

# AMENDED AGENDA

## STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Tuesday 14 July 2015  
Time: 6.30 pm  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street,  
Maidstone

### Membership:

Councillors Burton (Chairman), English,  
Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg, Harwood,  
Paine, Springett, de Wiggondene and  
Mrs Wilson

---

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Urgent Items
3. Notification of Visiting Members
4. Disclosures by Members and Officers

**Continued Over/:**

---

**Issued on 7 July 2015**

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact TESSA MALLET on 01622 602621**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

|     |  |           |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 5.  | Disclosures of Lobbying  |           |
| 6.  | Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2015   | 1 - 6     |
| 7.  | Presentation of Petitions (if any)   |           |
| 8.  | Questions and answer session for members of the public   |           |
| 9.  | To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information  |           |
| 10. | For information - Committee Work Programme   | 7 - 10    |
| 11. | Report of the Head of Planning and Development - Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny - recommendations arising from the review of Transport in Maidstone - alternatives to using the car | 11 - 80   |
| 12. | Verbal Updates - Task and Finish Groups  |           |
| 13. | Report of the Head of Planning and Development - MBLP Policy DM11 Open Space and Recreation  | 81 - 134  |
| 14. | Report of the Head of Planning and Development - Landscapes of Local Value   | 135 - 145 |
| 15. | Report of the Head of Planning and Development - Affordable Housing Policy   | 146 - 162 |
| 16. | Report of the Head of Planning and Development - Maidstone Borough Local Plan - mixed use allocations  | 163 - 203 |
| 17. | Report of the Head of Planning and Development - Reconsideration of previously rejected Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Draft and 2014 SHLAA Housing Sites  | 204 - 248 |
| a)  | <b><u>Updated Appendix 5 and 6 for Agenda Item 17 - Reconsideration of Previously Rejected Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Draft and 2014 SHLAA Housing Sites</u></b>                               | 249 - 254 |

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2015**

**Present:** Councillors Burton (Chairman) and Councillors English, Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg, Harwood, Paine, Springett, de Wiggondene and Mrs Wilson

**Also Present:** Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Garland, McLoughlin, Munford, Perry, Mrs Ring, Round, J Sams, Sargeant, Mrs Stockell, Willis and J.A. Wilson

#### 6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

#### 7. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, the update report of the Head of Planning and Development on the changes to decision making arrangements for Neighbourhood Planning (item 14) should be taken as an urgent item as it contained further information relating to the revised process for Neighbourhood Plans.

The Chair stated that, in his opinion, the agenda should be taken in a revised order to the published agenda to include the Amended Agenda item 15, Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update – implications of the 2012-based household projections, before item 14, Neighbourhood Planning Update.

The Committee agreed to have the Committee Work Plan as a regular item on the agenda.

#### 8. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor J Sams was in attendance to address the Committee on item 10 of the agenda, Reference from Planning Committee – A20 Highway Improvement Scheme – Harrietsham.

The following Councillors were in attendance as observers reserving their right to address the Committee on any item:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Garland, McLoughlin, Munford, Perry, Mrs Ring, Round, Sargeant, Mrs Stockell, Willis J Wilson.

9. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Garland would substitute for Councillor Burton from Agenda Item 15 - Strategic Housing Market Update – Implications of 2012-based household projections.

10. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Burton, the Chairman, explained he had taken legal advice and would withdraw from the meeting for item 15 Strategic Housing Market Update – Implications of 2012-based household projections, due to having an Other Significant Interest in Site H1 (10) Land South of Sutton Road, Langley. Councillor Garland would substitute in his absence and Councillor Harwood would take the Chair.

Councillor Springett declared an Other Significant Interest in Site H1 (17) Barty Farm, Bearsted.

11. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All members stated that they had been lobbied on various items on the agenda.

12. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2015

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed provided the duration of the meeting was inserted.

13. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

It was noted there were no petitions.

14. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

It was noted there were no questions received from members of the public.

15. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED** that the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

16. REFERENCE FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE - A20 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME - HARRIETSHAM

Councillor J Sams addressed the Committee.

The Head of Planning and Development explained the background to the referral from the Planning Committee.



The Committee agreed, that although it was impossible to stop developments progressing once planning permission had been granted, it was important a face to face meeting with Kent County Council Highways Department and other stakeholders was arranged to agree the delivery methodology and timescales for the highways improvement works on the A20 in Harrietsham.

**RESOLVED**

That:

- 1) A formal liaison style meeting be arranged with Kent County Highways Officers and Transport Planners to achieve a satisfactory timetable to ensure that the works were delivered to coincide with the implementation of the development comprised in application MA/14/0828 and other developments coming forward along the A20 corridor; and
- 2) In addition to the above, the following be invited to attend and participate in the meeting:
  - Ward Members
  - Parish Councillors
  - Chair and Vice Chair of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee
  - Chair and Vice Chair of the Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee
  - Maidstone Borough Council Transport and Planning Officers

17. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - LOCAL PLAN SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee discussed the purpose of the Local Plan Sub Committee.

It was suggested the sub-committee would delay the timetable for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and would create extra meetings and costs. It was also suggested the sub-committee would aid the work of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee by looking at some of the Local Plan policies in more detail.

**RESOLVED**

That the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee decided not to have the Local Plan Sub Committee at this point in time.

Voting:        For: 5        Against: 4

Councillors Harwood and English requested that their dissent be recorded.

18. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN POSITION STATEMENT

The Spatial Policy Team Leader presented the report which set the scene for the draft Local Plan, for the past and the future, with a proposed programme for the production on the Local Plan going forward.

It was noted that the adoption of Transport Policies by August 2015 was a realistic target as the VISUM transport modelling had been completed by Kent County Council (KCC). The VISUM modelling provided a broad strategic direction for the transport policies and alternatives to car use.

It was confirmed a meeting between the Chair and Vice Chair of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee and the Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Committee at KCC would be arranged to gain some clarity on the outcome of the VISUM modelling.

In order to provide clarity for the Committee, officers agreed to provide regular reports, to this Committee, from the Task and Finish Groups looking at infrastructure provision.

**RESOLVED**

That the draft programme be approved for publication on the Council's local plan web page.

19. STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET UPDATE - IMPLICATIONS OF 2012-BASED HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS

The Principal Housing Officer, Spatial Planning presented the report outlining the implications of the latest projections and latest practice for the borough's objectively assessed housing need and care home needs figures.

During discussion it was agreed the Council had done all that was possible to reduce the objectively assessed housing need figure. The Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked communities to come forward with alternative ideas to reduce the figure. Some ideas had been put forward but they would not stand up to scrutiny by a planning inspector.

**RESOLVED**

That the:

- 1) Updated objectively assessed need for housing (2011-31) of 18,560 dwellings, equating to 928 dwellings/annum be agreed;
- 2) Updated assessed need for 980 care home places (2011-31), equating to 49 places/annum be agreed; and

- 3) SHMAA update report, part of the evidence base of the emerging Local Plan, be noted.

20. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN: HOUSING SITES UPDATE

Councillor Burton left the meeting at 8.20pm and Councillor Harwood took the Chair. Councillor Garland substituted for Councillor Burton.

Councillor Grigg left the meeting at 9.00pm.

The Head of Planning and Development presented the report and explained, with a revised objectively assessed housing need figure of 18,560, the shortfall in housing provision in the draft Local Plan was 2161.

The Committee heard that the objectively assessed housing need figure would need to be met in full, according to the National Planning Policy Framework, unless robust constraints could be demonstrated.

The Head of Planning and Development outlined the challenges going forward:

- Robust constraints to justify the shortfall – the task and finish groups (focussed on infrastructure) were working on this;
- The risk of the local plan being found unsound would result in the evidence base having to be revised resulting in increased costs to the Council and leaving the borough open to speculative development;
- If the local plan was adopted in 2017 the life of the plan would be 14 years. An inspector may insist the period is increased from 2031 to 2036 as local plans are required to have a 15 year life;
- London migration – an uplift in the objectively assessed housing need is likely to be required in the future;
- Without an adopted local plan there would be no five year land supply, leading to planning by appeal, where appeals are lost on sites where development is not wanted.

Councillors Blackmore, Munford and Wilson addressed the Committee.

The Committee discussed the various options outlined in the report and other options put forward by Committee members.

**RESOLVED**

That the:

- 1) Additional sites considered and excluded from the Local Plan during the January/February/March 2015 cycle of Cabinet meetings be re-

considered (the sites deleted from the Regulation 18 version of the Plan (7 sites and 1 part site) and the allocation of more of the additional sites (15) resulting from the 2014 call for sites). Sites put forward by Ward Members with community support in Neighbourhood Plans during the further call for sites process and were borderline rejections from the SHLAA to also be re-considered.

2) Following sites are not to be re-considered:

H1 (25) Tongs Meadow, West Street, Harrietsham  
H1 (60) Fant Farm, Maidstone  
H1 (48) Heath Road, Boughton Monchelsea

Voting:            For 4            Against 3            Abstain            1

Arising from the discussion the Vice Chair (in the Chair) suggested that a report come to the Committee on areas of local landscape value.

The Head of Planning and Development stated the National Planning Policy Framework was unclear on this issue and suggested the Council could come up with broad locations of landscape protection areas. Vice Chair (in the Chair) suggested these locations should be in the Local Plan and not supplementary documents.

21. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT -  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING UPDATE

The Principal Planning Officer, Spatial Policy, presented the report and outlined the process being proposed given the Council's new governance structure.

The Committee agreed that stage three of the revised framework should be amended to state the Head of Planning and Development had delegated responsibility for this stage of the process.

**RESOLVED**

That the revised framework for decision making arrangements for Neighbourhood Planning presented in the report and the urgent update be agreed provided stage three, column 4 of the framework is amended to state "Delegated responsibility of the Head of Planning and Development to advise and respond".

22. MEETING DURATION

18:30 to 21:40



# 7 **Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee Work Programme**

Democratic Services Team  
E: [democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk)

Publication Date: 04/06/15

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document sets out the decisions to be taken by the various Committees of Maidstone Borough Council on a rolling basis. This document will be published as updated with new decisions required to be made.

## **DECISIONS WHICH COMMITTEES INTEND TO MAKE IN PRIVATE**

Committees hereby give notice that they intend to meet in private after its public meeting to consider reports and/or appendices which contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The private meeting of any Committee is open only to Committee Members, other Councillors and Council officers.

Reports and/or appendices to decisions which Committees will take at their private meetings are indicated in the list below, with the reasons for the decision being made in private. Any person is able to make representations to the relevant Committee if he/she believes the decision should instead be made in the public part of that Committee meeting. If you want to make such representations, please email [committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk). You will then be sent a response in reply to your representations. Both your representations and the Committee's response will be published on the Council's website at least 5 working days before the Committee meeting.

## **∞ ACCESS TO COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Reports to be considered at any of the Committees' public meeting will be available on the Council's website ([www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)) a minimum of 5 working days before the meeting.

## **HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?**

The Council actively encourages people to express their views on decisions it plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or to the relevant Chairman of a Committee (details of whom are shown in the list below).

Alternatively, you can submit a question to the relevant Committee, details are on our website ([www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)).

| <b>Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:</b> | <b>Title of Report and Brief Summary:</b>  | <b>Contact Officer:</b> | <b>Public or Private<br/>(if Private the reason why)</b> | <b>Documents to be submitted (other relevant documents may be submitted)</b> |
|---|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| <b>9 June 2015</b>                              | <b>Maidstone Borough Local Plan Position Statement</b>   | Sue Whiteside           | Public   |  |
| <b>9 June 2015</b>                              | <b>Strategic Housing Market Assessment update – implications of the 2012-based household projections</b> | Sarah Anderton          | Public   | SHMA Update – Implications of 2012 Based Household Projections               |
| <b>9 June 2015</b>                              | <b>Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Housing Sites Update</b>  | Sarah Anderton          | Public   |  |
| <b>9 June 2015</b>                              | <b>Neighbourhood Planning: changes to decision making arrangements</b>                                   | Jillian Barr            | Public   |  |
| <b>14 July 2015</b>                             | <b>Retail and mixed use site allocations</b>   | Sarah Anderton          | Public   |  |
| <b>14 July 2015</b>                             | <b>Landscape and Open Space – policies and site allocations</b>  | Jillian Barr            | Public   |  |
| <b>14 July 2015</b>                             | <b>Affordable Housing policy</b>   | Sue Whiteside           | Public   |  |
| <b>14 July 2015</b>                             | <b>Recommendations from PTD OSC review of Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using the car</b>     | Tessa Mallett           | Public   | Final review report  |
| <b>14 July 2015</b>                             | <b>Reconsideration of previously rejected MBCLP Reg 18 draft and SHLASS housing sites</b>                | Steve Clarke            | Public   |  |
| <b>18 August 2015</b>                           | <b>Maidstone Borough Local Plan Transport Policies (and results of transport modelling)</b>              | Steve Clarke            | Public   |  |
| <b>18 August 2015</b>                           | <b>ITS Timescales – summary report</b>   | Sue Whiteside           | Public   |  |
| <b>18 August 2015</b>                           | <b>Gypsy and Traveller site allocations</b>  | Sarah Anderton          | Public   |  |
| <b>18 August 2015</b>                           | <b>Employment site allocations</b>   | Sarah Anderton          | Public   |  |

| <b>Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:</b> | <b>Title of Report and Brief Summary:</b>   | <b>Contact Officer:</b> | <b>Public or Private<br/>(if Private the reason why)</b> | <b>Documents to be submitted (<i>other relevant documents may be submitted</i>)</b> |
|---|---|-------------------------|--|---|
| <b>18 August 2015</b>                           | <b>Future Broad Locations for Housing (Policy H3: Town Centre, Maidstone Barracks and Lenham)</b>             | Steve Clarke            | Public   |   |
| <b>18 August 2015</b>                           | <b>Draft Integrated Transport Strategy</b>  | Steve Clarke            | Public   |   |
| <b>8 Sept 2015</b>                              |   |                         |  |   |
| <b>6 Oct 2015</b>                               |   |                         |  |   |
| <b>10 Nov 2015</b>                              |   |                         |  |   |
| <b>1 Dec 2015</b>                               | <b>Consideration of the Publication version of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan for consultation (Reg 19)</b> | Sue Whiteside           | Public   |   |
| <b>12 Jan 2016</b>                              |   |                         |  |   |
| <b>9 Feb 2016</b>                               |   |                         |  |   |
| <b>8 Mar 2016</b>                               |   |                         |  |   |
| <b>5 Apr 2015</b>                               |   |                         |  |   |



## Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee

**14 July 2015**

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting? | <b>Yes</b> |
|---|------------|

## Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee – recommendations arising from the review of Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using a car

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Final Decision-Maker</b>             | SPS&T Committee                              |
| <b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b> | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development |
| <b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>   | Tessa Mallett, Democratic Services Officer   |
| <b>Classification</b>                   | Non-exempt                                   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                   | All  |

### This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Committee agree to review the recommendations made in the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review report on "Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using the car".
2. That the Committee agree to plan into the Committee's Work Programme officer update reports on the recommendations.
3. That the Committee nominate Members to the outside bodies, as recommended in the review report, and refer these nominations to the Democracy Committee.

### This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Great People
- Great Place
- Great Opportunity

### Timetable

| <b>Meeting</b>                 | <b>Date</b>  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Policy and Resources Committee | N/A  |
| Council                        | N/A  |
| Other Committee                | Decision - Democracy Committee – meeting date to be arranged |

# Planning Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee – recommendations arising from the review of Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using the car

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the recommendations arising from the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (PT&D OSC) review of "Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using the car", published in May 2015 and decide how to take these recommendations forward.
- 1.2 To consider nominations to outside bodies suggested in the recommendations of PT&D OSC. The nominations to these outside bodies to be referred to the Democracy Committee for appointment.

---

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During the 2014-2015 Municipal year the PT&D OSC carried out an extensive review of transport provision in Maidstone to explore alternatives to using the car to get into Maidstone and reduce congestion. A copy of the final published report is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 Congestion has been considered to be a serious problem in the centre of Maidstone for some time. With an objectively assessed housing need figure (for between 2011 and 2031) of 18,560 new homes, (as agreed by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on 9 June 2015), there is a risk this problem will only get worse unless strategic steps are taken to mitigate the effects of this increase in development on traffic. Permissions are being granted for new development on an on-going basis (some 7500+ dwellings have already been permitted or constructed since 2011) and these are subject, as appropriate, to specific measures when determined. Nevertheless, adopting sustainable transport measures and encouraging modal shift to reduce the reliance on the use of the private car when travelling around and through the Borough, will be a key element of the Council's policies going forward.
- 2.3 The emerging draft Local Plan will include policies to mitigate the effect of increased development on the Borough's roads, alongside an Integrated Transport Strategy being prepared by the Council in conjunction with Kent County Council who are the Highways Authority. This is an opportunity to look at alternative methods of transport infrastructure to support this.
- 2.4 The PT&D OSC has made recommendations regarding the promotion of walking and cycling as an alternative to using a car which will need considerable investment.

- 2.5 The Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC) found there were issues with the services provided by public transport providers. Issues raised included:

#### **Bus services**

- 'erratic' notification of road closures to bus service provider;
- Buses arriving and leaving earlier than scheduled;
- Lack of real time service updates;
- Lack of suitable services in many parishes;
- Cost of using public transport

#### **Rail services**

- Cost;
- Station parking and 'rail heading';
- Convenience and reliability;
- Safety at stations and on trains.

- 2.6 There also appears to be a lack of opportunity for service users to discuss their issues with providers or a lack of awareness of the opportunities that are available. The PT&D OSC believe these matters need to be addressed if public transport is to be an attractive alternative to using a car and have made recommendations accordingly.

- 2.7 From the review a total of 23 (A to W) recommendations were made.

- 2.8 Recommendations A, G, J, R and S relate to the appointment of Councillors to external bodies.

- 2.9 At their meeting on 14 April 2015 the Cabinet made the following decisions:

- (1) That the Scrutiny Committee Recommendation and Implementation Plan (SCRAIP) relating to the review of 'Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using a car' be referred to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee from May 2015 to consider in line with the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy; and
- (2) That the outside body appointments are referred to the Democracy Committee from May 2015.

---

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee could decide not to consider the recommendations in relation to the "Transport in Maidstone – alternatives to using a Car" report. However, the recommendations are based on evidence from a wide range of sources and support the Council's objectives with regard to Maidstone being a decent place to live and having a growing economy.

- 3.2 The Committee could decide to plan officer updates into the Committee's Work Programme for the coming year (some updates may be integrated into reports already planned for 2015-2016) and to nominate Councillors to the external bodies identified by PT&D OSC.
- 3.3 The Committee could decide to prioritise and focus their resources on some of the recommendations and nominate Councillors to the external bodies identified by PT&D OSC.
- 3.4 The Committee could decide to just nominate Councillors to the external bodies identified by PT&D OSC.

#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Option 3.2 is the preferred option as it will ensure the recommendations from the PT&D OSC are followed through and reliable methods of transport into Maidstone are available and are a viable alternative to travelling into the town by car.

#### **5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 5.1 Should the Committee decide on option 3.2, some of the recommendations could be considered in detail to plan the next step, i.e. officer report, officer action, member action, referral to other Committee/organisation.
- 5.2 The Committee may decide the planning work is carried out outside of the Committee meeting and the outcomes reported back to the full Committee at their meeting on 18 August 2015.

#### **6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

| <b>Issue</b>                          | <b>Implications</b>  | <b>Sign-off</b>                      |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b> |  | [Head of Service or Manager]         |
| <b>Risk Management</b>                |  | [Head of Service or Manager]         |
| <b>Financial</b>                      | There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Financial implications relating to measures agreed as part of the council's Integrated Transport Strategy will be assessed as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. | [Section 151 Officer & Finance Team] |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Staffing</b>                              |  | [Head of Service]                               |
| <b>Legal</b>                                 | The legal implications of maintaining and submitting a sound draft Local Plan relate to the capability of third parties to challenge it, but that will be dealt with by way of the Examination in Public process | Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services |
| <b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>      |  | [Policy & Information Manager]                  |
| <b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b> |  | [Head of Service or Manager]                    |
| <b>Community Safety</b>                      |  | [Head of Service or Manager]                    |
| <b>Human Rights Act</b>                      |  | [Head of Service or Manager]                    |
| <b>Procurement</b>                           |  | [Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]         |
| <b>Asset Management</b>                      |  | [Head of Service & Manager]                     |

## 7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: a Review of Transport in Maidstone Borough – alternatives to using a car.

# A Review of Transport in Maidstone Borough – alternatives to using a car

Published | May 2015

Reviewed | 2014 -2015



## Opening statement from Chairman of Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Val Springett

When we embarked on this topic, I don't think we were fully aware of the size of this subject.

Congestion is a big issue in Maidstone, and any improvements that can be made to reduce congestion, would also have a big knock on effect on the quality of life of those living in the town centre, improve air quality and by improving journey times, would benefit both employees and businesses alike.



Cllr Val Springett

Encouraging a modal shift from the private car to public transport is always going to be a challenge. But if good quality, frequent, reliable, fairly priced and easily accessible public transport is available, it will encourage more people to use it. Alternative methods of transport such as walking and cycling also bring health benefits but are not suitable for all journeys. The weekly family supermarket shop would prove challenging on a bicycle!

In producing this report, we have attempted to find out what the current issues are, what improvements would be needed to increase choice and to encourage people to select an alternative to using their car when it was convenient. We have also recommended that transport user groups are created or re-established to enable issues to be aired, with Officer support. Also, that a new group is established to look at future options of transport as they become more viable.

I would like to thank all those who gave their time to address the committee and assist us in understanding the issues and challenges involved. I believe we have achieved something positive in our work and I commend this report to you.

### Recommendation

***A. That after the publication of this report a sub group be formed from the beginning of the municipal year 2015, by the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference, to explore:***

- Alternative methods of transport for the future that will help ease congestion in Maidstone town. This sub-group to take forward research into future alternatives (for example rail halts on the Medway Valley Line, trams) and improving existing forms of transport, and;***
- Possible European Union funding to fund new transport initiatives.***



## Review of Transport – alternatives to using a car

### The Working Group



Report written by Tessa Mallett,  
Overview and Scrutiny Officer





## Executive Summary

This report has been created following a call for topics to be reviewed as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Work programme for the 2014-2015 Municipal year. Many of the suggestions received had a similar theme around congestion and transport issues within the Borough of Maidstone, as the congestion issue in Maidstone is considered a major factor affecting the future growth and economy of Maidstone. The report attempts to find out what the issues are that affect peoples' transport choices, and looks at ways in which improvements could be made to encourage the modal shift from the car to a suitable alternative.

The aim of the review was to explore how a reduction in our reliance on the car could be achieved, and it was decided that the report should look at what alternative modes of transport are currently available to residents within the borough of Maidstone, and how improvements could be made to encourage more people to use them.

The research undertaken included interviewing witnesses, from transport providers and expert authority officers to keen cyclists, walkers and service users. Improvements to communication regarding bus times and timetable disruptions was a big issue, and funding opportunities for Parish Council's to improve facilities within their areas were also discussed. Cycling usage would benefit from better cycle path provision in all areas and from interconnectivity with bus routes in more rural locations. Some parishes are including such provision in their emerging Neighbourhood Plans, such as Coxheath. Reliability and poor frequency of services were the main issues affecting the usage of bus services, and parking availability and fare costs were factors in residents using the rail network. It was established that user groups were beneficial in enabling issues to be addressed more easily and that Officer and Member support was beneficial.

An update of the draft Maidstone Borough Council Cycling Strategy, dated 2012 has been recommended, as well as the establishment of a Maidstone Cyclists Forum and the re-establishing of the Maidstone Borough Transport User Group. Better methods of communication for road closures would assist bus companies in maintaining schedules, and specific use of Section 106 monies would assist in enabling bus services and cycle and footpaths to be created alongside new developments.

There is still a long way to go to achieving reduced car usage in Maidstone. However, it is hoped that the recommendations from this report will lead to improvements being made to current alternative transport provision, and that future usage will improve as access, reliability and costs issues are addressed.

# Contents

| Section                   | Page Number |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1 Background              | 6           |
| 2 Terms of Reference      | 8           |
| 3 Introduction            | 10          |
| 4 Congestion in Maidstone | 12          |
| 5 Methodology             | 18          |
| 6 Walking and Cycling     | 21          |
| 7 Bus Services            | 31          |
| 8 Rail Services           | 42          |
| 9 Park and Ride           | 49          |
| 10 Recommendations        | 54          |
| 11 Thanks                 | 58          |
| 12 Evidence Log           | 59          |
| 13 Appendices             | 62          |



# 1 Background

In March 2014, Maidstone Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny team, with the help of the Communications team, implemented a communications plan to help gather suggestions for topics for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Future Work Programme and reviews for the Municipal year 2014-15.

More than 50 suggestions were received from staff, members of the public, community representatives, key stakeholders/partners including parish councils and local press. 18 of the suggestions received related to the terms of reference for the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC).

On 9 June 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Team held a workshop with PTD OSC where the committee considered all the suggestions and agreed a review topic to take forward for 2014-15.

Many of the suggestions raised concerns about transport in the Borough, including:

- Increased congestion in Maidstone town centre;
- Bus services;
- Parking;
- Public transport;
- Promoting walking and cycling, and;
- Introducing a mechanism where local people could report transport infrastructure issues to both Kent County Council (KCC) and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC).

The committee agreed to look at ways of reducing congestion in Maidstone town and would touch on all the concerns above. To do this the committee decided they needed to review different modes of transport that could be alternatives to using a car. The main groups decided upon were:

- Cycling and walking;
- Bus, and;
- Rail.

The committee recognised if these modes of transport were to be alternatives to the car they had to be convenient, reliable and attractive enough to encourage people to leave their cars at home. This in turn would reduce the need for parking in the town.

A working group was set up and met on 17 June 2014 to scope the review and presented a scoping document at the PTD OSC meeting of 24 June 2014 outlining the Terms of Reference for the review.

This review prompted interest from local media with it being reported on BBC South East on 7 October 2014 and BBC Radio Kent. BBC Radio Kent also interviewed Councillor David Burton, Cabinet member for Planning, Transport and Development on 27 July 2014 and Councillor Val Springett, Chair of PTD OSC on 7 October 2014 about the review. Kent Messenger also reported, on 1 August 2014, the recommendations of the committee meeting on 22 July 2014.

At their meeting of 16 December 2014, the committee agreed to review the Maidstone Park and Ride Service as part of this review.



## 2 Terms of Reference

The committee agreed by conducting this review it would aim to meet the following objectives:

To carry out a review of Transport in Maidstone Borough – alternatives to using a car to ease congestion in the town.

### 2.1 Cycling and walking

- Identify cycling and walking groups in the Borough;
- Establish what work is already being done regarding the promotion of walking and cycling;
- Identify and make recommendations on how MBC can work to increase the use of cycling and walking in the Borough.

### 2.2 Bus services

- Identify existing bus service providers operating in the Rural Service Centres ;
- Identify bus user groups in the Borough to avoid duplication of effort;
- Improve communication with the Quality Bus Partnership to enable Councillors to influence debate where they can;
- Identify the barriers to making the bus a viable alternative to using the car to travel into Maidstone town;
- Identify and make recommendations for improvements to bus service provision to and from the Rural Service Centres (RSC).

### 2.3 Rail services

- Identify rail user groups in the Borough to avoid duplication of effort;
- Gain an insight into KCC and rail providers' strategic plans for rail services in the Borough;

---

<sup>1</sup> Rural service centres (RSC) – outside of the town centre and urban area, rural service centres are considered the most sustainable settlements in Maidstone's settlement hierarchy. The planned development and maintenance of sustainable communities underpins the council's approach to rural areas where the primary aim is to direct development towards rural settlements that can best act as service centres for their local population and surrounding rural communities. Rural service centres play a key part in the economic and social fabric of the Borough and contribute towards its character and built form. They act as a focal point for trade and services by providing a concentration of public transport networks, employment opportunities and community facilities that minimise car journeys - (Maidstone Borough Council, 2014)



- Establish MBC member links with KCC and rail service providers;
- Identify and make recommendations for improvements to rail service provision in the Maidstone Borough.

## **2.4 Park and Ride Services**

- Establish what is currently offered by the service;
- Establish if the service is cost effective;
- Identify the impact the service has on the town centre in terms of:
  - Easing congestion
  - Benefits to users
- Establish why do/don't people use the service;
- Investigate the stability of current agreements for delivering the service
  - Leasing of land
  - Provision of buses;
- Identify the strategic importance of the service
  - Should MBC support it
  - Should the service be continued (and what are the consequences if it wasn't);
- Establish the future requirements for the service.

### 3 Introduction

Congestion on our roads is a growing concern across the UK. According to the Department for Transport (DoT,) Road Congestion and Reliability Statistics<sup>2</sup>, the average speeds on local 'A' roads in England during the weekday morning peak between April and June 2014 were 24.4mph. Compared to figures for the year end March 2014 this was a decrease of 0.9%. Across all nine regions in England London experienced the greatest reduction in speeds of 3.3%, followed by the South East with a 2.3% reduction.

Our reliance on car travel, even if it results in sitting in traffic with longer or unpredictable journey times, appears to be showing no let up.

Another report from the DoT, Public attitudes towards transport survey<sup>3</sup>, states, travelling by car as a driver was by far the most commonly and regularly used mode of transport with 44% of respondents reporting travelling by car as a driver every day or nearly every day. The research also stated, that on average, respondents reported making five journeys of less than two miles (3.22kilometres) by car in a typical week. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of respondents reported they could use alternative forms of travel. In 2012, 41% of people agreed they could just as easily walk many of the journeys of less than two miles they now travel by car; 39% said they could just as easily cycle (if they had a bike) and nearly a third said they could just as easily catch the bus. The challenge is encouraging people to make the change.

As can be seen by the map in **Appendix A** (Maidstone Walking and Cycling Isochrones) the vast majority of the Maidstone urban area is within the 5 kilometre threshold for trips by bike and a significant proportion of the Maidstone urban area is within the 2 kilometre threshold for trips on-foot. This serves to indicate the huge latent potential for increasing the proportion of trips by walking and cycling.

#### Recommendation

***B. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to carry out consultation with car users to establish why they drive into Maidstone town and what would encourage them to use an alternative mode of transport to get into the town.***

<sup>2</sup> Department for Transport Road Congestion and Reliability Statistics, Congestion on local 'A' roads, England: Apr to Jun 2014 report ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Department for Transport British Social Attitudes Survey 2012: public attitudes towards transport (July 2013)

According to the Parliamentary publication, Out of the Jam: reducing congestion on our roads, the definition of congestion is “unreliable journeys in terms of the length of time that journey will take, taking 20 minutes one day, 40 minutes the next and so on; it can mean that journeys are just too slow; or it can mean that in times of exceptional disruption, road works or special events etc., journeys are very different from the way they normally are.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> [www.publications.parliament.uk](http://www.publications.parliament.uk) - Transport Committee – Ninth Report, Out of the Jam: reducing congestion on our roads published 6 September 2011.



## 4 Congestion in Maidstone

### 4.1 Maidstone journey time information<sup>5</sup>

In order to assess the efficiency of the highway network over time in Maidstone town centre, Kent County Council monitors and analyses journey time information on key routes. A manual survey was carried out in March 2007 in order to establish a baseline which is used to highlight poorly performing links.

Data are collected every day at five minute intervals using Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras operated by Kent Police for the following primary routes:

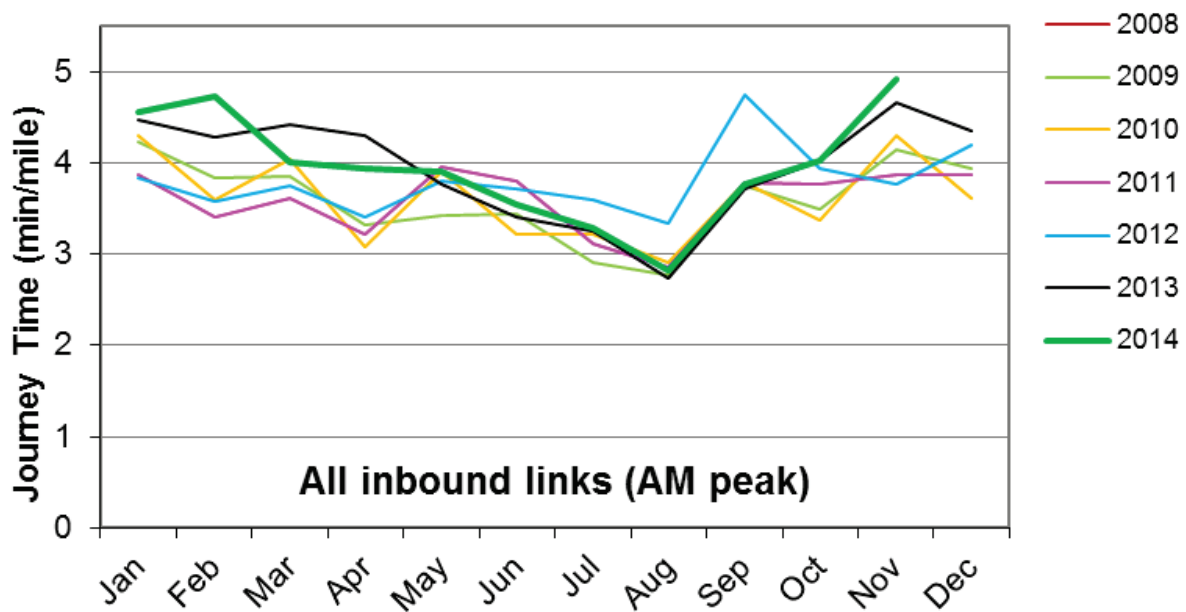
- A20 Ashford Road near Caring Lane to A249 Albion Place
- A20 Ashford Road near Caring Lane to A229 Lower Stone Street / Mote Road
- A274 Sutton Road to A229 Hayle Road
- A229 Loose Road to A229 Hayle Road
- B2010 Farleigh Hill to A229 Hayle Road
- A26 Tonbridge Road near South Street to A20 Terrace Road
- A20 London Road near Beaver Road to A20 London Road / Rocky Hill
- A229 Royal Engineers Road to A26 Tonbridge Road near Westree Road
- A229 Royal Engineers Road to A229 Lower Stone Street / Mote Road
- A249 Sittingbourne Road near M20 Junction 7 to A249 Albion Place

The Highway Management Centre in Aylesford monitor these routes every weekday, with particular focus during the morning peak (0730 to 0930) and evening peak (1600 to 1800) periods. Where possible, staff will adjust traffic signal timings in order to minimise congestion seen via CCTV images or in response to reported incidents on the network.

---

<sup>5</sup> KCC Highways, Transportation & Waste.

Below is a graph showing the monthly journey time trends since 2008



#### 4.2 Maidstone Integrated Parking Strategy – April 2012<sup>6</sup>

Maidstone Borough Council appointed JMP Consultants Ltd (JMP) to undertake a series of research tasks to support the development of the Council's Integrated Transport Strategy. The strategy aimed to assess the current and future demand for travel and the infrastructure required to support the development growth outlined within the Maidstone Core Strategy (2011).

JMB used the Maidstone Visum model software to forecast future transport movements in and around Maidstone using future development assumptions. The model forecasts there will be in the region of 52,000 transport movements within the AM peak hour in 2026, excluding all walking and cycling trips.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/12055/Integrated-Parking-Strategy-Options-Appraisal-Report-JMP-April-2012.pdf](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/12055/Integrated-Parking-Strategy-Options-Appraisal-Report-JMP-April-2012.pdf)

**Fig 1 Geographical representation of the Core and Inner sectors**



The report considered at least three quarters of all transport movements in and around Maidstone to be medium/long distance (>5miles). The report stated around a third of these long distance trips (25% of all movements) either originate or terminate in the Core Maidstone Sector (shown in Fig 1) and so could, theoretically, be served by a rail service, depending upon the proximity to a rail station. The report went on to say:

“Just over a third of all transport movements have both an origin and a destination in the Borough of Maidstone. These trips could, theoretically, be served by an urban and rural bus network across the borough.”

“The number of movements originating and terminating within the Core and Inner Maidstone Sectors represents around 14.5%. Many of these trips will be relatively short in distance and so have the potential to be undertaken by walking or cycling, depending upon the precise origins and destinations.”

“The number of movements originating in the Outer Maidstone Sector, Kent or London and terminating in the Core Maidstone Sector represents around 14.5% of total transport movements in the AM peak. Many of these trips could, theoretically, be targeted to travel by park & ride.”

### **4.3 Impact on Air Quality and Health<sup>7</sup>**

Local air pollutants are those that have a direct impact on public health, especially that of the young and old. The main air pollutants of concern in Maidstone are nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulates (PM). These have been linked to lung diseases (asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema), heart conditions and cancer. Based on national estimates, approximately 5.6% of premature deaths in Maidstone are due to air pollution.

Where health based air quality objectives are not being met Air Quality Management Areas must be declared. Maidstone declared an Urban AQMA due to exceeding the annual average nitrogen dioxide objective (objective level = 40ug/m<sup>3</sup>). This is a long term objective aimed at protecting the most vulnerable members of the population from the chronic (debilitating) effects of air pollution.

The Council undertook monitoring at 57 sites in 2013 (using diffusion tubes attached to street furniture) to monitor airborne NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations. The annual mean objective was exceeded at twelve sites, all within the Maidstone AQMA.

The very high results recorded at four of those sites (Upper Stone Street, and the A274/A229 junction), indicate a potential exceedence of the 1-hour mean NO<sub>2</sub> objective (200ug/m<sup>3</sup> hourly mean not to be exceeded more than 18 times in a year).

The short term hourly objective is aimed at protecting the most vulnerable members of the population from the acute (immediate) effects of air pollution, which may involve irritation of the eyes, nose and throat and an increase in the symptoms of existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis or emphysema. Breaches of the hourly objective are more infrequently observed in urban environments than breaches of the annual average objective, indicating that day to day peak levels of nitrogen dioxide pollutant concentrations are increasing.

A recent report from World Health Organisation (WHO) ‘Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollutants’<sup>8</sup> has produced new evidence of long-term effects of nitrogen dioxide for people suffering from existing respiratory and heart problems and indicates that these effects can occur below the current air quality objective levels.

---

<sup>7</sup> Mid Kent Share Services – Environmental Health

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf)

#### 4.4 Central Government Growth Fund

On 7 July 2014, Kent County Council<sup>9</sup> published a press release reporting that the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership<sup>10</sup> had won £104 million from the Government's 'Growth Deal'. The benefits to Maidstone from this cash injection were reported to be:

- A Gyratory Bypass - £4.56 million to go towards a relief scheme to help overcome congestion and delays in the town centre;
- Maidstone Integrated Transport - £8.89 million;
- Sustainable access to Maidstone employment areas (River Medway cycle path, East Farleigh to Aylesford) £2 million.

#### Recommendation

***C. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to lobby Kent County Council on the reconfiguration of the Maidstone Gyratory system to ensure safe cycle passages. The design of the gyratory system should incorporate surface cycle passages (not subways) for cyclists heading in and out of the town from west Maidstone using the A20 and A26.***

#### 4.5 Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy

On 27 January 2014, Maidstone Borough Council's Cabinet approved the vision and objectives for the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and work programme for developing the ITS to a full draft document to go out to public consultation in the Summer of 2014. This has been delayed to Summer 2015.

Because of peak period congestion and poor air quality across the urban area of Maidstone the ITS would focus primarily on demand management measures for one of the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. The principle being this would enable people to make informed choices about how and when they travel to and from the town centre and other destinations in the Borough.

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/news-and-press-releases/jobs-news/jobs-and-transport-boost-from-104m-growth-deal-funding>.

<sup>10</sup> Kent and Medway Economic Partnership is the local arm of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) which brings together key leaders from business, local government, and further and higher education to boost economic growth across Kent, Medway, East Sussex, Essex, Thurrock and Southend.

A report to Cabinet<sup>11</sup> on 27 January 2014, paragraph 1.3.16 stated the essential elements of the new ITS would include:

- A more targeted park and ride service, with new and/or improved sites in the vicinity of M20 Junction 7 and at Linton Crossroads on the A299 corridor to the south of the town, aimed at long-stay commuters into the town centre;
- Bus priority measures in tandem with the enhanced park and ride service;
- Highway capacity improvements at the bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 Junction 7, to improve journey time reliability and air quality;
- Increased bus service frequencies (to at least every 7 minutes) on radial routes serving Maidstone town centre;
- Walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on improved wayfinding, safer crossing points at the town centre gyratory, and improvements to the River Medway towpath;
- A car sharing initiative in partnership with local employers, and;
- A refreshed town centre parking strategy, which will look to increase long-stay car parking charges and reduce car parking supply to promote the use of park and ride, and a reduction in short-stay car parking charges to prioritise shoppers and visitors.

#### **4.6 Maidstone Draft Local Plan 2014-2031**

The Maidstone Borough Council Draft Local Plan<sup>12</sup> (paragraph 3.9) transport vision states that Maidstone will have a transport network that will have sufficient people and goods-moving capacity to support the growth projected by the local plan to 2031.

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g2059/Public%20reports%20pack%2027th-Jan-2014%2018.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

<sup>12</sup> <http://dynamic.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2018.pdf>

## 5 Methodology

The committee sought evidence from a variety of sources. For example select Committee-style interviews with a number of witnesses for each section of the review were undertaken.

### 5.1 Cycling and Walking

On 22 July 2014<sup>13</sup> interviews were conducted with witnesses who had an interest in or whose work involved the promotion of walking and cycling.

The witnesses invited to attend were:

- Bartholomew Wren – Economic Development Officer Regeneration and Transport, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council;
- Colin Finch – Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Kent County Council;
- Tay Arnold – Cycling Transport Planner, Kent Highways, Kent County Council;
- Sarah Ward, Community Development Team Leader, Maidstone Borough Council;
- Tim Hapgood, Transport Consultant, Spatial Policy Team, Maidstone Borough Council;
- James Gower – local cycling enthusiast who sent a suggestion via Twitter for the committee to review congestion in the town;

The specific questions asked of these witnesses to help prepare for the meeting can be found as **Appendix B**.

Other witnesses included:

- Councillor Paul Harper;
- Mr Elliott Dean, resident and cycling enthusiast.

### 5.2 Bus Services

On 16 September 2014<sup>14</sup> interviews were conducted with:

- Dan Bruce, Local Transport Planner (Mid Kent), KCC;
- Shane Hymers, Public Transport Policy and Strategy Manager, KCC;
- Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd;

On 30 September 2014<sup>15</sup> interviews were conducted with:

---

<sup>13</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=555&MId=2184&Ver=4>

<sup>14</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=555&MId=2186&Ver=4>

- Matthew Arnold, Commercial Manager, Arriva;
- Mike Fitzgerald, Chairman of East of Maidstone Bus Group;
- Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd was also in attendance;
- Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst Parish Council.

Specific questions asked of these witnesses can be found in **Appendix C**.

The committee also consulted with all 35 Parish Councils and 55 MBC Councillors, asking them for details of the following:

- Any bus service issues you may have in your constituency;
- Any bus user groups you are aware of in your constituency.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer attended a meeting between the Director of Regeneration and Communities (MBC), Officers from MBCs Community Development Team and a representative from Arriva. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways of making bus services more accessible to those residents on low incomes.

### 5.3 Rail Services

On 18 November 2014<sup>16</sup> interviews were conducted with:

- Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, South Eastern Rail
- Mike Fitzgerald, Chair Kent Community Rail Partnership and Medway Valley Line Group
- Keith Harrison, Chief Executive, Action with Rural Communities
- Written response from Stephen Gasche, Principal Transport Planner – Rail, Kent County Council

Specific questions ask of these witnesses were:

- What are your perceptions of the where the weaknesses are in rail services in the Maidstone borough?
- What could Network Rail do to relieve some of the congestion pressure in Maidstone?
- What do you do to integrate your services with other public transport services?
- How can scheduled changes be better communicated to users?

The committee also consulted with all 35 Parish Councils and 55 MBC Councillors, asking them for details of the following:

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=555&MId=2184&Ver=4>  
<sup>16</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=555&MId=2188&Ver=4>



- What issues does your parish have with train services within the borough that result in people using their car rather than the train?

#### **5.4 Park and Ride Services**

On 8 January 2015 the working group conducted interviews with the following witnesses:

- David Edwards, Director of Environment and Shared Services;
- Jeff Kitson, Parking Services Manager;
- Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development;
- Steve Clarke, Principal Planning Officer, Spatial Planning;
- Matthew Cotton, Service and Transport Coordinator;
- Martin Smith, Senior Transport Planner.

Desk research was carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to seek further evidence for the review.

## 6 Walking and Cycling

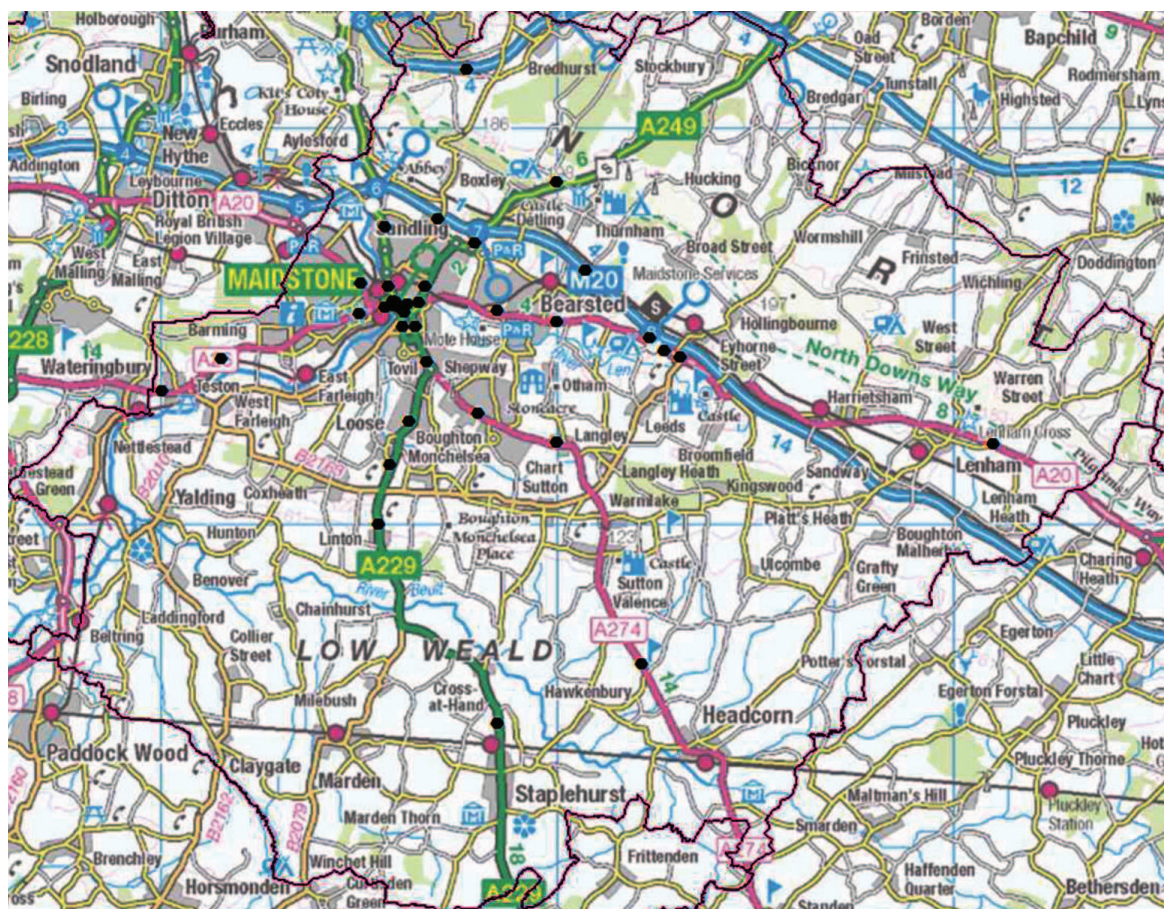
According to research carried out by the University of East Anglia and the Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR)<sup>17</sup> walking or cycling to work is better for people's mental health than driving to work.

The Department for Transport (DfT) carry out annual traffic counts on a selection of A roads throughout the UK. This data is split into vehicle type. It should be noted that as this data is for A roads only it may not reflect the levels of cycling as it does not include the country roads which are popular with cyclists<sup>18</sup>.

The Department for Transport British Social Attitudes Survey<sup>3</sup> defines a cyclist as someone who has access to a bicycle and has ridden a bicycle in the last 12 months.

In 2012, 43% of respondents to this survey had access to a bicycle: 40% owned a bicycle and 3% had regular use of a bicycle owned by someone else. Sixty-one per cent of respondents said that they had not ridden a bicycle in the previous 12 months.

**Map 1 Location of DfT count points in Maidstone**



<sup>17</sup> Report published 15 September 2014 – [www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/](http://www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/)

<sup>18</sup> Maidstone Borough Pedestrian and Pedal Cycle Data, Road Safety Team, KCC

**Table 1 Pedal cycle flow 2000 to 2013 at DfT count points in Maidstone as a proportion of all traffic**

| Year | Pedal Cycle Flow | All traffic | %Pedal Cycle |
|------|------------------|-------------|--------------|
| 2000 | 1634             | 641738      | 0.3%         |
| 2001 | 1535             | 650495      | 0.2%         |
| 2002 | 1424             | 652861      | 0.2%         |
| 2004 | 1407             | 657381      | 0.2%         |
| 2005 | 1183             | 641219      | 0.2%         |
| 2006 | 1589             | 646603      | 0.2%         |
| 2007 | 1192             | 638341      | 0.2%         |
| 2008 | 1380             | 607332      | 0.2%         |
| 2009 | 1539             | 603059      | 0.3%         |
| 2010 | 1499             | 617823      | 0.2%         |
| 2011 | 1659             | 611695      | 0.3%         |
| 2012 | 1419             | 588721      | 0.2%         |
| 2013 | 1657             | 584032      | 0.3%         |

The proportion of pedal cyclists to all traffic is normally between 0.2% and 0.3% on the A roads in Maidstone.

The 2011 Census journey to work data<sup>19</sup> indicated that journeys to work in Maidstone by bike have increased since 2001. However the change has been very small and the proportion of journeys to work by bike still only account for 1% of total trips.

The Institute of Highways and Transportation suggests that journeys of up to two kilometres were achievable on foot and journeys of up to five kilometres were achievable by bike. In particular the research suggested that journeys within these thresholds had the most realistic chance of replacing car journeys by trips on foot and by bike. The vast majority of the Maidstone urban area is within five kilometres of the town.<sup>20</sup>

Data on journeys to work on foot from the 2011 Census is not yet formally available. However early indications suggest they account for approximately 1% of journeys to work in Maidstone.

For comparison the committee sought evidence from a similar authority to establish how they approached the promotion of walking and cycling and how successful they had been. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was chosen because of its comparative size and location.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-295663>

<sup>20</sup> Report of Head of Planning and Development to PTD OSC 22 July 2014 - <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s37180/agenda%20item%2011%20Question%20Sheet%20-%20for%20front%20of%20Committee%20reports.pdf> page 21 paragraph 3.5

## **6.1 Cycling in Tunbridge Wells**

It was reported that cycling in Tunbridge Wells had increased in recent years, but still only accounted for 2% of road users. Tunbridge Wells was developing a strong cycling culture with a specialist café providing a shop and meeting point for cyclists.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's (TWBC) draft transport strategy had gone out to consultation in 2013 and provided a high level introduction to cycling. A stand-alone cycling strategy was planned to re-engage with the established local cycling forum and was due to go out to consultation late 2014.

Mr Greg Clark MP had supported a public meeting in November 2013 on cycling in Tunbridge Wells. A series of recommendations from the meeting had been suggested to feed into the new cycling strategy. The suggestions included proposed new cycling routes; increased cycle parking; installation of advance stop lines, 20mph speed limits; overcoming deficiencies in existing cycle routes; cycle education and awareness for young people and adults.

In January 2014, the Tunbridge Wells Cycling Forum was launched with its own terms of reference but no decision making powers. The meetings of the Forum were chaired by TWBC's portfolio holder for Planning and Transport and were reported to be well attended. Officers provided administrative and technical input but no support. Sub groups of the Forum focussed on areas such as education, events and infrastructure.

Cycling events supported and promoted by TWBC included safety campaigns with the AA; Bikeability training<sup>21</sup> part funded by the Department for Transport; Tunbridge Wells Great Bike Ride, and; Cycle Friday (launched 6 June 2014)<sup>22</sup>.

Final thoughts from Tunbridge Wells included; to be successful resources needed to be made available, and partnership working was important and should include agencies such as Sustrans, KCC, developers, landowners and local businesses; Department for Transport and the Highways Agency.

## **6.2 Existing work to promote walking and cycling in the Maidstone Borough**

KCC reported that Maidstone has 11.3% of the 4,200 miles of Public Rights of Way (PROW) in Kent providing a good historical asset of walking and cycling routes.

The Mote Park regeneration project provided traffic free routes which were being very well used by pedestrians and cyclist.

Inter parish 'behind the hedge (Public Rights of Way) schemes' had been developed – for example East Farleigh, Forge Lane route linking the village to the school and a similar scheme at Hunton linking the village to the church and village hall – providing safe pedestrian routes.

---

<sup>21</sup> Bikeability.dft.gov.uk

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.cyclefriday.co.uk/>

The Millennium River Project along the River Medway corridor provided a safe route for pedestrians and cyclist.

Work is being carried out to improve footpaths to Len Valley, Medway Valley and the Loose Valley Conservation area. It was considered the following footpath networks could be developed to form an orbital cycle and footpath route around Maidstone linking to Maidstone town centre via radial routes:

- Len Valley to the north of Maidstone;
- Medway Valley to the west of Maidstone;
- Tovil Nature Park;
- The Loose Valley Conservation area;
- Boughton Monchesea; and,
- Langley to the east of Maidstone;

## Recommendation

***G. That the Head of Planning and Development be asked to report back to by the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference during the 2015-2016 municipal year on:***

- ***The identity of potential routes for the provision of cycle ways from rural locations (villages and hamlets) with poor bus services, to bus stops on major routes with a more frequent bus service;***
- ***The possibility of creating an orbital cycle and footpath route around Maidstone linking to Maidstone town centre via radial routes such as:***
  - ***Len valley to the north of Maidstone***
  - ***Medway Valley to the west of Maidstone***
  - ***Tovil Nature Park***
  - ***The Loose Valley Conservation area***
  - ***Boughton Monchelsea, and***
  - ***Langley to the east of Maidstone***
- ***The costs of firstly providing cycle parking at the end of these routes;***
- ***The cost of the longer term aim of developing the cycle route to the cycle parking.***



KCC reported, that although MBCs planning policy ENV26 was considered a very effective policy, which stated no development would be allowed where there were Public Rights of Way, unless developers agreed to maintain or divert the routes. This had discouraged developers from developing in these areas. This in turn resulted in what has become known as 'back garden allies' where PROW were overgrown, unsafe and unused.

Bikeability cycle training was being offered to children and adults in the Borough using funding subsidised from the Department for Transport and Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF).

Work was being carried out with Kent Highways through a working group comprising of Kent Public Health and Kent Sport to promote the health benefits of cycling pitched at getting people on bikes who were not already using one. Maidstone Health Walks<sup>23</sup> scheme had lead three walks; Maidstone Town Centre Walk; Mote Park Health Walk; Cherry Orchard Health Walk. Data as of 7 July 2014 showed 662 walk hours had taken place since January 2014 with 57 registered walkers.

British Cycling and Sky TV<sup>24</sup>, part funded by Kent Public Health, encourage people of all levels to get involved in cycling through running events, guided rides, support and tips through the Sky Rider Local scheme. Four events took place in the Maidstone Borough between 20 July and 9 November 2014.

KM (Kent Messenger) Charity Team<sup>25</sup> work to encourage parents and children to walk to school. 'Walking Buses' operate along set routes, picking up children at pre-arranged points on the way to school. Parents take turns to escort the group of children to school, with everyone wearing a high visibility tabard for safety.

At the time of reporting (22 July 2014) 200 primary schools were using the KM Walk to School resources to promote green travel every week. During the last academic year (2012-2013) 218,000 school run car journeys were removed by local schools. For the academic year (2013-14 to July 2014) 22,517 school run car journeys were reported to have been removed from the roads in Maidstone.

Cycleplus<sup>26</sup> is a government approved scheme allowing employees to hire purchase a bike and safety equipment from their employers for commuting to work and for use outside of work. Bikes can be provided at up to 32% less than the usual cost and repayments can be spread across 12 to 18 months. Maidstone Borough Council offers this scheme to all its employees.

---

<sup>23</sup> [www.walkinforhealth.org.uk](http://www.walkinforhealth.org.uk)

<sup>24</sup> [www.goskyride.com](http://www.goskyride.com)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.kmcharityteam.co.uk/schools/schoolswalk/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/employers/employer-faqs>

### 6.3 Walking and Cycling groups

Much of the work in the promotion of walking and cycling is focussed on the health and social benefits they provide as leisure activities. There was very little evidence of explicitly encouraging either walking or cycling as a means of making other journeys such as getting to work. However, 39% of frequent riders had said that Sky Ride Local had influenced them to use their bike to commute to work.

Walking and cycling groups found by carrying out a search of the internet included:

- Maidstone Ramblers<sup>27</sup> – runs regular walks and social events around Kent.
- Maidstone Invicta U3A<sup>28</sup> – has a membership of 250 of older people no longer in full time work and has, amongst others, a short walk group (less than 5 miles).
- Mid Kent Outdoor Pursuits and Social Group<sup>29</sup> – has a membership of around 50 and organises activities, including walking around the Maidstone and Medway countryside.
- West Kent Walking and Outdoor Group<sup>30</sup> – is a walking group for those aged 30 to 50 and provide a mixed programme of walks most weekends.
- San Fairy Ann Cycling Club<sup>31</sup> – The largest cycling club in Kent with over 500 members from across the county. San Fairy Ann organise all types of cycling activities catering for riders of all abilities.

### 6.4 The draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy

The Draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy was produced in June 2012 by MBC officers and local interest groups and cyclist. The strategy was produced by understanding the current issues and the existing network, carrying out route audits and identifying opportunities for infrastructure improvements and developing an action plan. A copy of this document is attached as **Appendix D**.

Some parts of the draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy have been implemented, in particular the provision of cycle parking in the town centre and at train stations and improved route provision along a number of key corridors. The location of the existing and proposed cycle parking are shown on page 29-30 of the draft strategy.

Walking and cycling forms an integral part of the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and is covered by a number of objectives set out in the framework ITS agreed by MBC Cabinet on 27 January 2014. The strategy includes improving infrastructure and wayfinding, through securing Travel Plans for new developments as well as schools and existing businesses, introducing behaviour change projects to help influence how people travel.

---

<sup>27</sup> [Maidstoneramblers.org.uk](http://Maidstoneramblers.org.uk)

<sup>28</sup> [u3asites.org.uk](http://u3asites.org.uk)

<sup>29</sup> [www.midkentgroup.co.uk](http://www.midkentgroup.co.uk)

<sup>30</sup> [www.wkwg.org.uk](http://www.wkwg.org.uk)

<sup>31</sup> [www.sanfairyancc.co.uk](http://www.sanfairyancc.co.uk)

The draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy is still to go out to public consultation before being adopted.

### Recommendation

***E. That the Head of Planning and Development be recommended to urgently refresh and update the draft Maidstone Borough Council Draft Cycling Strategy, dated June 2012 and present it to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference in the new municipal year 2015-2016 before taking it for public consultation.***

### Recommendation

***F. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, use the principal proposals from the refreshed Cycling Strategy to inform the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy.***

### Recommendation

***G. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to:***

- Proceed with establishing the Maidstone Cycling Forum and ensure it is supported by an officer with responsibility for cycling in their job description;***
- Identify a lead member to act as a cycling champion within the authority.***

## 6.5 Safety

The Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) Surveillance report dated 27 March 2014<sup>32</sup> is a compendium of data covering a number of public health areas. One of the key areas of concern for the CMO was:

"Walking and cycling – Safety for pedestrians and cyclists must be improved if we are to encourage people to walk and cycle more and reap the associated health benefits. The risk of serious injury for each kilometre travelled on a bike is 21 times higher than by car. The CMO says that the relative risks of walking and cycling are unacceptably high and must be reduced and that an integrated approach to improving safety for all road users must be taken."

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-medical-officer-publishes-annual-report-on-state-of-the-publics-health>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2014/02february/pages/cycling-safety-a-special-report.aspx>



However, in a Cycling Safety Special Report by NHS Choices<sup>33</sup> researchers concluded that the benefits of cycling far outweigh the potential risks.

Researchers estimated that,

“On average, the benefits associated with regular cycling equated to up to 14 months extra life expectancy. The risks equated to a decreased life expectancy of up to 40 days; however, this was the upper limit and the figure may be closer to the 20-day mark. This represents an impressive benefit to risk ratio, despite only looking at the physical benefits of exercise. However, there are also documented psychological benefits of exercise, such as an improvement in mood, increased self-confidence and reduced risk of depression.”

## 6.6 Safety in Maidstone

In Maidstone Borough, pedal cycle casualties increased from 21 in 2009 to 41 in 2013. Killed or seriously injured (KSI) pedal cycle casualties are low and numbers vary with a peak in 2012 of 10.<sup>34</sup>

Pedestrian casualties injured in the Borough, after a peak in 2011 have recorded decreases in 2012 and 2013.

**Table 2 Pedestrian and pedal cycle casualties in Maidstone District by year and severity**

| Year | Severity | Pedestrians | Pedal Cyclists | Total |
|------|----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 2009 | KSI      | 8           | 2              | 10    |
|      | Slight   | 60          | 19             | 79    |
|      | Total    | 68          | 21             | 89    |
| 2010 | KSI      | 7           | 5              | 12    |
|      | Slight   | 54          | 22             | 76    |
|      | Total    | 61          | 27             | 88    |
| 2011 | KSI      | 16          | 2              | 18    |
|      | Slight   | 64          | 26             | 90    |
|      | Total    | 80          | 28             | 108   |
| 2012 | KSI      | 16          | 10             | 26    |
|      | Slight   | 52          | 28             | 80    |
|      | Total    | 68          | 38             | 106   |
| 2013 | KSI      | 10          | 5              | 15    |
|      | Slight   | 52          | 36             | 88    |
|      | Total    | 62          | 41             | 103   |

Whilst the A229 recorded the highest number of pedestrian and pedal cycle collisions in the last 5 years, the route with the highest rate of collisions was the B2012 (Well Street in Maidstone town centre).

<sup>32</sup> Maidstone Borough Pedestrian and Pedal Cycle Data, Road Safety Team, KCC

**Table 3 Collisions involving pedestrians or pedal cyclists in Maidstone by route, 2009 to 2013**

|       | Approx route length in km | Pedestrians                          |                                      |   |   | Pedal cycles                          |                                       |  |   |
|-------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
|       |                           | KSI collisions involving pedestrians | All collisions involving pedestrians | KSI collisions involving pedestrians/km | All collisions involving pedestrians/km | KSI collisions involving pedal cycles | All collisions involving pedal cycles | KSI collisions involving pedal cycles/km | All collisions involving pedestrians/km |
| A20   | 25.2                      | 3                                    | 28                                   | 0.12                                    | 1.11                                    | 5                                     | 20                                    | 0.20                                     | 0.79                                    |
| A2054 | 1.6                       | 0                                    | 0                                    | 0.00                                    | 0.00                                    | 1                                     | 1                                     | 0.63                                     | 0.63                                    |
| A229  | 31.4                      | 6                                    | 53                                   | 0.19                                    | 1.69                                    | 6                                     | 28                                    | 0.19                                     | 0.89                                    |
| A249  | 25                        | 2                                    | 13                                   | 0.08                                    | 0.52                                    | 1                                     | 3                                     | 0.04                                     | 0.12                                    |
| A26   | 6.5                       | 2                                    | 26                                   | 0.31                                    | 4.00                                    | 1                                     | 13                                    | 0.15                                     | 2.00                                    |
| A274  | 16.3                      | 4                                    | 16                                   | 0.25                                    | 0.98                                    | 0                                     | 7                                     | 0.00                                     | 0.43                                    |
| B2010 | 9.6                       | 2                                    | 6                                    | 0.21                                    | 0.63                                    | 1                                     | 2                                     | 0.10                                     | 0.21                                    |
| B2012 | 1.4                       | 2                                    | 6                                    | 1.43                                    | 4.29                                    | 1                                     | 3                                     | 0.71                                     | 2.14                                    |
| B2079 | 8.1                       | 0                                    | 2                                    | 0.00                                    | 0.25                                    | 0                                     | 0                                     | 0.00                                     | 0.00                                    |
| B2162 | 9.4                       | 0                                    | 1                                    | 0.00                                    | 0.11                                    | 2                                     | 4                                     | 0.21                                     | 0.43                                    |
| B2163 | 15.7                      | 3                                    | 11                                   | 0.19                                    | 0.70                                    | 0                                     | 4                                     | 0.00                                     | 0.25                                    |
| B2246 | 1.4                       | 0                                    | 1                                    | 0.00                                    | 0.71                                    | 0                                     | 1                                     | 0.00                                     | 0.71                                    |

The casualty profile for pedal cyclists in Maidstone shows peaks in the 10 to 14 and 45 to 49 age brackets with 19 each. KSI casualties recorded a peak in the 25 to 29 year old age bracket.

34% of KSI pedal cycle collisions occurred on weekends (5 on Sunday, 3 on Saturday). All but two of the KSI collisions involved another road user. Of the 19 10 to 14 year old pedal cycle casualties, 90% of the collisions occur on weekdays with a peak at 0800-0859 (3) and between 1500 and 1659 (8).

## 6.7 20mph Limits and Zones

Although not a major part of this review, 20mph limits and zones were part of the committee's discussions.

For clarity 20mph speed restrictions are limits and rely solely on signage, and 20mph zones have traffic calming measures in place (build outs, speed humps, etc.) to reduce speed. Highways Authorities such as Kent Highways have powers to introduce 20mph speed limits that apply only at certain times of day.

From October 2013 for up to a period of 18 months, KCC carried out a trial of 20mph schemes near six local schools in the Borough to gather evidence to establish whether such schemes could provide cost effective road safety benefits.

At the meeting of the Environment, Highways and Waste Cabinet Committee on 3 October 2013<sup>35</sup> Decision No: 13/00063 paragraph 12.7, it was decided:

“Taking in to account all the evidence gained from current local and national experiences there is insufficient evidence to recommend KCC adopts a blanket policy for the implementation of 20mph schemes. It is proposed that KCC continues with its policy of implementing 20mph schemes where there is clear justification in terms of achieving casualty reduction as part of the on-going programme of Casualty Reduction Schemes. However, in addition it is now proposed to identify where 20mph schemes can be implemented that would encourage more walking and cycling notwithstanding the casualty record. This will assist with delivering targets set out in Kent’s Joint Health and Well Being Strategy”.

The committee heard a lack of street lighting after midnight created safety issues for some pedestrians and cyclist. It was also stated segregation of pedestrians and cyclists from cars was very expensive and required a large element of public land to accommodate it.

It was suggested dropped and tactile curbs supported walking, as did pedestrian priority at junctions and traffic lights.

Witnesses reported the main roads in Maidstone were unpleasant for non-motorised users, there was little cycling infrastructure and crossings were designed to prevent inconvenience to cars rather than being convenient for cyclists or pedestrians. Witnesses also reported that the infrastructure in existence was often of poor quality and was mostly a pedestrian infrastructure with cyclists allowed. It was felt cycling was not considered a proper mode of transport and when it was is was as an afterthought or “squeezed in at the sides” and cycling specific schemes were rarely considered.

**“Don’t be anti-car – be pro cycling”**

James Gower, Cycling enthusiast,  
Maidstone

---

<sup>35</sup> <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43305/B1%20Updated%20Policy%20for%2020mph%20limits%20and%20zones%20on%20KCC%20roads%2003102013%20Environment%20Highways%20and%20Wast.pdf>

## 7 Bus Services

Approximately 80% of the local bus network in Kent runs on a commercial basis and in Maidstone is operated by the likes of Arriva and Nu-Venture. Kent County Council (KCC) builds on this network by providing £6.8 million in discretionary subsidy towards the other 20% of the network. This equates to approximately 166 local bus services which are not commercially viable for local bus operators but are considered to be socially necessary as they provide the only access to key services.

Additional services such as the Maidstone Borough Council funded Park and Ride facilities are also provided on top of this core network. This service is reviewed in part 9 of this report.

### 7.1 Quality Bus Partnership

The Quality Bus Partnership (QBP)<sup>36</sup> is a voluntary partnership between MBC, KCC and the primary commercial bus company, Arriva. NuVenture is represented by KCC at the QBP as their services are mainly funded by KCC. The Partnership

“is committed to encouraging the use of public transport in and around Maidstone to help residents get around more easily, to reduce the effects of traffic congestion, to help Maidstone’s economy and reduce emissions.”

The Partnership discusses operational issues of the principal commercial public transport companies operating in and around Maidstone.

Some of the achievements of the QBP outlined on their web page include:

- Spending £3.3 million on 11 new hybrid buses for Route 71, serving the A20 and A26 - this was funded by the Green Bus fund, KCC and Arriva;
- Adding six new buses on Route 82, serving Park Wood;
- Spending £100,000 to fully-refurbish seven mid-life buses;
- Building 12 new bus shelters;
- Spending £50,000 to refresh Maidstone’s Chequers Bus Station;
- Improved the quality of bus stops;

***“Much of the negative feedback on bus services focuses on two rural routes. This represents just four out of the 62 bus services Arriva and NuVenture operate in Maidstone. It should be noted that issues affecting these four rural buses are not representative of the good work that has gone on under the auspices of the Quality Bus Partnership which has delivered significant investment and improvements throughout the Borough.”***

*Arriva Buses*

---

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/quality-bus-partnership>

- Increased the number of clearways at bus stops, reducing obstructions to buses and delays to services;
- Starting a forum for discussing route changes, bus issues, performance and customer feedback;
- Helped set up trials for contactless payments;
- Helped increase the number of satisfied passengers using the buses in Maidstone;
- Helped improve the punctuality of the bus services in Maidstone and
- Introducing the A20 Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme - the scheme sets the minimum standards for buses and bus stops along the A20, and;
- All of Arriva's Maidstone fleet now have low-floors and are 100% wheelchair accessible.

At a meeting with representatives of the QBP on 16 September 2014, it was agreed a proposal would go to the Partnership to recommend a Councillor from MBC be invited to join the QBP.

## Recommendation

***H. That a member of Maidstone Borough Council's Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC), or a member of the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be invited to join the Quality Bus Partnership.***

## 7.2 Service issues in the Rural Service Centres and Parishes

In preparation for the review of bus services in the Maidstone Borough the working group consulted with all Borough Councillors and Parish Councils asking for the following information:

- Any bus service issues you may have in your constituency, and;
- Any bus user groups you are aware of in your constituency.

The responses received were used as the basis for the questions put to the witnesses, who kindly agreed to attend meetings with the working group and the committee for this review.

The responses demonstrated the parishes who did respond were either not aware of any bus user groups in their parish or omitted to respond to the question.

Responses were received from 12 parish councils. The issues raised focussed mainly around:

- Reliability – buses arriving early, late or not at all;
- Availability/Frequency – some parishes had a bus service but it was too infrequent;
- Cost of fares;
- Bus stops and shelters.

### **7.3 Reliability**

#### **Road closures**

The reliability issues raised focussed mainly on certain buses arriving late or not arriving at all due to road works or road closures.

It was reported that KCC Highways system of notification to bus service providers of road closures had worked well. However service providers reported it had recently become “erratic”. Service providers stressed the importance of receiving this information in a timely manner, to minimise disruption, was paramount to them being able to deliver their services.

The Traffic Commissioner requires bus service providers give eight weeks-notice of road closures but it was accepted that this was not always possible with emergency road closures. The Traffic Commission, the regulator for bus service providers, has a rigid legal framework service providers have to work within.

Service providers are required to give 56 days notice of changes to bus routes and the Commissioner applies this requirement rigidly. If bus services followed diversions put in place because of road closures they could be found to be breaking the law. However, there is some flexibility in this. Whilst there is a need for operators to register changes to their timetables and routes (with short notice support from the Local Authority where appropriate) the Traffic Commissioner does have a facility whereby operators can register short notice variations required due to road works at no cost and without the need for 56 days notice. Operators can also specify within their permanent registrations that the registered route “may be subject to change in the event of an emergency or if roads specified are not available”.

Responsibility for putting up notices to notify service users of cancelled or suspended services lies with KCC for their part funded routes. Arriva are responsible for putting up notices for all their routes.

It was reported that KCC Public Transport department had recently moved to the same site as Kent Highways department and was now under the same banner of Kent Highways. It was planned to organise regular meetings between Public Transport Planners and Highways to liaise and discuss approaches to road closures taking into account the needs of the service users affected by them.

It was noted that an appreciation that some road works have to take place at short notice due to the emergency nature and as such bus service cannot always be fully considered.

### **Parked cars blocking roads**

This was an issue already being considered through groups such as the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) and the Punctuality and Improvement Partnership (PiP). Issues can be raised by the predominant commercial operator (Arriva) as these forums are attended by the appropriate authorities to deal with these issues.

Where parked cars become regular occurrences on roads served by buses, service providers report it to MBC as the delegated parking authority so the appropriate measures can be considered, for example, enforcement. NuVenture reported they always found MBC very responsive in dealing with such reports.

### **Buses arriving and leaving earlier than scheduled**

There are legal obligations on bus companies to ensure buses run to time and use of electronic ticketing equipment makes it much easier to detect issues. Early running of buses is always avoidable and generally dealt with through disciplinary action.

***“Provision of a regular and reliable bus service is paramount for the passenger – and for their part, the operators will always seek to provide the most reliable service”***

*Norman Kemp, NuVenture Coaches Ltd,  
16 September 2014*

Groups such as the QBP and PiP see various partners work together to help buses run more reliably where possible. Discussions at meetings include looking at issues such as congestion, bus priority measures and funding streams to increase service provision. KCC have a performance monitoring/compliance process in place for contracted services to ensure they are running as per the Kent Bus contract terms and conditions and agreed service specification.

### **Real time service updates**

Real time service updates could be provided at bus stops or in nearby shops. Technology to provide this service was already available on every bus, transmitting details of where they were.

Where funding is available this service could be provided by parish councils or funded through Section 106 Agreements. The cost would need to be weighed against the number of users. The maintenance and repair of the equipment would also need to be taken into consideration.

Commercial services are monitored by the responsible statutory body, the Traffic Commissioner.

## Recommendation

***I. That the Public Transport Team at Kent County Council at meetings with KCC Highways, raise the following requests and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference during the 2015-2016 municipal year:***

- A definitive list of forthcoming road closures be sent to bus service providers in a timely manner to facilitate compliance with the Traffic Commissioners regulations;***
- A set of processes and procedures are established and put in place for communicating road closures to avoid problems when changes to Highways personnel are made;***
- A definition of what constitutes an emergency road closure is published and shared with bus service providers.***

## 7.4 Availability

Issues raised by parish councils included:

- Services finishing too early and not catering for workers returning home and the twilight economy;
- Services not linking rural villages to train stations or Maidstone town;
- No Sunday bus service;
- No cross Borough service, eg, Headcorn to Lenham or Staplehurst;
- One bus per hour out of the parish was not enough;
- Not enough return services from Maidstone;
- Some bus routes not serving local shop and other facilities.

It was reported that the KCC's Local Bus budget was fully allocated. KCC had managed to maintain a high number of subsidised services despite the current financial climate. If a new service required funding KCC was not currently in a position to fund it.

Funding streams were becoming increasingly important in providing bus services such as Section 106 Agreements, Kickstart and the Community Transport sector.



## Recommendation

***J. That the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for Community and Leisure in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended, as part of the Parish Charter refresh, to include a section on the powers and opportunities parish councils have in the provision of transport services and capital equipment, such as bus shelters and real time transport information, and funding streams available to them.***

### 7.5 Quality Contracts

A House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger Transport in Isolated Communities<sup>37</sup> raised the potential for local authorities to use Quality Contracts to introduce franchising systems similar to those operating in London – where the local transport authority specifies what service is required and the private sector competes for the right to provide it.

For KCC contracted services there is usually a tender round per district (involving the majority of services within that district) every four years. The tendering of a district as one allows operators to submit proposals, where appropriate, to provide a more total network solution. KCC Public Transport was going through a restructure and will look to challenge traditional tendering methods. Quality Contracts are an area that may be explored further. The re-structure will see the combining of Local Bus and Mainstream (school transport) functions at KCC.

### 7.6 Service enhancements

The 20% reduction in Bus Service Operator Grants was still having an effect on supported bus services. This reduced the ability of local authorities to respond to transport needs in isolated communities and impacted on employment and the local economy.

NuVenture reported if there was enough demand for a particular service they would be interested in providing it. Parish councils and residents who had ideas for bus service enhancements were encouraged to speak to the bus operators. If the idea was considered viable and linked with an existing service it is possible it could be provided.

NuVenture also reported they would be happy to provide a 'twilight' service if funding was available. Medway Council are currently running a pilot twilight service that could be used as a model.

---

<sup>37</sup> HC288 published 22 July 2014

Any local authority (District or Parish) could use their funds to provide a service. If the service is proven to be socially important, authorities can put the service out to competitive tender.

## Recommendation

***T. That a Maidstone Borough Council Officer be asked to investigate and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference Committee during the municipal year 2015-2016 on the progress and lessons learnt from the Medway twilight bus service once the trial is completed.***

### 7.7 Cost

Concern regarding the cost of bus services was raised by several parish councils particularly for their unemployed and low income residents.

MBC's Maidstone Financial Capability Partnership (MFCP) has been looking at ways to assist residents with making their money go further and provide support during, what may be for some, financially difficult times using partner organisations expertise across the Borough.

The project has been looking at household expenditure including transport costs. A meeting between members of MFCP and Arriva officers was held on 29 September 2014 to discuss the role of bus services in social inclusion.

During the meeting it was discussed that Arriva may be able to allow organisations to bulk buy tickets, and give to struggling families who are in crisis. Each organisation would apply for the deal, and decide which family to help with a discounted ticket. Organisations who would benefit from this are Children's Centres, Kent Support and Assistance Service (KCC), and Troubled Families Programme (MBC Maidstone Families Matter). A bulk buy scheme could also benefit residents attending work experience, interviews and apprenticeship schemes through Job Centre Plus, MBC and KCC.

Demographic information on residents of the Maidstone Borough would enable Arriva to revise their fare structure for the more deprived areas of the Borough.

### 7.8 Total Transport

The House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger Transport in Isolated Communities previously mentioned discusses the concept of Total Transport.

“Total Transport involves integrating transport services that are currently commissioned by different central and local government agencies and provided by different operators. Such integrated services might deliver improved passenger transport in isolated communities by allocating existing resources more efficiently. That might entail, for example, combining conventional bus services with hospital transport.”

The concept of Total Transport for Maidstone Borough was considered by service providers as a way forward. However, they reported the issue would be how to calculate how much of the fares each provider would get and what methods would be used to buy services. Joint thinking and working was key to success and was something providers were keen to investigate.

## 7.9 Bus Stops and Shelters

Several parishes reported issues with the provision of bus shelters and bus stops. The issues included safety; positioning, shelter from the weather; seating and maintenance.

The basic ‘advertising’ bus shelters are managed by MBC through a contractor. The new contract was in the process of being procured and if the existing contractor was unsuccessful in renewing the contract they would be likely to take away the existing shelters.

Parish councils can provide their own shelters and can apply for up to £2000 Rural Bus Shelter Grant from KCC, which would require match funding. There is a Kent Design Guide to help parishes with the design and siting of their shelter and signing and on-going maintenance to ensure it is built in keeping with the surrounding area.

### Recommendation

***L. That the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for Community and Leisure in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended, as part of the Parish Charter refresh, to include a section on the powers and opportunities parish councils have in the provision of transport services and capital equipment, such as bus shelters and real time transport information, and funding streams available to them.***

KCC and bus service providers agreed it would be useful for parishes to get involved with Kent Highways regarding the siting of shelters. It was also recommended the bus service providers are consulted on the design to ensure drivers are able to see there are passengers waiting to be picked up. Tovil Green’s new bus shelter was described as a good example of an effective bus shelter.

## Recommendation

***M. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, be recommended to include the potential use of Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies to support the provision of bus services, and/or provide capital equipment for bus services in the Borough in the Local Plan.***

## Recommendation

***N. That Kent County Council Transport Planning Officers be recommended to make strong arguments where they can to give Section 106 agreements impetus to provide bus services in and around the Borough of Maidstone.***

### 7.10 Bus User Groups in the Maidstone Borough

#### East of Maidstone Bus Group (EMBG)

Membership of this group includes eight parish councils in the East of Maidstone; Kent County Council; NuVenture and Arriva.

The group meets two to three times each year to consider and address issues raised by parishes or bus operators to help improve and safeguard services across the area, draw attention to issues raised, publicise services and help drive up passenger numbers.

The main concerns raised by this group were:

- **Journey times** – and their impact on people deciding to travel by bus (or not). It was suggested that new routes should be considered side by side with the Local Plan;
- **Community Bus Services** – it was suggested it would be unrealistic for local authorities to expect voluntary/community projects to compensate for decreased bus services;
- **Section 106 Agreements** – should be used to support new/revised routes supporting the Rural Service Centres;
- **MBC Transport Committee** – this group was disbanded some years ago. It had high level representatives from bus service operators; Network Rail; Southeastern Rail; service users; MBC officers; KCC officers. The group discussed transport service issues across the Maidstone Borough as well as safety issues, planning consents and contributions from developers. EMBG considered this group to have been a valuable asset to driving forward improvements to public transport and should be re-established.

## Local Transport Accessibility Group (LTAG)

This group represents Staplehurst, Frittenden, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Sandhurst and Bodiam, parishes who are connected in some way to Hawkhurst by bus.

The group meets every two months and is attended by parish councillors, residents' associations, bus service providers, Arriva, Kent County Council and service users. The group provides a forum for service users and providers to have face to face discussions regarding bus service provision.

The main concerns raised by this group were:

**Performance and reliability of the No 5 bus route** – the group reported the unreliability of this service had resulted in many parents not risking their children going to/from school using this service due to reliability and capacity issues. Parents chose to take their children to school by car instead.

It was requested that better, more timely, information from KCC in relation to the issuing of bus passes for young people and those in school, college or training, would help bus operators plan more effectively, especially at the start of the academic year when passes were issued and re-issued.

### 7.11 The Number 5 Bus Service

The number 5 service has distinct flows of children to Cornwallis Academy and Maidstone schools in one direction and to Angley School in the other. The service came under the spotlight during the 2013-14 academic year regarding both capacity and operational issues. As a result Arriva delivered a number of operational changes to help with reliability, such as the introduction of a regular set of drivers and more frequent maintenance inspections of vehicles. It is believed these changes have had a positive effect on the service.

***“KCC funds three additional capacity vehicles on the number 5 service and are confident that the corridor is now robust enough to cater for all intending passengers. Our understanding is that correspondence this year has centred around operational issues which are actively being addressed by Arriva as the commercial operator. Ultimately, these need to continue to be raised with Arriva or failing that with the Traffic Commission which is the statutory body responsible for the regulation of commercial bus service operations. KCC is confident with the capacity on the corridor but continues to liaise with Arriva on this and other issues.”***

*KCC Local Transport Planning (Mid Kent)*

Regarding capacity, KCC's involvement with the commercial network is to purchase season tickets for children in education who are entitled to free home to school transport. Due to this, and the existence of the Young Persons Travel Pass, KCC do work with commercial operators to assist with genuine issues of overcrowding where they are identified and take an interest in the network in general.

**Arriva App for mobile phones** – in relation to providing real time information and the location of buses was considered a useful advance and would make life easier for those who owned a Smart phone. However, many rural bus service users did not own a Smart phone.

## **Recommendation**

***0. That parishes, residents associations and neighbourhood forums be encouraged by the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, to form groups similar to the East of Maidstone Bus User Group.***

## 8 Rail Services

Kent's rail network is the result of historic competition between rival railway companies in the 19th century; consolidation under the Southern Railway and then British Railways in the 20th century; and dramatic change delivered by the present franchise operator with the arrival of High Speed services which have transformed journey times between East Kent and London in the 21st century.<sup>38</sup>

On 11 September 2014 Southeastern Trains announced that a 'Direct Award' contract had been agreed with the Department for Transport. It was stated "customers would see a host of schemes rolled out over the next three and a half years to improve train services and the passenger experience. The new franchise would run from 12 October 2014 to 24 June 2018."<sup>39</sup>

In previous franchise agreements Southeastern Trains would have received revenue support from the Government to provide rail services. The new franchise put Southeastern Trains in 'Revenue Risk'. This meant they had to generate all their income. This should result in more effective marketing and partnership working with local bus service providers and tourist attractions.

As a result of this review the committee acknowledge the good work commuter rail user groups are doing, but note that their primary focus is travel from Maidstone to London and other commuter destinations, whilst our review has been focussing on local travel into Maidstone. However as the Council moves forward in implementing the proposals in our review there will be some issues where these concerns overlap and opportunities for appropriate future co-operation will be considered.

On Tuesday 18 November 2014 the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting focused on Rail services as part of this review. Witnesses who attended this meeting were:

- Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, Southeastern Rail;
- Mike Fitzgerald, Chair Kent Community Rail Partnership and Medway Valley Line Group;
- Keith Harrison, Chief Executive, Action with Rural Communities;
- Stephen Gasche, Principal Transport Planner – Rail, Kent County Council – written evidence presented to the meeting.

---

<sup>38</sup> Rail Action Plan for Kent April 2011, Kent County Council

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.southeasternrailway.co.uk/about-us/latest-news/southeastern-awarded-new-contract-to-continue-operation-of-train-services/>

## **8.1 Improvements to rail service provision in the Maidstone Borough**

In preparation for the review of rail services in the Maidstone Borough the working group consulted with all Borough Councillors and Parish Councils asking for the following information:

- What issues does your parish have with train services within the borough that result in people using their car rather than the train?

The responses received were used as the basis for the questions put to the witnesses, who kindly agreed to attend meetings with the working group and the committee for this review.

Feedback received from parish councils and borough Councillors focused on four main areas:

- Cost
- Station parking and 'rail heading'
- Convenience and reliability
- Safety

## **8.2 Cost**

Comments received included "more travellers would use the train instead of their cars if the train fares were more affordable"; and, "the high cost of train travel means that the fares are a prohibiting factor to many potential users."

Southeastern Trains regularly surveyed its customers. Data gathered demonstrated that value for money services was one of their customers' main priorities along with more frequent trains at times convenient to them and a seat on the train.

Value for money was going to be a major focus for Southeastern Trains over the next four years. While government set the cost of regulated fares, for example season tickets, Southeastern Trains had control of off peak fares. At the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 18 November 2014<sup>40</sup>, Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager of Southeastern Trains stated "in the coming months customers would see more offers on off peak services."

On 5 December 2014 Southeastern announced a freeze on super off peak fares for 2015 claiming this will cut the cost of more than one million off peak journeys for passengers in Kent and East Sussex. The company is also making the special fares available on more routes, including the high speed service, which runs from Kent into London. The train operator also announced it will offer Advance fares for the first time in 2015 allowing customers a discount by pre-booking off peak fares via the Southeastern website.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=555&MId=2188&Ver=4>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.southeasternrailway.co.uk/about-us/latest-news/southeastern-announces-a-rail-sale-huge-reductions-for-more-than-a-million-off-peak-journeys/>



### 8.3 Station Parking and 'rail-heading'

Comments received from parish councils regarding the issue of station parking related to the availability of spaces and the cost of parking at rural stations. Both were considered, by respondents, to be a deterrent to encouraging the use of rail as an alternative to using the car to get to Maidstone.

Rural stations such as Headcorn and Staplehurst provide good services for commuters into London. It was reported this resulted in commuters from other areas in the borough, where services into London were not so regular and fast, travelling across to Headcorn or Staplehurst to use the rail services. This practice was described as 'rail-heading' and occurs in locations along the Maidstone East line and the Tonbridge/Sevenoaks line.

Rail-heading results in rural station car parks being full to capacity or nearby residential streets being used rather than the car park (due to the cost), Headcorn was given as an example.

Since the Canon Street service from Maidstone was stopped in 2009, SET had seen an increase in passenger numbers from Paddock Wood. It was reported to the committee that it was possible to find out where season tick holders lived who were travelling from this station to establish how far they had driven to use the service.

Network Rail owned the land used for station parking. Suggested solutions to alleviate parking pressures at rural rail stations included approaching Network Rail to consider expanding car parks (noting this would require funds) and Southeastern Trains reducing the parking charges to encourage their use instead of residential streets.

#### Recommendation

***P. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to survey the users of Maidstone East railway station car park to find out their reason for using it to establish how many users were rail passengers and how many were not.***

#### Recommendation

***Q. That the Cabinet Member for Planning Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to:***

- Respond to the Department for Transport's franchise consultation, which was due in 2016;***
- To reduce unnecessary car travel within the borough, this response should request improved commuter and off peak services using high speed trains and Thameslink services to reduce the number of rail users travelling across the borough by car to other stations that offer better service than their local station;***
- Continue to promote aspirations for re-securing a Maidstone to Canon Street service.***

## Recommendation

***R. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to re-establish the Maidstone Borough Transport User Group. Membership to include representatives from all public transport service providers, KCC transport planners, MBC officers/members, parish councils, service users and other interested parties to ensure on-going issues with transport and ideas for enhancements to services are communicated and dealt with***

KCC, in partnership with East Sussex County Council persuaded the Department for Transport to bring the new Thameslink services for Kent to Maidstone East rather than Tunbridge Wells. From May 2018 Maidstone East will be served by a direct half-hourly service to four key London stations (Elephant and Castle, Blackfriars, Farringdon and St Pancras). It is hoped this new service will substantially reduce rail-heading

### 8.4 Convenience and reliability

Parish councils raised the issue that rural train stations can be a long way out of the village, resulting in residents having to get in their car to travel to the station. It is thought, once in their car, residents felt they may as well continue their journey to Maidstone by car.

One parish council suggested a bus service from the village centre to the train station, linking up with train times, would help increase rail use in these parishes.

Southeastern Trains stated they were working with other public transport providers to link up and coordinate services. Plus Bus was a scheme currently in operation which included bus and rail travel, however, it is not advertised well. Stagecoach in Thanet was given as an example of where the two (bus and rail) services worked well together.

Another example of where bus and rail coordination worked well was the route 123 between West Malling station and Kings Hill. This bus service has a timetable based entirely on rail connections at the station to provide a link between the employment and residential area of Kings Hill and the rail services provided at West Malling station.

Kent was one of the smallest franchises in geographical terms, with 178 stations. Service specifications (for example trains per hour) were set by Government. The times of the trains were set by the operator (Southeastern). Train services would be quicker if there were fewer infrastructure issues (the responsibility of Network Rail) and trains did not stop at so many stations.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Statement by Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager of Southeastern Trains at meeting of PTD OSC 18 November 2014.

An on-going issue with the 07:45 service from Bearsted caused by a freight train regularly breaking down resulting in the service being cancelled. The knock on effect was parents having to take their children to school increasing the number of cars going into the town.

Network rail allocate time slots to service providers and freight operators. The freight trains used are old and prone to breaking down. Southeastern Trains have been working with Network Rail, at a senior level, to ensure the 07:45 service from Bearsted and other affected stations on this route receive a reliable service.

Through working together KCC, Network Rail and SET have made the 7:47 service from Ashford to Maidstone East more reliable. There was frequent occasions when this service was cut or operated non-stop between Ashford and Maidstone, leaving school children stranded. Now SET and Network Rail's joint control centre knows this train must operate, even if it means making changes to other services as a result.

Southeastern Trains stated that information provided to its customers was crucial, especially when services were delayed and the reasons for the delay. In the first four months of the new franchise 100 additional staff had been employed. Plans were in place to provide front line staff with iPads to assist customers with timely information on rail services. A mobile phone app was also available. Information boards at Maidstone stations were due to be upgraded.

To assist with reliability issues, Network Rail would be removing speed restrictions and improving their programme of asset repairs and maintenance. Southeastern Trains claimed issues with timetables for 2015 had been resolved.

## **8.5 Safety**

Feedback from parish councils stated the increase in anti-social behaviour on the trains with insufficient staff on the trains to deal with it was a major concern.

Concern was also raised regarding the transport infrastructure in the proposed Rural Service Areas in the draft Local Plan, such as Lenham and Harrietsham. Stations in these areas were considered by councillors to be in a poor state of repair with no lighting and no staff.

SET reported they were planning to make stations more welcoming to customers to encourage people out of their cars on to trains. This would be achieved by more attractive off peak travel, providing decent, clean stations where customers could buy a ticket and improved timetable information.

SET reported they were investing £5m in station improvements in partnership with Kent County Council and local businesses. All South East rail stations will be deep cleaned by the end of 2015. Other improvements would include online information, CCTV, ticket machines and ticket gates.

As mentioned under point 8.5.6.8 SET have increased the number of front line staff at stations.

SET stated they were expanding their City Safe Haven scheme with local police, where train stations were used as a place of safety for the public. The scheme had been trialled in Medway and London and SET were planning to extend this to other areas.

## **8.6 Kent Community Rail Partnership<sup>43</sup>**

The Kent Community Rail Partnership (KCRP) partners include Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and South Eastern trains as members, together with the following parish councils:

- Yalding;
- East Malling & Larkfield;
- Barming;
- East Farleigh;
- Aylesham; and,
- Maidstone Borough Councillor, Fay Gooch.

KCRP is funded by its members.

KCRP focuses its work on rail lines considered unlikely to attract investment from the rail industry. It works to bring social, economic and environmental benefits to the communities served by the rural and secondary rail services by improving community links with rail operators and initiating projects to make rail service more attractive to residents and visitors.

The Medway Valley Line is one line the KCRP promotes. This line runs from Strood in North Kent to Paddock Wood in the Weald of Kent with Maidstone West station, the only staffed station along the line, set centrally along it. To the south of Maidstone the line follows the course of the River Medway as far as Yalding and is mainly rural. To the north of Maidstone the area is mainly urban and industrial.

Regular services run from Maidstone West to Strood and Tonbridge. The High Speed service to and from St Pancras runs at peak morning and evening times Monday to Friday.

KCRP uses pop up displays to promote rail services to those who do not use them and to gather information and help to improve the services for those that did by influencing the service providers.

---

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.kentcrp.org.uk/>

KCRP had promoted the provision of cycle parking at Maidstone East station. It was reported there had been an increase in passengers cycling to the station with 50 to 60 passengers using the facility on most days.

The work of KCRP also included promoting health and safety on the railways to children between the ages of 10 and 12. Their work in schools also included promoting rail travel to children.

KCRP also run Station Adoption Schemes and Station Champion Schemes. This is where parish councils or an individual take responsibility for enhancing the facilities and look of a station. The schemes have resulted in one or two stations being adopted and had shown signs of reducing crime at these stations. KCRP are keen to expand this scheme to more stations.

## Recommendation

***S. That Councillor Chittenden investigate how Maidstone Borough can be represented on the South Eastern Public Transport User Group and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015***

## Recommendation

***T. That the Head of Planning and Development be recommended to ensure Section 106 funding be sought from developers at every opportunity to:***

- Support public transport links to and from new developments linking bus and rail services, and;***
- Ensure the provision is timed in a way to provide services that increase as occupation of developments increase.***

## Recommendation

***U. That the Chairman of the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee write to Mr Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, South Eastern Trains to:***

- Establish how parish councils can access funding for improvements to rural rail stations;***
- Request he take forward his suggestion to approach Network Rail regarding the possibility of expanding rail station car parks at Bearsted and Headcorn and look into the possibility of extending this to other rural rail stations;***
- Request he take forward his suggestion to reduce parking costs at rural rail stations such as Headcorn to discourage rail users from parking in residential areas.***

## 9 Park and Ride Services

The first Park and Ride service was introduced to Maidstone during the early 1980's on a Saturday only basis, where bus services operated from Springfield and Armstrong Road.

In November 1989, the first all-week Park and Ride car park was opened at Willington Street, followed by sites at Coombe Quarry (1990), London Road (1991) and Sittingbourne Road (1998).

The existing Park and Ride service was introduced as a result of severe peak hour traffic congestion in and around the town centre, together with growing pressures in the densely populated residential streets around the town where long stay commuter parking had become a significant problem.

In 1990, the concept of resident zone parking was introduced in and around Maidstone which excluded all day free parking except for valid permit holders. Much of the displaced parking has been accommodated in the Park and Ride car parks and has provided some parking easement in residential streets.

In policy terms, Maidstone Park and Ride is described primarily as a long stay parking facility although it has also become very popular with shoppers particularly at Christmas. The Park and Ride is a vital aspect in accommodating significant numbers of visitors to the town centre and reducing volumes of traffic during peak periods of demand. Its popularity is based on a high quality bus service and conveniently placed car parks.

Maidstone Borough Council ceased the Coombe Quarry service in 2006 and presently operates three bus services.

### 9.1 What is currently offered by the service?

The following Park and Ride bus tickets are currently available:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Peak Day Return before 09:00, Monday - Friday           | £2.60   |
| Off-Peak Day Return                                     | £1.60   |
| 10 Trip Ticket valid for 3 months                       | £10.30  |
| 4 Week Ticket only available via mobile M-Ticketing App | £41.20  |
| 12 Week Season Ticket                                   | £103.00 |

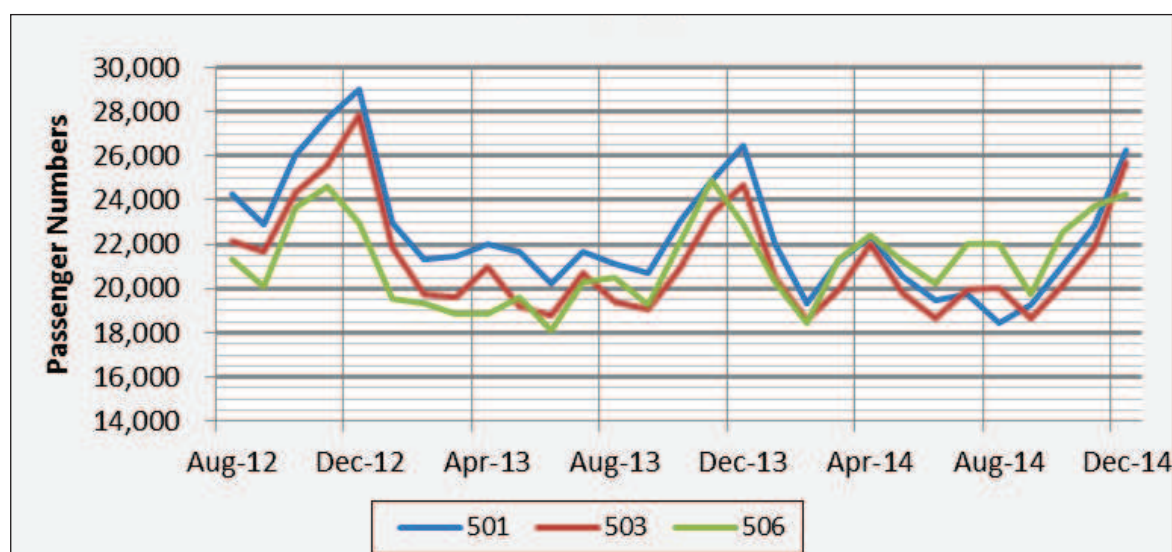
*Continued Overleaf*

Maidstone Borough Council operates three Park and Ride bus services where customers park for free at each site and pay a fare to travel on the bus into the town centre. The three sites are:

- Willington Street (501);
- London Road (503); and,
- Sittingbourne Road (506).

The two graphs below show passenger numbers for all three services from August 2012 to December 2014.

**Maidstone Park & Ride Passenger Numbers**



|                | 501<br>Willington Street | 503<br>London Road | 506<br>Sittingbourne Road |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Aug - Dec 2012 | 129,993                  | 121,554            | 112,535                   |
| Jan - Dec 2013 | 267,423                  | 248,417            | 244,197                   |
| Jan - Dec 2014 | 252,692                  | 245,926            | 258,346                   |

## 9.2 Is the service cost effective?

Parking Services department at MBC reviewed Park and Ride passenger statistics during 2012 and removed a number of journeys considered to be non-viable. This was to realign services to passenger demand and, with effect 14 January 2013, reduced operational costs by £121,390 per annum.

The budgeted subsidy for Park and Ride for the 2014/15 financial year was £522,340 and it is predicted that expenditure will be on, or perform slightly better, than budget.



The Council negotiated a new three year contract with Arriva Kent and Surrey starting 1 June 2014, this new contract represented further savings of £26,026. In addition, 140 spaces at the Sittingbourne Road site have been leased to Towergate Insurance and Kent Institute of Medical Science for a fee of £60,000 per annum. Parking Services also plan leasing up to 70 spaces at the Willington Street site for a potential further income of £60,480.

### 9.3 What impact the service has on the town centre?

#### Easing congestion

Across the three sites the service provides off road parking for a total of 1,438 vehicles with an additional 58 disabled bays. The service provision is considered by MBC Officers to be fundamental in reducing ever-increasing levels of traffic, particularly during peak morning and evening periods.

#### Benefits to users

Commuters and visitors to Maidstone can use the service and access the car park sites which are all located in close proximity to the town centre; off the Ashford Road A20 and M20 motorway (junctions 5 & 7).

The buses operate every 20 minutes throughout the day, providing transport services to and from the town centre.

### 9.4 Why do/don't people use the service?

#### Using the service

Tariffs applied at short and long stay car parks in Maidstone are more expensive per day compared to when travelling via the Park and Ride bus service.

Short stay tariffs:

| 30 minutes | 1 hour | 2 hours | Up to 4 hours |
|------------|--------|---------|---------------|
| 50p        | 90p    | £2.00   | £3.00         |

Long stay tariffs:

| 1 hour | 3 hours | 4 hours | 5 hours | Over 5 hours | Overnight 6:30pm-8am |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|----------------------|
| 90p    | £2.00   | £3.00   | £4.50   | £6.00        | £1.50                |

A greater number of parking spaces are available at the sites than at the public car parking facilities in the town centre. This makes finding a parking space easier than it is in the town.



All buses have been re-liveried, refurbished and are WiFi enabled. This modernisation of the buses provides free internet access when travelling to and from the town centre.

### **Not using the service**

Traditionally, members of the public prefer to drive rather than use public transport.

The existing Park & Ride bus routes may take longer than travelling by car into the town centre. Maidstone has limited designated bus lanes meaning buses sit within 'general' traffic during peak periods.

Operational hours of the service are limited and may ultimately deter potential users who wish to work or stay in the town beyond 6pm. No services operate on a Sunday.

## **9.5 Stability of current agreements for delivering the service**

Maidstone Borough Council owns the site at Willington Street, but leases the areas of land at both London Road and Sittingbourne Road.

Traffic modelling highlights Sittingbourne Road as the prime location for a Park and Ride site in Maidstone due to its access to and from the M20. The future of this site is tentative due to the landowner's own development aspirations, the varying cost to MBC for occupying the land and the existing lease which will expire on 8 November 2015.

## **9.6 The strategic importance of the service**

The strategic direction of transport provision in the Maidstone borough will be set in the Integrated Transport Strategy as part of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan to ensure transport requirements meet the demands of the development needed in the borough to 2031. MBC Officers consider it important the Park and Ride service is supported by MBC until the Integrated Transport Strategy is adopted.

If the service was to be discontinued commuters who use the service daily for travelling to and from work would have to find alternative means of transport. This would result in an increased demand for long stay town centre parking due to the volume of traffic.

Parking Services would need to revise the balance between short stay and long stay parking to cater for the new demand. This may also influence the car park market as private operators meet demand.

Other impacts of discontinuing the service would include (but not limited to):

- Increased congestion;
- Reduced journey times within and across the town centre;
- Increased air pollution;
- Reduction in economic growth in Maidstone as a result of the infrastructure being unable to support it.

## 9.7 The Future of Park and Ride in Maidstone

In order to maximise income, the Council has previously explored the viability of customers' paying a combined fee for car parking and bus fare at each of the Park and Ride sites in a similar way to how Canterbury city Council charge for their service. This is being investigated further. There are VAT implications relating to this method of charging that will need to be taken into consideration.

In addition, the cost to repair the faulty lighting circuit at Willington Street site has been secured this year and will be fully operational by autumn 2015.

Ultimately, if the service is to continue, site investment must be secured for Sittingbourne Road and Willington Street to ensure facilities are modernised to attract further patronage.

Until recent years the budgets for Park and Ride and Parking Services were different service units. The budgets for both services, in the wider national analysis of service spend, are both categorised under the heading of 'Transport'. However, in Maidstone these two budgets have always been reported separately as two individual services. Some members felt there was a clear relationship between the pricing structure of the two services (Park and Ride and Parking) and the consequent relative demand for each of the services.

### Recommendation

***V. Maidstone Borough Council, through the Committee with responsibility for transport in its terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, consider aggregating the Park and Ride Service and Parking Services Budgets to ensure that the access to the Town Centre is managed in a more coherent and integrated manner and to safeguard against possible changes in the regulatory climate.***

### Recommendation

***W. Maidstone Borough Council, through the Committee with responsibility for transport in its terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, should actively investigate and seek to bring forward an express bus service linked to the Park and Ride service, with particular attention initially being paid to the South Maidstone route.***

## 10 Recommendations

- A. *That after the publication of this report a sub group be formed from the beginning of the municipal year 2015, by the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference, to explore:*
- *Alternative methods of transport for the future that will help ease congestion in Maidstone town. This sub-group to take forward research into future alternatives (for example rail halts on the Medway Valley Line, trams) and improving existing forms of transport, and;*
  - *Possible European Union funding to fund new transport initiatives.*
- B. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to carry out consultation with car users to establish why they drive into Maidstone town and what would encourage them to use an alternative mode of transport to get into the town.*
- C. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to lobby Kent County Council on the reconfiguration of the Maidstone Gyratory system to ensure safe cycle passages. The design of the gyratory system should incorporate surface cycle passages (not subways) for cyclists heading in and out of the town from west Maidstone using the A20 and A26.*
- D. *That the Head of Planning and Development be asked to report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference during the 2015-2016 municipal year on:*
- *The identity of potential routes for the provision of cycle ways from rural locations (villages and hamlets) with poor bus services, to bus stops on major routes with a more frequent bus service;*
  - *The possibility of creating an orbital cycle and footpath route around Maidstone linking to Maidstone town centre via radial routes such as:*
    - *Len valley to the north of Maidstone*
    - *Medway Valley to the west of Maidstone*
    - *Tovil Nature Park*
    - *The Loose Valley Conservation area*
    - *Boughton Monchelsea, and*
    - *Langley to the east of Maidstone*
  - *The costs of firstly providing cycle parking at the end of these routes;*
  - *The cost of the longer term aim of developing the cycle route to the cycle parking.*

- E. *That the Head of Planning and Development be recommended to urgently refresh and update the draft Maidstone Borough Council Cycling Strategy, dated June 2012 and present it to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference in the new municipal year 2015-2016 before taking it for public consultation.*
- F. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, use the principal proposals from the refreshed Cycling Strategy to inform the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy.*
- G. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to:*
- *Proceed with establishing the Maidstone Cycling Forum and ensure it is supported by an officer with responsibility for cycling in their job description;*
  - *Identify a lead member to act as a cycling champion within the authority.*
- H. *That a member of Maidstone Borough Council's Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC), or a member of the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be invited to join the Quality Bus Partnership.*
- I. *That the Public Transport Team at Kent County Council at meetings with KCC Highways, raise the following requests and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference during the 2015-2016 municipal year:*
- *A definitive list of forthcoming road closures be sent to bus service providers in a timely manner to facilitate compliance with the Traffic Commissioners regulations;*
  - *A set of processes and procedures are established and put in place for communicating road closures to avoid problems when changes to Highways personnel are made;*
  - *A definition of what constitutes an emergency road closure is published and shared with bus service providers.*
- J. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to re-establish the Maidstone Borough Transport User Group. Membership to include representatives from all public transport service providers, KCC transport planners, MBC officers/members, parish councils, service users and other interested parties to ensure on-going issues with transport and ideas for enhancements to services are communicated and dealt with.*
- K. *That a Maidstone Borough Council Officer be asked to investigate and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference Committee during the municipal year 2015-2016 on the progress and lessons learnt from the Medway twilight bus service once the trial is completed.*

- L. *That the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for Community and Leisure in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended, as part of the Parish Charter refresh, to include a section on the powers and opportunities parish councils have in the provision of transport services and capital equipment, such as bus shelters and real time transport information, and funding streams available to them.*
- M. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, be recommended to include the potential use of Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies to support the provision of bus services, and/or provide capital equipment for bus services in the Borough in the Local Plan.*
- N. *That Kent County Council Transport Planning Officers be recommended to make strong arguments where they can to give Section 106 agreements impetus to provide bus services in and around the Borough of Maidstone.*
- O. *That parishes, residents associations and neighbourhood forums be encouraged by the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, to form groups similar to the East of Maidstone Bus User Group.*
- P. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to survey the users of Maidstone East railway station car park to find out their reason for using it to establish how many users were rail passengers and how many were not.*
- Q. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to:*
- Respond to the Department for Transport's franchise consultation, which due in 2016;
  - Reduce unnecessary car travel within the borough, this response should request improved commuter and off peak services using high speed trains and Thameslink services to reduce the number of rail users travelling across the borough by car to other stations that offer better service than their local station;
  - Continue to promote aspirations for re-securing a Maidstone to Canon Street service.
- R. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to promote the appointment of a Kent County Councillor for Maidstone and a Maidstone Borough Councillor to the Steering Group for the Medway Valley Line and Kent Community Rail Partnership to ensure Maidstone borough's needs are pursued.*

- S. *That Councillor Chittenden investigate how Maidstone Borough can be represented on the South Eastern Public Transport User Group and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015.*
- T. *That the Head of Planning and Development be recommended to ensure Section 106 funding be sought from developers at every opportunity to:*
- *Support public transport links to and from new developments linking bus and rail services, and;*
  - *Ensure the provision is timed in a way to provide services that increase as occupation of developments increase.*
- U. *That the Chairman of the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee write to Mr Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, SouthEastern Trains to:*
- *Establish how parish councils can access funding for improvements to rural rail stations;*
  - *Request he take forward his suggestion to approach Network Rail regarding the possibility of expanding rail station car parks at Bearsted and Headcorn and look into the possibility of extending this to other rural rail stations;*
  - *Request he take forward his suggestion to reduce parking costs at rural rail stations such as Headcorn to discourage rail users from parking in residential areas.*
- V. *Maidstone Borough Council, through the Committee with responsibility for transport in its terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, consider aggregating the Park and Ride Service and Parking Services Budgets to ensure that the access to the Town Centre is managed in a more coherent and integrated manner and to safeguard against possible changes in the regulatory climate.*
- W. *Maidstone Borough Council, through the Committee with responsibility for transport in its terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, should actively investigate and seek to bring forward an express bus service linked to the Park and Ride service, with particular attention initially being paid to the South Maidstone route.*

## 11 Thanks

### The Committee would like to express their thanks to:

- Bartholomew Wren – Economic Development Officer Regeneration and Transport, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council;
  - Colin Finch – Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Kent County Council;
  - Tay Arnold – Cycling Transport Planner, Kent Highways, Kent County Council;
  - David Edwards, Director of Environment and Shared Services;
  - Jeff Kitson, Parking Services Manager;
  - Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development;
  - Steve Clarke, Principal Planning Officer, Spatial Planning;
  - Matthew Cotton, Service and Transport Coordinator;
  - Martin Smith, Senior Transport Planner.
  - Sarah Shearsmith, Community development Team Leader, Maidstone Borough Council;
  - Tim Hapgood, Transport Consultant, Spatial Policy Team, Maidstone Borough Council;
  - Giuliano Gianforte, Environment Officer (Air Quality);
  - James Gower;
  - Stephen Horton, Road Safety Team, KCC
  - Dan Bruce, Local Transport Planner (Mid Kent), KCC;
  - Shane Hymers, Public Transport Policy and Strategy Manager, KCC;
  - Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd;
  - Matthew Arnold, Commercial Manager, Arriva;
  - Mike Fitzgerald, Chairman of East of Maidstone Bus Group and Chair Kent Community Rail Partnership and Medway Valley Line Group;
  - Parish Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst PC;
  - Mike Gibson, Partnership Manager, South Eastern Rail
  - Keith Harrison, Chief Executive, Action with Rural Communities
  - Stephen Gasche, Principal Transport Planner – Rail, Kent County Council
- **Parish Councils:**
- |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Bearsted                      | • Kingswood and Broomfield |
| • Boughton Monchelsea           | • Leeds                    |
| • Boxley                        | • Marden                   |
| • Coxheath – Neighbourhood Plan | • Staplehurst              |
| • East Farleigh                 | • Sutton Valence           |
| • East Sutton                   | • Teston                   |
| • Headcorn                      | • Yalding                  |



## 12 Evidence Log

### Witness sessions

- 22 July 2014 Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, interviews with:
- Bartholomew Wren – Economic Development Officer Regeneration and Transport, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council;
  - Colin Finch – Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Kent County Council;
  - Tay Arnold – Cycling Transport Planner, Kent Highways, Kent County Council;
  - Sarah Shearsmith, Community development Team Leader, Maidstone Borough Council;
  - Tim Hapgood, Transport Consultant, Spatial Policy Team, Maidstone Borough Council;
  - James Gower – local cycling enthusiast who sent a suggestion via Twitter for the committee to review congestion in the town;
- 16 September 2014 Working Group meeting and interviews with:
- Dan Bruce, Local Transport Planner (Mid Kent), KCC;
  - Shane Hymers, Public Transport Policy and Strategy Manager, KCC;
  - Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd;
- 30 September 2014 Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, interviews with:
- Matthew Arnold, Commercial Manager, Arriva;
  - Mike Fitzgerald, Chairman of East of Maidstone Bus Group;
  - Parish Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst PC;
  - Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd was also in attendance;
  - Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst Parish Council.
- 8 January 2015 Working Group meeting and interviews with:
- David Edwards, Director of Environment and Shared Services;
  - Jeff Kitson, Parking Services Manager;
  - Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development;
  - Steve Clarke, Principal Planning Officer, Spatial Planning;
  - Matthew Cotton, Service and Transport Coordinator;
  - Martin Smith, Senior Transport Planner.



## Websites

- [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf)
- [www.publications.parliament.uk](http://www.publications.parliament.uk)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-576000-153000/page/3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-576000-153000/page/3)
- [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf)
- <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/news-and-press-releases/jobs-news/jobs-and-transport-boost-from-104m-growth-deal-funding>
- <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g2059/Public%20reports%20pack%2027th-Jan-2014%2018.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>
- <http://dynamic.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2018.pdf>
- [www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/](http://www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/)
- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-295663>
- <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s37180/agenda%20item%2011%20Question%20Sheet%20-%20for%20front%20of%20Committee%20reports.pdf>
- [Bikeability.dft.gov.uk](http://Bikeability.dft.gov.uk)
- <http://www.cyclefriday.co.uk/>
- [www.walkinforhealth.org.uk](http://www.walkinforhealth.org.uk)
- [www.goskyride.com](http://www.goskyride.com)
- <http://www.kmcharityteam.co.uk/schools/schoolswalk/>
- <http://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/employers/employer-faqs>
- [Maidstoneramblers.org.uk](http://Maidstoneramblers.org.uk)
- [u3asites.org.uk](http://u3asites.org.uk)
- [www.midkentgroup.co.uk](http://www.midkentgroup.co.uk)
- [www.wkwg.org.uk](http://www.wkwg.org.uk)
- [www.sanfairyancc.co.uk](http://www.sanfairyancc.co.uk)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-medical-officer-publishes-annual-report-on-state-of-the-publics-health>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2014/02february/pages/cycling-safety-a-special-report.aspx>
- <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43305/B1%20Updated%20Policy%20for%2020mph%20limits%20and%20zones%20on%20KCC%20roads%2003102013%20Environment%20Highways%20and%20Wast.pdf>
- <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/quality-bus-partnership>

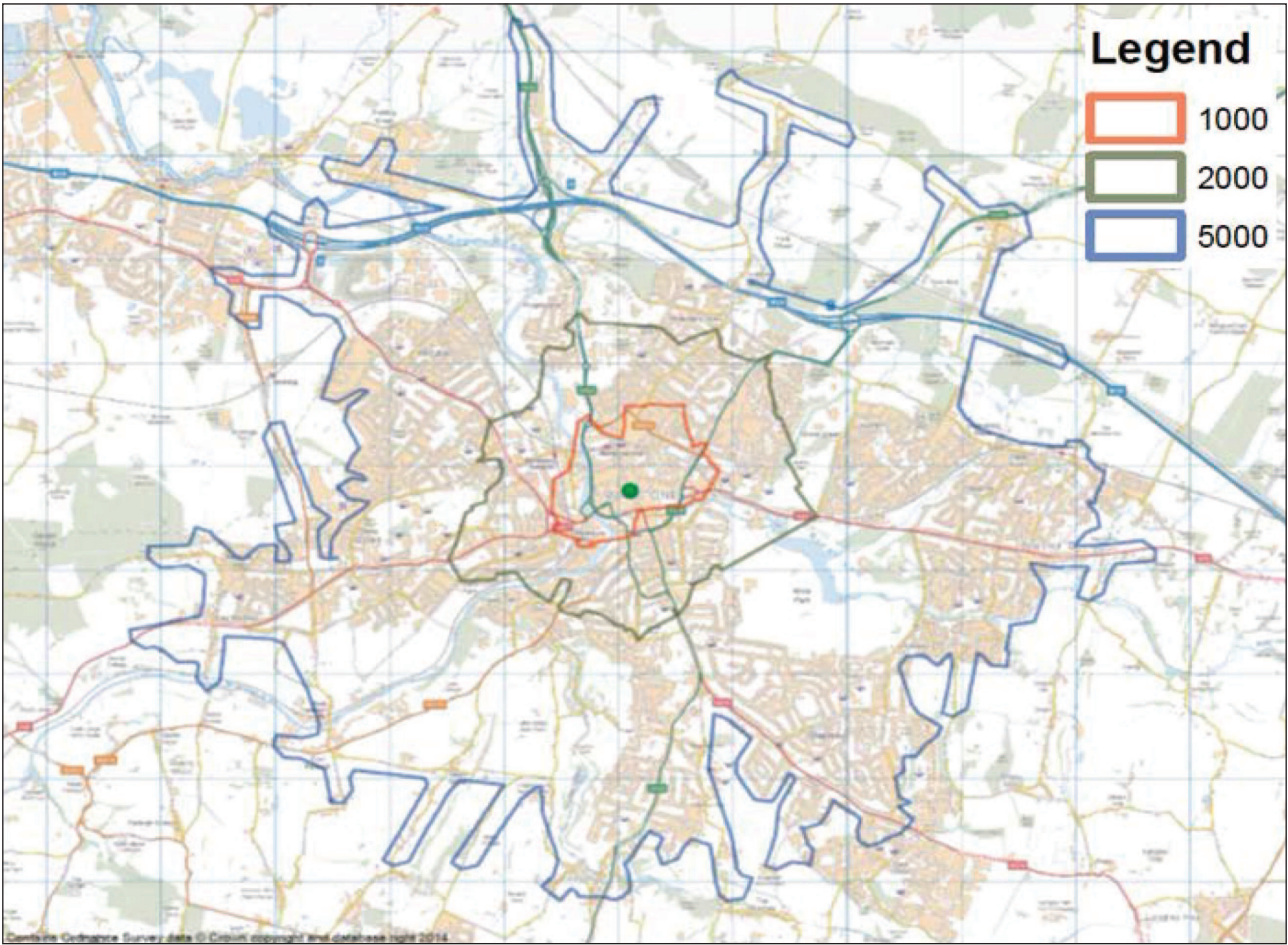
## Written Evidence

Email responses to requests for feedback on bus and rail services were received from the following parish councils:

- Bearsted
- Boughton Monchelsea
- Boxley
- Coxheath – Neighbourhood Plan
- East Farleigh
- East Sutton
- Headcorn
- Kingswood and Broomfield
- Leeds
- Marden
- Staplehurst
- Sutton Valence
- Teston
- Yalding

Written responses were presented by:

- Mike Fitzgerald, Chairman of East of Maidstone Bus Group and Chair Kent Community Rail Partnership and Medway Valley Line Group;
- Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst Parish Council;
- Stephen Gasche, Principal Transport Planner – Rail, Kent County Council



### **Cycling and Walking external witness interviews**

#### **Questions asked of witnesses to help them prepare**

James Gower, cycling enthusiast. Tay Arnold, Cycling Planner, Kent Highways, Transport and Waste and Colin Finch, Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Kent County Council:

- What is already being done to encourage cycling and walking in Maidstone and the Borough?
- What is working?
- What is not working?
- What are other areas doing?
- What is your 'dream vision' for cycling and walking in the borough?
- What can Councillors do to help?

Bartholomew Wren, Economic Development Officer, Regeneration and Transport, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:

- What are Tunbridge Wells doing to encourage cycling and walking?
- What is working?
- What is not working?
- What is your 'dream vision' for cycling in Tunbridge Wells?

Sarah Shearsmith, Community Development Team Leader, Maidstone Borough Council:

- What is happening to promote walking in the borough?
- What is working?
- What are the issues/barriers to success?
- What is your 'dream vision'?
- What can Councillors do to help?

Tim Hapgood, Transport Consultant, Spatial Policy, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC):

- Where is MBC now with cycling and walking in the Integrated Transport Strategy?

### **Bus Services external witness interviews**

#### **Questions asked of witnesses to help them prepare**

- How viable is it to enhance the bus services (listed on the right) including to compliment the 'twilight' economy?
- If Arriva are unable to provide the suggested enhancements – is there funding KCC could provide?
- The House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger transport in isolated communities (HC288 published 22 July 2014) discusses the concept of 'total transport' which involves pooling transport resources to deliver a range of services, eg, combining hospital transport with local bus services – Is it possible to create a form of total transport for Maidstone Borough?
- Could an 'oyster card' type system be introduced to provide flexibility to move from service to service?
- What would need to be done to ensure bus routes are in place and running before new developments are completed?
  - What can MBC do to help with this?
- Has any consideration been given to providing a radial bus service running around Maidstone?
- How possible would it be to provide a 'flag down' service for rural services where bus stops are situated on roads without footpaths?
  - Could a service such as this be trialled?

When will real time service update boards be provided at rural bus stops?

- What can be done to minimise disruption ie car parked blocking roads and lack of timely information going to service providers
- How can the criteria for the different bus services be clarified?
- Why are people who live within 500 meters of a bus stop not able to use the Kent Carrier Service?
- How viable would it be to introduce interchangeability of tickets between the different service?
- What is being done to combat buses arriving and leaving earlier than scheduled?
- The House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger transport in isolated communities (HC288 published 22 July 2014) raise again the potential for local authorities to use Quality Contract to introduce franchising systems similar to those operating in London – where the local transport authority specifies what service is required and the private sector competes for the right to provide it – how viable would Quality Contracts be for the Maidstone borough?
- Has KCC investigated how the test case, Nexus in Tyne and Wear, has performed with Quality Contract? If not, is this something they could find out?







## SPS&T Committee

**14<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

## MBLP Policy DM11 Open Space and Recreation

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Final Decision-Maker</b>             | SPS&T Committee                              |
| <b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b> | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development |
| <b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>   | Jillian Barr, Principal Planning Officer     |
| <b>Classification</b>                   | Non-exempt                                   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                   | All  |

### **This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:**

1. That the Committee approves the proposed Open Space Standards for inclusion in Policy DM11 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan for Regulation 18 consultation.
2. That the Committee approves amendments to Policy DM11 and supporting text for Regulation 18 Consultation.
3. That the Committee notes proposed draft Open Space Quality Standards at Appendix 4.

### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough Council.

### **Timetable**

| <b><i>Meeting</i></b>          | <b><i>Date</i></b> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Policy and Resources Committee | N/A                |
| Council                        | N/A                |
| Other Committee                | N/A                |

# **MBLP Policy DM11 Open Space and Recreation**

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The green spaces of Maidstone Borough are an important and precious asset. The benefits they provide are wide and varied and include: sport and recreation; regeneration; access to nature; access to tranquillity; and opportunities to improve health and fitness. They also provide a range of ecological services, including climate regulation, improving water resources and reducing flood risk.
- 1.2 The value of publicly accessible open space has long been recognised in planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stresses the need to ensure effective planning for high quality open spaces, sport and recreation facilities based on robust assessments of the existing and future needs of communities.
- 1.3 This report describes the process of identifying local standards for open space provision. These are based on a substantial evidence base and will form the basis of a robust planning policy to ensure delivery of high quality open space through development schemes to meet the needs of future communities. New quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards are proposed and the justification for them is explained.
- 1.4 The existing Open Space and Recreation Policy DM11 of the Regulation 18 draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2014) is revised to include the quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards and the Committee is recommended to approve this revised policy for consultation under Regulation 18.
- 1.5 The process of producing a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, which is being prepared alongside the emerging Local Plan, has contributed to the proposed standards. Once agreed, the Open Space Standards will also form the basis for identifying existing local deficiencies in open space provision. This is not the subject of this report, but the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will, through an Action Plan, identify ways in which existing deficiencies can be resolved, often through enhancement of existing spaces in the urban area, through environmental and access enhancements elsewhere and identifying potential new or extended open spaces.
- 1.6 The standards will also be used to establish whether strategic open space allocations need to be made in the emerging local plan to meet the needs of the future occupants of proposed allocated sites.



## **2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework stresses the need to ensure effective planning for high quality open spaces, sport and recreation facilities based on robust assessments of the existing and future needs of communities.

2.3 The green spaces of Maidstone Borough are an important and precious asset. Open spaces serve a wide range of functions and are essential to sustainable communities. They can:

- Create or enhance a distinct sense of place;
- Give access to tranquillity and improve health;
- Provide sport and recreation opportunities;
- Preserve and enhance biodiversity and give access to nature;
- Support sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling;
- Contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation; including climate regulation, improving water resources and flood management.

2.4 The NPPF advises that assessments of open space should include the following:

- A quantitative element – to identify how much new provision is needed;
- A qualitative element – against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities;
- An accessibility element – which should include distance thresholds and the cost of using a facility.

2.5 The new development proposed in the Borough results in the need to identify new open spaces to meet the future needs of new communities. Robust quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards are needed to ensure that appropriate provision (in terms of size, location, type and future maintenance) is secured.

2.6 Open space standards will guide the types and amounts of open space that should be delivered by development. Amendments to Policy DM11 are proposed to include open space standards and provide further guidance on the application of the standards. Parts 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Policy were previously considered and approved by Cabinet in January 2015 for Regulation 19 Consultation.

2.7 This report considers each open space element: quantity, quality and accessibility in turn, and sets open space standards for the Borough. It does not seek to allocate sites, nor identify existing deficiencies at this point. Progress towards open space allocations in the Local Plan and their relationship with the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is clarified later in this report.

## **3 Open space quantity standard**

3.1 In 2004 Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) was one of the first councils to produce a green spaces strategy. As part of its development, green space was

audited and categorised into eight different green space types. In 2006, an Open Space DPD was adopted and this included quantitative open space standards. These 2004 green space types and adopted standards can be seen in the table below.

### 3.2 Existing standards

| GREEN SPACE TYPE  | HECTARE<br>(Per 1000 population) |                |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------|
|   | URBAN                            | RURAL          |
| Parks and Gardens   | 2.30                             | N/A*           |
| Natural and semi-natural areas                            | ANGSt standard                   | ANGSt standard |
| Amenity Green space                                       | 0.7                              | 0.8            |
| Provision for Children's and Young People's Equipped Play | 0.12                             | 0.09           |
| Green Corridors   | N/A                              | N/A            |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities                                 | 1.4                              | 2.7            |
| Allotments and Community Gardens                          | 0.21                             | 0.18           |
| Cemeteries and Graveyards                                 | 0.66                             | 0.59           |

3.3 A new open space audit was carried out in 2014. The new audit has sought to update and improve the understanding of open space provision in the Borough. An exercise to identify and map open spaces was undertaken. There were, however, some changes to the methodology used in 2004, to ensure that the emerging information was even more detailed and robust.

- (i) The new audit measured publicly accessible open spaces only. For example, it did not include green areas where the only official right of access was a public footpath passing through the site;
- (ii) Whilst very important green spaces, green corridors were not included as a typology in the audit since these cannot be measured;
- (iii) Parks and gardens were not included as a separate typology in the audit because these are normally a combination of open space types. Instead, the component parts of each park were measured separately. This has resulted in a more detailed measurement of natural and semi-natural spaces, play spaces, amenity spaces and playing pitches;
- (iv) Cemeteries and graveyards were not included as a separate open space type. Closed graveyards, in particular, can be valuable spaces for wildlife, so this category was incorporated in the natural and semi natural open spaces typology. Graveyard capacity should be reviewed separately.

3.4 Summarised results of the audit are set out at Appendix 1 of this report.

3.5 New standards for open space provision were generated. Using a recognised 'best practice' methodology recommended during the operation of the Planning Policy Guidance 17 (now revoked) and 'Open Space Strategies: Best Practice Guidance' published by CABI Space.

3.6 The draft standards have been set by taking account of:

- (i) The current adopted standard (Para 3.2 above);
- (ii) Existing measured provision (Open Space Audit, Appendix 1);
- (iii) Residents' feedback (Telephone Survey Report, Appendix 2);
- (iv) GBI Stakeholder Workshops (May 2015);
- (v) Where applicable, national standards;
- (vi) Comparable standards from nearby Kent districts (Appendix 3).

3.7 Unlike the current adopted (2006) open space standards, the draft open spaces standards do not propose separate standards for urban and rural areas, because there is no clear justification for this.

3.8 The draft open space standards identify the minimum size of facilities to ensure that usable spaces are created.

3.9 Proposed new quantity standards are set out below:

| <b>Open Space Typology</b>                     | <b>Draft Standard</b><br>(hectares per 1000 population) | <b>Minimum Size of Facility</b><br>(hectares)   |
|--|---|---|
|  |   |   |
| <b>Amenity Green Space</b>                     | 0.7   | 0.1   |
| <b>Provision for children and young people</b> | 0.25  | 0.25 excluding a buffer zone*   |
| <b>Outdoor sports</b>                          | 1.6   | To meet the technical standards produced by Sport England or the relevant Governing Bodies of Sport |
| <b>Allotments</b>                              | 0.2   | 0.66  |
| <b>Natural/semi-natural space</b>              | 6.5   | 0.2   |

\* but in cases where accessibility to children's and young people's provision is poor, for example outside a reasonable walking distance or where the crossing of major roads is necessary, smaller areas of open space may be justified on-site. Features such as mounding or natural elements such as tree trunks and an open, level area of open space will provide opportunities for informal local play. Traffic calming measures to minimise vehicle speeds will help make streets safer in these areas and encourage use.

### 3.10 Justification for draft quantity standards for open space

3.11 **Amenity Open Space:** Amenity open space is defined as open space which provides space for informal activities and visual enhancement to residential areas.

3.12 The current adopted standard is 0.7ha per 1000 population for the urban area and 0.8ha for the rural area. In terms of new provision, there appears to be no justification for varying the provision of amenity open space between the urban and the rural area. As a benchmark, the standard broadly equates with the standard set in nearby Kent districts.

3.13 Of the five typologies, amenity green space and natural and semi natural open space are the most popular in terms of claimed usage. The vast majority of residents believe the amount of amenity open space available in the Borough is either very good or good (Telephone Survey Report, May 2015). This view was generally supported by Parish Councils who attended the Parish and Neighbourhoods GBI Workshop (20 May 2015) and the desire to protect open space was a clear message. Current provision equates to 0.7ha/1000 in the urban area and 1.47ha/ 1000 in the rural area and existing amenity open space should be protected.

3.14 The recommended new standard for amenity open space is 0.7ha/1000 population which aligns with the current standard and broadly aligns with the standard set in nearby Kent districts.

3.15 **Children's and young people's provision:** Provision for children and young people includes areas such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for play and social interaction involving children and young people.

3.16 The current adopted standard is 0.12ha for the urban area and 0.09ha for the rural area. In terms of new provision, there again appears to be no justification for varying the provision of play space between the urban and the rural area.

3.17 There are concerns with regard to the amount of play area provision for children and young people on which the current standard is based, with 40% rating provision as fair, poor and very poor (Telephone Survey Report, May 2015). It is therefore proposed to increase the standard.

3.18 The recommended standard is 0.25ha/1000 population which would equate to the 'equipped playing space' in the Fields in Trust (previously known as National Playing Fields Association) standard and would align more closely with the standards set in nearby Kent districts. A minimum size of 0.25ha is proposed for children's play space, advocating the delivery of a smaller number of well-equipped play areas.

3.19 **Outdoor sports:** Outdoor sports facilities is a wide ranging category of open space and includes natural or artificial surfaces which are publicly accessible and which are used for sport and recreation. Examples include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens and golf courses.

- 3.20 The current adopted standard is 1.4ha for the urban area and 2.7ha for the rural area. This difference emerged because the adopted standards were adjusted to allow for golf courses in the rural area. Most golf courses have not been included in the new audit due to restrictions to public access. Under the new audit, sports pitch provision in the urban area equates to 0.85ha/1000 and 0.44ha/1000 in the rural area. As a result there appears to be no justification for varying sports pitch provision between the urban and the rural area. The standard set in nearby Kent districts ranges between 1 and 2 ha/1000 population. The Fields in Trust standard is 1.6ha/1000 population.
- 3.21 There are concerns with regard to the amount of outdoor sports facilities with 43% rating them as fair, poor and very poor (Telephone Survey Report, May 2015). There is also information from the Football and Hockey Associations that provision for these sports in the Borough is inadequate.
- 3.22 A comprehensive Playing Pitch Needs Assessment, as advocated by Sport England, would provide a range of benefits, including identifying current levels of provision in the Borough, across the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors, and to compare this with current, and likely future, levels of demand. A supply and demand analysis for playing pitches will help identify the possible surplus or deficiencies of pitches across the Borough. Such an analysis would help to underpin future planning for playing pitch provision and help to support bids for external funding.
- 3.23 The proposed outdoor sports standard is 1.6ha/1000 population which would equate to the Fields in Trust standard and would align closely with the standard set in nearby Kent districts.
- 3.24 **Allotments:** In terms of open space provision, allotments provide many local residents with access to healthy food, exercise, the pleasure of gardening and a social outlet. They also form an important open visual aspect and add significantly to the biodiversity of an area.
- 3.25 The current adopted standard is 0.21ha for the urban area and 0.18ha for the rural area. In terms of new provision, there appears to be no justification for varying the provision of amenity open space between the urban and the rural area. The standard closely equates with the standard set in nearby Kent districts.
- 3.26 Not all residents were familiar with allotment provision, but of those that answered the question, 42% of residents believe the amount of open space available in the Borough is either very good or good (Telephone Survey Report, May 2015). Parish Councils who attended the GBI workshops (20 May 2015) supported a view that the provision of allotments was good and there was a clear desire to protect the existing open space (Parish and Neighbourhoods GBI Workshop 20 May 2015). Current provision equates to 0.2ha/1000 in the urban area and 0.22ha/1000 in the rural area and existing allotments should be protected.

- 3.27 The recommended standard is 0.2ha/1000 population which would equate to the current adopted standard, the current provision and aligns closely with the standard set in nearby Kent districts.
- 3.28 **Natural/semi-natural space:** The current adopted standard is the ANGSt standard. This is an accessibility standard.
- 3.29 In terms of new provision, there appears to be no justification for varying the provision of natural and semi natural open space between the urban and the rural area.
- 3.30 Of the five typologies, amenity green space and natural and semi natural open space are the most popular in terms of claimed usage. 72% of residents rated the amount of natural and semi natural space as very good / good (Telephone Survey Report, May 2015). This view was generally supported by Parish Councils who attended the GBI Workshop (20 May 2015) and the desire to protect the existing open space was a clear message. Current provision equates to 6.31ha/1000 in the urban area and 6.95ha/1000 in the rural area and existing natural and semi natural space open space should be protected as one of the Borough's key assets which supports the Council's priority of maintaining Maidstone as an attractive place to live. To set a lower standard than current provision is an option the Council can consider, but it is not recommended because it is important for the Maidstone pattern of growth to maintain accessibility for communities.
- 3.31 The recommended standard for future provision is 6.5ha/1000 which sets a quantitative standard for natural and semi natural space in Maidstone Borough for the first time. This is approximately the same as the current measured provision and represents a significant level of provision in association with new development – in part, because there is no longer a park and garden standard (which would normally include an element of natural and semi natural open space). The standard would represent the highest for this typology when compared with the standard set in nearby Kent districts.

#### 4. Open Space Quality Standards

- 4.2 There are currently no adopted quality standards in the Local Plan.
- 4.3 Quality standards, by their nature, must be applied flexibly so that they can respond to the location and character of a site. As a result, Local Plan Policy DM11 requires that development proposals provide an Open Space Layout and Design assessment which will demonstrate how the site meets the proposed quality standards. An SPD will be produced, setting out quality standards for open space.
- 4.4 It is essential that future and existing open spaces are managed as far as possible to enhance their ecological value and contribution to habitat networks, wherever possible. As such, the Open Space Layout and Design Statement should incorporate ecological enhancement and management measures.

- 4.5 The draft Quality Standards that are proposed to be taken forward to SPD are set out in Appendix 4 to this report for the Committee's information. The SPD will be subject to future Committee approval and consultation.
- 4.6 An assessment of the accessibility and quality of existing open spaces was carried out in 2014 and 2015. The assessment included visits to open spaces across the Borough, including parks, natural and semi natural open spaces and allotments. As a benchmark for the assessments, criteria were developed that were based closely on the Green Flag Award Programme and its standards. Criteria were applied proportionately to the size of the site. For example, some criteria such as car parking and lighting are less relevant to small natural and semi-natural sites, where creating habitats for wildlife will take priority. It is important to note that the Green Flag standard was used as a benchmark for the assessment. It is not proposed, however, to attempt to bring all sites up to a set standard according to the criteria, since this might not be appropriate for all sites. This is particularly the case for some natural or semi-natural sites, for example, where improving access may not be appropriate for reasons of controlling the amount of disturbance to sensitive habitats or species.
- 4.7 The assessments will help to establish a quality standard for the Borough's existing open space provision, identify sites that would benefit from improvement, and give a clear and robust overview of the physical condition of open space across the Borough and within defined areas.
- 4.8 A quality standard for existing open spaces and priorities for improvement will be agreed as part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- 4.9 This will enable the council to make informed decisions with regard to the improvements needed to sites in terms of their design and content, and in site management and maintenance.
- 4.10 It should be noted, however, that a quality standard and GBI Action Plan priorities for investment can be used to target investment from developer contributions when off-site provision is required. It can also inform management priorities of specific spaces for improvements if resources become available, and in some cases may be a long term aspiration.

## 5 Accessibility standards

- 5.1 Open spaces should be readily accessible to residents. They need to be in the right place to meet local need or demand, and the Council needs to determine acceptable distances for local people to travel to the different types of provision.
- 5.3 Some types of open space (such as amenity open space, or smaller areas of natural and semi-natural open space) are for local use within a neighbourhood or village and are generally accessed on foot. The accessibility standards are based around walking time. A short 5-8 minute walk (400 – 640m) to such local facilities is considered reasonable. Barriers such as main roads, railways or rivers that sever the route to an amenity open space should be avoided.

- 5.4 Children's and young people's provision are for local use within a neighbourhood or village and are generally accessed on foot. The accessibility standards are based around walking time. A 12 minute walk (965m) to such local facilities is considered reasonable. A walking time of 12 minutes from home was proposed to the Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in April 2013 as reasonable provision within easy reach for all age groups, with the large majority of households in the borough being within this range. Physical Barriers such as main roads, railways or rivers that sever the route to an open space should be avoided.
- 5.4 Other facilities such as outdoor sports, allotments and larger areas of natural and semi-natural open space can be more distant. For outdoor sports, the proposed standard relates to a 20 minutes walk. This is higher than the Fields in Trust standard of 15 minutes for playing pitches, but accords with the standard for tennis (20 minutes) and is less than the recommended standard for athletics (45 minutes). Outdoor sports teams will commonly be made up of players from across the borough and beyond.
- 5.5 Actual distances are converted to straight line (radius) distances by a 40% reduction to allow for the fact that routes to open spaces are not straight line distances, but more complex. The 40% reduction is based on research by National Playing Fields Association (now known as Fields in Trust). For example, a 15 minute walk, of 1.2 km, has a straight line distance (radius) of 720 metres.
- 5.5 The telephone survey carried out in 2015 indicated that three quarters of residents consider the access of open spaces on foot to be very good or good (75%). The vast majority of residents consider the access of open spaces by car to be good or very good. Of the five typologies, amenity green space, play area provision and allotments appear to be in close proximity to residents with 62%, 64% and 61% respectively indicating it takes up to 10 minutes to reach them. 53% of residents indicated it takes up to 10 minutes to reach the natural and semi natural space they use.
- 5.6 ANGSt (Access to Natural Green Spaces Standards) standards have been included in full. This is a recognised standard prepared by Natural England.

5.7

| <b>Open Space Type</b>                          | <b>Draft Accessibility Standard<br/>(radius from open space)</b>                |
|---|---|
|   |   |
| <b>Amenity Green Space</b>                      | 400m  |
| <b>Provision for children and young people.</b> | 600m  |
| <b>Publicly accessible outdoor sports.</b>      | 1000m   |
| <b>Allotments and community gardens.</b>        | 1000m   |
| <b>Natural/semi-natural areas of open space</b> | 300m (2 Ha site)<br>2km (20 Ha site)<br>5km (100 Ha site)<br>10km (500 Ha site) |



5.8 If a proposed development site lies outside the accessibility boundary of an open space type then the development will need to provide additional facilities. These should ideally be provided on site, but may be provided off-site if this is necessary due to site constraints. Alternatively, if a development is too small to deliver new open space provision, an alternative contribution may be sought in lieu of new provision to improve existing sites and enhance the capacity of existing provision.

5.9 Priorities for improvements to existing spaces will be set out in the Action Plan which will accompany the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Contributions from smaller development within the urban area, for example, might contribute to improvements to existing urban parks, or river the frontage. These improvements could range from habitat enhancements, to provision of multi-use games areas, to footpath improvements.

## 6 Proposed Open Space Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

6.1 References to an Open Space SPD replace references to a Green and Blue Infrastructure SPD in the new policy text. This is because the SPD will be a technical document relating to the application of the policy. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will identify existing deficiencies and potential ways to meet those deficiencies in an Action Plan.

6.2 An Open Space SPD will include the detailed draft quality standards set out in Appendix 4, accompanied by best practice case studies.

6.3 The SPD will also provide further guidance on the application of the standards, including:

- (i) Explanation on how Policy DM11 will be applied;
- (ii) Providing further detailed advice on how the Council calculates the population anticipated from a development;
- (iii) Providing further detailed advice on how the Council calculates the amount of open space required using the standards;
- (iv) Providing further detailed advice on how the Council calculates thresholds for on-site delivery of open space;
- (v) The circumstances when off-site provision or financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision should be sought;
- (vi) Advice on Council spending of contributions –restrictions and Green and Blue Infrastructure Action Plan;
- (ii) Advice on setting up management companies;
- (iii) Calculating commuted maintenance sums;
- (v) Adoption standards.

6.4 The Open Space SPD will apply to the whole of the Maidstone Borough.

- 7 Relationship of Policy DM11 Open Space and Recreation to Site Allocations and Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- 7.1 The standards will be used to identify whether strategic open space allocations need to be made in the emerging Local Plan to meet the needs of the future occupants of proposed development site allocations. Any proposed strategic open space allocations will need to be approved by this Committee for public consultation (Regulation 18) before being incorporated into the Local Plan for publication and final consultation (Regulation 19).
- 7.2 The GBI Strategy is being prepared alongside the emerging Local Plan and it is informing the Local Plan at each stage of preparation.
- 7.3 The illustration below describes this integral process in more detail.

## GBI Strategy and the Development Plan



## 8. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 8.1 Option A: To set the standards out in an Open Space SPD. This option would give more flexibility in the future, but would not have the benefit of the same weight in decision making as a Local Plan policy that is subject to independent examination.

- 8.2 Option B: To include the standards in Policy DM11 and to take the amended policy to consultation. Including standards in a policy which is tested through Local Plan Examination will give them more weight in decision making. Additional 'reasoned justification' text will give further advice on how the policy is applied.
- 

## **9 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.2 In accordance with Option B, the revised Local Plan Policy DM11 is recommended for approval for public consultation under Regulation 18 of the Local Plan Regulations. Representations made during consultation will be reported to Committee and recommendations made for any further amendments before a final policy is agreed for inclusion in the Regulation 19 Local Plan Publication draft.
- 9.3 The draft Quality Standards at Appendix 4 are also available for comment, although these will form part of a future SPD on Open Space, rather than the draft Local Plan.
- 9.4 The draft Policy DM11 sets out the open space standards for the Borough, including quantity, quality and accessibility standards. Each new development will be required to provide the range of open space types by quantity and to the desired quality, in so far as the development is of sufficient size to deliver the minimum identified size of facility. Financial contributions may be acceptable if the site is too small to deliver open space on site or if, in the case of identifying off-site provision, an appropriate site cannot be identified.
- 9.5 The recommended revised Policy for consultation is set out below, with changes in **bold** and ~~strike through~~. Changes already agreed by Cabinet on 14 January 2015 have been included in the Policy, with the exception of the addition of cemeteries and churchyards because these uses can be classed as more than one open space type. Only additional changes to the Policy and supporting text are highlighted.

### **Policy DM11 - Open space and recreation**

**11.52** High quality, publicly accessible open space can bring about opportunities for promoting social interaction and inclusion in communities. Sports and recreation areas and facilities can contribute positively to the well being and quality of those communities. Open space can also have a positive impact upon the quality of the built environment and can be of ecological value. The National Planning Policy Framework encourages the provision and retention of high quality open spaces, a stance that the council supports.

**11.53** The council will seek to secure publicly accessible open space provision for new housing and mixed use development sites, in accordance with ~~standards [to be defined] in the green and blue infrastructure supplementary planning document~~ **quantity, quality and accessibility standards set out in Policy DM11.**

**11.53a** New major developments will be required to meet their obligations for open space on-site. This recognises the demand for additional sports and recreation facilities to meet the needs of a growing population. Off-site provision in an accessible location will be acceptable if provision on-site is demonstrated to be undeliverable for reasons of site constraints or location.

**11.53b** If a development is too small to deliver new open space provision on site, then an alternative contribution will be sought in lieu of new provision to improve existing sites and enhance the capacity of existing provision. Priorities for improvement will be set out in the Action Plan to the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

**11.53c** The Council will produce an Open Space Supplementary Planning Document to provide further detail to support the policy, including qualitative open space standards.

**11.54** It is important to ensure that any new publicly accessible open space and sports provision preserves the quality of life for existing residents, as well as the visual amenity of the locality. Intense sports uses, such as multi use games areas, can generate significant amounts of noise; while sports and other recreation uses may include lighting, such as floodlighting. This can be harmful to the living environment of nearby occupiers and to the visual amenity of the countryside where levels of artificial lighting are generally very limited. The council will seek to ensure that new publicly accessible open space and recreation areas are appropriate to their setting in these regards.

**11.54a** Provision of open space should be an integral part of design and layout of development, and should be sited to make a contribution to biodiversity networks. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will set out the aims and objectives for the provision and enhancement of green space in the Borough over the period of the plan.

**11.54b** The Council will expect future management and maintenance of new open spaces to be delivered by means of a private limited management company or trust. However, where appropriate, the Council will seek to enter into an agreement with the developer for the future management and maintenance of the open space provision.

**11.55** The loss of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will be resisted, unless there is a proven overriding need for the development and there would be no resulting deficiency, or net loss, of such space/facilities in the locality. In considering the impact of the loss of open space, the council will have regard to the visual amenity and biodiversity value of the land in question.

---

## Policy DM 11

### Publicly accessible open space and recreation

1. For new housing or mixed use development sites, the council will seek to deliver the following categories of publicly accessible open space provision in accordance with the specified standards:

#### (I) Quantity standards

| Open Space Type                          | Draft Standard<br>(ha/1000 population) | Minimum Size of<br>Facility<br>(hectares)   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  |   |
| Amenity Green Space                      | 0.7                                    | 0.1   |
| Provision for children and young people  | 0.25                                   | 0.25 excluding a buffer zone*   |
| Publicly accessible outdoor sports       | 1.6                                    | To meet the technical standards produced by Sport England or the relevant Governing Bodies of Sport |
| Allotments and community gardens         | 0.2                                    | 0.66  |
| Natural/semi-natural areas of open space | 6.5                                    | 0.2   |

\* but in cases where accessibility to children's and young people's provision is poor, for example outside a reasonable walking distance or where the crossing of major roads is necessary, smaller areas of open space may be justified on-site.

#### (ii) Quality Standards

All new open spaces must take account of design and accessibility and other quality requirements specific to each open space type set out in the Open Space SPD. An Open Space Layout and Design statement, to incorporate ecological management measures, should be submitted for approval by the Council.

### **(iii) Accessibility Standards**

| <b>Open Space Type</b>   | <b>Draft Accessibility Standard<br/>(radius from open space)</b>                          |
|--|---|
|  |   |
| <b>Amenity Green Space</b>                                       | <b>400m</b>   |
| <b>Provision for children<br/>and young people<br/>provision</b> | <b>600m</b>   |
| <b>Publicly accessible<br/>outdoor sports</b>                    | <b>1000m</b>  |
| <b>Allotments and<br/>community gardens</b>                      | <b>1000m</b>  |
| <b>Natural/semi-natural<br/>areas of open space</b>              | <b>300m (2 Ha site)<br/>2km (20 Ha site)<br/>5km (100 Ha site)<br/>10km (500 Ha site)</b> |

**2. A financial contribution in lieu of open space provision will be acceptable, provided:**

- (i) the proposed development site would be of insufficient size in itself to make the appropriate new provision.**
- (ii) the open space cannot be accommodated on site due to site constraints, and alternative appropriate off-site provision cannot be identified.**

3. Proposals for, and including, new publicly accessible open space and recreation will, where feasible, seek to reinforce existing landscape character, as defined in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment.

4. Proposals for, and including, new publicly accessible open space and recreation provision shall respect the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, by ensuring that development does not result in excessive levels of noise or light pollution. New lighting relating to such development will also preserve the character and visual amenity of the countryside.

5. Proposals for new development which would result in the net loss of open space or sport and recreation facilities will not be permitted unless there is a proven overriding need for the development. In addition, the development will only be permitted if:

- i. There is no resulting deficiency in open space or recreation facilities in the locality; or
- ii. An alternative provision, determined to be of an equivalent community benefit by officers of the Council and community representatives can be provided to replace the loss.

6. In dealing with applications to develop existing open areas within the urban area, rural service centres, larger villages and other locations, the Borough Council will have regard to the impact of the loss of the contribution that the existing site makes to the character, amenity and biodiversity of the area.

**The Open Space supplementary planning document will contain further detail on how the policy will be implemented**

## **10 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

10.2 Previously, the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan (MBLP) has been subject to public consultation according to Regulation 18 of the Local Plan Regulations.

10.3 This report introduces revision of a Policy and is required to be submitted for further public consultation regarding its content and justification through evidence. If approved, this consultation will take place in September 2015.

---

## **11 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

11.2 Following approval for consultation, Policy DM11 together with its reasoned justification will be subject to consultation in accordance with Statement for Community Involvement. Representations to this Policy will be collated and assessed and amendments will be made where appropriate to take account of issues raised by stakeholders and the public.

11.3 On completion of the Regulation 18 public consultation, a revised version, known as the Local Plan Publication, will be presented to Committee for approval for a final consultation prior to submission to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination in Public.

---

## **12 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

| <b>Issue</b>                          | <b>Implications</b>   | <b>Sign-off</b>                              |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b> | Provision of open space is key to ensuring that Maidstone remains a green and attractive place.   | Sue Whiteside, Spatial Policy                |
| <b>Risk Management</b>                | This report seeks approval to consult. Any objections or concerns raised will be reviewed and the policy amended before a final publication version of the plan is completed. | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development |
| <b>Financial</b>                      | There are direct financial implications arising from this report in terms of future revenue costs for the council. Open   | Zena Cooke, S151 Officer and Paul            |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | space budgets are fully committed and the report recognises that innovative ways to secure maintenance of spaces, such as management companies set up by developers, should be explored. It also provides for ensuring that appropriate financial contributions are secured for future maintenance of spaces adopted by the Council. | Holland, Finance  |
| <b>Staffing</b>                              | An Open Space SPD can be managed within existing staff resources.  | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development                                      |
| <b>Legal</b>                                 | Public consultation on the emerging Local Plan is a legal requirement and essential to assisting the soundness of the Local Plan at Examination In Public  | Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services                     |
| <b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>      | Accessibility for all is a key element in consideration of the quality of our open spaces.   | [Policy & Information Manager]  |
| <b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b> | Creation of open space standards provide the Council with a framework for improving the environment and the lives of residents. The creation of up-to-date open space standards will be a positive step in the sustainable development of Maidstone Borough.   | Sue Whiteside, Spatial Policy   |
| <b>Community Safety</b>                      | Safety is a key element in consideration of the quality of our open spaces.  | Sue Whiteside, Spatial Policy   |
| <b>Human Rights Act</b>                      | N/A  | Sue Whiteside, Spatial Policy   |
| <b>Procurement</b>                           | N/A  | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development and Zena Cooke, Section 151 Officer] |
| <b>Asset Management</b>                      | N/A  | Sue Whiteside, Spatial Policy   |

## 13 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Results of the Open Space Audit 2014
- Appendix 2: MBC Open Space Telephone Survey Report 2015



- Appendix 3: Local Authority Open Space Comparison
  - Appendix 4: Draft Open Space Quality Standards
- 

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

## Appendix 1

### Results of Open Space Audit 2014: Urban Wards

The tables below show the total open space provision and total provision per 1000 population for urban and rural wards.

| Urban Ward               | Population 2014 | Allotments | Provision (m2)/ 1000 population | Amenity | Provision (m2)/ 1000 population | Natural   | Provision (m2)/ 1000 population | Play   | Provision (m2)/ 1000 population | Sports  | Provision (m2)/ 1000 population |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------|
| ALLINGTON WARD           | 6930            | 0          |                                 | 47,812  | 6,899                           | 72,634    | 10,481                          | 12,916 | 1,864                           | 78,470  | 11323                           |
| BARMING WARD             | 2360            | 18,507     | 7,842                           | 18,170  | 7,699                           | 57,373    | 24,311                          | 1,276  | 541                             | 0       | 0                               |
| BEARSTED WARD            | 8250            | 8,474      | 1,027                           | 25,730  | 3,119                           | 109,029   | 13,216                          | 809    | 98                              | 23,790  | 2884                            |
| BOXLEY WARD              | 8500            | 8,196      | 964                             | 93,343  | 10,982                          | 4,567,731 | 537,380                         | 6,799  | 800                             | 599,791 | 70564                           |
| BRIDGE WARD              | 5920            | 32,596     | 5,506                           | 50,479  | 8,527                           | 40,536    | 6,847                           | 3,497  | 591                             | 0       | 0                               |
| DOWNSWOOD AND OTHAM WARD | 2800            | 8,217      | 2,935                           | 37,665  | 13,452                          | 70,450    | 25,161                          | 3,981  | 1,422                           | 8,001   | 2858                            |
| EAST WARD                | 8650            | 1,154      | 133                             | 94,067  | 10,875                          | 38,808    | 4,486                           | 7,774  | 899                             | 9,882   | 1142                            |
| FANT WARD                | 9860            | 45,165     | 4,581                           | 26,012  | 2,638                           | 39,269    | 3,983                           | 6,130  | 622                             | 17,094  | 1734                            |
| HEATH WARD               | 5970            | 2,035      | 341                             | 54,365  | 9,106                           | 24,382    | 4,084                           | 26,183 | 4,386                           | 6,679   | 1119                            |
| HIGH STREET WARD         | 9880            | 6,660      | 674                             | 33,521  | 3,393                           | 20,669    | 2,092                           | 2,469  | 250                             | 10,652  | 1078                            |
| LOOSE WARD               | 2320            | 22,547     | 9,719                           | 23,769  | 10,245                          | 2,077     | 895                             | 813    | 350                             | 0       | 0                               |
| NORTH WARD               | 9900            | 43,840     | 4,428                           | 14,169  | 1,431                           | 99,536    | 10,054                          | 5,071  | 512                             | 0       | 0                               |
| PARK WOOD WARD           | 7040            | 0          | 0                               | 52,486  | 7,455                           | 33,361    | 4,739                           | 4,322  | 614                             | 16,072  | 2283                            |
| SHEPWAY NORTH WARD       | 9030            | 3,299      | 365                             | 67,473  | 7,472                           | 1,727,765 | 191,336                         | 5,920  | 656                             | 144,987 | 16056                           |
| SHEPWAY SOUTH WARD       | 5860            | 0          | 0                               | 49,063  | 8,373                           | 77,220    | 13,177                          | 4,615  | 788                             | 0       | 0                               |
| SOUTH WARD               | 8650            | 24,338     | 2,814                           | 96,428  | 11,148                          | 78,883    | 9,119                           | 5,804  | 671                             | 36,515  | 4221                            |
| Total                    | 111920          | 225,028    |                                 | 784,552 |                                 | 7,059,723 |                                 | 98,379 |                                 | 951,933 |                                 |
| M2/1000 Population       |                 | 2,011      |                                 | 7,010   |                                 | 63,078    |                                 | 879    |                                 | 8,505   |                                 |
| Ha/1000 Population       |                 | 0.20       |                                 | 0.70    |                                 | 6.31      |                                 | 0.09   |                                 | 0.85    |                                 |

## Results of Open Space Audit 2014: Rural Wards

| Rural Ward                                | Populati<br>on 2014 | Allotments | Provision<br>(m2)/<br>1000<br>populati<br>on | Amenity | Provision<br>(m2)/<br>1000<br>populati<br>on | Natural   | Provision<br>(m2)/<br>1000<br>populati<br>on | Play   | Provision<br>(m2)/<br>1000<br>populati<br>on | Sports  | Provision<br>(m2)/<br>1000<br>populati<br>on |
|---|---------------------|------------|--|---------|--|-----------|--|--------|--|---------|--|
| BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA AND CHART SUTTON WARD | 2680                | 15,297     | 5,708  | 77,556  | 28,939                                       | 223,629   | 83,444                                       | 1,077  | 402  | 15,230  | 5683   |
| COXHEATH AND HUNTON WARD                  | 3680                | 18,912     | 5,139  | 75,828  | 20,605                                       | 423,867   | 115,181                                      | 5,327  | 1,448  | 17,197  | 4673   |
| DETLING AND THURNHAM WARD                 | 3060                | 6,500      | 2,124  | 14,446  | 4,721  | 731,201   | 238,955                                      | 1,354  | 442  | 0       | 0  |
| HARRIETSHAM AND LENHAM WARD               | 5520                | 9,405      | 1,704  | 125,954 | 22,818                                       | 356,673   | 64,615                                       | 4,377  | 793  | 18,168  | 3291   |
| HEADCORN WARD                             | 5260                | 7,758      | 1,475  | 56,788  | 10,796                                       | 22,682    | 4,312  | 2,898  | 551  | 10,928  | 2078   |
| LEEDS WARD                                | 2430                | 0          | 0  | 14,893  | 6,129  | 14,353    | 5,907  | 1,213  | 499  | 20,703  | 8520   |
| MARDEN AND YALDING WARD                   | 7810                | 12,034     | 1,541  | 112,541 | 14,410                                       | 226,466   | 28,997                                       | 4,269  | 547  | 52,661  | 6743   |
| NORTH DOWNS WARD                          | 2440                | 0          | 0  | 36,890  | 15,119                                       | 782,057   | 320,515                                      | 3,175  | 1,301  | 5,814   | 2383   |
| STAPLEHURST WARD                          | 5960                | 0          | 0  | 33,812  | 5,673  | 15,825    | 2,655  | 3,041  | 510  | 40,537  | 6802   |
| SUTTON VALENCE AND LANGLEY WARD           | 2860                | 21,965     | 7,680  | 62,629  | 21,898                                       | 99,720    | 34,867                                       | 2,243  | 784  | 1,560   | 545  |
| Total                                     | 41700               | 91,871     |  | 611,337 |  | 2,896,473 |  | 28,974 |  | 182,798 |  |
| M2/1000 Population                        |                     | 2203       |  | 14660   |  | 69460     |  | 695    |  | 4384    |  |
| Ha/1000 population                        |                     | 0.22       |  | 1.47    |  | 6.95      |  | 0.07   |  | 0.44    |  |

# MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL OPEN SPACES SURVEY REPORT

Prepared by Lake Market Research for Maidstone Borough Council

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> May 2015

This report complies with ISO: 20252 standards and other relevant forms of conduct



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |                                 |    |
|---|---------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Research Context                | 3  |
| 2 | Executive Summary               | 5  |
| 3 | Usage Patterns                  | 7  |
| 4 | Current Provision               | 16 |
| 5 | Important Aspects of Open Space | 23 |

# 1. RESEARCH CONTEXT

## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Maidstone Borough Council commissioned Lake Market Research to undertake a telephone survey with residents of the Borough to identify and assess views on open space provision. This will assist the Council to assess views on the amounts of open space in the borough and the characteristics of open spaces that are important. This in turn will assist with the setting of open spaces standards and action plan priorities.

This research therefore explored:

- Claimed use of open space at an overall level and by specific typologies of open space
- Reasons for using open spaces and the most important aspects of open spaces
- Opinions on the amount, quality and accessibility of open spaces provided
- Opinion on the importance of the specific typologies of open space
- The most important aspects in terms of open spaces

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted by Lake Market Research via a telephone survey. The fieldwork was conducted during the evenings and weekends to ensure that we interviewed a representative proportion of the working population. Fieldwork was carried out over a two week period between 29<sup>th</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> May 2015. Target quotas were set in terms of age and gender in accordance with 2011 Census data. The respondent profile is as follows:

### Respondent Profile

The profile of residents interviewed for this survey incorporate a range of demographics:

|                       |                                       |           |           |                             |           |         |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender                | 48% Female                            | 52% Male  |           |                             |           |         |
| Age                   | 3% 18-24                              | 20% 25-34 | 14% 35-44 | 23% 45-54                   | 21% 55-64 | 17% 65+ |
| Ethnicity             | 96% White                             | 4% BME    |           |                             |           |         |
| Disability            | 11% Yes                               | 89% No    |           |                             |           |         |
| Ward within Maidstone | 4% Allington                          |           |           | 3% High Street              |           |         |
|                       | 2% Barming                            |           |           | 2% Leeds                    |           |         |
|                       | 5% Bearsted                           |           |           | 3% Loose                    |           |         |
|                       | 3% Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton |           |           | 5% Marden & Yalding         |           |         |
|                       | 3% Boxley                             |           |           | 2% North Downs              |           |         |
|                       | 3% Bridge                             |           |           | 2% North                    |           |         |
|                       | 4% Coxheath & Hunton                  |           |           | 2% Park Wood                |           |         |
|                       | 3% Detling & Thurnham                 |           |           | 5% Shepway North            |           |         |
|                       | 3% Downswood & Otham                  |           |           | 2% Shepway South            |           |         |
|                       | 5% East                               |           |           | 5% South                    |           |         |
|                       | 5% Fant                               |           |           | 6% Staplehurst              |           |         |
|                       | 5% Harrietsham & Lenham               |           |           | 3% Sutton Valence & Langley |           |         |
|                       | 5% Headcorn                           |           |           | 4% Prefer not to answer     |           |         |
| 3% Heath              |                                       |           |           |                             |           |         |

### **1.3 ANALYSIS, WEIGHTING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA**

It should be noted that a sample of visitors and residents participated in this survey rather than all residents of the Maidstone Borough Council area. Results are therefore subject to sampling error, which means that not all differences are statistically significant.

Overall results for the resident survey are accurate to a confidence interval (also called margin of error) of +/- 4.89% at the 95% confidence level. There are three factors that determine the size of the confidence interval for a given confidence level: sample size; percentage; and population size. In calculating the general level of accuracy for reporting purposes, we have used:

- The sample size of 401 achieved
- The worst case percentage (50%);
- 2011 Census data estimate of 122,000 residents across all wards of the Maidstone Borough Council area aged 18+.

Confidence interval calculations assume you have a genuine random sample of the relevant population (in practice, margins of error may be slightly higher).

Quotas were set in line with the gender and age profiles of Maidstone residents. These were achieved so no weighting has been applied to this dataset.

### **1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the team at Maidstone Borough Council for all their help and advice in developing the project. We would also like to thank all 401 residents who agreed to take part and whose views made this research possible.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2.1 USAGE PATTERNS

The vast majority of the residents surveyed have visited an open space in the borough of Maidstone in the last 12 months. The most popular reasons for using open spaces are to walk, to take exercise, for fresh air, to use children's play equipment and to walk the dog.

Of the five typologies, amenity green space and natural and semi natural open space are the most popular in terms of claimed usage. 51% use amenity green space once a week or more, 66% use it at least once a fortnight. 49% use natural and semi natural space once a week or more, 59% use it at least once a fortnight. 33% of residents use play area provision for children and young people and 15% use outdoor sports facilities at least once a fortnight.

Amenity green space is typically accessed by foot and by car (48% for each respectively). There is a slight skew towards access on foot for both natural and semi natural space and play areas provision (58% and 54% respectively). In comparison, the majority travel to outdoor sports facilities by car.

Of the five typologies, amenity green space, play area provision and allotments appear to be in close proximity to residents with 62%, 64% and 61% respectively indicating it takes up to 10 minutes to reach them. 53% of residents indicated it takes up to 10 minutes to reach the natural and semi natural space they use. 41% of residents indicated it takes up to 10 minutes to reach the outdoor sports facilities they use.

When asked to choose the type of open space they use most often, a number of users referenced a place as opposed to a type of space. As a number of open spaces contain a mixture of open space typologies, multiple responses have been accepted. We would also advise some caution surrounding comparison of the amenity green space and natural and semi natural space figures as we recognise that despite explanation there may be some overlap between the two because residents see these as the same type of space.

54% of residents indicated they use natural and semi natural space most often. 41% of residents indicated they use amenity green space most often. 26% of residents indicated they use play area provisions most often.

### 2.2 CURRENT PROVISION

The vast majority of residents believe the amount of open space available in the borough is either very good or good. This is significantly higher to the proportion indicating very good or good in the survey conducted by Maidstone Borough Council in 2005.



Encouraging responses are observed in relation to the amount of amenity green space and natural and semi natural space available (78% and 72% rating them as very good / good respectively).

There are however some concerns with regard to the amount of play area provision for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities with 40% and 43% rating them as fair, poor and very poor respectively. When the don't know ratings are removed, the concerns expressed with regard to play area provision for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities are more apparent. It is however unclear whether residents are responding to these categories as a whole when expressing concerns or whether there are sub categories within these areas that are concerns.

Three quarters of residents (75%) rate the overall quality of open spaces in the borough of Maidstone as very good or good. This is significantly higher compared to the proportion indicating very good or good in the survey conducted by Maidstone in 2005 (57%).

The vast majority consider the access of open spaces by car to be very good or good (84%). Three quarters consider the access of open spaces on foot to be very good or good (75%). Perceptions with regards to access by bicycle and public transport are more varied, with lower opinion ratings and uncertainty expressed.

## **2.3 IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF OPEN SPACES**

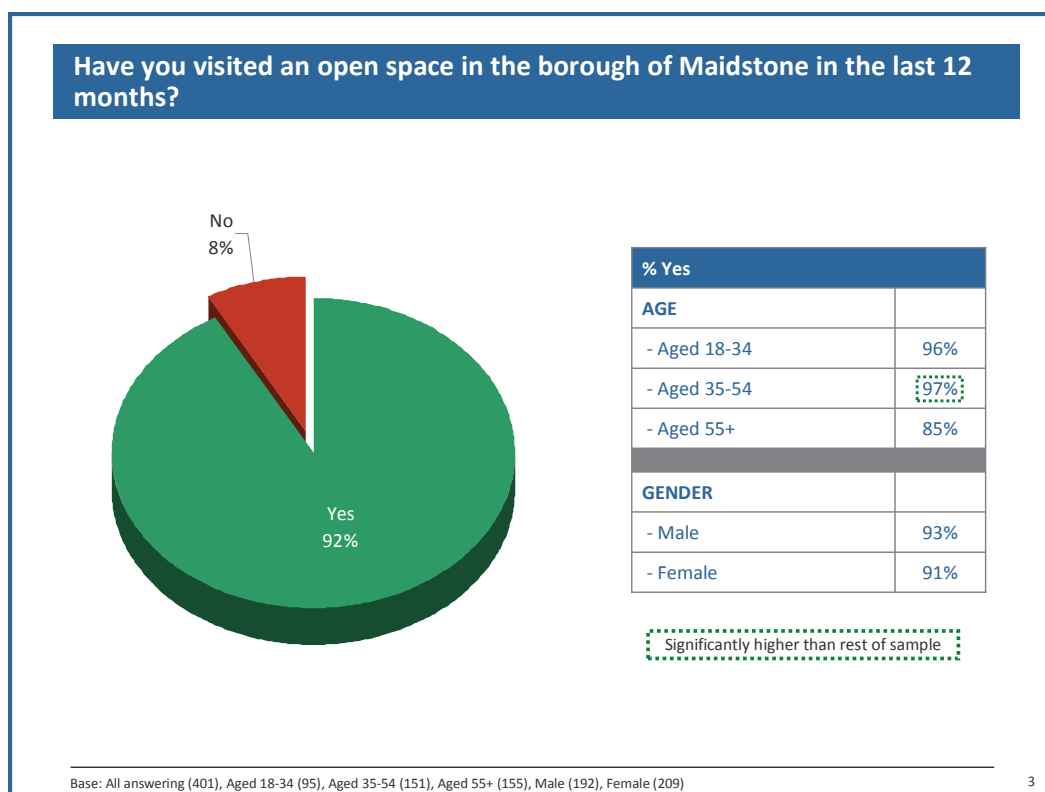
Consistent with usage patterns, the importance of the open space typologies varies. At an overall level, natural and semi natural space and amenity green space are considered important by the majority surveyed (94% and 91% rate them as very important or important respectively). Just under three quarters (72%) rate play areas provision for children and young people as very important or important. Just over half (51%) rate outdoor sports facilities as very important or important and a third (33%) rate allotments as very important or important.

Cleanliness / tidiness are considered the most important aspect of open spaces at an overall level with 39% of residents selecting this aspect. Nature features (e.g. wildlife, ponds, woodland) and equipment (e.g. play areas / recreation) are considered the next most important with 33% and 27% of residents selecting these aspects respectively. Maintenance and management is selected by 22% of residents. Other areas are considered important features to smaller proportions and are often considered as secondary factors of importance compared to those mentioned above.

### 3. USAGE PATTERNS

#### 3.1 PROPORTION USING OPEN SPACES AND REASONS FOR DOING SO

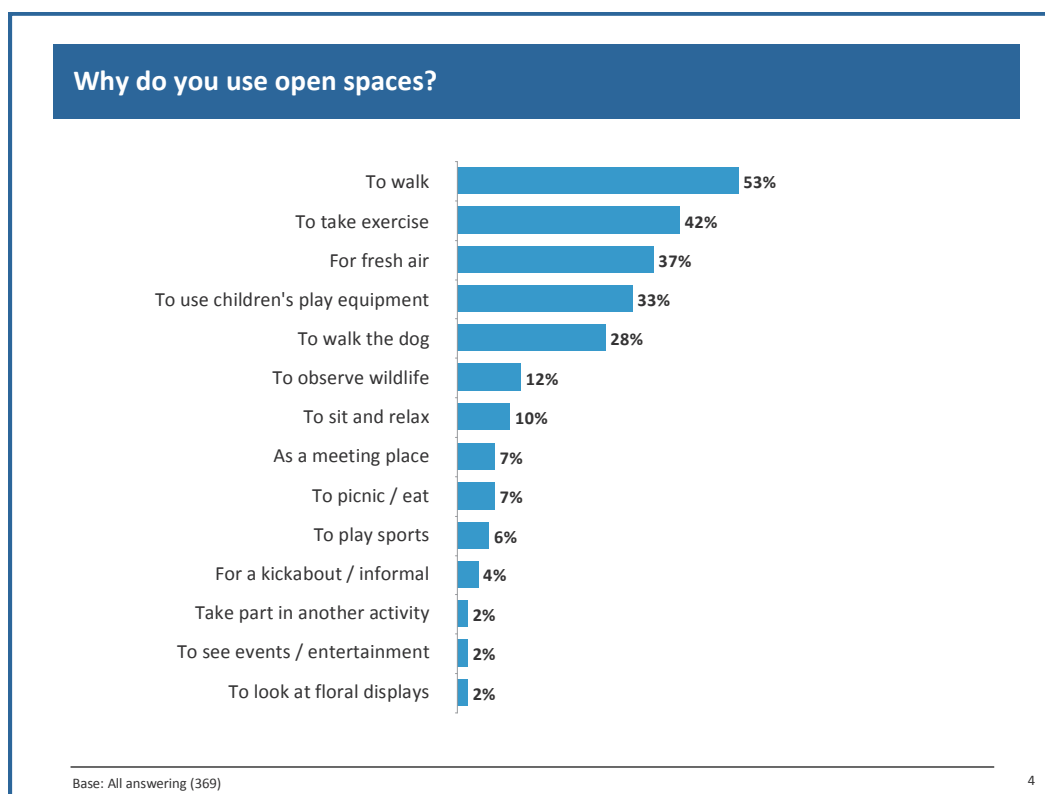
The vast majority of residents (92%) indicated that they had visited an open space in the borough of Maidstone in the last 12 months. Usage is high amongst male and female residents as well as the three age groups sampled, ranging from 85% to 97% – claimed usage is highest amongst residents aged 35-54 years old (97%).



32 residents indicated they hadn't used an open space in the borough of Maidstone in the last 12 months. The reasons for not visiting were largely due to personal circumstances such as a disability / not being physically able to visit (7 residents), being too busy / not having the time (9 residents). The remaining residents referenced that they were content with their property's surroundings.

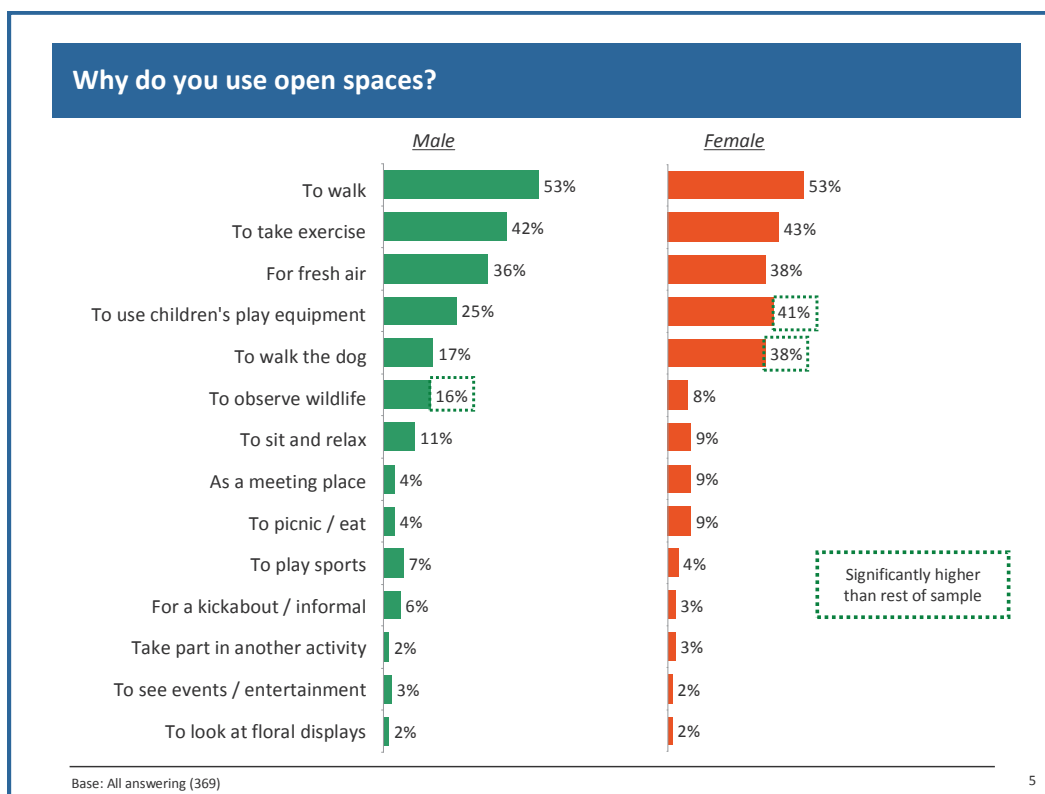
Residents were asked to indicate their reasons for using open spaces. Please note that the responses to this question were not prompted and residents' answers were coded against a pre-coded list accordingly or recorded separately. Residents were able to give as few or as many responses as they chose.

The most popular reasons for using open spaces are to walk (53%), to take exercise (42%), for fresh air (37%), to use children's play equipment (33%) and to walk the dog (28%). These patterns are consistent with those observed in the 2005 survey conducted by Maidstone Borough Council.

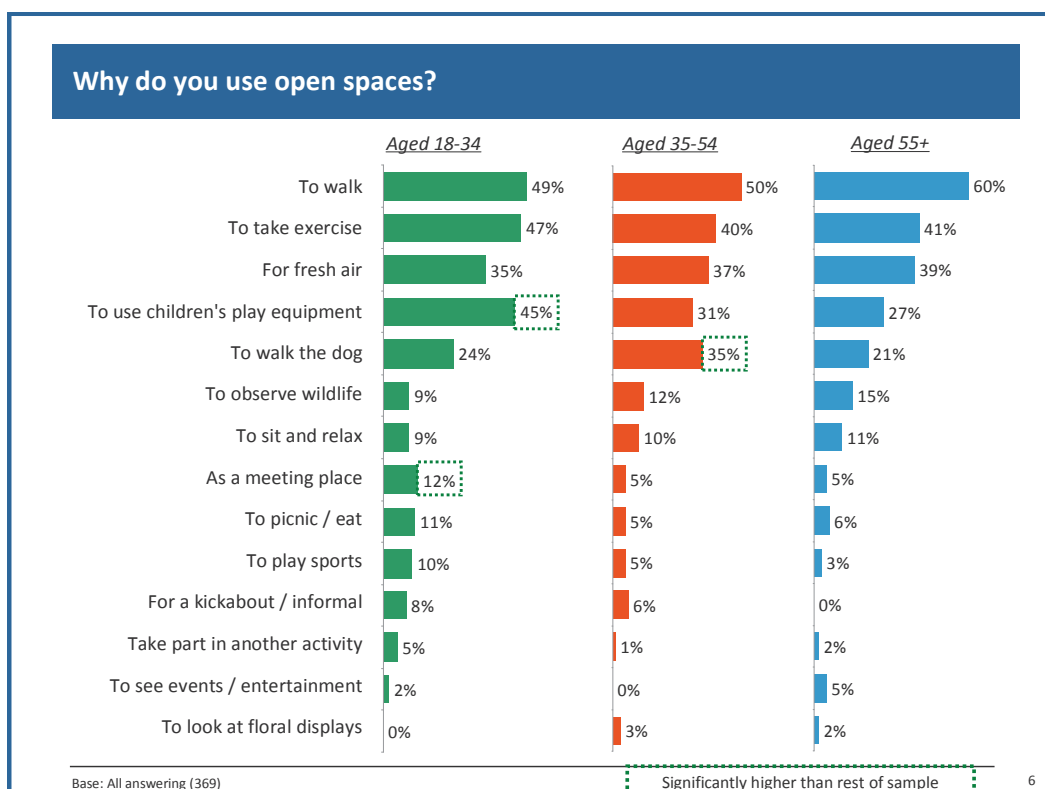


There are significant differences when looking at the responses of male and female residents. Whilst the most frequent responses are common amongst both male and female residents, a significantly higher proportion of female residents mentioned using children's play equipment (41% compared to 25% of male residents) and to walk the dog (38% compared to 17% of male residents).

A significantly higher proportion of male residents mentioned to observe wildlife (16% compared to 8% of female residents).



There are also significant differences when looking at the responses of the different age groups surveyed. A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 18-34 years old mentioned to use children's play equipment (45%) and as a meeting place (12%). A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 35-54 years old mentioned to walk the dog (35%).

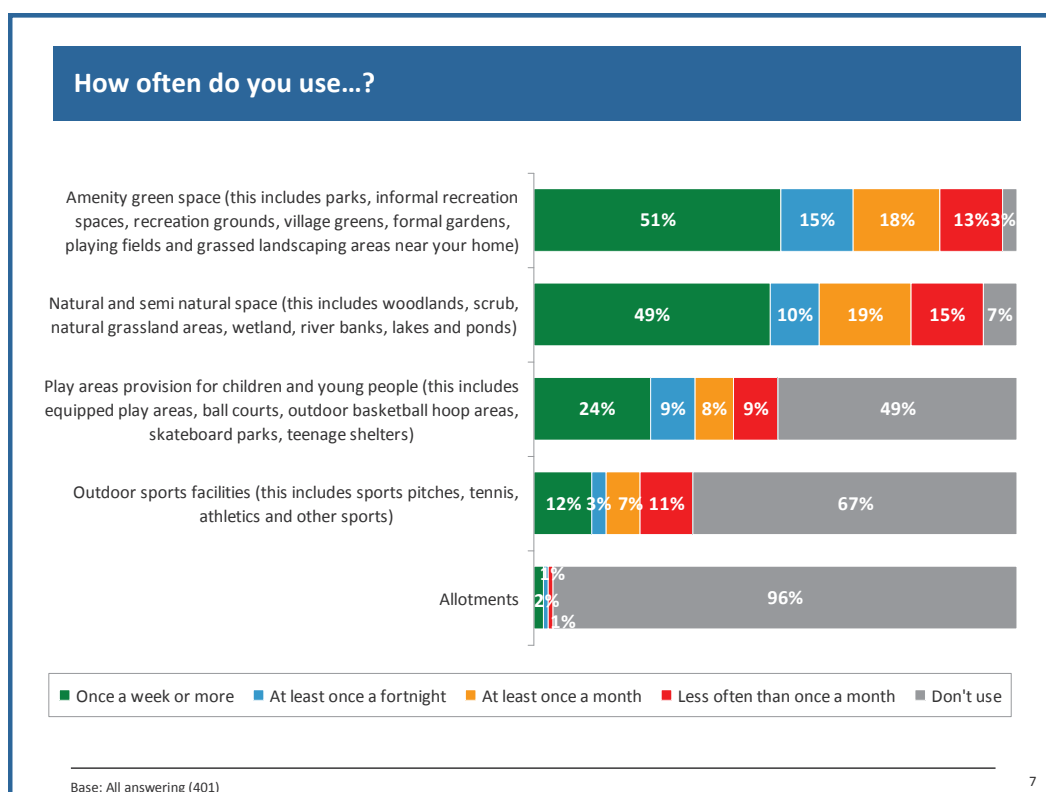


### 3.2 USE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF OPEN SPACE

Residents were asked to indicate how often they use each of the following types of open space. The following introductions were read out in full to residents to aid understanding of the typology titles:

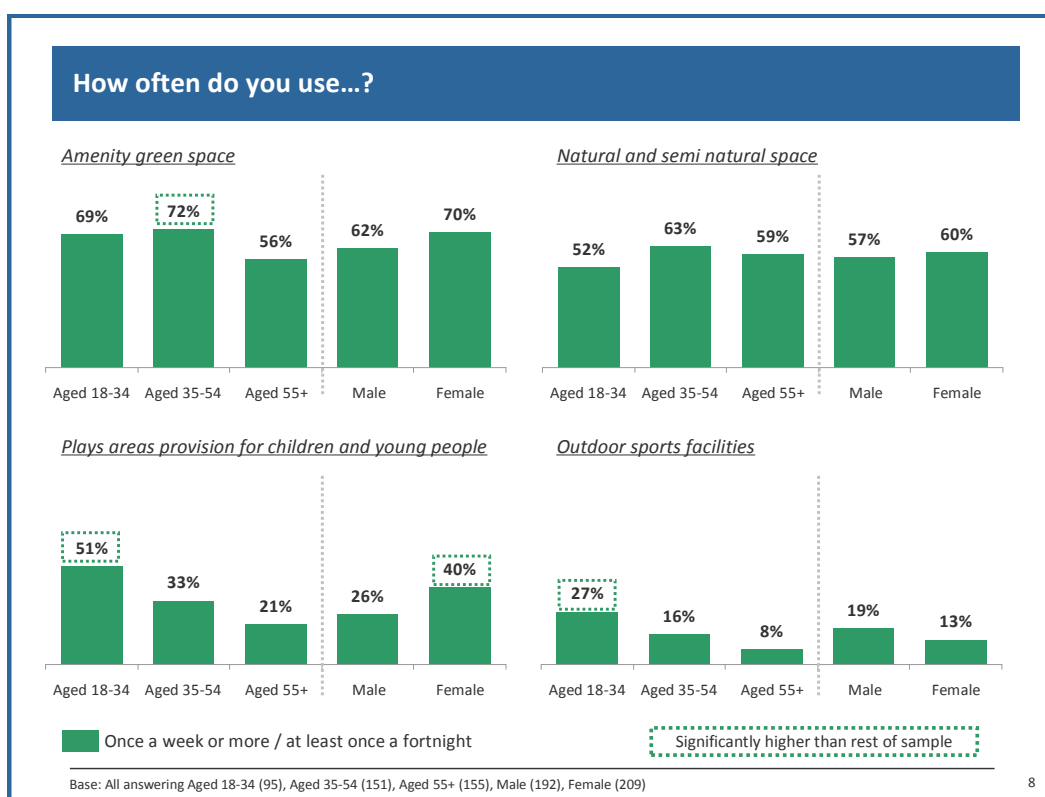
1. Amenity green space – including parks, informal recreation spaces, recreation grounds, village greens, formal gardens, playing fields and grassed landscaping areas near your home. Please note this does not include natural spaces also found in some parks such as woodland, lakes or natural grassland areas).
2. Outdoor sports facilities – including sports pitches, tennis, athletics and other sports.
3. Natural and semi natural space – including woodlands, scrub, natural grassland areas, wetland, river banks, lakes and ponds.
4. Play areas provision for children and young people – including equipped play areas, ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard parks, teenage shelters
5. Allotments

Of the five typologies, amenity green space is used most often by the residents surveyed – 66% indicated they use it at least once a fortnight. Usage of natural and semi natural space ranked second with 59% indicating they use it at least once a fortnight. A third of residents (33%) indicated they use play area provision for children and young people and 15% indicated they use outdoor sports facilities at least once a fortnight.



There are significant differences in terms of use of amenity green space, play area provision for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities:

- Amenity green space – a significantly higher proportion of 35-54 year olds indicated they use it more than once a fortnight (72%)
- Play area provision for children and young people – a significantly higher proportion of 18-34 year olds and female residents indicated they use it more than once a fortnight (51% and 40% respectively)
- Outdoor sports facilities – a significantly higher proportion of 18-34 year olds indicated they use it more than once a fortnight (27%)

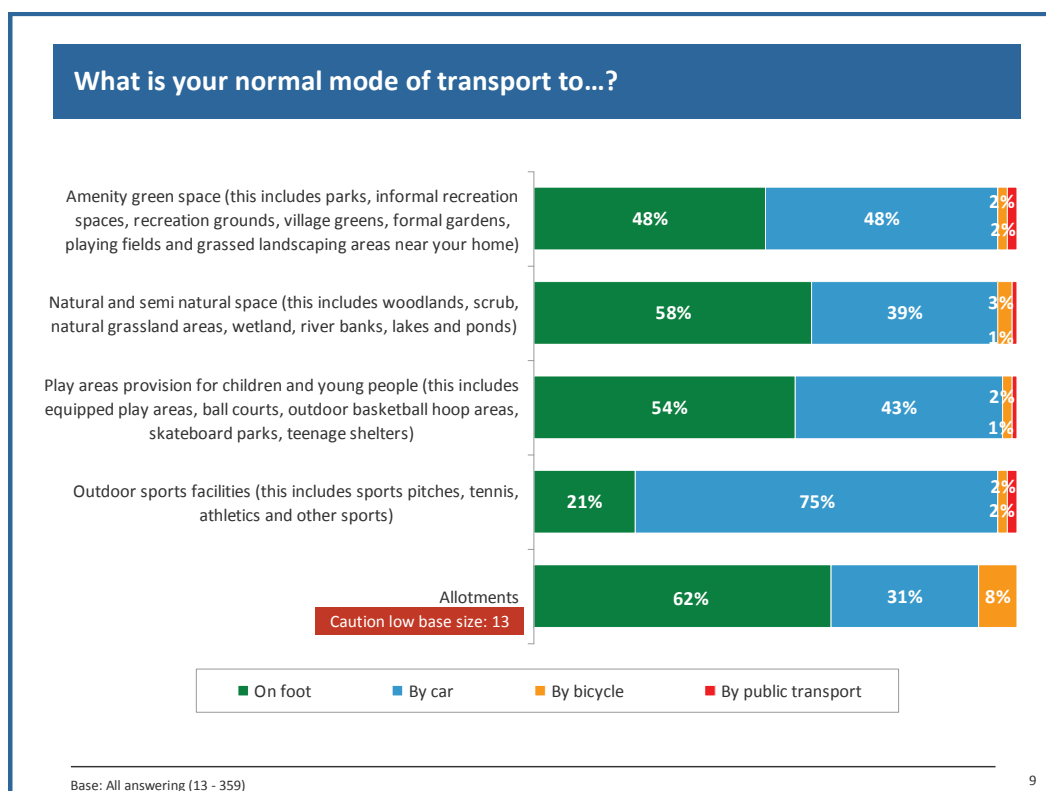


### 3.3 MODE OF TRANSPORT AND LENGTH OF TIME TO GET TO

Residents were asked to indicate their normal mode of transport to each of the open space typologies they visit. The most common modes of transport across all typologies are by foot or by car.

Even proportions are observed in terms of amenity green space (48% on foot and by car). There is a slight skew towards access on foot for both natural and semi natural space and play areas provision (58% and 54% respectively).

In comparison, the majority travel to outdoor sports facilities by car (75%).

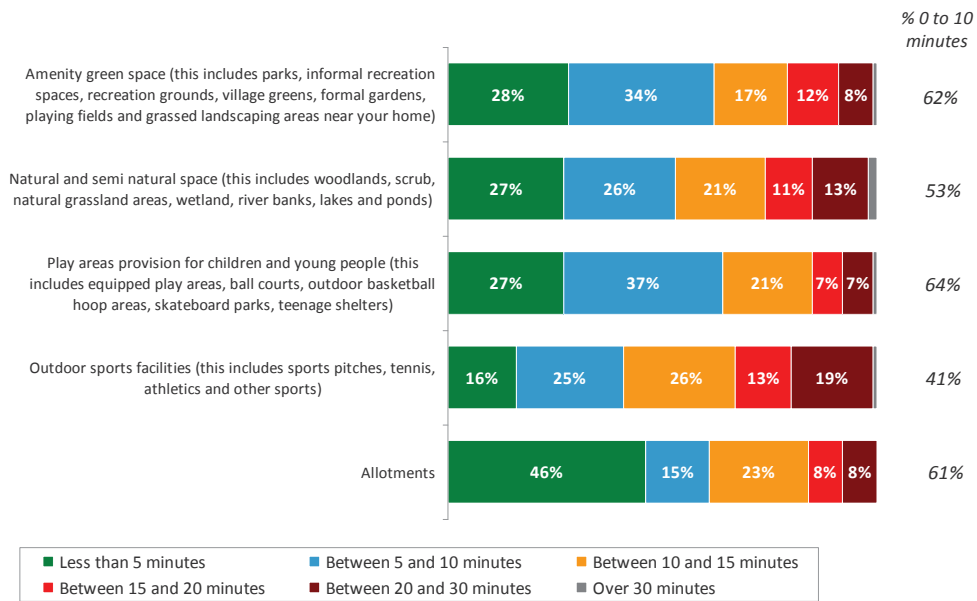


Residents were also asked to indicate the length of time it takes to get to each of the open space typologies they use. Of the typologies, amenity green space, play area provision and allotments appear to be in close proximity to residents with 62%, 64% and 61% respectively indicating it takes up to 10 minutes to reach them.

53% of residents indicated it takes up to 10 minutes to reach the natural and semi natural space they visit, with a further 21% indicating it takes between 10 and 15 minutes.

As perhaps expected, residents indicate it takes longer to get to the outdoor sports facilities they use, with 41% indicating it takes up to 10 minutes and 26% indicating it takes between 10 and 15 minutes.

## How long does it take you to get to...?



Base: All answering (13 - 359)

10



### 3.4 TYPE OF OPEN SPACE USED MOST OFTEN

Residents were asked to describe the open space they use most often in their own words. The main purpose of this question was to identify the typology that residents use most often.

This question posed some challenges as the majority of users referenced a place as opposed to a type of space when describing what they use most often. In reality, a number of open spaces across the borough of Maidstone contain a mixture of space typologies, for example a mix of amenity green space and natural and semi natural space.

This is particularly apparent in the case of Mote Park – a frequently used open space that contains four of the open space typologies – amenity green space, sports pitches, natural and semi natural space and play areas. 142 residents referenced Mote Park at this question (39%) of the sample answering.

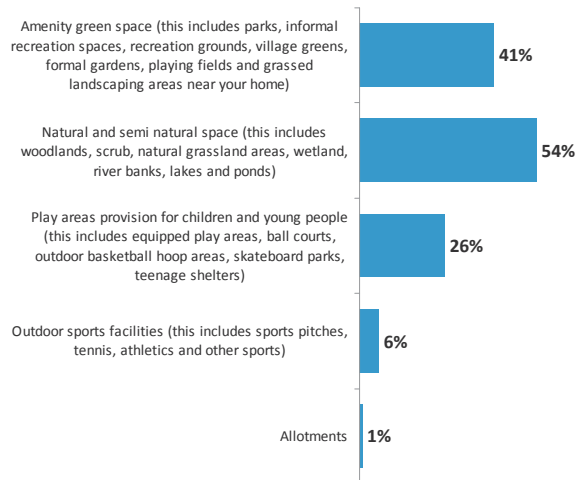
As a result we have accepted multiple responses to this question as some residents believe they use more than one typology in their visit, e.g. the amenity green space and natural and semi natural space at Mote Park.

We would also advise some caution surrounding the comparison of the amenity green space and natural and semi natural space figures as we recognise that despite explanation there may be some overlap between the two because residents see these as the same type of space (as they often exist in the same place).

54% of residents indicated they use natural and semi natural space most often. 41% of residents indicated they use amenity green space most often. As perhaps expected, a higher proportion of residents aged 55 and over use natural and semi natural space most often.

26% of residents indicated they use play area provisions most often. This is significantly higher amongst residents aged 18-34 and female residents.

## Can you please briefly describe the open space you use most often?



|               | Amenity green space | Natural and semi natural space | Play areas provision |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>AGE</b>    |                     |                                |                      |
| - Aged 18-34  | 43%                 | 45%                            | 36%                  |
| - Aged 35-54  | 43%                 | 53%                            | 24%                  |
| - Aged 55+    | 38%                 | 60%                            | 21%                  |
| <b>GENDER</b> |                     |                                |                      |
| - Male        | 39%                 | 56%                            | 19%                  |
| - Female      | 43%                 | 51%                            | 32%                  |

Significantly higher than rest of sample

Base: All answering (369), Aged 18-34 (91), Aged 35-54 (147), Aged 55+ (131), Male (178), Female (191)

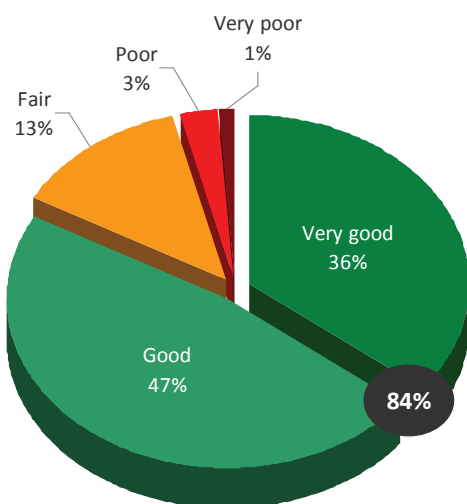
11

## 4. CURRENT PROVISION

### 4.1 AMOUNT OF OPEN SPACE AVAILABLE IN THE BOROUGH

The vast majority of residents believe the amount of open space available in the borough of Maidstone is either very good or good (84%). This is significantly higher than the proportion indicating very good or good in the survey conducted in 2005 (53%). This year, 13% of residents rated the amount of open space available as fair and 4% rated it as poor or very poor. Proportions are consistent across both male and female residents and the age groups surveyed, ranging from 82% to 85% rating the amount of open space available as very good / good.

In general terms, what do you think about the amount of open space available in the borough of Maidstone? The term open spaces include all the types of space open to the public, including natural spaces such as woodland, natural grasslands and river banks, more formal spaces such as parks, recreation space and village greens, green areas around your home, sport pitches, play areas and allotments.



| % Very good / Good |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| <b>AGE</b>         |     |
| - Aged 18-34       | 84% |
| - Aged 35-54       | 84% |
| - Aged 55+         | 83% |
| <b>GENDER</b>      |     |
| - Male             | 85% |
| - Female           | 82% |

Base: All answering (401), Aged 18-34 (95), Aged 35-54 (151), Aged 55+ (155), Male (192), Female (209)

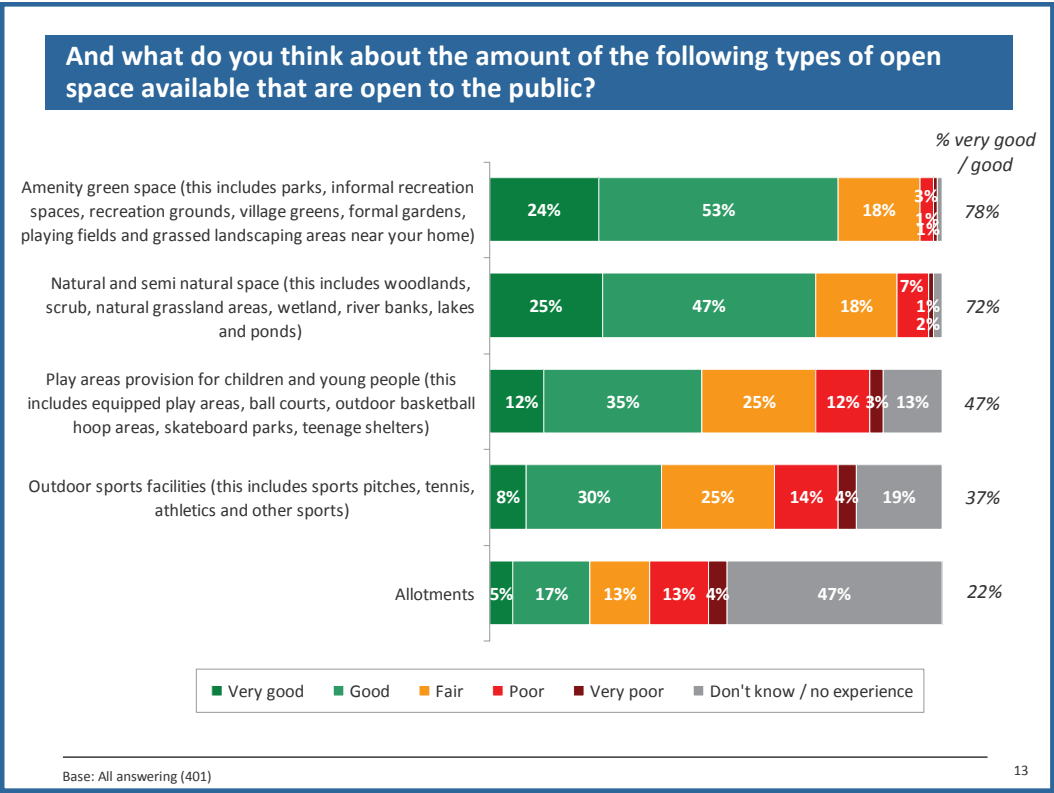
12

Residents were also asked to indicate what they think about the amount of the open space typologies available that are open to the public.

Response to the amount of amenity green space and natural and semi natural space is encouraging with 78% and 72% rating it as very good or good respectively.

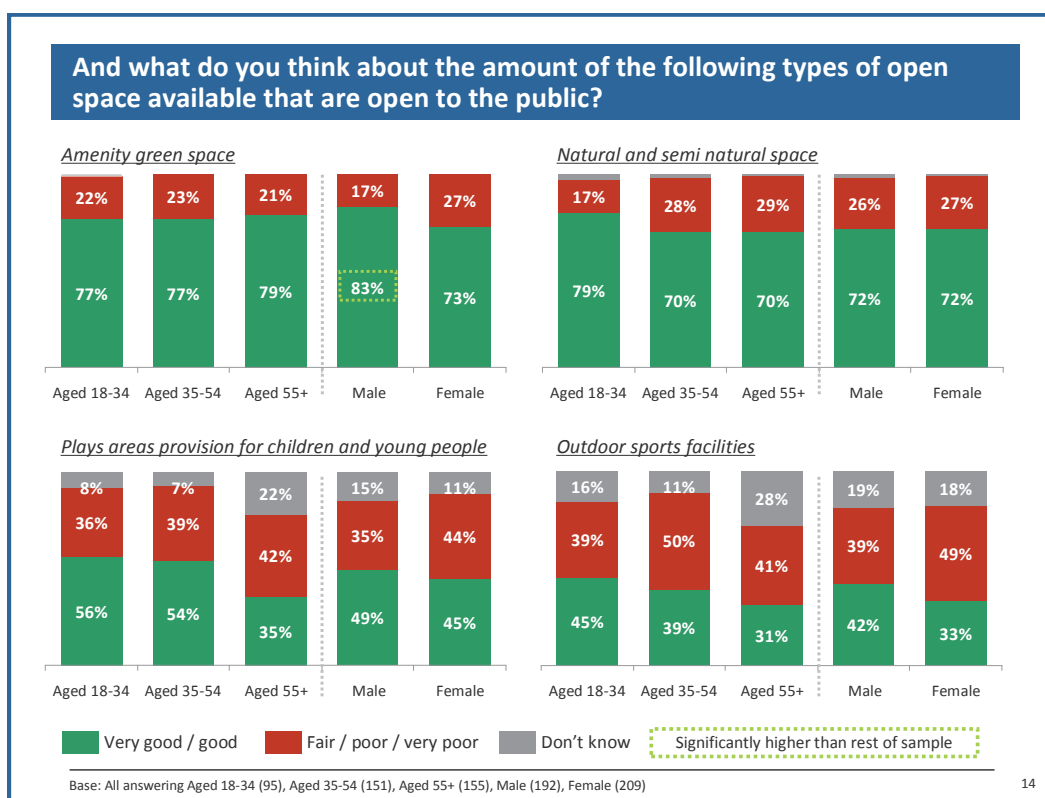
There are some concerns expressed with regard to play area provision for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities with 40% and 43% rating them as fair, poor or very poor respectively.

There is however also some uncertainty with regard to the provision of play areas and outdoor sports facilities with 13% and 19% indicating they were not sure / did not have any experience on which to make a judgement. 47% indicated they were not sure about the amount of allotments available that are open to the public.



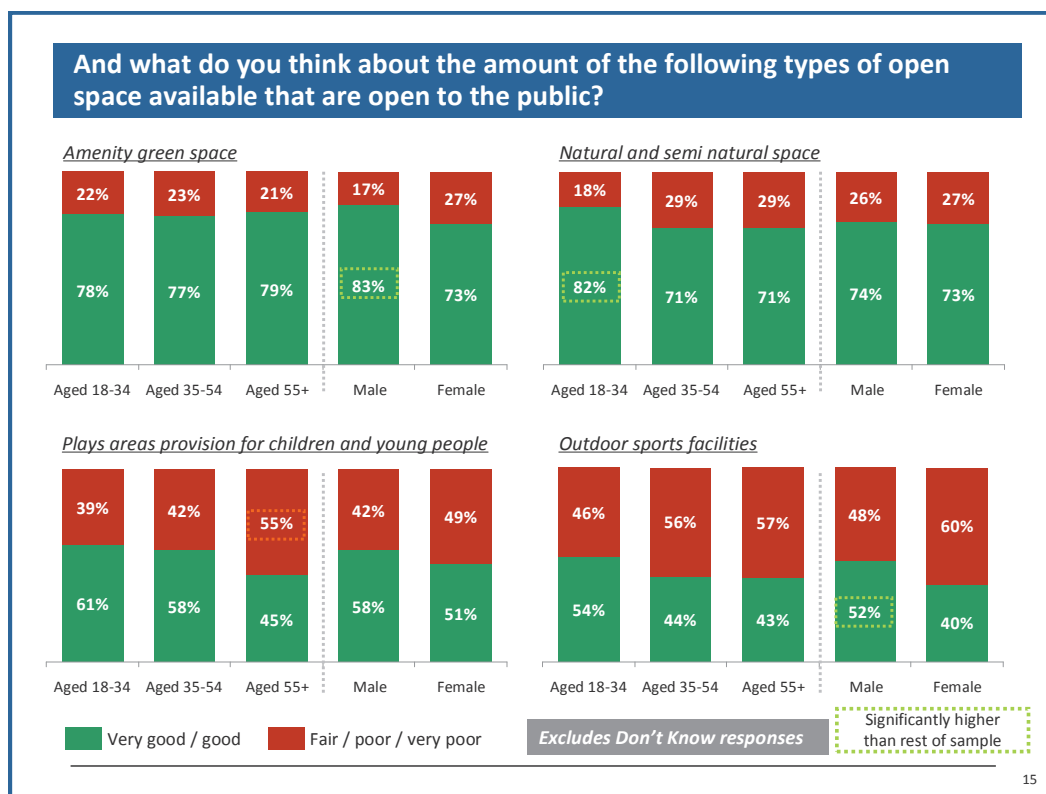
There are some significant differences when looking at results by demographic group. A significantly higher proportion of male residents rate amenity green space as very good or good (83% compared to 73% of female residents).

As perhaps expected, uncertainty with regard to play area provision and outdoor sports facilities is highest amongst residents aged 55 and over.

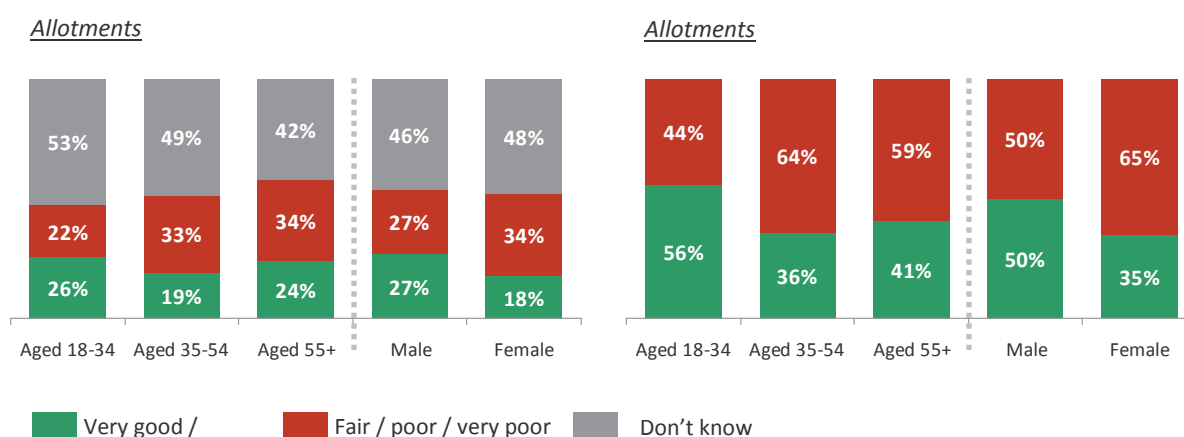


With don't know ratings removed, the concerns expressed with regard to play area provision for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities are more apparent across all of the demographic groups surveyed.

Perceptions of natural and semi natural space, amenity green space and outdoor sports facility amounts are highest amongst residents aged 18-34 (82%, 78% and 61% respectively). A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 55 and over rated the play area provision for children and young people as fair, poor or very poor (55%, once don't know ratings were removed).

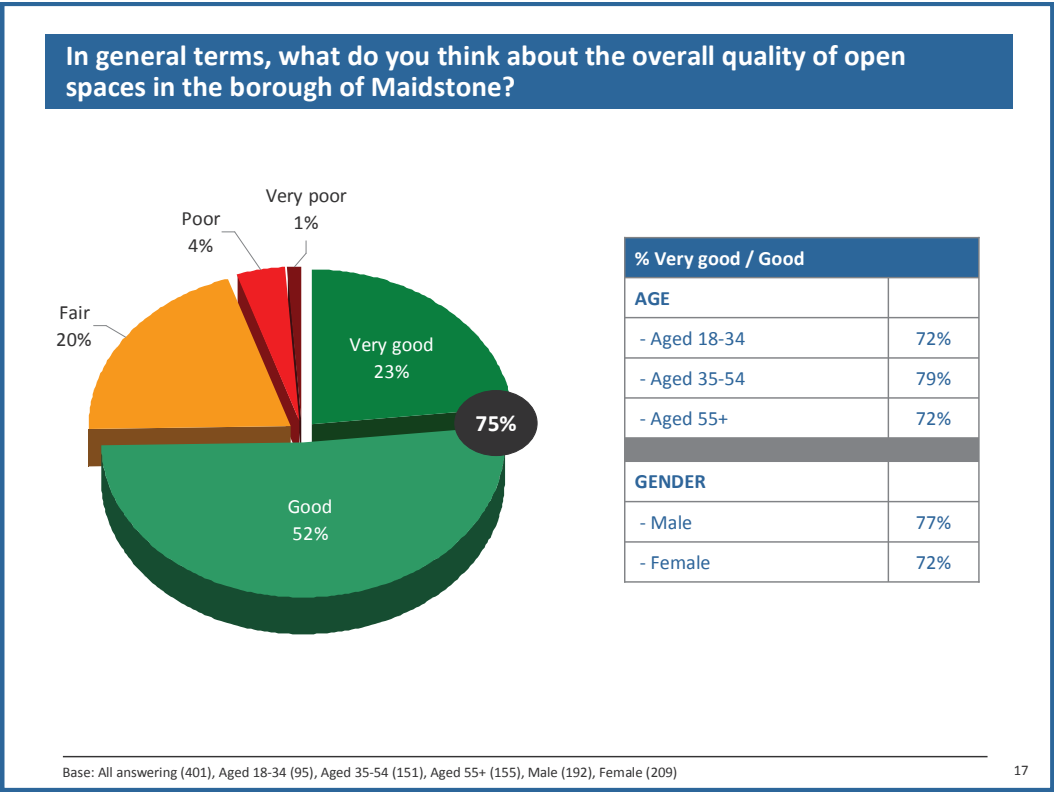


Uncertainty with regard to allotment provision is high amongst all demographic groups. With don't know ratings removed (on the far right chart below), there is some concern expressed for the amount of allotment space provided across the borough of Maidstone.



4.2 QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE AVAILABLE IN THE BOROUGH

Three quarters of residents (75%) rate the overall quality of open spaces in the borough of Maidstone as very good or good. This is significantly higher to the proportion indicating very good or good in the survey conducted in 2005 (57%). This year, 20% of residents rated the quality of open space available as fair and 5% rated it as poor or very poor. Proportions are consistent across both male and female residents and the age groups surveyed, ranging from 72% to 79% rating the quality of open space available as very good / good.

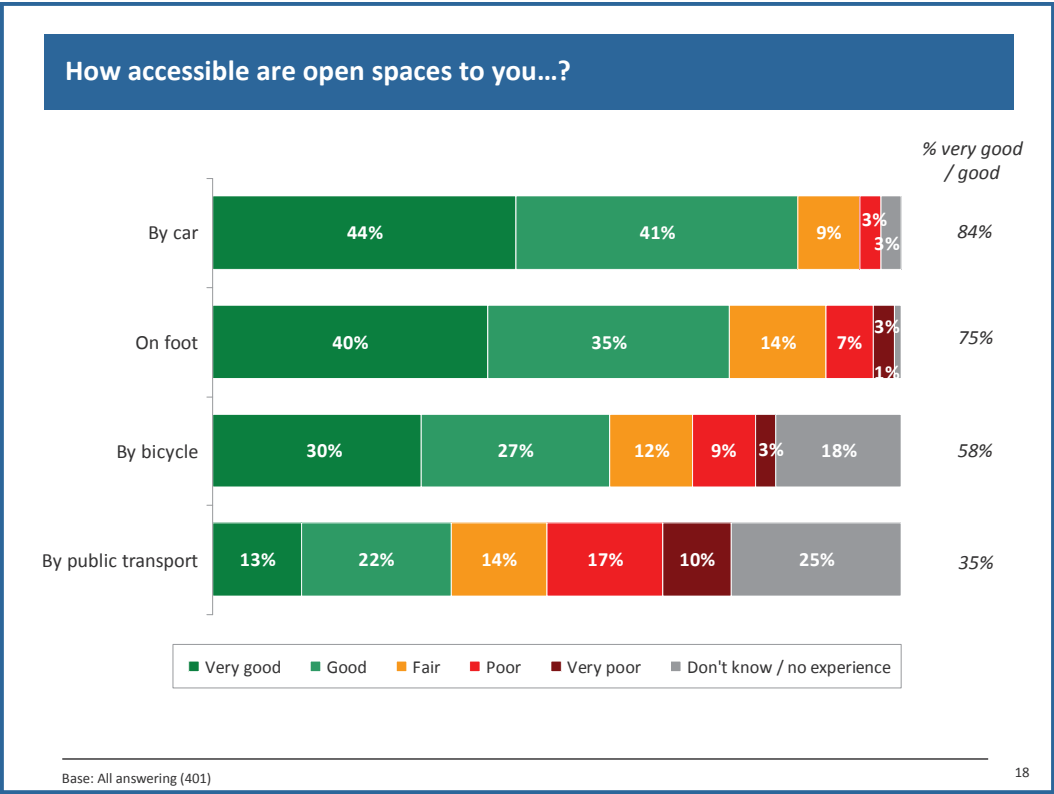


4.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF OPEN SPACES

Residents were asked to indicate how accessible open spaces are to them at an overall level by the varying means of transport: by car, on foot, by bicycle and by public transport.

The vast majority consider the access of open spaces by car to be very good or good (84%). Three quarters consider the access of open spaces on foot to be very good or good (75%).

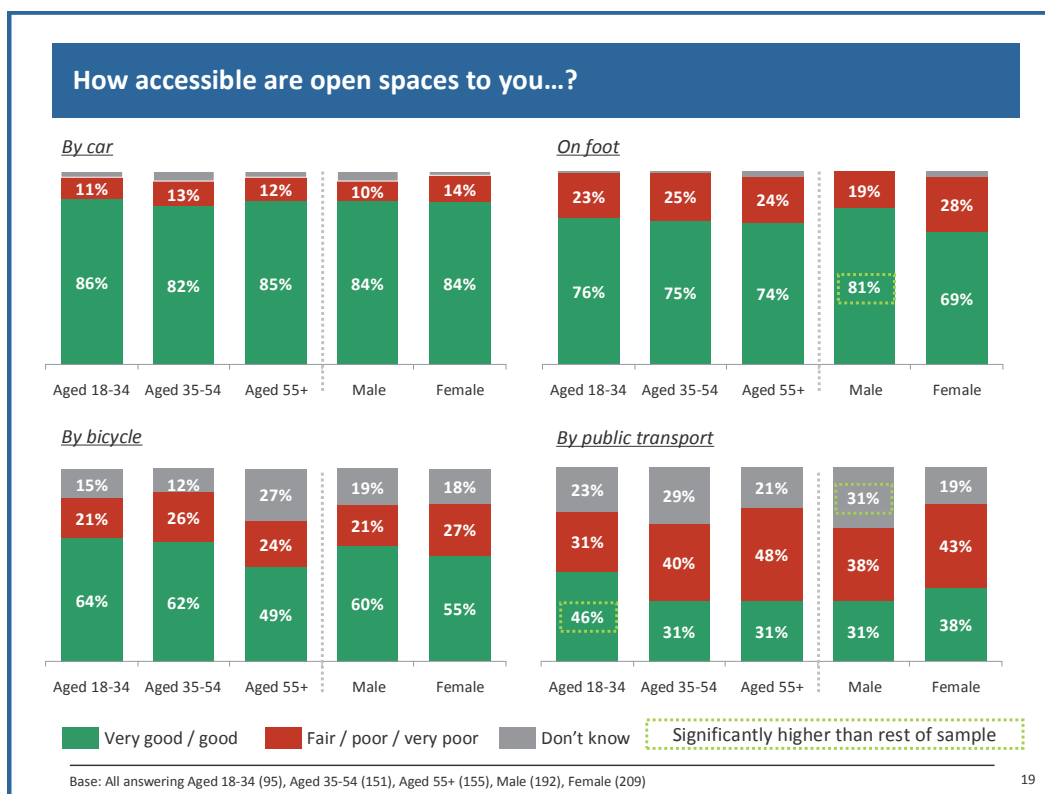
Perceptions with regards to access by bicycle and public transport are more varied, with lower opinion ratings and uncertainty expressed. Only 57% rate access by bicycle as very good or good and 35% rate access by public transport as very good or good. 18% and 25% of residents are not sure / have no experience with regard to bicycle access and public transport access respectively.



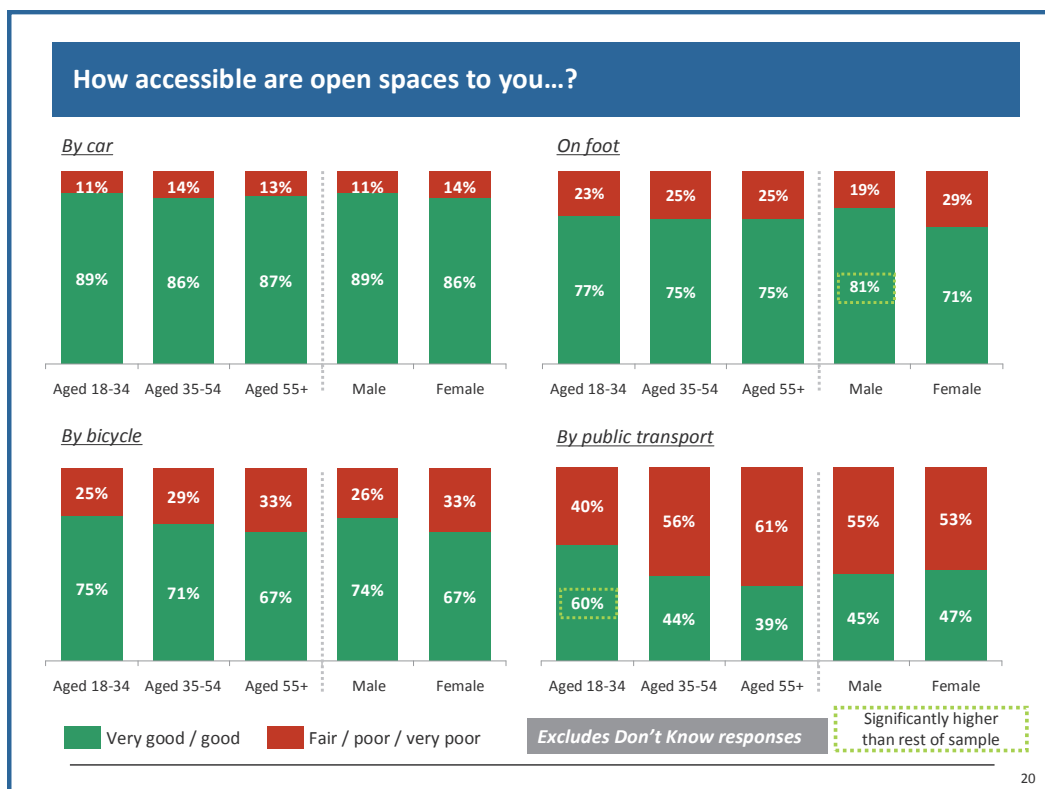
There are some significant differences when looking at results by demographic group. A significantly higher proportion of male residents rate access on foot as very good or good (81% compared to 69% of female residents).

As perhaps expected, uncertainty with regard to access by bicycle is highest amongst residents aged 55 and over. Uncertainty with regard to access by public transport is higher across all demographic groups.





With don't know ratings removed, there are concerns expressed with regard to access by public transport across all of the demographic groups surveyed. A significantly higher proportion of 18-34 year old residents rate access by public transport as very good or good (60%) compared to the rest of the sample interviewed.



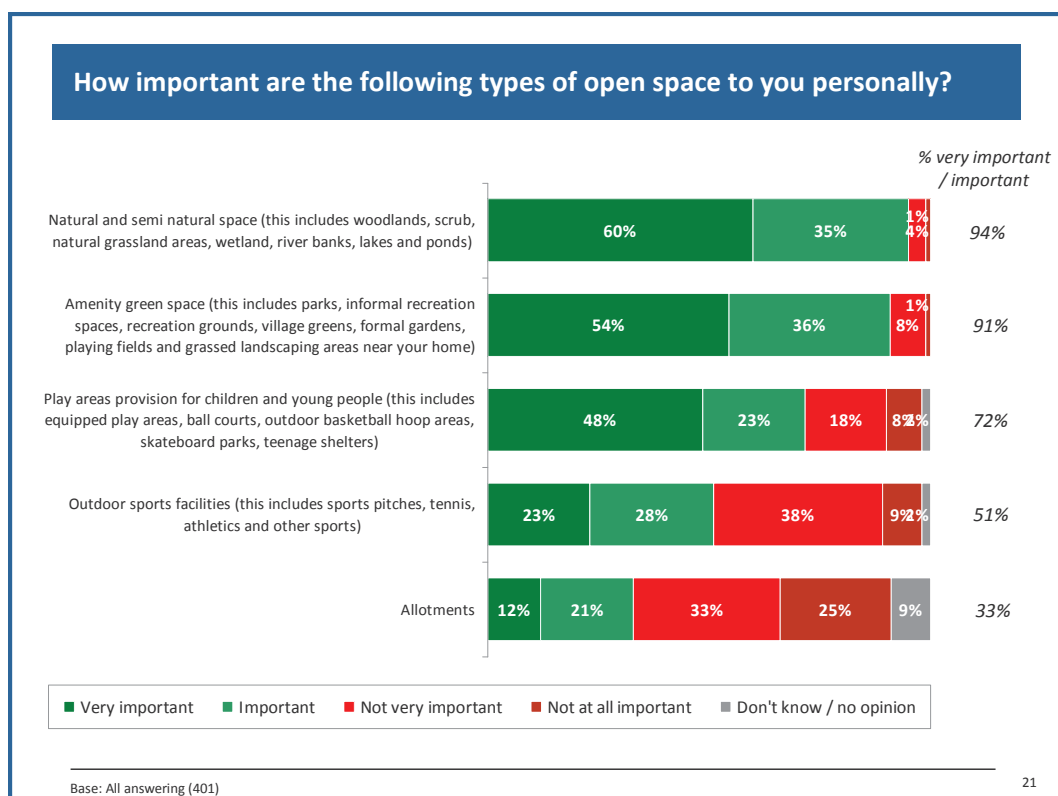
## 5. IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF OPEN SPACE

### 5.1 IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

As evidenced in terms of usage patterns, the importance of the open space typologies varies. At an overall level, natural and semi natural space and amenity green space are considered important by the majority surveyed (94% and 91% rate them as very important or important respectively).

Just under three quarters (72%) rate play areas provision for children and young people as very important or important.

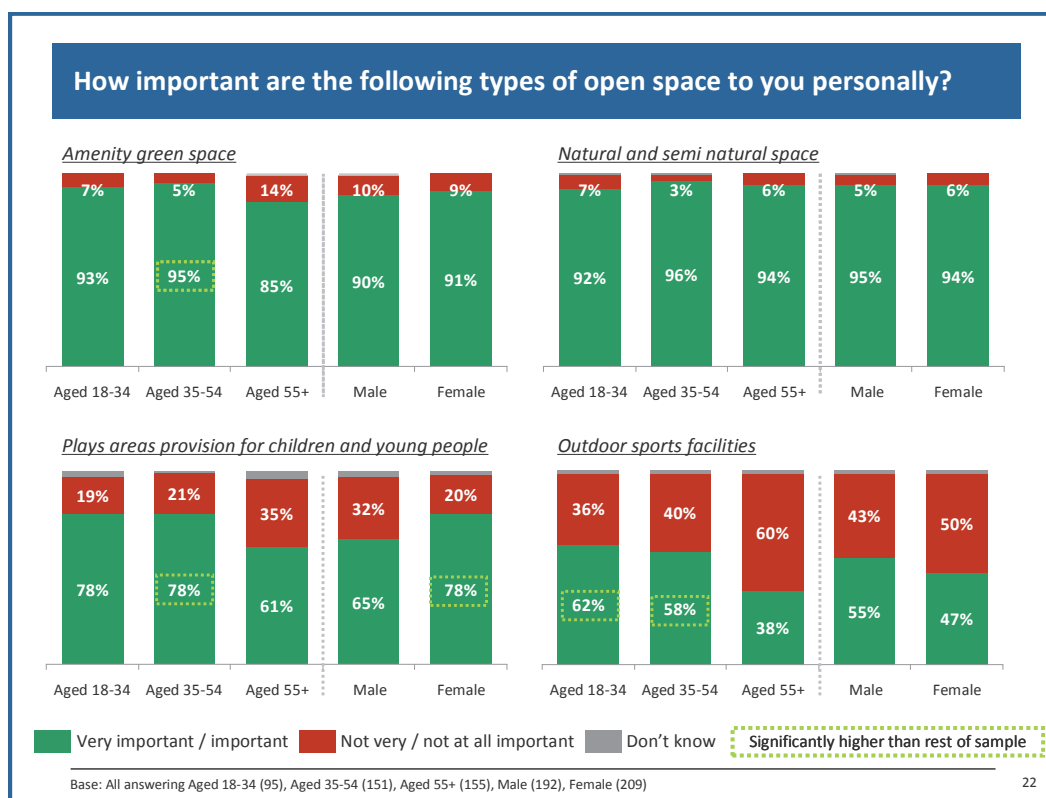
Just over half (51%) rate outdoor sports facilities as very important or important and a third (33%) rate allotments as very important or important.



Both natural and semi natural space and amenity green space are considered important to all the demographic groups surveyed with:

- 92% - 96% of the demographic groups rating natural and semi natural space as very important or important
- 85% - 95% of the demographic groups rating amenity green space as very important or important. Amenity green space is particularly important to residents aged 35-54.

As observed in usage patterns, there are significant differences when assessing the importance of play area provision for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities. Play area provision is particularly important to residents aged 35-54 and female residents (78% rating very important or important). Outdoor sports facilities are particularly important to residents aged 18-54 (62% of 18-34 year olds and 58% of 35-54 year olds rating very important or important).

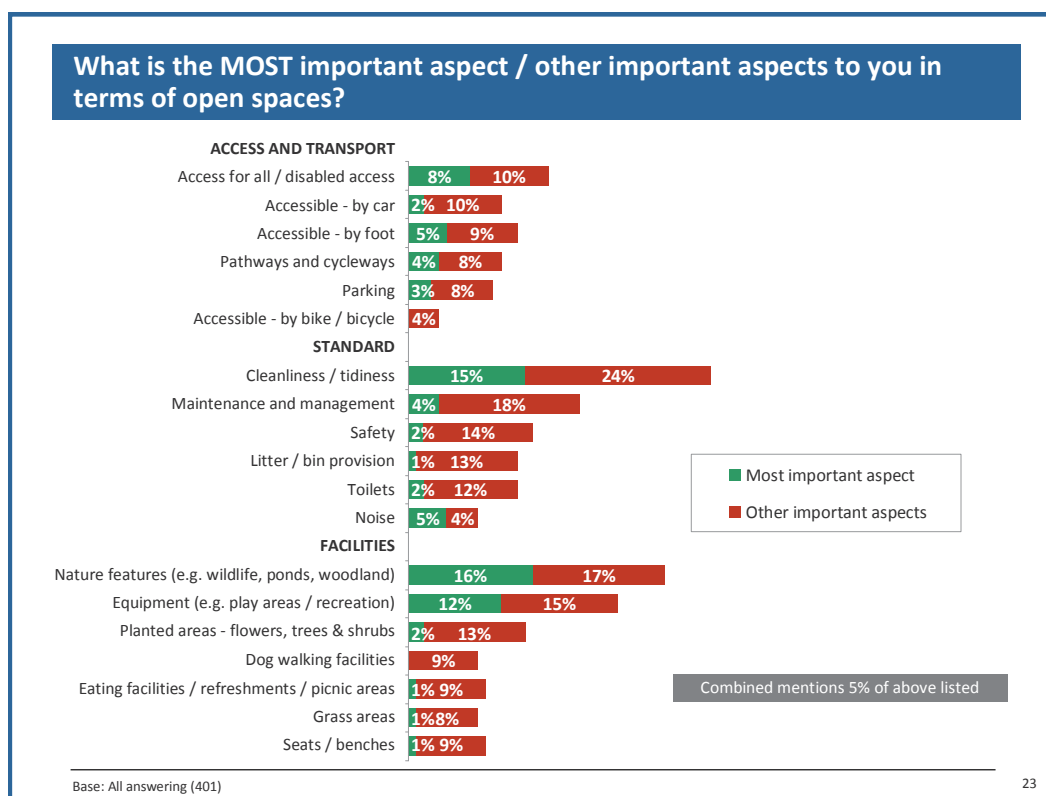


## 5.2 IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACE ASPECTS

Residents were asked to indicate the importance of a prompted list of access & transport, standard and facility aspects. First residents were asked to select the most important aspect to them (single selection), followed by other aspects that were important to them (multiple selection).

Cleanliness / tidiness are considered the most important aspect with 39% of residents selecting this aspect (15% as the most important, 24% as other aspects that are important). Nature features (e.g. wildlife, ponds, woodland) and equipment (e.g. play areas / recreation) are considered the next most important with 33% and 27% of residents selecting these aspects respectively. Maintenance and management is selected by 22% of residents.

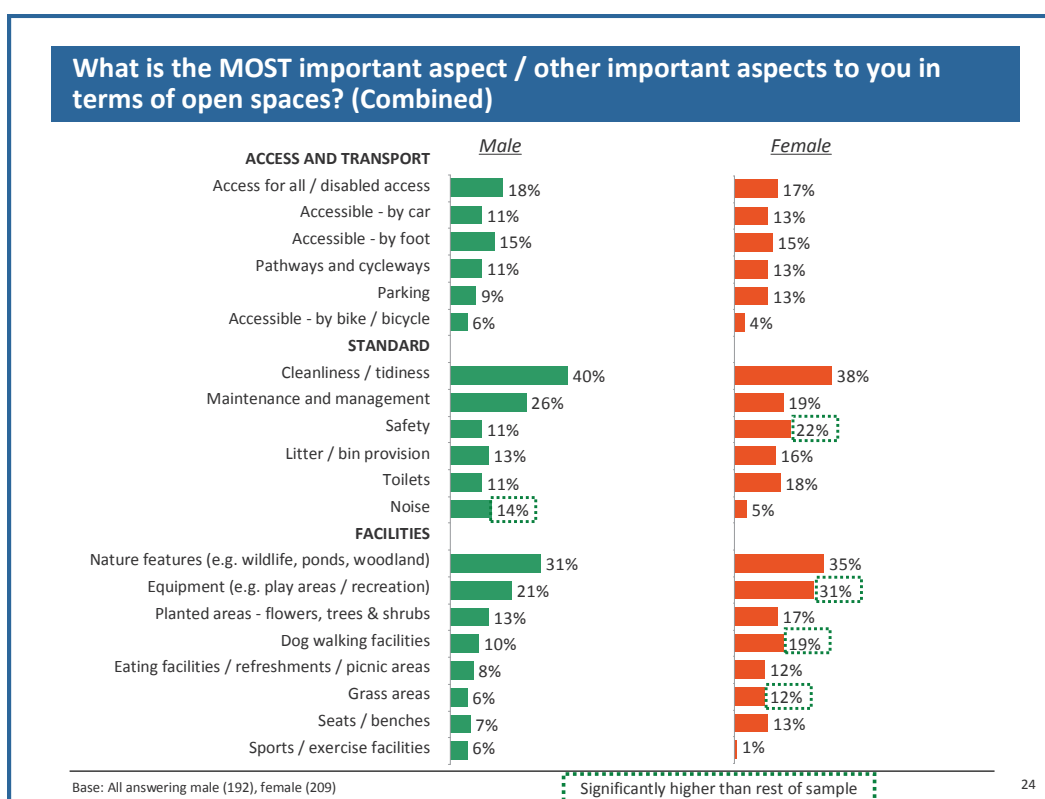
Other areas are considered important features to smaller proportions and are often considered as secondary factors of importance compared to those mentioned above.



There are significant differences observed when comparing male and female residents combined scores (i.e. the proportions selecting most important and other important aspects together).

Whilst cleanliness / tidiness and nature features are considered of broadly equal importance to both male and female residents, a significantly higher proportion of female residents consider equipment (e.g. play areas / recreation), safety, dog walking facilities and grassed areas important (31%, 22%, 19% and 12% respectively).

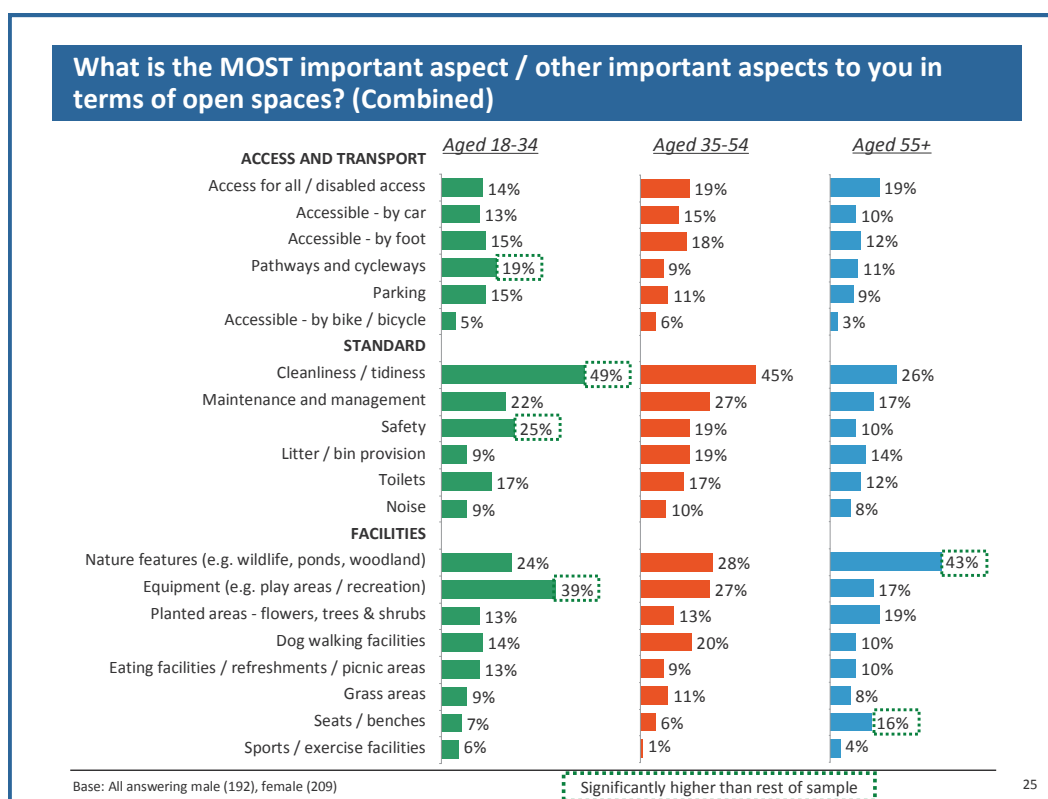
A clearer hierarchy is observed amongst male residents. Whilst a secondary aspect, noise is considered more important to male residents (14%) compared to female residents (5%).



There are also significant differences observed when comparing the combined scores from the different age groups of resident.

Cleanliness / tidiness stands out as particularly important to residents aged 18-34 (49%) and residents aged 35-54 (45%) compared to residents aged 55 and over (26%). In contrast, nature features (e.g. wildlife, ponds and woodlands) stand out as particularly important to residents aged 55 and over (43%).

In addition, equipment (e.g. play areas / recreation) and safety are selected by a significantly higher proportion of 18-34 year old residents (39% and 25% respectively).



## Maidstone GBI Strategy: publicly accessible open space standards

### Quantity standards (Hectares per 1000 population)

(Maidstone figures are for existing quantities as standards not set)

|                                  | Maidstone<br>(Urban) | Maidstone<br>(Rural) | Tunbridge<br>Wells | T & M<br>(Urban) | T & M<br>(Medway<br>Gap) | T & M<br>(Rural<br>service<br>centres) | T & M (Rural<br>settlements) | Medway             | Ashford | Swale |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------------------|--------------------|---------|-------|
| <b>Amenity</b>                   | 0.7                  | 1.47                 |                    | 0.76             | 1.33                     | 0.33                                   | 2.05                         | 0.74               | N/A     | 0.45  |
| <b>Equipped play<br/>areas</b>   | 0.09                 | 0.07                 | 0.3                | 0.1              | 0.1                      | 0.1                                    | 0.1                          | 0.08               | 0.5     | 0.24  |
| <b>Outdoor<br/>sports</b>        | 0.85                 | 0.44                 | 1.6                | 2.05             | 2.05                     | 2.05                                   | 2.05                         | Varies per<br>type | 1.6     | 1.09  |
| <b>Allotments</b>                | 0.2                  | 0.22                 |                    |                  |                          |  |                              | 0.18               | 0.2     | 0.2   |
| <b>Natural/semi-<br/>natural</b> | 6.31                 | 6.95                 |                    | 0.73             | 2.8                      | 1.83                                   | 3.0/2.4                      | 1.35               | 2.0     | 4.36  |
| <b>Cemeteries</b>                |                      |                      |                    |                  |                          |  |                              |                    | 0.6     |       |
| <b>Strategic<br/>parks</b>       |                      |                      |                    |                  |                          |  |                              |                    | 0.3     |       |
| <b>Parks and<br/>gardens</b>     |                      |                      |                    | 2.5              | 2.5                      | 2.5                                    | 2.5                          | 0.4                |         | 1.11  |

## Maidstone GBI Strategy: publicly accessible open space standards

### Accessibility standards

| Typology                                | Maidstone (proposed) | Tunbridge Wells              | T & M (Urban)              | T & M (Medway Gap) | T & M (Rural service centres) | T & M (Rural settlements)                  | T & M (Walderslade Urban) | Medway   | Ashford | Swale   |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|---------|---|
| Natural and semi natural                | Angst                | 1.27km                       | 960m                       | 960m               | 960m                          | within or adjacent to the village confines | 480m                      | Angst  | 400m    | 400m/800m/2km (neighbourhood/local/destination) |
| Amenity                                 | 400m                 | 800m ('informal open space') | 480m                       | 480m               | 480m                          | within or adjacent to the village confines | 480m                      | N/A  | N/A     | 400m  |
| Provision for children and young people | 400m                 | 400m/1000m (LEAP/NEAP)       | 480m                       | 480m               | 480m                          | 960m/1.5km                                 | 480m                      | 100m/400m/1km (LAP/LEAP/NEAP)  | 400m    | 400m  |
| Outdoor sports facilities               | 1km                  | Varies per type              | 6-8km                      | 6-8km              | 6-8km                         | 6-8km                                      | 6-8km                     | 1.2km  | 800m    | 800m  |
| Allotments                              | 1km                  | 1.48km                       |                            |                    |                               |  |                           | 1km  |         | 800m  |
| Parks and gardens                       | N/A                  | 2.66km                       | 6-8km (20 mins drive time) |                    |                               |  |                           | 280m/400m/1.2km/3.2km (pocket/small local/local/district/metropolitan) |         | 400m/800m/2km (neighbourhood/local/destination) |



## Appendix 4

### Draft Quality Standards for Open Space

The quality standards aim to ensure open spaces are fit for purpose, sustainable over the long term, well designed, well built, appropriately managed and can adjust to changing user needs and requirements.

#### Quality standard for new public open space

All open spaces should be designed as part of the green infrastructure network in a locality, contributing to local landscape character, connecting with local routes and green corridors for people and wildlife as well as providing multi-functional benefits such as addressing surface water management priorities. The spatial relationship between new open spaces and built development needs to be carefully considered to ensure open spaces are conveniently and safely located to serve the local community and are sufficiently overlooked by active building frontages. The location and shape of the space should allow for meaningful and safe recreation. Small, poorly located, oddly shaped, 'left over' sites will not be acceptable.

The design of new and improved open spaces should meet the needs of, and be developed in consultation with the local community wherever possible. New open spaces must include a management plan with adequate resources identified for on-going management and maintenance. All types of open space should be designed to meet the Green Flag Award standard on criteria relating to design and accessibility as set out below. Criteria should be applied proportionately to the size of the site and some criteria such as lighting will be less relevant to smaller, particularly natural and semi-natural sites, where creating habitats for wildlife will take priority.

- (1) Site is easily found and accessible by road, cycleway, footpaths and public transport including by those with disabilities, with pedestrian crossings on roads where appropriate.
- (2) Entrances are accessible for all users, are of appropriate size and inviting with a welcoming sign.
- (3) Clearly defined, accessible footpaths and cycleways where appropriate, to and around the site.
- (4) Waymarking signage provided where needed outside and within the site.
- (5) Information about the site clearly displayed for visitors in various formats (noticeboards, leaflets)
- (6) Site is well-designed to provide interest and activities for a wide range of users in particular meeting the needs of elderly and less able users as well as children, young people and families.
- (7) Provision of well-located seats and benches.
- (8) Equipment, structures and surfacing of high quality, safe to use and appropriate for the site.
- (9) Clearly defined boundaries with fences or hedges where needed to ensure safety of users.
- (10) Sufficient litter bins provided for general waste, dog waste and compost where appropriate.
- (11) Appropriate lighting to ensure safety of users without adversely affecting wildlife.

- (12) Emergency equipment where relevant (eg lifebelts by water) available on or near the site and clearly signposted.
- (13) A range of planting, with appropriate mix of species, maintained to a good standard.
- (14) Biodiversity is promoted on site through design, choice of species and management practices.
- (15) Information for visitors on biodiversity is available on site.
- (16) Any water bodies have clean, clear water, with appropriate marginal and other vegetation.
- (17) Any landscape, geological features, buildings or structures of historical value are identified and conserved appropriately.

## **Additional requirements for specific types of space:**

### **Outdoor Sports Space**

The specific type of outdoor sports space that should be provided on-site or added to existing sporting facilities in the area is to be agreed with the Council on a site by site basis.

Outdoor sports space should be designed to meet the technical performance quality standards in Fields in Trust's, 'Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities', 2004 and the technical standards produced by Sport England or the relevant Governing Bodies of Sport.

Playing surfaces must be appropriately maintained and drained, serviced by appropriate built accommodation (changing rooms/pavilion), toilets, car and cycle parking space and landscaping.

It may be appropriate to consider the provision of outdoor sports space in the form of synthetic/hard surface provision. Where the views of the local sports community indicate this would be a better option than grass provision, this will be taken into account.

### **Natural/Semi-Natural green space**

The type of natural/semi-natural green space to be provided will depend on the location of the site. The choice of plant species and the design of the planting environment must be appropriate to the context, complementing local landscape character and addressing habitat requirements identified as priorities in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The size, specification and provenance of planting stock should be suited to the environment and take into account disease resilience and the ability to adapt to climate change.

The shape and layout of the space should allow for meaningful and safe recreation. These areas should be clearly distinct from similar areas provided for the purposes of ecological mitigation, where public access will not be encouraged. Where possible, new sites should connect with the existing network of natural and semi-natural green spaces within the borough, providing movement corridors for wildlife.

### **Children and young people's play space**

Play spaces should conform to EN1176 standards and will require regular inspection in accordance with ROSPA guidance. All areas should afford good natural surveillance from

nearby streets and frontages of residential properties, whilst maintaining a minimum distance of at least 20m to the nearest dwelling (habitable room facade).

Play areas should be designed in accordance with Play England's, '*Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*', and specifically should incorporate the 10 principles for designing successful play spaces which states that play spaces should:

- (i) be 'bespoke'
- (ii) be well located
- (iii) make use of natural elements
- (iv) provide a wide range of play experiences
- (v) accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- (vi) meet community needs
- (vii) allow children of different ages to play together
- (viii) build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- (ix) be sustainable and appropriately maintained
- (x) allow for change and evolution

A wide range of play experiences should be provided and include the following:

- (i) **For young pre-school children:** Natural play features, paving that allows the use of toddler wheeled toys such as pedal cars and tricycles and items of play equipment that provide, as a minimum, for swinging, climbing, balancing, themed play and items useable by family groups e.g. basket swings. There should be seating for accompanying adults.
- (ii) **For other children up to teenage years:** Natural play features and pieces of play equipment providing for climbing, swinging, balancing, themed play, items facilitating group play, rotating equipment, physically challenging items and a small flat ball games area with multi-goals, sheltered seating and 'very low key' wheel play facility (undulating riding surface with features). There should be seating for accompanying adults.
- (iii) **For teenagers/young people:** Ball play and/or wheeled play opportunities, and covered seating to use as a meeting place.
- (iv) **Provision for those with disabilities:** Access to both disabled and non-disabled children, seating suitable for disabled children and their carers and a variety of the equipment designed to be useable by children with disabilities.
- (v) Some space with no predefined function should be incorporated into the layout to allow potential for change and evolution.

## Allotments

Allotments should:

- (i) be well related to residential properties, which enables natural surveillance.
- (ii) preferably co-located with schools or community facilities.
- (iii) sit sympathetically in the landscape.
- (iv) have well-drained soil which is capable of cultivation to a reasonable standard.
- (v) have direct access by footpaths and cycleways and safe vehicular access to the car park from the adopted highway.
- (vi) provide car parking and cycle parking facilities on or adjacent to the site.

- (vii) have perimeter security fencing with one lockable combined vehicle and pedestrian gate as a minimum. Where it is not desirable, for security reasons, to completely screen the security fencing with hedging the choice of fencing and its appearance will need to be acceptable for the context.
- (viii) have a metered mains water supply with four water supply points for watering, one to be at the site store and all fitted with stop cocks and frost-proof housing.
- (ix) provides a lockable and secure site store of at least 3m x 4m with double doors and external sink with soak away or mains drainage and a mains connected, lockable toilet with hand washing facilities.
- (x) have compound turf paths edged with flat-topped pre-cast concrete kerb edging between rows of plots and adjacent to the perimeter fencing.
- (xi) have permeable surfacing of crushed stone car parking.
- (xii) have concrete slab paving through entrance gates and beneath, and in front of, site store and portable toilet.
- (xiii) have, where desirable, a manageable hedge, capable of providing a year-round screen and fitting the urban context is to be provided around the outside of the perimeter security fencing.
- (xiv) provide for disabled access.
- (xv) provide for composting facilities.
- (xvi) provide protection and enhancement for biodiversity where possible.

## Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee

**14 July 2015**

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting? | <b>Yes</b> |
|---|------------|

## Landscapes of Local Value

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Final Decision-Maker</b>             | Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee                     |
| <b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b> | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development                                   |
| <b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>   | Sue Whiteside, Spatial Policy Team Leader, and Chris Berry, Consultant Planner |
| <b>Classification</b>                   | Non-exempt   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                   | All wards  |

### This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the amendments to draft policy SP5(6) and the supporting text for Landscapes of Local Value, as set out under Section 4 “Preferred Option” of the report, be approved for further public consultation (Regulation 18 consultation).
2. That the officer responses to the representations received during public consultation on the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 (Regulation 18<sup>1</sup> consultation) for policy SP5 (6) Landscapes of Local Value, as set out in Appendix A, be approved.
3. That the draft map identifying five Landscapes of Local Value, including the addition of the setting of the Kent Downs AONB, attached at Appendix B, be approved for further public consultation (Regulation 18 consultation).

### This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all

### Timetable

| <b>Meeting</b>                 | <b>Date</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Policy and Resources Committee | N/A         |
| Council                        | N/A         |
| Other Committee                | N/A         |

<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

# Landscapes of Local Value

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report describes the process of identifying landscapes of local value for protection by policies within the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. The draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 includes four landscapes of local value and the report is recommending a fifth area: setting of the Kent Downs AONB.
  - 1.2 Maidstone has a substantial rural hinterland, and the countryside areas will continue to be subject to considerable pressure for development. The local plan should address the important issue of landscape protection in addition to that afforded by national designation, and the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 identifies four such areas in Policy SP5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages the protection of valued landscapes through a criterion based approach to their identification.
  - 1.3 Seven criteria are applied to previously identified and newly proposed landscapes of local value, supported by landscape character and capacity assessments. Five areas satisfy the majority of the criteria and these may be seen as comprising landscapes of local value for public consultation.
- 

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Maidstone Borough is predominantly rural in nature and much of the rural landscape is of high quality with valuable agricultural and ecological resources. The countryside areas are highly accessible to those living and working in the urban areas, complemented by an extensive and well-used public rights of way network, and they also act as a major asset to attract new investment into the borough. This proximity to the urban area brings with it pressures arising from an increased level of demand for houses which needs to be balanced by recognising that the countryside has an intrinsic value that should be conserved and protected for its own sake.
- 2.2 A significant amount of work has been undertaken over the years at both county and district levels to assess and review landscape quality and character, culminating in the identification of Special Landscape Areas (SLA) in former structure and local plans. These included the North Downs SLA, Greensand Ridge SLA and a small proportion of the High Weald SLA. The Low Weald SLA was a later addition in the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000. It is clear that the geology and topography of these areas has not changed.
- 2.3 The most significant landscape area in the borough is the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which covers over 27% of the borough to the north, and formed the largest part of the North Downs SLA designated in the adopted local plan 2000. This is a visually prominent landscape that contributes significantly to the borough's high quality of life. It is an important amenity and recreation resource for both Maidstone

residents and visitors and forms an attractive backdrop to settlements along the base of the North Downs scarp. It also contains a wide range of natural habitats and biodiversity.

- 2.4 The currency of SLAs was first challenged by the introduction of national advice in the former Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas 2004 (since superseded by the NPPF) which stated:

*“The Government recognises and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally. The Government believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas.” (PPS7, 2004, paragraph 24).*

- 2.5 Legislative support for strategically designated areas such as SLAs was thus gradually withdrawn, and the responsibility for the identification of locally significant landscape areas for protection became a local responsibility.
- 2.6 The NPPF makes distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, whereby protection is commensurate with their status, but the framework still encourages the protection of locally valued landscapes. The Inspector at a recent appeal for 46 houses in a Warwickshire village stated that the examples of landscape in which development should be restricted set out in the NPPF<sup>2</sup> are not exclusive because, if they were the only valued landscapes for the purposes of the framework, the NPPF would say so. The Inspector ultimately concluded that the harmful impacts of development outweighed the benefits of developing the site. The systematic and consistent approach of the council’s landscape sensitivity study lent weight to the Inspector’s findings, as did the ministerial statement<sup>3</sup> urging decision makers to ensure that development is suitable for the local context.
- 2.7 Local plans can designate strategic landscapes of local value, provided a strong case for their protection is made. Hence the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 identified four landscapes of local value under policy SP5 (6): the Greensand Ridge, and the river valleys of the Medway, the Loose and the Len.
- 2.8 A number of representations were submitted during public consultation on the draft local plan and the comments on landscapes of local value, together with officer responses and recommendations, are set out in Appendix A of the report. Consequently, a review of currently designated areas and newly proposed areas of strategic significance has been undertaken, and the methodology used to identify landscapes of local value is clarified.

---

<sup>2</sup> “For example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives (see paragraph 119) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or within a National Park (or the Broads Authority); designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding or coastal erosion” (NPPF paragraph 14, footnote 9).

<sup>3</sup> Landscape character and prematurity in planning decisions, Brandon Lewis MP, 27 March 2015

- 2.9 Accordingly, general criteria for assessing landscapes of local value which are relevant to conditions in Maidstone are drawn initially from the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6<sup>4</sup> and subsequent planning practice guidance published in 2014 on Landscape Character Assessment. Best practice elsewhere, including Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment<sup>5</sup>, provide further guidance on the criteria which may be applied to ascertain where landscapes should be retained for their intrinsic value.
- 2.10 Relevant criteria for assessing landscapes of local value have been developed for Maidstone, and areas for consideration should be:
- i. Part of a contiguous area of high quality landscape;
  - ii. Significant in long distance public views and skylines;
  - iii. Locally distinctive in their field patterns, geological and other landscape features;
  - iv. Ecologically diverse and significant;
  - v. Preventing the coalescence of settlements which would undermine their character;
  - vi. Identified through community engagement;
  - vii. Providing a valued transition from town to countryside.
- 2.11 Further specific local evidence of landscape value in Maidstone is provided by the Landscape Character Assessment (March 2012, amended July 2013) and the Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment (January 2015). These assessments used a systematic and consistent approach to identify landscape characteristics throughout the borough and categorise areas according to their condition and sensitivity in landscape terms.
- 2.12 Together, the application of the criteria and the evidence provided by the landscape character and sensitivity assessments enable the identification of landscapes of local value, and provide the council with the justification to protect valued landscapes which are in good condition and highly sensitive to significant change.
- 2.13 In addition to the four landscapes of local value identified under policy SP5(6) of the draft local plan 2014, two further areas have been included for consideration in response to the consultation comments that refer to previously designated SLAs: the North Downs, which covered the Kent Downs AONB and its setting, and the Low Weald. The AONB has national landscape protection so the area under consideration in this report is the setting of the AONB. It is important to note that areas are selected on the basis of satisfying criteria for assessing landscapes of local value, and the following six areas were initially identified on this basis.
- Greensand Ridge
  - Loose Valley
  - Medway Valley

---

<sup>4</sup> The Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002

<sup>5</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment



- Len Valley
- Setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Low Weald.

2.14 Table 1 shows how the criteria set out in 2.10 relate to the specific areas which have been identified through previous assessments and consultation, indicating the characteristics which are most significant in denoting landscape quality. The asterisks in the table indicate where the criterion has been satisfied for the area identified, and areas which satisfy at least four of the criteria are regarded as suitable for inclusion in the local plan as landscapes of local value. This analysis provides the evidence to strengthen the protection of landscapes of local value as identified in policy SP5 of the draft local plan 2014.

| Areas                          | Criteria  |  |  |                                      |   |   |  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
|                                | Part of a contiguous area of high quality landscape | Significant in long distance public views and skylines | Locally distinctive in their field patterns, geological and other landscape features | Ecologically diverse and significant | Preventing the coalescence of settlements which would undermine their | Identified through community engagement | Providing a valued transition from town to countryside |
|                                | i   | ii   | iii  | iv                                   | v   | vi                                      | vii  |
| Greensand Ridge                | *   | *  | *  | *                                    |   | *                                       |  |
| Loose Valley                   |   |  | *  |                                      | *   | *                                       | *  |
| Medway Valley                  |   | *  |  | *                                    | *   | *                                       | *  |
| Len Valley                     |   |  | *  |                                      | *   | *                                       | *  |
| Setting of the Kent Downs AONB | *   | *  | *  | *                                    |   | *                                       |  |
| Low Weald                      |   |  |  | *                                    | *   | *                                       |  |

Table 1: Landscape value criteria matrix

2.15 The Greensand Ridge and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB score highly in the matrix as valued landscapes, and the three river valleys score well and are particularly valued for their function as a transition from town to countryside. These valleys are an important local characteristic of Maidstone and have influenced the distinctive pattern of growth of the town.

2.16 The Low Weald meets three of the landscape value criteria, one of which is a landscape identified through community engagement (which all areas satisfy). The council must be careful that it does not diminish the value of local landscape protection through extensive coverage in the countryside, which may not be defensible at examination into the local plan. The case for designating the Low Weald is not considered robust enough. It is therefore recommended that the Committee approves one additional landscape of local value for policy SP5 (6): the setting of the Kent Downs AONB.

- 2.17 As a further calibration of the selection process, each of the five recommended landscapes of local value was revisited in the Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment 2015 with regard to the comparative sensitivity of landscape character areas to possible development. This exercise has helped to refine the boundaries of the recommended landscapes of local value.

---

### 3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The analysis outlined in this report leads to the consideration of policy amendments to protect landscapes of local value as identified in policy SP5 (6) of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014.
- 3.2 Option 1: Do nothing and retain draft local plan policy SP5, which identifies four landscapes of local value. It is clear that at least one new area scores highly in the assessment so this option is not recommended.
- 3.3 Option 2: Designate the setting of the Kent Downs AONB as a landscape of local value under policy SP5 (6). This option scored highly as a contiguous area of high quality landscape with significant long distance public views and skylines. The landscape is locally distinctive in its field patterns, geology and other features. The setting of the Kent Downs AONB is recommended as a fifth landscape of local value, to be subject to further public consultation.
- 3.4 Option 3: Designate the Low Weald as a landscape of local value. The Low Weald is not a contiguous area of high quality landscape with significant long distance public views and skylines, and the landscape area scored lowest in the assessment. Extensive coverage of landscapes of local value is likely to diminish their value, and the council should focus on the most highly prized landscapes it wishes to protect and can justify. The Low Weald is not recommended as a landscape of local value.

---

### 4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is recommended to approve the following amendments to policy SP5 of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 in respect of landscapes of local value, and to approve the revised policy for further public consultation (Regulation 18). The amendments reflect the recommended option set out in Section 3 of the report. Additions to the policy are in **bold text** and deletions are in ~~strike through text~~.

Landscapes of local value

- 4.2 The council will protect its most valued landscapes which are in good condition. In addition to the Kent Downs AONB and sites of European and national importance, the borough includes significant tracts of landscape which are in good condition and are highly sensitive to significant change. **Landscapes of local value have been identified according to criteria relating to the character and sensitivity of the areas:**

- i. **Part of a contiguous area of high quality landscape;**
- ii. **Significant in long distance public views and skylines;**
- iii. **Locally distinctive in their field patterns, geological and other landscape features;**
- iv. **Ecologically diverse and significant;**
- v. **Preventing the coalescence of settlements which would undermine their character;**
- vi. **Identified through community engagement;**
- vii. **Providing a valued transition from town to countryside.**

4.3 **Development proposals within landscapes of local value should, through their siting, scale, mass, materials and design, seek to contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of the protected landscape. Designated areas include the setting of the Kent Downs AONB, including parts of the Greensand Ridge, together with and the borough's river valleys of the Medway, the Loose and the Len river valleys.** These landscapes were highlighted as areas of local value by the public through previous consultations.

4.4 **The setting of the Kent Downs AONB comprises the land to the south of the North Downs escarpment which is to some extent compromised by the presence of the M20 motorway and railway lines but still provides relatively uninterrupted views of the nationally designated landscape area. It is characterised by open grassland which is generally used for livestock grazing or arable cultivation.**

4.5 The Greensand Ridge lies to the south of Maidstone and is defined by the scarp face of the Ridge with extensive views across the Low Weald to the south. It is characterised by frequent small blocks of coppice and deciduous woodland, extensive orchards and frequent oasts, with ragstone being a predominant material in walls and buildings

4.6 The Medway Valley is characterised by the wide River Medway and steep valley sides where the valley incises the Greensand and is crossed by distinctive ragstone bridges. The area lends itself to much recreational land use including the Medway Valley Walk, although some sections are more wooded and remote in character. The Loose Valley lies to the south of Maidstone and is characterised by the Loose stream, mill ponds and springs with steep wooded valley sides, mature native woodland and traditional mill buildings and cottages. The Len Valley lies to the east of Maidstone and is bordered by Bearsted to the west. It is characterised by the River Len, historic mills and a network of pools with remnant orchards.

#### Policy SP5 Countryside

6. The **setting of the Kent Downs AONB, the Greensand Ridge, the Medway Valley, the Len Valley and the Loose Valley**, as defined on the policies map, will be protected and maintained as landscapes of local value.

---

## 7. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- a. The draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan has been subject to public consultation in accordance with Regulation 18. The representations submitted in respect of landscapes of local value are set out in Appendix A of the report, together with officer responses and recommendations.

---

## 8. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- a. The draft policy for landscapes of local value will be subject to further public consultation (Regulation 18) before being included in the Publication version of the local plan (Regulation 19).

---

## 9. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue                                   | Implications  | Sign-off  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>   | The adoption of the local plan will assist in the delivery of the council's corporate priorities.   | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development        |
| <b>Risk Management</b>                  | A sound evidence base and further public consultation on policy amendments will minimise the risk of policy SP5 being found unsound at examination into the local plan.                                     | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development        |
| <b>Financial</b>                        | There are no financial implications arising from this report. Failure to produce a robust policy would have significant financial implications for the Council.   | Zena Cooke, S151 Officer & Ellie Dunnett, Finance |
| <b>Staffing</b>                         | The Regulation 18 consultation will require staff resources but, given this will be a focused consultation on key policy changes only, the consultation can be managed within existing staff resources.     | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development        |
| <b>Legal</b>                            | There are no legal implications directly arising from this report, although the Legal Team continues to provide advice and guidance on local plan matters, and to review any legal implications of reports. | Legal Team  |
| <b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b> | N/A   | Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager        |
| <b>Environmental/Sustainable</b>        | N/A   | Rob Jarman,                                       |

|                         |     |  |
|-------------------------|-----|--|
| <b>Development</b>      |     | Head of Planning & Development   |
| <b>Community Safety</b> | N/A | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                                   |
| <b>Human Rights Act</b> | N/A | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                                   |
| <b>Procurement</b>      | N/A | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development, & Zena Cooke Section 151 Officer |
| <b>Asset Management</b> | N/A | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                                   |

## 10. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2014 – landscapes of local value policy SP5(6) consultation issues and responses
- Appendix B: Landscapes of Local Value Map

---

## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

**APP A: MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2014 CONSULTATION ISSUES & RESPONSES TO POLICY SP5(6) LANDSCAPES OF LOCAL VALUE**

| Key Issue  | No. in support | No. of objections | No. of observations | Details  | Officer response  | Officer Recommendation   |
|--|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|--|---|--|
| 1. Lack of replacement for Special Landscape Areas           | 0              | 1                 | 0                   | Lack of replacement for Special Landscape Areas  | Nationally, there is a move away from extensive local landscape area designations unless there is robust evidence to support such policies. The draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 designates areas of local landscape value, including the Greensand Ridge which is a former SLA. Further work has identified an additional landscape of local value for the setting of the Kent Downs AONB. The Low Weald SLA did not meet the criteria for designation.   | Add Setting of the Kent Downs AONB to landscapes of local value. |
| 2. Omission of additional areas of landscapes of local value | 0              | 10                | 2                   | <p>Walderslade woodlands, Beechen Bank, Lidsing environs, Cowbeck Woods, Reeds Croft Woods</p> <p>Greenfield land in Otham</p> <p>Land between Bearsted and Leeds Castle</p> <p>The countryside between Leeds Castle and Bearsted, either side of the A20 and M20</p> <p>Area between J7 and J8 (former SLA) should receive some protection</p> <p>Setting of the AONB</p> <p>Greensand Ridge and Low Weald</p> <p>Should include land south of Ashford Road in Bearsted (not clear exactly where)</p> | Many of these areas are too small to be designated landscapes of local value, which is a strategic designation of landscape protection for the borough, and would be better considered at the local level through the neighbourhood planning process. The Greensand Ridge is already designated in the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014. Further work has identified an additional landscape of local value for the setting of the Kent Downs AONB. The Low Weald SLA did not meet the criteria for designation. | Add Setting of the Kent Downs AONB to landscapes of local value. |

|  |   |   |   |   |                     |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---------------------|---|
|  |   |   |   |   |                     |   |
| 3. The definition of local landscapes needs to be clearer and clarification of the added protection included | 0 | 3 | 0 | The definition of local landscapes needs to be clearer and clarification of the added protection included | Agreed.             | Add to supporting text for policy SP5: Landscapes of local value have been identified according to criteria relating to the character and sensitivity of the areas.<br>Development proposals within areas of landscape local value should, through their siting, scale, mass, materials and design, seek to contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of the protected landscape. |
|  |   |   |   |   |                     |   |
| 4. Landscapes of Local Value protection is supported   | 1 | 0 | 0 | Landscapes of Local Value protection is supported   | Support is welcomed | No change to policy   |
|  |   |   |   |   |                     |   |

# Agenda Item 15

## Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee

14 July 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

## Affordable Housing Policy

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Final Decision-Maker</b>             | Strategic Policy, Sustainability and Transport Committee |
| <b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b> | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development             |
| <b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>   | Sue Whiteside, Spatial Policy Team Leader                |
| <b>Classification</b>                   | Non-exempt   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                   | All wards  |

### This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the officer responses to the representations submitted during public consultation on the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 (Regulation 18<sup>1</sup> consultation) for policy DM24 Affordable Housing, as set out in Appendix A, be approved.
2. That draft policy DM24, as amended under Section 4 “Preferred Option” of the report, be approved for further public consultation (Regulation 18 consultation).

### This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

### Timetable

| <b>Meeting</b>                 | <b>Date</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Policy and Resources Committee | N/A         |
| Council                        | N/A         |
| Other Committee                | N/A         |

<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012



# Affordable Housing Policy

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider and approve the officer responses to the representations made on the draft affordable housing policy (DM24) contained in the public consultation draft of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 (Regulation 18 consultation), set out in Appendix A.
  - 1.2 To approve a revised draft local plan policy for affordable housing that has been amended as a result of public consultation and further viability testing, set out in Section 4 of the report. The revised policy is recommended for further public consultation (Regulation 18) before the Publication version of the local plan is published for consultation (Regulation 19).
- 

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local planning authorities have a duty to meet the full, objectively assessed needs for affordable housing; to plan for a mix of housing and identify the tenure and range of housing that is required; to prepare a plan which is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence; and to assess policies to ensure their cumulative impact does not put the implementation of the Plan at serious risk<sup>2</sup>. The council has a net affordable housing need of 5,800 households from 2013 to 2031<sup>3</sup>, equivalent to 322 affordable homes each year (which is 35% of the council's objectively assessed need of 928 dwellings p.a.).
- 2.2 The council's adopted Affordable Housing Development Plan Document (2006) sets a threshold of 15 dwellings or 0.5ha as a trigger for sites to provide for affordable housing as part of development proposals. A minimum 40% affordable housing is sought, of which not less than 24% of the total number of dwellings should be for affordable rent, the balance providing for shared ownership, shared equity or discounted market rent.
- 2.3 Consultants, Peter Brett Associates (PBA), were appointed to undertake a Local Plan Viability Testing Study (April 2013) to update the council's evidence base. Consequently, policy DM24 of the public consultation draft of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 updated the council's affordable housing policy, and set a new threshold of 10 residential units and a different rate of provision across different types of geographical area. The policy sought 15% affordable housing provision for previously developed urban sites, 30% for greenfield sites and private residential gardens in the currently defined urban area and at the urban periphery, and 40% in the countryside, rural service centres and larger villages. The policy further sought a tenure split of not less than 65% affordable/social rented housing, and up to 35% intermediate affordable

---

<sup>2</sup> NPPF Paragraph 47

<sup>3</sup> Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (January 2014)

housing (shared ownership and/or intermediate rent).

- 2.4 The representations that were received during public consultation on the local plan in respect of affordable housing policy DM24, together with officer responses and recommendations, are set out in Appendix A. The comments relate to the cost of providing affordable housing, tenure split, the proposed geographical split, and tenants who would live in the dwellings. The nature of the comments and their implications for the viability of the local plan were such that further work was required. PBA were therefore appointed to undertake a Revised Plan and CIL Viability Study (May 2015) at a strategic plan level to update the 2013 viability study and to provide the following outputs:
- A plan viability assessment of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031;
  - To test the impact of affordable housing policy in the context of the plan viability assessment; and
  - Viability assessment of theoretical developments taking into account the Local Plan requirements and other costs, to inform the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rates.
- 2.5 The council's CIL Charging Schedule is being prepared alongside the local plan programme. A report on the key issues arising from public consultation on the CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule was considered by Planning, Transport and Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 16 September 2014. A further report seeking approval to undertake the next stage of consultation on the Draft Charging Schedule, taking account of the updated PBA viability study, will be presented to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee early next year, following the Committee's approval of the local plan for publications and submission.
- 2.6 PBA tested a range of typologies, or hypothetical developments, that are likely to be brought forward in the plan period. These hypothetical developments were assigned to broad locations within the borough, and the typology sites were based on new and existing sites of known development within the plan period. Since the previous 2013 viability study, overall the general viability picture has not changed: rural areas are more viable than urban locations, and brownfield sites (previously developed land) within urban areas are less viable than greenfield sites. This picture is supported by decision making in the development management process.
- 2.7 One key difference in the viability results between 2013 and 2015 is the notable increase in residential sales values over the last two years. When looking at sales values it is not uncommon to consider sales values from the previous three to five years. It is likely that some of the transactional data used in the previous study may have overlapped with transactional data from the height of the recession, so viability would have been slightly more suppressed than in the previous three/five years from the present day. The approach to values has also changed: a blended rate of houses and flats was used in the 2013 viability model, whilst the 2015 model separately identifies houses and flats.
- 2.8 Since the previous viability study there have also been a number of changes in how costs are considered within the viability study. These changes are a result

of a number of factors, including PBA's experience gained at Independent Examination of other local planning authorities' local plans, peer review and improved market conditions:

- Externals (costs for internal access roads, car parking and hard and soft landscaping within the site) are reduced to 10% of build costs as opposed to 15%;
- 10% of build cost for professional fees, reduced from 12%;
- Profit that developers may gain from affordable housing has fallen from 8% to 6%; and
- There is evidence to suggest finance costs have fallen considerably since the previous study where 8% was used - a figure of 6% is now used.

### **Vacant Building Credit**

- 2.9 National policy provides for an incentive for brownfield development on sites containing vacant buildings. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG, paragraph 21) explains that *“where a vacant building is brought back into any lawful use, or is demolished to be replaced by a new building, the developer should be offered a financial credit equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of relevant vacant buildings when the local planning authority calculates any affordable housing contribution which will be sought.”* The existing floorspace of a vacant building is credited against the floorspace of the new development so affordable housing contributions may be required for any increase in floorspace, and if there is no additional floorspace from redevelopment then the local authority cannot seek affordable housing contributions. The financial credit applies to all vacant buildings that have not been abandoned.
- 2.10 The definition of “vacant” was initially unclear but recent amendments to the NPPG wording provide for local planning authorities to have regard to the intention of national policy when applying the credit. Thus it may be appropriate for local planning authorities to consider:
- Whether the building has been vacant for the sole purpose of redevelopment; and
  - Whether the building is covered by an extant or recently expired planning permission for the same or substantially the same development.
- 2.11 It is unclear whether local planning authorities may consider that the vacant building credit is not appropriate for buildings that have become vacant solely to enable development to proceed. Uncertainty also remains as to how the vacant building credit will be applied in practice, for example, no time limit is specified for the period of time that has to elapse before the building is considered vacant.
- 2.12 The national policy is clear that vacant building credit has been introduced to incentivise brownfield redevelopment. Nevertheless, the vacant building credit is being challenged by a number of authorities, particularly in London where certain councils are seeking to introduce a local exemption policy against the credit. In Maidstone, the regeneration of brownfield sites in the town centre and the urban area is a local plan priority set out in its strategy. Officers will keep a

watching brief on vacant building credit and will report back on the implications for Maidstone Borough.

---

### 3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **A: 'Do nothing' option – do not progress with an affordable housing policy.** The council has a net affordable housing need of 5,800 homes between 2013 and 2031<sup>4</sup>, equivalent to 322 households each year. There is a clear and significant need for new affordable homes in the borough, and there is therefore a clear justification for the council to seek affordable housing through new development schemes. Local plans are required to pay careful attention to viability and costs, and sites should not be subject to such a scale of obligation and policy burden that their ability to be developed is threatened<sup>5</sup>. The PBA study has tested a range of options to ensure the local plan and its policies are viable. All site typologies tested proved to be viable, and some level of affordable housing can be accommodated.
- 3.2 **B: Affordable Housing Threshold.** Paragraph 12 of the NPPG, which refers to circumstances where infrastructure contributions through planning obligations should not be sought from developers, was updated on 26 March 2015. As a consequence, developer contributions for affordable housing should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. The PBA viability testing results assumed the national threshold of 11 dwellings for affordable housing.
- 3.3 The NPPG does set out some exceptions where a lower threshold may be applied: rural areas described under Section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, which includes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. So consideration can be given to introducing a lower threshold of somewhere between six and 10 units in the Kent Downs AONB where affordable housing or tariff-style contributions could be sought. The PBA viability study demonstrates that, whilst greenfield sites may be able to accommodate a lower threshold, brownfield developments would not be viable. The emerging local plan is not proposing to allocate any housing sites in the AONB. Windfall applications in this location on greenfield sites of between six and 10 dwellings would therefore normally be contrary to policy, an exception being the provision of local needs housing which is 100% affordable housing.
- 3.4 It is recommended that affordable housing should be sought from developments of 11 units or more, and which have a combined floorspace of greater than 1,000m<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.5 **C: Affordable Housing Target Rate and Geographical Differentiation.** Draft policy DM24 currently seeks 15% affordable housing provision on urban brownfield sites, 30% on greenfield sites (and private residential gardens) in the currently defined urban area and at the urban periphery, and 40% in the countryside and villages. A range of alternative targets and geographical differentiations were proposed by respondents to the local plan consultation

---

<sup>4</sup> Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (June 2015)

<sup>5</sup> NPPF Paragraph 173

(Appendix A).

- 3.6 Further testing of options in the 2015 PBA viability study demonstrates that a 40% affordable housing rate can be achieved in the rural areas and a 30% rate can be achieved in and adjacent to the currently defined urban area. The key policy change relates to urban brownfield sites where there is an increase in provision from 15% to 30%. Two strategic urban brownfield sites that are important for the delivery of the local plan, Springfield (residential site allocation policy H1(11)) and Haynes (H1(12)), would be viable delivering 30% affordable housing, but there would be limited capacity to provide for necessary infrastructure at these sites because of site constraints. These sites can accommodate a rate of 20% affordable housing which would allow for an appropriate balance of affordable housing with the need to provide for infrastructure.
- 3.7 Alternatively, a 15% affordable housing rate, as set out in the current draft policy, could be retained for the urban area to incentivise brownfield redevelopment, but this must be balanced against the borough's need for affordable housing. A 30% affordable housing rate is viable, subject to the identified exception sites.
- 3.8 A 40% affordable housing requirement in the countryside, rural service centres and larger villages, and a 30% requirement in the urban area are recommended, with the exception of a 20% requirement for the Springfield and Haynes residential site allocations.
- 3.9 **D: Affordable Housing Tenure.** The draft 2014 local plan policy DM24 seeks a tenure split of a minimum 65% affordable/social rented housing and 35% intermediate housing. Some respondents to the consultation sought a more even tenure split in order to address local needs (Appendix A). The policy already states that specific site circumstances may influence the tenure split of each development, so introduces a degree of flexibility in accordance with NPPF requirements. The delivery of affordable housing in Maidstone must give greater priority to affordable rented homes due to the significant need for such accommodation (in excess of 1,400 applicants) on the council's housing register at the present time.
- 3.10 The Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014) identifies the need for different types of tenure of affordable housing through the period of the local plan. Across the borough as a whole, it is estimated that some 67% of need is for social or affordable rent tenures, whilst around 33% is for intermediate housing. A ratio of 70% affordable rent and 30% intermediate was tested in the PBA study and has been shown to be viable.
- 3.11 An indicative target of 70% affordable/social rent and 30% intermediate housing is recommended, but with modifications to the policy wording to ensure flexibility subject to viability and/or evidence of the needs for different tenures at the time of the application.
- 3.12 **E: Older Person Housing (retirement and extra care homes).** Viability testing for retirement homes (also known as sheltered housing) and extra care



homes (also known as assisted living) suggests these uses are not as viable as other residential uses in Maidstone. There was very little difference between extra care and retirement properties, and the study recommends a single affordable rate for both. Whilst a rate of 30% affordable housing is viable, this could only be achieved with a zero CIL charge. Alternatively, a lower 20% affordable housing rate can be accommodated which would allow for an appropriate balance between affordable housing need and infrastructure provision.

3.13 An affordable housing requirement of 20% for older person housing (retirement and extra care homes) is recommended.

3.14 **F: Care Homes.** Care homes are residential or nursing homes where 24 hour personal care and/or nursing care are provided. Population projections predict that 18% of the borough's residents will be over 70 years of age by 2031, compared with 12% in 2011, resulting in a need for 960 additional care home places in the borough. A new policy for care homes was approved for public consultation (Regulation 18) by Cabinet on 14 January 2015. Despite significant investment in recent years, the care homes market shows weak prospects in terms of providing any affordable housing.

3.15 An affordable homes target for care homes is recommended at 0%.

---

## 4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Committee is recommended to approve the following amendments to policy DM24 of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 in respect of affordable housing set out in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.10 below, and to approve the revised policy for further public consultation (Regulation 18). The amendments reflect options (B), (C), (D), (E) and (F) of Section 3 of this report. Additions to the policy are in **bold text** and deletions are in ~~strike through text~~. Paragraphs 4.2 to 4.10 are the supporting text to the policy, whereas the policy itself is set out in the table following paragraph 4.10.

### Policy DM24 - Affordable housing

4.2 ~~Maidstone Borough has a clear affordable housing need. The~~ **Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)** supports the approach of seeking a proportion of dwellings to be provided on site for affordable housing needs. **The council has a net affordable housing need of 5,800 homes from 2013 to 2031<sup>6</sup>, equivalent to 322 households each year. This is a significant need for the borough and a clear justification for the council to seek affordable dwellings through new development schemes.** ~~The on-site provision of dwellings is necessary to aid community integration.~~

4.3 ~~Viability testing indicates that affordable housing is achievable with a one dwelling threshold. For practical purposes, the threshold will be set at 10 dwellings.~~ **The NPPG refers to circumstances where infrastructure**

---

<sup>6</sup> Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (June 2015)

contributions through planning obligations should not be sought from developers. Affordable housing should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. The viability testing has assumed the national threshold of 11 dwellings for affordable housing. To support community integration, affordable housing will be provided on site, and alternative provision will not be accepted unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify it. Any proposals for off-site or financial provision must be made at the time of the application.

#### ~~Targets by area~~

- 4.4 Affordable housing targets will differentiate across the borough by geographical area and existing land use, due to relative issues such as land price and policy considerations. ~~Previously developed land, within the urban area, will be required to provide the lowest level of affordable housing contribution, primarily because of existing use values, meaning that it costs more to regenerate sites and areas that may otherwise remain unused or under used. On greenfield and private residential garden sites in the urban area and around the urban periphery, the council recognises that land may be relatively more expensive because of the expectation of policy coming forward to develop these sites, giving a hope value. Sites at urban periphery locations can also reasonably expect to contribute to a wide range of infrastructure requirements as well as affordable housing. Evidence has indicated that in rural locations and on the edge of rural settlements, although land values are higher, so are the values of the developments. In these areas development remains viable when factoring in higher affordable housing targets, still returning acceptable profits for landowners and developers. Further viability testing has confirmed that the rural areas in Maidstone are more viable than urban locations, and brownfield sites (previously developed land) within urban areas are less viable than greenfield sites. Viability testing demonstrates that a 40% affordable housing rate can be achieved in the rural areas and a 30% rate within the urban area. A 30% affordable housing requirement for two strategic urban brownfield site allocations that are important for the delivery of the local plan would result in limited capacity to provide for necessary supporting infrastructure because of site constraints. The Springfield (H1(11)) and Haynes (H1(12)) residential site allocations can accommodate a rate of 20% affordable housing which allows for an appropriate balance of affordable housing with the need to provide for infrastructure.~~
- 4.5 In order to respond to the identified need for affordable housing of different tenures through the period of the plan, the council will seek an indicative target of 70% affordable rented or social rented housing, or a mixture of the two, and 30% intermediate affordable housing (shared ownership and/or intermediate rent). This ratio was used for strategic viability testing purposes and has been shown to be viable. Specific site circumstances may affect the viability of individual proposals and the council recognises that the need for different tenures may also vary over time.

- 4.6 To ensure proper delivery of affordable housing, developers are required to discuss proposals with the council's housing department at the earliest stage of the application process, to ensure the size, type and tenure of new affordable housing is appropriate given the identified needs. Where economic viability affects the capacity of a scheme to meet the stated targets for affordable housing provision, the council will expect developers to examine the potential for variations to the tenure and mix of provision, prior to examining variations to the overall proportion of affordable housing.
- 4.7 Retirement homes (sheltered housing) and extra care homes (assisted living) are not as viable as other residential uses in Maidstone. A 20% affordable housing rate will be sought for such developments, which will allow for an appropriate balance between affordable housing need and supporting infrastructure provision.
- 4.8 Residential care homes or nursing homes, where 24 hour personal care and/or nursing care are provided, are shown to be even less viable than retirement homes. Population projections predict that 18% of the borough's residents will be over 70 years of age by 2031, compared with 12% in 2011, resulting in a need for 960 additional care home places in the borough. Despite significant investment in recent years, the care homes market shows weak prospects in terms of providing any affordable housing so a zero rate is set.
- 4.9 Developers will be required to pay for viability assessments and any cost of independent assessment. The council will only consider reducing planning obligations if fully justified through a financial appraisal model or other appropriate evidence.
- 4.10 The affordable and local needs housing supplementary planning document will contain further detail on how the policy will be implemented.

#### ~~Previously developed land~~

- 4.11 ~~In the urban area and on the urban periphery the definition of previously developed land that the council uses when applying this policy will determine which affordable housing target is applied to a given development. The resulting difference in requirement will be between 15% and 30% as per the proposed policy.~~
- 4.12 ~~The NPPF definition clarifies what is considered previously developed land and [in most cases] what is commonly referred to as greenfield land. However, there are circumstances where land that demonstrably exhibits greenfield characteristics can technically be argued to be previously developed land.~~
- 4.13 ~~The key consideration that the council will take into account in these circumstances is how the viability of the proposed development is likely to be affected. On sites where there is inherent viability, developers should make commensurate contributions. On sites where there is a question relating to how~~



~~much of the site actually is previously developed land (likely attracting higher costs to redevelop) and how much is more reflective of greenfield land (likely attracting lower costs to develop), at least half of the land area should have been developed i.e. buildings and ancillary features, if the 15% target rate is to apply.~~

## Policy DM 24

### Affordable housing

On housing sites or mixed use development sites of ~~10~~ **11** residential units or more, **and which have a combined floorspace of greater than 1,000m<sup>2</sup>**, the council will ~~seek~~ **require** the delivery of affordable housing.

1. The target rates for affordable housing provision **within the following geographical areas, as defined on the policies map**, are:

- ~~i. Previously developed land – urban – 15%;~~
- ~~ii. Greenfield and private residential gardens – urban and urban periphery – 30%; and~~
- ~~iii. Countryside, rural service centres and larger villages – 40%.~~

- i. Maidstone urban area 30%, with the exception of**
  - a) Policy H1(11) Haynes, Ashford Road 20%, and**
  - b) Policy H1(12) Springfield, Royal Engineers Road 20%; and**

- ii. Countryside, rural service centres and larger villages 40%.**

~~This provision will consist of:~~

2. ~~The integrated on-site provision of dwellings or, where proven necessary in exceptional circumstances, off-site provision in the following order of preference:~~ **Affordable housing provision should be appropriately integrated within the site. In exceptional circumstances, and where proven to be necessary, off-site provision will be sought in the following order of preference:**

- ~~i. An identified off site scheme; or~~
- ~~ii. The purchase of dwellings off-site; or~~
- ~~iii. A financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing.~~

3. ~~The council will seek a tenure split in the borough of not less than 65% affordable rented housing, social rented housing or a mixture of the two. The balance of up to 35% of affordable dwellings delivered will be intermediate affordable housing (shared ownership and/or intermediate rent). Specific site circumstances may influence the tenure split of each development, so the council requires developers to enter negotiations with the council's Housing department in consultation with registered providers at the earliest stage of the application process, to be able to determine whether a variation of tenure split is acceptable/appropriate and what alternative proportions are achievable.~~

**The indicative targets for tenure are:**

- i. **70% affordable rented housing, social rented housing or a mixture of the two; and**
- ii. **30% intermediate affordable housing (shared ownership and/or intermediate rent).**

**Developers are required to enter into negotiations with the council's Housing department, in consultation with registered providers, at the earliest stage of the application process to determine an appropriate tenure split, taking account of the evidence available at that time.**

- 4. The council will seek provision of 20% affordable housing for schemes that provide for retirement housing and/or extra care homes.**
- ~~5. In cases where the required provision cannot be achieved on the grounds of viability, the council will negotiate a reduced contribution. This will be subject to viability evidence.~~ **Where it can be demonstrated that the affordable housing targets cannot be achieved due to economic viability, the tenure and mix of affordable housing should be examined prior to any variation in the proportion of affordable housing.**

~~An~~ **The affordable and local needs housing supplementary planning document will be produced to expand on how the proposals in this contain further detail on how the policy will be implemented.**

---

## **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 The draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan was subject to public consultation between March and May 2014. The key issues raised by respondents to the plan's affordable housing policy (DM24), together with officer responses and recommendations are set out in Appendix A of the report and have helped to refine the draft policy.

---

## **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 The amended affordable housing policy will be subject to further public consultation (Regulation 18) before being included in the Publication version of the local plan (Regulation 19).
-

## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue  | Implications  | Sign-off  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>        | The adoption of the local plan will assist in the delivery of the council's corporate priorities.   | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                    |
| <b>Risk Management</b>                       | Risk management has included cross-departmental consultation with Housing Officers; the appointment of consultants to update viability testing to reflect current market conditions; a review of updated national policy and guidance; and an assessment of the key issues raised by respondents to policy DM24 during public consultation.                           | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                    |
| <b>Financial</b>                             | The receipts from CIL will be substantial and will need to be administered through the council's finance department. In the broader context, there are financial implications relating to the long term delivery of the local plan and the developments proposed within. The cost of viability consultants can be accommodated within the existing local plan budget. | Zena Cooke, S151 Officer & Ellie Dunnett, Finance             |
| <b>Staffing</b>                              | The Regulation 18 consultation will require staff resources but, given this will be a focused consultation on key policy changes only, the consultation can be managed within existing staff resources.   | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                    |
| <b>Legal</b>                                 | There are no legal implications directly arising from this report, although Mid Kent Legal Services continue to provide advice and guidance on local plan matters, and to review any legal implications of reports.   | Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services |
| <b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>      | N/A   | Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager                    |
| <b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b> | N/A   | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                    |
| <b>Community Safety</b>                      | N/A   | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                    |
| <b>Human Rights Act</b>                      | N/A   | Rob Jarman, Head of   |

| Issue                   | Implications   | Sign-off   |
|-------------------------|--|--|
|                         |  | Planning & Development   |
| <b>Procurement</b>      | Peter Brett Associates who have prepared technical evidence to support the local plan have been appointed in accordance with the council's procurement procedures. | Rob Jarman,<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development, &<br>Zena Cooke<br>Section 151<br>Officer |
| <b>Asset Management</b> | None   | Rob Jarman,<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development  |

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

**Appendix A: Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2014 - affordable housing policy DM24 consultation issues and responses**

---

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Maidstone Borough Council: Revised Plan and CIL Viability Study (July 2015)

**APPENDIX A: MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2014 CONSULTATION ISSUES AND RESPONSES TO POLICY DM24 AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

| Key Issue  | No. in support | No. of objections | No. of observations | Details   | Officer response  | Officer Recommendation  |
|--|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. The percentages proposed for the delivery of affordable housing should be amended | 8              | 32                | 2                   | 40% affordable housing for countryside, rural service centres and larger villages too high. Reasons being that these areas are the least suitable for new affordable housing as new tenants would probably require services found in more urban areas. Points highlighted include: lack of infrastructure, poor public transport, low employment opportunities in these areas, the impact on rural communities and that the high percentage in rural service centres would cause tenants who would be better housed in town centre / urban areas to move where they do not want to go to. | A fair balance must be struck between the viability of a scheme and the affordable housing provision. The council has a net affordable housing need of 5,800 homes between 2013 and 2031, which is a significant need and a clear justification for the council to seek affordable dwellings through new development schemes. Further viability testing has confirmed that the rural areas in Maidstone are more viable than urban locations, and brownfield sites (previously developed land) within urban areas are less viable than greenfield sites. A 40% affordable housing rate can be achieved in the rural areas and a 30% rate within and adjacent to the urban area, with two identified site exceptions that will accommodate a rate of 25% affordable housing which will allow for an appropriate balance of affordable housing with the need to provide for infrastructure. The local plan identifies the infrastructure required to support new development, but new development cannot mitigate existing infrastructure problems - only ensure that those problems are not exacerbated. | A 40% affordable housing requirement in the countryside, rural service centres and larger villages, and a 30% requirement in the urban area are recommended, with the exception of a 25% requirement for the Springfield (H1(11)) and Haynes (H1(12)) residential site allocations. |
|  |                |                   |                     | 15% affordable housing should apply to all previously developed land sites and not just in urban areas.   |   |   |
|  |                |                   |                     | 30% affordable housing should apply to all greenfield sites and not just urban and urban periphery.   |   |   |
|  |                |                   |                     | All sites should contain 80% affordable housing or higher.  |   |   |
|  |                |                   |                     |   |   |   |

|  |   |   |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 2. Affordable housing should be decided on a site specific basis               | 0 | 1 | 0 | Affordable housing should be decided on a site specific basis.              | A clear policy that sets out the affordable housing provision that is expected from developments gives clarity and certainty to developers, land owners and the public. The policy, as amended, offers flexibility and developers can assess the viability of an individual scheme in advance of submitting a planning application. The details of size, type and tenure of affordable housing will be decided on a site by site basis in accordance with the policy provisions. The policy, as amended, identifies exceptions to geographical differentiation.                                    | A 40% affordable housing requirement in the countryside and villages and a 30% requirement elsewhere is recommended, with the exception of a 25% requirement for the Springfield (H1(11)) and Haynes (H1(12)) residential site allocations.   |
| 3. The new affordable housing provision percentage figures are too complicated | 0 | 1 | 0 | The new affordable housing provision percentage figures are too complicated | The council has a net affordable housing need of 5,800 homes between 2013 and 2031, equivalent to 322 households each year. There is therefore a clear and significant need for new affordable housing in the borough. The percentage requirements have been reviewed in the light of updated viability testing, which demonstrates rural areas are more viable than urban locations, and brownfield sites (previously developed land) within urban areas are less viable than greenfield sites. The policy retains 3 affordable housing rates but the geographical differentiation is simplified. | A 40% affordable housing requirement in the countryside, rural service centres and larger villages, and a 30% requirement in the urban area are recommended, with the exception of a 25% requirement for the Springfield (H1(11)) and Haynes (H1(12)) residential site allocations. |

|   |   |   |   |  |  |   |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| 4. Policy should highlight a reasonable and flexible approach | 0 | 0 | 4 | Policy should highlight a reasonable and flexible approach | The council acknowledges that every development is different and each has varying costs and issues associated with it. The council needs to ensure that the provision of affordable housing for the borough is met whilst understanding that developers need to obtain a reasonable return. The policy already includes a flexibility clause, and setting an indicative tenure split in the policy will introduce greater flexibility to respond to changes in housing need.   | An indicative target of 70% affordable/ social rent and 30% intermediate housing is recommended, but with modifications to the policy wording to ensure flexibility subject to viability and/or evidence of the needs for different tenures at the time of the application. |
| 5. Ensure bungalows are part of any affordable scheme         | 0 | 0 | 1 | Ensure bungalows are part of any affordable scheme         | Policy DM23 of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan specifically covers housing mix. The exact affordable housing mix will be discussed with the developer and will take into account the housing needs of existing, emerging and future projected households, together with the proposed layout and characteristics of individual sites.  | No change to policy.  |
| 6. Local needs housing should be on all developments          | 0 | 1 | 0 | Local needs housing should be on all developments          | Local needs housing is specifically covered under Policy DM25 of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014. This policy sets out the detail about when local needs housing can be considered and delivered. It would not be appropriate to introduce a blanket policy for local needs housing on all developments as there may not be a specific identified local need for all sites. This in turn could lead to affordable dwellings being vacant due to not having enough eligible applicants to consider as a result of the strict local connection occupancy criteria that exists for local needs housing schemes. | No change to policy.  |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Adopted relevant neighbourhood plans should be taken into account   | 0 | 0 | 2 | Adopted relevant neighbourhood plans should be taken into account   | The council acknowledges that neighbourhood plans need to be considered in the wider housing and planning context. Their relevance will be better highlighted in the Regulation 19 version of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan, but should not be specifically included as part of the affordable housing policy.   | No change to policy.  |
| 8. 65% Affordable / Social Rented Housing – 35% Intermediate Affordable Housing split should be more even to address local needs | 0 | 2 | 0 | 65% Affordable / Social Rented Housing – 35% Intermediate Affordable Housing split should be more even to address local needs | Updated viability testing recommends setting an indicative target seeking a range of tenures around 70% affordable rent and 30% intermediate housing to allow flexibility where schemes are marginal. Setting an indicative tenure split will introduce greater flexibility to respond to changes in housing need. The delivery of affordable housing must give greater priority to affordable rented housing due to the significant need for such accommodation on the council's housing register. | An indicative target of 70% affordable/ social rent and 30% intermediate housing is recommended, but with modifications to the policy wording to ensure flexibility subject to viability and/or evidence of the needs for different tenures at the time of the application. |



## Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee

14<sup>th</sup> July 2015

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting? | Yes |
|---|-----|

## Maidstone Borough Local Plan – mixed use allocations

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Final Decision-Maker</b>             | Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee  |
| <b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b> | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                  |
| <b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>   | Sarah Anderton, Principal Planning Officer (Spatial Policy) |
| <b>Classification</b>                   | Non-exempt  |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                   | All   |

### This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Committee approves the officer responses to the representations submitted during public consultation on the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2014 for policy RMX1 Retail and Mixed Use Allocations, set out in Appendix I.
2. That the Committee approves the amendments to Policy RMX1 set out in Appendix II, for incorporation into the Regulation 19 version of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan

### This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

| Timetable                      |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Meeting</b>                 | <b>Date</b> |
| Policy and Resources Committee | n/a         |
| Council                        | n/a         |
| Other Committee                | n/a         |

# Maidstone Borough Local Plan – mixed use allocations

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report responds to, and proposes changes to, the allocation policies for mixed use sites (Policy RMX1) contained in the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Regulation 18) (“the Reg 18 Plan”) as a result of the representations made to these policies during the public consultation held between March and May 2014. It recommends that the proposed changes be approved for incorporation into the next full draft of the Local Plan (Regulation 19).

---

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan was approved by Cabinet for its first full stage of public consultation (Regulation 18) in February 2014. The public consultation took place between 21 March and 7 May 2014.
- 2.2 Cabinet considered the representations to the development management policies (14th January 2015) and agreed amendments for inclusion in the next full draft of the Local Plan (Regulation 19). The housing site allocations in Policy H1 of the Reg 18 Plan were considered by Cabinet (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February and 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015) and some of these are also the subject of a separate report on this agenda.
- 2.3 This report considers the representations made to the mixed use site allocations made under Policy RMX1 of the Reg 18 Plan and proposes changes to be included in the Regulation 19 version of the Plan which is scheduled for public consultation in early 2016.

---

## 3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Policy RMX1 allocates five sites for mixed use development. Representations were made to the policy during the Regulation 18 consultation undertaken between March and May 2014. The Committee could decide not to consider these representations at this time and to defer consideration to a later meeting. Such delay could, however, impact on the draft programme for the progression of the Local Plan towards Independent Examination agreed by the Committee at its June meeting.
- 3.2 The Committee could decide not to consider the representations at all, and to progress Policy RMX1 unaltered for inclusion in the Regulation 19 version of the Plan. This is not advised as proper consideration of the issues raised during consultation, and of any updated information received since the Reg 18 Plan was prepared, will be of benefit to the overall soundness of the Plan.

- 3.3 The Committee could decide to consider the representations in line with the recommendation. For the reasons above, this is the preferred option.
- 

#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 For the reasons set out above, the preferred option is for the Committee to consider the representations and updated information as presented in the remainder of this report.
- 4.2 The issues raised in representations to Policy RMX1 are set out in the table in Appendix I. The table also includes an officer response to each of the issues raised and recommends appropriate changes to the policy. The specific changes which are being recommended are also set out separately in Appendix II. Key points raised by the representations are discussed below.

##### Newnham Court, Maidstone (Policy RMX1(1))

- 4.3 Concerns have been raised about the visual and landscape impact of the proposals for Newnham Court, stating that this would equate to over development of the site, that the foreground of the Kent Downs AONB should be protected, and objecting to the loss of countryside.
- 4.4 In response, Policy RMX1(1) specifically seeks to control and limit the amount of additional development across the site. The policy also clearly requires extensive structural and internal landscaping and landscape buffers to help mitigate the visual impact of development. The redevelopment of Newnham Court shopping village is limited to only a marginal increase on the existing development footprint.
- 4.5 Regarding the loss of the countryside, some greenfield loss will be required to accommodate growth needs over the timescale of the Local Plan. Junction 7 is a location where there is already significant, existing development and where the principle of further development is already established through planning consents. Policy RMX1(1) seeks to mitigate impacts on the setting of the AONB through, for example, explicit landscaping requirements and the control of building heights and siting and lighting. The policy also specifically requires a landscape buffer to Horish Wood Local Nature Reserve.
- 4.6 In summary, it is considered that the policy as drafted provides adequate safeguards against the impacts cited in these representations. A detailed change to the policy is recommended in order to clarify that compensatory planting will be required where loss of existing planting is unavoidable.
- 4.7 Concerns were also raised about highway impacts (congestion) and, conversely, that the list of transport requirements in the policy may not be appropriate for the scale of retail development proposed in the policy.
- 4.8 The transport measures specified in the policy have been agreed with KCC Highways as the highway authority. Further, the highways measures associated with the medical campus have been confirmed through the determination of the

outline application (MA/13/1163). For clarity, the policy specifies the list of highways improvements expected to be required. The policy is also clear that a Transport Assessment will be required which will be used to confirm the detailed extent of measures to be delivered. An additional requirement for a car parking management plan is recommended in addition to the policy.

- 4.9 It is argued in the representations that the increased retail capacity at Newnham Court in addition to Next on the adjacent site will be to the detriment of the town centre. The landowner states that redevelopment is not feasible on the existing footprint whilst maintaining continuity of trade and will not be viable or deliverable with the restriction of additional floorspace to 700sqm.
- 4.10 In response, Newnham Court is an existing, established retail destination. The policy specifies that a Retail Impact Assessment will be required to quantify the development's impact on town centre trade. It provides for the re-provision of the existing floorspace with a modest amount of additional floorspace (700sqm) to enable redevelopment. A redevelopment scheme could enable the existing permitted retail floorspace to be set out in a more efficient way, better suited to modern retailers' needs. The Council could aim to enable continuity of trade through its consideration of applications for temporary buildings to be used during construction.

Maidstone East & Royal Mail Sorting Office, Maidstone (Policy RMX1(2))

- 4.11 In response to the representations, detailed changes are recommended to the policy criteria to clarify that a Phase 1 Ecology Study will be required and that compensatory planting will be required if the loss of landscape features is unavoidable.
- 4.12 Additionally, the Inspector for the Baltic Wharf Inquiry (see paragraphs 4.19 to 4.23 below) was critical that the draft Local Plan is not explicit that the Maidstone East/Sorting Office site should include a large food store. The Inquiry, which was held in May 2014, related to a proposal for a foodstore (A1 use class), offices (A2, B1), café/restaurant (A3) and assembly/leisure (D2) uses at the Baltic Wharf site on St Peters Street, which is an 'out of town centre' site in retail planning terms. The Inspector allowed the appeal in July 2014.
- 4.13 The draft policy RMX1(2) states that the site is allocated for up to 10,000sqm of comparison and convenience retailing. The policy was drafted in this way to allow for some flexibility in the exact balance of retail uses on the site in response to market changes. This is still considered a reasonable approach. The nature of retail needs is changing, evidenced recently by the main supermarket operators' focus on smaller convenience stores and away from the largest scale superstores. To respond to the Baltic Wharf Inspector's concern, and to avoid further doubt, it is recommended that the supporting text be amended to clarify that the site would be suitable for a foodstore.
- 4.14 As stated in the Regulation 18 Plan, the Maidstone East/Sorting Office site is the priority location for additional retail floorspace in the town centre. The site is in a key gateway location and benefits from direct links via Week Street to the

heart of the town centre, enabling linked shopping trips and giving the best opportunity for access by sustainable transport modes. It is recommended that retail-led redevelopment remain the priority for this site, as expressed in Policy RMX1(2), with residential as a secondary use. Offices are an identified town centre use and an element of office floorspace would also be appropriate as a further secondary use on this site. To provide clarity, it is recommended that the supporting text of the Local Plan be amended to confirm that a subsidiary element of office floorspace would also be acceptable where this would support or, at the least, not compromise the retail-led requirements for the site set out in the Policy.

Clockhouse Farm, Heath Road, Coxheath (Policy RMX1(4))

- 4.15 This site is allocated for 40 homes and 7,700sqm of office/light industrial floorspace (B1) in the draft Local Plan (Regulation 18).
- 4.16 Subsequently, a planning application for 72 dwellings, up to 43 extra care apartments and land for open space/community use (MA/14/0566) was approved by Planning Committee on 5th February 2015 subject to the completion of a legal agreement.
- 4.17 In view of this updated position, it is recommended that Clockhouse Farm be omitted as a mixed use allocation from Policy RMX1.

Syngenta, Yalding (Policy RMX1(5))

- 4.18 The Environment Agency (EA) has now objected to the proposed 200 dwellings on this site. Following the floods of December 2013, the EA is expecting to publish its revised flood modelling maps by October 2015. The site's potential developers can be expected to want to agree a flood mitigation approach in response to the EA's concerns and the latest published information. Pending this further work, it is proposed that the site be retained as a mixed use allocation in the Local Plan. The position on this site will be monitored as new information from the EA and the site's potential developers becomes available.

Baltic Wharf (formerly known as the Powerhub building)

- 4.19 A representation was received from the owners of Baltic Wharf, St Peters Street in Maidstone stating that their site should be allocated in the Local Plan for a large food store as part of a mixed use development.
- 4.20 This representation to the Reg 18 Plan was made before the Public Inquiry into the Council's refusal of permission for a foodstore (A1 use class), offices (A2, B1), café/restaurant (A3) and assembly/leisure (D2) uses on the Baltic Wharf site was held in May 2014. The appeal Inspector concluded that a foodstore use was the only primary use which would secure the future of this Grade II listed building, provided a retailer would commit to the scheme and allowed the appeal in July 2014.

- 4.21 The appeal Inspector highlighted what he regarded as an imbalance between the draft Local Plan's inclusion of a specific allocation for the Maidstone East/Sorting Office site and the lack of a policy for the Baltic Wharf building, a substantial listed building in the town centre. He stated this was not necessarily an incorrect approach, but the net result was that he gave little weight to the draft Local Plan at the point he was considering the appeal.
- 4.22 Clearly the site now has planning consent; there is no need to allocate the site for the uses for which it has permission. Further, whilst other uses such as residential would be appropriate for the building, an allocation policy citing it as an alternative main use would not be deliverable based on the viability information so recently tested at the appeal.
- 4.23 That said, there is merit in making reference to the site in the Local Plan as a substantial and underused listed building in the town centre, should the position on viability change over the lifetime of the Plan. It is recommended that the supporting text to Policy SP1 – Maidstone Town Centre be amended to confirm that, should the consented scheme not come forward, the Council will consider positively alternative schemes that achieve the retention and restoration of the listed building. Appropriate uses would include housing, offices, leisure uses, cafes and restaurants.

#### Eclipse Business Park, Maidstone

- 4.24 The landowners propose that Eclipse Business Park should be allocated in Policy RMX1 to enable a more flexible approach to the site's development.
- 4.25 This is an established, modern employment location which provides good quality office space with good levels of associated car parking close to the M20 motorway junction 7. There are further extant consents for additional office development on the site. It is identified in the Local Plan as an established Economic Development Area under Policy DM18; it constitutes an important element of the borough's employment land portfolio and the site is recommended for retention as an employment site in the evidential 'Qualitative Employment Sites Assessment', GVA (2014). It is considered that the best policy approach to secure the future use of this site is to retain it in draft Local Plan Policy DM18 (retention of employment sites). Accordingly, Cabinet agreed this policy, with the inclusion of Eclipse Park, for incorporation into the Regulation 19 version of the Plan when it considered the Development Management policies at its meeting on 14th January 2015.
- 4.26 Policy DM18 sets out the considerations that would be applied if a mixed use scheme incorporating some non B-class elements was proposed within one of the identified Economic Development Areas, such as Eclipse Park. Criterion 4 of the policy indicates that such a proposal may be exceptionally permitted if this would help to demonstrably regenerate the site to better meet modern business needs and would secure the same or improved levels of employment. In this respect the policy provides for an appropriate degree of flexibility, as an exception, as sought by the site's owners.

### Springfield, Maidstone

- 4.27 Representations have been received that the Springfield site should be allocated for mixed use under Policy RMX1 rather than for 100% housing.
- 4.28 Springfield can deliver a significant amount of housing on an urban brownfield site and thereby make a significant contribution towards the challenging 'objectively assessed need' for new homes (Policy H1). A revised yield of 500 dwellings was agreed by Cabinet for inclusion in the Regulation 19 Plan on 2nd February 2015. A recent application for a supermarket, supporting retail and a doctors' surgery was refused permission in May 2014 (MA/13/2099) based on concerns about the impact on the town centre trade, amongst others. Faced with alternative ways to meet the borough employment land needs, which is a matter for decision at the August meeting of this Committee, it is not proposed to further change the allocation policy for this site.

### Haynes, Ashford Road, Maidstone

- 4.29 Representations were received stating that the allocations in Policy RMX1 do not identify sufficient land to accommodate Maidstone's identified need for retail floorspace. It is argued that a further site should be identified for convenience needs and the Haynes site on Ashford Road, Maidstone could contribute to 5,000sqm retail needs in the short to medium term plus up to 150 dwellings. Policy H1(12) of emerging Plan allocates the Haynes site for some 200 homes (reduced from 250 homes at Cabinet in February 2015). The landowners have stated that 100% residential development is not deliverable on the grounds of viability.
- 4.30 In response, it is considered that the Haynes site can accommodate a significant amount of dwellings on an urban brownfield site to contribute towards the challenging objectively assessed need for new homes (Policy H1). The landowners have not submitted evidence which can be tested to evidence the assertion that 100% residential redevelopment of the site is unviable.
- 4.31 Further, Maidstone East/Sorting Office site (RMX1(2)) is allocated as the priority location to meet retail needs, be it convenience and/or comparison needs, in the short-medium term. Redevelopment of The Mall (Policy SP1) provides for longer term retail needs. Both these locations are sequentially preferable to the Haynes site which is an 'out of centre' site in retail planning terms. In addition, since the Regulation 18 Local Plan was prepared, the supply of consented retail floorspace has been boosted by the consent for between 3,500 and 4,180sqm (net) at Baltic Wharf.
- 4.32 The schedule of proposed changes to Policy RMX1 in Appendix II is recommended for approval for incorporation in the next full draft of the Local Plan (Regulation 19).

---

## **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 This report sets out the results of the Regulation 18 consultation as it applies to Policy RMX1. The policy, as amended, will be included in the Regulation 19 version of the draft Local Plan which is scheduled for further public consultation early in 2016.
- 5.2 A Consultation Statement, explaining how the consultation stages have helped to develop the Plan is required to support the Plan when it reaches submission stage (Regulation 22).

---

## 6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The policy, as amended, will be included in the Regulation 19 version of the draft Local Plan which is scheduled for further public consultation early in 2016.

---

## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue  | Implications   | Sign-off  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>        | The adoption of the Local Plan will assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.  | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development      |
| <b>Risk Management</b>                       |  | [Head of Service or Manager]                    |
| <b>Financial</b>                             | The development of the Local Plan has been fully funded as part of the council's revenue budget. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Ensuring the Local Plan is based on sound evidence will minimise the likelihood of avoidable costs being incurred. | Zena Cook, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team   |
| <b>Staffing</b>                              |  | [Head of Service]                               |
| <b>Legal</b>                                 | The Council is required to take account of any representations made to them in the preparation of its Local Plan (Reg 18(3) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)_(England) Regulations 2012)  | Mid Kent Legal Services, Team Leader (Planning) |
| <b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>      |  | [Policy & Information Manager]                  |
| <b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b> | The Local Plan is fundamentally concerned with delivering sustainable development objectives.  | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning &                  |



|                         |  |   |
|-------------------------|--|---|
|                         |  | Development                             |
| <b>Community Safety</b> |  | [Head of Service or Manager]            |
| <b>Human Rights Act</b> |  | [Head of Service or Manager]            |
| <b>Procurement</b>      |  | [Head of Service & Section 151 Officer] |
| <b>Asset Management</b> |  | [Head of Service & Manager]             |

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: schedule of issues and responses for Policy RMX1
- Appendix II: schedule of detailed changes to Policy RMX1

---

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

## APPENDIX I

### Schedule of issues and responses for Policy RMX1

| Policy Number<br>RMX1   | General objections and representations |  |                 |
|---|--|--|-----------------|
| Summary of issues   |  | Officer Response   | Proposed change |
| Character Area Assessments should be prepared prior to accepting planning applications for large developments (parish council)  |  | The council cannot refuse to accept and consider a valid planning application. Policy DM4 provides clear guidance on design matters including the need to respond to local character. A development's response to the local character should be explained in the Design & Access Statement submitted with the application. | No change.      |
| Support (resident)  |  | Support welcomed   | No change       |
| The policy should distinguish between in and out of centre retail sites. For out of centre sites the policy should require no impact on town centre sites' viability and deliverability and restrictions on overall floorspace, goods, uses, size/number of units (landowner) . |  | Policy RMX1(1) for Newnham Court , which is an out of centre site, already sets out the type of criteria which are sought by the respondent.   | No change       |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1  | Site omissions  |                 |  |
|--|---|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response  | Proposed change |  |
| <p>RMX1 and H1(12) The allocations in Policy RMX1 do not identify sufficient land to accommodate Maidstone's identified need for retail floorspace. A further site should be identified for convenience needs and the Haynes site could contribute to 5000sqm retail needs in the short to medium term plus up to 150 dwellings. 100% residential development under policy H1(12) is not deliverable on the grounds of viability. (landowner).</p> | <p>The Haynes site can deliver a significant amount of housing on an urban brownfield site to contribute towards the challenging objectively assessed need for new homes (Policy H1). The landowners have not submitted evidence which can be tested, to evidence the assertion that 100% residential redevelopment of the site is unviable.</p> <p>Maidstone East/Sorting Office site (RMX1(2)) is allocated as the priority location to meet retail needs, be it convenience and/or comparison needs, in the short-medium term. Redevelopment of The Mall (Policy SP1) provides for longer term retail needs. Both these locations are sequentially preferable to the Haynes site which is an 'out of centre' site in retail planning terms. In addition, since the Regulation 18 Local Plan was prepared, the supply of consented retail floorspace has been boosted by the consent for between 3,500 and 4,180sqm</p> | No change.      |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1  | Site omissions |   |                 |
|--|----------------|---|-----------------|
| Summary of issues  |                | Officer Response  | Proposed change |
|  |                | (net) at Baltic Wharf.  |                 |
| The Mall redevelopment should be included in the policy (landowner)  |                | Redevelopment of The Mall is included in the Local Plan as a longer term redevelopment proposal as the site is more complex to deliver and the exact form and nature of development in this location will be the subject of further assessment and refinement in conjunction with the landowners. It is considered appropriate to identify this area as a broad location ahead of this more detailed work being done but this does not prevent redevelopment being delivered earlier in the plan period should the landowners decide to expedite it. The council is very willing to work constructively with the landowners to bring the site forward sooner. | No change.      |
| Eclipse Business Park should be included in Policy RMX1 (and excluded from DM18) to enable a flexible approach towards development (landowner) |                | This is an established, modern employment location which provides good quality office space with good levels of car parking close to the motorway junction. There are further extant  | No change.      |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1  | Site omissions   |                 |  |
|--|--|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response   | Proposed change |  |
|  | <p>consents for additional office development on the site. It is an important element on the borough's employment land portfolio. The site is recommended for retention as an employment site in the Qualitative Employment Sites Assessment (2014). Inclusion in Policy DM18 is considered appropriate to secure the future use of this site and this was agreed by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015.</p>  |                 |  |
| <p>Springfield should be identified as a mixed use site rather than for 100% housing. It can deliver a mix of residential retail and office uses and would be more appropriately allocated for such. (landowner)</p> | <p>The long term business occupants of both the Sorting Office and the Whatman site (at Springfield) are vacating their sites. This prompts the opportunity to consider the future use of these sites by the inclusion of specific site allocations in the draft plan. On balance Springfield can deliver a significant amount of housing on an urban brownfield site to contribute towards the challenging 'objectively assessed need' for new homes (Policy H1).</p> | No change.      |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1   | Site omissions  |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Summary of issues   | Officer Response  | Proposed change   |  |
| <p>Baltic Wharf, St Peters Street in Maidstone, should be allocated for a large food store as part of a mixed use development. (landowners)</p> | <p>Since the Reg 18 Local Plan consultation closed, an appeal on this site has been allowed, granting consent for a foodstore, A2, A3, B1 and D2 uses. The Inspector concluded that a foodstore use was the only primary use which would secure the future of the Grade II listed building, provided a retailer could be secured.</p> <p>The inspector highlighted what he regarded as an imbalance between the draft Plan's inclusion of a specific allocation for the Maidstone East/Sorting office site and the lack of a policy for the Baltic Wharf building, a substantial listed building in the town centre. He stated this was not necessarily an incorrect approach, but the net result was that he gave little weight to the draft Local Plan at the point he was considering the appeal.</p> <p>Clearly the site now has planning consent; there is no need to allocate the</p> | <p>Proposed change: add the following to the supporting text for Policy SP1 – Maidstone Town Centre:</p> <p><i><u>"The Baltic Wharf building in St Peters Street is a prominent and substantial Grade II listed building fronting the west bank of the River Medway. Whilst the more modern warehouses adjoining the building are occupied, the main building is currently underused and the future of this listed building would be best secured by putting it into active use. To this end, an appeal was allowed for a large foodstore and other ancillary uses (offices, restaurant &amp; cafe and assembly &amp; leisure uses) in July 2014. Should the consented scheme not come forward, the Council will consider positively alternative schemes that achieve the retention and restoration of the listed building. Appropriate uses would include housing, offices, leisure uses, cafes and restaurants. "</u></i></p> |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1 | Site omissions |   |                 |
|-----------------------|----------------|---|-----------------|
| Summary of issues     |                | Officer Response  | Proposed change |
|                       |                | <p>site for the uses for which it has permission. Further, whilst other uses such as residential would be appropriate for the building, an allocation policy citing it as an alternative main use would not be deliverable based on the viability information so recently tested at the appeal.</p> <p>That said, there is merit in making reference to the site in the Local Plan as a substantial and underused listed building in the town centre, should the position on viability change over the lifetime of the Plan. It is recommended that the supporting text to Policy SP1 be amended accordingly.</p> |                 |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1) | Site Name: Newnham Park |                  |                 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Summary of issues        |                         | Officer Response | Proposed change |
|                          |                         |                  |                 |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1)   | Site Name: Newnham Park  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response   | Proposed change   |  |
| <p>Visual/landscape impact and design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Object to any buildings over 2 storeys (resident)</li> <li>• Object to over development of the site (residents)</li> <li>• Site forms part of the foreground to the AONB which should be protected. Development will damage Horish Wood (Member)</li> <li>• Object to loss of countryside (resident)</li> <li>• Amend criterion 5(ii) to read “Where possible, the retention and enhancement of existing planting. Where existing planting cannot be retained, appropriate mitigation should be provided.” (landowner)</li> <li>• Replace the last sentence of criterion 7 with “ the design of development should take account of and be sensitive to the local landscape” (landowner)</li> </ul> | <p>Regarding building heights, the policy states that two storeys is a maximum across the site with the clear exception of two specified locations where taller buildings could be delivered without undue landscape impact as assessed through the approved outline planning application for the Maidstone Medical Campus (13/1163)</p> <p>Regarding the concern about potential over-development of the site, the policy specifically seeks to limit the amount of additional development across the site and in respect of the medical campus this has been achieved through the granting of an outline consent (13/1163) which specifies the total additional floorspace which will be delivered (98,000sqm). The policy also clearly requires extensive structural and internal landscaping and landscape buffers to help mitigate the visual impact of development. The redevelopment of Newnham Court shopping village is limited to only a</p> | <p>Proposed change:<br/>Amend criterion 5(ii) through the addition of a second sentence to read; “the retention and enhancement of existing planting. <u>Where the loss of selected existing planting is unavoidable, appropriate compensatory planting must be provided</u>”</p> |  |



| <b>Policy Number<br/>RMX1(1)</b> | <b>Site Name: Newnham Park</b> |  |                        |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| <b>Summary of issues</b>         |                                | <b>Officer Response</b>  | <b>Proposed change</b> |
|                                  |                                | <p>marginal increase on the existing development footprint.</p> <p>Regarding the concern about protection of the AONB foreground, there is already significant existing development in the vicinity of Junction 7, and further development permitted at both Eclipse Park and Maidstone Medical Campus, which impacts to some extent on views towards the AONB. In this context of existing and permitted development, Policy RMX1(1) seeks to mitigate impacts on the setting of the AONB through, for example, explicit landscaping requirements and the control of building heights and siting and lighting. The policy specifically requires a landscape buffer to Horish Wood Local Nature Reserve.</p> <p>Regarding the loss of the countryside, some greenfield loss will be required to accommodate growth needs over the timescale of the Local Plan. Junction 7 is a location where there is already</p> |                        |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1)  | Site Name: Newnham Park |   |   |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|
| Summary of issues   |                         | Officer Response  | Proposed change   |
|   |                         | <p>significant, existing development and where the principle of further development is already established through planning consents.</p> <p>Regarding criterion 5(ii), it is accepted that this criterion could be improved by confirming what measures would be required if the loss of existing planting is demonstrably unavoidable.</p> <p>Regarding criterion 7, as drafted the criterion gives clear direction to developers that conventional retail warehouse-style development would be inappropriate in this location. The respondent's proposed criterion does not give this specificity.</p> |   |
| <p>Transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If development is combined with others in the locality, it should be able to support sustainable transport (infrastructure provider)</li> <li>Concern about highway impacts (congestion) including on</li> </ul> |                         | <p>Regarding sustainable transport measures, comment noted.</p> <p>Regarding highway impacts, the transport measures in the policy have been agreed with KCC Highways as highway authority. Further, the highway measures</p>   | <p>Amend criterion 14 to read "submission of a Travel Plan, <u>to include a car park management plan</u>, to be approved by the Borough Council "</p> |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1)   | Site Name: Newnham Park  |                 |  |
|--|--|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response   | Proposed change |  |
| <p>A249 and strategic highway junctions, and impact on car parking (Member; residents; Swale BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of transport requirements in the policy may not be appropriate for the scale of retail redevelopment proposed in the policy. The detailed requirements listed were not all applied to the approved medical campus scheme. The policy should state that a TA will be required and mitigation shown necessary carried out. (landowner)</li> </ul> | <p>associated with the medical campus have been confirmed through the determination of the outline application (MA/13/1163). There was no highway objection to the Land Securities proposal for the redevelopment of Newnham Court shopping village for which permission was refused (MA/13/1931), notwithstanding that the floorspace of that scheme was significantly greater than Policy RMX1(1) permits. In view of the demand for car parking that the site will generate, the requirement for a car parking management plan should be added as a development requirement.</p> <p>For clarity, the policy specifies the list of highways improvements expected to be required . The policy is also clear that a Transport Assessment will be required which will be used to confirm the detailed extent of measures to be delivered .</p> |                 |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1)   | Site Name: Newnham Park   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response  | Proposed change  |  |
| <p>Newnham Court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased retail capacity, in conjunction with Next, will be to the detriment of the town centre (Member; residents). There has been no retail impact analysis on Sittingbourne town centre (Swale BC). Site does not pass the sequential test (Member). This out of town retail site should not be allocated in the Local Plan (landowner). Development will result in the creation of a free standing out of centre retail park which will compete with the town centre. Other sites such as Baltic Wharf are sequentially preferable (developer). Capacity for additional retail floorspace should be allocated at Newnham Court to help accommodate predicted retail capacity and resist leakage in the shorter term (developer). The Land Securities scheme will not cause significant harm to the town centre (developer). There are no other sequentially preferable sites (developer).</li> <li>The extent of existing retail floorspace on the site has not been justified (developer) The existing extent of A1 floorspace is 22,388sqm not 14,300sqm (developer)</li> <li>Redevelopment is not feasible on the existing footprint whilst maintaining continuity of trade without which the development will not happen. The allocation boundaries</li> </ul> | <p>Regarding town centre impacts, Newnham Court is an existing, established retail destination. The Policy provides for the re-provision of the existing floorspace with a modest amount of additional floorspace. The policy specifies that a retail impact assessment will be required to provide evidence of the development's impact on town centre trade. In terms of the analysis of the policy's impact on Sittingbourne town centre, it is of note that Swale BC did not raise an objection to the much larger, Land Securities retail proposal on this site (MA/13/1931). For clarity however, criterion 8 of the policy could be amended to refer to impacts on town and local centres in the plural.</p> <p>The Local Plan also identifies sequentially preferable locations for new and improved retail in and at the edge of the town centre (The Mall; Maidstone East &amp; the Sorting Office). The Baltic Wharf site now has permission for a foodstore (up</p> | <p>Amend criterion 8 to read “ submission of a retail impact assessment which clearly demonstrates that the retail development has no significant adverse impact on the town <u>and local</u> centres_ “</p> |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1)  | Site Name: Newnham Park   |                 |  |
|---|---|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues   | Officer Response  | Proposed change |  |
| <p>should reflect that submitted in Land Securities application. (landowner)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redevelopment will not be viable or deliverable with the restriction of additional floorspace to 700sqm. The figure is not justified by evidence (landowner).</li> <li>• The exclusion of all non-A1 uses is unnecessarily restrictive. The test should be demonstration of no harm to the town centre (landowner)</li> <li>• The blanket restriction on goods in the policy should be removed (landowner)</li> <li>• The policy should not allow for food retail as there are sequentially preferable sites (Haynes). This restriction should be explicit in the wording of the policy. (landowner)</li> </ul> | <p>to 4,180sqm). In refusing the Land Securities' application, the Council concluded that the proposal would have significant adverse impacts on town centre trade.</p> <p>Regarding the existing extent of A1 retail floorspace, the Council considers that some 14,300sqm on the Newnham Court site is in established retail use. This includes covered and uncovered permanent sales and display areas and excludes areas used for the temporary display of goods.</p> <p>The Council would aim to enable continuity of trade through its consideration of applications for temporary buildings to be used during construction.</p> <p>Regarding the additional floorspace, a modest amount of additional floorspace is provided for in the policy to help enable redevelopment. In addition a</p> |                 |  |

| <b>Policy Number</b><br>RMX1(1) | <b>Site Name: Newnham Park</b> |  |                        |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| <b>Summary of issues</b>        |                                | <b>Officer Response</b>  | <b>Proposed change</b> |
|                                 |                                | <p>redevelopment scheme would enable the existing permitted retail floorspace to be set out in a more efficient way, in footplates better suited to modern retailers' needs.</p> <p>Regarding the restriction of non A1 uses, the town centre must be protected as the key shopping destination and this role is significantly enhanced by its variety of supporting uses such as cafes and restaurants. It is important that the role of Newnham Court does not expand to directly compete with the town centre necessitating control over the nature of supporting uses on the site.</p> <p>Regarding the goods restriction, fashion and clothing are key drivers of trade in the town centre. The goods restriction as proposed helps to secure the future of the town centre as the key retail destination in the borough. An element of convenience (food) retailing may be appropriate subject to the sequential and</p> |                        |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1)   | Site Name: Newnham Park |  |                 |
|--|-------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Summary of issues  |                         | Officer Response   | Proposed change |
|  |                         | impact tests being met.  |                 |
| Support (business representative; resident; developer)   |                         | Support welcomed.  | No change.      |
| Medical hub: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question labour supply implications of the Maidstone Medical hub and the consequent economic and transport implications for Swale BC (SBC).</li> <li>• Concern that the delivery of highly paid jobs is not guaranteed (resident)</li> </ul> |                         | Regarding the labour supply and transport implications of medical hub for Swale BC, this development now has outline consent (13/1163). SBC did not object to the outline application for the medical campus. KCC Highways did and do not object to the proposals.<br><br>Regarding the delivery of high quality jobs, the allocation of the site, and the granting of outline consent, demonstrably increases the prospect of the proposal, and the associated jobs, being delivered. | No change.      |
| Additional development criterion to be met: 'Utility infrastructure: Existing underground sewers on site are protected, or appropriate arrangements are made for their diversion' (Southern Water).  |                         | This is a detailed matter which, whilst supported, will be addressed through the detailed design of a scheme at planning application stage   | No change.      |
| Requirement for a development brief is unreasonable as the majority  |                         | Regarding the need for a development brief, this is still considered beneficial,   | No change.      |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(1)             | Site Name: Newnham Park   |                 |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues                    | Officer Response  | Proposed change |  |
| of the site has consent. (landowner) | particularly in the absence of an approved consent at Newham Court and detailed approval of the medical campus development. |                 |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(2)  | Site Name: Maidstone East & Sorting Office  |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Summary of issues   | Officer Response  | Proposed change   |  |
| <p>Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern about the visual impact of high density residential blocks (Member; residents). Views across the site should be protected in full rather than as stated in criterion (2) (resident)</li> <li>Concern about loss of trees on Sandling Road (Member; residents)</li> <li>Development should retain semi-natural habitat of the quarry slopes (Member; residents)</li> </ul> | Regarding the visual impact of development, the policy includes safeguards to help retain views of Sessions House from the west. This is a site of significant size, close to the heart of the town, occupied and surrounded by buildings of significant scale and height (Brenchley House, Sessions House, Invicta House, Sorting Office building). With this strong urban context, it is considered that the site is appropriate for development of the significant scale and density proposed, provided the design and layout considerations in the policy are adhered | <p>Amend criterion 9 to read “the incorporation of landscaped elements within the overall scheme design including the retention of existing landscape features where possible. Where the loss of existing landscape features is unavoidable, appropriate compensatory planting must be provided”</p> <p>Add a new criterion to read “development will be subject to the results and recommendations of a phase 1 ecological survey”</p> |  |



| <b>Policy Number<br/>RMX1(2)</b>   | <b>Site Name: Maidstone East &amp; Sorting Office</b> |   |                        |
|--|---|---|------------------------|
| <b>Summary of issues</b>   |   | <b>Officer Response</b>   | <b>Proposed change</b> |
|  |   | <p>to.</p> <p>Regarding the potential loss of trees, the policy requires the retention of landscape features where possible. It is considered that the integration of the development with the street scene will be best achieved by the creation of an 'active frontage' to Sandling Road. This could comprise features such as entrances and shop windows. To achieve this key benefit, some trees will be lost. In response it is recommended that the policy is amended to include a requirement for compensatory planting.</p> <p>Regarding habitat retention, it is recommended that a further criterion is added requiring an ecological survey of the site.</p> |                        |
| Concern about traffic generation and local air pollution levels (Members; residents) |   | Regarding traffic generation, this is a town centre site which by virtue of its existing/most recent use is an established traffic generator. KCC Highways has been   | No change.             |

| <b>Policy Number<br/>RMX1(2)</b>  | <b>Site Name: Maidstone East &amp; Sorting Office</b> |   |                        |
|---|---|---|------------------------|
| <b>Summary of issues</b>  |   | <b>Officer Response</b>   | <b>Proposed change</b> |
|   |   | party to the drafting of the policy for the site and has not raised any objection to the allocation of the site and the uses proposed. As a town centre site, the site has good levels of accessibility by public transport, most notably by train, and good direct pedestrian connections from the town centre. With these accessibility characteristics the potential to access the site by sustainable modes is significant with consequent benefits for traffic generation and air quality impacts. |                        |
| Concern about impact on school and medical facilities (Member; residents) |   | Regarding the impact on school and medical facilities, the cumulative impact of the totality of the development proposed in the draft Local Plan on services and infrastructure is assessed as part of the refinement of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The relevant infrastructure providers have not objected to the allocation of this site in the Local Plan.  | No change              |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(2)  | Site Name: Maidstone East & Sorting Office  |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Summary of issues   | Officer Response  | Proposed change   |  |
| <p>Uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be 100% housing or housing-led (resident)</li> <li>• Site should be used for employment and transport purposes (Members)</li> <li>• Housing should be substituted with a multi storey car park for which there is a greater need (resident) .</li> <li>• Question that there is no clear evidence of the deliverability of retail on this site. Site is unlikely to be attractive for prime retail development. Site has been undeliverable for 10 years which casts doubt on the viable delivery of the site in the short-medium term. A residential led scheme with some office component, transport interchange and ancillary retail would be more deliverable. (agent; landowner)</li> <li>• Site should be prioritised for comparison goods retailing in the light of the retail capacity study findings (developer).</li> <li>• Query whether the development proposed is deliverable when planning, parking and railway operational requirements are taken into account. Also query whether the site is available (developer).</li> <li>• Site not large enough to accommodate the entire identified</li> </ul> | <p>The site is the best, most significant opportunity to provide for the evidenced demand for additional retail floorspace on a site which is close to and accessible from the heart of the town centre. Redevelopment of the site as proposed will help to sustain the town centre as an important shopping destination. The current application for a mixed retail development, commuter car parking and railway station improvements (MA/14/500483/OUT) provides evidence of the site's availability and deliverability. The policy as drafted does not require specific proportions of comparison and/or convenience retail floorspace to offer a degree of flexibility to meet market demands. Recognising that retail is the priority use, the site can accommodate some housing either in a separate block or on upper floors. It may be that the site could also accommodate an element of office floorspace as a supporting use, provided that this does</p> | <p>Add the following text to paragraph 7.11 "This edge of centre site is considered suitable for a combination of comparison and convenience retailing. <u><i>This could include a large foodstore.</i></u></p> <p>Add the following text to the end of paragraph 7.12: "<u><i>Additionally a subsidiary element of office development would be acceptable provided this does not compromise the retail requirements for the site expressed in Policy RMX1(2).</i></u>"</p> |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(2)  | Site Name: Maidstone East & Sorting Office   |                 |  |
|---|--|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues   | Officer Response   | Proposed change |  |
| <p>need for convenience goods. The likely format would meet half the identified need which would compromise the ability to meet comparison needs and lead to pressure for out of town development (landowner).</p> <p>Additionally, the Inspector for the Baltic Wharf Inquiry was critical that the draft Local Plan is not explicit that the Maidstone East/Sorting Office site should include a large foodstore.</p> | <p>not undermine the achievement of retail floorspace on the site, and it is suggested that the supporting text be amended accordingly. Subject to detailed agreement, the commuter car parking which is provided as part of the redevelopment may also be available for public use.</p> <p>The current planning application provides for a significant scale foodstore (8,296sqm GIA) and comparison retail (4,364sqm GIA). In addition, since the Reg 18 Local Plan was prepared, the supply of consented floorspace has been boosted by the consent for between 3,500 and 4,180sqm (net) at Baltic Wharf. Regarding the Baltic Wharf Inquiry Inspector's comments, the draft policy RMX1(2) states that the site is allocated for up to 10,000sqm of comparison and convenience retailing. This was drafted in this way to allow for some flexibility in the exact balance of uses on the site in response to market changes. This is still</p> |                 |  |

| <b>Policy Number<br/>RMX1(2)</b>  | <b>Site Name: Maidstone East &amp; Sorting Office</b> |   |                        |
|---|---|---|------------------------|
| <b>Summary of issues</b>  |   | <b>Officer Response</b>   | <b>Proposed change</b> |
|   |   | considered a reasonable approach. The nature of retail needs is changing, evidenced recently by the main supermarket operators' focus on smaller convenience stores and away from the largest scale superstores. To respond to the Inspector's concern and to clarify that the site would be suitable for a foodstore, it is recommended that paragraph 7.11 of the supporting text be amended accordingly. |                        |
| Support redevelopment (resident; landowner)   |   | Support welcomed.   | No change.             |
| Poor train service needs to be addressed prior to any development (resident)  |   | The Council will continue to use its influence to secure improved services for the borough. A pre-requisite for further improved services before the development of this site would not comply with the tests in the NPPF (paragraph 204).  | No change.             |
| Policy should allow for a phased approach to development to allow for the residential redevelopment of land south of the station after the commuter car parking has been re-provided as part of the |   | The policy as drafted does not preclude this approach.  | No change              |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(2)  | Site Name: Maidstone East & Sorting Office   |                 |  |
|---|--|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues   | Officer Response   | Proposed change |  |
| redevelopment of the land north of the railway (developer)  |  |                 |  |
| Criterion 18: improvements to Sessions Square to be delivered through contributions (developer)   | The mechanism to deliver public realm improvements to Sessions Square is a matter which is being resolved through the current planning application | No change       |  |
| Policy should allow for noise assessment and sustainable drainage strategy information to be submitted with subsequent detailed applications.(developer)  | The policy does not preclude these being prepared at the detailed application stage  | No change.      |  |
| Additional development criterion to be met: 'Utility infrastructure: Existing underground sewers on site are protected, or appropriate arrangements are made for their diversion' (Southern Water). | This is a detailed matter which, whilst supported, will be addressed through the detailed design of a scheme at planning application stage         | No change       |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(3)   | Site Name: King Street, Maidstone  |                 |  |
|--|--|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response   | Proposed change |  |
| <p>Uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question whether the site can accommodate the scale of development proposed when car parking requirements are</li> </ul> | The current approved application on the eastern part of the site for a sheltered housing scheme (MA/14/505005) provides evidence of the site viability for | No change.      |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(3)  | Site Name: King Street, Maidstone |   |                 |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Summary of issues   |                                   | Officer Response  | Proposed change |
| <p>taken into account. It is an unviable location for a foodstore .<br/>The combined existing values of the site exceeds residential and retail uses (developer)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site should be allocated for a medical centre (Member)</li> </ul> |                                   | residential redevelopment. The remaining part of the site is in the Council's control to bring forward for mixed or retail redevelopment. Car parking requirements should take account of the site's town centre location, with good levels of accessibility to public transport. The NHS Property team is not advocating additional medical facilities in the town centre. |                 |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(4)   | Site Name: Clockhouse Farm, Heath Road, Coxheath |  |                      |
|--|--|--|----------------------|
| Summary of issues  |  | Officer Response   | Proposed change      |
| General concern about the lack of infrastructure in Coxheath (residents) |  | Regarding infrastructure in Coxheath, the cumulative impact of the totality of the development proposed in the draft Local Plan on services and infrastructure is being assessed as part of the refinement of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The relevant infrastructure providers have | No change to RMX1(4) |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(4)   | Site Name: Clockhouse Farm, Heath Road, Coxheath |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Summary of issues  |  | Officer Response  | Proposed change   |
|  |  | not objected to the allocation of this site.  |   |
| Concern about the highway impacts of the development (residents)   |  | KCC Highways has raised no objections to the allocation of this site as proposed.   | No change.  |
| Object to commercial element. Industrial units are not needed/available elsewhere. Proposals do not comply with Policy DM7. Development should be 100% housing (residents). Coxheath is a Larger Village, not an RSC, so the employment floorspace in this allocation should be removed. Access to the strategic road network is limited (Parish Council). |  | <p>This site is allocated for 40 homes and 7,700sqm of office/light industrial floorspace (B1) in the draft Local Plan (Regulation 18).</p> <p>Subsequently, a planning application for 72 dwellings, up to 43 extra care apartments and land for open space/community use (14/0566) was approved by Planning Committee on 5th February 2015 subject to the completion of a legal agreement.</p> <p>In view of this updated position, it is recommended that Clockhouse Farm be omitted as a mixed use allocation from Policy RMX1.</p> | Amend Policy RMX1 to omit site (4) Clockhouse Farm, heath Road, Coxheath. |
| Clock House is of historical and architectural interest (Parish Council)   |  | Criterion 6 of the policy requires the strengthening of the southern hedgerow to separate development from the farm   | No change   |



|   |   |                        |  |
|---|---|------------------------|--|
| <b>Policy Number<br/>RMX1(4)</b>  | <b>Site Name: Clockhouse Farm, Heath Road, Coxheath</b>   |                        |  |
| <b>Summary of issues</b>  | <b>Officer Response</b>   | <b>Proposed change</b> |  |
|   | complex. Further, in view of the decision to grant planning permission for the application 14/0566, it is recommended that this site be omitted from Policy RMX1.   |                        |  |
| Object to loss of agricultural land (residents; Parish Council)                 | This land has been assessed as of Grade 3a quality. The loss of this land from agricultural production is not considered to outweigh the overall benefits of the proposed development. Further, in view of the decision to grant planning permission for the application 14/0566, it is recommended that this site be omitted from Policy RMX1. | No change.             |  |
| Concern that two storey accommodation is impractical for the elderly (resident) | Development will be designed to be fit for purpose for example through the installation of lifts. Further, in view of the decision to grant planning permission for the application 14/0566, it is recommended that this site be omitted from Policy RMX1.  | No change.             |  |
| Question deliverability of a medical centre (resident)                          | Coxheath Parish Council has stated that it  | No change.             |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(4)   | Site Name: Clockhouse Farm, Heath Road, Coxheath  |                 |  |
|--|---|-----------------|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response  | Proposed change |  |
|  | is in direct discussions with the existing health centre about this site. Further, in view of the decision to grant planning permission for the application 14/0566, it is recommended that this site be omitted from Policy RMX1.  |                 |  |
| Site falls within the Special Landscape Area (resident)  | This site immediately adjoins the built up area of Coxheath. The policy requires the strengthening of existing hedgerow boundaries to help mitigate the landscape impact of development. The emerging Landscape Capacity Study (2015) identifies that this site has moderate capacity for development. Further, in view of the decision to grant planning permission for the application 14/0566, it is recommended that this site be omitted from Policy RMX1. | No change       |  |
| Additional development criterion to be met: 'Utility infrastructure: A connection is provided to the local sewerage system at the nearest point of adequate capacity, as advised by Southern Water' (Southern Water) | This is a detailed matter which, whilst supported, will be addressed through the detailed design of a scheme at planning application stage. Further, in view of the decision to grant planning permission for   | No change.      |  |

|                                  |   |  |                        |
|----------------------------------|---|--|------------------------|
| <b>Policy Number<br/>RMX1(4)</b> | <b>Site Name: Clockhouse Farm, Heath Road, Coxheath</b> |  |                        |
| <b>Summary of issues</b>         |   | <b>Officer Response</b>  | <b>Proposed change</b> |
|                                  |   | the application 14/0566, it is recommended that this site be omitted from Policy RMX1. |                        |

|  |  |   |                        |
|--|--|---|------------------------|
| <b>Policy Number<br/>RMX1(5)</b>   | <b>Site Name: Former Syngenta Works, Yalding</b> |   |                        |
| <b>Summary of issues</b>   |  | <b>Officer Response</b>   | <b>Proposed change</b> |
| <p>Uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site is unsuitable for commercial use because of restricted highway access for HGVs (level crossing and narrow bridge) (residents)</li> <li>consider for employment related uses only (agent; resident; member)</li> </ul> |  | <p>This is a brownfield site which was last in industrial/employment use. The site is less than a mile from A228 which itself links directly to M20 at J4. KCC Highways has not objected to the commercial use of the site.</p> <p>Subject to the resolution of flooding issues, this site is considered suitable for a mix of residential and commercial uses. Outline consent has previously been granted for 19 houses on the adjoining site, adjacent to Yalding Station. Including residential development as part of the mix of uses will benefit the development</p> | No change              |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(5)   | Site Name: Former Syngenta Works, Yalding   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| Summary of issues  | Officer Response  | Proposed change   |  |
|  | viability of this brownfield site.  |   |  |
| <p>Flooding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns about flooding and scope for mitigation (resident; agent; parish council). Concern that measures may have adverse implications for other parts of the village (residents).</li> <li>Object to 200 dwellings at The Syngenta site at Yalding. The site is mostly within an area at high risk to flooding (Flood Zone 3), with a very small part at medium flood risk (Flood Zone 2). We were not completely satisfied with the conclusions of a previous Flood Risk Assessment and it has been subject to flooding on several occasions in the past including October 2000 and December 2013, when practically the entire site was inundated with floodwater. It is difficult to envisage how the site can be made safe against flooding without significantly increasing the risk elsewhere and so doubt whether a proposed allocation for residential development could pass either the Sequential or the Exception Test. Given the recent flood history we would object to any form of residential development at this site. Reference is made to a “sustainable drainage approach to flood mitigation”. While we would welcome the use of sustainable drainage from the site, it should not be confused</li> </ul> | <p>Following the floods of December 2013, the Environment Agency will publish its revised flood modelling maps by October 2015. The site’s developers can be expected to want to agree a flood mitigation approach in response to the EA’s concerns and the latest published information. Pending this further work, it is proposed that the site remain as a mixed use allocation in the Local Plan.</p> | <p>No change at this stage. The position on this site will be monitored as new information from the EA and the site’s developers becomes available.</p> |  |

| Policy Number<br>RMX1(5)  | Site Name: Former Syngenta Works, Yalding |   |                 |
|---|---|---|-----------------|
| Summary of issues   |   | Officer Response  | Proposed change |
| as a technique for reducing flood risk to the site, but should be viewed as a technique to reduce flood risk downstream, improve water quality of the receiving watercourse and possibly enhance the local environment (Environment Agency) . |   |   |                 |
| Unsuitable location in terms of public transport (infrastructure provider)  |   | The site is very well related to Yalding station. The policy requires additional improvements to public transport serving the site.   | No change       |
| Concern about increased congestion in Yalding (resident)  |   | KCC Highways has not objected to the proposed allocation of this site.  | No change.      |
| Site has poor walking connections with the village (resident)   |   | The policy requires improved pedestrian connections to Yalding.   | No change.      |
| Concern about the capacity of local services and facilities for a development of this scale. (residents)  |   | Infrastructure providers have been consulted as part of the development of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This has not revealed any 'showstoppers' to the development proposed at Yalding. | No change.      |
| Additional development criteria to be met: 'Utility infrastructure: A connection is provided to the local sewerage system at the nearest point of adequate capacity, as advised by Southern Water' and  |   | This is a detailed matter which, whilst supported, will be addressed through the detailed design of a scheme at planning  | No change.      |

|  |  |                         |                        |
|--|--|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Policy Number</b><br>RMX1(5)  | <b>Site Name: Former Syngenta Works, Yalding</b> |                         |                        |
| <b>Summary of issues</b>   |  | <b>Officer Response</b> | <b>Proposed change</b> |
| 'Existing underground sewers on site are protected, or appropriate arrangements are made for their diversion' (Southern Water) |  | application stage       |                        |

## Appendix II – schedule of detailed changes to PolicyRMX1

| Site reference | Site name & address                       | Change  | Reason  |
|----------------|---|---|---|
| RMX1(1)        | Newnham Park, Bearsted Road, Maidstone    | Proposed change:<br>Amend criterion 5(ii) though the addition of a second sentence to read; “the retention and enhancement of existing planting. <u>Where the loss of selected existing planting is unavoidable, appropriate compensatory planting must be provided</u> ”                             | To clarify the Council’s requirements for replacement landscaping.  |
| RMX1(1)        | Newnham Park, Bearsted Road, Maidstone    | Amend criterion 8 to read “ submission of a retail impact assessment which clearly demonstrates that the retail development has no significant adverse impact on the town <u>and local</u> centres “  | To clarify the requirements of the retail impact assessment   |
| RMX1(1)        | Newnham Park, Bearsted Road, Maidstone    | Amend criterion 14 to read “submission of a Travel Plan, <u>to include a car park management plan</u> , to be approved by the Borough Council “   | In view of the differentiated demand for car parking that the separate uses across the site will generate, a car parking management plan is required. |
| RMX1(2)        | Maidstone East & Maidstone sorting office | Amend criterion 9 to read “the incorporation of landscaped elements within the overall scheme design including the retention of existing landscape features where possible. <u>Where the loss of existing landscape features is unavoidable, appropriate compensatory planting must be provided</u> ” | To clarify the Council’s requirements for replacement landscaping.  |
| RMX1(2)        | Maidstone East & Maidstone sorting office | Add a new criterion to read “ <u>development will be subject to the results and recommendations</u>   | To overcome an omission from the policy to ensure ecological value is assessed and responded to.  |

| Site reference | Site name & address                       | Change  | Reason  |
|----------------|---|---|---|
|                |   | <u>of a phase 1 ecological survey</u>   |   |
| RMX1(2)        | Maidstone East & Maidstone sorting office | Add the following text to paragraph 7.11 “This edge of centre site is considered suitable for a combination of comparison and convenience retailing. <u>This could include a large foodstore.</u>   | For the avoidance of doubt.   |
| RMX1(2)        | Maidstone East & Maidstone Sorting Office | Add the following text to the end of paragraph 7.12: <u>“Additionally a subsidiary element of office development would be acceptable provided this does not compromise the retail requirements for the site expressed in Policy RMX1(2).”</u>   | For clarification.  |
| RMX1(4)        | Clockhouse Farm, Coxheath                 | Delete site (4) Clockhouse Farm, Heath Road, Coxheath from Policy RMX1.   | To reflect the decision of Planning Committee to grant permission for residential, and extra care units and open space/community uses on this site (MA/14/0566) subject to the completion of a legal agreement. |
| -              | Baltic Wharf, St Peters Street, Maidstone | Proposed change: add the following to the supporting text for Policy SP1 – Maidstone Town Centre:<br><br><u>“The Baltic Wharf building in St Peters Street is a prominent and substantial Grade II listed building fronting the west bank of the River Medway. Whilst the more modern warehouses adjoining the building are occupied, the main building is currently underused and the future of this listed building would be best secured by putting it into active use. To this end, an appeal was allowed for a large foodstore and other</u> | To set the Council’s approach to this site should the extant consent for a foodstore not be implemented.  |



| Site reference | Site name & address | Change   | Reason |
|----------------|---------------------|--|--------|
|                |                     | <p><u>ancillary uses (offices , restaurant &amp; cafe and assembly &amp; leisure uses) in July 2014. Should the consented scheme not come forward, the Council will consider positively alternative schemes that achieve the retention and restoration of the listed building. Appropriate uses would include housing, offices, leisure uses, cafes and restaurants. “</u></p> |        |

# Agenda Item 17

## Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee

14 July 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting? **Yes**

## Reconsideration of previously rejected Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Draft and 2014 SHLAA Housing Sites

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Final Decision-Maker</b>             | Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transport Committee  |
| <b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b> | Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development                |
| <b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>   | Steve Clarke, Principal Planning Officer (Spatial Policy) |
| <b>Classification</b>                   | Non-exempt  |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                   | All   |

### **This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:**

- 1: The following re-assessed sites go forward to Regulation 19 Consultation as allocated housing sites but to include the revised site criteria attached at Appendix Two for site H1(10).  
H1(10) Land South of Sutton Road Langley with 10ha of natural/semi-natural open space.  
H1(31) Ham Lane Lenham  
H1(39) Ulcombe Road an Mill Bank Headcorn  
H1(40) Grigg Lane and Lenham Road Headcorn (part)  
H1(41) South of Grigg Lane Headcorn  
H1(42) Knaves Acre Headcorn
- 2 The following re-assessed sites go forward to Regulation 18 Consultation as potential housing site allocations  
H1(57) Former Astor of Hever School Farm Oakwood Road Maidstone  
H1(61) Land at Cross Keys Roundwell Bearsted with 2.3ha of natural/ semi-natural open space  
H1(64) Bell Farm North Harrietsham with 4.15ha of natural/semi-natural open space  
H1(65) Land at Lenham Road Headcorn  
H1(66) Land south of The Parsonage Goudhurst Road Marden  
H1(67) Land south of Marden Road Staplehurst  
H1(68) Land to the north of Henhurst Farm Staplehurst with 5.78ha of natural/semi-natural open space  
H1(69) Land at Lodge Road Staplehurst

- 3 The following sites go forward to Regulation 18 Consultation as newly considered potential housing site allocations  
Land at north of Heath Road (known as Older's Field), Coxheath with 2.34ha of natural/semi-natural open space.
- 4 The following site goes forward to Regulation 19 consultation as an allocated housing site.  
H1(12) Haynes Ashford Road Maidstone

**This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

| <b>Timetable</b>               |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b><i>Meeting</i></b>          | <b><i>Date</i></b>                         |
| Policy and Resources Committee | N/A  |
| Council                        | N/A  |
| Other Committee                | SPS&T Committee 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2015 |

# Reconsideration of previously rejected Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Draft and 2014 SHLAA Housing Sites

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At its meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and subsequently on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015 following a call-in of their earlier decisions, Cabinet made a series of decisions about housing sites included, or proposed to be included, in the draft emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan (the Local Plan). An outcome of this decision making was that the draft Local Plan would provide for 2,201 fewer dwellings than would be required to meet the objectively assessed need figure of 18,600 homes (2011-31) in full. Cabinet also resolved that it wished to consider a further report which would set out the implications of this position for the production of a sound Local Plan.
- 1.2 These implications were addressed in a report (Maidstone Borough Local Plan Housing Sites Update) considered at the meeting of this Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015.
- 1.3 This report has arisen from the resolution of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to adopt an amended version of 'Option E' of the 'Update Report'; which states:
  1. Additional sites considered and excluded from the Local Plan during the January/February/March 2015 cycle of Cabinet meetings be re-considered (the sites deleted from the Regulation 18 version of the Plan (7 sites and 1 part site) and the allocation of more of the additional sites (15) resulting from the 2014 call for sites). Sites put forward by Ward Members with community support in Neighbourhood Plans during the further call for sites process and were borderline rejections from the SHLAA to also be re-considered.
  2. Following sites are not to be re-considered:
    - H1 (25) Tongs Meadow, West Street, Harrietsham
    - H1 (60) Fant Farm, Maidstone
    - H1 (48) Heath Road, Boughton Monchelsea
- 1.4 The first section of this report therefore re-assesses the Regulation 18 sites that were recommended for deletion and the reasons given for these recommendations by Cabinet. Maps of the sites are attached at Appendix One.
- 1.5 The second section of the report re-assesses the sites originally recommended for allocation but not accepted by Cabinet together with the reasons given for non-allocation. Maps of the sites and the proposed policy criteria are attached at Appendix Three.
- 1.6 The final section re-assesses sites that were on-balance rejected from the SHLAA call for sites exercises that have been undertaken including sites that were considered acceptable by Parish Councils/Ward Members as well as

those which appear in neighbourhood plans. In this section, there is also some additional commentary on site H1 (12) Haynes, Ashford Road, Maidstone and H1(19) Bell Farm North Street Barming, following additional information that has come to light since the decision taken by Cabinet. Maps of the sites are attached at Appendix Four

- 1.7 It is recommended that Councillors reinstate the following sites into the draft Plan for Regulation 19 Consultation or in the case of newly allocated sites, be subject to Regulation 18 Consultation. In the case of Policy H1 (10) it is also recommended that Councillors approve the revised policy criteria included at Appendix 2.

| <u>Sites in Maidstone Borough Local Plan Reg. 18 Consultation Draft 2014</u> |   |              |
|--|---|--------------|
| Policy No.   | Location                                    | No. of units |
| H1 (10)  | Land south of Sutton Road, Langley          | 850          |
| H1 (31)  | Ham Lane, Lenham                            | 82           |
| H1 (39)  | Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank, Headcorn        | 240          |
| H1 (40)  | Grigg Lane and Lenham Road, Headcorn (part) | 80           |
| H1 (41)  | South of Grigg Lane, Headcorn               | 55           |
| H1 (42)  | Knaves Acre, Headcorn                       | 5            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   | <b>1312</b>  |
| <u>Sites proposed to be allocated</u>  |   |              |
| H1 (57)  | Former Astor of Hever School, Oakwood Rd.   | 60           |
| H1 (61)  | Land at Cross Keys, Roundwell, Bearsted     | 50           |
| H1 (64)  | Bell Farm North, East Street Harrietsham    | 80           |
| H1 (65)  | Land at Lenham Road Headcorn                | 50           |
| H1 (66)  | Land S of The Parsonage Marden              | 50           |
| H1 (67)  | Land S of Marden Road Staplehurst           | 100          |
| H1 (68)  | Land to the N of Henhurst Farm Staplehurst  | 60           |
| H1 (69)  | Land at Lodge Road Staplehurst              | 60           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   | <b>510</b>   |

- 1.8 Land at Older's Field, Coxheath, should also be subject to Regulation 18 Consultation as a potential allocated housing site for up to 55 units. Site H1(12), Haynes, Ashford Road, Maidstone should be confirmed to go forward to Regulation 19 Consultation with an indicative yield of 200 units.
- 1.9 Councillors are also recommended to agree the revised site plan and site criteria for the site at Bell Farm, North Street, Barming; (Policy H1(19)), that secure a minimum 5m set-back for development from the North Street frontage with a consequent extension of the site development area 5m further westwards.

## 2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015, and subsequently on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015, following a call-in of their earlier decisions, Cabinet made a series of decisions about housing sites included, or proposed to be included, in the draft emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan (the Local Plan). An outcome of this

decision making was that the draft Local Plan would provide for 2,201 fewer dwellings than would be required to meet the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) figure of 18,600 homes (2011-31) in full. Cabinet also resolved that it wished to consider a further report which would set out the implications of this position for the production of a sound Local Plan.

2.2 These implications were addressed in a report (Maidstone Borough Local Plan Housing Sites Update) considered at the meeting of this Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

2.3 This report has arisen from the resolution of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to adopt an amended 'Option E' of the 'Update Report'; which states:

1. Additional sites considered and excluded from the Local Plan during the January/February/March 2015 cycle of Cabinet meetings be re-considered (the sites deleted from the Regulation 18 version of the Plan (7 sites and 1 part site) and the allocation of more of the additional sites (15) resulting from the 2014 call for sites). Sites put forward by Ward Members with community support in Neighbourhood Plans during the further call for sites process and were borderline rejections from the SHLAA to also be re-considered.
2. Following sites are not to be re-considered:
  - H1 (25) Tongs Meadow, West Street, Harrietsham
  - H1 (60) Fant Farm, Maidstone
  - H1 (48) Heath Road, Boughton Monchelsea

2.4 Also at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Councillors agreed a revised Objectively Assessed Need figure of 18,560 dwellings between 2011 and 2031.

2.5 The council's housing land supply against objectively assessed need has been updated to reflect the latest information from the housing land survey at the snapshot date of 1 April 2015. It is important to note that where a residential site allocation (with Cabinet approval) has gained a planning permission by 31 March 2015, the dwellings have been moved from "allocations" to "extant permissions". This is to avoid double counting sites.

|   | <b>Dwellings</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|---|------------------|---------------|
| Objectively Assessed Need 2011 to 2031                |                  | 18,560        |
|   |                  |               |
| Housing land supply:                                  |                  |               |
| Dwellings completed between 01.04.11 to 31.03.15      | 2,339            |               |
| Extant planning permissions at 01.04.15               | 3,706            |               |
| Yield from Cabinet approved allocations at 01.04.15   | 6193             |               |
| Yield from Broad Locations (MBLP 2014 – Reg 18)       | 3,400            |               |
| Windfall contribution 9 years at 114 dwellings p.a.   | 1,026            |               |
| Total housing land supply                             | 16,664           | 16,664        |
|   |                  |               |
| <b>Unmet housing need (18,560 less 16,664)</b>        |                  | <b>1,896</b>  |
|   |                  |               |
| Yield from further allocations proposed in the report |                  | 1,877         |
|   |                  |               |

## Regulation 18 Sites

- 2.5 As can be seen from the details of the sites attached at Appendix One, Cabinet recommended that a total of eight sites be subject to a further Regulation 18 Consultation recommending their deletion from the Plan. The sites were as follows:

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| H1 (10) | Land south of Sutton Road, Langley            |
| H1 (25) | Land at Tong's Meadow West Street Harrietsham |
| H1 (31) | Ham Lane, Lenham                              |
| H1 (39) | Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank, Headcorn          |
| H1 (40) | Grigg Lane and Lenham Road, Headcorn (part)   |
| H1 (41) | South of Grigg Lane, Headcorn                 |
| H1 (42) | Knaves Acre, Headcorn                         |
| H1 (48) | Heath Road Boughton Monchelsea                |

- 2.6 Cabinet gave reasons for their decision on each site as follows

### H1 (10) Land south of Sutton Road

(as amended by Cabinet on 9 March 2015).

- (a) in the opinion of the Cabinet the eastern boundary of site H1(5) forms a natural boundary to the edge of the urban area of Maidstone;
- (b) there should be no further encroachment of residential development into the countryside which would result in the loss of green space and a leisure facility;
- (c) there would be an unacceptable impact on conditions in the surrounding area where the environmental and amenity consequences for the community are unacceptable now.

### H1 (25) Tongs Meadow West Street Harrietsham

(as agreed by Cabinet on 9 March 2015)

- (a) in view of the recent advice from Natural England (NE) that they would be unlikely to consider issuing an EPS (European Protected Species) Development License given the fact that the site is a receptor site for a previous development,

### H1 (31) Ham Lane Lenham

- (a) unacceptably adverse impact on the AONB and on the character of the village because it is peripheral to the settlement and beyond the open space occupied by Swadelands School playing field.

### H1 (39) Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank Headcorn.

### H1 (41) Land south of Grigg Lane Headcorn.

### H1 (42) Knaves Acre Headcorn

- (a) local infrastructure is insufficient, in particular for foul water sewerage, flood risk and highway congestion

### H1 (40) Land at Grigg Lane and Lenham Road Headcorn (part).

- (a) it has not been demonstrated to the community's satisfaction that current foul water problems can be resolved and these will be exacerbated by any further development in this part of Headcorn and the unacceptable cumulative impact for the community and highways. In addition of community concerns that suitable highways access arrangements cannot be achieved at this point in time.

#### H1 (48) Heath Road Boughton Monchelsea

(a) as the site access is not within the control of the promoter of the site, the site cannot be considered as deliverable.

2.7 The reasons given for the recommended deletion of each site have been reassessed in order to ascertain whether they are likely to be upheld under examination by an Inspector at the ultimate Independent Examination of the submitted Local Plan and also in light of decisions made by the Council's Planning Committee in recent months. As resolved by this Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015, sites H1(25) Tongs Meadow, West Street, Harrietsham, H1(48) Heath Road Boughton Monchelsea, and H1(60) Fant Farm, have not been reassessed.

2.8 Turning to the sites in Headcorn, sites H1(39) to H1(42), Councillors will be aware that the Ulcombe Road/Mill Bank site (H1(39)), was the subject of an application, reference MA/14/505284/OUT. The applicants lodged an appeal against the failure of the Council to determine the application within the statutory time period. On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015, in accordance with appeal procedure, the Planning Committee resolved that had no appeal been lodged, they would have granted planning permission for the development.

2.9 In arriving at this resolution, Councillors were satisfied that a drainage solution for the development had been demonstrated that would not make the existing situation worse. New development cannot be used to solve existing problems. No objections were raised to the application from Southern Water or the Environment Agency the Statutory Consultees. In addition, whilst Cabinet were concerned that the local road network was not of a sufficient capacity, Kent Highway Services did not object to the application on highway capacity or safety grounds and were satisfied that appropriate mitigation could be put in place. Similarly, concerns regarding the capacity of Headcorn Primary School to expand to accommodate expected growth in pupil numbers were also unfounded as an appropriate solution to address this issue with a deliverable plan to extend the school and its grounds to meet the required standards for a 2-form entry school having been identified by the Kent County Council and discussed with officers and the applicants. On this basis, the Planning Committee resolved that, had it been in a position to do so, it would have granted permission for the development subject to appropriate s106 obligations and planning conditions.

2.10 The reasons given for the recommended deletion of site H1(39) were as follows:

'local infrastructure is insufficient, in particular for foul water sewerage, flood risk and highway congestion'

Councillors will be aware that an identical application (15/503325) has been submitted and this is to be reported to the Planning Committee on 9 July with a recommendation that planning permission be granted subject to the prior completion of a s106 agreement, there being no change in circumstances relating to the site since the earlier application was considered in April. It is considered that the reasons given by Cabinet for recommending the deletion of



policy H1(39) are not sound and would not be upheld at an Independent Examination of the Local Plan.

- 2.11 Similarly, planning applications have been submitted on the part of site H1(40) (Grigg Lane and Lenham Road, Headcorn), that are not already subject to extant planning permissions. The reasons for recommending deletion of this site were very similar to sites H1(39), H1(41) and H1(42);

‘it has not been demonstrated to the community’s satisfaction that current foul water problems can be resolved and these will be exacerbated by any further development in this part of Headcorn and the unacceptable cumulative impact for the community and highways. In addition of community concerns that suitable highways access arrangements cannot be achieved at this point in time.’

- 2.12 Again, no objections have been raised to the submitted planning applications by relevant statutory consultees on flood risk or drainage grounds, highway impact or impact on local education provision. It is considered therefore that the reasons given by Cabinet for recommending the sites be deleted are not sound and would not be upheld at the Independent Examination of the Local Plan.

- 2.13 By analogy with the above examples, it is considered that the reasons given for the recommended deletion of sites H1(41) South of Grigg Lane and H1(42) Knaves Acres (which were identical to the reasons for site H1(39)), are also unsound and would not be upheld at the Independent Examination.

- 2.14 It is recommended therefore that the sites should be retained in the plan and be subject to further Regulation 19 Consultation.

- 2.15 With regard to site H1(31); Ham Lane, Lenham, Cabinet recommended deletion of the site for the following reason:

(a) unacceptably adverse impact on the AONB and on the character of the village because it is peripheral to the settlement and beyond the open space occupied by Swadelands School playing field.

- 2.16 At the Council’s Planning Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015, planning application MA/14/502973 in relation to this site was refused planning permission on the following ground:

‘The development proposed would not constitute good design by reason of its layout (including inadequate space for structural landscaping) and scale. It would therefore be harmful to the character and appearance of the open countryside, including the setting of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The application is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular paragraphs 56, 57, 58 and 109, and ‘saved’ policies ENV28 and ENV33 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000.’

- 2.17 The Planning Committee did not consider that the development as proposed was of a satisfactory design, layout and visual impact and that it would thus have an adverse impact on the setting of the Kent Downs AONB which lies on the north side of the A20 Ashford Road opposite the site.

- 2.18 Recommended to Cabinet as a result of the review of representations received from the Kent Downs AONB Unit and others at Regulation 18 consultation stage, were three new criteria as follows.

The development proposals are designed to take into account the results of a landscape and visual impact assessment undertaken in accordance with the principles of current guidance that particularly addresses the impact of development on the character and setting of the Kent Downs AONB

Development proposals shall incorporate substantial areas of internal landscaping within the site to provide an appropriate landscape framework for the site to protect the setting of the Kent Downs AONB

Development proposals will be of a high standard of design and sustainability reflecting the location of the site as part of the setting the Kent Downs AONB incorporating the use of vernacular materials and demonstrating compliance with the requirements of policies DM2, DM3 and DM4.

- 2.19 It is considered that these three criteria along with the existing criteria in the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan should ensure an appropriate form of development is secured.
- 2.20 Councillors will also note from the site plan attached as part of the site details in Appendix One, that there is already development on the west side of Ham Lane at Loder Close and the more recent development Westwood Close.
- 2.21 It is concluded that a development scheme that fully addresses the proposed and existing policy criteria, thus overcoming the ground of refusal for the previously submitted planning application, is potentially achievable on this site and that as a consequence, the site should not be recommended for deletion but should go forward to Regulation 19 Consultation as an allocated site.
- 2.22 The final regulation 18 site recommended for deletion by Cabinet was site H1(10); Land south of Sutton Road Langley.
- 2.23 The reasons given, which were amended at the Cabinet meeting on 9 March 2015 following call-in of the decision made on 2 and 4 February, are as follows;
- a) in the opinion of the Cabinet the eastern boundary of site H1(5) forms a natural boundary to the edge of the urban area of Maidstone;
  - b) there should be no further encroachment of residential development into the countryside which would result in the loss of green space and a leisure facility;
  - c) there would be an unacceptable impact on conditions in the surrounding area where the environmental and amenity consequences for the community are unacceptable now.
- 2.24 For Councillors' information, a set of revised site development criteria were recommended to Cabinet at their original meetings on 2 and 4 February along with a revised indicative site yield of 850 units. The revised site criteria included the changes from the published Regulation 18 draft as well as an addition to criterion 19 (clause vii)), that was agreed at the meeting of Cabinet on 9 March are set out at Appendix Two;
- 2.25 It is necessary to re-assess each of the stated reasons for the recommended deletion of the allocation in-turn in considering whether the allocation should be retained.
- 2.26 Does the adjacent allocated housing site to the west (H1(5), Langley Park Farm, form a natural boundary to the edge of the urban area of Maidstone? It is acknowledged that the site at Langley Park Farm has a well-defined eastern

boundary and that there is some change in character of land to the east of this. However, development along Sutton Road does not stop at this point. On the northern side of the road in particular, there is an almost continuous ribbon of development which extends as far eastwards as Rumwood Green Farm which is host to a number of large and visually prominent packing and storage sheds that dominate the skyline in medium to long distance views.

- 2.27 The second reason for recommending the site not be allocated relates to the fact that there should be no further encroachment of development into the countryside, which would result in the loss of green space and a leisure facility.
- 2.28 Councillors should note that as of July 2014, the additionally allocated greenfield sites outside the boundaries in the 2000 Borough-wide Local Plan amounted to some 207.4ha. The total area of countryside in the Borough based on the same 2000 boundaries amounted to 35,879ha. This means that 0.58% of the countryside is being lost to greenfield allocations across the Borough.
- 2.29 It is acknowledged that development of site H1(10) would result in the loss of the existing golf-driving range. The facility is not included within the list of community facilities for which full justification for loss or replacement is required in the current or emerging local plan. There are also alternative driving ranges available at The Ridge Golf Club, Marriott Tudor Park Golf Course and Staplehurst Golf Centre. It is not considered therefore that the loss of the facility is an overriding factor that would lead to the non-allocation of the wider site.
- 2.30 The third ground put forward in support of the recommended deletion of the site states that;  
‘there would be an unacceptable impact on conditions in the surrounding area where the environmental and amenity consequences for the community are unacceptable now.’  
Cabinet were clearly concerned about the cumulative impact of this development in an area where they considered existing conditions to be unacceptable. No detail as to their specific concerns was given however.
- 2.31 An additional and sizeable strategic area of publicly accessible open space (approx. 10ha in area) would be secured as part of the development. This would provide not only an appropriate setting to the development but would also ensure that such provision is provided on a comprehensive rather than spread in a piecemeal basis across the development. It is considered that cumulative impact on both the environment and amenity would be addressed through any development proposals. For Councillors’ information, the Council has received a formal application seeking a Scoping Opinion for a potential Environmental Impact Assessment for proposed development on this site. (Application ref: 15/504183/EIASCO). If a planning application is submitted it would therefore be submitted with an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES would consider environmental issues as well as a range of other issues including the cumulative impact of the proposed development relative to other committed development in the vicinity.
- 2.32 There have been no representations from statutory consultees on applications already submitted and/or approved advising that conditions in the area are such that new development cannot be accepted as it cannot be adequately mitigated.

- 2.33 It is therefore considered that the site should be retained as an allocation and go forward to Regulation 19 Consultation.

Sites recommended for allocation but not accepted.

- 2.34 The following new sites were recommended for allocation for development to Cabinet on 2 and 4 February 2015 but were not accepted by Cabinet.

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| H1 (57) | Former Astor of Hever School, Oakwood Rd.  |
| H1 (60) | Fant Farm Maidstone                        |
| H1 (61) | Land at Cross Keys, Roundwell, Bearsted    |
| H1 (64) | Bell Farm North, East Street Harrietsham   |
| H1 (65) | Land at Lenham Road Headcorn               |
| H1 (66) | Land S of The Parsonage Marden             |
| H1 (67) | Land S of Marden Road Staplehurst          |
| H1 (68) | Land to the N of Henhurst Farm Staplehurst |
| H1 (69) | Land at Lodge Road Staplehurst             |

- 2.35 Cabinet gave reasons for not recommending the allocation of these sites as follows;

H1 (57) – Land at former Astor of Hever Community School, Oakwood Road, Maidstone (60 units)

That this new site be rejected and not be taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that the site is retained for education use and development would be unacceptably compromised by the lack of adequate access.

H1 (60) – Fant Farm, Maidstone (225 units)

That this new site be rejected and not taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that the site is valuable for agriculture use, and would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape, including the overall shape of the urban area of Maidstone and the unacceptable highways impact for the local community.

H1 (61) – Land at Cross Keys, Roundwell, Bearsted (50 units)

That this new site be rejected and not taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that development of this site would have an unacceptable impact on hydrology and local flood risk.

H1 (64) – Bell Farm North, East Street, Harrietsham (80 units)

That this new site be rejected and not taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that the cumulative impact of development having a detrimental effect on the character, size and shape of the village and community due to the increase in size and footprint of the village and unacceptable cumulative impact for the community for education provision, transport and other community infrastructure.

H1 (65) – Land at Lenham Road, Headcorn (50 units)

That this new site be rejected and not taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that development is in reality impractical due to current water conditions and community perception of failure of infrastructure providers to deliver infrastructure identified as

required in the past, local knowledge of flood risk and community concern about the cumulative impact on local education provision and highways.

#### H1 (66) – Land South of the Parsonage, Goudhurst Road, Marden (50 units)

That the recommendation of the Committee be rejected and that this new site not be taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that the site is too peripheral to Marden and on the grounds that the cumulative impact of sites already considered in the draft Local Plan would be unacceptable to the community in terms of highways and water infrastructure and social balance.

#### H1 (67) – Land to South of Marden Road, Staplehurst (100 units)

That this new site be rejected and not taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that it has not been demonstrated to the community's satisfaction that current foul water problems can be resolved and these will be exacerbated by any further development in this part of Staplehurst and the unacceptable cumulative impact for the community and highways.

#### H1 (68) – Land to the North of Henhurst Farm, Staplehurst (60 units)

That this new site be rejected and not taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that it has not been demonstrated to the community's satisfaction that current foul water problems can be resolved and these will be exacerbated by any further development in this part of Staplehurst and the unacceptable cumulative impact for the community and highways. In addition of community concerns that suitable highways access arrangements cannot be achieved at this point in time.

#### H1 (69) – Land at Lodge Road, Staplehurst (60 units)

That the recommendation of the Committee be rejected and that this new site should not be taken forward to Regulation 18 consultation on the grounds that the site should be retained for employment use given the economic upturn and that infrastructure must be improved to enable this to happen and the cumulative impact of residential development in Staplehurst on social balance.

- 2.36 The reasons given for the recommended deletion of each site have been re-assessed, to ascertain whether they are likely to be sustainable under examination and also in the light of decisions made by the Council's Planning Committee in recent months. As resolved by this Committee on 9 June, site H1(60), Fant Farm, Maidstone has not been reassessed.
- 2.37 With regard to site H1(57), Land at the former Astor of Hever Community School Oakwood Road Maidstone, the stated reasons for not allocating the site were that the site should be retained for educational use and that development would be unacceptably compromised by the lack of adequate access.
- 2.38 This site was until 2008/2009 grazing land connected with the school farm attached to the Astor of Hever School. Around 2008/2009, the farm buildings were redeveloped and that part of the site is now occupied by the 21 houses at Astor Park. Since that time, the site has not been used for educational purposes but has remained in the ownership of the site's promoter KCC.
- 2.39 The site is very well contained. It is adjoined to the north by a place of worship, to the east by the rear of properties fronting Bower Mount Road, to the south by

the rear of properties in Astor Park and to the west by a treed and landscaped steep bank that separates this area of land from the larger playing fields to the west/north west that remain in use by the existing schools on the Oakwood Park campus. If development were to take place on this site given the site's containment and topography, development would not extend beyond the site area submitted and proposed for allocation.

- 2.40 At first glance, there appear to be two apparently possible access points into the site. These are a strip of land (approximately 12m in width), situated between nos. 58 and 62 Bower Mount Road and secondly, across an open area on the east side of Astor Park.
- 2.41 The land on Bower Mount Road is not in the ownership of KCC, the site promoter and is also subject to TPO no.6 of 1993 which protects 6 individual pine trees located adjacent to Bower Mount Road and which would preclude construction of an access unless they were felled. The second potential access point would be across the open area east of no.21 Astor Park exiting onto Oakwood Road via the junction of Astor Park and Oakwood Road. KCC have retained rights of access across this land to the proposed site. The access point proposed is via the latter route and will provide a suitable and safe access on to the highway. No objections were raised by Kent Highway Services to the proposed use of this access point when the initial site assessment was undertaken. Any application would be accompanied by a transport assessment and this would indicate any necessary mitigation required to deliver the development.
- 2.42 It is concluded that the reasons given for the non-allocation of this site are not robust and Councillors are recommended to allocate the site for development with an indicative yield of 60 units.
- 2.43 The proposed site at H1(61) Land at Cross Keys Roundwell, Bearsted was not allocated by Cabinet on the grounds that development of this site would have an unacceptable impact on hydrology and local flood risk. Councillors will be aware that planning application 14/504795 was reported to the Planning Committee on 16 April 2015. The Committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a s106 legal agreement covering a number of obligations. In determining the application the Committee considered the views of Southern Water and the Environment Agency on flood risk. A detailed hydrological assessment had been undertaken by the applicants and submitted with the application. Neither Southern Water nor the Environment Agency raised objections to the development on the grounds of flood risk as the package of mitigation measures set out in the assessment were acceptable.
- 2.44 It is therefore concluded that the reasons given for the non-allocation of this site are not robust and Councillors are recommended to allocate the site for development.
- 2.45 Proposed site H1(64) related to land at Bell Farm North, East Street Harrietsham and was not allocated on the grounds that;

'The cumulative impact of development having a detrimental effect on the character, size and shape of the village and community due to the increase in size and footprint of the village and

unacceptable cumulative impact for the community for education provision, transport and other community infrastructure.'

- 2.46 Councillors will be aware that there were four sites proposed for development in the Regulation 18 consultation draft of the emerging Local Plan. One site, Tong's Meadow is recommended for further Regulation 18 Consultation with a view to its deletion due to Natural England's advice that they would not be likely to issue an EPS Development Licence, and the site has not been re-assessed as part of this current exercise. The remaining three sites H1 (26) South of Ashford Road, H1 (27) Mayfield Nursery Ashford Road and H1(28) Church Road Harrietsham, are all subject to planning applications that have been considered and approved by the Planning Committee subject to the prior completion of a s106 agreement securing appropriate obligations which include, inter-alia, safety and streetscape improvements to the A20 Ashford Road, healthcare contributions and education contributions.
- 2.47 It is clear from these decisions that have followed and taking into account consultation with statutory consultees on each application, that development within the settlement is not constrained by an inability to improve infrastructure to mitigate the impact of development.
- 2.48 Development on this site would not unacceptably extend the footprint of the village. It would, in the manner proposed, be immediately adjacent to the approved development on site H1(26). In addition, a significant area of approximately 4.15ha of open space would also be secured. This would not only maintain an appropriate setting to the East Street Conservation Area and the listed buildings within it, but also provide additional amenity space for the residents of the village living on the south side of the A20.
- 2.49 It is not considered therefore that the grounds for non-allocation of the site given by Cabinet are sound. The site should be subject to Regulation 18 consultation with a view to its allocation as a development site for 80 dwellings and open space provision.
- 2.50 Previously recommended site H1(65), relates to an area of land on the north side of Lenham Road Headcorn. The site is subject to planning application 14/505162 that was considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 18 June 2015. It was resolved to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a s106 agreement.
- 2.51 Similarly, to the sites in the Regulation 18 consultation draft of the emerging Local Plan, appropriate mitigation for drainage, highways and local school provision was identified. It is considered therefore, that this site should be subject to Regulation 18 consultation with a view to its allocation as a development site.
- 2.52 Site H1(66); land to the south of The Parsonage, Goudhurst Road Marden, was not accepted by Cabinet for allocation as they considered that the site was too peripheral to Marden and also on the grounds that the cumulative impact of sites already considered in the draft local plan would be unacceptable to the community in terms of highways, water infrastructure and social balance.

- 2.53 It is acknowledged that the four allocated sites included in the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation draft in Marden have all been subject to planning applications that have been considered and approved by the Council's Planning Committee and that in addition a further site at the MAP Depot Goudhurst Road Marden has also been approved and is in fact under construction. On each of these approvals it has been demonstrated that appropriate mitigation for impact on highway and drainage as well as community facilities can be secured and that no objections were raised by statutory consultees to any of the developments on these grounds. It is considered therefore that given this history that the grounds for non-allocation would not stand-up to examination.
- 2.54 As to the site's peripheral location this proposed site is immediately to the south of and would be linked to The Parsonage Goudhurst Road, site H1(34) that has outline planning permission. The site is considered to be very well-related to this proposed development and also sits behind the existing continuous ribbon of development that fronts Goudhurst Road and is not considered peripheral to the village. The site should therefore be included for Regulation 18 Consultation seeking its allocation for development for 50 dwellings.
- 2.55 Site H1(67); land to the South of Marden Road Staplehurst, was not accepted by Cabinet for allocation on the grounds that it has not been demonstrated to the community's satisfaction that current foul water problems can be resolved and these will be exacerbated by any further development in this part of Staplehurst and the unacceptable cumulative impact for the community and highways.
- 2.56 Councillors should be advised that since this decision, application 14/502010 submitted in relation to the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation draft site H1(36); Hen & Duckhurst Farm, Marden Road Staplehurst, has been considered by the Planning Committee at their meetings on 16 April and 18 June. That Committee resolved to grant outline planning permission for the development subject to appropriate s106 obligations. These obligations would secure appropriate highway mitigation works including at the junction of Marden Road and the A229 High Street and a requirement to safeguard a future possible link from the site through to Lodge Road, education contributions, healthcare contributions and also contributions towards other community facilities and open space facilities as well as a landscape and ecological management plan for the site itself. There were no objections to the proposed methods for foul and surface water drainage from statutory consultees.
- 2.57 It is considered that in the light of this decision and the fact that no objections were raised on highway capacity or flood risk grounds to the development at Hen & Duckhurst Farm that could not be mitigated, the grounds given for the non-allocation of this site would not stand up to examination given the proposed criteria included within the draft site policies that safeguard the areas of concern. The site should therefore be included for Regulation 18 Consultation seeking its allocation for development for 100 dwellings.
- 2.58 Site H1(68); land to the north of Henhurst Farm Staplehurst, was not accepted as a draft allocation by Cabinet on the grounds that it had not been



demonstrated to the community's satisfaction that current foul water problems can be resolved and these will be exacerbated by any further development in this part of Staplehurst and the unacceptable cumulative impact for the community and highways. In addition of community concerns that suitable highways access arrangements cannot be achieved at this point in time.

- 2.59 As set out above, the experience of the assessment of the application submitted at Hen & Duckhurst Farm would indicate that the stated concerns are unlikely to withstand examination given the proposed site criteria. Access to the site would be obtained via Oliver Road and the development currently under construction immediately to the north of this proposed site.
- 2.60 A key additional benefit of this site would be the securing of an undeveloped area to be used for open space and ecological mitigation and as proven necessary, allotments that would link to the already secured ecological/open space area provided for the Oliver Road development mentioned above. This area would extend to approximately 5.78ha and would provide natural and semi-natural open space for this part of Staplehurst for which there is an identified need. The site should therefore be included for Regulation 18 Consultation seeking its allocation for development for 60 units and the open space provision outlined above.
- 2.61 Site H1 (69); Land at Lodge Road Staplehurst was not allocated by Cabinet on the grounds that the site should be retained for employment use given the economic upturn and that infrastructure must be improved to enable this to happen and the cumulative impact of residential development in Staplehurst on social balance.
- 2.62 It is acknowledged that this site has an extant outline planning permission for employment use and is allocated for employment use in the current Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000. This permission was renewed in 2013 following earlier outline permissions granted in 2007 and 2009 and even earlier permissions in 1996 and 1999. The northern part of the site adjacent to the railway-line was also subject to an employment use permission approved in 2008. This area is also an allocated employment site in the MBWLP 2000. Whilst there has been no action to implement any of the past and current permissions on the two parcels of land, there would nevertheless be a net reduction in available employment land if a mixed-use development was to take place on this site.
- 2.63 However, the allocation of just the southern part of this site for housing would still deliver approximately 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment development on the remainder along with an area of open space centred on a retained existing pond. It is considered therefore that a balanced mixed-use of the site would result that would still allow for further employment related development to take place.
- 2.64 Councillors are also referred to the commentary earlier in the report relating to the Hen & Duckhurst Farm site in Marden Road recently considered and approved by Planning Committee. Issues relating to drainage and highways are addressed in paragraph 2.56 and will to be repeated here. It is worth noting

however that amongst the conditions to be imposed on the Hen & Duckhurst Farm permission when granted is a requirement for the reserved matters application(s) to safeguard a vehicle route from the site to Lodge Road. Such a route is not safeguarded in the existing employment permission on site H1(69) but would be if the site was allocated as now proposed, however any vehicular access through site H1(69) should be restricted to buses as well as allowing for pedestrian and cycle access rather than allowing use by private cars and HGV vehicles due to the likelihood of 'rat-running' through the two new developments occurring. Given the above caveat, the site should therefore be included for Regulation 18 Consultation seeking its allocation for development for 60 dwellings and 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment space with an intervening area of open space/ecological mitigation.

Assessment of sites previously rejected 'on-balance' including sites supported by Parish Councils/Ward Members

- 2.65 This section of the report re-assesses sites which were 'on-balance' rejected including those sites supported by Parish Councils/Ward Councillors.
- 2.66 When the 2013 SHLAA call for sites exercise was undertaken, a 'traffic light' system of assessment was initially used (Red for rejected sites, Green for accepted sites and Amber for marginal sites). Prior to the consideration by Cabinet and subsequently the publication of the Regulation 18 consultation draft of the Local Plan, the 'Amber' sites were reconsidered and re-categorised. Those that were acceptable were included within the recommendation to Cabinet on 24 February 2014 and subsequently the published Regulation 18 consultation draft or rejected and not recommended to Cabinet.
- 2.67 The 2014 'call for sites' exercise assessed the sites as either acceptable or not acceptable. Sites were recommended for allocation to Cabinet in February/March 2015 on this basis. Submitted as part of the process, an additional seven sites were submitted relating to sites in Lenham.
- HO3-195: Land rear of Loder Close
  - HO3-202: Land off Old Ham Lane
  - HO3-209: Allotment land between Robins Avenue and Hollywood Road
  - HO3-219: Lenham Cricket Pitch Ham Lane
  - HO3-221: Grove Paddock
  - HO3-294: Land at Tanyard Farm, Old Ashford Road
  - HO3-297: Land South of Tanyard Cottages, Old Ashford Road
- Of these, HO3-209 and HO3-219 were rejected due to the unacceptable loss of community facilities without direct replacements being secured.
- 2.68 The five remaining sites were considered potentially acceptable as development sites but were included within the identified broad location of Lenham for development in the latter part of the plan period, beyond 2026. As such, to avoid 'double-counting', none of the remaining sites were recommended for allocation to Cabinet in February 2015. The submitted sites did however, give a good indication of potentially available sites in support of the future broad location for development.

- 2.69 Councillors are also advised that site HO3-221: Grove Paddock, is the subject of a current application (14/503411/FULL) for 23 dwellings.
- 2.70 It is not recommended that additional sites in Lenham are allocated. The broad location will be subject to review at the first review of the Local Plan following its adoption.
- 2.71 Collier Street Parish Council has expressed support for a 2014 SHLAA site that would see the redevelopment of Bentletts commercial vehicle scrapyards in Claygate Road, Laddingford (HO3-270). Clearly such a use could be considered to be non-conforming and at first glance may offer some environmental and visual benefits if it was removed as well as improving the setting of 'The Pest House', a Grade II listed building located at the entrance to the site. The site is currently well screened which also reduces its visual impact to an extent.
- 2.72 The site is however located in open countryside in an isolated location on a site that does not accord with the proposed settlement hierarchy set out in the draft Local Plan.
- 2.73 In terms of access to services and public transport the site is also not considered sustainable. The nearest railway stations are; Beltring 4.1km, Yalding 4.5km, Marden 6.2km and Paddock Wood 6.6km, all some distance away from the site. The site and Claygate Road is served by Nu-Venture route 23/26. However, it is a two-hourly service only operating on weekdays. The first bus to Maidstone is 07:10 (not Saturday) and the last bus to Maidstone is 16:35. The last bus from Maidstone leaves at 17:40 or 18:20 (on demand after Yalding). As far as shops and community facilities the nearest shops/post office is at Yalding 3.2km away, where there is also a GP surgery. The primary school at Laddingford is 1.6km from the site and the school at Collier Street 2.3km. Claygate Road and the surroundings are unlit and have no pavements and therefore occupiers of the site are highly likely to be reliant on the use of the private car for day-to-day needs.
- 2.74 Whilst the site itself is not within flood zone 2 or 3 much of the surrounding land together with access roads to the site is. In their representations following the call for sites exercise, the Environment Agency advised that the Council should be aware the site will be isolated during flood conditions, making access and egress by potential occupiers and emergency services very difficult.
- 2.75 It is considered therefore that the site should not be subject to Regulation 18 consultation with a view to its allocation. Councillors should be aware that there is currently an undetermined planning application for residential development on the site. Clearly the future of the site will be decided through the application determination process.
- 2.76 The draft Coxheath Neighbourhood Plan includes a proposed housing site immediately to the west of the current village boundary on the north side of the B2163 Heath Road. It is known locally as Older's Field. Submitted under the 2013 SHLAA/SEDLAA exercise as a mixed use employment and residential site and again in the 2014 SHLAA (HO3-256) exercise but purely for residential.

The site was rejected due to the potential coalescence between Coxheath and the settlement in Dean Street and also due to the regenerating heathland growth occurring on the site and potential ecological impact.

- 2.77 A planning application (MA/13/1979) has been submitted in respect of the site seeking outline permission for the erection of up to 55 dwellings with a new access onto the B2163 and also the transfer/lease of parcels of land adjacent to the site to the Parish Council in accordance with the details in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. A further area of woodland to the north of the site is now subject to a separate planning permission for use as open space. The residential application was reported to the Planning Committee on 18 December 2014 with a recommendation that permission be refused. The Committee resolved however, to defer consideration of the application to

- 1: Seek additional details of surface water drainage (to address Environment Agency comments;
- 2: Seek 40% affordable housing with appropriate viability evidence to demonstrate if this is not achievable; and
- 3: Seek further ecological surveys of the site.

In reaching that decision, Councillors did not consider that the site should be refused in principle. This is a material consideration.

- 2.78 It is a key aim of the neighbourhood plan to provide a 'green-necklace' around the village to enable circular walks and also to safeguard against coalescence with neighbouring settlements. The land associated with this application and the large area of land to the north that already has permission for use as open space would form part of the 'necklace' on the western side of the village of Coxheath. Kent Highway Services have raised no objections to the development of the site in principle. The discussions with the applicant regarding the level of affordable housing provision are currently on-going but as with other sites the required 40% should be provided unless it can be demonstrated by means of an appropriate viability assessment that a reduced amount can only be provided. Further information regarding potential ecological impact has been submitted and is also being assessed. Any site development criteria would require any site layout to be guided by the results of surveys and could also require appropriate management plans to be put in place.
- 2.79 Given the support of the Parish Council and the site's inclusion in the draft Coxheath neighbourhood plan it is now considered, on balance, that the site should be allocated for development and be subject to formal Regulation 18 consultation to that end. A suggested site policy with development criteria is attached at Appendix Five.
- 2.80 Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council have expressed their desire that a further site at Hubbards Lane (HO3-220), also a rejected 2014 SHLAA site, be allocated for development. The site is actually located within the Loose Parish boundary and is on the eastern side of Hubbards Lane, directly opposite the Cornwallis Academy at the southern end of a ribbon of houses on Hubbards Lane. These form part of the defined settlement of Loose in the current Borough-wide Local Plan 2000.

- 2.81 The site is part of a larger field in agricultural use (it is currently covered in polytunnels) and is currently bounded by an impermeable and tall mature hedgerow that also forms the boundary with the B2163 Heath Road to the south. The site extends to some 0.4ha in area and has a site frontage to the highway of approximately 50m. A linear development of the site, thus reflecting the character of development to its north may result in 5-8 dwellings. Councillors will be aware that at the northern end of this group of dwellings there is an existing larger allocated site (20 dwellings) subject to policy H1(47) of the Regulation 18 draft that would see development infill the gap between the houses in Hubbards Lane and those in Haste Hill Road.
- 2.82 It is considered that development of site HO3-220 would not be appropriate due to the fact that a significant length of the existing mature hedgerow would be lost and also that development would be much closer to Heath Road unacceptably extending the existing ribbon of development on Hubbards Lane southwards. Since Cornwallis Academy was redeveloped and the original lower school buildings demolished, there is a greater openness on this section of Hubbards Lane that would be compromised if development were to take place on the site. It is not considered therefore that the site should be allocated for development.

Haynes, Ashford Road Maidstone Policy H1(12)

- 2.79 Councillors are advised that due to an oversight, when the submitted representations in response to the 2014 the Regulation 18 Consultation were considered by the Planning Transport & Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January and then Cabinet in February/March of this year, a representation on behalf of the owners of this site was not reported and considered.
- 2.80 In essence, the representation states that objection is raised to the proposed allocation of the site solely for housing as set out in the Regulation 18 Consultation draft of the local plan on the grounds that this would not be viable or sufficient to fund the relocation of the current businesses on the site to other local sites. The landowner's preferred option would be for the site to be redeveloped in a mixed retail and residential use as this is considered to give the necessary land value to enable relocation to take place. Some commentary on retail opportunities/provision in Maidstone has been provided in support of the argument that the Haynes site is an appropriate retail site, but no detailed viability information in support of the contention that the site is not viable unless retail provision is included has been supplied. (The retail representation submitted on the Haynes site during public consultation is addressed in the Retail and Mixed Use report as part of the agenda).
- 2.81 In a number of previous pre-application meetings, the site owners and their advisors have been advised by officers that the Haynes site is not a sequentially preferable location for retail development. This remains the case. The site owners and their advisors have again been given the opportunity to submit information as to why they do not consider a 100% residential allocation to be viable and offered the opportunity for further discussion/meetings. It is also

understood that the company's land-holdings on the Parkwood Industrial Estate are in freehold ownership which would if it is the case clearly result in lower land acquisition costs if relocation/rationalisation of this landholding was proposed. No further information has been submitted and the offer of a meeting has not, to-date, been taken up.

- 2.82 It is therefore not currently considered appropriate to allocate part of the site for retail development. This sustainable urban brownfield site does, however, remain a suitable site for residential development and should be retained as such, going forward to Regulation 19 Consultation.

Bell Farm, North Street, Barming: Policy H1(19)

- 2.83 Councillors are advised that as a result of continuing negotiation and consideration of the currently submitted planning application on the site (14/506419/FULL), to ensure appropriate ecological mitigation, a minimum 5m set-back for the development from the street frontage has been secured. The consequence of this is that the development site would extend a further 5m to the west. It is therefore necessary to both amend the existing site plan for policy H1(19) and also to amend criteria 2 of the existing policy in the Regulation 18 Draft to reflect the requirement for the minimum 5m set-back for development from the North Street frontage that has been secured. The changes would then be subject to the forthcoming Regulation 19 Consultation. The amended site plan and revised policy criteria are set out at Appendix 6.

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Councillors have two options to consider.
- 3.2 Option One: Councillors could consider the re-assessment details set out in section 2 of this report and resolve not to make any changes to the Cabinet decisions made on 2 and 4 February and 9 March 2015.
- 3.3 Option Two: Councillors could follow the advice and conclusions set out above in section 2 of the report in respect of the Regulation 18 sites Cabinet previously resolved to recommend for deletion, the proposed allocated sites that were not considered appropriate for Regulation 18 consultation by Cabinet, and the sites previously rejected 'on-balance' or rejected sites supported by Parish Councils/Ward Members.

### **4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Councillors are recommended to adopt option two.
- 4.2 In doing so, the gap between the currently identified delivery of 16,664 dwellings and the Objectively Assessed Need figure of 18,560 dwellings between 2011 and 2031, which is 1,896 units, would be addressed. The total number of dwellings recommended in the report is 1,877 units.

- 4.3 Such a course of action would reduce the clear risks of the Local Plan being found unsound at Independent Examination, as outlined in the report considered and also accepted at the last meeting of this Committee on 9 June.

## 5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue                                   | Implications  | Sign-off  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>   | The adoption of the local plan will assist in the delivery of the council's corporate Priorities.   | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development        |
| <b>Risk Management</b>                  | A key risk to the local plan programme relates to the council's ability to meet its objectively assessed housing need. There are a number of risks of not meeting the Objectively Assessed Need   | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development        |
| <b>Financial</b>                        | The development of the Local Plan has been fully funded as part of the council's revenue budget. The total spend from 2006/07 to 2014/15 is £1.8 m. At 31 March 2015, the budget has a balance of £353,480. The base budget for the next 3 years is £60k p.a. plus one-off funding of £480k from New Homes Bonus. The budget does not account for any additional costs arising from the risk that the local plan is found unsound or withdrawn, which would include the preparation of additional evidence, further consultations, and re-examination. This would need to be found from the council's revenue budget which already has a target to deliver £2.2 m savings in 2016/17 – 2018/19. The council will need to demonstrate financial rigour in terms of decisions that will incur avoidable unbudgeted expenditure. | Zena Cooke,<br>S151 Officer &<br>Ellie Dunnett<br>Finance |
| <b>Staffing</b>                         | N/A   | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development        |
| <b>Legal</b>                            | There are no legal implications directly arising from this report, although the Legal Team continues to provide advice and guidance on local plan matters, and to review any legal implications of reports  | Legal Team  |
| <b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b> | N/A   | Anna Collier,<br>Policy &<br>Information<br>Manager       |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b> | N/A   | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development   |
| <b>Community Safety</b>                      | N/A   | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development   |
| <b>Human Rights Act</b>                      | N/A   | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development   |
| <b>Procurement</b>                           | Consultants are used to prepare specialist or technical evidence to support the local plan and are appointed in accordance with the council's procurement procedures. | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development &<br>Zena Cooke<br>Section 151<br>Officer |
| <b>Asset Management</b>                      | N/A   | Rob Jarman<br>Head of<br>Planning &<br>Development   |

## 6. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

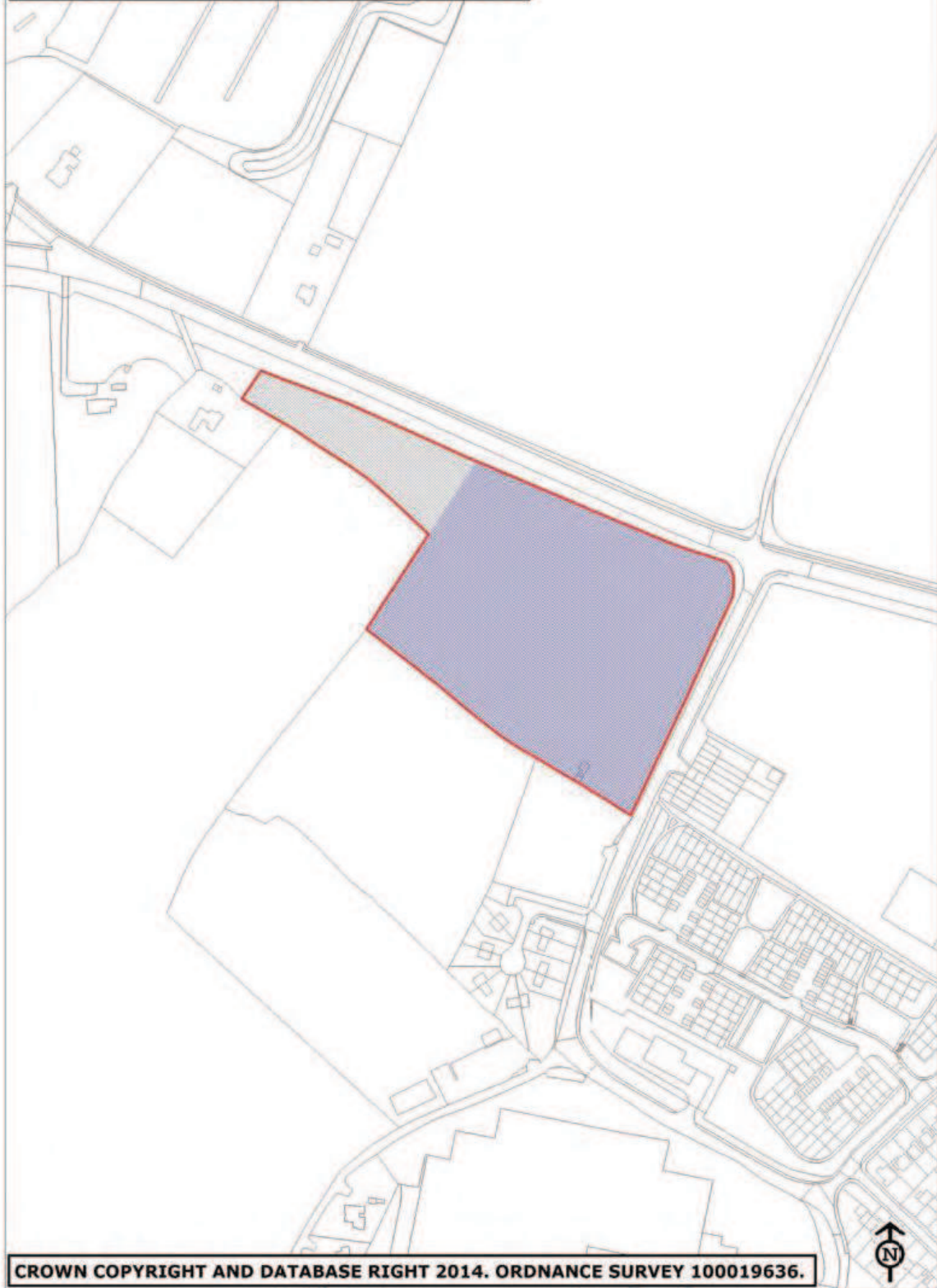
- Appendix 1: Maps of Maidstone Borough Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Draft 2014: Sites recommended for deletion by Cabinet
- Appendix 2: Revised site criteria for site H1 (10) Land South of Sutton Road
- Appendix 3: Maps of sites not recommended for allocation by Cabinet
- Appendix 4: Maps of sites on balance rejected and sites supported by Parish Councils/Ward Councillors
- Appendix 5: Proposed site plan and policy criteria for Land North of Heath Road (Older's Field) Coxheath.
- Appendix 6: Amended site plan and revised policy criteria for site H1(19): Bell Farm, North Street, Barming.

## 7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

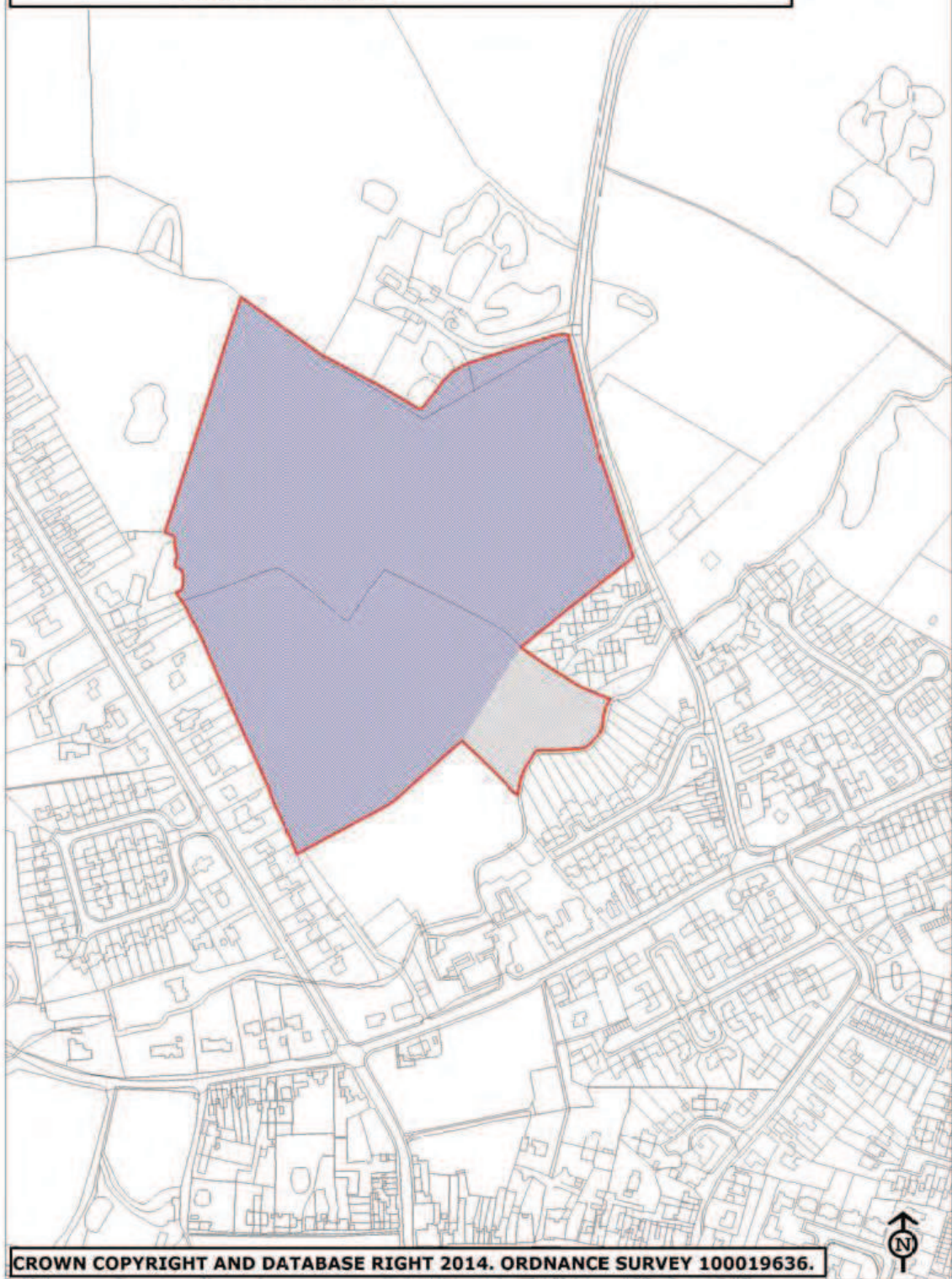
None



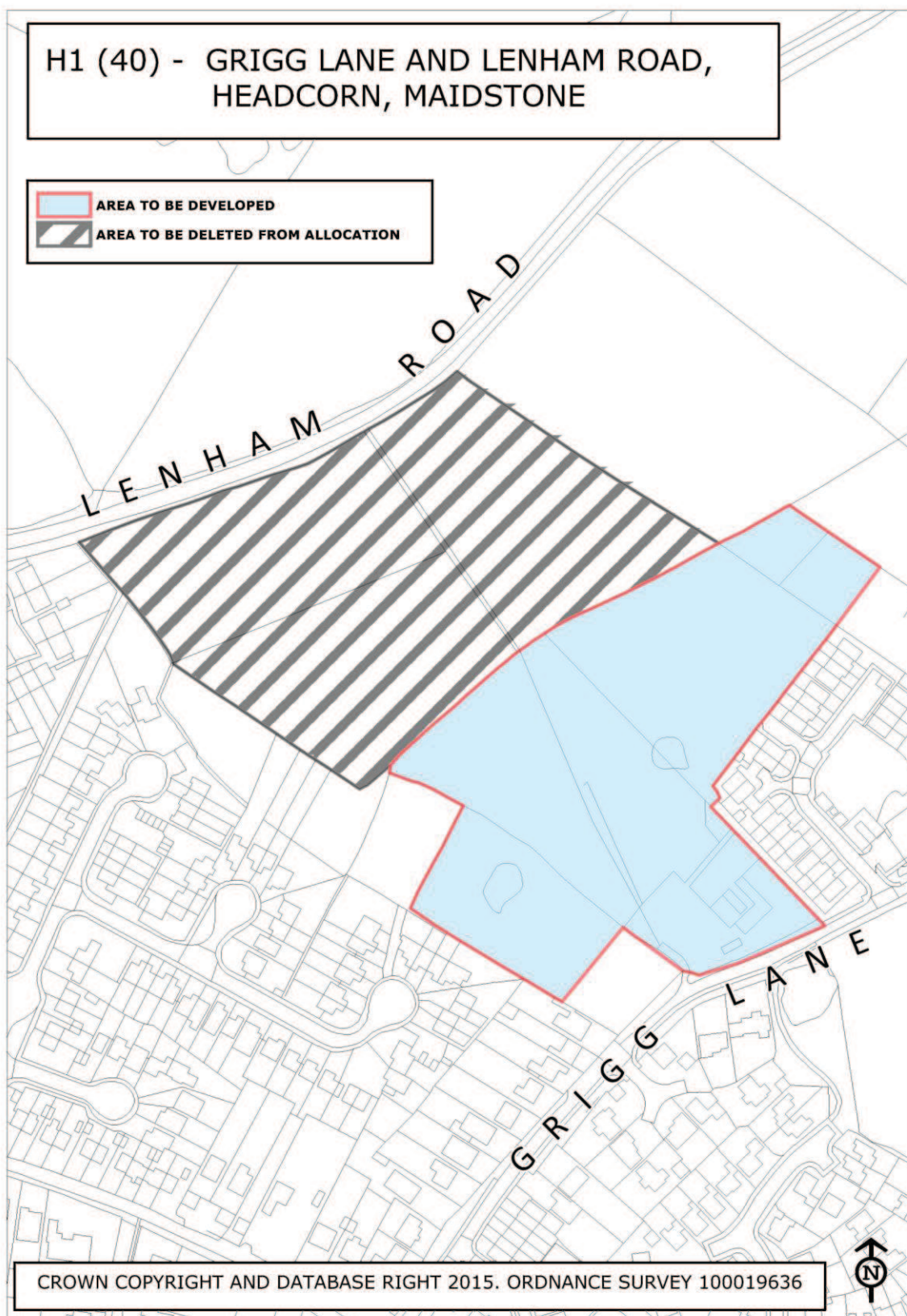
**H1(31) - HAM LANE, LENHAM**

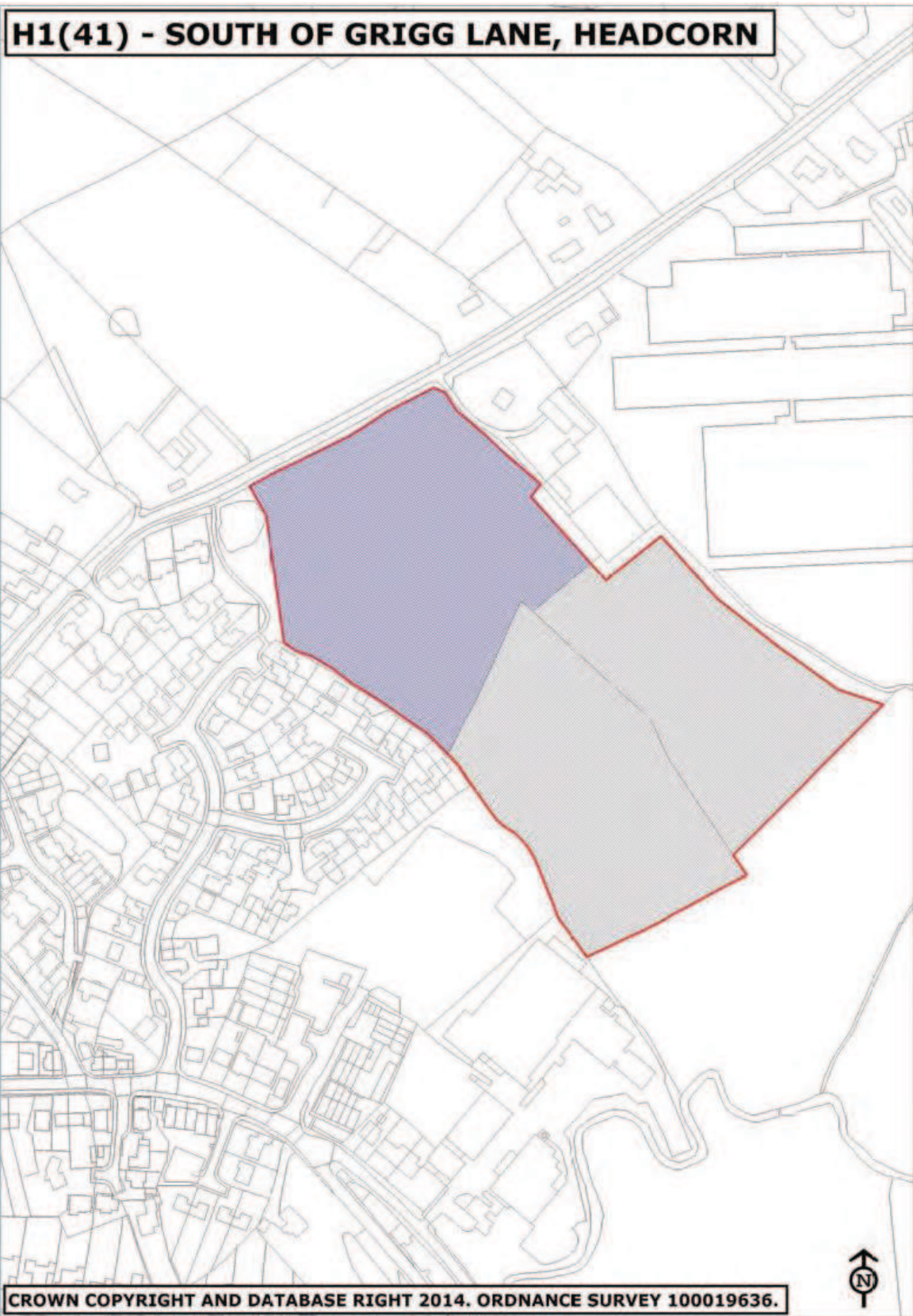


**H1(39) - ULCOMBE ROAD AND MILL BANK,  
HEADCORN**



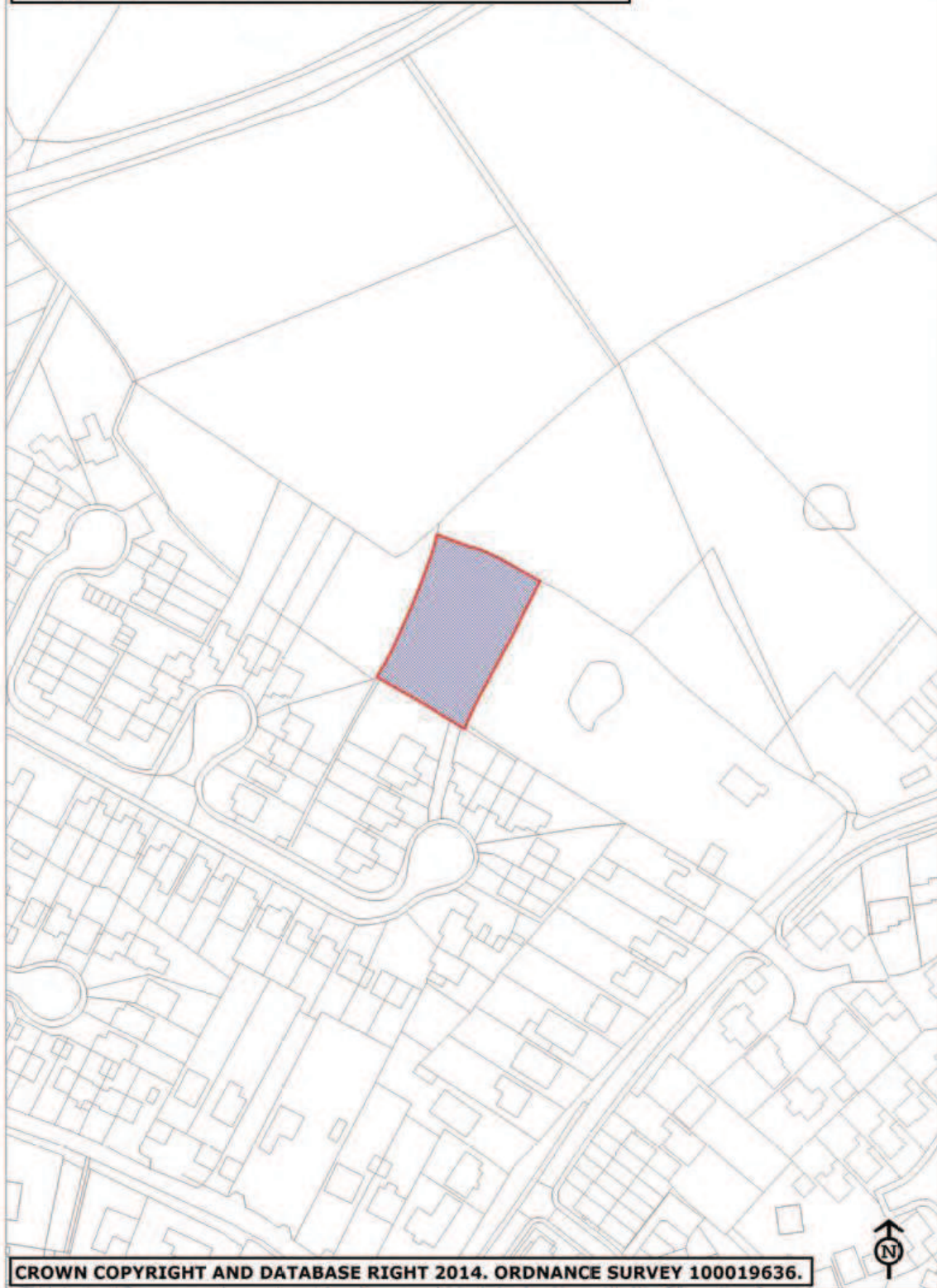


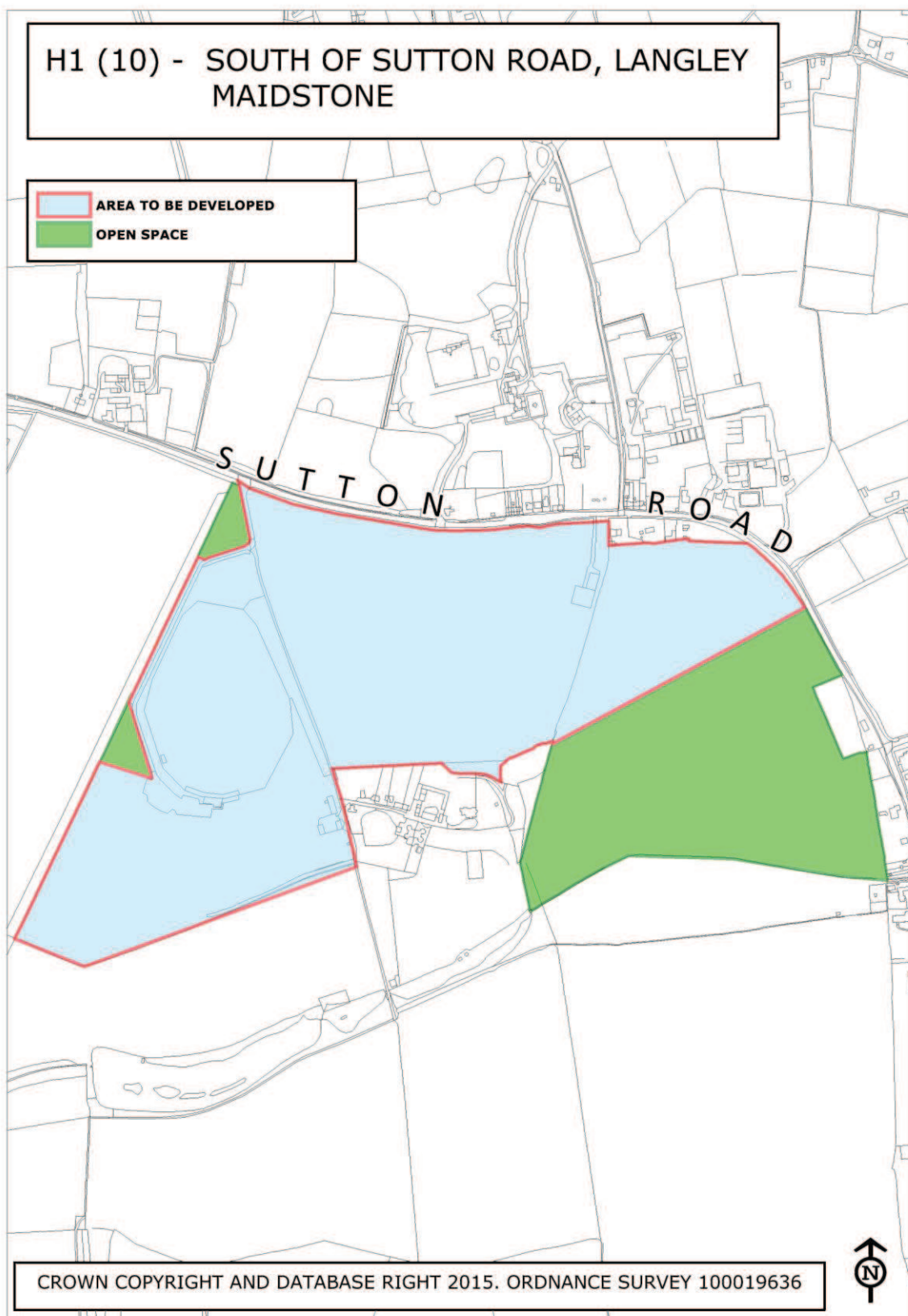






**H1(42) - KNAVES ACRE, HEADCORN**





## **H1 (10) South of Sutton Road Langley**

**Ward: Parkwood/Sutton Valence and Langley**

**Parish: Boughton Monchelsea/Langley**

**Current use: Golf Driving Range and Plant Nursery**

### **South of Sutton Road development criteria**

Planning permission will be granted if the following criteria are met:

#### **Design and layout**

1. An undeveloped section of land will be retained in the eastern part of the site to create a buffer between development and the adjacent open countryside. No built development other than a site access road will be permitted further to the east/south east than as shown on the Proposals Map, the approximate location of the 105m contour-line.
2. The retained open land beyond the built development shall be used for the provision of SuDS surface water drainage mitigation and to provide a comprehensive area of public open space to serve the development rather than open space being provided on a fragmented basis within the development.
3. The development proposals are designed to take into account the results of a landscape and visual impact assessment undertaken in accordance with the principles of current guidance, with particular emphasis on the Loose Stream/Langley Loch and Langley Church and other heritage assets adjacent to the site.
4. The proposals will be designed and laid-out to provide an appropriate and strong visual relationship between the new development and the hamlet of Langley Park, whilst preserving the setting of the existing listed buildings and protecting the amenity and privacy of existing residential properties.
5. Development should be sited in order to preserve or enhance the setting of the listed buildings surrounding the site.

6. PROW KH364 will be retained and improved to enable use by pedestrians and cycles, continuing the link between Sutton Road and the Loose/Shaw stream and in addition PROW KH365 between Langley Church and Brishing Road shall also be improved to enable use by pedestrians and cycles and to provide an alternative link to south east Maidstone.

7. Development proposals will be of a high standard of design and sustainability incorporating the use of vernacular materials and demonstrating compliance with the requirements of policies DM2, DM3 and DM4.

### **Access**

8. Primary access will be taken from the A274 Sutton Road.

9. Secondary access will be taken through site H1(5) Langley Park subject to agreement with the highways authority and Borough Council.

10. A separate cycle and pedestrian access will be provided to site H1(5) Langley Park subject to agreement with the highways authority and Borough Council.

### **Ecology**

11. Development will be subject to the results and recommendations of a phase one ecological survey.

### **Noise**

12. Development will be subject to a noise survey to determine any necessary attenuation measures in relation to the A274 Sutton Road.

### **Air quality**

13. Appropriate air quality mitigation measures will be implemented as part of the development.

### **Drainage**

14. Development proposals will demonstrate that any necessary new or improved foul and surface water drainage infrastructure required to serve the development, to ensure no risk of flooding off-site has been delivered, or will be



delivered in parallel with the development, in consultation with Southern Water and the Environment Agency.

15. The provision of appropriate contributions towards the long-term maintenance and improvement of the flood mitigation reservoir at Brishing Lane.

### **Open space**

16. Provision of publicly accessible open space as required by criterion 2.

### **Community infrastructure**

17. Appropriate contributions towards community infrastructure will be provided, where proven necessary.

### **Highways**

18. Safe connections will be made to the existing cycle network from Park Wood to the town centre and through the upgrading of PROW KH364 and KH365.

### **Strategic transport requirements**

19. Allocations H1(5), H1(6), H1(7), H1(8), H1(9), H1(10), H1(21) and H1(22) are subject to strategic transport requirements as part of the south east strategic housing location. These allocations will contribute, as proven necessary, towards the following;

- i. An additional inbound lane for vehicular traffic with bus priority measures on the A274 Sutton Road from Willington Street to the Wheatsheaf junction;
- ii. The improvement of the Willington Street / A274 Sutton Road junction;
- iii. A new roundabout to be provided on the A274 to allow access to Langley Park site;
- iv. A new access road of a width suitable to accommodate contra-flow traffic and adjacent footways between Gore Court Road from the western boundary of Bicknor Wood and A274 Sutton Road;
- v. Widening Gore Court Road to a suitable width to accommodate contra-flow traffic with a footway on the eastern side of the carriageway between White Horse Lane and the access into the North of Sutton Road site; and

vi. A pedestrian and cycle crossing on the A274 to link the allocated development sites.

vii. Strategic road infrastructure to significantly relieve traffic congestion on Sutton Road and Willington Street.

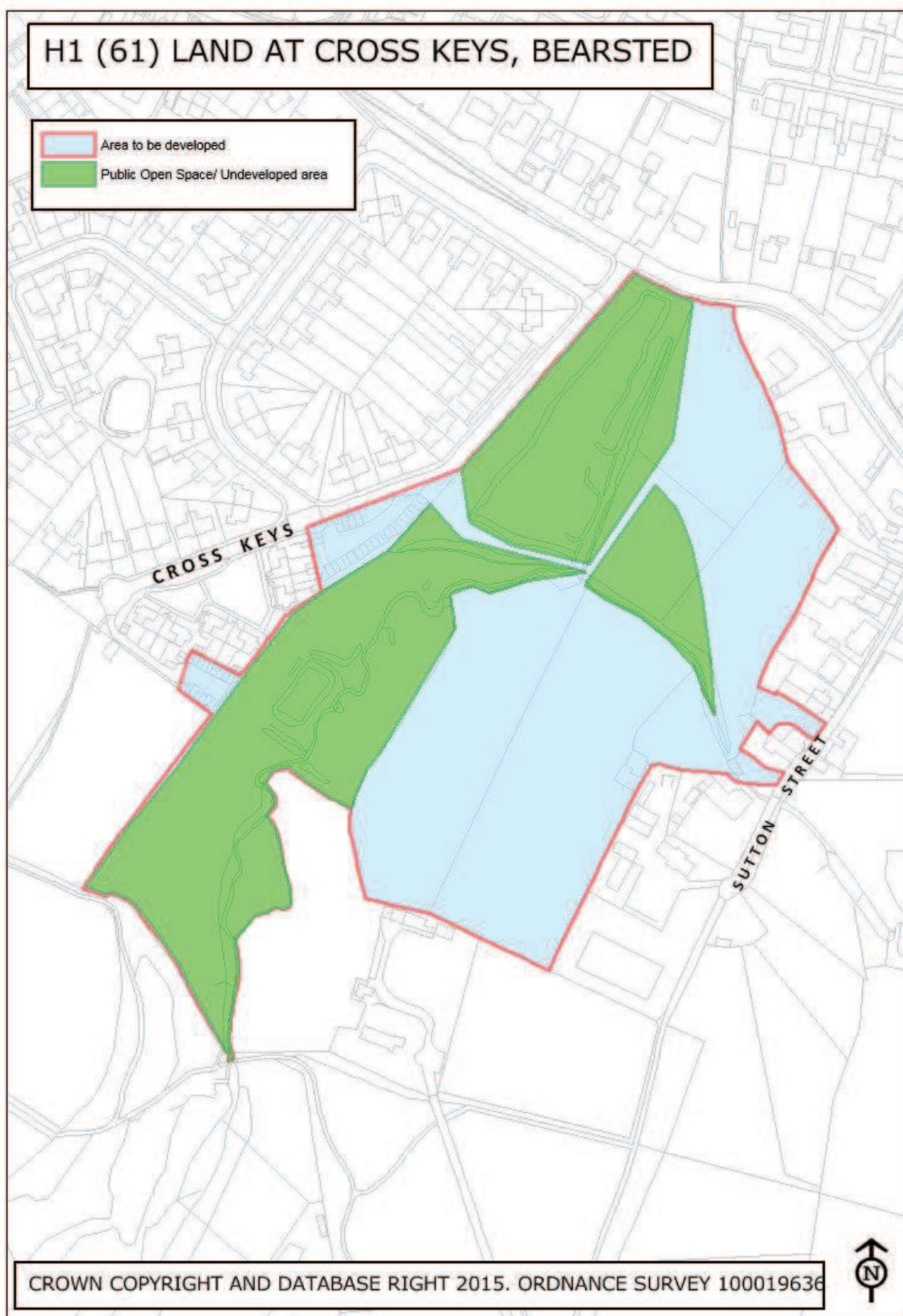
An individual transport assessment for each development, to be submitted to and approved by the Borough Council in consultation with Kent County Council as the highway authority and the Highways Agency, where appropriate, will demonstrate how proposed mitigation measures address the cumulative impacts of all the sites taken together.

Gross area (ha) 47.1 Net Area 32.4(ha)

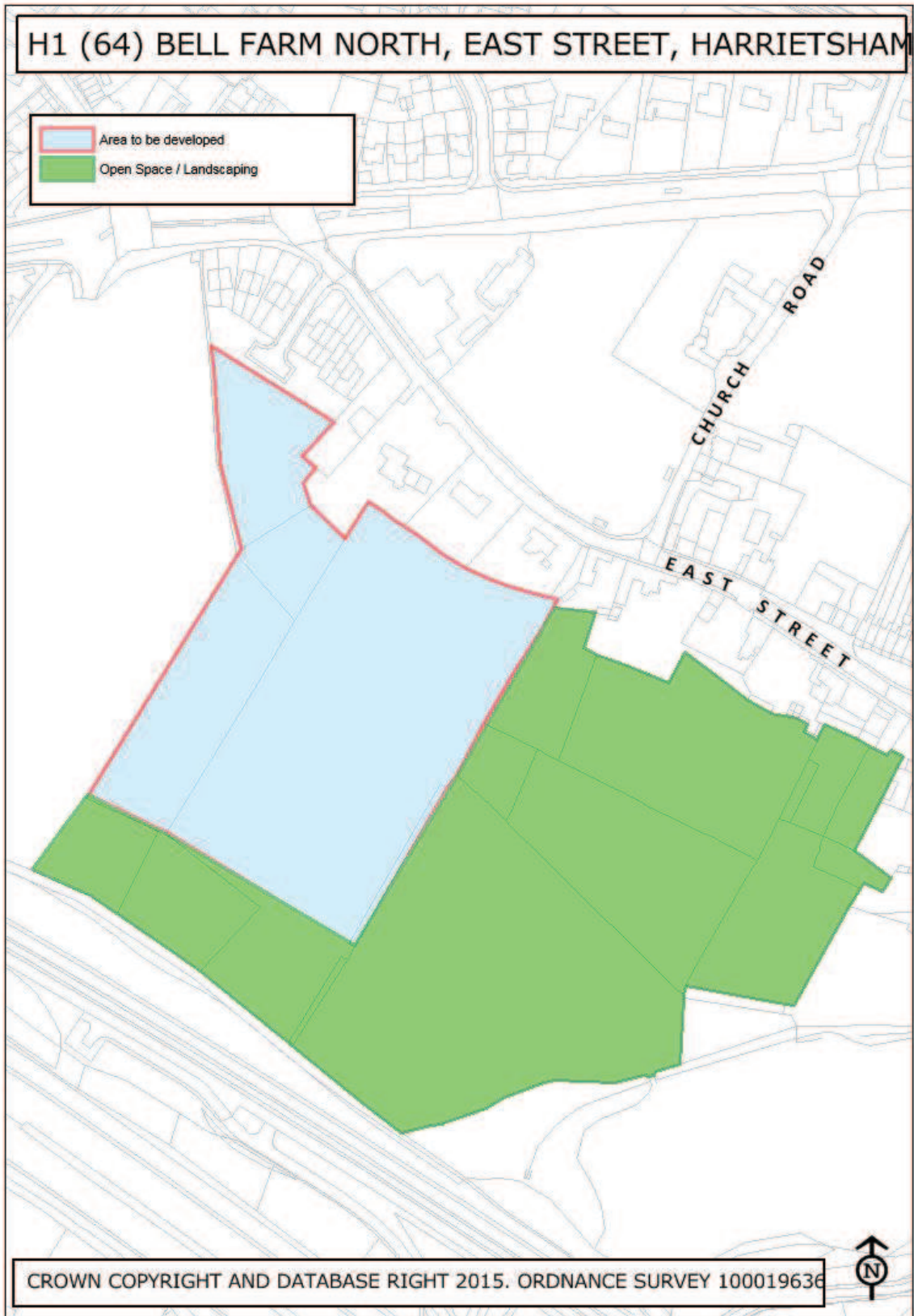
Approximate density 26dpha Approximate net capacity 850

H1 (57) LAND AT FORMER ASTOR OF HEVER  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL, OAKWOOD ROAD, MAIDSTONE

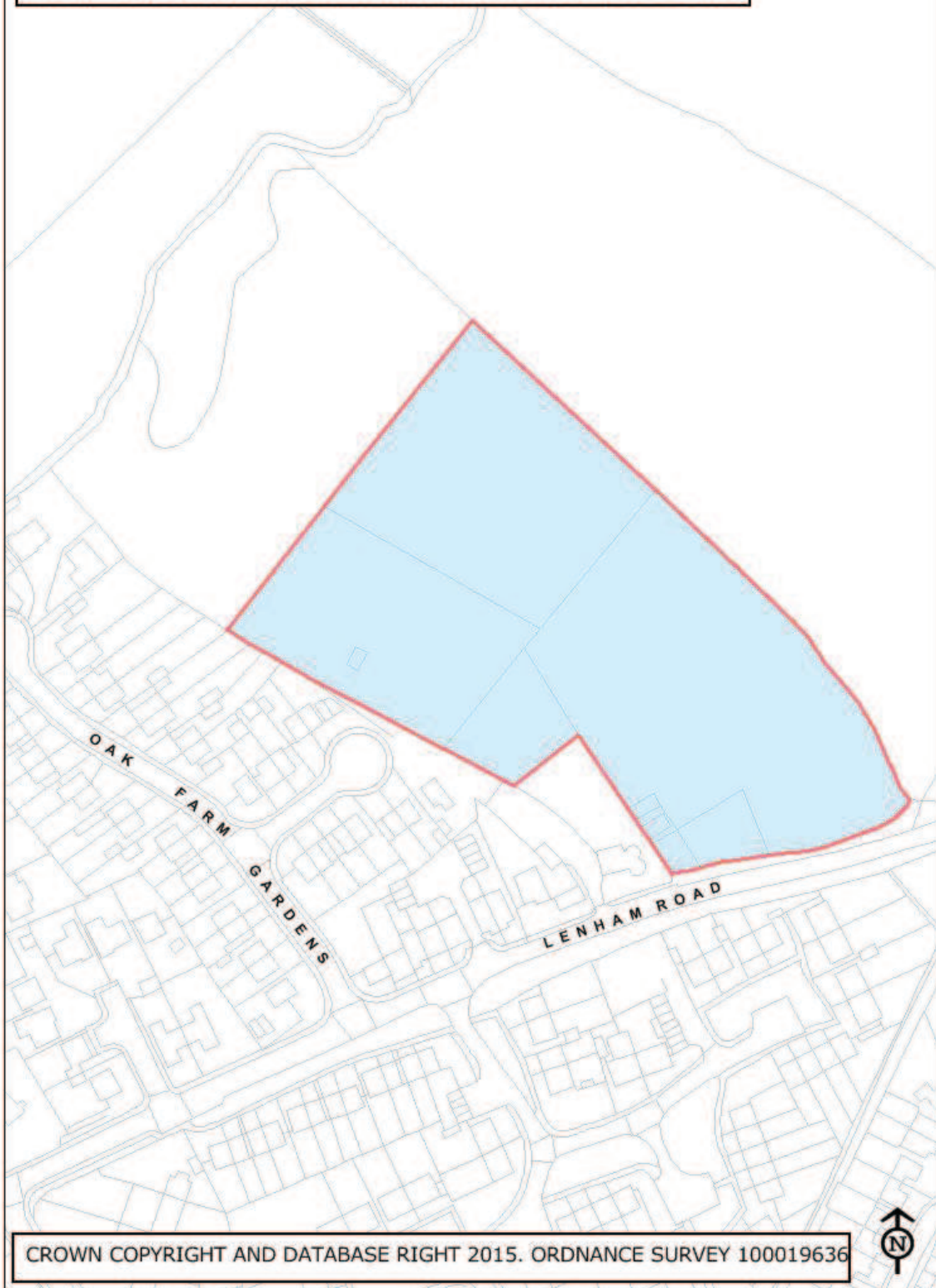




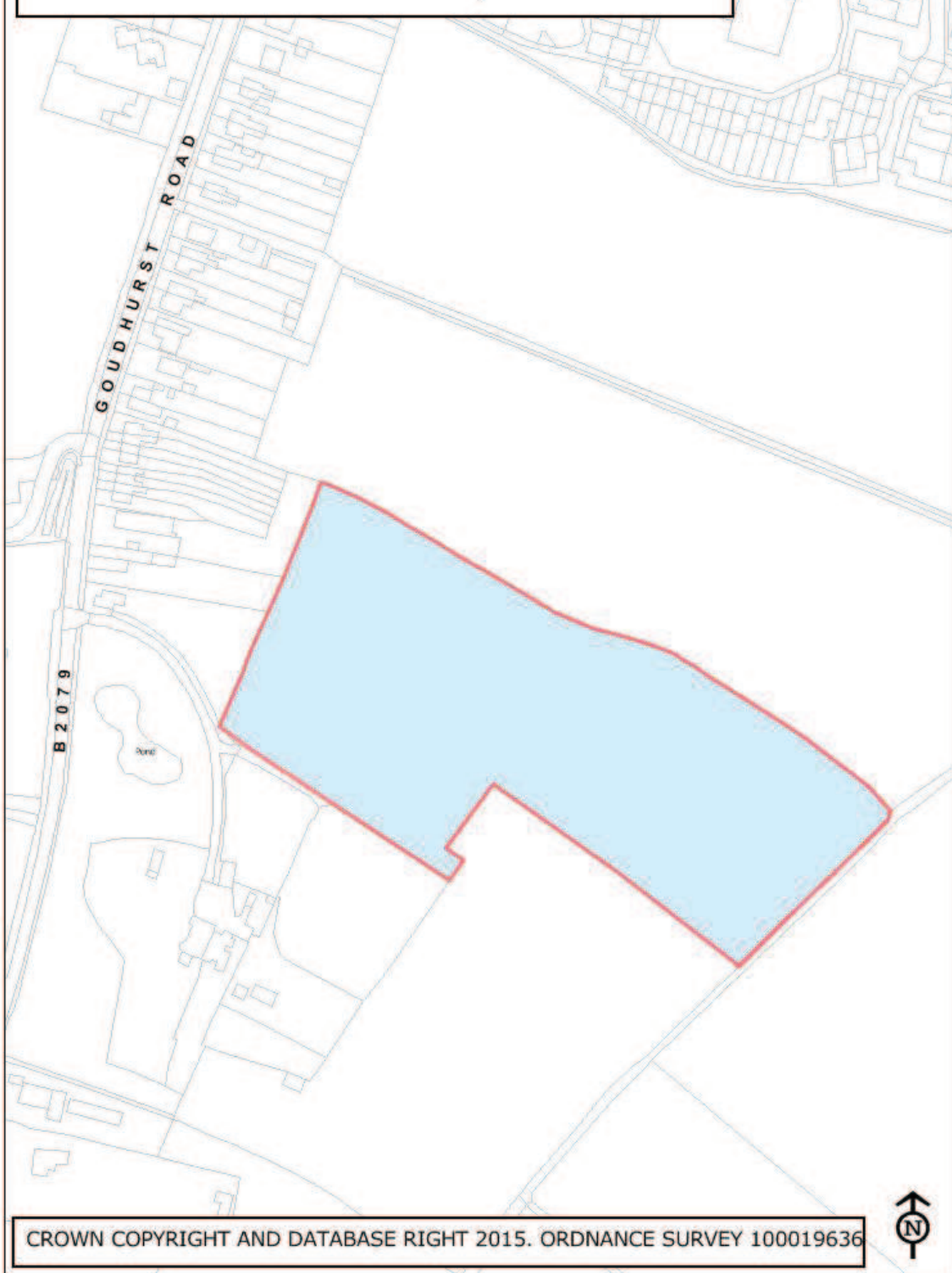




H1 (65) LAND AT LENHAM ROAD, HEADCORN



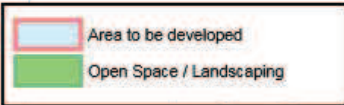
H1 (66) LAND SOUTH OF THE PARSONAGE,  
GOUDHURST ROAD, MARDEN



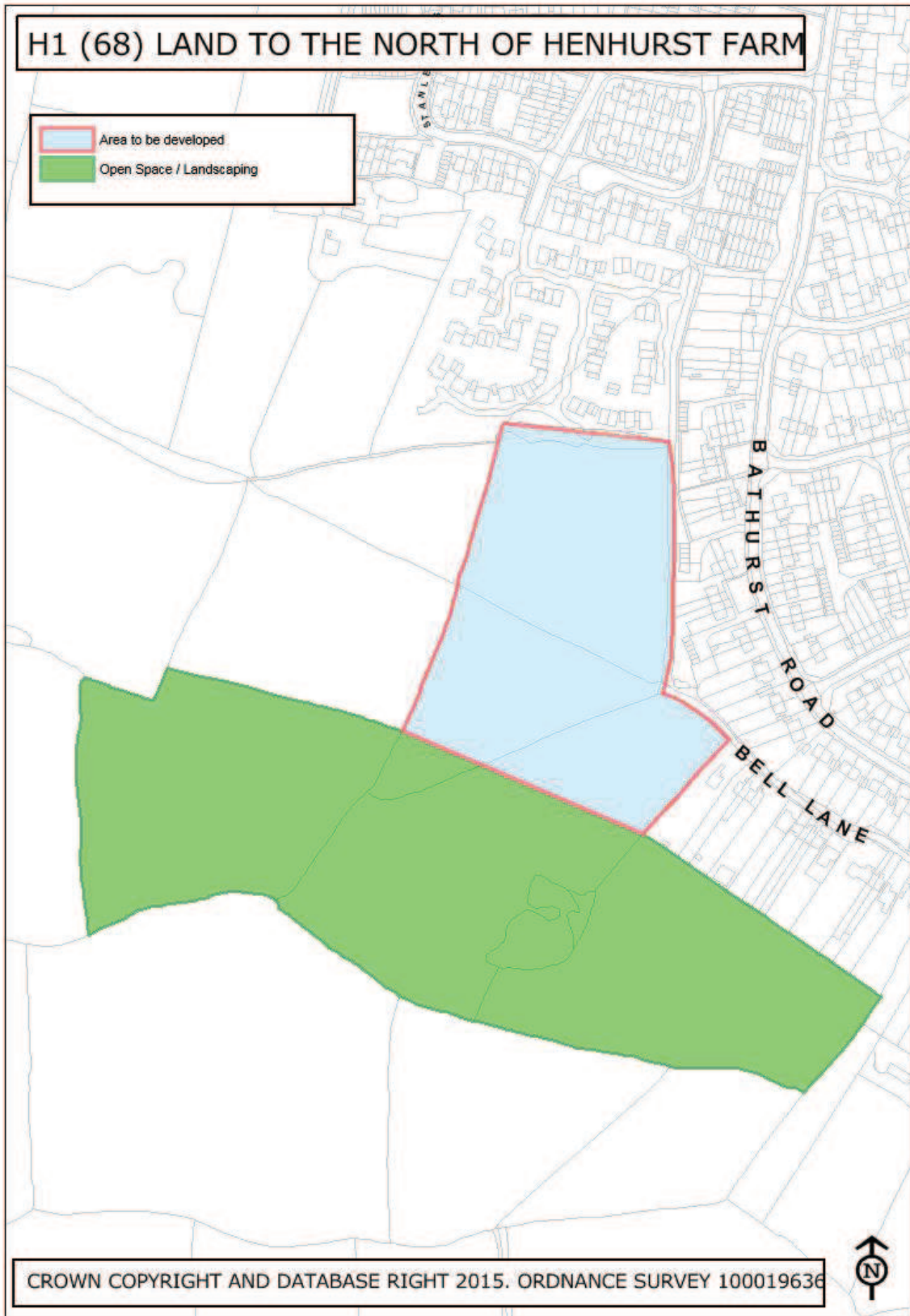
CROWN COPYRIGHT AND DATABASE RIGHT 2015. ORDNANCE SURVEY 100019636

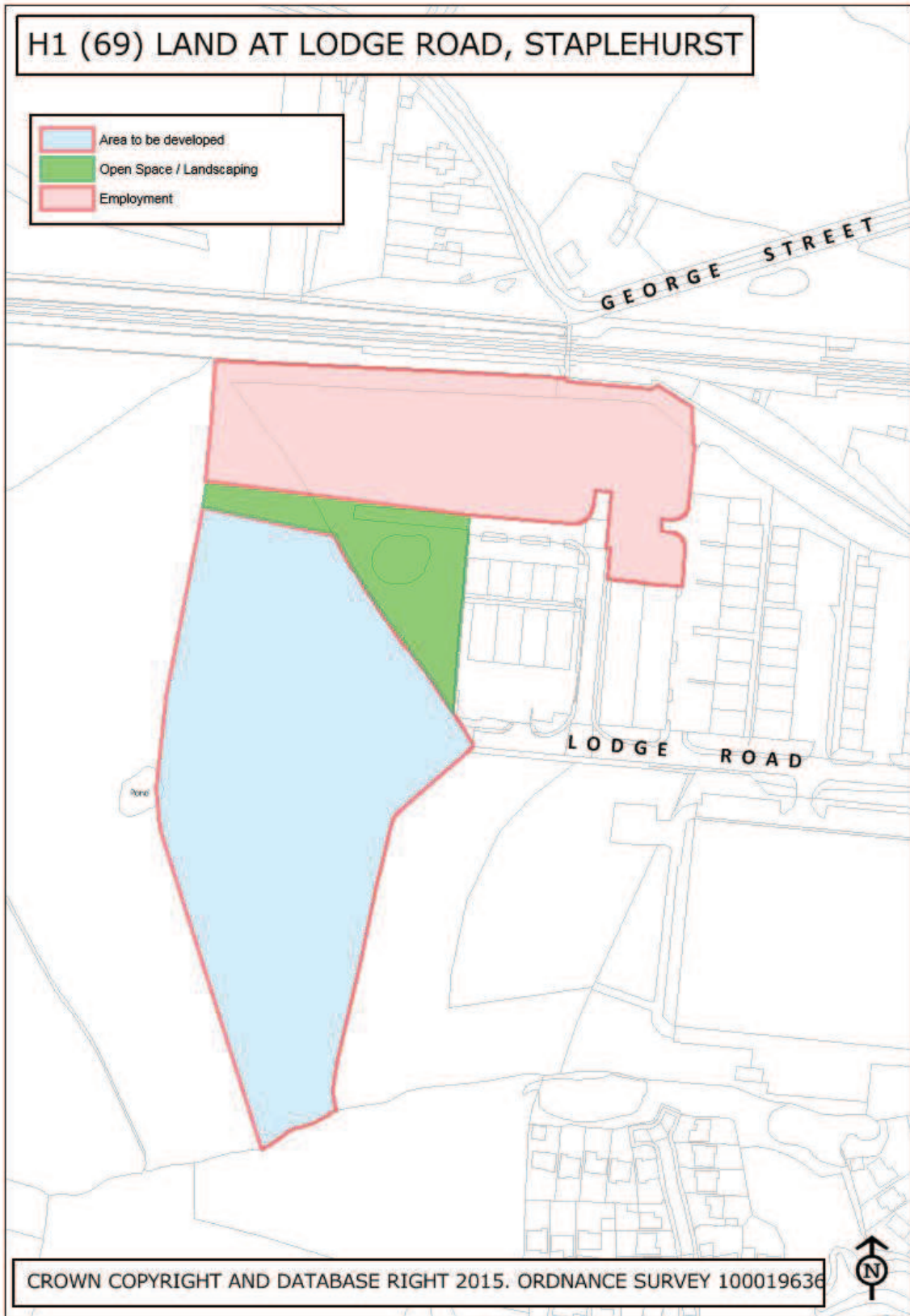


# H1 (67) LAND SOUTH OF MARDEN ROAD, STAPLEHURST

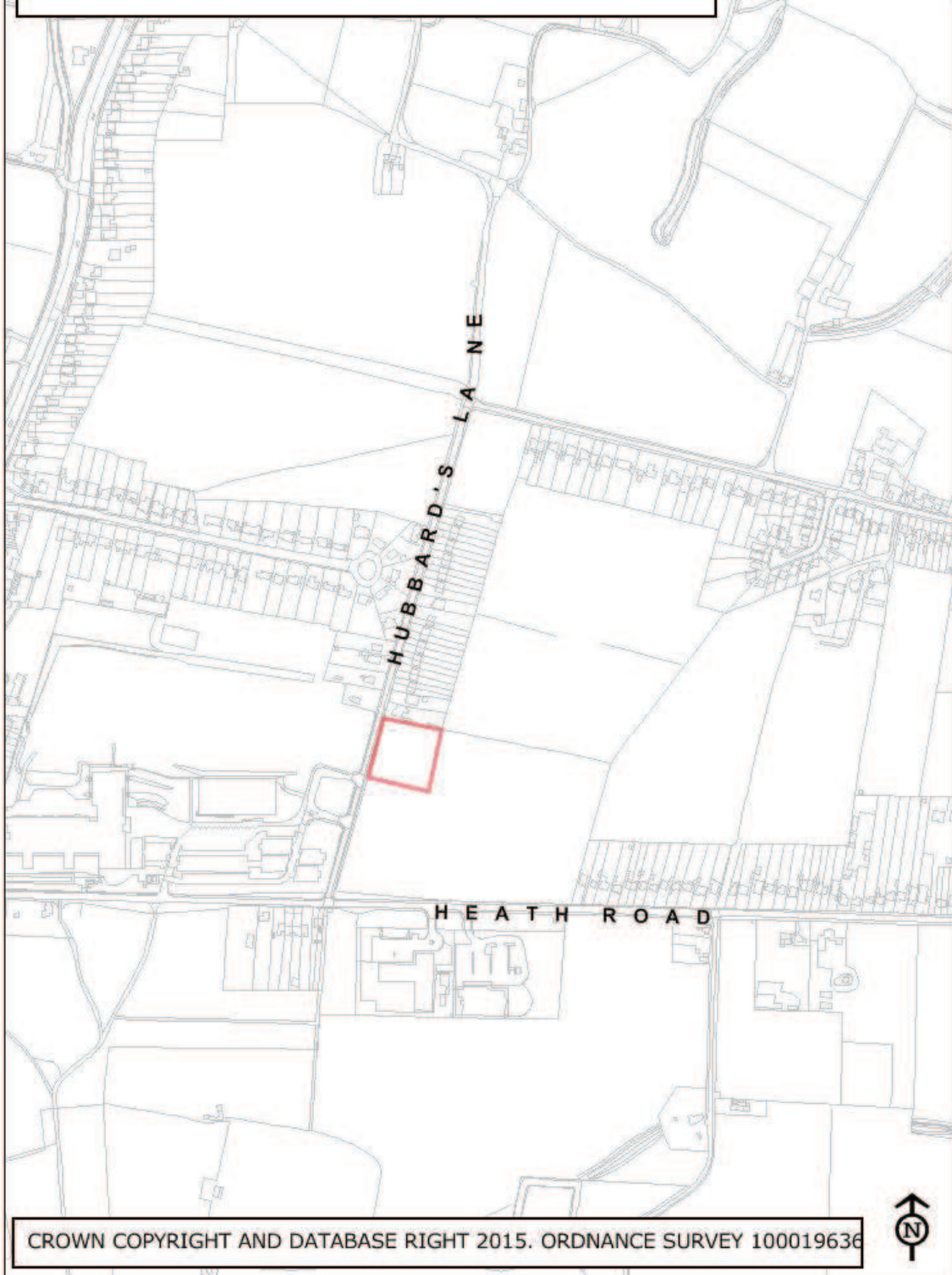






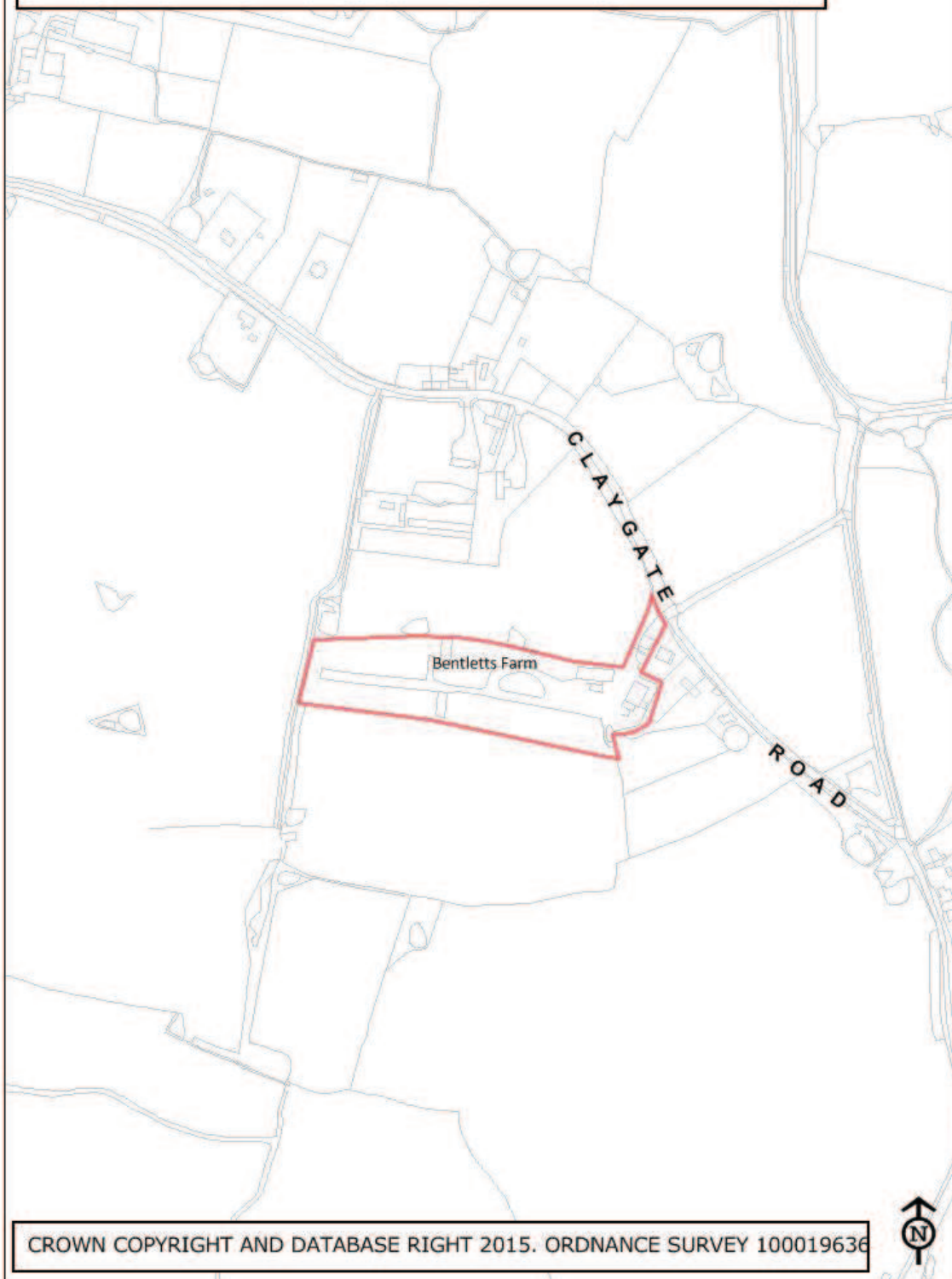


H03 - 220 HUBBARDS LANE, LOOSE AND  
BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA

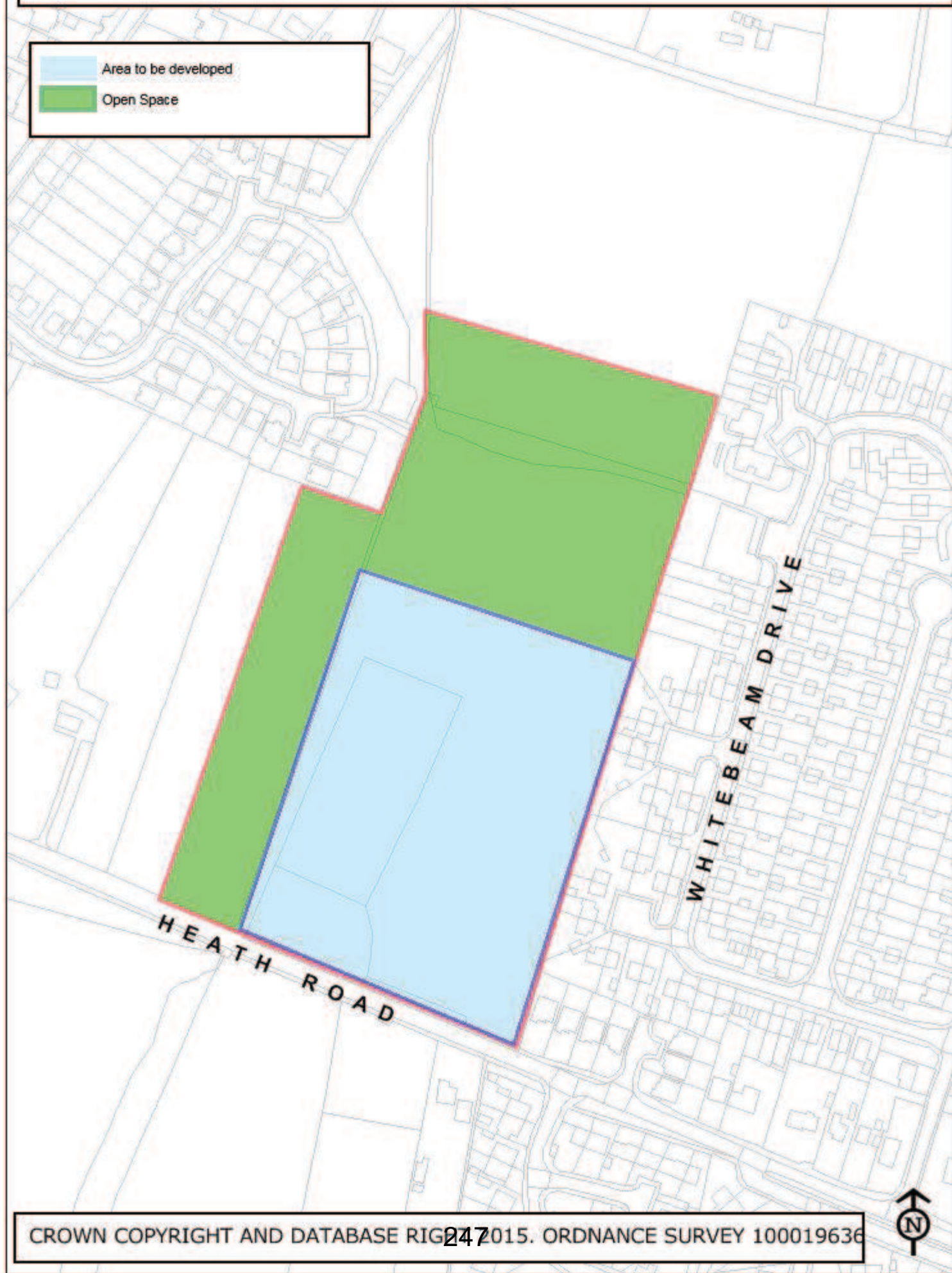
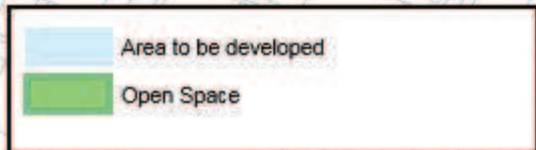




H03 - 270 BENTLETTS YARD, CLAYGATE ROAD,  
LADDINGFORD



# H1 (76) LAND NORTH OF HEATH ROAD (OLDER'S FIELD) COXHEATH





# H1 (19) BELL FARM, NORTH STREET, BARMING

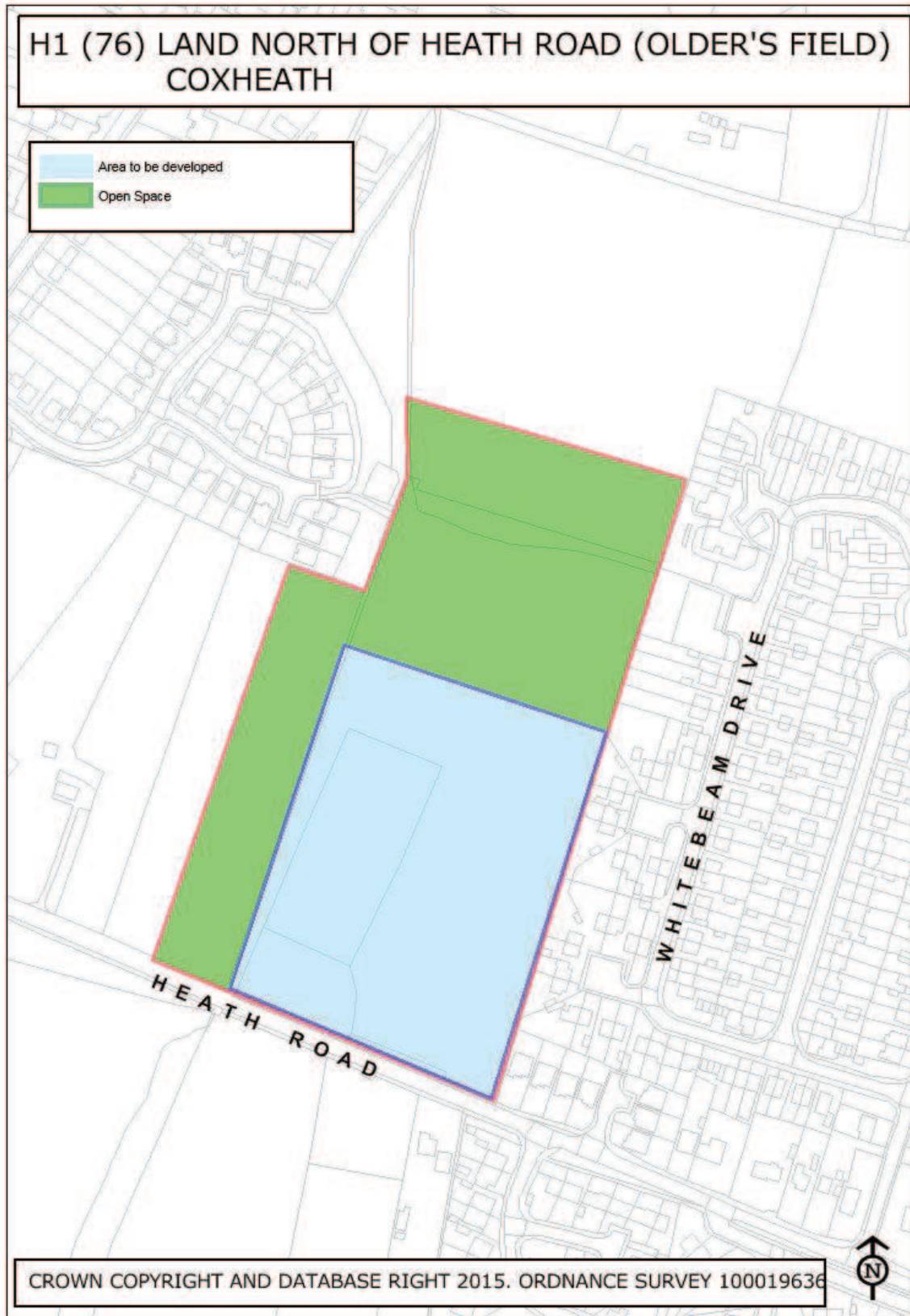


Site Boundary

HEATH ROAD

BELL FARM GARDENS





## **H1(76) – Land North of Heath Road (Older’s Field) Coxheath**

**Ward: Coxheath and Hunton**

**Parish: Coxheath**

**Current use: Vacant regenerating heathland/woodland with informal public access**

### **Land North of Heath Road (Older’s Field) Coxheath: Development Criteria**

The site is located on the north side of the B2163 Heath Road, immediately adjacent to the current western boundary of the village of Coxheath. It extends to 4.59h in area. The land falls gently towards the north.

Currently, the site is comprised largely of sweet chestnut woodland with heathland plants such as Broom taking hold, along with Sweet Chestnut/Silver Birch trees on previously more open areas. In the centre of the area is an open grassed area beyond a bund feature.

Established woodland (2.13ha) to the north is not currently being managed as coppice woodland. This has permission however, for use as public open space, approved under application 13/1999.

From throughout much of the site, the dwellings at Whitebeam Drive/Lynden Road and Wakehurst Close within the existing village boundary of Coxheath to the east are visible; there is a harsh edge to the village. The majority of this boundary is close-boarded fencing and the houses are on slightly higher land than much of the site. The current boundary edge with Coxheath is used for dumping of household garden waste in some cases.

Approximately half way into the site, to the north west, the dwellings at Adbert Drive/Fairhurst Drive are visible. These were built on the site of a former scrap metal yard and are accessed from Dean Street further to the west which comprises a linear residential development on either side.

The whole site area is criss-crossed by a network of informal paths running north-south and east-west through the woodland and scrub and is well-used on an informal basis by local residents.

PROW KM46 runs along the western side of the site from Heath Road towards Pleasant Valley Lane which is also a PROW (KM44) but which is surfaced and serves a number of dwellings and also grazing land.

Planning permission was granted in 1972 (MK/3/71/385) for a petrol filling station and showroom with caretaker’s flat on the part of the site fronting Heath Road. The development was commenced and an application for a lawful development certificate, demonstrating that the permission remained valid, was



granted in 1999 (99/0771). However, given the regeneration that is taking place on the site, evidence of the works undertaken to implement the 1972 permission are becoming harder to see on site but they do remain.

Two areas of open space to the west and north of the proposed residential development area are indicated. These areas should be provided and transferred to the Council or other appropriate body. These areas together with the area to the north already permitted as open space will, play an important role in prevent coalescence between the settlements of Dean Street and Coxheath. This is an aspiration of the emerging Coxheath Neighbourhood Plan.

Planning permission will be granted if the following criteria are met.

### **Design and Layout**

1. The layout will provide for a range of dwelling types and sizes to ensure an appropriate mix of accommodation is provided.
2. Development proposals will be of a high standard of design and sustainability incorporating the use of vernacular materials and demonstrating compliance with the requirements of policies DM2, DM3 and DM4.
3. Residential development shall take place on not more than 2.25ha of the site as indicated on the Proposals Map and shall be accessed from the B2163 Heath Road.
4. Two areas of open space comprising a minimum of 1.54ha to the north of the residential development area and a minimum of 0.8ha to the west of the residential development area as shown on the proposals map shall be provided and transferred to the Council or other appropriate body.

### **Landscape/Ecology**

5. The development proposals are designed to take into account the results of a landscape and visual impact assessment undertaken in accordance with the principles of current guidance.
6. The development proposals are designed to take into account the results of a detailed arboricultural survey, tree constraints plan and tree retention/protection plans.
7. The development proposals are designed to take into account the result of a phase 1 habitat survey and any species specific surveys that may as a result be recommended, together with any necessary mitigation/enhancement measures.

### **Flood risk and drainage**

8. Development will be subject to the results of a detailed flood risk assessment and a sustainable surface water drainage strategy that

demonstrates that surface water run-off from the site will not lead to an increased risk of flooding off-site.

### **Community facilities**

9. Appropriate contributions towards community infrastructure in Coxheath to mitigate the additional impact of the development will be provided where proven necessary.

### **Open space**

10. In addition to the provision of publicly accessible open space pursuant to Criterion 2 other contributions towards other types of open space as proven necessary and/or contributions towards such provision off-site will be provided.

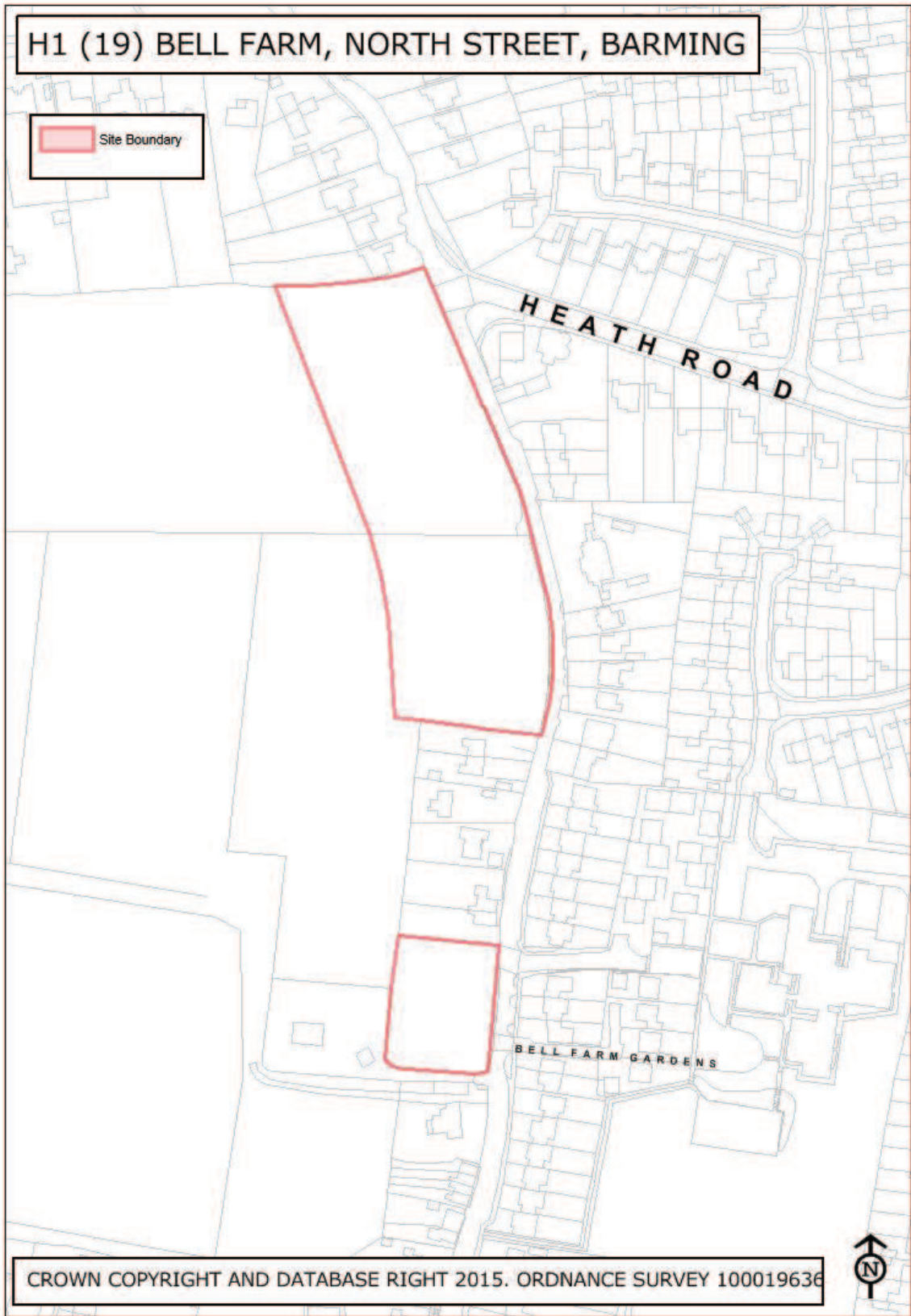
### **Access**

11. Vehicular access shall be taken from the B2163 Heath Road.
12. Improvements to PROW KM46 from Heath Road as far as its junction with KM46 (Pleasant Valley Lane) for the benefit of both pedestrian and cycle access.

### **Highways**

13. Appropriate contributions towards the improvement in capacity and safety of the junction of the B2163 Heath Road and the A229 Linton Road at Linton Crossroads will be provided where proven necessary
14. The existing pedestrian footpath on the north side of Heath Road that currently terminates at Wakehurst Close shall be extended across the site frontage as far as PROW KM46.

Site area 4.59ha Developable area 2.25ha  
Approximate yield: 55 Net density: 24.4dwellings/ha



**+H1 (19) Bell Farm, North Street, Barming: Amended Criterion 2**

Criterion 2 currently reads:

2: The North Street frontage will be set back from the road to maintain the open character of this location.

Amend criterion 2 to read:

2: Development on the North Street frontage shall be set back a minimum of 5m from the road to maintain the open character of this location.