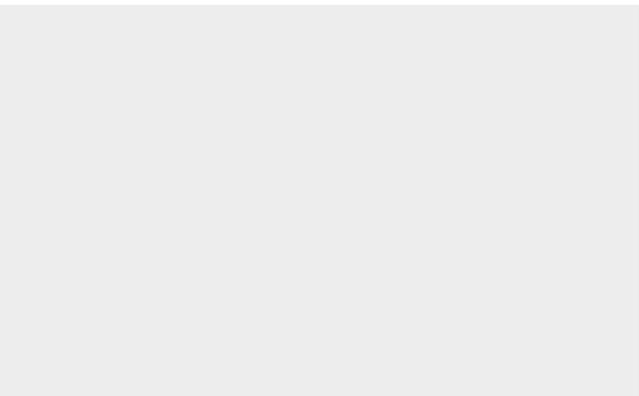
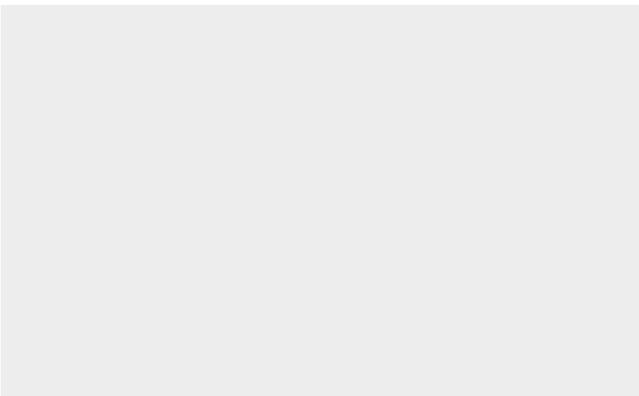
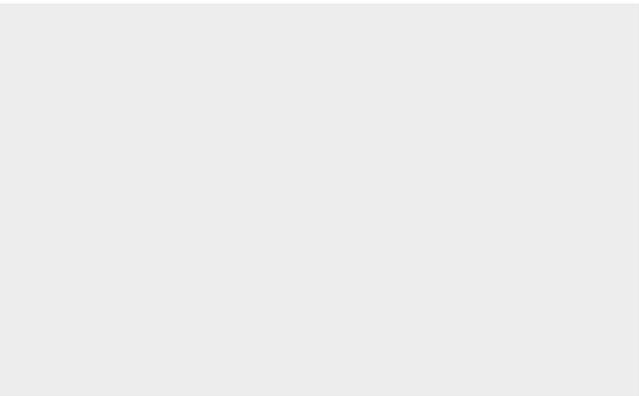
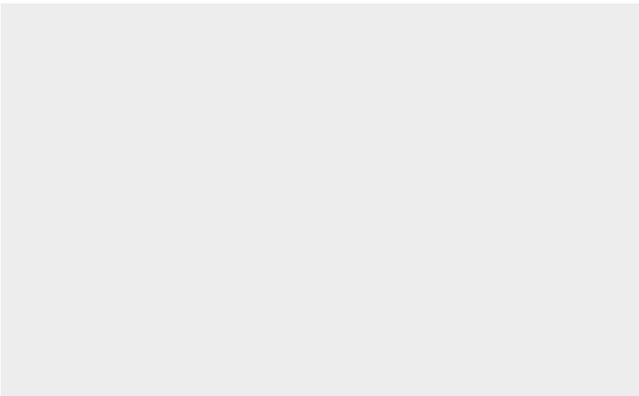
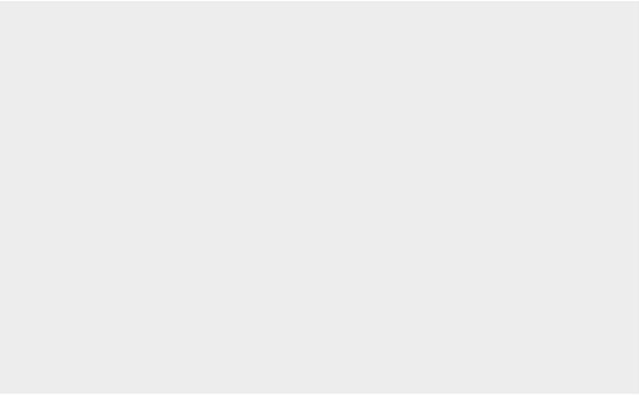
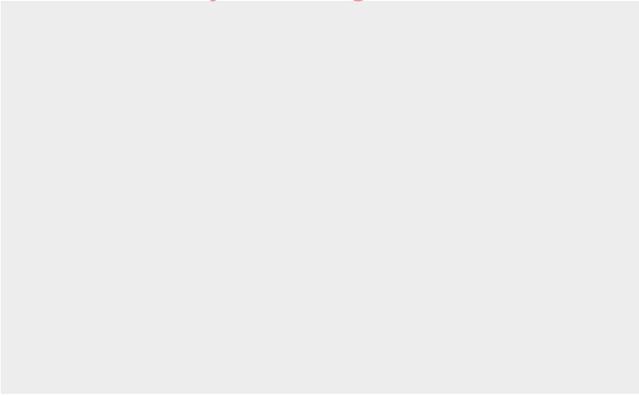


The Holy Trinity Church is a prominent historic feature in east to west views, although it is now masked in vantage points from the west due to development. Northward views look towards Maidstone and the North Downs beyond; southward views are very limited due to topography and high hedgerows.

Coxheath is a larger village, centred around the highway, Heath Road. The straight alignment of Heath Road and other highways in Coxheath originate from the village's history as a major 18th century army camp for the Kent Militia. Evidence of this has disappeared, along with the Maidstone Union Workhouse which was in operation in Coxheath during the Victorian era.

Built form is now predominantly low density 20th and 21st century dwellings, apart from the ragstone Holy Trinity Church (built as a chapel for the Workhouse) and a few examples of traditional buildings, constructed from ragstone and chequered red and grey brick.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



### 3.5.2. East Farleigh

East Farleigh is identified as a Larger Village in the Borough of Maidstone's Local Plan Review. It lies in the centre of the Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt, which extends across the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge to the south of Maidstone. The Fruit Belt has an undulating landform where orchards predominate and promote a strong pattern of enclosed small to medium sized fields. Nonetheless, the rural landscape is interspersed commercial, agricultural and leisure development, and some orchards (especially at the edge of Maidstone) appear unmanaged.

East Farleigh village is situated on ground rising southwards from the river. Station Road extends south of the river, accessed via the medieval five-arch East Farleigh Bridge, and leads to the main developed part of the village. Notable historic features in the village include the ragstone Church of St Mary (likely 12th century), a very early Victorian train station and, to the south-west, the 14th century Gallants Manor.

The wider village predominantly comprises a mix of traditional and sensitively designed modern homes. Many residential gardens comprise mature native trees, alongside ornamental planting.

East Farleigh is irregular in form and incorporates outlying development approximately 0.5km to the south of the village centre including dwellings and East Farleigh Primary School. Services are limited to a few independent businesses (including The Bull Inn public house and leisure businesses associated with the river) and public transport facilities (including East Farleigh train station and three bus services). There are also highway connections to the A26 to the west.



- |                               |                                    |                          |                      |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area                  | Landscape of local value | LPR Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building           | Green playing/sport area |                      |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building          | Productive gardens       |                      |
| Railway Station               | Grade I listed building            | Other green areas        |                      |
| Buildings                     | Area of Outstanding Natural beauty | Local Woodland           |                      |
| Educational Facilities        |                                    | Ancient Woodland         |                      |
|                               |                                    | Water bodies             |                      |

Figure 10: Plan of East Farleigh\_ 1:20.000

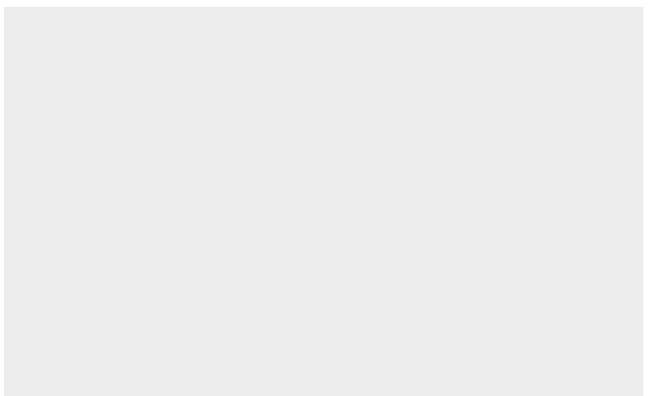
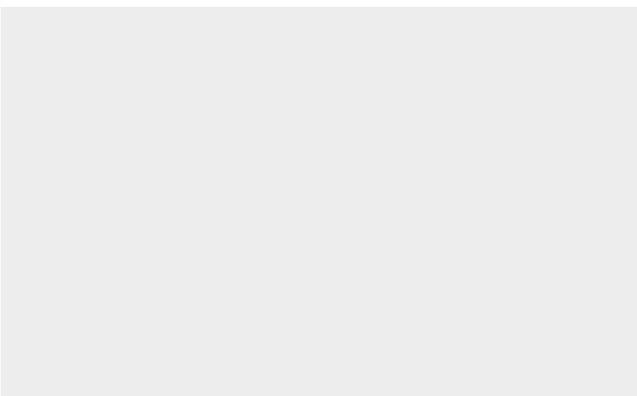
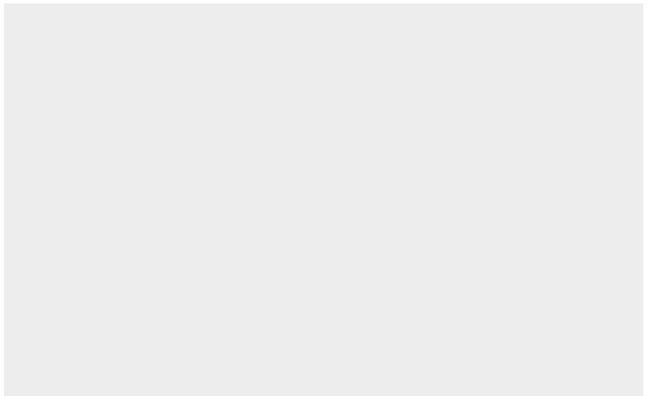
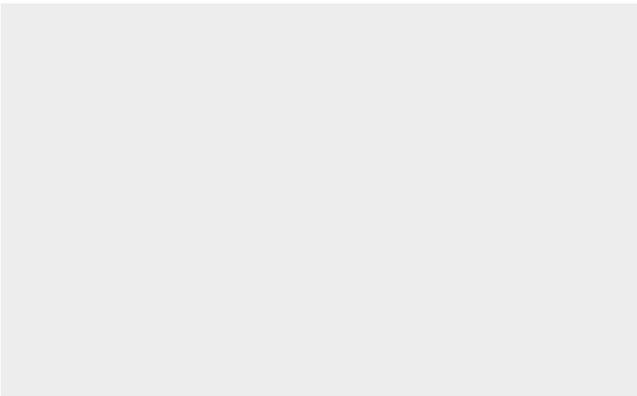
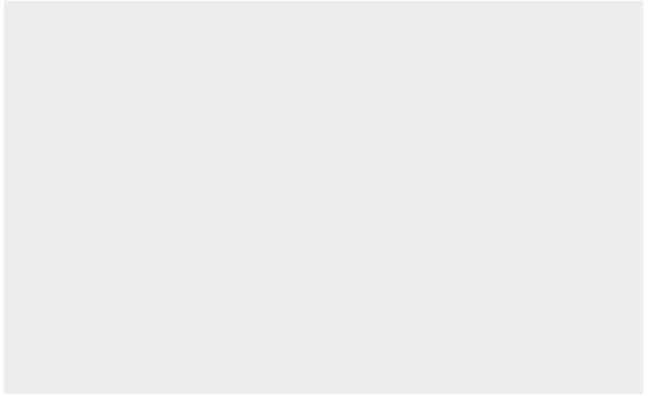
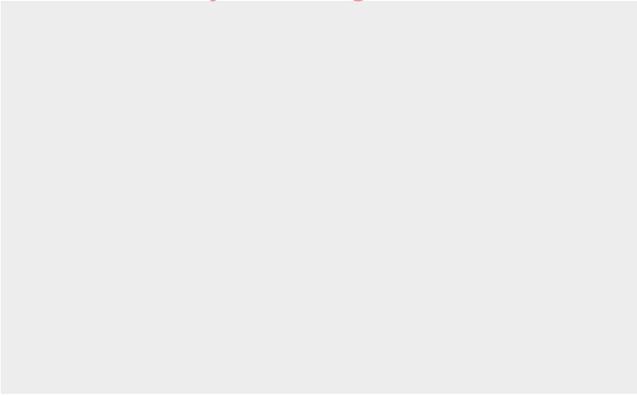


The Fruit Belt also comprises many broadleaf and coppice woodland blocks, including ancient woodland. The enclosure created by the trees limits visual connections to Maidstone, despite its proximity. One of the few exceptions is from Forge Lane in East Farleigh, where there are long and clear views of the urban area of Maidstone and the North Downs beyond.

The Fruit Belt comprises several dispersed settlements and isolated farmsteads, including many of architectural and historic interest. To the west of East Farleigh, there are traditional courts, halls and manors dispersed throughout the landscape; to the east of the village, there are oast houses. Additionally, buildings, walls, gateways and pillar boxes also feature rag stone, as a result of historic rag stone mining in the area. This past mining activity has also given rise to deeply cut undulations in some locations.

Unique landscape features of East Farleigh include the upper River Medway valley which comprises large arable and smaller pastoral fields divided by native hedgerows and tracks. Most highways are single track and sunken in places, giving rise to an ancient character.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



### 3.5.3. Harrietsham

Harrietsham, a Rural Service Centre, lies south-east of Maidstone within the Greensand Ridge landscape character area. Harrietsham is a sizeable village to the north of the M2 motorway and HS1 rail line. It is intersected by the A20 (Ashford Road), which routes through the village's extensive 20th century housing estates and passes an extensive warehousing and industrial area further east. It is well connected, and has a local economic role, with a moderate range of shops and amenities. The village's services incorporate several local businesses, including a convenience shop and public transport links including a rail station and two bus services. There are also highway connections to the M20 to the south.

It is situated in the context of a series of vales, including Eyhorne Vale to the west and Lenham Vale to the east, alongside Harrietsham Vale itself. These vales form the rising foreground to the Downs further north, where the Kent Downs AONB lies, and lead up to extensive panoramic views of the open downland landscape, wooded areas and across the Len Valley to Greensand Ridge. These views are permitted from unenclosed locations including the Pilgrims Way, which marks the foot of the steep scarp of the North Downs.

Historic buildings are limited and mainly lie on Harrietsham's peripheries. East Street extends to the south-east from the A20 – it is partly Georgian in character and includes the distinctive twelve dwelling terrace of 18th century red-brick Quasted Almhouses; a well-preserved 16th century Wealden house; and the simple weather-boarded Holy Shepherd Church. West Street arcs to the north-west from the A20, in the opposite direction, and partly comprises 18th century brick and tile-hung houses and Victorian cottages.



- |                               |                                    |                          |                      |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area                  | Landscape of local value | LPR Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building           | Green playing/sport area |                      |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building          | Productive gardens       |                      |
| ● Railway Station             | Grade I listed building            | Other green areas        |                      |
| ■ Buildings                   | Area of Outstanding Natural beauty | Local Woodland           |                      |
| ■ Educational Facilities      |                                    | Ancient Woodland         |                      |
|                               |                                    | Water bodies             |                      |

Figure 11: Plan of Harrietsham\_ 1:20.000



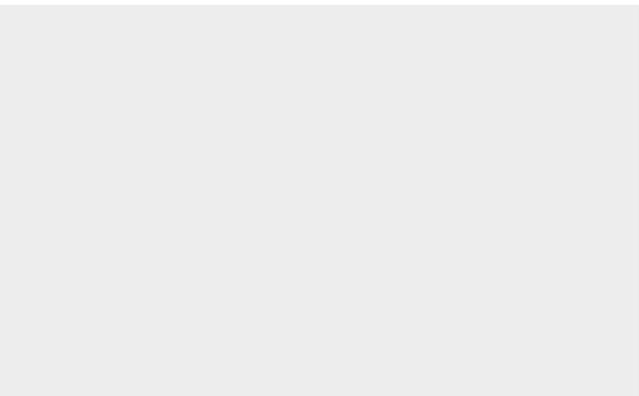
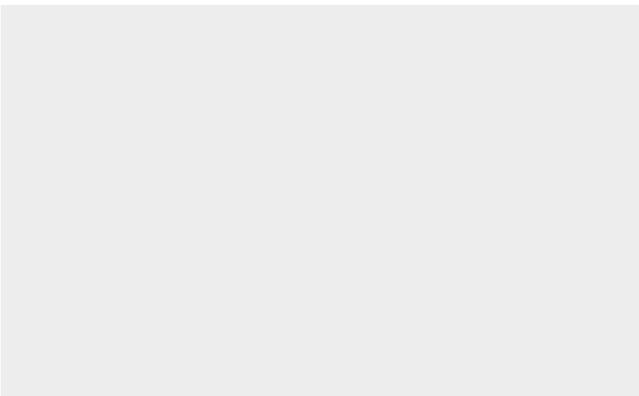
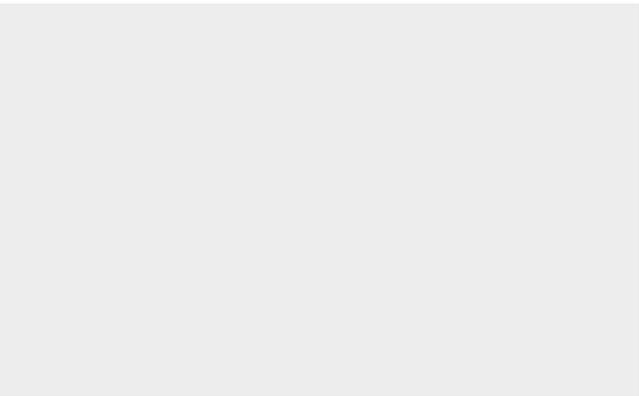
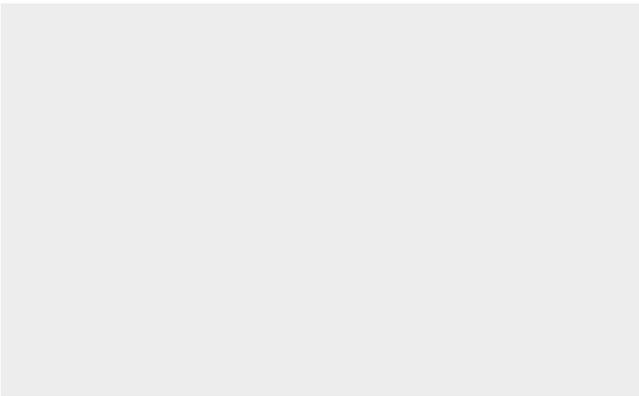
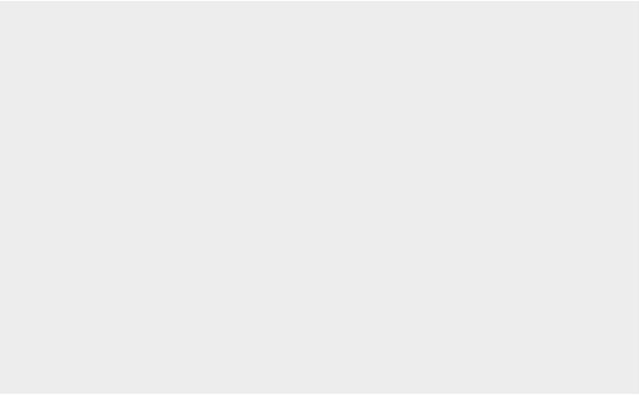
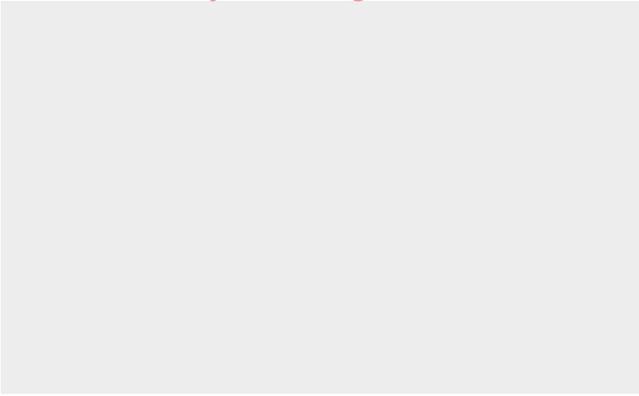
To the north of Harrietsham, there is the grey rag stone St John the Baptist Church and stately red-brick Court Lodge lie, overlooking a field where an annual fair was previously hosted. There is a pond and woodlands area close by to the west; this incorporates a distinctive red brick square gazebo.

The locality of Harrietsham comprises an irregular pattern of small traditional and large arable fields and, in proximity to Lenham, fields with curved and distinctly non-rectilinear boundaries. Isolated oak trees are a common feature, where fields have been enlarged for intensive agriculture. Additionally, there are woodland belts (including ancient woodland) and ribbons of vegetation (incorporating willow trees) along chalk defined drains.

The south part of Harrietsham Vale is somewhat disrupted by the audibility of traffic from the M20 and the HS1 rail line. The infrastructure corridors have created artificial landforms and mitigation ponds, thereby disturbing the traditional field patterns.

South of this, the landform is defined by the more tranquil character of River Len headwaters, where there is marshy grassland designated as a Local Wildlife Site. This area also incorporates sunken lanes.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



### 3.5.4. Potential Heathlands Garden Settlement

On the east Maidstone Borough boundary, Heathlands Garden Settlement has been identified as a potential strategic allocation in Maidstone's recent Regulation 18 'Preferred Options' Local Plan Review consultation.

The proposal is currently at a preliminary stage, and so the extent of the new settlement has not been defined. Instead, there is a broad area of search between the village of Lenham to the west and the village of Charing to the east, and between the North Kent Downs Line to the north and the Great Stour River to the south. This search area therefore currently includes the hamlets of Lenham Heath and Lenham Forstal, and is intersected by the major infrastructure corridors of HS1 and the M20 motorway to the south. Additionally, the proposed search area lies to the south of the A20 highway and the Kent Downs AONB beyond.

The emerging proposal for the new Garden Settlement will potentially comprise 4,800 dwellings of different types and densities, mixed use District and Local Centres (including employment, retail and community uses) and new education facilities.

Located within the Wealden Greensand landscape, the proposal forms part of the foreground of the North Downs to the north, and the upper catchment of the Great Stour River to the south.

Heathlands encompasses the closely located hamlets of Lenham Heath and Lenham Forstal. Plots in both hamlets appear to have been established along highways initially, and extended to the rear as backland development to accommodate additional buildings and garden land. This has led to an irregular settlement pattern of varying building density and uses.

There is a scattering of historic buildings throughout the hamlets, particularly in Lenham Forstal where traditional buildings confer a strong sense of place.

Heathlands is not assessed in the Maidstone Settlement Hierarchy Review 2021. As such, it is assumed that it currently falls within the 'Countryside and undefined settlements' category in the hierarchy. These are settlements which are considered to perform negligibly against the connectivity, economy, facilities and scale factors in the hierarchy assessment.

Services include the Red Lion public house, Heath Farm School and two bus services. The settlement is also connected by road, with a nearby connection onto the M20 motorway.

To the north, the search area lies at the foot of the steepest section of the North Downs scarp face, where there is some sense of enclosure. The Maidstone East rail line (on the search area's north boundary) sits comfortably within this landscape, enclosed by a mature vegetation belt. Scattered development in the locality is visible in views especially where the land rises northward – this includes 20th century dwellings, recent commercial development and isolated farmsteads.

There is a simple pattern of large open arable fields demarcated by native hedgerows (including hawthorn and hazel), interspersed with springs and drains that run towards the Great Stour. Travelling south, fields decline in size, become more irregular in form and incorporate pockets of trees. In the vicinity of Lenham Heath, there are predominantly paddocks for equestrian grazing, leading to poor quality grassland and patchy hedgerows. Sandy soils have also influenced this locality, giving rise to substantial bracken and silver birch. There are also current and former sand extraction areas, including Bull Heath Pit which is now a fauna rich Local Wildlife Site.

South of HS1 and the M20, the search area is shaped partly by the gentle valley slopes of the Great Stour River, and partly by the ridgeline to the south, where land begins to fall sharply towards Greensand Ridge. The valley around the river (a minor stream in this location) comprises grazing land, while the wider locality is formed of large arable fields regularly interspersed with woodland blocks (including ancient woodland) and some native hedgerows. However, the infrastructure corridors within and in proximity to the search area somewhat detract from its rural tranquillity.

There are notable rural historic assets in the search area including traditional oast houses, rag stone and timber weatherboarded barns and chequered red and grey brick farmhouses. There are also unique features, such as the rag stone Bowley Mill and pond, and the 17th century weather-boarded Chapel Mill, both situated by the Great Stour. The historic Chilston Park also lies to the south-west and comprises a stately home and parkland, alongside ecologically valuable ponds and acidic grassland.

### 3.5.5. Hollingbourne

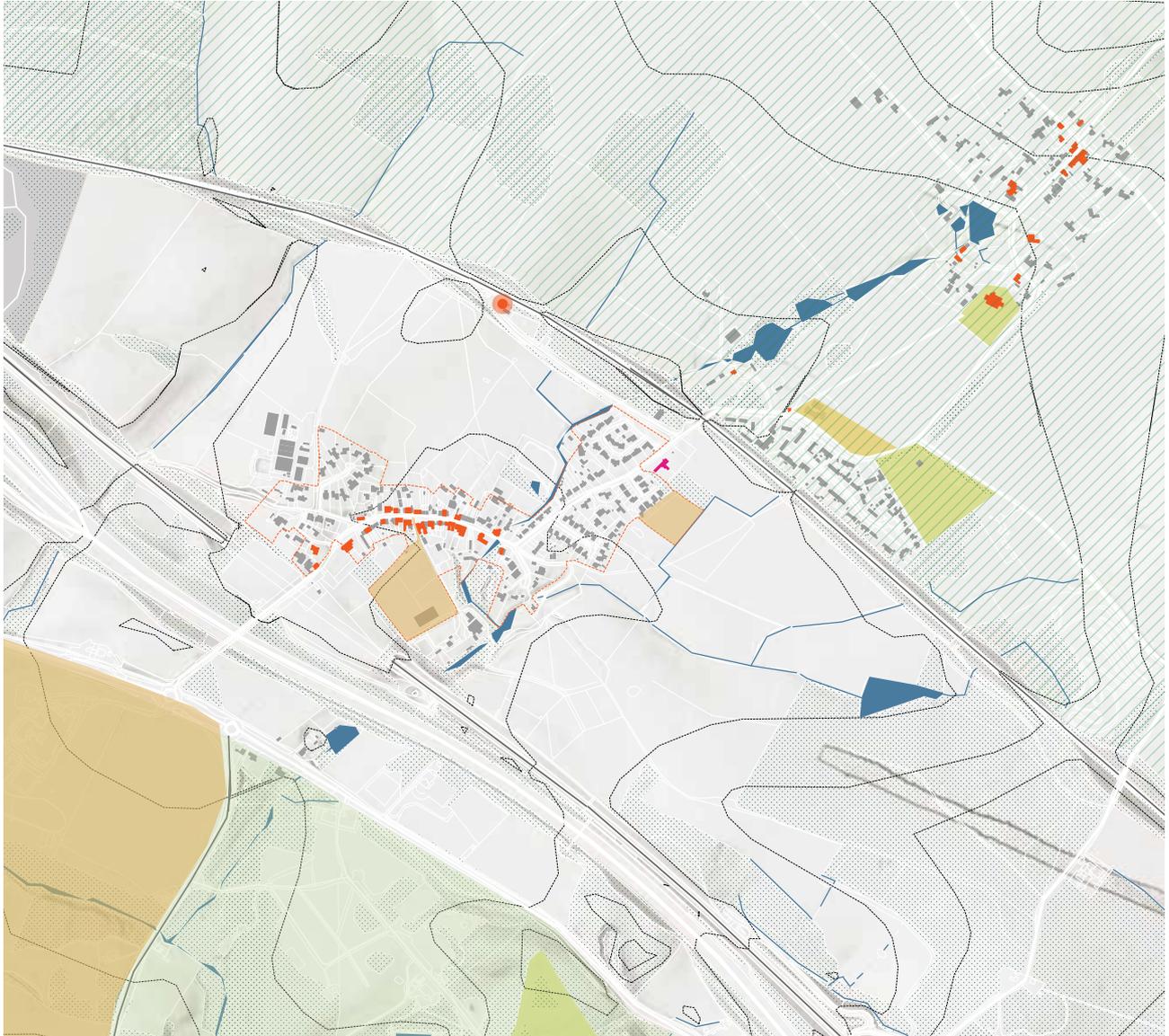
Hollingbourne is a Larger Village within Thurnham Vale, part of Gault Clay Vale, and has several watercourses, drains and ponds which run down the scarp and eventually into the River Len to the south-east. It is well connected, but has limited facilities and economic role. Services include one school, a few local businesses (including two public houses) and public transport links including a rail station and one bus service. There are also highway connections to the M20 to the south.

The village is formed by three distinct clusters around Eyhorne Street and Upper Street, the historic link between Maidstone and Sittingbourne. Buildings that front this main route throughout the village are a mix of sizes and era, but provide strong enclosure to the route, producing a visually rich and varied rhythm and grain. The section of the village north of the North Kent Down railway line lies within the Kent Downs AONB.

The western cluster is the main service centre and lies between HS1 and the Kent Downs railway alignment. Services include several public houses and the village hall. The historic core is made up of a dense collection of cottage type buildings with strong relationship to Eyhorne Street, generally with a couple of steps to front doors.

The building line tracks the curvature of the road to create a strong sense of enclosure. Some farmsteads and coaching inn type buildings provide deep plots framed by buildings accessed by secondary paths from the main street. Later additions from the 20th century are formed of individual houses set back from cul-de-sacs. Eyhorne Street thickens around the Windmill Pub, potentially around the ancient site of the market that was permitted in 1448.

The central cluster has emerged around the Victorian Primary School and is of early to mid-century, arts and crafts influenced ribbon development. Eyhorne Street is defined by mature trees and dense hedgerows, residential buildings generally are set back from behind a deep grass verge.



- |                               |                                    |                          |                      |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area                  | Landscape of local value | LPR Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building           | Green playing/sport area |                      |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building          | Productive gardens       |                      |
| Railway Station               | Grade I listed building            | Other green areas        |                      |
| Buildings                     | Area of Outstanding Natural beauty | Local Woodland           |                      |
| Educational Facilities        |                                    | Ancient Woodland         |                      |
|                               |                                    | Water bodies             |                      |

Figure 12: Plan of Hollingbourne\_1:20.000

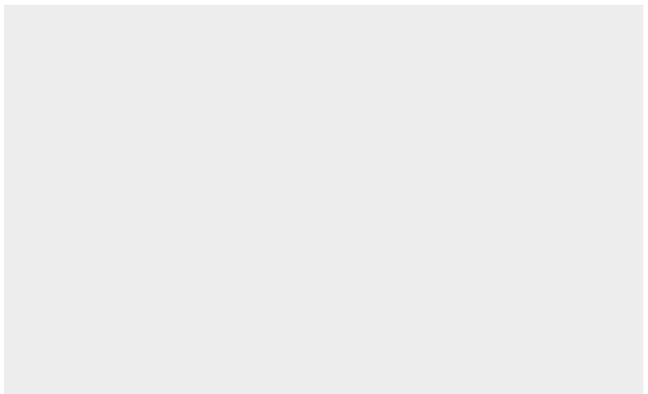
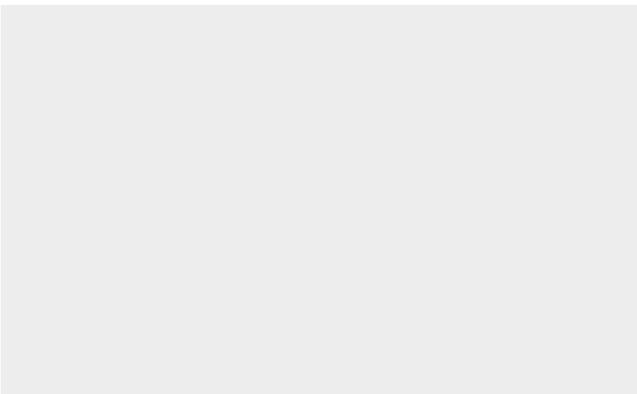
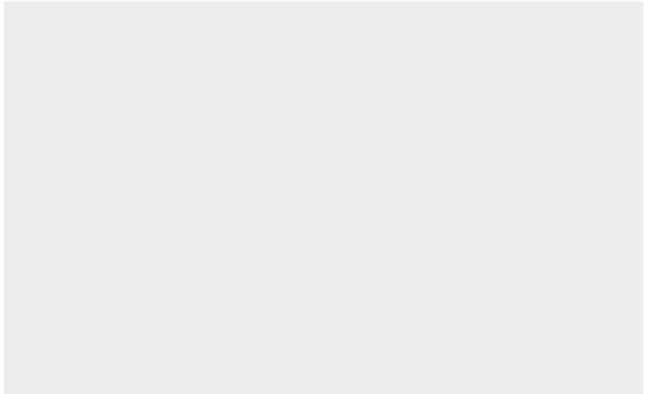
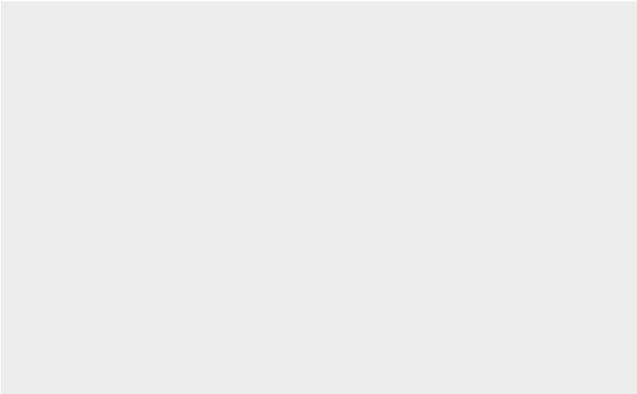
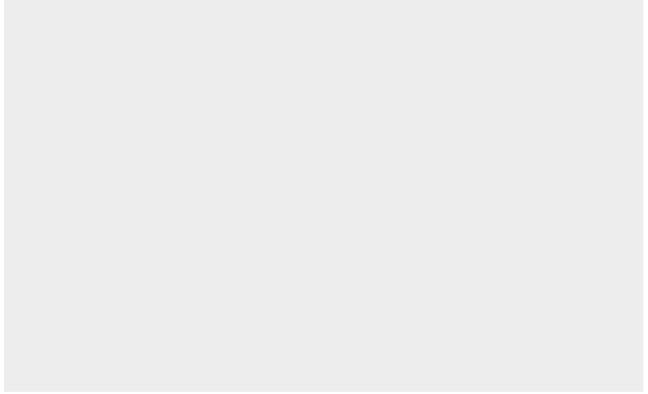
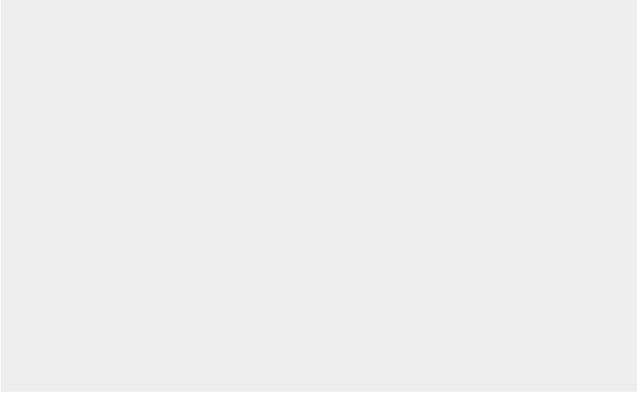


The westernmost cluster has formed a loose collection of grander houses that have formed on secondary lanes around the 1500s, namely All Saints Church and the Elizabethan Hollingbourne Manor. The main street is formed by walls and vegetation, with the buildings set back on slopes higher than the street. The crossroads of Pilgrims Way and Upper Street/Hollingbourne Hill buildings cluster tightly to the street edge culminating in the jettied, 15th century half-timbered Malthouse, public house and former forge.

Long views from the village are generally rare due to large blocks of trees (including ancient woodland to the east) along water courses and vegetated boundaries. However, where the village rises up the scarp towards the east and boundary vegetation thins, glimpsed views of the church and the village exist. Long views into the village are generally from the north, particularly from the Pilgrims Way.

The undulating arable land has over time agglomerated into larger fields, although there are instances of smaller, irregular fields and pockets of mixed woodlands in belts and blocks. Mature willow trees mark the location of drains and ditches and the North Kent Downs railway line steps over historic lanes with distinctive narrow red brick arches.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



### 3.5.6. Lenham

Lenham lies south-east of Maidstone within the Wealden Greensand landscape character area. It is situated within Lenham Vale, which has a strong southern boundary defined by HS1 and the M20. Lenham is a Rural Service Centre which is well connected, has a significant local economic role and hosts many local facilities. Services include two schools, several local businesses, including a convenience shop and public transport links including a rail station and five bus services. There are also highway connections to the M20 to the south.

Lenham is a nucleated village in the east of the Borough that has evolved at the crossroads where the east-west Maidstone to Ashford Road meets the Faversham Road, before it runs north over the scarp. It is around this significant intersection that a square has formed, a rare feature amongst the villages of Maidstone Borough, providing a strong sense of centrality for the village around which the church, shops and other amenities have developed.

The village's most significant built heritage is concentrated around its centre. St Marys Church lies just south of Old Ashford Road, comprising elements of 12th to 15th century construction. The adjacent timber framed Tithe Barn also has ecclesiastical links, as it was built on a historical demesne (or property) of St Augustines of Canterbury. Across Old Ashford Road, there are Wealden houses and the 19th century Stanfield House situated on The Square. Other distinctive features in the village include the single storey red-brick Almshouses on the High Street and the old Lockup on Faversham Road.

Beyond Lenham's formal settlement boundary, there are small clusters of light industrial development to the south and Ashmill Business Park to the east. The undulating landscape is also studded with isolated farmstead buildings (including traditional oast houses and rag stone and weatherboarded barns) which were originally established at spring heads emanating from the chalk.

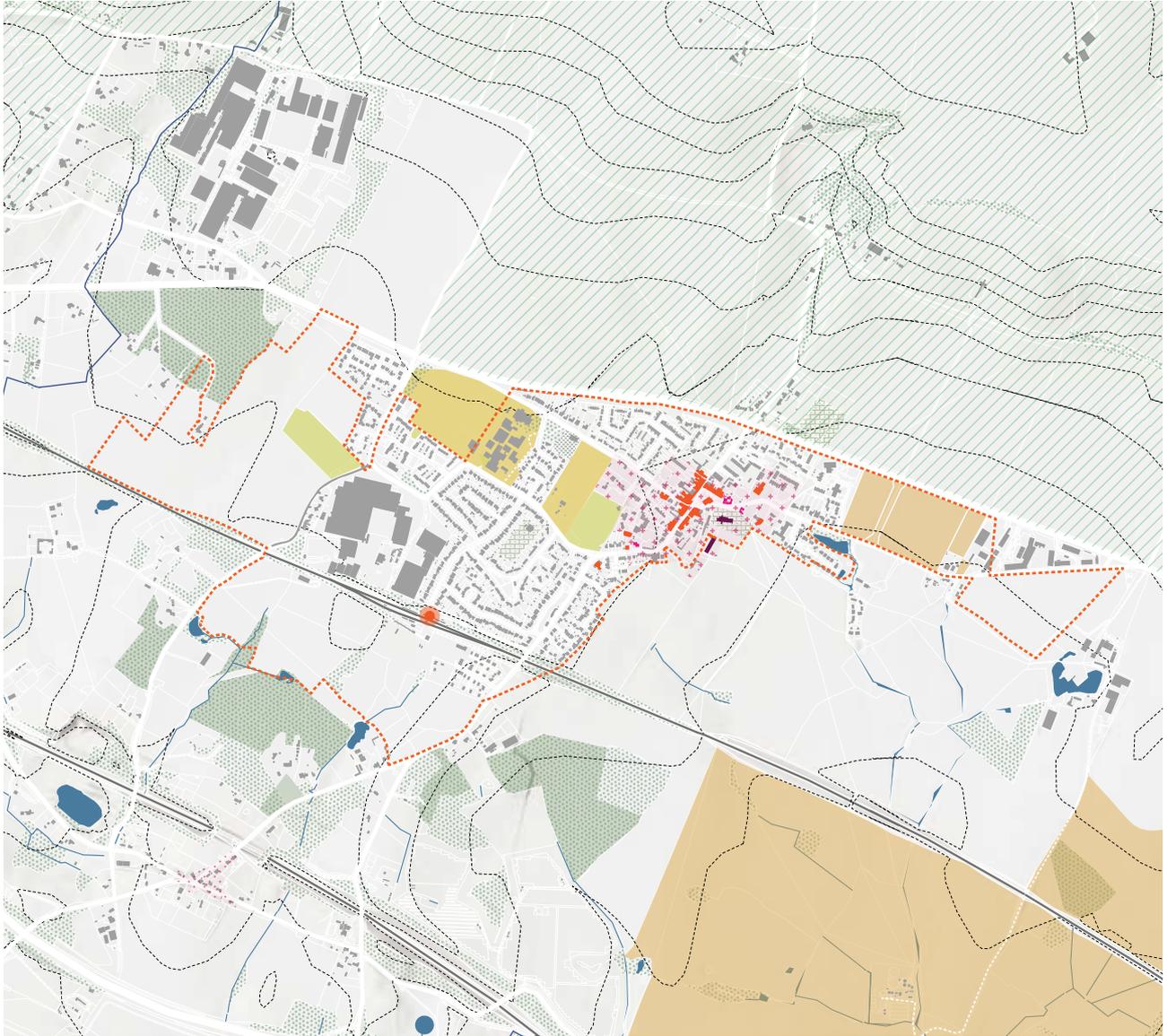


Figure 13: Plan of Lenham\_1:30.000



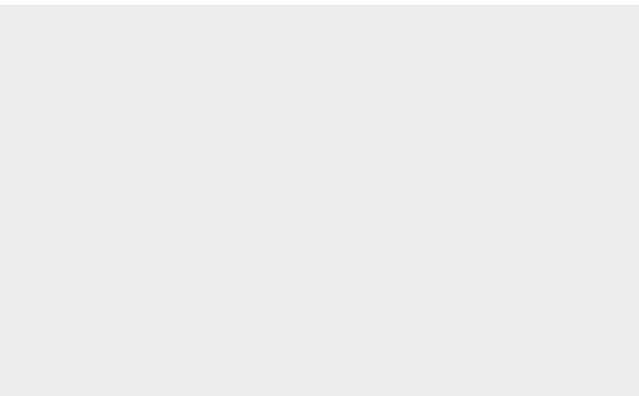
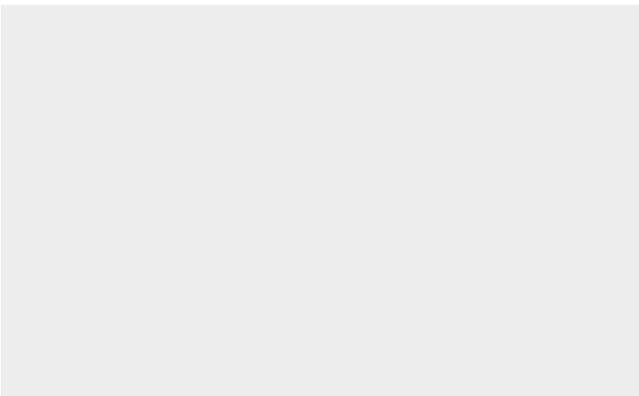
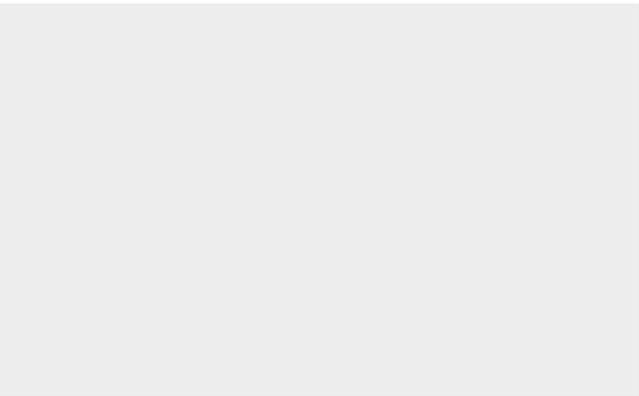
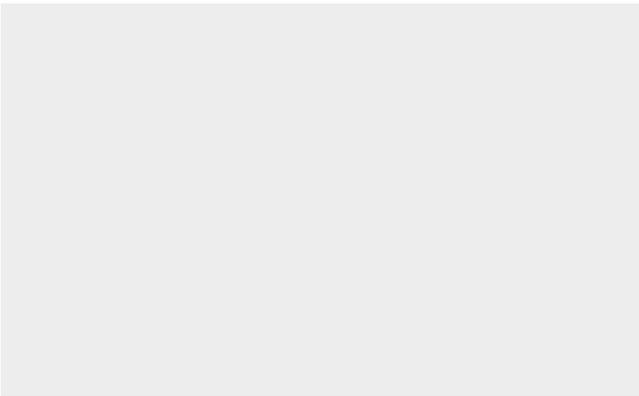
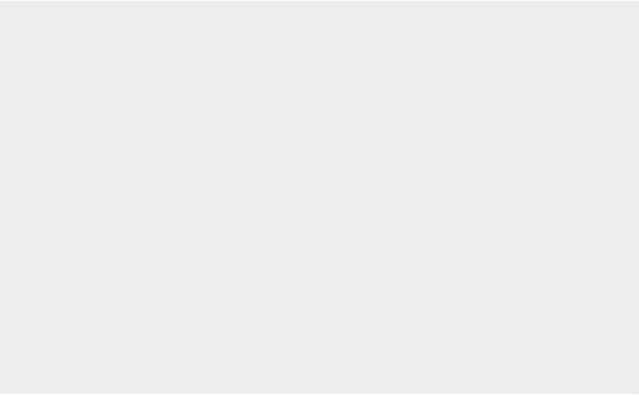
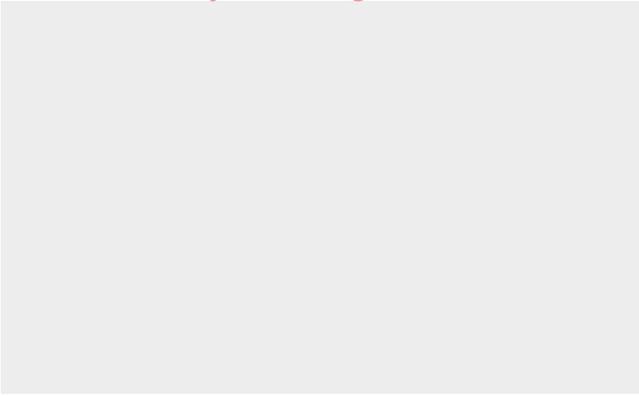
There are also historic standalone dwellings, including Royton Manor. Additionally, the North Kent Downs Line sits within the landscape, set down within a strong belt of mature vegetation.

The Lenham Vale forms part of the rising foreground to the Downs further north, where the Kent Downs AONB lies, and eventually leads up to extensive panoramic views of the downland landscape from unenclosed locations including the Pilgrims Way. One of the scarp slopes displays a distinctive commemorative chalk cross.

Lenham's locality is characterised by a distinctive patchwork of ancient woodland blocks, including Kiln Wood and Oxley Wood to the south of Lenham rail station. There are also medium to large sized fields of arable and pasture agriculture, often of irregular form, which increase in scale with distance from the village.

The landscape to the west of Lenham is generally experienced from the busy A20 which links the villages at the base of the chalk scarp, there are few roads that run perpendicular and as such the patchwork has a large grain, there is also significant areas of commercial development. To the east of the village there are more chalk springs emanating and a higher density of routes directly up the scarp slope. The dense hedgerows and tree lines develop a greater sense of enclosure.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



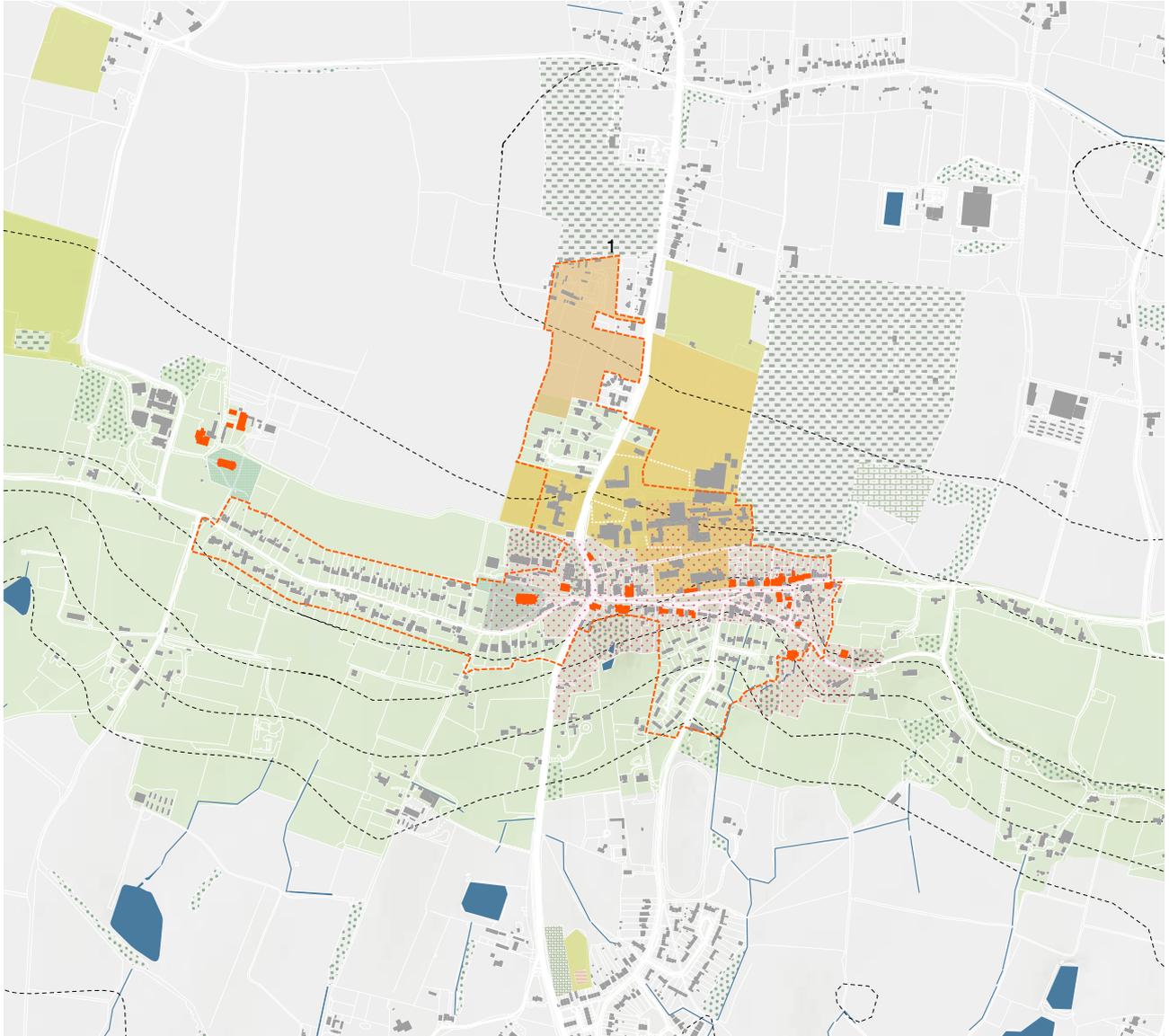
### 3.5.7. Sutton Valence

Sutton Valence is a Larger Village south-east of Maidstone urban area, on the juncture between the Wealden Greensand and Low Weald landscape character areas. A scarp face lies to the north of the village, marking the southern extent of Greensand Ridge. Sutton Valence is considered an ancient settlement, with evidence of Iron Age activity and the crossing of a Roman road. It is moderately well connected, with a moderate number of facilities. Services include three schools, some local businesses (including two public houses), a GP surgery, a village hall and public transport links including a rail station and four bus services. There are also highway connections to the A229 to the west.

Development has continued to evolve around the landscape's contours, and showcase different architectural periods. The village displays a diverse palette of building styles and materials, including medieval halls, the simple grey stone Lambe's Almshouses, the weatherboarded Swan Inn, the Wealden style Linden House and Aylmer House, and timber framed Valence House. Nonetheless, there is more modern development, including a post-war estate and a recent satellite residential development to the south, known as The Harbour.

The medieval St Mary's Church was developed north of Chart Road on the steep slope of the ragstone ridge, following the contours of the hillside. Further east, on Rectory Lane, Sutton Valence Castle was erected in the 13th century, taking the form of a Norman keep. A small school was then built in the Elizabethan era, adjacent to and on a level above the Church.

The landscape displays a dispersed settlement pattern formed of isolated farmsteads and clusters of farms. Many farmhouses are architecturally distinctive, encompassing examples of traditional oast houses and building materials including timber framing, hung tiles, rag stone, chequered red and grey brick and white weatherboarding.



- |                             |                           |                          |                      |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| ----- Topography            | Conservation Area         | Landscape of local value | LPR Site Allocations |
| - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building  | Green playing/sport area |                      |
| — Railway                   | Grade II* listed building | Productive gardens       |                      |
| Railway Station             | Grade I listed building   | Other green areas        |                      |
| Buildings                   |                           | Local Woodland           |                      |
| Educational Facilities      |                           | Ancient Woodland         |                      |
|                             |                           | Water bodies             |                      |

Figure 14: Plan of Sutton Valence\_1: 20.000



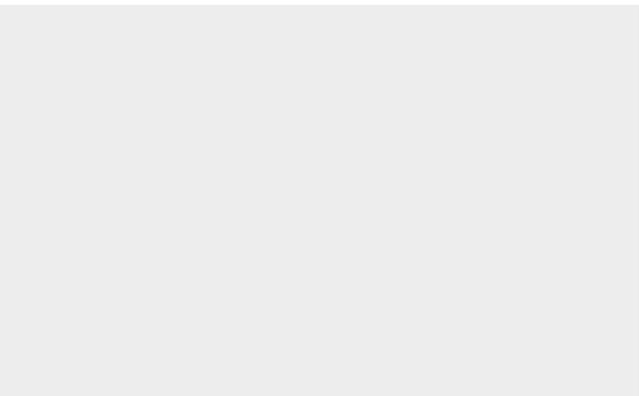
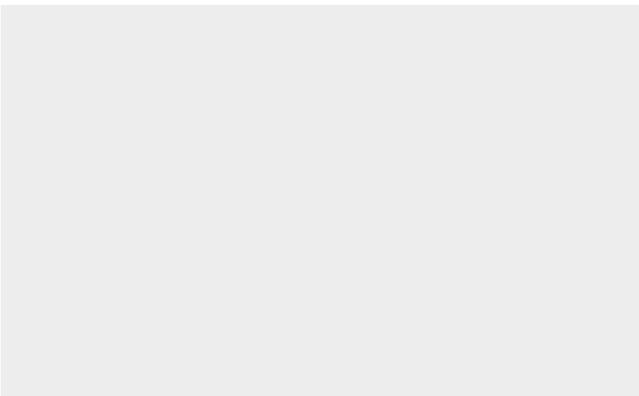
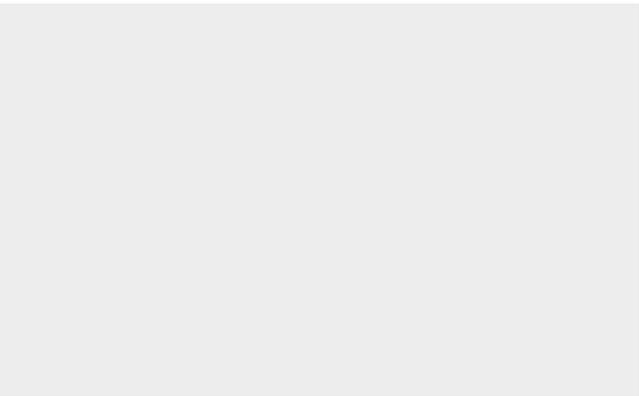
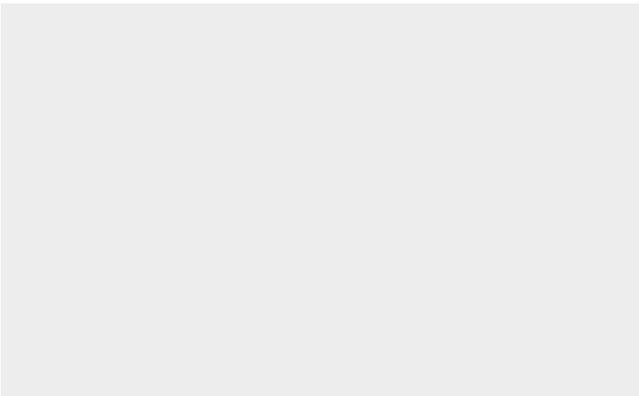
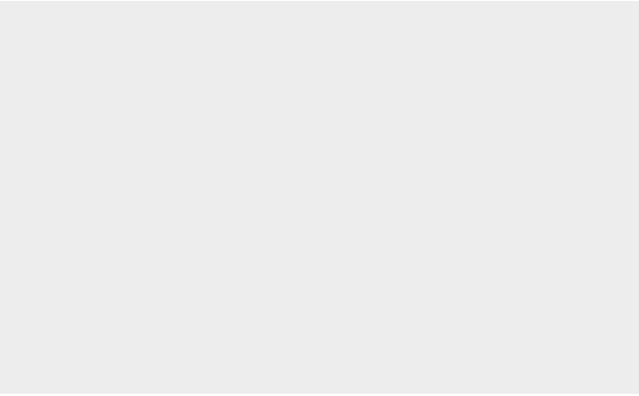
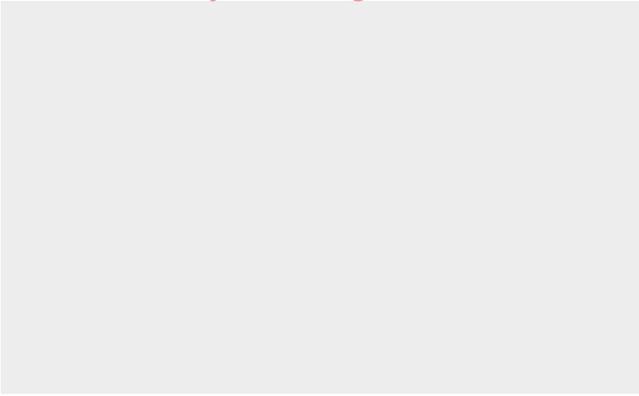
North of Sutton Valence, there are also several large manor houses and associated parklands extending across the Low Weald landscape. Additionally, the landscape comprises a few rural lanes, including sunken lanes enclosed by overarching beech and ash trees. A notable exception to this is the A274 highway – its linearity has brought ribbon development in some locations, going against the grain of the area’s traditional pastoral character.

From the top of the Greensand Ridge, including from the Greensand Way, there are wide views across the Low Weald. South of the steep scarp, the Low Weald unfolds into an undulating landscape with wide views in certain locations, especially from Sutton Valence which sits on higher ground. Views encompass many orchards and grazed pasture, as well as distinctive buildings including the ragstone church and distinctive tall brick chimneys of the East Sutton prison.

To the north of Sutton Valence, woodland (including ancient woodland) is a strong feature. This dissipates southwards into small woodland blocks of coppice and orchards, enclosed by poplar shelterbelts, and occasional pockets of hop gardens, particularly around Morry Lane.

Further south, at the foot of the scarp, the landscape is more influenced by modern agriculture and incorporates larger fields, polytunnels and reservoirs. Nonetheless, there are still some small scale pastoral fields, demarcated by irregular Medieval native hedgerows and shaws, often incorporating mature oak. There is also a notable network of narrow streams and ditches, originating from springs at the bottom of Greensand ridge, which in turn have created field ponds and pockets of wetter ground with willow trees in the Low Weald.

**Photo Survey On-Going**

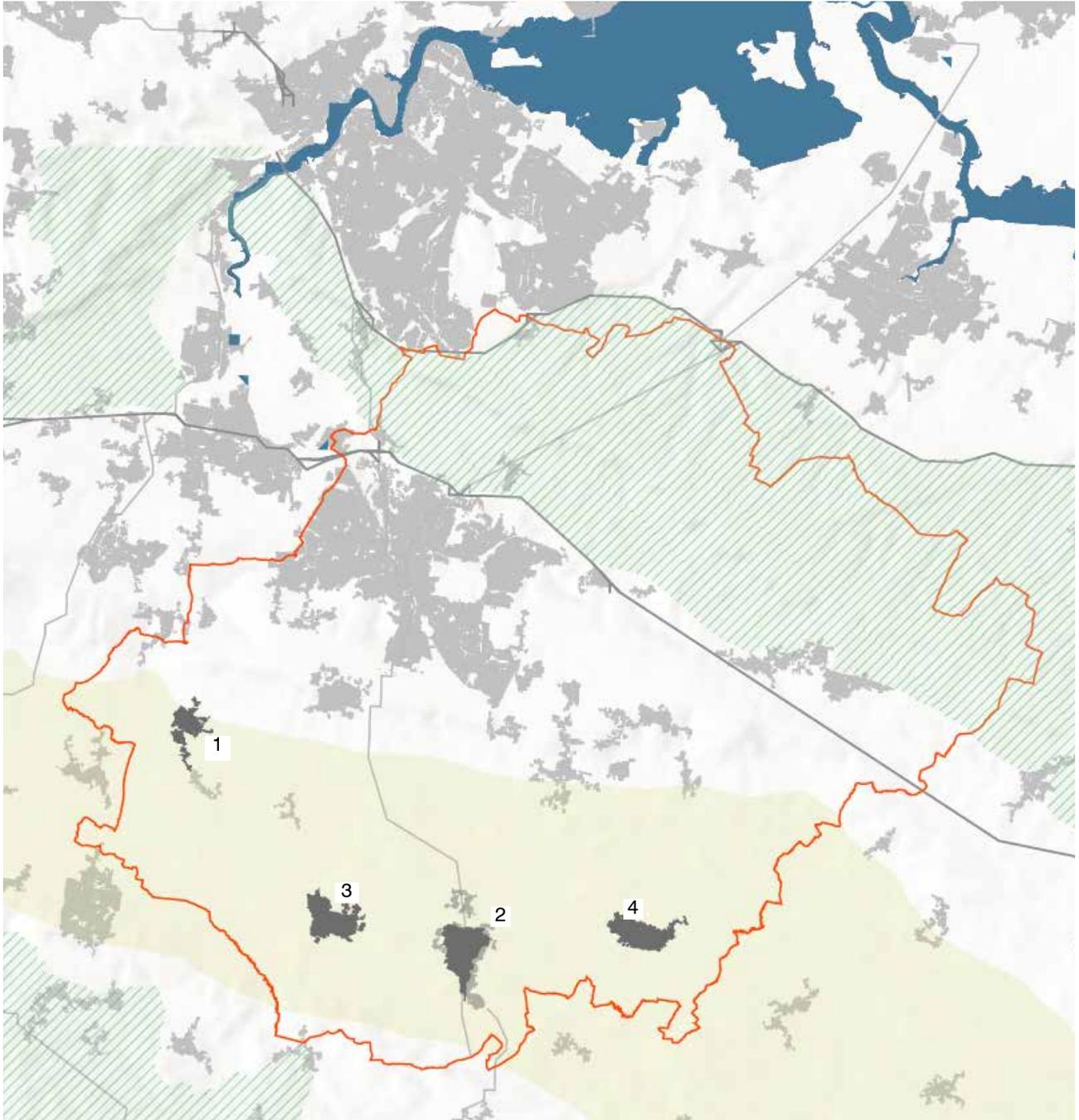


## 3.6 Villages in the Low Weald

The Low Weald is a broad, low lying clay vale which wraps around the north, west and south parts of the High Weald from Surrey to east Kent, and so lies to the south of Maidstone Borough. This landscape forms an important part of the setting for the High Weald AONB, which lies to the south-west.

The prevailing character is predominantly rural, with pastoral agriculture occupying the shallow undulations some arable landscapes on the higher ground. This productive landscape is defined dense hedgerows studded with veteran trees and punctuated by areas of dense woodland, rivers and ponds. Some of these ponds are the legacy of early iron, quarrying and brickmaking industry. This intricate network of water meadows and wet woodlands provides very important habitats and is rich in biodiversity.

Despite its proximity to London, the Low Weald has retained a rural character with small villages enclosed in woodland and many traditional farmsteads, including oast houses to the east.



- |   |   |                |
|---|---|----------------|
|  | Builtup Area                                | 1. Yalding     |
|  | Maidstone Bourugh Boudnary                  | 2. Staplehurst |
|  | Low Weald National Landscape Character Area | 3. Marden      |
|  | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty          | 4. Headcorn    |

Figure 15: Plan of Low Weald



### 3.6.1. Yalding

Yalding is a Larger Village and lies just south of the Wealden Greensand character area, where the landscape starts to open out into the clay vale of the Low Weald. It is well connected with a moderate number of facilities. Services include one school, a few local businesses (including a restaurant and The Walnut Tree public house), community facilities, six bus services and a rail station (albeit this lies approximately 1.25km west of the village centre). There are also highway connections to the A228 to the west.

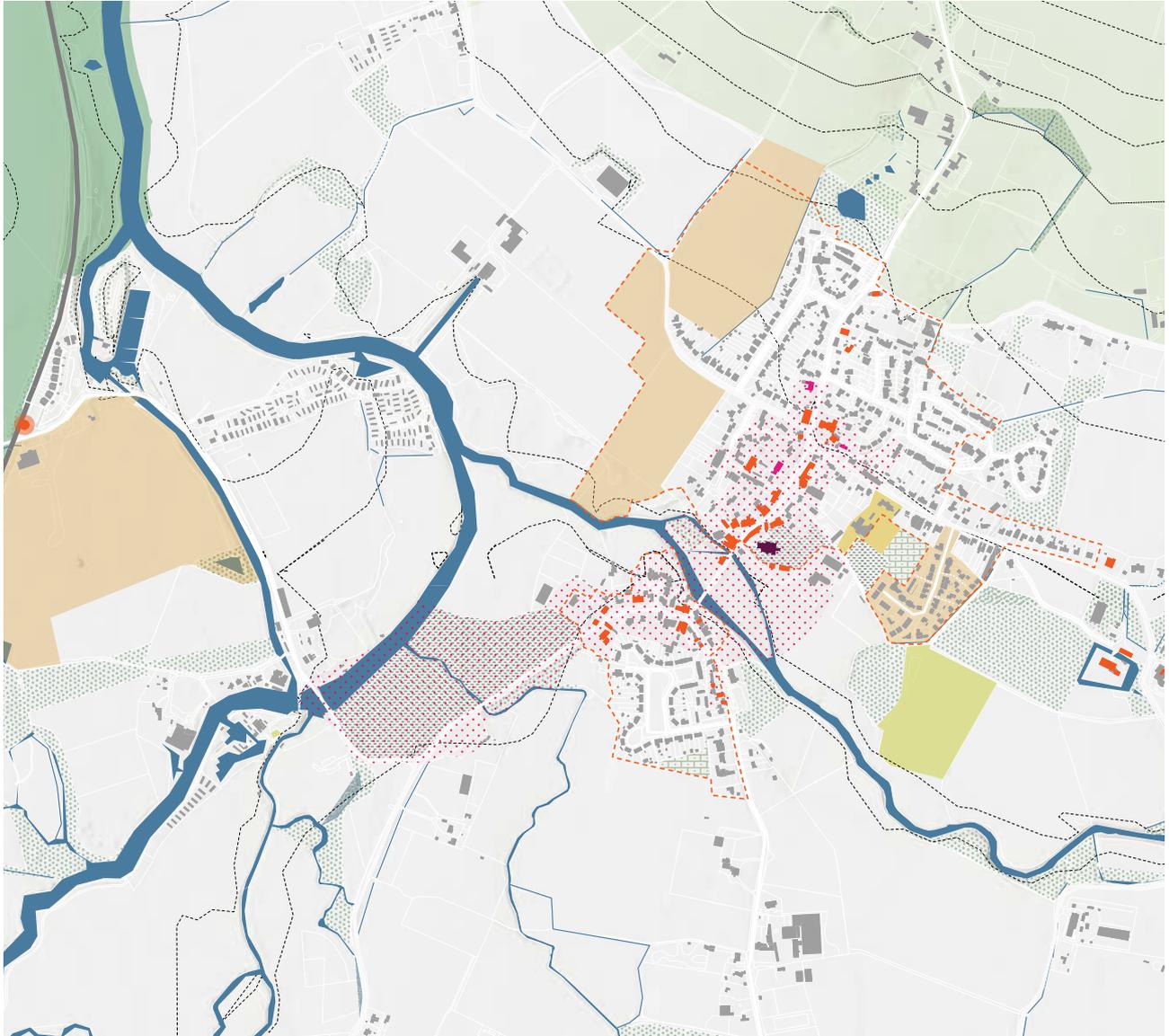
Development is dispersed, comprising large rag stone farmhouses and buildings constructed of weather boarding and chequered red and grey brick, often of historical importance. In the vicinity of Yalding, there is a distinctive mix of building styles and materials, including oast houses, timber barns, weatherboarding, ragstone, thatched roofs, red and grey chequered and herringbone brickwork.

The village of Yalding is formed in two clusters, north and south of the River Beult. To the north riverbank, St Peter & St Paul Church is prominently situated, constructed of ragstone and Tunbridge Wells sandstone. From here, the narrow High Street continues with cottages set back behind wide grass verges.

There is a sharp incline further north, due to the scarp ridge, towards the 18th century Kenward cottage which overlooks the River Medway.

In proximity to the Church, there are several other historical buildings of note including orange-red brick Church House with distinctive detailing, the grand Court Lodge with red and blue chequered brick, the 15th century Walnut Tree public house and the Wealden hall house, Rose Cottages.

Several medieval bridges and causeways cross the rivers and their marshy hinterland. This includes the medieval ragstone Town Bridge with seven arches over the River Beult, the medieval Twyford Bridge over the River Medway and the Laddingford Bridge over the smaller River Teise.



- |                               |                           |                          |                  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area         | Landscape of local value | Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building  | Green playing/sport area |                  |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building | Productive gardens       |                  |
| Railway Station               | Grade I listed building   | Other green areas        |                  |
| Buildings                     |                           | Local Woodland           |                  |
| Educational Facilities        |                           | Ancient Woodland         |                  |
|                               |                           | Water bodies             |                  |

Figure 16: Plan of Yalding\_1: 20.000



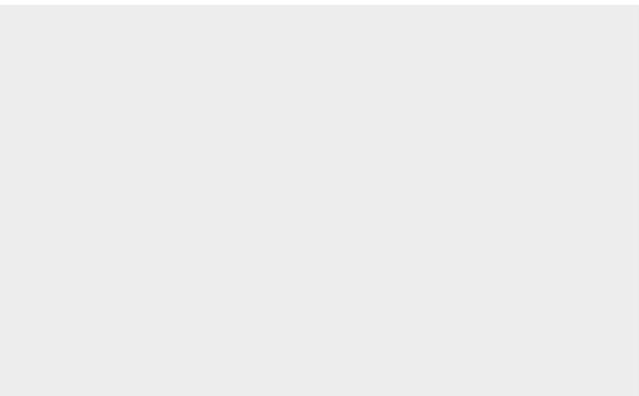
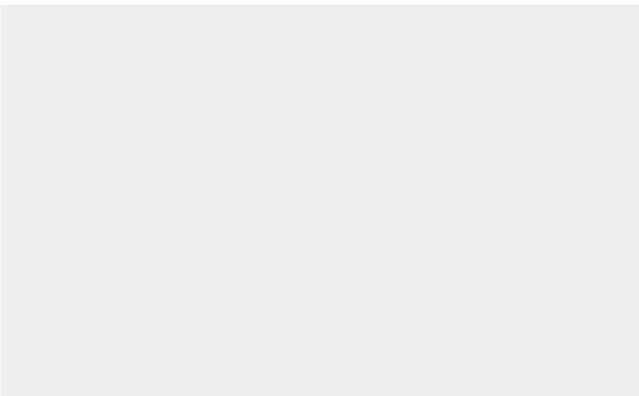
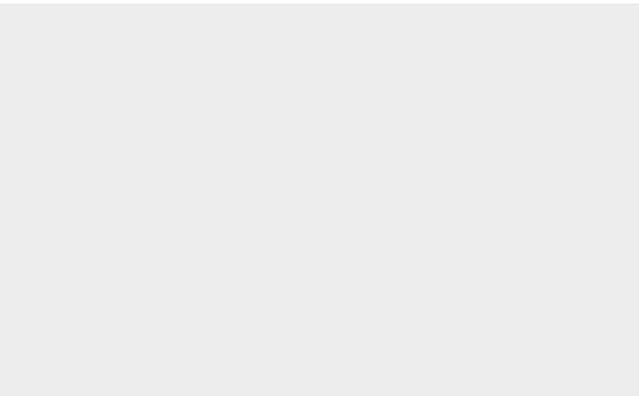
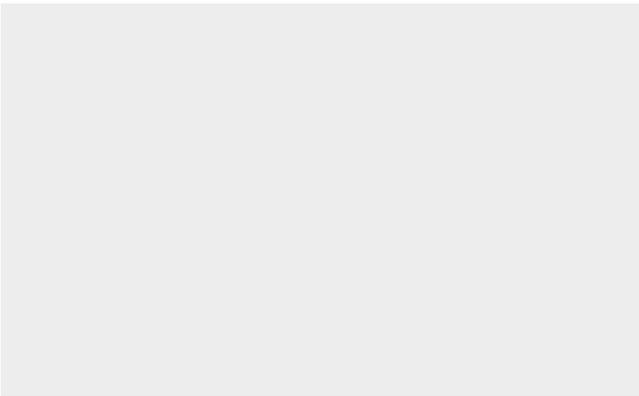
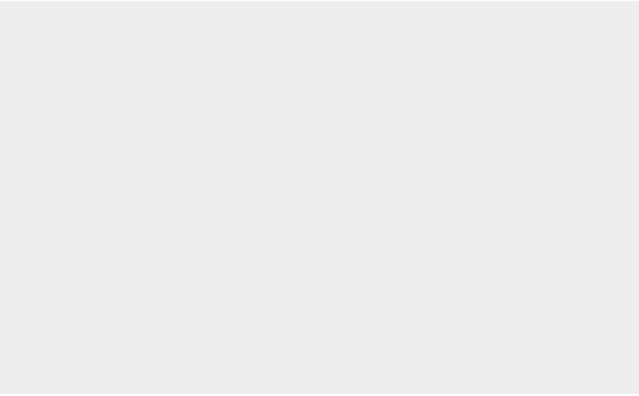
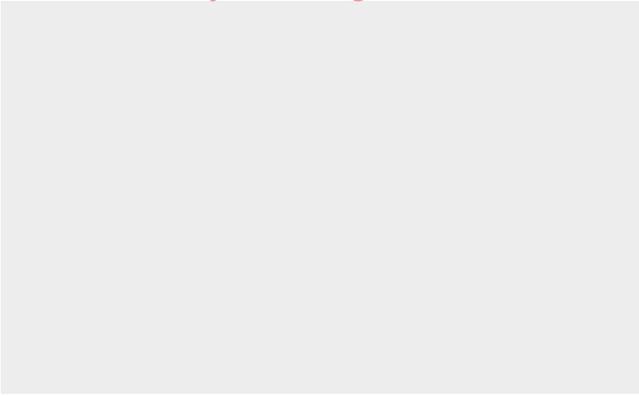
The village is also surrounded by disparate clusters of development, including the hamlet of Benover to the south, leisure developments to the west on the River Medway and commercial polytunnel cultivation to the north.

Views of the Low Weald landscape are interspersed with orchards, are permitted from certain vantage points where not enclosed by woodland. Landform in the immediate vicinity of Yalding is shaped by its relationship with the River Medway Valley (at the foot of the Greensand scarp to the west) and its tributary, the River Teise, and the River Beult, which passes directly through Yalding itself.

The landscape displays extensive tree cover, predominantly comprising orchards, alongside occasional parkland. These orchards are arranged in a traditional small scale pattern, enclosed by poplar shelter belts. Broadleaf trees are also common, including along narrow chalk drains and in small woodland blocks scattered throughout the landscape.

North of Yalding, around developed areas, orchards have been replaced with large arable fields and equestrian grazing. Small reservoirs also feature, arising from springs at the foot of the Greensand Ridge, providing good ecological habitats. Further south, there are examples of medium sized grazing fields enclosed by native hedgerows.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



### 3.6.2. Staplehurst

Staplehurst is a Larger Village some distance to the south of Maidstone urban area, and relatively close to the High Weald landscape character area to the south. It is well connected, is significant in the local economy and has a high number of facilities and services. Services include one school, a few local businesses (including a supermarket and the Kings Head public house), leisure facilities, a GP surgery, two bus services and a rail station. The village is also well-connected by road, with the A229 highway running through its centre.

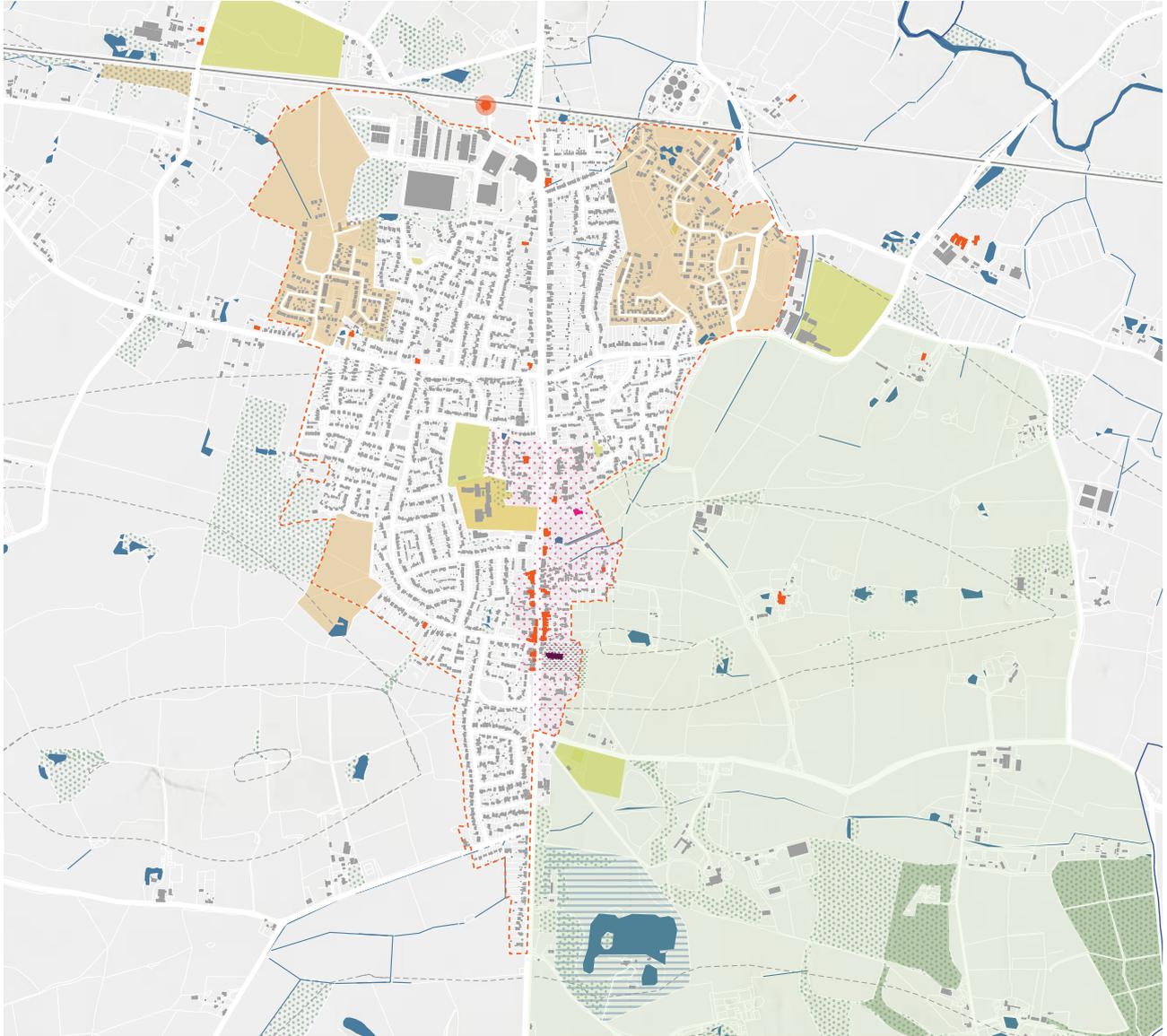
The long spine road through the village of Staplehurst follows the original path of a Roman road which passed through the Weald.

The village contains a significant concentration of buildings with historic and architectural value. At the centre, All Saints Church and the village's earliest dwellings (of timber frame construction) are situated on an elevated limestone ridge. Other notable examples of timber framed buildings on the High Street include the Crown Cottages, a long-close studded building with an integral cart entry, the c.14th century Kings Head public house and, further northwards, Loddenden Hall. In contrast, there are also distinctive Victorian era buildings, including the austere blond brick Vine House and the unusually rambunctious Village hall, originally a village school. Additionally, the village encompasses hall houses, including the 14th century Copp William (on the western edge of Staplehurst) and Little Hearts Heath.

The prevailing landscape is low lying and gently undulating, with shallow elevated ridges to the south including at the centre of Staplehurst. There is also a network of watercourses, ditches and ponds, with willows populating more waterlogged ground. Given the topography, many views are enclosed by tall hedgerows and tree belts, unless fields have been enlarged for arable agriculture. Where there is elevated land, long views include Greensand Ridge and woodland to the north, and Sherenden Wooded Hills and the High Weald AONB to the south.

The landscape largely comprises a coherent pattern of small fields with mature oaks, orchards and pasture, enclosed by thick native hedgerows. Small woodland blocks are also a common feature, including ancient woodland. Nonetheless, there are also examples of fields being enlarged for arable agriculture, leaving irregularly shaped fields of monoculture crops.

Development is dispersed in form, comprising several small hamlets and farmsteads scattered across the area. These are linked by gently winding rural roads with generous verges and ditches containing cow parsley, meadowsweet and other colourful flora. Overall, the landscape has a historic and productive character.



- |                               |                           |                          |                  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area         | Landscape of local value | Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building  | Green playing/sport area |                  |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building | Productive gardens       |                  |
| ● Railway Station             | Grade I listed building   | Other green areas        |                  |
| ■ Buildings                   |                           | Local Woodland           |                  |
| ■ Educational Facilities      |                           | Ancient Woodland         |                  |
| ▬ Health Facilities           |                           | Water bodies             |                  |

Figure 17: Plan of Staplehurst\_1.30.000



### 3.6.3. Marden

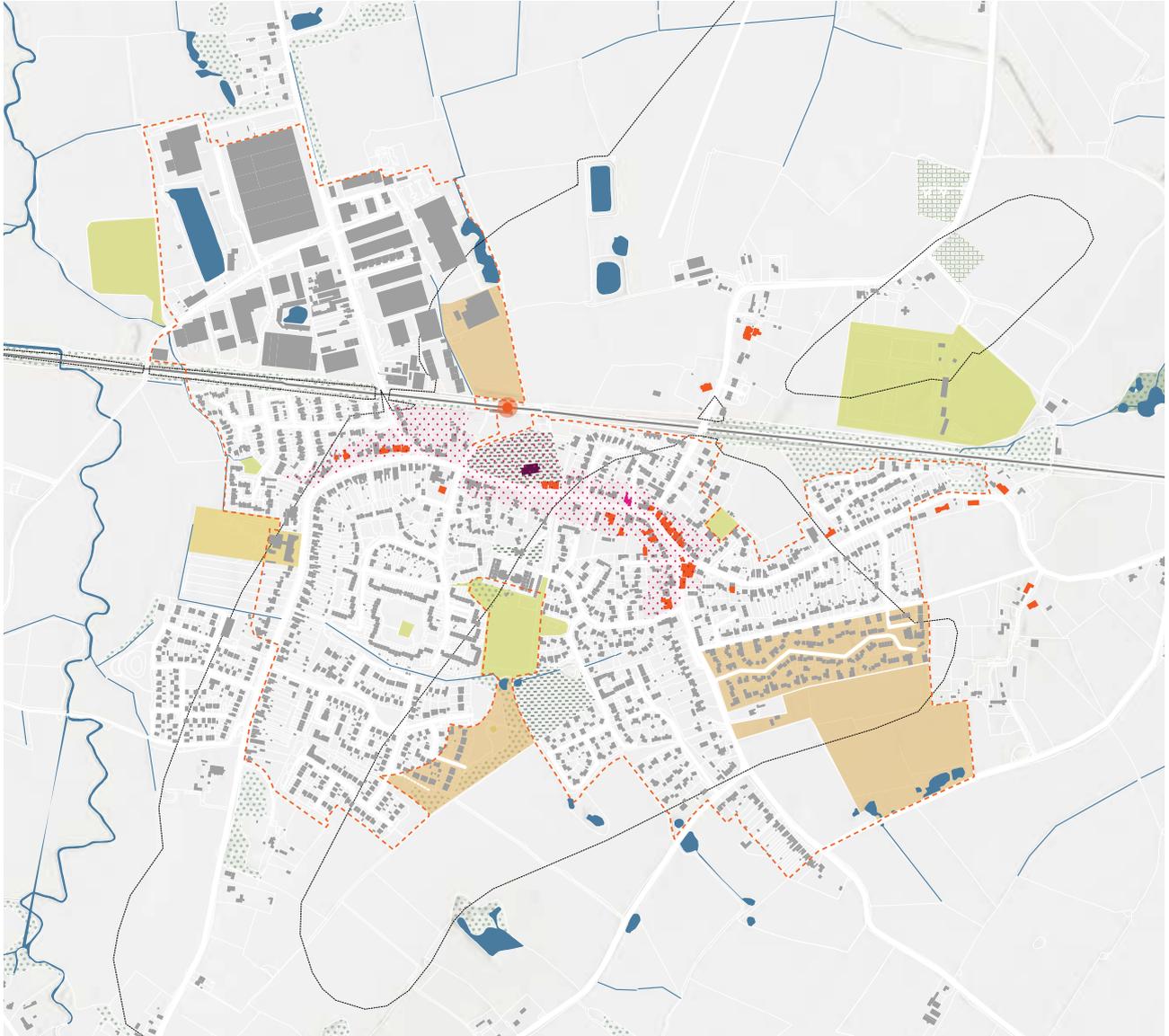
Marden is a Rural Service Centre situated some distance to the south of Maidstone. It is highly connected, has a significant role in the local economy and has a number of facilities. Services include one school, a few local businesses (including a convenience shop and two public houses), leisure facilities, a GP surgery, bus services and a rail station. There are also highway connections to the A229 to the east. Marden is intersected by the Tonbridge-Ashford rail line – a large industrial estate lies to the north of this, while the main part of the village lies to the south.

Adjacent to the rail station, St Michael and All Angels Church is situated, built from rubble sandstone and Bethersden marble and set within a parklike churchyard. Marden's High Street extends from the Church south-eastwards, comprising a significant collection of historic buildings, particularly those of weatherboarding, timber framing and tile hung construction.

Timber framed close-studded buildings include the large medieval Turnpike House, taking the form of a Wealden hall, and the 17th century Culpeppers building. There are also examples of weatherboarded buildings on the High Street, including the tiny Court House on a crossroads to the east.

Its surrounding landscape is predominantly characterised by the low lying, gently undulating topography of the Low Weald. West of Marden, alluvium drifts sit atop the Wealden Clay, forming the Teise Valleys. These are relatively inconspicuous in the landscape, carrying the narrow Rivers Teise and Lesser Teise northwards to the Rivers Beult and Medway.

Given the topography, many views are enclosed by tall hedgerows and tree belts, albeit the white cowls of oast houses are visible above vegetation in some places. Where there is elevated land, long views include Greensand Ridge and woodland to the north, and Sherenden Wooded Hills and the High Weald AONB to the south.



- |                               |                           |                          |                  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area         | Landscape of local value | Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building  | Green playing/sport area |                  |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building | Productive gardens       |                  |
| ● Railway Station             | Grade I listed building   | Other green areas        |                  |
| ■ Buildings                   |                           | Local Woodland           |                  |
| ■ Educational Facilities      |                           | Ancient Woodland         |                  |
|                               |                           | Water bodies             |                  |

Figure 18: Plan of Marden\_1: 20.000



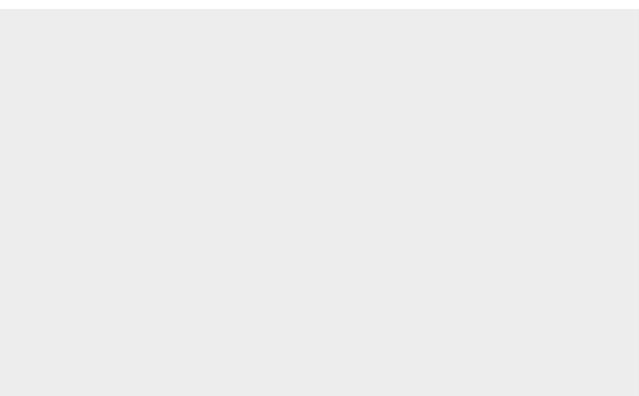
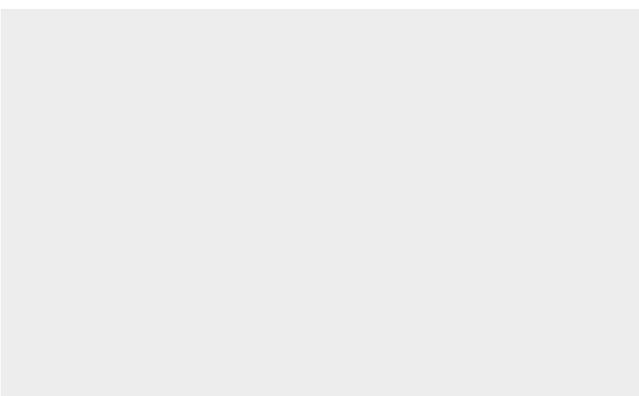
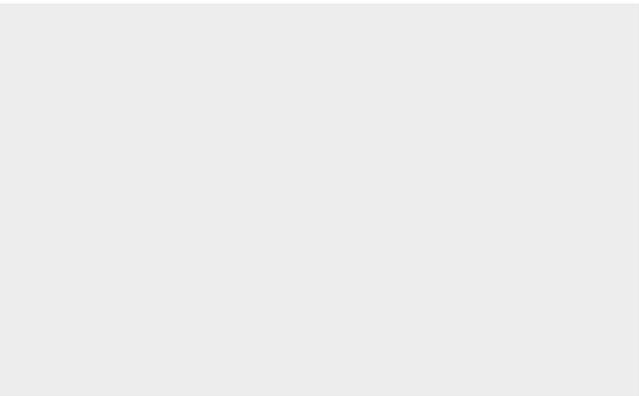
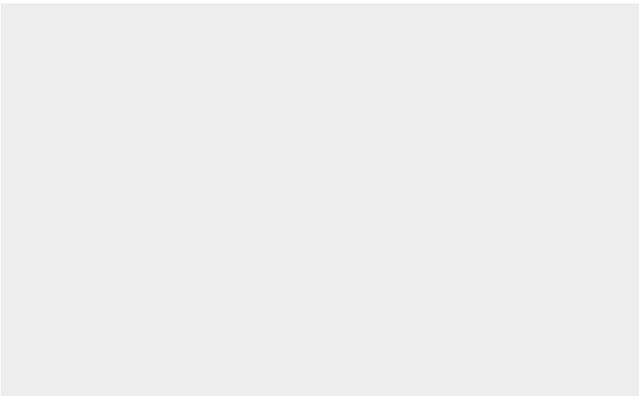
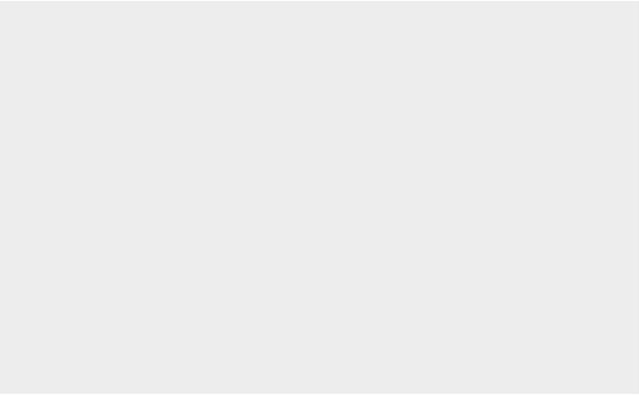
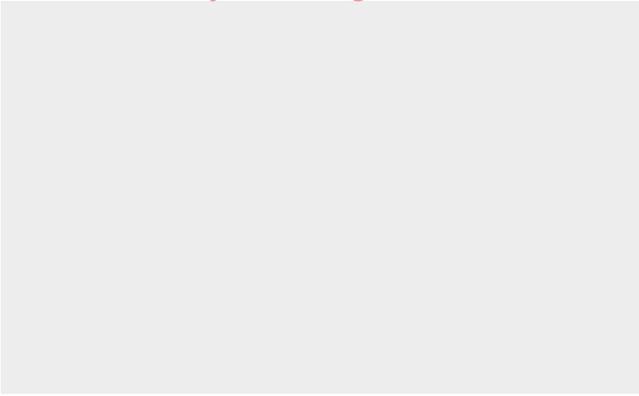
Throughout Marden's hinterland, ditches, watercourses and ponds are common, with shrubby willows indicating the wettest land.

In proximity to Marden, there are largely grazed fields enclosed by hedgerow and mature, often ancient, oak trees. Hedgerows in this locality are thought to have been cut from cleared woodland in the Medieval era, giving them a more irregular appearance. Fields are interspersed with orchards enclosed by wooded shelterbelts (including alder and poplar species). Additionally, there are occasional traditional unploughed meadows, such as the Marden Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest, which support several rare fauna and flora. In contrast, there are also examples of large irregular arable fields containing monoculture crops.

Westwards, native vegetation populates the alluvium drifts of the Teise Valleys. Woodland is mainly limited to tall native tree belts which enclose fields and line ditches – these contain willow, oak and blackthorn species. Fields are irregular in pattern, are often unenclosed and feature isolated oak trees. Some are used for equestrian grazing, where herds of horses are accommodated in more open, large paddocks.

In proximity to Marden, development is dispersed in form, comprising several small hamlets and farmsteads scattered across the area, many of historic significance. These are linked by gently winding rural roads with generous verges and ditches containing cow parsley, meadowsweet and other colourful flora. Westwards, the Teise Valleys contain very little development, save a few farmsteads, converted oasts and timber barns. In addition, the Tonbridge-Ashford rail line passes linearly through the landscape from east to west, although vegetation screens it from wider views.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



#### 3.6.4. Headcorn

Headcorn is situated some distance to the south-east of Maidstone, within the Low Weald landscape character area. It is highly connected, has a significant role in the local economy and has a number of facilities. Services include one school, some local businesses (including a supermarket and public houses), leisure facilities, GP surgeries, bus services and a rail station. The village is also well-connected by road, with the A274 highway running through its centre.

Headcorn is a large Wealden village, granted market rights in 1251. It has developed north and westwards from its historic core, and has a strong south boundary demarcated by the Tonbridge-Ashford rail line.

The Bethersden marble St Peter and St Paul Church lies towards the south-west corner of the village, set within an open grassed churchyard. It has a strong visual relationship with the High Street which extends eastwards before it. To the rear of the Church, bordering the graveyard, the Headcorn Manor is situated – this is a Wealden house originally built as a vicarage for the Church. South of the Church, the Methodist Church lies, banded with red and yellow brick.

Travelling eastwards, the High Street features a row of several historically significant buildings, featuring a mix of different architecture. From the medieval period, there are a group of timber-framed dwellings to the east end of the High Street, including the close-studded Shakespeare House with a prominent roof form, and Cloth Hall at the south end of North Street. Further eastwards and of a comparatively simpler form, there is a small hall house with façades composed of brick and tile-hanging. Additionally, from the Victorian era, there is the relatively tall chequer brick Institute building, the old English style George & Dragon public house and the small brick-built Baptist Chapel distinctly situated in its own verdant grounds and churchyard.

The landform is predominantly low lying, gently undulating clay with instances of alluvial drift. Views are predominantly enclosed, due to the network of small fields enclosed by thick hedgerows, tree belts and tall hedgerow oaks.



- |                               |                           |                          |                  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| ----- Topography              | Conservation Area         | Landscape of local value | Site Allocations |
| - - - - - Settlement Boundary | Grade II listed building  | Green playing/sport area |                  |
| — Railway                     | Grade II* listed building | Productive gardens       |                  |
| Railway Station               | Grade I listed building   | Other green areas        |                  |
| Buildings                     |                           | Local Woodland           |                  |
| Educational Facilities        |                           | Ancient Woodland         |                  |
|                               |                           | Water bodies             |                  |

Figure 19: Plan of Headcorn



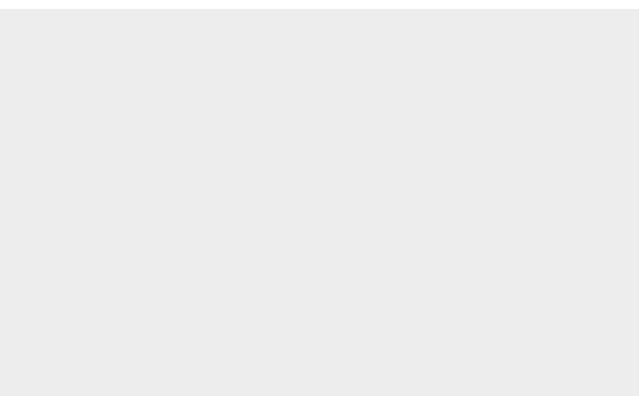
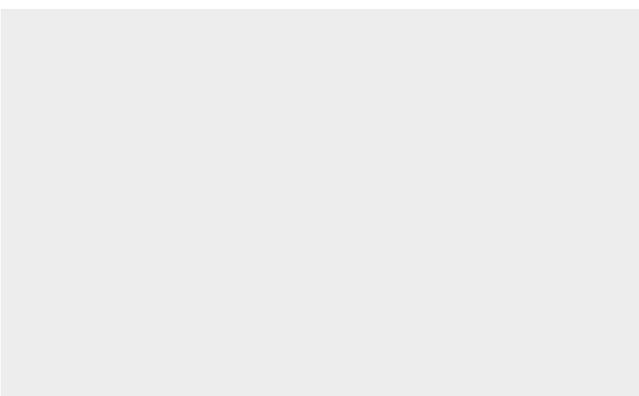
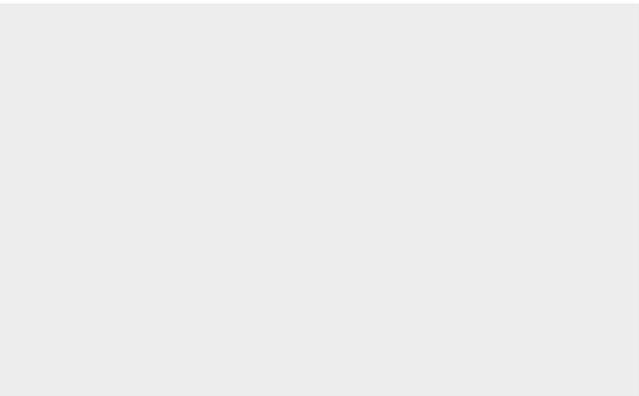
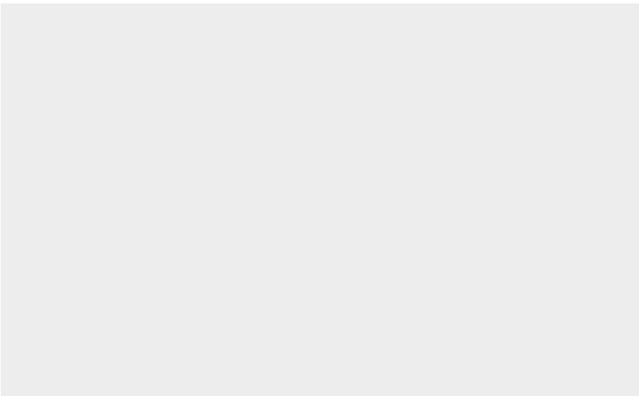
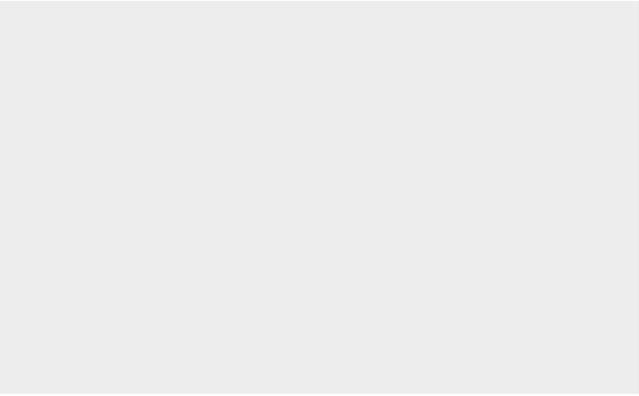
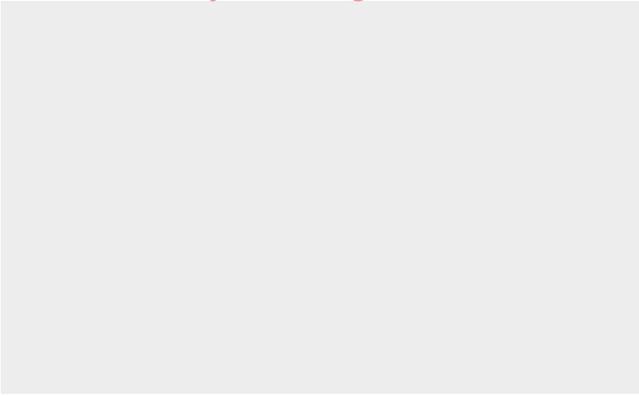
Northwards, ground levels are slightly higher and permit long views towards Greensand Ridge, the village of Sutton Valence on an elevated ridge and the ragstone Church of St Mary the Virgin. To the south of Headcorn, the broad and shallow Beult Valley gradually meanders north-westwards, permitting the River Beult to eventually join the River Medway at Yalding. Very exposed views appear where hedgerows are patchier or where there are large arable fields, again back towards the Greensand Ridge on the horizon.

Small scale enclosed pasture predominates, both within the vicinity of Headcorn and close to the meandering rivers to the south, creating a strong sense of place. The fields are typically contained by irregular Medieval native hedgerows and shaws, with frequent mature hedgerow oaks. There are also areas of modern agriculture, particularly to the foot of the Greensand Ridge, interspersed with reservoirs. Additionally, around Headcorn, there are small disparate pockets of mixed woodland.

Ponds, watercourses and ditches are common, draining the heavy Wealden clay soils, particularly to the south. These areas often feature willow, reeds and other emergent vegetation. In addition, the banks of the River Sherway, a tributary of the River Beult, supports an ecologically rich environment of ponds and pastures, with flora and fauna (including green woodpecker and grey heron) typical of clay rivers.

Development is dispersed in form and comprises a combination of isolated farmsteads, small hamlets and villages. Around Headcorn, there are several traditional oast houses, timber framed buildings and hung tiled properties. Further south, development becomes more infrequent. Historic buildings are predominantly agricultural, and incorporate materials such as timber framing, or chequered brickwork in Flemish bond.

**Photo Survey On-Going**



# 04. Maidstone Borough Design & Sustainability Requirements



## 4.1 Overarching Design & Sustainability Principles

All development should play its part in the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places<sup>17</sup>. The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of the residents of the Borough of Maidstone. Good design is set out in the National Design Guide under the 10 characteristics illustrated on Figure 1.

As the National Design Guide suggests, a well-designed place must take a holistic approach in designing:

- the layout (or masterplan);
- the form and scale of buildings;
- their appearance;
- landscape;
- materials; and
- their detailing.



Figure 20: The components of a well-designed place from the National Design Guide

17. NPPF, Chapter 12



## Placemaking

This is the process of creating places that encourage the right uses and activities in the right locations. Placemaking can be understood as the ‘software’ of a development; it is a social concept that describes seeding the ingredients that will produce vibrancy and vitality in the places that we’ve built. Successful placemaking creates a clear purpose through which unique identity can develop over time. High-quality placemaking should convey care and attention to detail that encourages people to take ownership and pride in a place as well as experiencing joy and inclusion when in that space.



## Streets & Buildings

This is the three-dimensional arrangement of the structures that we build. Streets and buildings can be understood as the ‘hardware’ of a development, which creates a physical relationship between people and the built environment.

Successfully designed streets and buildings provide a human scale environment that feels safe and comfortable for everyone to use, as well as being configured in a manner that is intuitive to navigate and contains clear visual cues. Highly sustainable forms of building ensure efficient use of land through developments which encourage people to walk or cycle. In turn, these will incorporate the efficient use of resources and energy.



## Open Space and Nature

Open spaces serve a variety of very important functions that make our settlements healthy, liveable and desirable. Open spaces will range from the highly managed formal parks and squares, to the informal natural and semi-natural spaces in which people are secondary to the natural environment. All types of open spaces are important for biodiversity and nature-based solutions.

Well-designed open spaces should cater to all users, be resilient and create suitable enclosure whilst maintaining physical and visual links to the surroundings.

They must also look attractive, with features such as trees and planting that thrive and attract both people and ecological diversity.

Conserving and enhancing natural features will help to create connected green networks throughout the Borough. Exceptional open spaces and a thriving natural environment have a key role to play in water management, carbon sequestration and climate adaptation and mitigation in new developments.



## Movement

The movement network is formed from a connected network of streets, paths and tracks that provide safe, inclusive, accessible and attractive facilities for walking and cycling. The network should include access to high-quality public transport connections and enable safe freight, delivery, servicing and private vehicle movements where required. High quality movement networks prioritise active and sustainable transport in order to ensure that people can stay connected to local amenities, jobs and services.

Additionally, the network should minimise the impact of vehicles and the local environment by reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions and can also contribute to healthier communities with improved wellbeing as a result of more active lifestyles. Well-designed movement networks ensure many connections between neighbourhoods and draw on the historic street patterns and desire lines of a place. The hierarchy and layout of well-designed movement networks should work intrinsically with built form and landscape and seek to prioritise people over the needs of vehicles.



## Sustainable Buildings

Sustainable buildings minimise the impact on the environment through their approaches to design, construction and operation. They will also minimise their impact at the end of their life by using materials that are readily re-used. Buildings should provide comfortable and healthy environments for people to live, work, and spend time in as well as being intuitive to use and maintain.

Sustainable buildings reduce emissions and contribute to a circular economy by considering carbon consumption of the materials they are made from, the energy sources they are heated and powered by, as well as the ability to re-use or recycle materials at the end of a building's use.



## Design Quality

Design quality refers to the articulation and delivery of great buildings and public spaces which enhance Maidstone's distinctive identity and conveys the aspirations and attention to detail that is attribute of great places. Well-designed places are robust, and adaptable; ensuring that buildings and public spaces are durable and have a long lifespan which can evolve with changes to the way people live and work.

For major developments, the Council will expect proposals to provide a site-wide masterplan, which meets each of the above requirements and associated DPD policies. The level of detail of a masterplan should be proportionate to the proposal and type of planning application (e.g. outline or full planning application).

## 4.2 Placemaking

### 4.2.1. Successful Placemaking Principles

Successful placemaking is the creation of places where people ‘love to live and work’ and, therefore, choose to dwell.

Placemaking is a creative, practical, and continual process. It is underpinned by a holistic approach to community wellbeing that embraces good design with health, economy, culture, and the environment. Heritage is integral to a place’s character. It requires leadership to establish clear and widely-owned policy and practice, developed in partnership between the Council and all of its stakeholders. It is typified by strong and ongoing community engagement, as well as professional involvement in the planning, design and management of new and regenerated places.

Development proposals should be of high design standards at all scales - from masterplanning to individual building and open space design. Good design should be fit for purpose, sustainable, efficient, coherent, flexible, responsive to context, attractive and a clear expression of the requirements of a particular brief. It should seek to add to the Borough’s overall quality as a place and attractiveness, and also where appropriate enhance its cultural capacity, its ability to create opportunities for community interaction, expression, learning, sharing, and enjoyment. Developing and perpetuating good design is achieved through peer-review design panels and meaningful public engagement.

The Council is committed to ensuring that new neighbourhoods make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of their communities.

## **D&S DPD PM1: Placemaking**

All new development should be of high quality and must respond appropriately to its context, be inclusive and prioritise sustainability.

### **1. Understanding the Context, Character and Identity**

Achieving a high quality proposal involves consideration of the design and layout of new buildings, alterations to existing buildings and the design of surrounding adjacent spaces.

All applicants will be required to demonstrate that their development proposal takes account of the following principles:

- a) Reflect the distinctive character of Maidstone's locality and places whose setting would be affected, in respect of their separate identities, valued townscapes, urban form, street layout, materiality and other key design, landscape or other natural elements;
- b) Situate sensitively to protect the countryside, including in views out of and into settlements, particularly where topography affects the prominence of development in views of the wider landscape;
- c) Retain, celebrate and/or interpret existing heritage or landscape feature(s) in the urban form of new proposals;
- d) Demonstrate how the relationship with key buildings, views and vistas, both within and beyond proposals, have been used to create interest and delight in the new development;
- e) Promoting sustainable, vibrant inclusive and healthy communities;
- f) Create a varied sequence of spaces and vistas aligned with focal buildings; and
- g) Preserve the special architectural and historic interest of listed buildings and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

Sustainable and popular communities are where residents and visitors can access a range of services and opportunities within a reasonable distance of where they live. Developments should create or support attractive, healthy and liveable communities which strive to embody the 20-minute neighbourhood concept. Within larger developments, this may require a mix of uses, whilst infill development or changes of use should consider the opportunity to enhance the character and function of an area.

Within a proposal site, developments should have a permeable street network with clearly defined route hierarchies that are safe, designed for all users and support desirable mobility options for people to choose not to travel by car.

All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development takes accounts for the following principles:

a) Demonstrate the 20-minute neighbourhood concept:

- i. For small scale developments, proposals should connect to their surrounding areas and demonstrate how access to existing amenities and transport nodes has been established or enhanced;
- ii. For large scale developments, proposals should demonstrate how they provide community focal points, amenities and transport nodes at locations with the highest catchment of existing and new residents.

b) Proposals should create child friendly environments, through the provision of play environments and movement networks that are safe and enable an appropriate degree of independent mobility.

c) Proposals should ensure they are creating healthy environments that are appropriate for older people and those of limited mobility.

## **2. Design Engagement with Communities and Stakeholders**

Successful development proposals generally have broad-based support, from land promoters, developers and from existing and future communities. This support should be established through a robust process of design engagement beyond statutory consultation.

To ensure that new development proposals gain consensus, the applicant must set out:

- a) A process of meaningful engagement with the public and stakeholders, which starts at an early stage in the design process, making best use of digital technology to reach and engage existing and potential new communities widely.
- b) A timetable for the transparent and timely publication of engagement information to the public and stakeholders so that they are empowered to provide informed responses to proposals.
- c) A summary of how proposals have responded to feedback at each stage of engagement.

In addition to the above requirements, development shall integrate all relevant requirements of this D&S DPD.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall Approach

The Council's approach to placemaking draws directly on the advice in the National Design Guide. Paragraph 63 of the guide notes that "well-designed places have:

- compact forms of development that are walkable, contributing positively to well-being and placemaking;
- accessible local public transport, services and facilities, to ensure sustainable development;
- recognisable streets and other spaces with their edges defined by buildings, making it easy for anyone to find their way around, and promoting safety and accessibility; and
- memorable features or groupings of buildings, spaces, uses or activities that create a sense of place, promoting inclusion and cohesion."

The approach also reflects other guidance including the Manual for Streets and The Town and County Planning Association (TCPA)'s 'Guide to 20-minute Neighbourhoods' (March 2021)<sup>18</sup>. The latter document provides guidance and information on the features of a 20-minute neighbourhood and how to successfully implement the concept in existing places and in new large-scale developments.

The Design and Access Statement should be the primary document which justifies the design quality of the development.

18. The Town and County Planning Association 'Guide to achievement of this aspiration. 20-minute Neighbourhoods - Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities' (March 2021)

## **Understanding context**

Development should be justified on a robust understanding of its unique relationship with the surroundings, so that it relates well to its setting. This is developed through an analytical observation of the area that surrounds the site and the processes that have shaped it. An overview of the context for development in the Borough has been provided in Part 3 of this D&S DPD, however it is expected that this will form the basis of detailed site-specific observation by an applicant and their design team. Topics that can form the basis of this analysis could include<sup>19</sup>:

- Topography and geology;
- Waterways, drainage patterns and flooding;
- Landscape and ecology;
- Open space;
- Local character;
- Materiality;
- Heritage and cultural assets;
- Land use and built form;
- Community infrastructure, including meeting places, healthcare and schools;
- Public transport accessibility;
- Street hierarchy;
- Demographics; and
- Socio-economics.

From these observations a site can be evaluated and described in terms of its strengths and opportunities and a set of structuring elements can be developed. This can form the basis of a vision for the development.

19. Page 9 National Model Design Code Part 1: Baseline

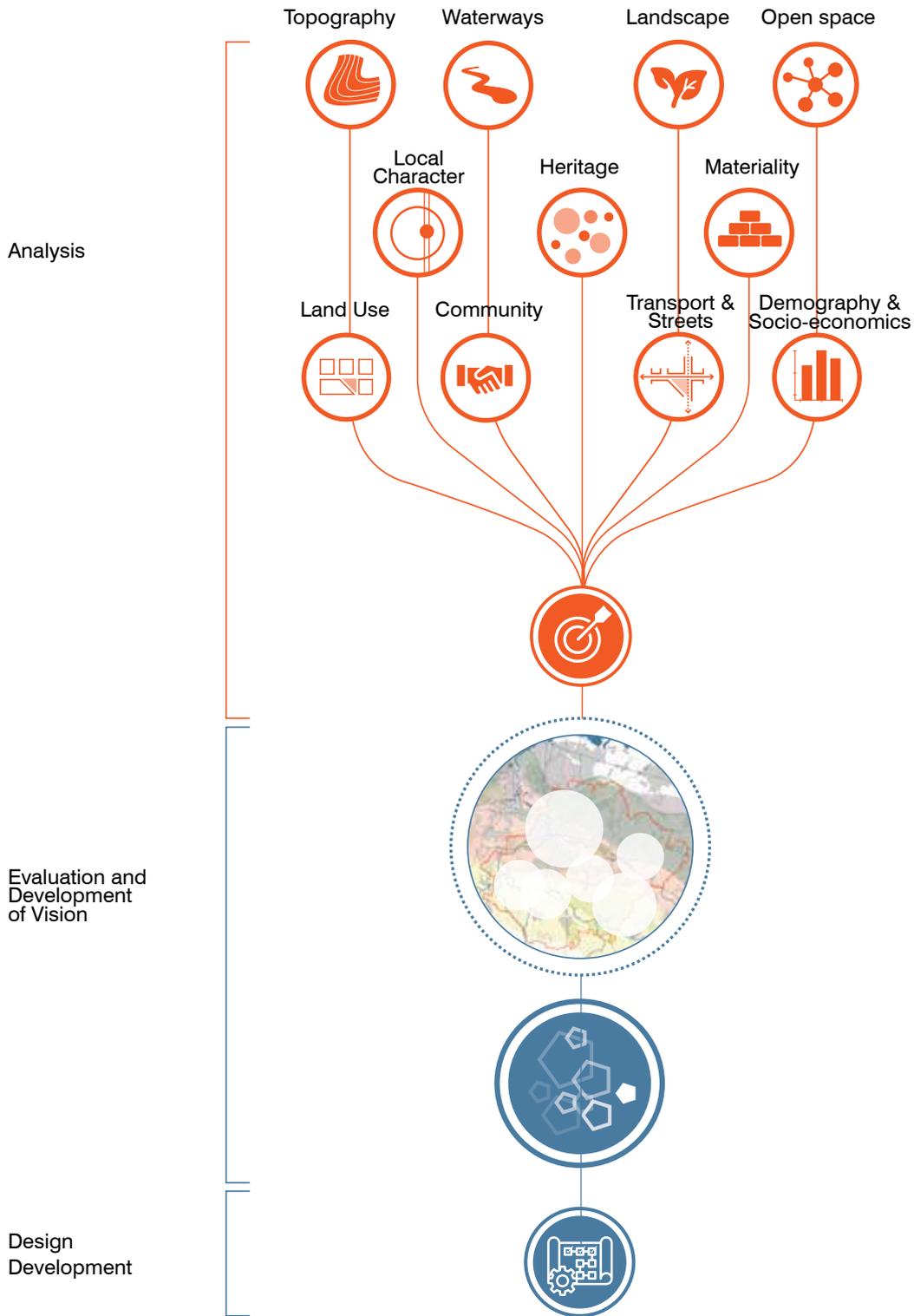


Figure 21: Methodology Diagram

## **Character and Identity**

Character and identity are social concepts derived from associations with the environment we experience. In both cases developments should seek to promote positive associations, through the composition of the development, and also through its on-going management and stewardship.

The character of a place is derived from the composition of built and natural components and the associations that this composition brings. Strategies that develop characterful places include:

1. Visual interest, including consistent and rhythmic building designs but where appropriate, the creation of areas of varying character;
2. Well located buildings of distinction, that provide reference points and legibility; and
3. Coherent architectural detailing that reflects the local character of places as well as the function of individual buildings.

Identity is derived from the experiences and memories that are ascribed to a place. Strategies to develop unique and positive identity of places can include for example:

- Integrated heritage assets or interpretation;
- Amenity spaces that are at the heart of new developments, designed for use by the whole community;
- Well-designed and managed public realm which people value and care for; and
- Co-location of community and other non-residential uses adjacent to areas of public realm.
- Well-designed and managed public realm which people value and care for.

20. The Town and County Planning Association 'Guide to achievement of this aspiration. 20-minute Neighbourhoods - Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities' (March 2021)

## Promoting local centres and supporting a vibrant mix of uses

The TCPA 'Guide to 20-minute Neighbourhoods' (March 2021)<sup>20</sup> provides guidance and information on the features which make up a 20-minute neighbourhood and how to successfully implement in existing places and when planning new large-scale developments.



Figure 22: Diagram illustrating the key components of a 20-minute neighbourhood according to The Town and County Planning Association.

## **Creating Inclusive Places**

Inclusive places provide an environment where people of all ages and ranges of mobility are adequately catered for. This requires designing in safety and passive surveillance, encouraging social interactions which develop neighbourliness and a sense of community and the provision of infrastructure and design that enables mobility and independence. Time spent outdoors and in the presence of nature benefits health and wellbeing. For young people an environment that provides opportunities to play and develop levels of independence benefits their development. For older and less mobile people places to rest and dwell should be designed such that they reduce hazards, increase social connectedness and benefit well-being and mental health. In successfully designed inclusive places the whole community will prosper from a well-used and vibrant public realm.

## **Engagement with Communities and Stakeholders**

The objective of design engagement should be an ongoing conversation, through which participants can articulate their concerns, but more importantly their aspirations for new proposals. This will mean engaging a broad but targeted audience to understand specific insights, and more widely to understand the ambitions of the future occupiers of a development. It can also be a useful process of allaying fears from existing residents. Successful engagement is where participants feel empowered by having positively influenced proposals through design development. The outcome of a successful engagement process should be designs that are accepted and generally popular, helping establish pride and a sense of ownership of new developments.

In accordance with the National Model Design Code, potential methods of engagement might include:

- Visual preference surveys;
- Place assessment tools;
- Structured workshops and charettes;
- Community panels or forums;
- Drop in events and exhibitions;
- Design review panels;
- Social media engagement;
- Digital models and visualisations; and
- Community data gathering.

#### 4.2.2. New and transformed places in the Borough of Maidstone

Well-designed developments respond positively to the distinctive townscapes and landscapes where they are situated. This subsection comprises a place-specific policy to encourage proposals to respond to the unique urban characteristics of Maidstone Town Centre and its role as the county town of Kent.

##### **D&S DPD PM2: Maidstone Town Centre**

Development which lies within the defined area of Maidstone Town Centre (as defined on the Local Plan Policies Map) should retain and enhance its character, attractiveness, vitality and accessibility and contribute to its role as a strategic business, shopping and service centre. As the county town of Kent, Maidstone town centre has the potential to accommodate buildings of scale, and should be of a quality that is representative of its importance in the county.

Developments should achieve:

- a) Comprehensively designed proposals which maximise the potential of the site in accordance with relevant development principles, including the Town Centre Strategy, development brief and/or other guidance;
- b) Design which reflects the scale and context of the town centre, including interesting and distinct, multi-building frontages, use of local materials, the creation of new landmarks and incidental spaces and demonstrate the use of best practice in contemporary urban design and place making;
- c) Incorporates or contributes to a mix of uses including residential uses which are appropriate to the location of the site, its accessibility and the character of the surrounding area. Proposals should seek to minimise potential conflicts and ensure the on-going commercial operations that support a vibrant high street;
- d) At street level, ground floor uses must maintain and/or contribute to town centre activity, especially retail vitality on primary and secondary shopping frontages, generating footfall. Where practicable, major mixed-use developments should provide employment or other commercial and leisure uses in a range of unit sizes and assess the scope to include residential uses, particularly on upper floors;
- e) The creation of new, or the enhancement of existing, high quality pedestrian priority civic spaces, improved connections, linkages and activated public spaces and traffic-free routes where achievable; and
- f) Promotion of active travel trips and incorporation of appropriate levels of cycle parking.

All development must have regard to the historic environment and take account of the contribution heritage assets make to the character of an area and its sense of place. This should be in reference to the national and local evidence base relating to heritage, including Historic England guidance and detailed advice in relevant Conservation Area appraisals.

Development should maximise opportunities to preserve, enhance, or better reveal the significance of designated heritage assets and that of any other heritage assets subsequently identified through the development process. It will also promote recognition of the importance of the historic environment through traditional heritage interpretation measures such as plaques and interpretation boards or artistic and digital interpretation measures. Heritage can also be interpreted through creative approaches to the design of new buildings and open spaces.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall Approach

Maidstone Town Centre will go through a period of significant change, with the Borough's spatial strategy identifying it as having capacity to accommodate significant levels of housing growth, and economic and leisure development.

A long-term vision and strategy for Maidstone Town Centre is currently under development which will set out the core principles for its development and a spatial framework to guide the major areas of change. This work will strengthen the economic base of the town centre and stimulate its re-invention with a strong focus on heritage, arts and culture, leisure and the visitor economy.

Development will be prioritised through the town centre strategy and will:

- Maximise the use of identified opportunity sites;
- Integrate the blue and green infrastructure of the urban area and establish improved public realm and connections, including to the riverside; and
- Improve the perception of the place and ensure that the town centre is a place where people want to live, visit and feel safe.

**Intentionally Blank**

## 4.3 Streets and Buildings

### 4.3.1. Optimising Built Form

The three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces is often referred to as Built Form. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics: the sum of the parts is, indeed, greater than the whole. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place. These approaches are relevant to the town centre, suburbs, the villages and rural settlements.

Well-designed streets and public spaces contribute significantly to the success of places and to the sustainability agenda. Streets and public spaces should be laid out to support both well-being and environmentally friendly transport by:

Being safe, comfortable, stimulating and attractive environments that encourage social interaction and act as meeting points for communities; and

- Encouraging sustainable transport modes and healthy lifestyles that reduce reliance on the car. This is also helped through the creation of attractive environments for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Streets and spaces are also heavily influenced by the buildings that engage with them, for example, their scale, built form, quality and of course their use function. The interface between building and streets and places is critical to successful place-making.

The following policies apply equally to both new places and also to changes or additions to existing places, where individual buildings or infill development provide an opportunity to maintain or enhance the quality and sustainability of a place.

## **D&S DPD S1: Built Form**

### **1. Overarching objectives**

Proposals for developments should positively address each of the following interlinked characteristics that influence the sense of place:

- a) Compact forms of development that are walkable, provide accessible local services and facilities and support access to public transport to ensure sustainable development;
- b) Recognisable streets and other spaces with their edges defined by buildings or street trees/landscaping, creating intimate and supervised environments, making it easy for anyone to find their way around, and promoting safety and accessibility;
- c) Memorable features or groupings of buildings, spaces, uses or activities that create interest and 'events' along routes, contributing to a sense of place, promoting inclusion and cohesion; and
- d) Active frontages enlivening the edge of the street and creating an interesting and engaging environment. Active frontages should be achieved with frequent entrances and openings that ensure the street is overlooked and to generate pedestrian activity as people come and go from buildings.

### **2. Scale and Massing**

The scale and mass of buildings may vary across sites and will relate to the prominence, function, context of prevailing scale and role of the street or space that it frames.

Designers should break down otherwise monolithic built forms with smaller plot sizes, together with architectural consideration of features such as the design of doors and windows, datum lines, fenestration, rhythmic elements and varied roof lines.

### **3. Blocks and Plots**

Careful consideration should be given to the scale of building plots, with the emphasis generally being upon a finer urban grain that relates better to the human scale. Applicants should give due consideration to historic patterns through the use of figure-ground diagrams and where possible, look to repair past insensitive changes to the built pattern of an area. Blocks may be regular (i.e. rectangular) or irregular depending on the context of the site and the character that the development is seeking to achieve;

- a) Block layout proportions should be scaled to encourage walking and cycling;
- b) Blocks should define the positive public space between them by orientating the building plots within them towards the street. Blocks will be scaled to avoid the need to incorporate cul-de-sacs at their centre; and
- c) Building frontage within plots and boundary treatments should form a coherent and positive visual enclosure to the street and promote inclusivity

#### **4. Layout, Streets and Space**

Streets should be designed as social spaces with the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users put above the needs of the motorist. Street furniture such as seating should be incorporated to provide spaces to dwell and rest.

Applicants should ensure that proposals:

- a) Achieve a coherent hierarchy of routes framed with buildings of a proportionate scale to the function of the street;
- b) Include where appropriate landscaping and green space in the street;
- c) Contribute positively to, and clearly define, public and private realms and be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;
- d) Incorporate a green infrastructure plan that maximises opportunities to retain existing trees and incorporate new trees and other natural planting within public spaces, including delivering tree-lined streets and pocket open spaces whilst also protecting and enhancing existing open spaces and gardens that contribute to the character and function of the area;
- e) Incorporate well-integrated parking and servicing areas that do not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed (see Policies S6 Off-street parking, S7 On-street parking, S9 Servicing layout and access and S10 integrating refuse and recycling storage for further requirements and guidance);

Cul-de-sacs will generally not be acceptable unless there is a site-specific reason for their incorporation.

#### **5. Enclosure**

- a) Generally, the height to width ratio of well-enclosed streets will be 1:1 – 1:2 and no greater than 1:3 unless there is a legible site specific rationale; and
- b) Enclosure will typically be defined by building fronts or street trees/landscaping and not by fences, blank gables, garages, parking or high walls.

#### **6. Relationship between buildings and street**

- a) Animated uses should be oriented to the front of buildings and domestic, private rooms should be orientated to the rear of buildings to provide passively surveyed and vibrant streets;
- b) For non-residential and mixed-use developments on streets, ground floor units should provide front door access to the public, as appropriate. Blank facades or impermeable glazing should be avoided; and
- c) Boundary treatments should be human scaled and allow for passive surveillance of the public realm. Boundary treatment should avoid a 'fortress' like appearance, while still framing the plot and visually indicating the definition between public and private space.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall approach

This policy follows the guidance set out in the National Design Guide and is interpreted in a Maidstone context.

Elements such as street layout, architecture, materials, gardens, forecourts, verges, incidental spaces, village greens, boundary treatments, trees and other vegetation, lighting and street furniture can considerably influence landscape quality. Detailed landscape schemes will be required as part of development proposals since these are significant factors in the aesthetic and functional quality and success of a development, its assimilation into the landscape context and its contribution to the character and perceived quality of the greater area.

New development should normally provide strong street enclosure and continuous frontages that enable coherent building lines with the corners of blocks emphasised. Within urban areas, the established existing building line should usually be followed. Buildings should be arranged with public areas to the front so that buildings overlook and provide natural surveillance to streets and open spaces minimising opportunities for crime. This also allows for secure private areas at the rear.

### Enhancing legibility

This policy draws on the National Design Guide, the Manual for Streets and accepted good practice.

New developments should enhance legibility by laying out development to respond to such existing features or through the careful location of new features or buildings to act as markers or landmarks. For larger schemes development should be laid out with a clear street hierarchy that allows users to easily distinguish main streets from secondary and minor routes. Streets that create a varied sequence of spaces and vistas aligned with focal buildings or other features can be more rewarding and contribute to the understanding of a place. This can be achieved through:

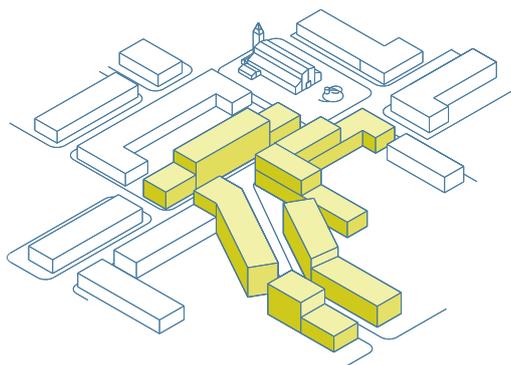
- A curve or kink in the street;
- Off-setting the street network and terminating the view on a building;
- Creating a pinch point;
- Creating 'moments' or 'events' along routes, including open spaces and landscaping; and/or
- Locating a taller building to terminate the street which marks the end of an axis.

Marker buildings may be a little taller than the surrounding context but this increase in height must be proportionate to the role that they play in the streetscape.

## Scale and massing

The distribution of building scale and massing should be used to both respond to existing features, and provide the intuitive clues for people within the development to identify features such as primary routes, civic squares, boundary conditions and landscape features.

Figure 23: Diagram Illustrating how Scale and Massing can be designed to inform key routes and spaces



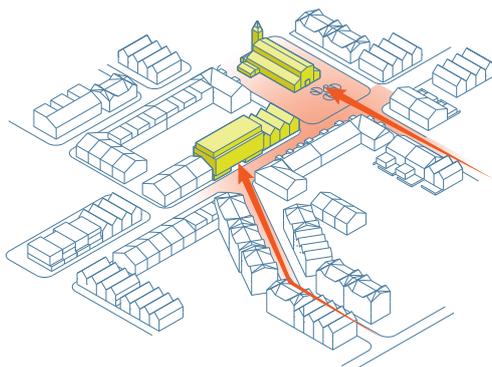
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Marker buildings may be a little taller than the surrounding context but this increase in height must be proportionate to the role that they play in the streetscape.

Figure 24: Views, vistas and landmarks



## Blocks and plots

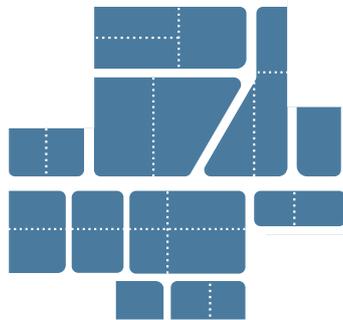
Blocks are typically the area within bounding streets in which buildings are sited and are defined by the fronts of plots and buildings, however, there may be instances where blocks are penetrated by pedestrian scale access.

The pattern of blocks should generally be based upon establishing a finer urban grain, for example, where possible extending uses vertically rather than horizontally.

The continuity of block frontage defines the street and as such the character of that space. Blocks should be proportioned so that they maintain visual interest along their length. Their scale will promote walking, as such their geometry should be direct and ensure that there is connectivity within a development. Where the interior of a block is developed, building types and public realm should be sub-servient to the primary frontage of the block and the more intimate 'mews' type of character should be recognised.

Plots are the subdivision of the block and dictate the curtilage associated with a building. Plots should generally provide the opportunity for the development of a rhythmic and related series of buildings and boundary treatments that form a positive street edge or boundary interface between plots.

Figure 25: An illustration of how streets frame urban Blocks and Plots

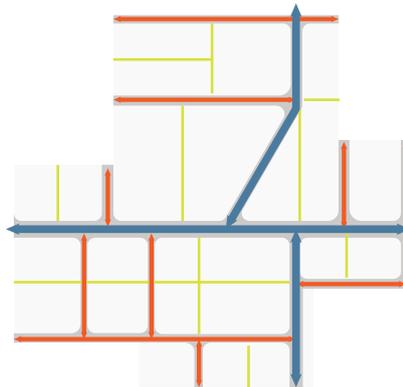


## Layout, streets and space

Layouts are the way in which streets, other public spaces and buildings relate to one another, and should respond to a clear and logical hierarchy of connections. Traditional settlement layouts are compact and walkable and this should be a key consideration for proposals. Layouts should be connected to the surrounding communities via more than one point of access, and should respond to existing and likely desire lines between where people live, and where they are likely to want to go (for example, open spaces, schools, public transport stops or, amenities). Layouts should be well connected within development sites, and dead ends and cul-de-acs will not be deemed appropriate. New extensions to existing urban areas should seek to enhance, protect, repair or create new points of connectivity between existing and new places.

Again layouts should promote inclusivity.

Figure 26: Layout, streets and spaces



## Incorporating public and private spaces

Development proposals that provide opportunities to promote the enhancement of, or creation of, public space will be supported. The use and enjoyment of streets and spaces are affected by how empowered people feel to engage in these spaces, through cultural, everyday leisure and economic activity. Private spaces should feel like safe completely private places people can relax in. Public spaces should feel like genuine public spaces that are welcoming and belong to everyone. Semi-private space, especially in housing developments, needs extreme care in design so immediate neighbours can have a sense of their collective ownership and even stewardship. Consideration should be given to Secured by Design principles whilst balancing the needs of urban design principles such as attractive connected streets and spaces.

## Enclosure

Enclosure is defined by the proportion of building height relative to the width of the public (and semi-public) space that they frame. A well-enclosed street is welcoming and provides a sense of place, and will be produced by a coherent building line or positive boundary treatment. Domestic enclosure for traditional housing typologies is ratio of around 1:1 up to 1:2 and certainly no more than 1:3. A more civic scale of enclosure may be defined in residential areas where the scale of public realm enables and where this is supported with well-considered tree planting.

Figure 27: Diagram describing a 'domestic' sense of enclosure



## Connection with Activity on the street

Frequent front entrances, paired front doors, bay windows, porches and balconies all project activity and will animate the street. Both residential and commercial buildings with active or habitable rooms and generous windows to the street will also produce an enlivened and more attractive street scene. Importantly it makes the street feel safer as when they are overlooked and discourages anti-social behaviour and the perception of insecurity. Extensive blank or dead frontages should be avoided, particularly in non-residential areas or buildings fronting public realm.

Figure 28: Connection with streets' activity



### 4.3.2. Tall Buildings

High density development can normally be delivered through well designed compact development without the need for tall buildings.

#### **D&S DPD S2: Tall Buildings**

Tall buildings in the context of Maidstone town centre are defined as above six storeys. In exceptional circumstances there may be potential for tall buildings in Maidstone town centre, where it can be demonstrated that they play a role in improving legibility, for instance marking the location of one of the railway stations or new civic space and contribute to the overall town centre regeneration. Outside of Maidstone Urban Area, tall buildings will be defined as those that rise more than 6 metres above the prevailing height of its context.

Proposals for tall buildings should consider the impact on medium and long views, and should include a detailed views analysis to ensure the development will not harm the setting of heritage assets.

Any tall building will need to be:

- a) A height and scale, mass and volume that is proportionate to its role, and its position in the local context; and
- b) An outstanding and elegant design that makes a positive contribution to the skyline when viewed from any direction.

Tall buildings should also:

- c) Enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area without adversely affecting established valued townscapes and views including Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings and other heritage assets and their settings;
- d) Present a positive relationship with the street and deliver a high-quality public realm; and
- e) Be designed to avoid creating any adverse impact on the microclimate, amenity and environment of the proposal site and the surrounding area.

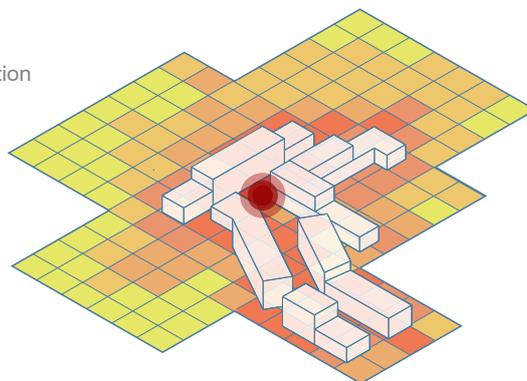
The relationship of a tall building with the public realm is important and tall buildings should be promoted as part of a comprehensive proposal that can address the challenges of servicing and provision of a mix of uses to provide activity at the ground floor/street level.

### 4.3.3. Optimising Density

New development should generally respond to the scale, massing and grain of adjacent areas and the settlement context within which it is located. However, in some parts of the Borough there may be an opportunity to deliver a new development character provided this is part of a comprehensive vision, establishes a sense of place and does not impact on the sensitive townscape or landscape assets of an area. Density should be regarded as an outcome of the character of development, rather than a target to be achieved. Density can therefore be used as a design tool to produce areas where there is good accessibility to shops and services or good public transport links that minimise the need to travel and/or reliance on private vehicles. Larger urban extensions and new Garden Villages also offer the potential for higher densities particularly around neighbourhood and village centres, and public transport nodes.

However, the delivery of higher densities of development becomes proportionately more dependent upon the quality of building design and the quality of accommodation and amenity provided for future occupiers.

Figure 29: Density and Heights distribution



### **D&S DPD S3: Optimising Density**

New development should generally respond to the scale, massing and grain of adjacent areas and the settlement context within which it is located.

There are opportunities to promote a greater concentration of development in:

- a) Maidstone town centre and some sites close to the town centre;
- b) The most accessible parts of new urban extensions where this does not adversely impact on existing homes/character and the rural edge; and
- c) Employment sites where appropriate access and servicing can be maintained.

Higher density schemes should promote green travel options through dedicated green travel plans and include measures such as reduced parking provision, provision of car club spaces, good quality cycle parking and improved connections to public transport.

Any development that promotes a scale, height and massing that is significantly greater than the existing context must also demonstrate that it does not:

- a) Cause significant harm to the amenity of adjacent properties;
- b) Adversely impact on views of the wider townscape and landscape;
- c) Harm the setting of heritage assets;
- d) Adversely impact on the quality of the streets and spaces; and/or
- e) Generate parking or servicing areas that dominates or adversely impacts on the public realm.

### **Urban extensions and New Settlements**

The character and form of the different parts of urban extensions should be varied.

A range of urban grains, plots and blocks, densities, building types and forms will normally be required to cater to a diverse population, catchment and housing need. Variety also contributes to the character of larger developments, creating identifiable neighbourhoods and local places. Higher density development should be situated in the more accessible locations and lower density development in the peripheral areas. Grouping housing types further aids diversity across a development.

More compact development that creates a stronger sense of street enclosure is encouraged along main streets and around neighbourhood centres, particularly where it can help reinforce the importance of these areas.

Higher density focal points should be associated with good quality public realm.

## Supporting policy guidance

Increasing the intensity of development in the most accessible locations will help to deliver much needed homes and employment space in the most sustainable places reducing both the need to travel and the pressure to build on the countryside. However, it is essential that density is not achieved by sacrificing quality or amenity of existing and future occupants.

Optimising density through the integration of contemporary residential and architectural typologies can enable additional opportunities for open spaces at the heart of a development site. New development should generally respond to the scale, massing and grain of adjacent areas and the settlement context within which it is located. Opportunities to maximise multi-functional open spaces should be encouraged through the distribution of density across a site.

### Urban Extensions

The character and form of the different areas of an urban extension should vary in order to enhance the overall legibility and distinctiveness of the development while also delivering a balanced community.

A range of densities, building types and forms will normally be required, with higher density development in the more accessible locations and lower density development in the peripheral areas.

Varied character and density in larger new developments helps to enhance the overall legibility and character areas within the development while also delivering a balanced community offering housing choice.

More compact development along main streets and around neighbourhood centres can be delivered through a combination of greater height, vertically articulated frontages and terracing of properties to deliver a more continuous, but engaged, street frontage with underlying rhythm and order. Promoting higher buildings fronting onto public spaces is often appropriate as they provide more overlooking, do not overshadow or overlook other homes and increase the sense of enclosure.

#### 4.3.4. Mixed Uses

Mixed-use schemes are promoted because they positively contribute to sustainability by providing local facilities within walking distance and give developments a community focus.

Where new development is proposed in an area that is already deficient in certain uses, services or amenities, it can offer the opportunity to improve the range of uses and services available to an established community, as well as new residents, thereby enhancing the sustainability of existing areas.

#### **D&S DPD S4: Mixed Uses and Local Centres**

Larger proposals (typically over 100 dwellings) should consider the provision of employment opportunities local services and facilities which are accessible within 20 minutes' walk or cycle; in addition to public space, leisure and recreation opportunities. Proposals should demonstrate how these amenities are accessed conveniently and intuitively within 20-minute walk or cycle. Where there is a lack of local provision within 20-minutes, the extent of the provision onsite should be informed by an assessment of the existing local provision and potential catchment area, in particular, any deficiencies that would be exacerbated by the development.

The location of mixed-use centres, neighbourhood hubs and community facilities should be:

- a) Located preferably at the intersection of well-connected streets;
- b) A walkable and cyclable distance from the surrounding residential development (reference the 20-minute neighbourhood);
- c) Easy to identify;
- d) Designed inclusively, accessible for all users and encouraging of healthy lifestyles and behaviours; and
- e) Where possible, be served by an existing bus route or make provision for future connectivity.

They should generally be designed:

- f) As a cluster of facilities around an appropriately scaled high quality public space that provides a central focus between building frontages that define the space;
- g) With residential development above non-residential uses to enable activity and surveillance throughout the day and night;

h) To minimise potential conflicts with residential uses and ensure the commercial operations that support a vibrant high street;

i) With the non-active parts of larger non-residential buildings (such as supermarkets or leisure/entertainment buildings) concealed within blocks enabling an active frontage around the perimeter;

j) With servicing areas located where they do not visually dominate the streetscene and to avoid dead frontages overlooking the public realm; and

k) With short stay/visitor and disabled car parking spaces and secure cycle parking discreetly integrated into the streetscape and landscape design.

To support sustainability and a sense of community larger proposals (300+ homes) should normally include local services and facilities in addition to public space. The extent of the provision will nevertheless depend on factors such as economic viability, the existing local provision and potential catchment area.

The accessible location of mixed-use centres and neighbourhood hubs within a development is key to their viability and long-term success.

#### 4.3.5. Public Realm

Public realm comprises any spaces that are perceived of as publicly accessible. Policy S5 promotes proposals with a public realm of high visual quality that all members of the community can enjoy and benefit from. As identified within this DPD, they are an essential element of placemaking and the approach to their design is as important as that for buildings.

They often bring together or connect different parts of an area and should therefore be considered on a spatial basis, ie, not plot by plot or forecourt by forecourt.

They must be welcoming and safe spaces for residents, workers and visitors alike and should be adaptable to varying functions, for example, different daytime or nighttime roles. They should support the viability and vitality of mixed-use areas and encourage social gathering and allow, for example, in appropriate locations, the potential for small scale events.

This subsection stipulates two policies pertaining to the public realm that promote proposals both within and facing onto public realm of high visual quality that all members of the community can enjoy and benefit from. Public spaces should avoid interventions that imply private or corporate ownership.

#### **D&S DPD S5: High Quality Public Realm and Streetscene**

The public realm must be designed in a coordinated manner using a consistent palette of high quality and robust materials in combination with appropriate soft landscaping whilst avoiding cluttering the street with excessive furniture or signage.

- a) As well as being routes, public realm should provide the opportunity for visual or functional 'events' along their route that may be focussed upon, for example, heritage or landscape assets, key nodes. Such areas should consider the scope for public art and be designed to be dynamic flexible spaces.
- b) Surface materials and street furniture should be informed in their appearance in relation to:
  - a. The existing character of an area, including local building materials;
  - b. Their intended purpose, maintenance and management;
  - c. Technical requirements;
  - d. Soft landscaping;
- c) Alignment with Sustainable Drainage principles (refer to Policy ON5 Sustainable Drainage Systems and supporting text); and

- d) Inclusive design for all pedestrians, cyclists, those with prams, those with limited mobility and those who are visually impaired.
- e) Natural stone, either as flags, setts or cobbles, or natural brick is the most appropriate surface treatment, especially in historic and rural locations, informed by local materials palettes;
- f) Street furniture should be simple, high quality, robust and responsive to its setting and integral to the landscape design. It should be restricted to essential items and combine functionality where possible;
- g) Lighting schemes should be designed as an integral element of the public realm and be designed to enhance key built or landscape features.
- h) Light fittings should be low energy and temperature and be designed to avoid causing light pollution particularly in sensitive and rural areas (refer to Policy ON7 Protection of Dark Skies);
- i) Proposals for lighting of individual buildings or spaces shall be designed to complement rather than detract from the wider public realm lighting strategy.
- j) Utility requirements such as supply boxes, meter cupboards cable runs and maintenance access and the location of electric vehicle (EV) charging points should be considered at an early stage of the design process to avoid conflicts between these and landscape features, tree planting and public realm designs.

The overall lighting of areas of public realm should be part of a coordinated strategy, rather than being plot by plot.

Service runs should be coordinated under, for example, vehicular trafficked and other sensitive areas and located where their operation and maintenance does not conflict with the quality of the landscape or public realm. This extends to streets within principally residential areas.

Inclusive design should ensure that all buildings, places and spaces can be easily and comfortably accessed and used by everyone. This includes giving careful consideration for safe access for those who are visually impaired. Materials and colours should be designed with ease of legibility in mind, along with continuity in building edges for guide dogs to follow.

Modern services (including external pipework, flues, vents, meter cupboards, satellite dishes and aerials) can create a cluttered appearance and detract from the street scene and public realm. Careful consideration, therefore, needs to be given to their location and positioning on buildings at the initial design stage. Side or rear elevations, garages and car ports are the preferred location for residential services.

Rainwater downpipes, where of an appropriate material and form, can positively contribute to the articulation and rhythm of a façade by defining the plot widths of semi-detached and terraced houses or can be employed to help reduce the scale of apartment buildings through careful and regular positioning within the façade.

Within mixed-use areas, utility meters should be carefully planned so they are conveniently located and unobtrusive; preferably grouped together in discreet cabinets set within, rather than projecting from walls and avoiding the frontage whenever possible. Apartment buildings should normally have a communal media to restrict dish proliferation.

Where concrete or tarmac is proposed, low carbon, sustainable concrete or tarmac is preferred, such as recovered aggregate materials.

### **Incorporate public and private spaces**

Development proposals that provide opportunities to promote the enhancement of, or creation of, public space will be supported. The use and enjoyment of streets and spaces are affected by how empowered people feel to engage in these spaces, through cultural, everyday leisure and economic activity. Private spaces should feel like safe completely private places people can relax in. Public spaces should feel like genuine public spaces that are welcoming and belong to everyone. Semi-private space, especially in housing developments, needs extreme care in design so immediate neighbours can have a sense of their collective ownership and even stewardship. Consideration should be given to Secured by Design principles whilst balancing the needs of urban design principles such as attractive connected streets and spaces.

### **Role of Public Art**

On larger schemes there is often an opportunity to incorporate public art in the proposals. This should be considered at an early stage in the design process and carefully integrated to ensure it is well related to the development proposals.

#### 4.3.6. Integated parking

The quality of the street environment should be a paramount consideration in designing parking spaces. Parking should be attractively integrated so that it does not dominate the streetscape, is softened by landscaping and accords with the other layout principles in the National Design Guide. A balanced approach should be taken to achieve convenient parking close to households, whilst minimising the impact of parking on the street.

This should also apply to the provision of EV charging points and applicants should consider how the increased uptake of electric vehicles will impact the development.

This subsection stipulates policies and provides guidance on how to sympathetically incorporate off-street and on-street parking in new developments, the latter being preferred in new developments. Applicants should prepare a comprehensive car parking strategy which contains a combination of appropriate parking solutions with a balance of on-street and off-street parking provided as relevant.

#### **D&S DPD S6: Off-Street Parking**

- a) Parking spaces should be discreetly incorporated, and preferably screened from the main public realm, so they do not contribute to a hard-edged/parking-dominated environment;
- b) Larger parking courts/squares will normally be unacceptable unless they are designed as part of a well landscaped and ordered open space that contributes positively to the development;
- c) For lower density areas with detached and semi-detached houses, parking should normally be discreetly accommodated to the side of dwellings, and behind the building line;
- d) Where a garage space is counted as part of the residential parking requirement, it shall be sized such that it is useable or designed in the style of an open fronted car barn; in order to enable daily use if required;
- e) Off-street parking in front of houses should normally be avoided;
- f) Adjacent to or on-street visitor parking should be distributed where it is convenient for the development as a whole and be designed to integrate with landscaping;
- g) Parking areas should be surfaced with permeable paving to prevent flooding and excessive water run-off;
- h) Parking associated with all new residential development shall be laid out to ensure the relevant requirements of Schedule 1 Part S of the Building Regulations (including amended or replacement Regulations) regarding EV charging are met; and
- i) All new non-residential buildings (with the exception of car parking serving customers of retail and leisure buildings that principally serve short stay visitors) with more than 10 associated parking spaces within the site boundary, shall provide a minimum of 2 'Fast' (7kW) or faster, EV charging points for every 10 spaces. Cable routes shall be provided for 50% of the remaining total number of spaces.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Off-street Parking in High and Low Density Developments

This policy draws on the National Design Guide, the Manual for Streets, Building Regulations and accepted good practice.

Higher density areas within new developments which incorporate terraced housing and flats should normally include rear court, under-croft or underground parking. Rear courts typically need to be small in scale (up to 15 spaces approximately) to avoid large soulless hard-edged environments. They should be designed so they benefit from direct overlooking while being well screened from the street; for these reasons, they work well when they are combined with flats over garages that define the street frontage. Entrances to rear parking courts should be carefully designed to create a semi-private appearance.

For lower density areas with detached and semi-detached houses, parking should normally be discreetly accommodated to the side of dwellings, and behind the building line where it is less visible from the street. Tandem parking arrangements avoid over-wide separation gaps between buildings. Off-street parking in front of houses should normally be avoided. This is likely to result in environments dominated by hard surfaces and generates greater face to face building distances leading to weaker street enclosure unless combined with taller building frontages.

Where provided, garages should be capable of daily use and thus sized accordingly. The preference is for open fronted car barns that are more suited to regular use.

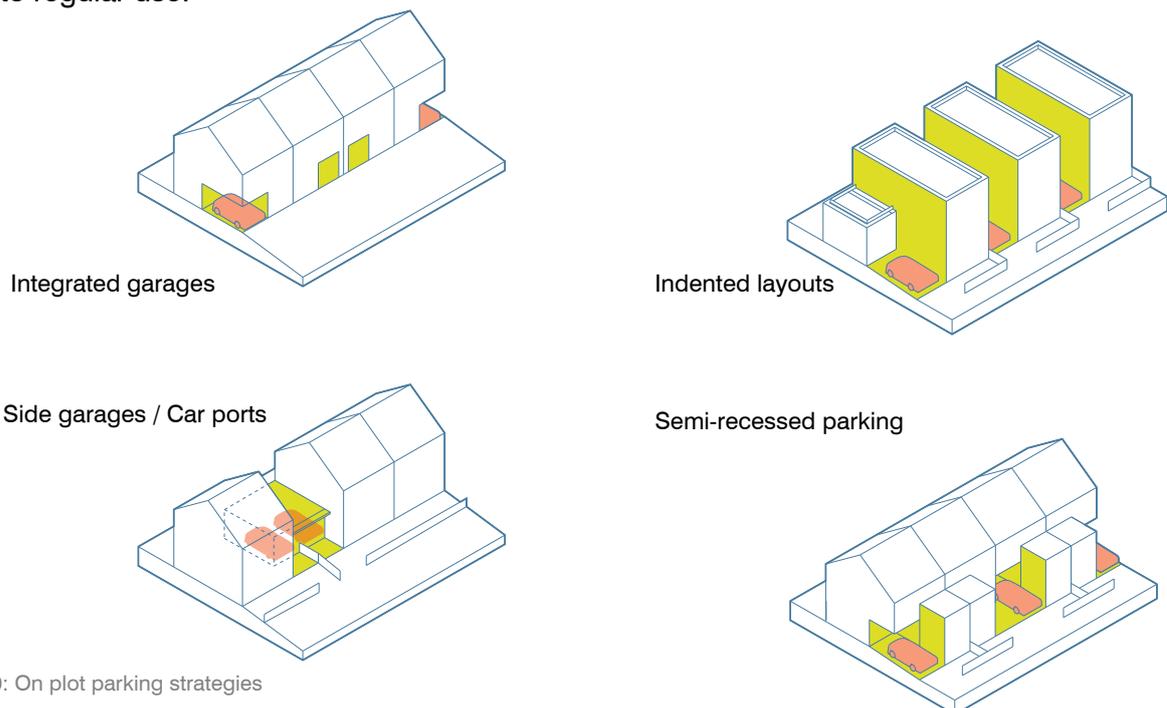


Figure 30: On plot parking strategies

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### **D&S DPD S7: On-Street Parking**

On-street parking should be well landscaped and incorporate generous safeguarding areas around trees and shrubs.

On-street parking must be designed to minimise its visual impact. Its primary purpose should be to provide for visitor parking.

- a) Parking bays should generally be laid out in parallel, rather than right-angles, with the street kerb;
- b) Right-angle on-street parking should be minimised in new developments as it can dominate the public realm, generate weak street enclosure and hard-edged street environments;
- c) On-street EV charging facilities should be provided on residential streets where there is reliance on street parking to meet parking standards. Provision should reflect the number of parking spaces directly associated with the development to meet parking provision standards and/or typically at a rate of one per dwelling or for all the parking spaces where there are fewer parking spaces than there are dwellings; and
- d) On-street parking should not cause obstructions in the highway, should enable free movement of refuse vehicles and buses while retaining continuous footways.

## **Supporting policy guidance**

### **On-street Parking Layout**

This policy draws on the National Design Guide, the Manual for Streets, Building Regulations and accepted good practice.

On-street parking is convenient for visitors and adds activity to the street and natural surveillance. Where used for allocated parking, for example terraced properties, it also avoids vehicle crossovers on the pedestrian footway.

On-street parking should be well landscaped and incorporate generous safeguarding areas around trees and shrubs to protect them from pedestrian as well as vehicular movement and provide for private defensible space at the front of dwellings.

Right-angle on-street parking should be minimised in new developments as it can dominate the public realm, generate weak street enclosure and hard-edged street environments. It is sometimes acceptable if it is positively designed as part of a comprehensive landscaped public realm and is limited to one part of a comprehensive parking strategy for the higher density areas.

Non-allocated shared parking (generally on street) is more efficient than designating parking to individual dwellings and this approach is supported to reduce parking numbers within development schemes especially in respect of terraced housing.

### Provision for Electric Vehicle charging

Given Government objectives to cease sales of internal combustion engine cars in 2030, provision should be made to meet current and anticipated future demand. The EV charge points must be accessible to local residents. The Council will need to be satisfied that any plans will ensure local residents will be able to access the EV charge points. This may be via resident parking schemes or permits to ensure that local residents are assured that they will be able to charge their vehicles on a regular basis. Double-headed EV charge points, capable of charging two vehicles at once, should be installed wherever possible. Provisions for bays/laybys and on-street EV charging must be considered in dense areas to enable residents to access EV charging infrastructure without private driveways.

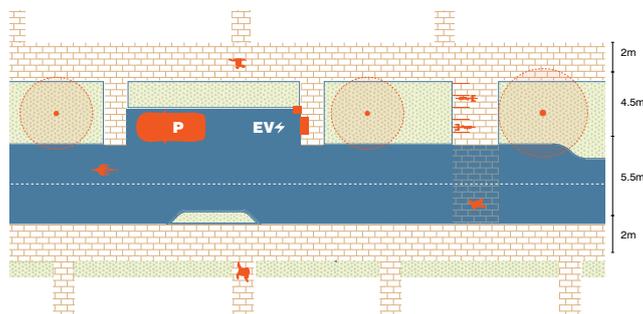


Figure 31: On street parking strategy

#### 4.3.7. Settlement Edges

The careful treatment of settlement edges, particularly for proposals which seek to extend established settlement boundaries, is crucial for preserving and enhancing views of places. Settlement edges also play a role in maintaining visual distinction of places from surrounding development and landscapes.

New development should not seek to rely upon the adjacent countryside for its setting or views, as this inevitably means that there would be a material change and harm to the reverse view from the countryside.

##### **D&S DPD S8: Settlement Edges**

Properties should not back onto the settlement edge and the edge should not be defined by rear garden fences.

For larger developments or extensions on the edges of existing built-up areas and villages, the development shall be designed to ensure that there is an acceptable transition with the remaining countryside.

New development will be laid out in a manner that avoids a harsh transition through, for example:

Grading densities and building heights towards the edge of sites;

Individual properties should not back onto the settlement edge and the edge should not be defined by rear garden fences;

Avoiding narrow artificial boundary screening that would appear alien in the landscape, in favour of a wider landscape buffers that reflect natural landscape features;

Breaking up the development edge by allowing boundary planting to bleed into the built development;

Incorporating layers of planting throughout site in order to break up the roofscape;

Ensuring that structural landscaping within a site replicates natural landscape characteristics such as small copse, tree'd hedgerow;

Ensuring that the location of new buildings responds to topography, avoiding locating buildings where they may appear prominent in medium to longer distance views from the countryside; and

Managing artificial lighting towards the edges of developments.

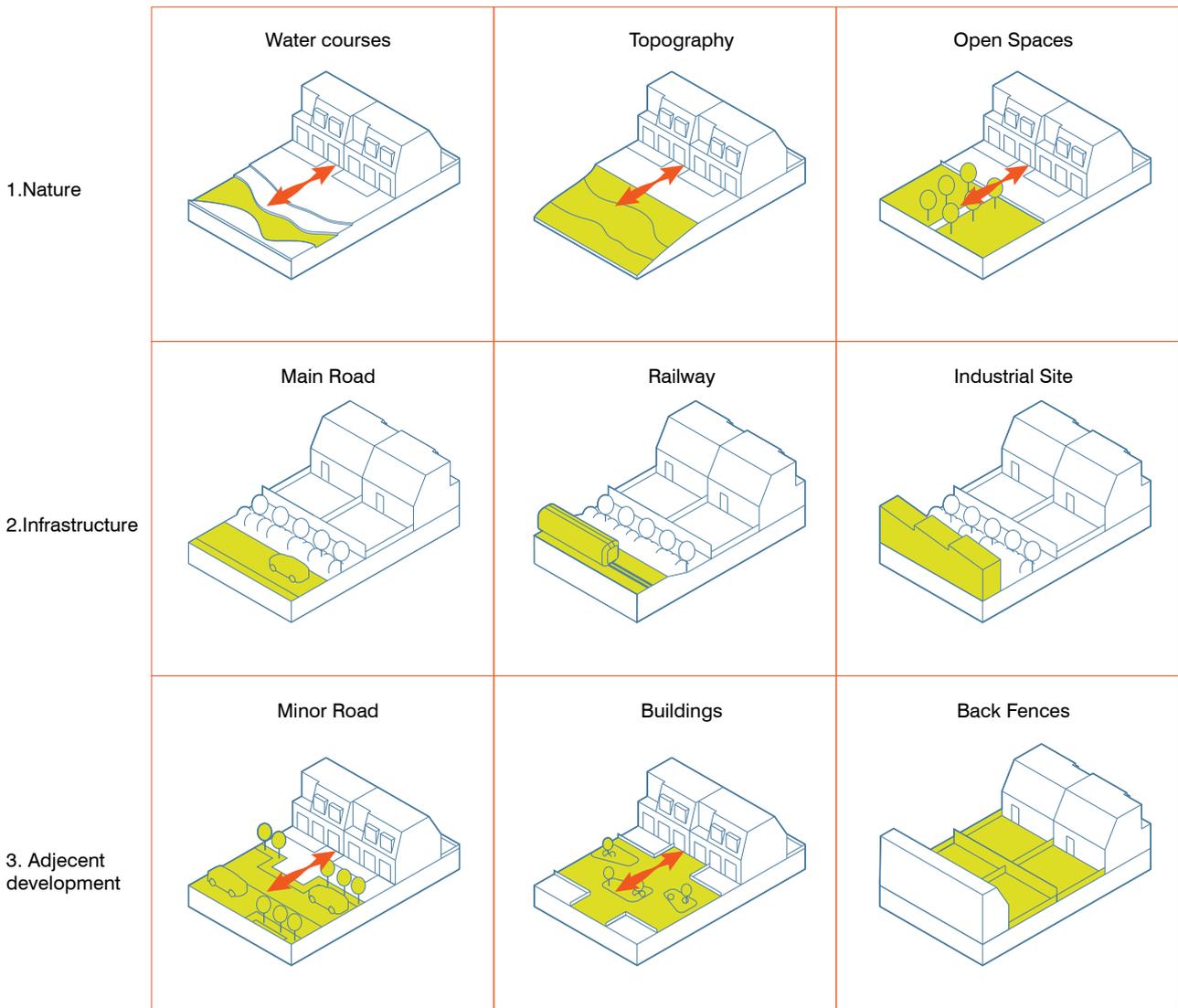


Figure 32: Edge conditions

## Supporting policy guidance

### Best Practice Boundary Treatments

The benefits of a soft transition from countryside to development to create a gradual change between town and countryside are widely accepted as good practice. Ideally settlement edges are generally strong and well vegetated, reflecting the traditional character of Maidstone's settlements and reducing the visual intrusion of items in rear gardens. New boundaries should reflect this and avoid appearing as unnatural landscape features.

Properties should not back onto the settlement edge and the edge should not be defined by rear garden fences. This can create security problems and over time the quality of the environment can become degraded as fences are replaced or fall into disrepair. When viewed from the countryside this creates an unresolved and untidy edge that diminishes the quality of the environment. Developments should therefore normally be designed with building frontages facing site boundaries served by new access roads that run adjacent to the built site edge, further separating new development from the countryside. This arrangement also enables existing tree-lined boundaries and hedgerows to be:

- Revealed to the public realm; and
- Safeguarded by incorporating them outside the private realm and avoiding potential overshadowing of rear gardens.

Development should nevertheless be sensitively designed so that it avoids imposing upon the rural edge and existing roads that are characterised by their hedgerows and tree belt. This may require additional boundary planting. At the rural edge lower density development will also normally be necessary, together with lower building heights in sensitive positions.

There are a variety of different edge conditions, which should be identified and designed for appropriately. These include edges produced by landscape features (for example watercourses, topographic changes or hedgerows), transport features (for example strategic roads and railways), and built form edges (for example farmsteads, residential and existing settlement edges and industrial sites).

Where boundary landscaping is provided, this should incorporate natural features and species of the surrounding landscape, a theme which should also continue into a sites internal structural landscaping.

Responding to landscape edges can enhance residential amenity, as well as landscape and habitat connections.

Responding to existing built features can create positive new streets, as well as completing existing blocks whilst retaining the amenity of existing buildings.

Responding to hard infrastructure can reduce its dominance and impact on the development.

#### 4.3.8. Refuse, Storage and Utilities

It is essential that development responds positively to the waste hierarchy and is designed in a manner that firstly encourages a reduction in waste generated, but also enables recycling in both private and public spaces. Poorly planned or inadequately specified facilities associated with refuse collection and storage can have a significant detrimental impact on the quality of the streetscape and public if not properly planned. This subsection stipulates two policies to ensure proposals integrate practicable and unobtrusive refuse facilities.

##### **D&S DPD S9: Servicing Layout and Access**

The layout of development should be designed and tested to facilitate service vehicles and refuse collections.

Streets should be designed such that they are not used for informal overnight parking, which can prohibit early morning servicing.

The preference is for a continuous connected network of streets which helps avoid the need for large turning areas for servicing vehicles.

Space for the storage and collection of bins at individual residential and commercial properties, and communal properties should normally be attractively integrated into the streetscape, or buildings, and allow for bins to be easily moved to collection points and vehicles.

Details of the collection of waste should be submitted with planning applications for residential and commercial development.

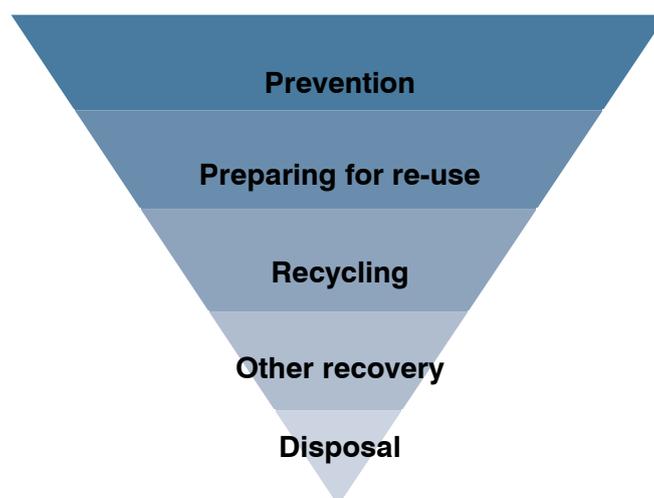


Figure 33: The Waste Hierarchy

### **D&S DPD S10: Integrating Refuse and Recycling Storage**

Facilities for both residential and commercial refuse and recycling storage must be included in developments and should be:

- a) A suitable size to accommodate all the refuse and recycling containers to meet the needs of occupiers and be of a size acceptable to the refuse collection service;
- b) Carefully designed and located so they are neither visually obtrusive nor obstruct the passive surveillance of the street, and avoid having a deadening impact on the façade or threshold; and
- c) Located where they will not be obstructed by car parking.

For communal developments and commercial properties refuse and recycling facilities should be:

- a) Within secure and well-ventilated areas;
- b) Located so that they may be easily accessed from properties but where they will not cause nuisance through unpleasant odours or noise; and
- c) Coordinated with cycle storage.

## **Supporting policy guidance**

### **Overall Approach**

Well-designed storage helps to preserve the character of streets and spaces, keeping them uncluttered and visually appealing. Dedicated waste and recycling storage or set down spaces can help reduce street clutter and encourage people to store their bins neatly. Well designed and adequate provision encourages recycling. Storage for waste and recycling is poorly used if it is hard to access. In all but the largest of back gardens, a simple set down area in a back garden is often not an appropriate solution. Instead, space should be made to the side or front of a plot for waste and recycling, screened by a boundary hedge or fence to avert it becoming a visual intrusion or potential security risk.

For apartments, waste stores and cycles stores should be integrated into the building and be designed to be easily accessible, whilst not detracting from the streetscape. Should this not be possible, dedicated stores in timber, arranged as an outbuilding to the rear of the building, should be provided. Information on the approach to waste storage and collection should be submitted with applications for full planning consent because an approved site layout or building footprint may not be able to retrofit adequate provision. For developments seeking outline consent, conditions will be considered requiring a waste and recycling strategy to be submitted at the reserved matters stage for appropriate development.

## 4.4 Open Space and Nature

### 4.4.1. Setting and Landscape

The term 'landscape' includes both the built and open landscapes of the urban, suburban, and rural environment. It forms an important element of both their character and setting, for example, views, vistas, streetscapes, and roofscapes. Landscape character is formed by a number of factors, such as topography, vegetation, land use, drainage, materials and buildings. It is important that a thorough understanding of the existing landscape features, character and quality is attained at a very early stage in order to appropriately inform the design process.

Landscape and townscape characteristics should be considered from the outset of the design process. In many instances landscape is a key element of transition, for example, between built up areas and the countryside, or, for example, within urban areas, between public and private realms. The existing context informs the character of most sites. It should be retained as much as possible so that it shapes the form of new development and is incorporated to enhance its setting while reducing its impact on the wider landscape.

Heritage assets and historic landscapes should be celebrated, preserved and enhanced, for the enjoyment of existing and future residents and visitors. Where appropriate and providing it does not cause harm to the heritage assets or their setting, open space and nature they should be carefully integrated into development proposals as they help to reinforce a sense of place and local identity. Elsewhere new development should generally reflect the scale of adjacent areas and the settlement context within which it is located to deliver a coherent and consistent urban fabric that does not harm the wider landscape setting.

Landscape, topography and drainage patterns are often the historic basis upon which existing patterns of development have been defined. Where development is proposed outside of a clearly defined pre-existing urban context existing landscape features such as topography or field boundaries should provide a framework for the pattern of dispersal, grain and urban structure of new development plots. This may entail a process of the intensification of existing patterns of movement and connectivity. The study of adjacent settlements and/or patterns of habitation in the area should be undertaken. This is particularly important as the scale of new development increases and completely new 'places' are created. For these, national best practice for contemporary placemaking for new settlements or urban extensions must be considered.

Views across the open countryside from elevated locations in the Borough, especially in the setting of the Kent Downs AONB, are an important part of the Borough's character and must be retained. Developments, particularly at a larger scale, must be carefully managed to minimise adverse impacts. New buildings should not obscure or cause adverse impact on these existing views and attention must be given to reduce the impact of development against the skyline or ridgelines of hills. Development proposals should soften their appearance within the landscape by minimising their visual impact through integrating them within the existing landform and with the careful siting of buildings and landscape.

Applicants should identify important views into and out of their site. This may include long distance views to landscape features or buildings or shorter distance views to attractive or distinctive townscape. Where appropriate development should be laid out so that these views are retained and where possible enhanced to improve legibility whilst ensuring that new development is appropriately screened so as not to impact on views towards the site.

Where a local landscape has been harmed through, for example, past development or modern agricultural patterns, opportunities should be taken to restore the quality of the landscape, for example, field patterns and landscape features such as hedgerow. In doing so, applicants should have regard to, for example, landscape character assessments, including the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.

### **D&S DPD ON1: Landscape and the Setting of Places**

Development proposals will be encouraged and supported where they:

- a) Demonstrate and reflect understanding through desk and field-based evidence, including Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or Appraisal (LVIA) on any rural and edge of settlement sites of the local and wider landscape character and landscape quality relative to the locality, and the value of its contribution to the setting and context of the town and surrounding villages, including natural and historic features and influences such as topography, vegetation, drainage patterns and historic land use;
- b) Conserve and enhance landscapes of local value, landscape quality and character, and the public's experience of it and make a positive contribution to existing special qualities;
- c) Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship between good landscape design, biodiversity net gain and water sensitive design;
- d) Create opportunities to enhance the public use and enjoyment of existing and proposed streets and open spaces (while restricting public access to designated ecological sites);
- e) Recognise the significance of landscape features such as mature trees, hedges, and historic boundaries and other important character elements, and retain them in a respectful context where they can be suitably managed and sustained;
- f) Take full account of issues and recommendations in the most up to date Landscape Character Appraisal;
- g) Include sustainable, practical, and high quality soft and hard landscape details and planting proposals that are clearly evidence based and make a positive contribution to the character of streets, spaces and other landscapes; and
- h) Create a comfortable association between the built and natural environment and attain an appropriate relationship of scale between building and adjacent open space, garden or street. In this respect consideration will be also given to function and other factors such as the size of mature trees.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Responding to landscape

Where potential landscape impacts are significant, a well-prepared Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is considered an important to not only inform the design process, but to also aid planning decisions by identifying how development responds to and potentially affect on the character and appearance of the landscape itself.

Underpinning this approach, paragraph 130 of the NPPF suggests that planning policies and decisions should: be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.

Paragraph 176 of the NPPF suggests that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. this includes its 'setting'. The Kent Downs AONB, which stretches west to East across the northern part of the Borough, is potentially significant in the setting of possible development sites. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas. The NPPF suggests that the scale and extent of development within the AONB setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

Heritage assets are often a key feature of local landscapes and reflect their history, for example, historic farmsteads, historic houses and parklands. Paragraph 194 of the NPPF also suggests that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. It also suggests that the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance.

## **The Assessment of Proposals on the Landscape**

In order to provide officers with sufficient material to assess proposals, landscape assessments in line with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Not 1/20 "Reviewing LVIAs and LVAs" should be submitted with applications. This should set out in detail an agreed methodology used to undertake the assessment, including a rationale behind the criteria selected for review and the process undertaken to assess them.

Landscape assessments should include a full check of the baseline contents and findings of the assessment, including (but not limited to):

- a review of the visual baseline used and selected receptors;
- a review of the landscape value, and cross reference to other topics such as heritage and ecology; and
- a review of whether appropriate design iteration has been undertaken to mitigate potential impacts and the eventual design response included in a proposal.

In response to the presentation of these findings, the Council will assess both the content of the assessment as well as critiquing the transparency and objectivity of the findings, the clarity of visual communication and illustration of findings and the effectiveness of the graphic and visual representation of proposals<sup>22</sup>.

### **4.4.2. Open Space**

As a key subset of the public realm, open spaces are areas of developments intentionally not containing buildings and are delivered to make important contribution to the function and setting of a building and the character and amenity of an area. They may be connected to the wider public realm for public access, or for shared or communal use by occupiers, or even private spaces that engage with the wider public realm and landscape strategy.

These spaces should support encourage healthy lifestyles by providing, as appropriate, both physical and visual amenity and a focus for residents, employees and visitors to relax, socialise, play and host recreational or sporting activities and events.

With changing working patterns becoming more permanent, people are spending far more time within the areas that they live. Therefore the availability and quality of open space within neighbourhoods is becoming an increasingly important aspect of wellbeing and must be a key element of any overall spatial strategy for an area as well as individual developments.

21. Landscape Institute, 2020; Technical Guidance Note 1-20: Reviewing LVIAs and LVAs

## D&S DPD ON2 Open Spaces

1. Open space beyond the main areas of public realm should be provided as an integral part of a development and designed with a specific role or function as part of the wider open space network. They should take the opportunity to create a high quality setting for development and create environments and facilities that provide for, and encourage, wellbeing and inclusive access and activity for all age groups and abilities.

Open spaces should be designed according to the following principles:

- a) Contribute to both the setting and functions of new developments
- b) To optimise their environmental, social and recreational potential by providing multi-functional all year-round activity useable space for a range of activities, that appeal to and attract all ages;
- c) They should, therefore, include both hard and soft surfaced areas;
- d) To be safe places defined by building frontages providing appropriate enclosure and overlooking;
- e) To positively respond to potential desire lines that cross the space (including public rights of way); and
- f) To ensure that they possess longevity, be designed in a robust manner with consideration of future maintenance. Outdoor furniture and equipment should be attractive, robust, durable and coordinated.

2. On larger developments (100+ dwellings), consideration should also be given to setting aside land for productive use by residents such as community gardens and allotments.

Having regard to the wider open space standards within the Development Plan, all developments are expected to meet their own needs in respect of public open space in accordance with LPR Policies LPRSP13 and LPRINF1. To establish a development's needs for publicly accessible open space, applicants should also consider factors such as:

- the needs of future residents within the development
- the location of the development and the character of the surrounding area
- potential impacts upon existing provision having regard to shortfalls or surpluses in certain open space typologies in the surrounding area, and
- opportunities to enhance overall provision

3. In exceptional circumstances, where it is not possible to meet the spatial requirements of the development plan to provide publicly open space, development shall, having regard to a wider assessment of open space provision within the surrounding area:

- Identify the most appropriate level and typology of open space within the development
- Identify opportunities to contribute to new or enhanced publicly accessible open space within the wider area.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Principles for High Quality Open Spaces

The National Design Guide recommends the provision of a network of high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play. Well-designed places provide usable green spaces, taking into account:

The wider and local context, including existing landscape and ecology;

- Access;
- How spaces are connected;
- The balance between public and private open spaces;
- Their potential to contribute to a strategic green infrastructure system, and to water management;
- A variety of natural and designed landscapes for everyone, with different functions to suit a diverse range of needs;
- Opportunities for formal and informal play, exercise and rest that are accessible to all and with no segregation;
- Well-integrated drainage, ecology, shading, recreation and food production that achieve a biodiversity net gain as required by the 25-year Environment Plan;
- Well-considered maintenance and management regimes based on an understanding of the costs for occupants or users;
- Their ability to support a range of activities and provide amenity value; and
- How they are to be managed and maintained.

Open spaces should be designed to be high quality, robust and adaptable over time so that they remain fit for purpose and are managed and maintained for continual use. Open spaces should include public, shared and private outdoor spaces with a range of sizes and locations.

#### 4.4.3. Biodiversity and Nature

As a key subset of the public realm, open spaces are areas of development intentionally not containing buildings and are delivered to make important contribution to the character and amenity of an area. These spaces should encourage healthy lifestyles by providing both physical and visual amenity and a focus for social, play and sporting activities and events.

##### **D&S DPD ON3: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery**

Biodiversity and geodiversity are important natural capital assets and provide benefits as part of ecosystem services. Nature recovery is important for delivering improvements to nature, ecological networks and green infrastructure.

Development proposals will also need to be in accordance with Policy ON4 Biodiversity Net Gain. Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- a) Protects existing biodiversity by retaining features of interest, including connecting routes as part of wider ecological networks, and ensuring the appropriate long-term management of those features;
- b) Takes appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy set out in national policy. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort);
- c) Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments;
- d) Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience;
- e) Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the Borough;
- f) Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and irreplaceable habitats such as Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including priority habitats, wildlife corridors, ancient, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, areas identified for nature recovery, and Nature Improvement Areas;

- g) Protects designated sites and gives them appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks and nature recovery;
- h) Acknowledges that soils are important for biodiversity and carbon storage. Soils will be protected and enhanced, including the best and most versatile agricultural land, by development avoiding soil disturbance, compaction and erosion. Development should not result in soil pollution;
- i) Protects geodiversity and prevents harm to geological conservation interests, and where possible, enhances such interests. Geological conservation interests include Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites; and
- j) Seeks to meet the objectives of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, taking opportunities to deliver ecological networks and green infrastructure. Development will need to demonstrate that it will not harm or adversely affect an area or areas identified as opportunities for nature recovery.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall approach

Well-designed places:

- Integrate existing, and incorporate new natural features into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place, strategic green infrastructure, biodiversity and water management, and addresses climate change mitigation and resilience;
- Prioritise nature so that diverse ecosystems can flourish to ensure a healthy natural environment that supports and enhances biodiversity;
- Provide a variety of natural and designed landscapes that are attractive open spaces in locations that are easy to access, with activities for all to enjoy, such as play, food production, recreation, and rest, so as to encourage physical activity and promote health, well-being and social inclusion; and
- Have well-considered maintenance and management regimes based on an understanding of the costs for occupants or users.

Open spaces should be designed to be high quality, robust and adaptable over time so that they remain fit for purpose and are managed and maintained for continual use. Open spaces include public, shared and private outdoor spaces with a range of sizes and locations.

'Green infrastructure' is the term used for the overarching framework related to all green assets. Traditionally, environmental planning has looked at the functions of these assets in isolation, such as biodiversity, open space provision or public realm design. Whilst we should not devalue the benefits of looking at these issues individually, a green infrastructure approach considers how together these assets form an overall 'system' that is greater than the sum of its parts.

### **Designing with nature in Maidstone**

Maidstone's approach is to both continue to protect, enhance and extend where possible biodiversity habitats and landscapes; and also, to support the multifunctional benefits of green infrastructure. These include opportunities for sport and recreation, creating safe and attractive walking, cycling and equestrian routes; the provision of ecosystem services such as improvements in air and water quality; cultural value; mitigation and adaptation to climate change, an enhanced backdrop and landscape to aid business and attract inward investment and boost the economy; to ensure Maidstone is an attractive place to live and promote well-being; and, of course, to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

### **Enhancing Biodiversity**

It is vital that new developments play a role in supporting wildlife, working with, and adding to, existing habitats. Within existing and proposed buildings, green spaces and landscape features, opportunities for wildlife should be maximised. This should include planting of native plants and the creation of safe places and/or nesting opportunities supplemented by nest and roost boxes with a focus on urban species such as pipistrelle and long eared bats, swifts, swallows, house sparrows and starlings. Opportunities should be taken to strengthen and improve habitat corridors. Barriers to connectivity such as roads and paths should be avoided and where necessary mitigated through the use of aerial connections (touching tree canopies) and wildlife culverts. Further advice can be found in the Wildlife Trusts' 'Homes, People and Wildlife'<sup>23</sup>.

22. homes\_for\_people\_and\_wildlife\_lr\_-\_spreads.pdf ([wildlifetrusts.org](http://wildlifetrusts.org))

#### 4.4.4. Biodiversity Net Gain

The requirement for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain was introduced by the Environment Act 2021. Biodiversity Net Gain seeks to deliver measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Policy ON4 sets out how Biodiversity Net Gain will be expected to be implemented.

##### **Policy ON4: Biodiversity Net Gain**

Biodiversity Net Gain Development (as defined in the Environment Act 2021 or its secondary legislation or as amended by the Government) will need to deliver a net gain in biodiversity which will contribute to the delivery of ecological networks, green infrastructure and nature recovery. Development will need to demonstrate through a Biodiversity Gain Plan that measurable and meaningful net gains for biodiversity will be achieved and will be secured and managed appropriately.

##### **1. Principles of Biodiversity Net Gain**

- a) Development will need to demonstrate that good practice principles for biodiversity net gain have been followed. Development will need to demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been followed;
- b) Proposals for biodiversity net gain will also need to be in accordance with other policy, and avoid harm to irreplaceable habitats, protected sites and priority habitats;
- c) Biodiversity net gain, including off-site biodiversity net gain, should be maximised and align with the objectives and priorities of the Nature Recovery Network, Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant local strategies, contributing and connecting to wider ecological networks and blue and green infrastructure. Consideration should be given to landscape character when developing proposals for biodiversity net gain;
- d) It is expected that development proposals will enhance existing biodiversity and incorporate features to encourage biodiversity and pollination within and around the development;
- e) The level of Biodiversity Net Gain Biodiversity net gain will be calculated and assessed using the Government's published biodiversity metric. The biodiversity net gain calculation and assessment should be completed by a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist and submitted (in full) with a planning application; and
- f) The minimum percentage of biodiversity net gain required will be 10% as set out in legislation (or as amended by the Government). However, unless demonstrably infeasible the Council seeks a higher level of biodiversity net gain. A minimum percentage of biodiversity net gain of 20% will be required and developments should seek to maximise opportunities beyond this, especially where development is located in, or in proximity to, the areas where opportunities for improving biodiversity are greater or there are priority habitats.

## **2. Demonstrating Biodiversity Net Gain**

Proposals must demonstrate their ability to achieve biodiversity net gain through a Biodiversity Gain Plan which is required to be submitted alongside a planning application. This must set out:

- a) Steps taken to avoid and minimise the adverse effects of the development on habitats;
- b) Identification of pre- and post-development onsite biodiversity value;
- c) Details of registered off-site biodiversity value allocated to the development and biodiversity credits purchased;
- d) Other information that may be required by other and/or prevailing regulations; and
- e) How the condition of any habitat creation and enhancement will be maintained for at least 30 years after development is completed.

## **3. Biodiversity Gain Mitigation Hierarchy**

- a) All development required to provide biodiversity gain must provide appropriate mitigation and compensation in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy;
- b) Only where a development proposal cannot prevent and/or minimise loss to biodiversity using avoidance measures, and this has been clearly demonstrated through a Biodiversity Gain Plan, can habitat remediation and compensation measures be considered;
- c) Biodiversity remediation and compensation (through habitat creation, restoration and enhancement) should be provided on-site in the first instance, avoiding, where possible, harm to existing designated and non-designated habitat and species features of conservation value;
- d) In exceptional circumstances where biodiversity net gain cannot be achieved on-site, clear reasoning should be supplied with proposals. Only in these exceptional circumstances should alternative measures be considered to deliver biodiversity gain. These might include:
  - Off-site habitat compensation, which include designing offset habitats outside the development's boundary, emerging register of biodiversity gain sites or habitat banks; and
  - As a last resort<sup>24</sup>, off-site habitat payment compensation, such as through national Biodiversity Credits scheme<sup>25</sup>.
- e) Where biodiversity gain mitigation is proposed to be provided through these alternative mechanisms, evidence must be provided to demonstrate that:
  - All impacts are mitigated, including cumulative impacts of habitat losses to enable habitat compensation, and biodiversity gains are achieved; and,
  - Mechanisms for off-site delivery have been secured through formal agreement, such as through conservation covenant, unilateral undertaking or S106 agreement<sup>26</sup>.

23. NPPF (2021) Paragraph 180a.

24. PPG Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 8-023-20190721

25. PPG Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 8-023-20190721

- f) Proposals which affect statutory designated sites for nature conservation must ensure that biodiversity net gain is delivered in addition to any existing requirements for mitigation<sup>27</sup> ;
- g) Where adequate compensation measures cannot be appropriately provided, either on-site or off-site, and significant harm cannot be avoided, planning permission will be refused.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall approach

All development can contribute to biodiversity improvements and nature recovery and it is expected that development incorporates biodiversity features; restores, enhances and creates ecological networks; and delivers green infrastructure. Development should align with the objectives and priorities of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant local strategies.

Biodiversity Net Gain can be delivered on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures, however, the implementation of biodiversity net gain should align with the local objectives and priorities for biodiversity improvements and nature recovery. It should also be implemented in line with emerging Kent County Council guidance.

The mitigation hierarchy set out in the NPPF should be followed: first by avoiding harm to biodiversity, then providing mitigation with compensation as a last resort.

The Council will expect development to maximise opportunities to deliver higher levels of biodiversity net gain especially where development is located in or in proximity to biodiversity opportunity areas or priority habitats.

### Relationship with statutory designations

Biodiversity net gain complements the hierarchy of statutory nature conservation sites, habitats and species. It does not override the protection for designated sites, protected or priority species and irreplaceable or priority habitats. Impacts on irreplaceable habitats and habitats sites will not be supported and cannot be accounted through a net gain approach.

26. Defra (2022). Consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations. Available online at: [https://consult.defra.gov.uk/defra-net-gain-consultation-team/consultation-on-biodiversity-net-gain-regulations/supporting\\_documents/Consultation%20on%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Regulations%20and%20Implementation\\_January2022.pdf](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/defra-net-gain-consultation-team/consultation-on-biodiversity-net-gain-regulations/supporting_documents/Consultation%20on%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Regulations%20and%20Implementation_January2022.pdf)

#### 4.4.5. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs)

Whenever possible, applicants should retain, enhance or re-establish watercourses and other surface waterbodies as positive features contributing to the character, sense of place, ecological value and biodiversity of new development.

Applicants should consider how to manage surface water to minimise flood risk and flows to watercourses. Development proposals should normally incorporate sustainable urban drainage (SuDs) as an integral part of the landscape structure.

##### **DPD D&S ON5: Sustainable Drainage Systems**

- a) Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be implemented in all major developments unless demonstrated to be inappropriate, to avoid any increase in flood risk, protect surface and ground water quality and contribute to wider landscape-scale flood alleviation;
- b) Arrangements for the long-term maintenance and management of SuDS must also be identified through a maintenance and management plan, to be secured by condition at planning application stage;
- c) For the redevelopment of brownfield sites, any surface water draining to the foul sewer must be disconnected and managed through SuDS following the remediation of any previously contaminated land;
- d) SuDS should be sensitively designed and located to maximise improved biodiversity (in line with Biodiversity Net Gain principles in Policy ON4), an enhanced landscape and good quality spaces that improve public amenities in the area; and
- e) For proposals in proximity to existing watercourses, a 20 metre buffer should be allowed between the watercourse and any built form (including buildings, lighting surfacing and boundary treatments) to replicate a natural riparian buffer.

As set out in Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010. The preferred hierarchy of managing surface water drainage from any development is: 1. Infiltration Measures, 2. Attenuation and discharge to watercourses; and if these cannot be met, 3. Discharge to surface water only sewers.

Land that is considered to be required for current and future flood management will be safeguarded from development and proposals will need to have regard to relevant flood risk plans and strategies.

SuDs should be positively designed into schemes from the outset as public realm features. These features can include ponds, infiltration basins, swales/rain gardens and wetlands as they:

- Help manage the risk of flooding and climate change;
- Reduce demand on the sewer network;
- Manage some pollutants and improve the quality of water going back into the environment; and
- Can make a positive contribution to the biodiversity, character, appearance and sustainable performance of development.

Developers are encouraged to consider wet SuDS (i.e. those SuDS which hold water in perpetuity, regardless of seasonality) if local drainage and topographical conditions allow.

Swales and attenuation ponds should be designed so that water features and plants are visible from the surrounding area and should avoid unattractive boundary treatments over-engineered surrounds, whilst ensuring the safety of local residents and children, etc.

Attenuation ponds on slopes should be avoided if they need deep embankments or bunding. Consideration must be given to the future management and maintenance of sustainable drainage otherwise flood risk could increase.

The choice of surface materials and the balance of hard and soft landscaping should be considered in terms of the impact upon the drainage system. Where hard landscaping is needed, porous materials should normally be maximised to enable infiltration and manage rainfall at source.

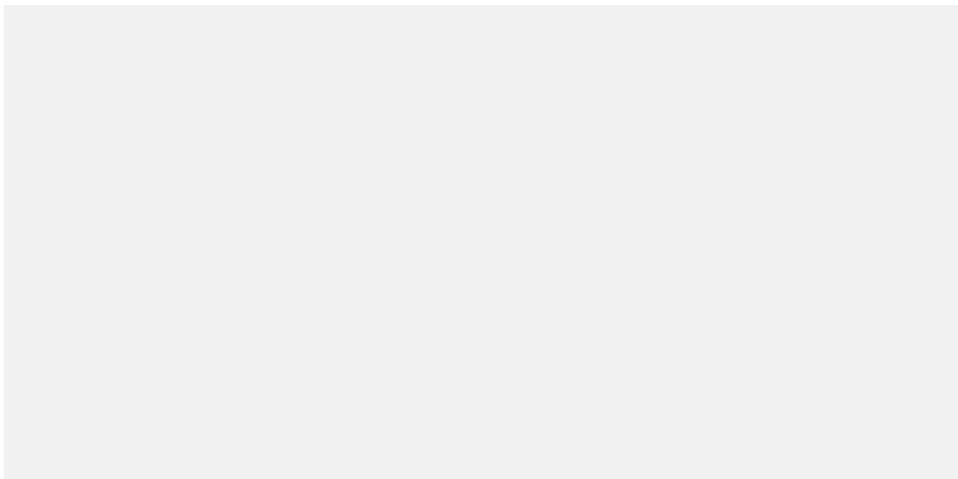


Figure 34: Opportunities for Sustainable Drainage Systems integration within streetscape and landscape.

#### 4.4.6. Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure refers to the network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features (including trees, woodland and hedgerows) in urban and rural areas. Green infrastructure should be capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

This subsection sets out three policies which demonstrate how applicants should maximise the benefits of green infrastructure in their schemes, including by sensitively incorporating native tree species.

##### **D&S DPD ON6: Green Infrastructure**

Green infrastructure (including blue infrastructure) should deliver a range of environmental, social and economic benefits. This encompasses resilience to the effects of climate change (including moderating temperature and mitigating flood risk), positive health and wellbeing effects, nature-based solutions and supporting nature recovery. Green infrastructure assets, links and an overall multi-functional network should be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- a) Responds to and incorporates existing on-site and off-site green infrastructure into the development design;
- b) Provides new green infrastructure integrated into the development design;
- c) Contributes to the wider green infrastructure network by taking opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore green infrastructure, and providing links to existing green infrastructure including outside the development's boundaries.

From the outset, applicants should consider the landscape assets of the site. Their Design and Access Statement should demonstrate how they may be used to create part of a coherent landscape structure that links to existing and proposed landscapes to form open space networks whenever possible, revealing existing landscape features.

Green infrastructure design will be expected to demonstrate that opportunities have been taken to:

- a) Strengthen connectivity and resilience of ecological networks;
- b) Improve resilience to the effects of climate change; and
- c) Support health and wellbeing by providing access to green space, nature and rights of way.

Appropriate arrangements and funding for the future long-term management and maintenance of green infrastructure should be identified and implemented. Where appropriate, the Council will seek to secure this via planning conditions and/or planning obligations.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall approach

Trees and soft landscape make an important contribution to the character of an area by providing both physical and visual amenity, improving biodiversity and enhancing sense of place. They have a strong impact on people's well-being, soften the impact of buildings and structures, and indicate the passage of the seasons through their growth and change through the year, and should therefore be incorporated throughout new development.

Plant species, along with sizes and locations, within new housing schemes in Maidstone are also critical to support the rich biodiversity and landscape character of the local area.

### Relationship with Landscape Strategy

From the outset, there should be a clear landscape strategy that is an integral part of the design of new development covering all streets and public spaces while accounting for the growing process.

Consideration must also be given to the future maintenance of trees and plants in the design. Native trees and shrubs and longer-lived species should be selected where possible and appropriate as they support a greater variety of wildlife, are often more suited to local conditions and better reflect the character of the wider countryside. Trees and soft landscaping should be selected and located according to the growing space available and the final height, spread and form at maturity. They should also reflect existing species in the locality.

The intended character of an area, street or public space (for example, formal sculptural planting or softer informal planting) should also influence choice with a presumption of informal planting in the existing villages and rural areas and where this is consistent with adjacent developments. The scale and importance of a street with larger stature trees on main streets and smaller species selected for minor routes will help the legibility of layouts. Greater formality and street enclosure with more formalised tree planting, and tree species normally sought on main streets and spaces to reinforce their importance in the street hierarchy.

Creating avenues of a single species normally helps to deliver the necessary formality for main streets and spaces, applicants should nevertheless avoid over-long stretches of the same species to safeguard against the risk of tree losses through disease; changing species block by block is therefore recommended. All street trees should normally have a regular shape and form.

## Tree species

The below tree species are suggested. This is not an exhaustive list and other species and cultivars will be considered.

### 1. Main streets

Native species (preferred) including:

- a) *Alnus glutinosa* or *Alnus cordata*;
- b) *Quercus palustris* (pin oak);
- c) *Quercus robur* (oak);
- d) *Tilia cordata* 'Streetwise' or 'Greenspire' (small leaved lime); and
- e) *Ulmus* 'New Horizon' (elm).
- f) Alternative species options (occasionally appropriate) including:
- g) *Acer platanoides* 'Emerald Queen' (Norway maple); and
- h) *Ginkgo biloba* (Maidenhair tree).

### 2. Secondary Streets

- a) *Acer campestre* (field maple);
- b) *Corylus colorna* (Turkish hazel);
- c) *Coryllus avellana* (hazel);
- d) *Liquidamber styraciflua* (sweet gum tree).
- e) *Sorbus aria* (whitebeam); and
- f) *Sorbus aucuparia* (rowan).

### g) Minor / Tertiary Streets

- h) *Arbutus unedo* (strawberry tree);
- i) *Crataegus x lavalleyi*;
- j) *Crataegus* species (hawthorn);
- k) *Ligustrum lucidum*;
- l) *Malus* 'Evereste' (crab apple); and
- m) *Sorbus aucuparia* (rowan).

## **Rural and Village Planting**

Within rural areas and villages, a multi-layered planting strategy is required across the site; trees, hedgerow boundaries, open spaces, gardens, and grassland verges, to allow for a range of vegetation heights and habitats across the development informed by published and site specific landscape character assessments.

In rural parts of the Borough, planting could include:

- a) Native hedging plants and shrubs which can be coppiced, such as hornbeam, beech, hazel, hawthorn, guelder rose, dogwood, and field maple;
- b) Orchard type trees such as apples, crab apples, and cherries;
- c) 'Structural' hedgerow and specimen trees such as oak, hornbeam, field maple, and birch, including new mature trees;
- d) Native wildflowers; and
- e) Willow and other riparian species.

## **Tailoring Choice of Species**

In more rural settings front garden hedges adjacent to footways can be successfully created from a mixture of hornbeam, beech and hazel for example, to maintain a locally distinctive, semi-rural character in village developments.

Native wildflowers are an integral part of the area's ecosystems, and should be included in landscaping schemes to also embed a sense of place and local character in a new development, for example; English bluebells and wood anemones under trees and in grass verges at the base of hedgerows, and wildflower mixes in open spaces, sourced from suppliers using locally sourced plants or seed. Wild flora mixes need to be selected according to the ecology of the site, informed by ecological surveys of the site and surrounding area.

Areas of the ubiquitous, 'estate' planting of ornamental ground-cover shrubs (such as Berberis, Pyracantha, Photinia and Mahonia) are not appropriate in developments within villages. Locally non-native or invasive species such as laurel, leylandii, buddleia, European bluebells, rhododendron and cotoneaster should also be avoided, as should imported topsoil and other mechanisms which could introduce pests and diseases.

#### 4.4.7. Dark Skies

The natural environment and the ecology it hosts, together with people's health and quality of life need to be protected from unacceptable levels of light pollution.

##### **D&S DPD ON7: Protection of Dark Skies**

Development proposals must demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution (including sky glow, glare and light spillage) have been taken including minimising impacts on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes including protected landscapes and areas important for nature conservation and nature recovery.

Whilst respecting the importance of public safety, artificial lighting proposals (including outdoor lighting, floodlighting and new street lighting) should be minimised in terms of intensity and number of fittings.

Applicants should demonstrate that:

- a) The minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose is specified or otherwise justified on safety or security grounds;
- b) The design and specification of the lighting would minimise sky glow, glare and light spillage in relation to the visibility of the night sky, local amenity and local character;
- c) as well as managing luminosity levels, lower temperature levels should be used and where possible, automatic timers and dimmers used
- d) the means of lighting would be unobtrusively sited and sensitively integrated with natural landscaping ; and
- e) low energy lighting is used;
- f) there would not be an adverse impact on wildlife such as through consideration of the appropriate colour and temperature of lighting.
- g) Where lighting of a landmark or heritage feature is proposed, the level and type of illumination used would enhance the feature itself.

Development proposals will need to take into account the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance and other relevant guidance such as that from the International Dark-Sky Association and AONB Units.

The Borough does not have any Protected dark sky zones, but much of the Borough is an intrinsically dark natural or rural landscape characterised by dark skies at night. The Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance on The Reduction of Obtrusive Light (2021)<sup>28</sup> identifies environmental zones for external lighting control, as set out and applied to Maidstone below.

Applicants should consider the environmental zone of the development when designing external lighting. The following limits should be used as a guide in designing external lighting

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Surrounding</b>	<b>Lighting Environment</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Locations in Maidstone</b>
E0	Protected	Dark (SQM 20.5+) <sup>29</sup>	Astronomical Observable dark skies, UNESCO starlight reserves, IDA dark sky places	There are no designated dark sky places in Maidstone
E1	Natural	Dark (SQM 20 to 20.5)	Relatively uninhabited rural areas, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, IDA buffer zones etc.	Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the countryside
E2	Rural	Low district brightness (SQM ~15 to 20)	Sparsely inhabited rural areas, village or relatively dark outer suburban locations	Larger villages, smaller villages and hamlets
E3	Suburban	Medium district brightness	Well inhabited rural and urban settlements, small town centres of suburban locations	Rural Service Centres
E4	Urban	High district brightness	Town / City centres with high levels of night-time activity	Maidstone

27. Institution of Lighting Professionals (2021) The Guidance Note GN01/21The Reduction of Obtrusive Light <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/>

28. Sky Quality Meter (SQM) is an instrument used to measure the luminance of the night sky. It is typically used by astronomers to quantify skyglow, using units of magnitudes per square arcsecond. scale is between 16:00 (a bright night sky) and 22:00 (the least light pollution).

## Maximum values of vertical illuminance on premises <sup>30</sup>

Light technical parameter	Application conditions	Environmental Zone					
		E0	E1	E2	E3	E4	
Illuminance in the vertical plane	Pre-curfew	n/a	2	1x	5 lx	10 Lx	25 lx
	Post-curfew	n/a	<0.1 lx*	1 lx	2 lx	5 lx	

\* If the installation is for public (road) lighting then this may be up to 1 lx

It is not expected that any external lighting would be required in Natural areas, and in Rural areas it should only be used where it is absolutely necessary, and should conform to the Institute of Lighting Standards and be capable of night time switch-off. Site-specific solutions should be created that minimise light pollution and glare in context. Where lighting is needed, the suburban impact of street ‘clutter’ of a proliferation of lighting columns, uncharacteristic in many of Maidstone’s villages, can be minimised through a more place-sensitive product selection; a combination of Passive Infrared lights on building access points (e.g. porch lights), low level bollard lighting on key public routes, and wall-mounted lighting within parking courts.

Within the AONB’s, development should not harm their intrinsically dark sky characteristics. In areas particularly vulnerable to the impacts of light pollution, condition may be imposed upon future development limiting the scope for retrofitting of external lighting and/or require such to be in accordance with agreed parameters.

29. Requirements taken from CIE150, International Commission on Illumination, Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations, 2nd Edition, 2017. the scale is between 16:00 (a bright night sky) and 22:00 (the least light pollution).

#### 4.4.8. Building on Sloping Sites

Much of The Borough's topography is undulating, reflecting significant landscape features such as the Kent Downs Scarp, the Greensand Ridge and river valleys. Bands of higher land lie broadly east-west, resulting in a specific need to consider how new development is built into this landscape. In addition, the River Valleys cut through at lower levels, creating an additional level of complexity to local landscapes.

##### **D&S DPD ON8: Building on Sloping sites**

Buildings should be designed to respond elegantly to the gradient of the slope by:

- a) Working with the landscape and reflecting the natural undulations of the site;
- b) avoiding locating development on prominent slopes where it would be unduly visible from a wider area,
- c) having regard to the orientation and gradients of the land and working with the landscape and reflecting the natural undulations of the site;
- d) building into, rather than atop higher ground and sloping ground,
- e) where possible allowing development and street scenes to articulate the topography within the character of the development, for example, step buildings down slopes and cut into slopes rather than creating elevated building platforms,
- f) articulating massing and rooflines on front elevations in order to, that are evenly stepped to reflect, for example, the angle of the slope and avoid over-sized flank / return elevations.
- g) Providing a considered roof design that responds to the slope. Generally, hipped or gable fronted delivers this more successfully than a gable flank by double pitched roof;
- h) Ensuring buildings on cross slopes deliver level access to the building from the rear garden and from the street to the front; and
- i) incorporate landscaping through the development that mitigates the impacts of views towards development on rising ground.
- j) Incorporating use of porous materials to promote good drainage, in line with the approaches specified in Policy ON5: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall Guidance

Building on sloping sites is challenging and without thorough consideration of the incline can lead to awkward access arrangements (such as multiple steps/front doors at basement level, and inappropriately accentuated building elevations) if executed poorly. At the other end of the spectrum, entirely levelling a site and removing topography can erode or remove the site's natural position in the wider landscape, creating a foreign and unnatural sense of place.

Local topography can inform the design of a site and create an interesting visual experience through the consideration of short and long views, and street orientation that maximises accessibility. The design of sites should avoid the need for large retaining structures, and where there is the need to accommodate an engineered structure like a retaining wall, this should be concealed within blocks and plots and should preferably be concealed and integrated within buildings.

Where engineered structures are necessary the amenity of adjacent plots and public realm should be considered, so that large blank elevations are minimised in line with the policies set out in Streets and Buildings. Large slab platforms should be avoided, and the scale, height and roofline of development should be designed with the underlying topography in mind.

#### 4.4.9. Provision of Amenity Space

Provision of outdoor amenity space significantly contributes to the wellbeing of the occupants. Amenity space can be provided in the form of a private garden, patio or balcony; or, where appropriate, well designed communal gardens/areas that are for the exclusive use of a buildings occupiers, with no public access.

In addition, residential developments are expected to provide publicly accessible open space that supports wellbeing, provides for recreation and contributes to biodiversity net gain.

Even within town centres and areas where higher densities are being promoted, the availability of good quality useable amenity space is essential to the wellbeing of occupiers.

#### **DPD D&S ON9: Providing External Amenity Space for All Homes**

All dwellings should normally have access to usable private outdoor amenity space that is proportionate to the location and the type and size of accommodation, in line with LPR Policy LPRQ&D 7. This should be provided in the form of useable communal gardens/spaces, private garden, patio/terrace or balcony.

- a) Such spaces should provide a pleasant environment with access to good levels of natural light and relative privacy for both occupiers and neighbours.
- b) Applicants should demonstrate that their size and configuration is useable.
- c) Private outdoor amenity space should normally be designed adjacent to the dwelling (unless exceptional circumstances are stated) as an extension of the living space with direct external access provided and should avoid being unduly overshadowed.
- d) Where insufficient private amenity space is provided and is justified for reasons of say heritage or setting, a generous private communal garden should be available.
- e) Communal gardens should be incorporated to the rear or side of apartment blocks to provide appropriate separation and privacy between habitable windows, visual amenity as well as outdoor space for residents with soft landscaping prioritised over areas of hard standing.
- f) Consideration should also be given to the provision of outdoor seating, eating, drying and growing space.
- g) Ground floor homes in apartment blocks should normally have access to a well-defined, private area that provides both 'defensible space' and good quality external amenity.
- h) In exceptional circumstances, where the provision of on-site amenity space is not possible in exceptional circumstances, developments would be expected to contribute towards the provision or enhancement of appropriate public open space within the immediate area.

There is a growing consensus that the availability of external amenity space is beneficial for households in creating space for purposeful interaction and addressing mental health issues as well as influencing positive behaviours in the home and within the community. A sustainable lifestyle requires functional internal and external spaces. This has become more evident during the lockdown periods of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, when the inadequacy of some homes, the absence of external amenity space and the importance of proximity to public spaces was brought into a sharper focus.

Where balconies are provided, these should be generous to encourage use (e.g. enough space for a table and chairs or food and container-based plant growing).

Where there is no potential to meet standards through dedicated amenity space, indoor gyms and sport facilities will be encouraged to meet as far as possible, the minimum standards.

Apartment buildings are also encouraged to provide internal communal areas, such as lounges where residents can relax and engage, recreation spaces and, for example, winter gardens.

Where a communal garden is proposed, appropriate screening such as a separate patio garden or soft landscaping should be provided for ground floor units, taking care not to prejudice outlook or daylight penetration. An agreed maintenance regime must be in place, and access to the garden must be provided for all units.

Proposals for family-sized housing will also require new playspace, or contributions to the creation or enhancement of very adjacent existing facilities.

Applicants, particularly for larger developments, should undertake an assessment of public open space provision within the wider area, identifying levels of provision and net deficiencies in order that, as well as meeting the needs of future residents, a development can contribute to addressing any quantitative or qualitative shortfalls within an area.

Publicly accessible open space within a development should not be designed for the exclusive use of those occupiers but form an extension to the existing network of spaces.

## 4.5 Movement

### 4.5.1. Layout and Movement

Patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. They also form a crucial component of local character. Their success is measured by how they contribute to the quality and character of the place, not only how well they function.

Successful streets are those where traffic and other activities have been integrated such that all mobility modes can happily co-exist, and where buildings and spaces, and the needs of people and communities, not just of their vehicles, shape the area. Buildings, streets and spaces should combine to create locally distinct places, which make a positive contribution to the life of local communities.

The following policy reflects established good practice which is most notably set out in the Manual for Streets.

#### **D&S DPD MO1: Layout and Movement**

Development proposals must:

- a) Be organised around green transport principles and create a pedestrian and cyclist-friendly layout that is safe, well-connected, legible and accessible;
- b) Optimise a site's potential to accommodate development especially on brownfield sites and in locations close to facilities or with good public transport links; and
- c) Take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (500+ dwellings) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element.

Developments should form part of a clear street hierarchy with the principal vehicular routes integrated within the structure of development as main streets or boulevards, fronted by buildings and with street trees and not as peripheral distributor roads (bypasses).

Development proposals should deliver patterns of land use that facilitate residents making shorter, regular trips by walking or cycling. The movement network (streets, public transport network, cycleways and footpaths) should:

- d) Link with existing routes and access points;
- e) Create direct, attractive and safe connections through the site for pedestrians, cyclists and

vehicular modes which follow natural desire lines, connect to existing streets, open spaces, local facilities or destinations, and coordinate with open spaces and green links;

- f) Avoid turning heads by creating continuous vehicular routes around perimeter blocks;
- g) Carefully integrate public rights of way;
- h) Sensitively accommodate the existing topography while avoiding steep gradients;
- i) Function efficiently to get everyone around, taking account of the diverse needs of all potential users and providing a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes;
- j) Reduce the dominance of vehicles on the Borough's streets whether stationary or moving;
- k) Promote activity and social interaction, contributing to health, well-being, accessibility and inclusion; and
- l) Incorporate green infrastructure, including street trees to soften the impact of car parking, help improve air quality and contribute to biodiversity.

Streets should be well defined and enclosed by building frontages normally in combination with trees and landscaping (contributing to Biodiversity Net Gain where possible, in line with Policy ON4). Street design should encourage healthy lifestyles and behaviours, safe pedestrian and cycle movement through:

- a) Appropriate pavement widths, avoiding unnecessary barriers or clutter;
- b) Providing places for pedestrians to rest, gather and socialise;
- c) Designing residential streets for maximum speeds of 20 miles per hour; and
- d) Traffic calming measures that are integral to the street design that encourage drivers to drive with care and caution. These elements will naturally limit the speed of vehicles through the placement of furniture, landscaping and trees and, material treatment of surfaces.

Within commercial areas, whilst restrictions should not threaten the operational viability of commercial users, streets should be designed such that areas used for servicing during certain times of the day, can still be good quality pedestrian spaces at other times.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Assumptions underlying Policy MO1

The Council makes the following assumptions on successful places – these assumptions should be addressed in proposals to comply with Policy MO1:

- a) Successful development depends upon a movement network that makes connections to destinations, places and communities, both within the site and beyond its boundaries;
- b) Successful places are easy to get to, easy to move through and easy to find your way around. A connected network of streets offers choice, aids legibility, avoids engineered solutions and provides a hierarchy of street types which respond to the function and role of the street;
- c) The network should provide a choice of routes for all modes and follow a spatial and visual hierarchy. The character of a street should reflect its position in this hierarchy and respond to local characteristics;
- d) While direct routes are most convenient, the design should also balance visual attraction, traffic calming and safety to optimise the pedestrian's experience;
- e) Developments that are accessed off a single location or promote a long cul-de-sac that do not provide a choice of direct and convenient routes should be avoided;
- f) The opportunity should be taken to make pedestrian/cycle connections between adjacent development sites;
- g) New development should be designed to encourage active lifestyles and sustainable modes of transport prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable road users first, in accordance with the recommendations in Manual for Streets;
- h) Applicants should accordingly plan their development to minimise reliance on the private car. They should create an attractive network of safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes integrated with the development and connecting with the wider area and adjacent sites;

i) Public transport should also be accommodated where appropriate. For larger developments (over 100 homes) applicants should consider at the outset how buses can be routed through a site and the provision of stops in the most accessible locations where they may serve both new and existing residents. This will inform consideration of street design at the more detailed design stage. Whenever possible new homes should be located within 400m (approximately a 5 minute walk) of a bus stop;

j) The movement network/layout should be future-proofed by providing streets that later phases of development can connect into at the edges of development sites (and by avoiding a network of cul-de-sacs accessed off a distributor route). This is typically achieved by a combination of:

- Legible links through the site; and
- Perimeter block layouts that generate roads around the perimeter of the site and building frontages that face the boundaries.

## Overall Approach

Overall, proposals should aim to ensure that the Borough of Maidstone is delivering a connected network of streets that prioritises journeys by active and sustainable transport modes, whilst allowing the use of streets for essential private vehicle movements. Maidstone's streets should be attractive and safe for all users with a clear and legible movement.

As the National Design Code (paragraph 75) notes, patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. Paragraph 76 of the guide indicates that successful development depends upon a movement network that makes connections to destinations, places and communities, both within the site and beyond its boundaries. Furthermore, paragraph 77 suggests a well-designed movement network defines a clear pattern of streets that:

Is safe and accessible for all;

- Functions efficiently to get everyone around, takes account of the diverse needs of all its potential users and provides a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes;
- Limits the impacts of car use by prioritising and encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, mitigating impacts and identifying opportunities to improve air quality;
- Promotes activity and social interaction, contributing to health, well-being, accessibility and inclusion; and
- Incorporates green infrastructure, including street trees to soften the impact of car parking, help improve air quality and contribute to biodiversity.

## **Managing Vehicle Activity**

Policy MO1 reflects the National Design Guide recommendations. Even until the recent past, the focus has been on the movement function of residential streets. The result has often been places that are dominated by motor vehicles to the extent that they fail to make a positive contribution to the quality of life.

Ideally, designers should aim to create streets that control vehicle speeds naturally rather than having to rely on unsympathetic retrospective traffic-calming measures, e.g. speed bumps as a traffic calming measure for new roads should be avoided. Typical acceptable traffic calming measures may include:

- The use of shared surfaces that are designed to ensure pedestrian safety;
- Varying the alignment of the vehicular route along a length of a road;
- Use of tight junction radii, whilst incorporating good visibility;
- Narrowing the carriageway and the use of planting bays/build-outs;
- The provision of on-street parking that is integrated with landscaping;
- Raised areas at junctions and nodal points; and
- Changes of surface colour and materials.

The Council supports proposals in accordance with the recommendations in Manual for Streets.

## **Street materiality and markings**

In the rural villages, the materials palette for streets should be simple, and help avoid suburbanisation of the locality. Large areas of blacktop, for instance in parking areas or footways, will not be appropriate. Limited use of grey asphalt, coloured chips in HRA<sup>31</sup>, imprinted materials, stone setts, or resin bound gravel may be suitable in some areas depending on the hierarchy and role of the street. Herringbone patterns are not typical of the Maidstone area and should not be used. Surfaces should be accessible to those of limited mobility and assist those with disabilities to sense when moving from a safe space to one where they might encounter bicycles or vehicular traffic. Where rural pavements are provided, they should generally be in a material that matches the highway surface.

However, other footpaths, such as those through green spaces, should be in a softer material such as self-bind hoggin or resin bound gravel. Kerbs should be avoided in most situations, but if needed the demarcation should be minimal. Soft roadside verges can often be designed to accommodate services. Many smaller streets and lanes in the villages on country roads do not have many road markings, using instead their scale, or surfacing changes to indicate priorities. Painted lines on road surfaces should only be used where absolutely necessary for highway safety requirements.

Within villages and the countryside, boundaries that front onto streets should be of an appropriate character and again avoid typical suburban features such as close boarded fencing.

30. HRA is a dense, gap graded asphalt.

#### 4.5.2. Designed for All

##### **D&S DPD MO2: Design for All**

The public realm should be designed so that it:

- a) Reflects the wide mix of people using and benefitting from open spaces;
- b) Is convenient, safe and easy to use for all people without having to experience undue effort, barriers to access or separation;
- c) Enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities irrespective of a person's mobility, age, gender or ethnicity;
- d) Meets the needs of wheelchair users, mobility impaired people and people with pushchairs;
- e) Encourages social interaction and does not purposely design-out the activities of young people or other groups; and
- f) Provides sensory richness.

In particular, applicants should:

- a) Ensure that street furniture, signage, lighting and visual and textural contrast in the paving materials are carefully designed and reflect the needs of all potential users; and
- b) Provide sufficient levels of accessibility for all potential users in terms of accessible parking, pavement space and access to public transport.

## Supporting policy guidance

### **Materiality of Public Realm**

Use of consistent natural materials helps to create a coherent environment and sense of place that can stand the test of time. Examples of combined functions for street furniture includes attaching signs to lamp posts, mounting streets signs and/or lighting on buildings.

Where necessary for functional reasons, tarmac should normally be coordinated with other hard surface materials as well as soft landscaping as otherwise the uniform appearance and sharp finish can undermine the character of an area.

### **Inclusion and Public Realm**

In well-designed places, streets are public spaces that are open to all. They encourage people to walk and cycle rather than to depend upon cars, particularly for short, local journeys. They are accessible to all and designed to meet the needs of their most vulnerable users. They are places where the design of shared space schemes, that remove or reduce the distinction between the pavement and carriageway, takes into consideration the needs of people with disabilities particularly visual impairment.

### 4.5.3. Active Travel

'Active travel' refers to non-motorised and sustainable forms of transport, primarily walking and cycling. Prioritising active travel is about making walking and cycling easy, comfortable and attractive for all users, so they are seen as genuine choices for travel on local journeys.

Walking and cycling are the least carbon-intensive ways to travel.

Walking is the most sustainable form of transport. Furthermore, all journeys begin and end on foot. By prioritising design for pedestrians first, the number of short journeys taken by car can be reduced and public transport made more accessible. The need for more walkable communities is also an issue of social equity as it is the poorest and most vulnerable in society, including children, the elderly and the disabled for whom car travel is less of an option. It is also these groups who are disproportionately affected by the threat of accident, community severance and the loss of social cohesion.

Designing for cyclists must be given a high priority. Trips by bicycle have the potential to replace motor vehicles as an alternative means of transport for short to medium range trips (and in some cases longer range trips). This is especially true given the rise of e-bikes. Cycling also promotes a healthy lifestyle.

#### **D&S DPD MO3: Plan for cyclists**

To help cycling to become an attractive alternative to the car, bicycles must be conveniently and securely stored.

In houses, cycle parking should normally be provided within the rear garden, car port, garage or outbuilding.

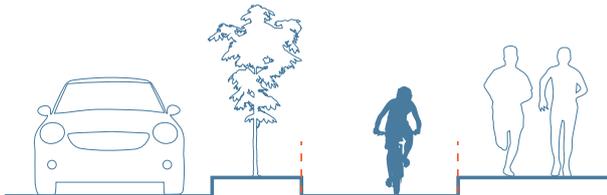
For apartments, cycle storage should normally be provided within the main buildings, preferably close to main entrances as they typically offer more convenience and security than external stores. Charging points for electric bicycles should be provided.

Dedicated visitor cycle parking should also be provided for apartments close to main entrances and well overlooked by habitable rooms but also carefully integrated to enable an active frontage.

In development of other uses, for instance commercial outdoor spaces, cycle parking should be provided in an accessible area that is overlooked and accessible.

**Primary Street**

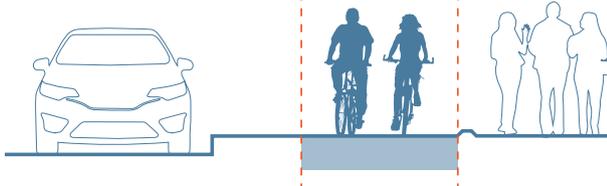
Segregation through landscape



Segregation through level difference

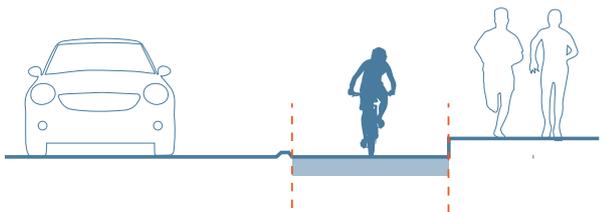


Separation through level difference and raised strip



**Secondary Street**

Separation through raised strip



**Neighbourhood Street**

Separation through level difference



Separation through raised strip



Separation through material/texture

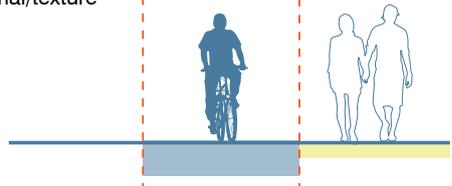


Figure 35: Spaces for cyclists within primary streets (left), secondary and neighbourhood streets (right).

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall approach

The quality of the street environment should be a paramount consideration in designing parking spaces into the street. Cycle parking should be attractively integrated so that it does not dominate the streetscape, is softened by landscaping and accords with the other layout principles in this D&S DPD. A balanced approach should be taken to achieve convenient parking close to plots whilst minimising visual impact on the street.

Providing enough convenient and secure cycle parking at people's homes and other locations for both residents and visitors is critical to increasing the use of cycles. In residential developments, designers should aim to make access to cycle storage at least as convenient as access to car parking.

Cycle parking standards and guidance which is of general applicability as shown in Table 1, 2 and 3.

<b>Residential Use</b>	
<b>Type of Development</b>	<b>Number of Spaces</b>
Residential dwellings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 space per bedroom up to 3 bedroom dwellings</li> <li>• then 3 spaces for 4 bedroom dwellings, 4 spaces for 5 bedroom dwellings etc</li> <li>• some level of visitor cycle parking, in particular for large housing developments</li> </ul>
Guest houses and hotels	1 space for every 2 members of staff and 2 spaces for every 10 bedrooms
Nursing homes	1 visitor space for every 10 residents and 1 space for every 2 members of staff
Retirement homes/sheltered houses	• 1 space for every 6 residents and 1 space for every 2 members of the staff
Student residential accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 space per 2 bed spaces within Historic Core Area</li> <li>• 2 spaces per 3 bed spaces for the rest of the city</li> <li>• 1 visitor space per 5 bed spaces</li> </ul>
Residential schools, collage or training centre	(as above)
Hospitals	On merit

Figure 36: Parking Standards guidelines

<b>Retail, Culture, Leisure and Sports Uses</b>	
<b>Type of Development</b>	<b>Number of Spaces</b>
Food Retail	1 space per 25m <sup>2</sup> GFA up to 1500m <sup>2</sup> thereafter 1 per 75m <sup>2</sup>
Non-food retail	1 space per 25m <sup>2</sup> GFA up to 1500m <sup>2</sup> thereafter 1 per 75m <sup>2</sup>
Financial and professional services	1 space for 30m <sup>2</sup> GFA to include some visitor parking
Food and Drinks	1 space for every 10m <sup>2</sup> of dining area
Museums, Exhibition venues	1 space for every 2 members of staff Visitors: on merit
Sports and recreational facilities and swimming baths	1 space for every 25m <sup>2</sup> net floor area or 1 space for every 10m <sup>2</sup> of pool area and 1 for every 15 seats provided for spectators
Places of assembly, including cinema, theatre, stadia, auditoria and concert halls	1 space for every 3 seats
Place of workshop, public halls and community centres	1 space per 15m <sup>2</sup> of public floor area

<b>Offices Uses</b>	
<b>Type of Development</b>	<b>Number of Spaces</b>
Offices	1 space for every 30m <sup>2</sup> GFA, to include some visitor parking
General industry	1 space for every 40m <sup>2</sup> GFA, to include some visitor parking
Storage and other B use classes	On merit

Figure 37: Parking Standards guidelines

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## 4.6 Sustainable Buildings

### 4.6.1. Sustainable Design and Construction

All development in its design, construction, operation and use will be expected to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions, increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and improve sustainability. Applicants will need to consider:

- Measures that achieve zero carbon development;
- Energy use;
- Preventing overheating;
- Water resources and water efficiency;
- Soil protection; and
- Minimising waste.

To help ensure development design and construction contributes to the reduction of carbon emissions and delivers a sustainable development, the BREEAM sustainability assessment method will be utilised and applied.

## D&S DPD SB1: Sustainable Design and Construction

### Overarching Requirements

a) All developments are required to submit a Sustainability Statement to demonstrate how through its design, construction, operation and use it will contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions, increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and improve sustainability;

b) Developments should prioritise retention and retrofit of existing buildings or structures to capture the embodied energy associated with the building's original construction unless it can be demonstrated to be unviable to do so. Development, as defined below, will be required to meet the relevant minimum defined standards until they are superseded by higher national standards;

c) Unless it can be demonstrated that doing so is not technically feasible or unviable, development will be required to achieve the minimum standards below:

Development Type	Scale of Development	Minimum Standard
Residential new build	Up to 150 dwellings	HQM Star*
Residential new build	Greater than 150 dwellings	HQM 3.5 Star*
Residential refurbishment	Major	HQM 3 Star*
Non-residential new-build	All	BREEAM Excellent**
Non-residential refurbishment	Over 500m <sup>2</sup>	BREEAM Excellent refurbishment and fit out technical standards**
New Communities	Garden Communities	HQM 3.5 Star or BREEAM Excellent**

\* Developments must achieve a minimum score of 50 credits in the energy category and 12 in the water category. \*\*Developments must achieve an 'Outstanding' rating in energy and water categories and demonstrate reasonable endeavours to achieve an 'Outstanding' rating overall.

### Assessment frameworks

Planning applications should be accompanied by a pre-assessment, demonstrating how the BREEAM Technical Standards and/or Home Quality Mark (HQM) Star rating, or any future replacement standards, will be met. Evidence demonstrating the project has been registered with the Research Establishment (BRE) during the design stage shall be submitted with any application and conditions will be imposed to secure appropriate certification to demonstrate compliance with this policy.

## **Energy Use**

All new developments should follow the energy hierarchy to contribute to reducing carbon emissions: being lean (using less energy), being clean (supplying energy efficiently), being green (using renewable energy) and being seen (monitor, verify and report on energy performance). Demonstrate how opportunities for incorporating decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy schemes.

## **Water Resources and Water Efficiency**

a) All development must minimise building water use and reuse water including:

- Water efficient fittings and appliances;
- Rainwater harvesting;
- Greywater recycling; and
- Sustainable drainage systems

Recycled water should be used for the operation of buildings and the maintenance of gardens and landscaped areas.

## **Soil**

Best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction (from compaction, pollution and erosion) and to protect soil biodiversity and carbon storage. Undisturbed soils should be protected, and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.

Development will also be expected to take opportunities to improve soil health.

## **Existing Carbon Sinks**

Development will be expected to protect existing carbon sinks and take opportunities to provide nature-based solutions for carbon capture. Applicants are encouraged to meet this requirement in conjunction with achieving Policies ON4: Biodiversity Net Gain, ON5: Sustainable Drainage Systems and ON6: Green Infrastructure, amongst other benefits for sustainable development.

## **Minimise Waste**

All development will be required to support the circular economy by minimising construction, demolition and excavation waste disposed of in landfill and follow the waste hierarchy to maximise recycling and re-use of material.

For residential development, units should be served by proportionate facilities for outdoor food waste composting. These facilities should have due regard to environmental health considerations, including the impact of odours on neighbours' amenity.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Background on technical standards

BREEAM is an industry recognised sustainability assessment and rating methodology. Assessment and rating certification is delivered through accredited third-party assessors. BREEAM assessments consider a wide range of sustainability factors and are completed throughout the lifecycle of the development.

The HQM<sup>32</sup> is an independently assessed certification scheme for new homes. It awards certificates with a simple star rating for the standard of a home's design, construction and sustainability. The BRE developed and manage HQM as part of the BREEAM family of schemes to assess sustainability in the built environment.

The assessments include an analysis of energy use, health and wellbeing, innovation, land use, materials, management, pollution, transport, waste and water. Where applicable, consideration of how the appropriate design standard will be achieved must start at the inception stage of the design process in order to maximise the developments potential to achieve the highest scores.

Details should be set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, including evidence of registration of the project with BREEAM. Unless otherwise agreed, compliance with BREEAM and HQM standards shall be demonstrated via formal certification.

Equivalent standards for buildings by nationally recognised certification bodies may also be accepted, such as Passivhaus or AECB standards.

### Incorporating Circular Economy Principles

According to the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (UK Statistics on Waste July 2021) the development industry made up over half (62%) of the UK's total waste production in 2018 from construction, demolition and excavation.

In addition, a notable proportion of materials delivered to building sites are never used and go straight to waste. In order to help move away from a linear economy where products are made to be used and sent to waste, and towards a circular economy which looks to minimise waste production all developments will be expected to demonstrate how they

31. [HQM-Guide-document\\_BRE\\_115302\\_0120-v2.3.pdf \(homequalitymark.com\)](#)

will follow the waste hierarchy and avoid any avoidable waste production and disposal.

This can be achieved by:

- Prioritising the use of previously developed land and buildings;
- Reusing and recycling of appropriate materials that arise through demolition and refurbishment, including the reuse of non-contaminated excavation soil and hardcore within the site;
- Prioritising the use of locally sourced and/or sustainable materials and construction techniques; and
- Using resilient, low maintenance materials.

Applicants should also have regard to Policy CSW3 Waste Reduction in the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan<sup>33</sup> which requires all new development to minimise the production of construction, demolition and excavation waste and manage any waste in accordance with the objectives of the Waste Hierarchy.

### **Historic Assets**

Energy efficiency improvements to listed buildings can impact upon their heritage significance in a variety of ways. There are few one size fits all solutions appropriate for traditional homes and such improvements require a balanced solution that preserves the significance of the heritage asset whilst also saving energy. When considering energy efficiency improvements to historic buildings it is important to take a whole-building approach that can help in improving the energy efficiency whilst sustaining the significance of the heritage asset.

This can be achieved by:

- Prioritising the use of previously developed land and buildings;
- Reusing and recycling of appropriate materials that arise through demolition and refurbishment, including the reuse of non-contaminated excavation soil and hardcore within the site;
- •Prioritising the use of locally sourced and/ or sustainable materials and construction techniques; and
- Using resilient, low maintenance materials.

32. [Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 \(adopted 2020\)](#)

#### **4.6.2. Minimising Greenhouse Emissions**

The impacts of climate change are seen in both the built and natural environment. The planning system is a tool that provides an opportunity to minimise vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Maidstone takes an integrated and holistic approach to address the causes of climate change and to increase resilience to the effects of climate change.

Maidstone have committed to becoming as close to carbon neutral as possible by 2030. Carbon Neutrality (or 'net-zero') can be achieved through reducing existing emissions and actively removing greenhouse gases. Maidstone have committed to achieving net-zero for our own operations by 2030 and our long-term aspiration is to become carbon negative or a footprint less than neutral, so that we have a net effect of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

At a Maidstone Borough wide-scale, in accordance with national government targets, and based on Tyndall Centre data, Maidstone have set out carbon reduction milestones to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by -13.4% each year across the Borough to reach near to net-zero by 2041. The achievement of this target is contingent on many aspects and not the sole responsibility of the Council due to economic factors, private sector, transport sector, and wide-scale public behaviour change. We know that effective collaboration is essential for delivering the scale of change needed.

Maidstone's overall strategy for net zero is set out in its Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.

## **D&S DPD SB2: Minimising Greenhouse Gas emissions in New Development**

a) Major development<sup>34</sup> should be net zero carbon. This means reducing greenhouse gas emissions in operation and minimising both annual and peak energy demand in accordance with the following energy hierarchy: 1) be lean: use less energy and manage demand during operation 2) be clean: exploit local energy resources (such as secondary heat) and supply energy efficiently and cleanly 3) be green: maximise opportunities for renewable energy by producing, storing and using renewable energy on-site 4) be seen: monitor, verify and report on energy performance;

b) Major development proposals should include a detailed energy strategy to demonstrate how the net zero carbon target will be met within the framework of the energy hierarchy;

c) In exceptional circumstances where the net zero carbon target cannot be fully achieved on-site, clear reasoning should be supplied with proposals. These exceptional circumstances may exist for building retrofit proposals.

Only in these exceptional circumstances any shortfall should be provided in the form of either: 1) through a cash in lieu contribution to the Council's carbon offset fund (if one is in place at the time of application submission), or 2) off-site provided that an alternative proposal is identified and delivery is certain carbon reductions, in agreement with the Borough;

d) Major development proposals should calculate and minimise carbon emissions from any other part of the development, including plant or equipment, that are not covered by Building Regulations, i.e. unregulated emissions;

e) Development proposals of 100 residential units or more (or 1000 m<sup>2</sup> floorspace for non-residential development) should calculate whole life-cycle carbon emissions through a nationally recognised Whole Life-Cycle Carbon Assessment and demonstrate actions taken to reduce life-cycle carbon emissions.

33. Definition based on Part 1 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Generally, major developments are: (i) Development of dwellings where 10 or more dwellings are to be provided, or the site area is 0.5 hectares or more; (ii) Development of other uses, where the floor space is 1,000 square metres or more, or the site area is 1 hectare or more.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Legislative background

The UK's climate change commitments have been reflected within planning legislation to enable plan-making and decision-making which will support reaching these commitments. This national ambition is brought into the context of local planning through The Planning Act (2008) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).

Section 182 of the Planning Act 2008 puts a legal duty on local authorities to include policies on climate change mitigation and adaptation in Development Plan Documents, thereby amending the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). Government will introduce higher energy efficiency standards nationally for domestic buildings through the Future Homes Standard, which targets regulated emissions. Local authorities will continue to have the power to demand higher energy efficiency standards of new development than central Government.

The Planning and Energy Act (2008) sets out powers for local authorities to have development plan policies which impose reasonable requirements for a proportion of energy used by developments in their area to be energy from renewable sources and/or to be low carbon energy from sources in the locality of the development.

As such, this allows local planning authorities to set energy efficiency standards in their development plan policies that exceed the energy efficiency requirements of the Part L Building Regulations. Section 43 of the Deregulation Act 2015 would have withdrawn this power to set energy efficiency standards from local authorities, however this has not yet been enacted and Government has said that it does not intend to enact it.

In 2020, the Government consulted on proposed updates to the Building Regulations and the introduction of the Future Homes Standard<sup>35</sup>. Through this, Government set out its intention to “introduce in 2020 a meaningful but achievable uplift to energy efficiency standards as a steppingstone to the [2025] Future Homes Standard.”

34.UKGBC (2019) The Policy Handbook, <https://www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Policy-Playbook-v.1.5-March-2020.pdf>

In 2021, the Government published the outcome of the Future Homes consultation<sup>36</sup>, outlining what changes will be made and at what pace. The new Standard will ensure that all new homes built from 2025 will produce 75-80% less carbon dioxide emissions than homes delivered to current Building Regulations standards, with low carbon heating and very high fabric standards. From 2025, all new homes will be 'zero-carbon ready', requiring no further energy efficiency retrofit work to enable the homes to become zero-carbon as the electricity grid decarbonises.

For the interim period to 2025, updated Building Regulations will require new homes built from June 2022 to produce 31% less carbon emissions compared to current standards. Transitional arrangements are in place which means that if a building notice, initial notice, or full plans for building work are submitted to a local authority before 15 June 2022, then, provided the building work commences by 15 June 2023, work on that individual building is permitted to continue under the previous standards.

In 2023, the Government will hold further consultation about the technical aspects of the Future Homes Standard, before updating the Regulations again to come into force in 2025. It is important to note that the new emissions reduction requirements apply only to the emissions arising from regulated energy, i.e., lighting, ventilation and heating space and water. Unregulated energy in buildings is energy consumption that is not 'controlled' by Building Regulations - in homes the primary source of unregulated energy is electrical appliances.

The Future Homes Standard reduction targets do not apply to emissions resulting from unregulated energy, meaning that a proportion of domestic operational emissions are still unaccounted for. Government recognises this limitation in its response to the consultation, stating that it will "carry out wider work to consider the future of energy efficient and low carbon buildings, looking beyond the scope of Building Regulations... examin[ing] some of the broader and more fundamental questions around how we can ensure that all new buildings are designed and constructed to be fit for a zero-carbon future"<sup>37</sup>. No date is given by which this work can be expected, although the Government's intention seems to be to include not just unregulated energy but also construction emissions in its future analysis.

35. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2021) The Future Homes Standard: 2019 Consultation on changes to Part L (conservation of fuel and power) and Part F (ventilation) of the Building Regulations for new dwellings, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/956094/Government\\_response\\_to\\_Future\\_Homes\\_Standard\\_consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956094/Government_response_to_Future_Homes_Standard_consultation.pdf), (p.10)

36. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2021) The Future Buildings Standards Consultation on Consultation on changes to Part L (conservation of fuel and power) and Part F (ventilation) of the Building Regulations for non-domestic buildings and dwellings; and overheating in new residential buildings,

In response to the consultation proposal to remove the power of local authorities to set higher energy efficiency standards than those in the Building Regulations, the Government has chosen to continue allowing local authorities to have this power over development in their local area. This is especially important for ambitious local authorities who are striving to reach net zero ahead of national targets.

Government intends to introduce higher energy efficiency standards nationally for non-domestic buildings through the Future Buildings Standard. In December 2021, the Government published its response to the Future Buildings Standard consultation on proposed changes to Part L (conservation of fuel and power) and Part F (ventilation) of the Building Regulations<sup>38</sup>. The Future Homes Standard addresses residential buildings, the Future Buildings Standard addresses non-residential buildings (in addition to overheating in new residential dwellings).

With regards to non-domestic Part L, an interim uplift in energy efficiency will enter into effect in June 2022, requiring a 27% reduction in emissions compared to current standards. This will rely on increased efficiency as well as fabric improvements.

37. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2021) The Future Buildings Standard: 2021 Consultation on changes to Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations for non-domestic buildings and dwellings; and overheating in new residential buildings, The Future Buildings Standard: summary of responses, and Government response ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)),

### 4.6.3. Passive Design

The construction industry makes a significant contribution to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions utilising substantial volumes of non-renewable resources and generating pollution and waste. The need for sustainable approaches to building design and operation is therefore fundamental if the challenges associated with climate change, resource depletion and pollution are to be addressed, and will be necessary to achieve the Government's Future Homes and Buildings Standard.

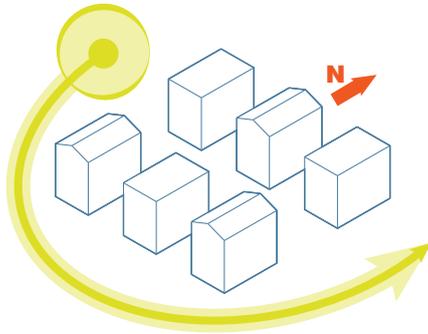
#### D&S DPD SB3: Passive Design of Buildings

The Council welcomes innovative and inventive designs that respond to the sustainability agenda by minimising the use of resources and energy both through building construction and after completion.

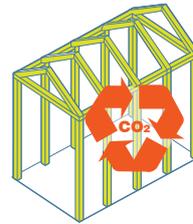
Applicants must demonstrate how this has informed their design and should consider in particular:

- a) Orientation and design of buildings and roofs to maximise daylight/sunlight penetration and solar gain, whilst also avoiding overheating;
- b) Maximise passive cooling through natural ventilation and other passive means. Reliance on air conditioning systems should be avoided. Green and blue infrastructure should be incorporated in line with Policy ON3: Green Infrastructure to provide natural cooling and shading;
- c) The use of green roofs or walls to reduce storm water run-off, increase sound-proofing and biodiversity;
- d) The use of materials with low embodied energy (for example, sustainably sourced timber and recycled materials);
- e) The use of sustainable materials that are locally sourced wherever possible, including recycled aggregates and other recycled material;
- f) Incorporating high levels of insulation (in combination with air tightness and temperature control systems) including the use of materials with a high thermal mass, such as stone or brick, which store heat and release it slowly;
- g) Incorporating renewable and low carbon energy sources including photovoltaics, solar thermal water heating, ground and air source heat pumps, and/or other emerging technologies;
- h) The use of low flow technology in water fittings, rainwater harvesting systems and grey water recycling systems to reduce water consumption to 110 litres/person/day (maximum); and
- i) Laying out development to support identified opportunities for decentralised renewable or low carbon energy systems.

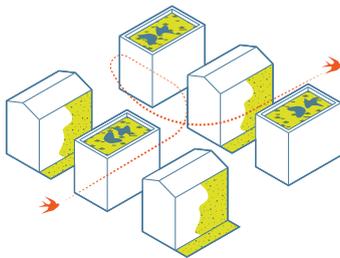
Orientation



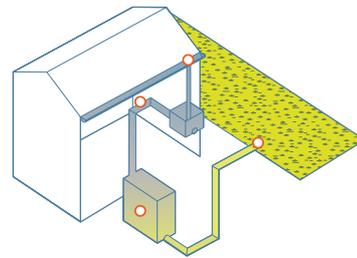
Low embodied energy materials



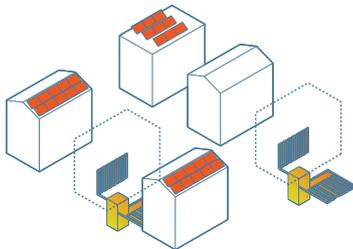
Green roofs and walls



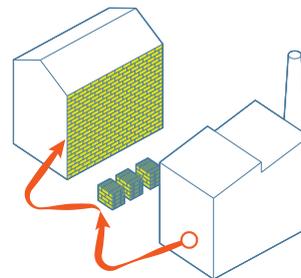
Rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling



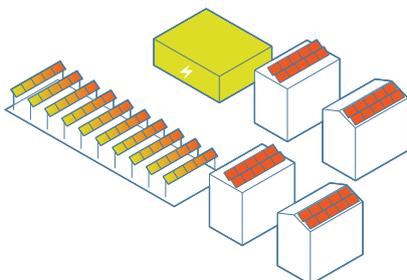
Incorporated renewable energy systems



Use of locally sourced materials



Layout opportunities for decentralised renewables



High level insulation and high thermal mass materials

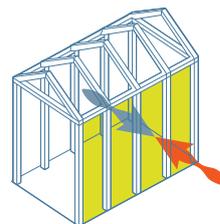


Figure 38: Passive Design strategies for buildings

## Supporting policy guidance

### Passive design principles

Developed by The Passive House Institute, passive building design principles focus on substantially reducing space heating and cooling requirements and establishing good indoor comfort levels and air quality, by adopting a fabric first approach and systems level ventilation<sup>39</sup>.

Passive building design is achieved solely by post-heating or post-cooling of fresh air flow, without the need for additional recirculation of air. This therefore significantly increases building carbon and energy efficiency, and resilience to the effects of climate change.

Policy SB3 is informed by these passive design principles. It also promotes applying these principles to building design to achieve wider benefits for sustainability, including increasing green and blue infrastructure and reducing embodied carbon associated with construction.

To allow flexibility for developers, the precise choice of technology has not been specified in the Policy. However, given the location of Maidstone in the south-east of England and potential solar gains, it is highlighted that there may be significant opportunities for roof-based solar PV energy generation. Solar PV may in turn power domestic heat pumps, hot water systems and/or a thermal store.

38. BRE Group (2022) The Passivhaus Standard. Available online at: <https://bregroup.com/a-z/the-passivhaus-standard/> [Accessed on 21/03/23].

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## 4.7 Design Quality

Maidstone requires the design of new development to be high quality and to respect the character of towns and villages as well as the character of individual buildings. New development, must contribute positively to the character of the area to the private and public realm (including streets and open spaces), protect or enhances valued townscapes, and create accessible and inclusive environments whilst maximising opportunities to enhance the sustainability of our communities.

The various components of new buildings including their form, proportions, roofscape and overall appearance should also display underlying architectural integrity and contribute to a sense of place by being borne from their location. Being responsive to the character of the existing built form should not result in pastiche replicas, instead the emphasis should be placed on contemporary interpretation of traditional building forms and materials to suit today's needs.

### 4.7.1. Design Led Approach

An informed design led approach should be taken to ensure that all proposed development sits comfortably in its context. A proposal's layout, scale, height, density, land uses, materials, architectural detailing and landscape should be considered and applied on a case-by case basis. Well-designed places and buildings are visually attractive and aim to delight their occupants and passers-by. They contribute to visual appeal and local distinctiveness. They cater for a diverse range of residents and other users. All design approaches and architectural styles are visually attractive when designed well.

The Design and Access Statement provides a framework for applicants to explain how a proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting and demonstrate that it can be accessed by prospective users. It should demonstrate how the design has responded to, and been shaped by, the development's context, and should explain the applicant's response to relevant policies. The level of detail contained within the document should be proportionate to the complexity of the application, but a Design and Access Statement is required for any major development and any application that consists of the provision of one or more dwellinghouses and/or a building with a floorspace of 100sqm or more (National Policy Requirement).

Where proposals are submitted in outline form for major development, or minor development in sensitive locations, applications must be accompanied by for example, an overarching masterplan framework, a series of design, sustainability and environmental codes that (i) demonstrate that the principle of development is acceptable and (ii) ensure that quality and sustainability are maintained throughout the planning process. Where planning permission is granted with weight being placed upon the quality and sustainability of the development, these are the principles upon which the Council and local communities have accepted a scheme and it will not be acceptable for either to be eroded through one or more amendments to a permission.

The following policy sets out an overarching approach to design.

#### **D&S DPD DQ1: Design Led Approach**

Development should provide high quality building, urban and landscape design that respects and responds to the local characteristics, features, geology, and qualities that form the local distinctiveness of the Borough's rural and urban places and environments as set out in Part 3, Maidstone's Places. Proposals should provide evidence that the design has referenced key local characteristics - either as per Part 3 or based on the applicant's own original analysis.

Applicants should establish an architectural approach and identity in design that is borne from the place. The layout, façade and elevational treatment, roofscape fenestration and materials used in existing buildings within the locality should be a starting point for the consideration of architectural design of new buildings. Overall the design should demonstrate a successful co-ordination of proportions, materials, colour and detail. Buildings should therefore be holistically designed with each part in harmony with its whole while appropriately responding to both its context, sustainability and modern living and working requirements. This includes, where appropriate:

- a) Layout, urban grain, scale, height, density, land uses, materials and landscape, including a layout, urban grain, scale, height, density, land uses, materials and landscape, including evidence that a masterplan framework and design parameters underpin detailed design, or which set the framework for details pursuant to outline applications for major development;
- b) building typologies that reflect local character ;
- c) Elevational treatment and overall façade design;
- d) Adopting typical building forms, composition, articulation, proportions, features, materials, details, patterns and colours of an area;

Figure 39: Design-led Approach

- e) Roofscape and form that creates a harmonious composition and ensures that features such as of downpipes and guttering enhance the visual appearance of a building in terms of their style and materials;
- f) The appropriate incorporation of dormer windows, roof detailing and chimneys;
- g) An appropriate palette of good quality materials that are preferably locally sourced; and
- h) Preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings (if applicable).

Development should demonstrate this design led approach by submitting a comprehensive Design and Access Statement with a planning application which demonstrates how the proposed development meets requirements of this document, the Local Plan and other relevant material considerations. A heritage statement should accompany applications for proposed works to listed building or those affecting its setting, and proposed demolition of a building in a Conservation Area. In relation to outline applications for major development, the Council may expect to agree a masterplan framework and design code to guide subsequent reserved matters applications.

As part of their community engagement, applications, for major development should demonstrate that the design principles for the scheme have been tested with local communities at an early stage and that there is evidence of feedback to communities on their inputs.

For proposals of significance the Applicant and Council should agree the best approach to reviewing design proposals as they emerge, this could take the form of a Design Review Panel at one or more appropriate stages of the design evolution. These principles also apply to the infilling of existing areas and larger scale extensions to buildings.

## Supporting policy guidance

Well-designed places should appeal to all senses. The way a place looks, feels, sounds, and even smells, affects its enduring distinctiveness, attractiveness and beauty. It is defined by the height and massing of buildings, variation in roof forms and material selection. Materials, construction details and planting are selected with care for their context. They should be attractive but also practical, durable and affordable.

In well-designed buildings, the materials and details suit the design concept and they are consistently followed through the construction process to completion. Both the Borough as a whole and local character areas provide a number of important design cues, as set out in section 2 of the DPD. For example, the predominant roof forms in the Borough are simple double-pitched roofs; these can be organised with gable or hipped ends and/or with gable-fronts. New development should respect these characteristics, while providing variety of roof forms to help give schemes diversity, particularly in larger developments. For instance, adopting a consistent roof-form can help to distinguish one street from another.

Proposals should normally avoid:

- Shallow-pitched roof profiles (below 40 degrees) and visible crown-topped roofs on traditionally designed buildings as these are atypical to the character of the area and can generate a weak building profile; and
- Inconsistent roof pitches on the same or adjacent buildings as this can generate clumsy juxtapositions.

The roof form should also be influenced by sustainability/orientation and the scope for solar PV panels.

The scale of new buildings should relate to their context (rural or urban), their location within the hierarchy of routes and whether they act as a focal point, landmark or corner building and the topography of a site. However, focal buildings can often be created by subtle variations and should not be used to seek to justify a scale or typology that is out of character. Subdividing a street frontage into a series of vertically proportioned bays helps avoid larger buildings, and extended frontages, appearing monolithic and provides them with a more human scale.

All dwellings should normally have access to usable private outdoor amenity space that is appropriate to the location and the type and size of accommodation, together with frontage space that creates an appropriate streetscape setting and opportunities for biodiversity

enhancement. Main entrances to houses, ground floor flats, communal entrances for flats and non-residential uses should directly face onto the street and be clearly visible from the public realm; they should also be welcoming and easily identifiable to help improve legibility.

Dormer windows should be visually subordinate to the roof slope, enabling a large proportion of the main roof to remain visible. Excessively wide dormers are likely to look unsatisfactory as they will often be out of proportion with the existing roof. Dormer windows should normally be positioned below the ridgeline, and above the eaves line.

Balconies can provide useful outside space or sense of the outside and can help articulate a façade providing they are carefully organised and integrated and appropriately scaled. Deep balconies that project too far from the main façade can appear to be poorly integrated. They are often more successfully integrated if they are either recessed or partially recessed within the main façade, where they can provide additional sense of structural depth. The design of the balustrading should both fulfil safety requirements and be designed to integrate well with the rest of the façade. Opaque or solid balustrades should be considered if there are privacy issues where residents may otherwise be tempted to introduce secondary, temporary screening.

Boundary treatments should be reflective of the area and local traditions in terms of height, structure and materials; however, this should be balanced with the need for natural surveillance. For larger developments boundary treatments should be coordinated to contribute to the character of the street but allow for some variety and individuality.

Site layout and detailed design of all dwellings should benefit from daylight and sunlight levels that conform to BRE standards. Single aspect north-facing apartments should normally be avoided as they receive insufficient sunlight. South facing apartments will need to be carefully designed to avoid overheating problems.

Extensions should respond to the design of the original dwelling and applicants will be expected to demonstrate how local character has informed the design proposal. Extensions should also normally be designed to be well-integrated with the existing scale, form and massing allowing the original building to remain the dominant element of the property whether it has one or several additions. . In particular extensions to buildings should respect their relationship with neighbouring properties and their contribution to the wider street scene.

The primary objective of all conversions of traditional buildings must be to retain the character and appearance of the original building, and its defining architectural characteristics

#### 4.7.2. Masterplanning

Masterplanning is integral to creating well-planned and designed places. It is a tool for developing a vision for a place into development principles and ultimately detailed design. It is also a way of engaging local communities and stakeholders throughout the evolution of a scheme.

It is a process that spans from concept vision, to client brief, through to design and ultimately delivery and longer-term stewardship.

For larger development proposals that, for example extend beyond a single street it is highly likely a masterplan encompassing the full site area is required.. This masterplan will establish a new street network/hierarchy, an overall open space strategy, building uses, scale and types, along with various other parameters such a blue and green networks. It should also address how a scheme connects with its surrounding neighbourhoods.

For detailed applications, the masterplan will demonstrate the integrity and robustness of a scheme and its responses to, for example, stakeholder engagement and testing. For outline applications, a masterplan framework should provide comfort that both the principle of development and its scale are acceptable. It should also, together with design codes, establish parameters that will guide future detailed submissions and ensure that the overall vision is adhered to and that quality is maintained throughout the process.

The level of detail will be proportionate to the scale of development and for larger scale proposals, this is likely to involve:

- Visioning
- Concept masterplan
- Framework masterplan
- Detailed masterplan
- Detailed design
- Delivery and stewardship.

## D&S DPD DQ2: Masterplanning

Larger proposals (typically over 100 dwellings) development proposals should be supported by a site-wide masterplan demonstrating the application of this D&S DPD to the site. The masterplan should be able to demonstrate that it has been informed by a contextual assessment of the wider area and responses to stakeholder engagement and, subject to the scale of development, include for example, one or more of the following stages:

### 1. At the visioning stage:

- a) An overall vision that accords with the wider principles of this DPD, development targets and spatial principles
- b) An assessment of the site's context and connections with the surrounding area and how they have informed (i) site selection and (ii) will influence the overall spatial strategy

### 2 .At the concept masterplan stage, the key structuring principles such as:

- c) An overall access strategy for the site,
- d) Overall development targets and the broad spatial distribution of land uses, supported by viability evidence
- e) An assessment of necessary infrastructure requirements
- f) Key land use or other nodes / focal points
- g) An overall landscape framework and green and blue infrastructure networks
- h) Key interfaces with the sites boundaries and beyond

### 3. A Framework Masterplan that covers:

- i) Details of access and the street and movement hierarchy
- j) How individual neighbourhoods or character areas are to be defined
- k) The area types that will apply to different parts of the site (indicating density, massing, height, street building line etc.)
- l) Development plots by land use and capacities, including targets in respect of housing mix and tenure
- m) The site-wide landscape strategy, and quantifiable open space requirements by area, taking account of existing natural and heritage features of the site and wider area, biodiversity and new structural elements.
- n) Phasing and delivery strategy, again with a further level of viability analysis
- o) An infrastructure delivery strategy, including principles for matters such as utilities locations
- p) A stewardship and management plan.
- q) Sustainable design principles

**4. At the detailed design stage**, subject to the scale of the development and the type of application further detail may include:

- t) A breakdown of landscape and green infrastructure by typology and function
- u) Development layout and structure by plot, block or character area, as guided by the area's building types.
- v) Indicative elevational details including materials, details and finishes
- w) Detailed landscape design details by typology of space and function
- x) Detailed, servicing and utilities strategy
- y) Detailed sustainability measures for both built and open space elements.
- z) For outline applications, the level of detail required in 'masterplan framework' will provide the basis for the key parameters that define the requirements for future detailed submissions in a manner that ensures design and sustainability principles are maintained throughout the detailed design and delivery process.

### Supporting policy guidance

This approach follows the National Model Design Code recommendation that for larger sites land owners and developers should agree a masterplan for each of the development sites establishing the key parameters and area types. The actual level of detail will vary depending on the complexity and sensitivity of the site. It will also depend on where the site is in the planning process – Local Plan preparation, pre-application, community consultation, outline or detailed application stages. Landscape and setting is likely a major driver in a design process at masterplanning scale in Maidstone.

### 4.7.3. Design Coding

Form based design codes are a powerful tool to define the character of places and ensure a consistent approach to delivering development. Design coding can refer to a variety of scales and levels of detail, however it is expected that for sites of particular significance or sensitivity, the Council will require the development a detailed design code which sets out the parameters of the built form of a proposal or phase.

#### D&S DPD DQ3: Form Based Design Codes

As part of the masterplanning process set out within Policy DQ3, major developments may be deemed to require a form based design code / coding plan at Outline Planning application stage, which will, for example:

- a. Analyse and identify adjacent character areas and their unique/defining characteristics
- b. Set out the layout and the location of new character areas and the contextual characteristics that will define them

Once the coding plan has been established, the design code will define the parameters relating to the following themes:

- a. Urban structure and block principles
- c. Legibility
- d. Block types
- e. Frontages and building line
- f. Scale and massing
- g. Height
- h. Floor area ratio
- i. Landscaping
- j. Lighting
- k. Materials

Subsequent proposals will be required to achieve the standards or range set out in the design code.

A form based design code will provide detailed guidance which reinforces the objectives and ensures the designed character of a place is delivered. It will define parameters on a development parcel level which gives certainty to the form and layout of the plot. As such the built form can be defined prior to the design of the building architecture, which would then follow within the parameters set.

The purpose of a form based design code is to:

- Set the parameters and the brief for building and landscape designers to develop detailed designs;
- Enable swift and informed assessment for reviews to judge the appropriateness of proposals;
- Articulate the desired character of a development or phase of development;
- Ensure the stated design ambitions are codified and defined; and
- Ensure the quality and consistency of detail throughout the delivery of a site.

A form based design code could be the basis for an outline planning application which would then speed the assessment of subsequent reserved matters applications on a plot by plot basis. Alternatively, the adoption of a form based design code could be made a condition for the grant of an outline planning permission which contains less detail, for example a framework masterplan.

#### 4.7.4. Maintaining Design Quality

It is important that design quality is maintained throughout the development process from the granting of planning permission to completion of a development and as necessary, to its long-term stewardship thereafter.

##### **D&S DPD DQ4: Maintaining Design Quality**

The development's design quality should be retained from vision and planning approval through to completion by:

- a) Ensuring maximum detail appropriate for the design stage is provided to avoid the need for subsequent design changes and to ensure scheme quality is not adversely affected by later decisions on construction materials, landscaping details or minor alterations to layout or form of the development;
- b) Ensuring that the wording of the planning permission, conditions and legal agreement provide clear direction on design quality;
- c) A design code may need to be agreed on major applications in advance of reserved matter applications (refer to Policy DQ3 Form Based Design Codes); and
- d) Production and approval of maintenance and management plans prior to the first occupancy of any development.
- e) Longer-term monitoring.

## Supporting policy guidance

### **Managing incremental changes**

What happens to a design after planning consent can be instrumental to the success of a project and subsequent quality of a place. Changes to designs after the initial planning permission has been granted are often granted via minor amendments or additional necessary detail and may not be subject to community or Committee scrutiny. However, even minor changes can have a substantial effect on design quality. The cumulative effect of amendments can be significant and should be reviewed holistically.

Maidstone therefore proposes these measures to ensure that a development which is supported by a community and granted permission based upon certain principles and design and sustainability expectations; maintains that quality through to delivery and longer-term management.

#### **4.7.5. Materials and Detailing**

The impression of a building's beauty is significantly influenced by its detailing. This relates to how the various elements of a building's composition fit together and how they are seen from close range and from afar.

##### **D&S DPD DQ5: Materials and Detailing**

Proposals involving Modern methods of construction will be supported where they:

Development should deliver buildings that appropriately respond to their context and modern living and working requirements, and are borne from the place in which they are located by:

- a) Respecting and responding to the surrounding local character (either as per Part 3 or based on own the applicant's own original analysis);
- b) Using a simple palette of materials that are complementary to the locality and are ideally locally sourced;
- c) Using unified facing materials on all sides of the building (as opposed to only the front elevation); and
- d) Use of materials of sufficient quality that withstand weathering, are durable, are appropriate for the use of the building and are tenure-blind.

## Supporting policy guidance

### Overall Approach

Buildings should not seek to mimic detailing on nearby buildings but should contain elements that reflect the character of the area – these being, for example, doors, windows, roofs and balconies. The rationale for these should be set out within the Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application. Examples of detailing to consider when formulating a design are: floor to ceiling heights, soffits, fascia, bargeboards, guttering, front doors, door frames, size and orientation of windows, depth of window reveal, sills and lintels, etc.

As referenced in Part 3, it is possible to isolate local variations in building materials that are distinctive to a rural area, village, town or to the wider Borough or region. The Council recognises that the use of these materials in new development will not only ensure that the new built form 'feels' part of the existing place, but will help to retain place-specific character, deepening ties with the land on which its built and enhancing sense of place.

This extends to the people who use the space too, where a heightened sense of belonging and care for the place will flourish from this. It is therefore important the new development considers the place it is in and reflects this in its design and materials. High quality materials should also contribute to the environmental performance of the building. The Council welcomes innovation to achieve the right balance between responding to the character of an area and, achieving the highest sustainability requirements set out in policies relating to Sustainable Buildings in this DPD

#### 4.7.6. Modern Methods of Construction

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) is a wide term that includes a range of off-site manufacturing and on-site techniques that provide alternatives to traditional housebuilding methods. The term embraces a variety of approaches and its definition has varied over the years, with numerous associations. MMC include the following types:

- Volumetric construction – three-dimensional units that are fully fitted out off-site;
- Pods – used in conjunction with other construction methods, for example bathroom or kitchen pods;
- Panelised systems – panels with timber or light steel framing, structural insulated panels (SIPs), or cross-laminated timber;
- Sub-assemblies and components – larger components incorporated into new homes, for example roof and floor cassettes, prefabricated chimneys, porches and dormers, and I-beams; and
- Site-based MMC – innovative methods of construction used on-site, for example include thin-joint blockwork and insulated formwork.

The Council recognises that MMC offers the potential to deliver a high-performance building solution that directly contributes to achieving high levels of sustainability, and therefore encourages innovative and experimental solutions across building scales.

The January 2020 report<sup>40</sup> from the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission recognised that “Modular building can be, and sometimes has been, misused to create bland, clumsy and placeless buildings. There is modular ugliness as well as modular beauty.” The report suggests that design codes and the use of digital technology could improve modular building processes by providing certainty and a more efficient system, as well as improving place-making outcomes.

39. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-with-beauty-report-of-the-building-better-building-beautiful-commission>

### **D&S DPD DQ6: Modern Methods of Construction**

Proposals involving Modern Methods of Construction will be supported where they:

- a) Can deliver buildings of similar or better quality to those constructed using traditional building methods;
- b) Meet other development plan policy requirements related to design, style and durability;
- c) Deliver the to the highest standards of sustainability and energy efficiency;
- d) Increase or accelerate the supply of all homes, including those that are affordable and socially rented;
- e) Are provided in conformity with a strict design code, which establishes parameters for style, daylighting/fenestration and space standards which is agreed in advance of detailed consent; and
- f) Include emphasis on adaptability to ensure that as household composition and needs change, homes and neighbourhoods can evolve.

### **Supporting policy guidance**

The acceptance and successful roll-out of MMC depends on the resulting homes being both desirable to potential residents, attractive to existing communities and their overall sustainability. Site specific design codes in conformity with other policy should be used to set out a suite of design options which are all acceptable in planning terms.

This is to enable the Council as planning authority to identify the external parameters relevant to a particular site or group of sites within which MMC units could be assembled in different combinations. This approach creates the opportunity to maintain quality across a diverse portfolio of development and contribute to a coherent clarity of place.

#### 4.7.7. Houses in Multiple Occupation

A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a house or flat in which three or more unrelated persons live, who form two or more households, and share an amenity such as a bathroom, toilet, or cooking facilities.

##### D&S DPD DQ7: Houses in Multiple Occupation

a) HMO developments should comply with the specified standards set out on the Council's dedicated HMO webpage<sup>41</sup> and should provide appropriate floorspace for sleeping and communal spaces as per below:

Use of Room	One person	Two persons
Sleeping	9m <sup>2</sup>	14m <sup>2</sup>
Kitchen	4.5m <sup>2</sup>	4.5m <sup>2</sup>

Figure 40: Minimum individual room sizes for one or two persons

Use of Room	1-5 people	6-10 people
Living area	11m <sup>2</sup>	16.5m <sup>2</sup>
Kitchen area	7m <sup>2</sup>	10m <sup>2</sup>
Kitchen / diner	11.5m <sup>2</sup>	19.5m <sup>2</sup>

Figure 41: Minimum individual room sizes for groups

b) The conversion or sub-division of existing residential buildings into HMOs will be acceptable, provided that they would:

- Provide adequate car parking space;
- Not prejudice the amenity of neighbours;
- Provide adequate amenity space;
- Provide adequate refuse storage and servicing; and
- Provide adequate cycle storage.

40. Maidstone Borough Council (2023) Houses of multiple occupation standards. Available at: <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/housing/tier-2-primary-areas/housing-for-business/tier-3-primary-areas/houses-in-multiple-occupation/hmo-standards>

## Supporting policy guidance

### Standards for HMOs

It is important to prescribe standards for the design of these units as it is common that, during a conversion to an HMO, the ease of use is lessened, or floor areas are reduced, resulting in a poor-quality space that does not function well for residents. The Council knows that the quality of internal and external living spaces has a significant impact on many health and wellbeing indicators, and that it is therefore important to specify standards for this type of housing. HMOs should be in areas that have access to sustainable modes of transport, shops and local services. Proposals should consider the appropriately concealed provision for refuse to ensure that access can be maintained whilst reducing the visual impact of provision.

The ill-considered conversion of buildings to HMOs can result in insufficient space/areas for refuse storage, particularly to the front of houses, and inadequate cycle parking spaces to accommodate the number of residents living at the property. This can have a knock-on unsightly and negative impact on the streetscene. Therefore, appropriate refuse and cycle storage solutions should be considered within all applications that propose a conversion to an HMO. Parking arrangements for HMOs on plot should not result in frontages that are dominated by surface parking or significant loss of rear garden space. Proposals should seek to minimise the visual impact on the streetscene through appropriate landscape design. The removal of built elements to accommodate significant increases in parking, such as traditional boundary walls, side walls and front gardens should be avoided, as this will tend to have a detrimental effect on a place's character. Parking arrangements, and the vehicle movements they will produce, should not cause significant impact on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists or existing flows of traffic.

#### **4.7.8. Creating mixed and resilient communities**

Development capable of responding to changing social, technological and economic conditions is more likely to be successful and ultimately more sustainable. Particularly on larger sites, new housing should reflect people's differing requirements and desire to adapt or change their property to respond to changing needs.

##### **D&S DPD DQ8: Mixed Communities**

New residential development should typically:

- a) Provide a mix of dwelling types (including apartments and terraced homes) and tenures to meet local needs;
- b) Incorporate affordable housing that is 'pepper-potted' throughout the site and has the same external appearance and quality of finishes as private housing;
- c) Provide buildings designed so that they can be altered internally or externally over time without the need for demolition or rebuilding as needs change;
- d) Provide buildings designed to maximise the potential for lifetime use; and
- e) Address the needs and access requirements of people with disabilities and include the provision of wheelchair accessible homes. These homes should be positioned in highly accessible locations.

## Supporting policy guidance

Development that is capable of responding to changing social, technological and economic conditions is more likely to be successful and ultimately more sustainable. Particularly on larger sites, new housing should reflect people's differing requirements and desire to adapt or change their property to respond to changing needs. New residential development should provide a mix of dwelling types (including apartments and terraced homes) and tenures to meet local need.

By building flexible internal space, rooms can be adapted to different uses depending on family requirements. Buildings should be designed to maximise the potential for lifetime use.



