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Work undertaken by both Maidstone and KCC has concluded that the scheme is 'good' – as a transport proposal it achieves a good benefit to cost ratio. There is also no public transport solution that would limit the need for a road because the nature of the traffic flows are such that you cannot achieve the critical mass that a public transport solution would require.

But a good transport case is no longer enough to justify investment in a new road. Funders prioritise schemes that unlock new development. So there would appear to be no scenario where the Councils long standing objective, to deliver the road, can be achieved without development to enable it.

To address this, the Council, with the landowners have developed a policy led solution that uses development to pay for the route and also deliver a new community.

The Council recognises that these homes are not 'needed' at the moment. But there will be a time, most likely at the next plan review, when the Council is asked to formally allocate more land for development. So, the Council's strategy is for this plan round to lay the foundations to ensure that the various technical components are available when needed. Importantly the safeguarded policy provides stakeholder partners a framework that they can use to progress the expensive technical evidence.

The Council considers that this approach would appear to align with the recent changes to the NPPF and the new emphasis that the plan can play in supporting a long term 'vision' for the Borough. The Council notes that these changes to the NPPF were partly in response to failed Garden Community Proposals elsewhere and the challenge in assembling the delivery evidence to support formal allocations inside the plan period.

The Council accepts that the evidence is not sufficient to allocate the land for development nor to draft the detailed development management policies that would be required. This is a matter for a plan review to address. The Council also recognises that there is a risk that the technical evidence identifies new 'showstoppers'. And/or national policy may change between now and a plan review. In this scenario the Council would, at plan review, be able to delete the safeguarded policy and look to identify an alternative future portfolio via traditional call for sites etc. But the intention of the policy, and the product of the work to date, is that this area can be shaped to a sustainable location for future rounds of housing growth and also one whereby the Councils long standing objective to deliver a relief route is achieved.