

# Maidstone Borough Local Plan Examination

Session 13B Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016  
14:00 – 17:00 regarding 'Alternative Sites'

## **Representation R19130: Lenham Road, Headcorn**

By

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Replies to questions set by the Local Plan Inspector are as follows:

Issue (i) – whether the alternative site would be suitable, sustainable and deliverable.

**Q 13.20 Does the site have any relevant planning history?**

Yes. The company has recently submitted planning application MA/16/502755/OUT for 48 dwellings. This application was refused on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2016 under delegated powers. A copy of the officer's report is attached as **Appendix 1**; this sets out the grounds of refusal. It should be noted that the company considers the ecological objection to be undefendable as there appears to be some confusion regarding some of the issues which are clearly capable of resolution between the company's ecologist and KCC Ecology. The submitted layout is shown at **Appendix 2**.

**Q 13.21 What's the site's policy status in the submitted Local Plan?**

Landscape of Local Value. Headcorn village is surrounded by this designation. Therefore it should be noted that all the land allocated for development at Headcorn falls within this category.

**Q 13.22 What is the site's policy status in any made or emerging Neighbourhood Plan?**

Headcorn Parish Council have produced the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan and this was subject to a public examination on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016. At the time of writing the examiner's report is awaited. It should be noted that this Neighbourhood Plan is sought to be in conformity with the Maidstone Boroughwide Plan of 2000 not the emerging Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan has no allocations although there is some degree of acceptance that some of the land between Grigg Lane and Lenham Road is sustainable. This land already has planning approval and some houses are already under construction by Crest Nicholson. However, the unallocated two fields west of the Cricket and Tennis Club are not endorsed as such; open countryside is favoured in the NP. The NP does not see Headcorn as a village with sustainable credentials and a Rural Service Centre where positive housing growth should be favoured.

**Q 13.23 Is the site greenfield or previously developed (brownfield) land according to the definition in the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework?**

Greenfield. However, it should be noted that the fields are in separate unrelated ownership and do not form part of an agricultural holding. The land quality is 3b, the same Wealden clay as lies under adjacent land in the Grigg Lane / Lenham Road area which already is allocated for housing and with planning permission (Phases 1 and 2 already under construction Crest Nicholson).

**Q 13.24**      **What previous consideration by the Council has been given to the site's development (e.g. inclusion in a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHEDDLAA) and does the Representor have any comments on its conclusions?**

Surprisingly, this land was rejected by the Council in its call for sites exercise under HO-132 (**Appendix 3**) yet has granted approval to two other sites which in our opinion are of a lesser standing i.e. MA/15/503325 for 220 dwellings west of Ulcombe Road and MA/15/507424 west of the Maidstone Road. The planning officers also granted planning permission for MA/14/505162 to Countryside Properties and this is under construction - 48 dwellings. This site lies on the northern side of Lenham Road.

The planning officers also recommended approval for MA/15/509288 for another site on the north of Lenham Road but this was refused by Members at the Planning Committee of the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016. This has been subject to a public hearing on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and a decision is awaited by the end of November. This site lies opposite this subject site.

**Q 13.25**      **What is the site area and has a plan been submitted which identifies the site?**

Yes. The area is approximately 2.2 ha (5.4 acres)

**Q 13.26**      **What type, and amount of development could be expected and at what density?**

The company application is for 48 dwellings and it should be noted that there is a keen driver to deliver 18 bungalows on this site as shown on the attached layout at **Appendix 2**.

**Q 13.27**      **When could development be delivered and at what rate?**

The site could deliver housing within the short term to augment the 5 year housing supply. In terms of delivery the site could deliver 48 dwellings over an 18 month period inclusive of the 40% affordable housing provision.

**Q 13.28**      **What evidence is there of the viability of the proposed development?**

The company is confident that the site is deliverable and can produce a return within expected normal commercial parameters.

**Q 13.30**      **Has the site been subject of sustainability appraisal and does the Representor have any comments on its conclusions?**

We are not aware of a specific sustainability appraisal. The Borough Council's officers reported to committee that the site on the northern side of Lenham Road was sustainable for housing although the application was refused by Members. A public hearing was held on 19<sup>th</sup> October and a decision is awaited.

**Q 13.31**      **What constraints are there on the site's development and how could any adverse impact be investigated?**

The main constraint is the need to provide mitigation for the Great Crested Newts in the area. The layout makes adequate pond and foraging provision for these animals and it is anticipated that the ecological objections raised by KCC Ecology are somewhat misplaced. The Council has not refused the application with regard to the site proximity to the Cricket Club and overall the release of this greenfield site is relatively straight forward subject to planning permission and a Great Crested Newt licence from Natural England.

It should be noted that the Company has been involved in this area for many years in terms of promoting housing development and licenses are in place for Phases 1 & 2 which are now being built by Crest Nicholson as they have bought the land off my company Wealden Homes.

# **APPENDIX 1**

<b>NOTES FOR TECH:</b>		
<b>APPLICATION PROPOSAL</b>		<b>Ref No 16/502755/OUT</b>
Outline application for the construction of up to 48 no. bungalows, houses and apartments with 40% affordable housing, associated amenity land for ecological mitigation, and new vehicular access from Lenham Road inclusive of footway on southern side of Lenham Road, Headcorn.		
<b>ADDRESS</b> Land Off Lenham Road Headcorn Kent		
<b>RECOMMENDATION - Refuse</b>		
<b>WARD</b> Headcorn	<b>PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL</b> Headcorn	<b>APPLICANT</b> Wealden Ltd <b>AGENT</b> Wealden Homes
<b>DECISION DUE DATE</b> 30/06/16	<b>PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE</b> 24 May 2016	<b>OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE</b> 3 May 2016
<b>RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including relevant history on adjoining site):</b>		
<b>App No</b>	<b>Summary</b>	
No site history. Relevant history on adjoining sites as follows:		
15/501342/OUT	Site adjacent to west boundary of application site. Outline application for the erection of 28 dwellings including amenity space and nature conservation mitigation corridors, approval for access, appearance, layout and scale being sought with landscape reserved for future consideration. Including development affecting a Public Right of Way. Approved 14/07/2016. Wealden Homes Phase 4 of allocated housing site H1(38).	
14/503960/OUT	Outline application for 13 no. dwelling houses with associated amenity space, shared access road and new footway with access, appearance, layout and scale to be considered at this stage with all other matters reserved for future consideration. Approved 14/07/2016. Wealden Homes Phase 3 of allocated housing site H1(38).	
13/1943	Outline planning application for the erection of a children's' nursery school, 20 residential units (comprising 17 detached, semi-detached and terraced houses and 3 bungalows) and provision of a children's' play area together with off-site highway improvements to the junction of Oak Lane and Wheeler Street (A274). Approval is sought for access, appearance, layout and scale with landscaping as a reserved matter. Approved 28/10/2014. Wealden Homes Phase 2 of allocated housing site H1(38).	
12/1949	Outline planning application with access, layout, scale and appearance to be determined and with landscaping as a reserved matter, for the demolition of buildings at Kent Cottage and Chance Holding to enable the construction of residential development (for 25 dwellings inclusive of 10 affordable dwellings), inclusive of retained woodland as open amenity land, enhanced landscaping including new pond, electricity sub station, foul drainage pumping station with access road off Grigg Lane. Approved 08/08/2013. Wealden Homes Phase 1 of allocated housing site H1(38).	
15/509288/OUT	Land north of Lenham Road – Opposite application site. Outline planning application for the construction of up to 57 no. dwellings including 40% affordable housing, associated public open space, ecological mitigation land and new vehicular access from Lenham Road. Refused 17/03/2016 for the following reason:  <i>'The proposed development would be contrary to policies ENV28 and ENV34 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and notwithstanding the lack of a 5 year housing land supply, the harm to the</i>	

	<i>landscape, in particular the Special Landscape Area, by virtue of the extension of built development into open countryside, forming an incongruous intrusion into the said countryside, should be given weight.'</i>
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### **DESCRIPTION OF SITE**

The application site is situated on the eastern edge of the existing built-up area of Headcorn between allocated housing site H1(38) in the draft local plan to the south west and the Headcorn Cricket Club to the north east.

The site comprises approximately 2.1ha of low lying level grassland within open fields bordered by hedgerows and trees to all boundaries. It is located approximately 350 metres east of the settlement boundary of Headcorn as defined in the Local Plan 2000 and located within the countryside for Development Plan purposes and is also designated as a Special Landscape Area, the Low Weald. The application site would be located outside the proposed village settlement boundary of Headcorn in the emerging plan.

Allocated housing sites H1(38) adjacent to the application site to the south west benefit from 4 separate planning permissions comprising a total of 86 residential units which will be built out in 4 stages.

Planning permission (14/505162) has been granted for 48 new residential units on the north side of the Lenham Road to the west which is an allocated housing site H1(41) in the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan and is currently under construction. Planning permission 15/509288/OUT was refused for the construction of up to 57 no. dwellings on the site directly adjacent site H1(41) and is currently subject to appeal.

It has been established that the site is Agricultural Land Classification grade 3b which means moderate quality agricultural land.

### **PROPOSAL**

Outline application for the construction of up to 48 no. bungalows, houses and apartments with 40% affordable housing, associated amenity land for ecological mitigation, and new vehicular access from Lenham Road inclusive of footway on southern side of Lenham Road, Headcorn.

The application involves the consideration of access only from Lenham Road and all other matters are reserved. Proposed development is described as phase 5 of its development of parcels of adjoining land to the south and west included within allocated housing sites H1(38) and H1(40) in the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

The indicative layout shows vehicular access from the west corner of the site with provision of a concentric road layout with houses laid out in standard traditional plots facing the street. Within the centre of the site, rear gardens would backing onto other rear gardens opposite in a typical block layout. Two blocks of flats would be located to the southern corner.

A footpath is proposed from the west side of the vehicular entrance to extend presumably to the village. An additional footpath is proposed through to the site adjacent to the south which would provide an additional route through to the village centre.

A gap in the north eastern hedge is proposed to provide gated access through to the cricket club.

## **PLANNING CONSTRAINTS**

Countryside location

## **POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan: ENV6, ENV28, ENV34

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Maidstone Borough Council (Submission Version) Draft Local Plan: SP5, SP7, SP17, DM1, DM2, DM3, DM11, DM12, DM13, DM14, DM24.

In accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF, weight can be afforded to the policies of the council's emerging plan having regard to the progress the plan has made to examination. Furthermore, it is key that 3 of 4 allocations contained within the plan are either consented or in the planning process for determination and therefore are deliverable within 5 years.

Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan - Paragraph 216 of the NPPF allows weight to be given to emerging plans and the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan has proceeded through consultation and is due for an examination hearing on the 18<sup>th</sup> October. This plan contains a number of policies regarding countryside protection and the manner of delivery of housing amongst other policies.

### **Policy Appraisal**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000, and as such the starting point for consideration of the proposal is policy ENV28 which relates to development within the open countryside. The policy states that:

*"In the countryside planning permission will not be given for development which harms the character and appearance of the area or the amenities of surrounding occupiers, and development will be confined to:*

- (1) that which is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture and forestry; or*
- (2) the winning of minerals; or*
- (3) open air recreation and ancillary buildings providing operational uses only; or*
- (4) the provision of public or institutional uses for which a rural location is justified; or*
- (5) such other exceptions as indicated by policies elsewhere in this plan."*

None of the exceptions against the general policy of restraint apply, and therefore the proposal represents a departure from the Development Plan. It then falls to be considered firstly whether there are any material considerations which indicate that a decision not in accordance with the Development Plan is justified in the circumstances of this case.

In this case the Submission Version of the Draft Local Plan has advanced and was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on the 20 May 2016 and examination is underway at the present time and expected to conclude in early December 2016. Following the submission of the plan, it is the council's position that it is now able to demonstrate a five



year housing supply having regard to paragraph 47 of the NPPF and its role as a material consideration in decision making.

In terms of other material considerations, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a key consideration, particularly with regard to housing land supply. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF states that Councils should;

*'identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land;'*

The Council has undertaken a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was completed in January 2014. This work was commissioned jointly with Ashford and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils. A key purpose of the SHMA is to quantify how many new homes are needed in the borough for the 20 year period of the emerging Local Plan (2011-31). The SHMA (January 2014) found that there is the objectively assessed need (OAN) for some 19,600 additional new homes over this period which was agreed by Cabinet in January 2014. Following the publication of updated population projections by the Office of National Statistics in May, the three authorities commissioned an addendum to the SHMA. The outcome of this focused update, dated August 2014, is a refined objectively assessed need figure of 18,600 dwellings. This revised figure was agreed by Cabinet in September 2014. Since that date revised household projection figures have been published by the Government and as a result the SHMA has been re-assessed. At the meeting of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on 9 June 2015, Councillors agreed a new OAN figure of 18,560 dwellings.

The new Local Plan has advanced and was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on the 20 May 2016. The Plan allocates housing sites considered to be in the most appropriate locations for the Borough to meet the OAN figure and allows the Council to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites. It is a key point that the emerging plan is seeking to meet its OAN in full and the five year supply is based upon such a figure. Whilst, previous appeal decisions are noted, this figure is the most appropriate on which to base the five year supply position particularly in the absence of any other targets on which to base the supply.

The yearly housing land supply monitoring carried out at 1 April 2016 calculated the supply of housing, assessed extant permissions, took account of existing under delivery and the expected delivery of housing. A 5% reduction from current housing supply was applied to account for permissions which expire without implementation. In conformity with the NPPF paragraph 47, a 5% buffer was applied to the OAN. The monitoring demonstrates the council has a 5.12 year supply of housing assessed against the OAN of 18,560 dwellings.

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as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 of 5.71 years – (see Housing Topic Paper Update 1 September 2016)

### LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

	COMMENTS RECEIVED	OFFICER RESPONSE
Headcorn Parish Council	<p>OBJECTION raised as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contrary to Maidstone Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan</li> <li>- Not sustainable site</li> <li>- Outside village boundary</li> <li>- Not meeting local housing needs</li> <li>- Increased traffic and commuting</li> <li>- Strain on local services</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	
Residential Objections Number received: 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close to aerodrome which causes noise</li> <li>- Not in accordance with MBC Local Plan or Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan.</li> <li>- Not sustainable site</li> <li>- Cumulative impact of housing developments in village will put strain on local services, drainage, sewerage, public transport, surgery and school.</li> <li>- Would increase housing in village to unsustainable number.</li> <li>- Building on flood plain.</li> <li>- Destroy rural nature of village.</li> <li>- Insufficient local employment</li> <li>- Insufficient parking.</li> <li>- Increased traffic and parking full around station.</li> <li>- Transport statement is inaccurate</li> <li>- Sitewithin Headcorn's Special Landscape Area (SLA) and is contrary to Policy ENV34, as the proposed development will neither protect nor conserve the scenic quality and distinctive character of the area.</li> <li>- No open spaces proposed</li> <li>- Village will become small town and sense of community will disappear.</li> </ul>	
Headcorn Cricket & Tennis Club	<p>Proposal includes entry gate to grounds where there is an increased risk of unauthorised public access and damage to the Club grounds, its buildings and equipment.</p>	

	<p>Will increase the number of instances the club grounds become water logged resulting in the pitch remaining under water for extended periods due to reduced natural drainage. Instances of flooding in the club's grounds have increased with excess water taking some time to disperse. By building so close to the grounds the problem will be exacerbated further, resulting in the cancellation of matches and the use of the grounds which would affect the Club's capacity to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain its standing and ability to support the tennis and cricket leagues.</li> <li>• Provide much needed sporting facilities to the local community, adults and young people alike in Headcorn and across the County.</li> <li>• Generate and retain income from membership and match fees. Such income is the Club's main source of funds (95%)</li> </ul> <p>There is concern that the planting of trees on the boundary will lead to the outfield area being shaded thus causing the area to be damp, difficult to maintain and use, and potentially dangerous as a result.</p> <p>Tennis courts have the benefit of floodlighting, which members have been able to enjoy without restriction for over 35 years. This is an increasingly unique and major attraction to current and potential new members. The Committee believe the proposed development will threaten this attraction as experience shows that in time residents will petition for a curfew for personal reasons. A lighting restriction will adversely affect the club's membership numbers and consequently its main source of income threatening the financial stability of the Club. The courts are used throughout the year with twice weekly 'Club nights' and league matches on many other evenings. A lighting restriction would severely restrict these activities.</p>	
Residential Support		

Number received: 0		
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## CONSULTATION RESPONSES

**Economic Development:** No objection subject to contributions to libraries, primary education and cost of acquiring additional land to accommodate the expansion of Headcorn PS.

**Natural England:** For the local planning authority to determine whether or not this application is consistent with national and local policies.

**Southern Water:** No objection subject to conditions and informatives.

**KCC Flood Officer:** No objection subject to conditions.

**KCC Highways:** No objection

**KCC Ecology:** Additional information required to clarify why the ecologist is satisfied that the functionality of the GCN population be maintained within the proposed development.

**Upper Medway Drainage Board:** No objection

**Rural Planning:** The Agricultural Land Classification Grade of the site has been confirmed to be only 3b (moderate quality) in a detailed survey dated September 2014, with soil wetness the main limitation. The land does not fall, therefore, within the BMV category, and I do not consider that the loss of agricultural land here, per se, is likely to form a determining issue in this instance.

## APPRAISAL

The main planning considerations relevant in the determination of this application are:

- \* The acceptability of the principle of development.
- \* Visual Impact of the development on the landscape.
- \* Impact of the development on biodiversity.

### Principle of Development

The council have submitted its emerging plan for examination in May 2016 and the examination into the Regulation 19 submission is currently under way with the closing session set for 1<sup>st</sup> December. This emerging plan will meet the objectively assessed housing need (OAN) which was derived from ONS figures. In order to deliver this planned growth, sustainable growth will take place across the five service centres, including Headcorn and the proposed future strategy of the village is set out in the emerging policy SP7 which proposes 423 dwellings set across the allocated sites within Headcorn. The policy seeks to direct minor development and redevelopment of existing sites within the settlement in accordance with policy SP5 whilst the rural fringe of the village is to be protected by the countryside policy SP17.

Policy SP17 of the Draft Local Plan, which relates to development in the countryside states that small-scale residential development will be permitted which meets local housing needs

where they do not harm the character and appearance of the area and any impacts can be appropriately mitigated.

With regard to this case, the application site is located adjacent to the settlement boundary of Headcorn which is identified as a Rural Service Centre (RSC) in the Draft Local Plan under draft policy SP7, providing a range of key services including a primary school, range of local shops, eateries, doctors surgery, village hall to name but some of the amenities/facilities available. Rural Service Centres are considered the most sustainable settlements in Maidstone's settlement hierarchy, as set out in the draft Local Plan, outside of the town centre and urban area. They have been identified as such for their accessibility, potential for growth and role as a service centre for surrounding areas. The draft Local Plan states that "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".

Given the Council can now demonstrate a 5 year housing supply, the council's housing policies can now be considered 'up-to-date' and therefore, the previous balancing exercise set out in paragraph 14 does not apply, namely whether there are adverse effects that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of approving the application or whether there are specific policies that would indicate planning permission should not be granted.

Planning application 15/509288/OUT located opposite the application site on the north side of Lenham Road outside of the settlement boundary was refused in July 2016 for the construction of up to 57 no. dwellings including 40% affordable housing, associated public open space, ecological mitigation land and new vehicular access from Lenham Road for the following reason:

*'The proposed development would be contrary to policies ENV28 and ENV34 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and notwithstanding the lack of a 5 year housing land supply, the harm to the landscape, in particular the Special Landscape Area, by virtue of the extension of built development into open countryside, forming an incongruous intrusion into the said countryside, should be given weight.'*

As such, as this application site is located outside the settlement boundary similar to that above, within the open countryside, it would be contrary to Policies ENV28 of the Maidstone Local Plan and Policy SP17 of the emerging Draft Local Plan and thus the principle of the development is not accepted.

#### **The effect on the character and appearance of the countryside**

Saved Policy ENV28 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan (2000) states that in the countryside, planning permission will not be given for development which harms the character and appearance of the area.

Policy SP17 of the Submission Version of the Draft Local Plan states that small-scale residential development which meets local housing needs where they do not harm the character and appearance of the area and any impacts can be appropriately mitigated.

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that Planning should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

Paragraph 56 attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and considers it key to sustainable development. It is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively towards making places better for people.

Paragraph 58 states that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of an area, establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, respond to local character and history, create safe and accessible environments and be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. The intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised.

The Kent Design Guide (2005) (KDG) emphasises that design solutions should be appropriate to context and the character of the locality. Development should reinforce positive design features of an area; include public areas that draw people together and create a sense of place; avoid a wide variety of building styles or mixtures of materials; form a harmonious composition with surrounding buildings or landscape features; and seek to achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development to reduce the need to travel and improve the local context.

The appeal site lies some distance beyond the current settlement boundary which is set by policy ENV28 of the 2000 Local Plan and is also located outside but adjacent to the settlement boundary that is defined within the emerging local plan. This policy can be given due weight particularly as the aim of the policy ENV28 is to protect the character of the countryside which is a principle which is consistent with that of the NPPF and its core principles set out in paragraph 17 of the framework. The adopted plan and the emerging plan both retain the site as an area of countryside and of landscape value despite the sustainable growth intended for the village under policy SP17 of the emerging plan. It should also be noted that the site also is contrary to the approach proposed within the neighbourhood plan both in terms of its location beyond the village, size and delivery, although on limited weight can be attached to this due to the progress of the neighbourhood plan.

The site lies within the Low Weald, an important landscape across Kent and Sussex which is given special protection under Policy ENV34 of the 2000 Local Plan, a protection which is intended to be continued under Policy SP17 and Policy DM34 which seeks to protect landscapes of local value. The site was assessed under the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (amended 2013), which is part of the evidence base to the emerging plan, and which divides the borough into a number of character areas. This document confirms the site is located within an area known as Headcorn Pasturelands (no.43). This character area is a low lying area with enclosed pasture land and has a prominence of English Oak as individual stands within pastureland and within hedgerows. The assessment also confirmed the area is characteristic of the Low Weald Landscape and considers the character area to be in good condition and have a high sensitivity to change. This is also reinforced by the Sensitivity Assessment 2015.

Natural England considers the Low Weald in its relevant National Character Area Profile setting out a number of key characteristics of the Low Weald landscape including;

- Generally a pastoral landscape with arable farming and fruit cultivation
- Field boundaries of hedgerows and shaws (remnant strips of cleared woodland) enclosing small, irregular fields and linking into small and scattered linear settlements along roadsides or centred on greens or commons.

- An intricate mix of woodlands, much of it ancient, including extensive broadleaved oak over hazel and hornbeam coppice, shaws, small field copses and tree groups, and lines of riparian trees along watercourses. Veteran trees are a feature of hedgerows and in fields.

With regards the recent decision on application 15/509288/OUT on the north side of Lenham Road, the council in refusing the application considers the landscape impact to be of such significance that it justified the refusal of the application irrespective of the housing supply position. This was in particular in relation to the impact on the character of the special landscape area in which the site is located where the Low Weald landscape is recognised to be of both regional and local importance. Whilst, it is recognised land within such areas is sometimes released for new development, this is via a comprehensive plan-led approach to the allocation of development and there is a policy presumption for the protection of such areas. It is clear that this decision to refuse this application is material to the consideration of the current application, although recognition is given to the established mantra that each application should be considered on its own individual merits.

The application site presents clear inherent characteristics of the Low Weald by way of its field pattern, pastoral character, mature oak specimens and presence of ponds within the site. This landscape value is recognised in the Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (as amended 2013) and the Sensitivity Assessment 2015 also confirms the area as having an overall 'high' sensitivity to change.

It is considered the impact of the development upon the landscape character of the area can be considered in relation to its individual impact and its cumulative impact with the allocated development sites to the west and south.

It is considered the redevelopment of the site will have an adverse impact on this landscape character and particularly the sense of place. Whilst the presence of the approved sites to the west is recognised, the site is relatively well screened by existing vegetation to its boundaries. In any case, the perception of the Low Weald character is particularly strong in views towards the north-west when the open countryside opens up in front of the user. It is clear this character will be adversely affected by the loss of the landscape and replacement with new development by way of the urbanised form of the new dwellings, road infrastructure and other paraphernalia.

There is also considered to be an impact from Lenham Road which will cause an adverse impact on the rural setting to the village. The site access, which will involve the removal of existing hedgerow and its location some distance, from the settlement along Lenham Road and new footpath will lead to the urbanising of the rural character of this main approach to the village, contrary to adopted policy ENV6 of the Local Plan. However, from my site visit, I noted that it would not be possible to provide a pavement along the south side of Lenham Road due to the very narrow verges between the road and the fields, presence of boundary hedges, trees, telegraph poles and most crucially drainage ditches to the side of the road. In discussing the feasibility of this path KCC Highways agreed that the path may not be feasible especially with the presence of drainage ditches which would need to be retained and accessible.

These effects have an adverse impact on landscape character in an individual context but also when considered cumulatively in relation to the other development taking place in the village. It is recognised that the site is located adjacent to an approved allocated site in the emerging plan. However, the development of that site (and indeed the other emerging allocations) has been subject to careful consideration via the local plan process as to how the growth of Headcorn should take place over the forthcoming plan period. By following the

plan-led approach, the council decided on 4 sites to the north and east of the settlement which were tightly drawn to restrict any significant incursion into the countryside.

The application site was originally considered via the council's SHLAA exercise which considered the suitability of the site for housing along with other sites in and around the village. However, this was rejected for being somewhat divorced from the existing settlement and would represent a significant intrusion into the countryside. As set out above, the site is some distance from the adopted development boundary and adjacent to the intended boundary in the emerging plan and would essentially extend the extent of the village eastwards by way of the built development that be located adjacent to Lenham Road and the creation of the site access further eastwards. This additional spread of development, including views of the development and other associated development such as a footpath and creation of a new access further along Lenham Road would lead to a more urban context to the western approach to Headcorn from one that is currently semi-rural and provides an appropriate setting to the village.

Therefore, when taking into account the above identified impact and the current good condition of the site and its landscape character which is representative of the Low Weald landscape, a landscape which is of regional and local importance, the proposed development is considered to have a significant adverse impact on the character of the countryside. The development would therefore not accord with the development plan and would be contrary to the policies ENV6, ENV28, ENV34 and the NPPF which seeks to protect the intrinsic beauty of the countryside and those policies of the emerging plan and the neighbourhood plan.

### **Biodiversity Impact**

The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) contain certain prohibitions against activities affecting European Protected Species, such as bats. These include prohibitions against the deliberate capturing, killing or disturbance and against the damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. The Habitats Directive and Regulations provides for the derogation from these prohibitions in certain circumstances. Natural England is the body primarily responsible for enforcing these prohibitions and is responsible for a separate licensing regime that allows what would otherwise be an unlawful act to be carried out lawfully.

The Council as local planning authority is obliged in considering whether to grant planning permission to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive and Habitats Regulations in so far as they may be affected by the grant of permission. Where the prohibitions in the Regulations will be offended (for example where European Protected Species will be disturbed by the development) then the Council is obliged to consider the likelihood of a licence being subsequently issued by Natural England and the "three tests" under the Regulations being satisfied. Natural England will grant a licence where the following three tests are met:

- There are "imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment";
- there is no satisfactory alternative; and
- the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range



Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) states that 'Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Section 40(3) of the same Act also states that 'conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environmental by minimising the impacts on biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are most resilient to current and future pressures.

Paragraph 118 of the NPPF states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity, Where development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

Saved Policy ENV28 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan (2000) and Policy SP17 of the Submitted Version of the Draft Local Plan state that proposals should include measures for habitat restoration and creation to ensure that there is no net loss of wildlife resources. Saved Policy ENV41 states that development will not be permitted which would lead to the loss of ponds, or which would harm their visual and wildlife functions.

The applicants have submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Great Crested Newt Survey dated July 2016 which has assessed that there is a medium population of GCN within the surrounding area and this is consistent with the GCN survey results carried out since 2008 which is acknowledged that there has been a decline in the GCN peak count.

This site is one of several developments/proposed developments within the immediate area. Most the developments south of Lenham Road are with the same developer and as a result a GCN master plan was produced to demonstrate they were carrying out a strategic approach for the GCN mitigation required across the whole area. The Council's ecological advisors have compared the GCN master plan and the proposed site plan and advise that the areas of green infrastructure have changed since the master plan was produced. The area of habitat within the eastern corner of the site has been reduced and the eastern and southern boundaries have widened.

KCC Ecology has been consulted and are satisfied that the ecologist has sufficient survey information to inform the detailed mitigation strategy. However concerns are raised with the proposed mitigation which does need to be addressed prior to the determination of the planning application. The phase 1 map submitted within the ecology document does not depict the proposed development site but instead it is the proposed development site to the west of this planning application. The text within the document suggests it is referring to this application, however there is a need to ensure that the report is assessing the impact this development will have on the GCN population.

KCC advise that there is a need for the report to be reviewed and updated by the ecologist to ensure that the mitigation proposed is appropriate for this development.

As such, it has not been shown that the proposal would minimise its impact on biodiversity, or that the need for mitigation measures has been addressed. As such, it would not enhance

the natural and local environment, or contribute to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

The updated GCN survey has identified areas where there is a need for enhancements to be carried out on a number of ponds. There is a need to ensure the recommended enhancements are implemented to ensure that the GCN population can be maintained within the development sites. Ideally there should only be one management plan for the area covered by the GCN masterplan to ensure that management is taking in to consideration the whole area not just the individual development plots and it avoids the risks of management works being carried out more than once.

However this may not be possible/practical in that there is a collective need to ensure that the development of a management plan for this site takes in to consideration the management requirements for the adjacent plots. The creation and retention of ponds is important to maintain the GCN population but it is equally important to ensure that the terrestrial habitat is managed appropriately (to provide sufficient foraging/resting/hibernating habitat. The management plan needs to ensure that the terrestrial habitat will be managed appropriately and is recommended that a comprehensive ecological management plan be submitted prior to commencement of development.

As such, it has not been shown that the proposal would minimise its impact on biodiversity, or that the need for mitigation measures has been addressed. As such, it would not enhance the natural and local environment, or contribute to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

### **Affordable Housing**

The adopted affordable Housing DPD requires that a 40% affordable housing provision be made on developments of 15 units or more. Policy DM13 of the Draft Local Plan sets out target rates for affordable housing of 30% within the Maidstone Urban Area and 40% within the countryside, rural service centres and larger villages.

The proposal shows 19 units as being in accordance with the 40% aspiration provision for affordable housing, in line with adopted Borough Council policy. This will be a mix of rented housing and shared ownership, the split to be agreed by negotiation. In terms of housing mix, the proposal is for 12 no. 1 bed flats, 4 no. 2 bed semi detached houses and 3 no. 2 bed terrace units.

### **Heads of Terms**

The proposal would require the provision of financial contributions to secure improvements of the local library, primary school and cost of acquiring land for expansion of Headcorn PS within the local area as well as NHS and open space contributions, details of which have not been received at the time of writing the report. No legal undertaking has been submitted in support of the application. In the case of a recommendation for approval, this absence may be dealt with by way of further discussions and an appropriate legal mechanism prior to the approval of the application. However, in this instance, where the recommendation is for refusal, the absence of an appropriate legal mechanism to secure the necessary contributions represents an additional reason to refuse the application.

### **Conclusion**

The development is located outside the adopted settlement boundary and is located within an area of countryside as defined by the adopted local plan and by the emerging local plan and the Neighbourhood Plan. The site also lies within a special landscape character area which is of regional and local importance and for which there is a policy presumption to protect its special character. It is considered the development will cause landscape harm,

both in terms of its individual and cumulative effects when considered in combination with consented adjacent development to the south west.

Having regard to the plan-led approach as advocated by the NPPF and as the council's housing policies can be given due weight, the development is contrary to the development plan and thus the appeal should be dismissed having regard to the tests of Section 38. Furthermore, other material considerations also support this decision, notably that the development would also be contrary to the policies and strategy set out in the emerging plan which is shortly to be examined by the Inspectorate.

The council can demonstrate a five year housing supply and the housing policies are not out-of-date for the purposes of the NPPF. Therefore, the development would not accord with the development plan and there are no material considerations that indicate an alternative decision should be reached. Alternatively, the degree of harm is sufficient that even if the planning context was different, the adverse effects would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of approving the application.

#### **RECOMMENDATION – Refusal**

#### **REASONS:**

(1) The proposed development is considered unacceptable by virtue of its location outside a defined settlement to this rural area which would have an urbanising effect, harmful to the prevailing character and appearance of the landscape, in particular the Special Landscape Area by virtue of the extension of built development into open countryside, forming an incongruous intrusion into the countryside, contrary to the aims of policies ENV6, ENV28 and ENV34 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000, Policy SP17 of the Submission Version of the Draft Local Plan and paragraphs 17, 55 and 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

(2) By virtue of the lack of relevant and up to date information submitted, it is not possible to fully assess the impact that the proposal would have upon the ecology/biodiversity and in particular protected species and their habitats within the application site and surrounding area. The application thereby fails to comply with central government planning policy as set out in section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Circular 06/2005 and Policy DM3 of the Submission Version of the Draft Local Plan.

(3) In the absence of an appropriate legal mechanism to secure necessary contributions towards the local library; NHS primary care, primary education/land and parks and leisure contributions within the local area and affordable housing provision, the impact of the development would be detrimental to existing social infrastructure and therefore contrary to central government planning policy as set out in paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, adopted policy CF1 of the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000, adopted Affordable Housing DPD and ID1 of the Submission Version of the Draft Local Plan.

Case Officer: Richard Elder

Case Officer Sign: Richard Elder

Date: 10.16.

Delegated Authority Sign: James Bailey

Date: 20.10.16

**PRINT NAME:**

TL/DM Countersign if refused:

Date:

## **APPENDIX 2**



**KEY**

- Material Paving to be kerbside or similar. Kerbside 200mm x 60mm concrete paving with overlying dealer black for slip risk
- Cracks Suits - Cobblestone paving laid to area - approx. 20mm wide
- 150mm Terrazzo tiles laid to area - approx. 20mm wide
- kerbside kerbside paving shall be a minimum 150mm wide
- 1.8m High glass panel fence
- Bin point
- Cycle store
- Water parking
- Turfed Area
- Existing Trees
- Proposed Native species Trees
- Proposed Landscaping
- Grassseed or similar material

**Shrub Planting**

- Shrub Planting**
1. *Rapanea Noveboracensis*
  2. *Styphelia tetragyna*
  3. *Leucophaea terminalis*
  4. *Pomadouria holocarpa*

**Tree Planting**

- Tree Planting**
1. *Prunus Aemula* - Cherry
  2. *Banksia Parviflora* - Silver Banks
  3. *Acacia Depressa* - Ruscus - Maple

**Native Planting**

Plants are to be double staggered near at 2000mm centres

- Native Planting**
- |                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Acacia Campylocha</i>     | 5%  |
| <i>Corymbia Basmilla</i>     | 7%  |
| <i>Cotinus Sarcocolla</i>    | 8%  |
| <i>Corylia Avellana</i>      | 25% |
| <i>Crotonia leucophaea</i>   | 25% |
| <i>Eucalyptus Globulus</i>   | 5%  |
| <i>Banksia Parviflora</i>    | 7%  |
| <i>Leucophaea terminalis</i> | 10% |
| <i>Prunus Aemula</i>         | 2%  |
| <i>Rhus Communis</i>         | 3%  |
| <i>Rosa Avonlea</i>          | 7%  |
| <i>Rosa Canina</i>           | 3%  |
| <i>Santibonina Nivea</i>     | 6%  |
| <i>Viburnum Opulus</i>       | 3%  |



Rev.	Date	Description

Note: All dimensions, materials and workmanship to conform with NZS4103 Standards and Building Regulations.  
Do not scale from this drawing. All dimensions to be verified with the final contract.  
All dimensions shown are absolute unless otherwise stated.

Project  
**Land Off Lenham Road, Headcom**

Drawing Title  
**Site Layout as Proposed**

Scale	Date	Drawn	Approved
1:500 @ A1	Sept 2014		

Drawing No  
**PL-WH-011**

## **APPENDIX 3**

<b>1. SITE INFORMATION</b>	
Reference number	HO - 132
Site name/address	Lenham Road, Headcorn
Landowner	Unknown
Agent	Wealden Homes
Greenfield/PDL	Greenfield
Site area (ha)	1.21
Proposed yield	35 dwellings
Is the site urban, adjacent to urban, rural settlement or rural	Rural
Site origin (e.g. Call for Sites)	Call for sites

<b>2. SITE ASSESSMENT/SUITABILITY</b>	
Site description (including topography and surrounding land uses)	Approximately rectangular site extending southwards from Lenham Road. Surrounded by agricultural land. Site boundaries marked by native hedges with some trees. The site is level.
Current use	Agricultural (grazing land)
Adjacent uses	Agricultural.
Planning and other designations (AONB, greenbelt etc)	Open countryside, SLA.
Planning history	MA/82/0489 Ground floor extension (Sydney House - possibly GIS error) - APPROVED  63/0255/MK2 Outline application (residential development) - REFUSED
Has site previously been considered in Local Plan Inquiry, if so, record Inspectors recommendation	Accepted in 2009 SHLAA (124).
Landscape/townscape impact - including reference to Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (inc. long distance views); cumulative landscape impact; existing screening	<p>Would appear as an isolated development in the open countryside, despite existing screening would be quite visible from the highway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald</li> <li>• Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge</li> <li>• Drainage ditches running southwards towards the River Beult</li> <li>• Enclosed pasture</li> <li>• Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets</li> <li>• Dominance of mature oaks within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees</li> <li>• Condition Assessment = Good</li> <li>• Sensitivity Assessment = High</li> <li>• Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald</li> <li>• Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and hedgerows to replace aging populations</li> <li>• Conserve the pastoral land use and resist conversion to arable land</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure</li> <li>• Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads</li> <li>• Resist infill linear development along Maidstone Road</li> <li>• Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting</li> <li>• Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these</li> </ul>



	areas
Ecological Impacts (inc. SSI & local wildlife sites within or adjacent to site)	Grassland field which is surrounded by hedgerows. There are records of GCN and reptiles in the surrounding area. Appears to be a hay field so may have less ecological interest than HO-131 (adjacent site).
Trees (inc. TPO, ancient woodland within and adjacent to site)	Along boundaries; none protected or registered.
Agricultural land quality	Grade 4.
Heritage impacts (Listed building, conservation area)	Not applicable.
Archaeology (SAM etc.)	Not applicable.
PROW (within or near site)	KH 606 approximately 50m to south west.
Access (Highways) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site access</li> <li>• Impact on wider highway network</li> <li>• Access to strategic/main highway network</li> <li>• Availability of public transport/walking/cycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lenham Road is a classified highway, the C258, national speed limit.</li> <li>• A new site access would be required.</li> <li>• The site is not adjacent to existing residential development and access is from Lenham Road, which is a national speed limit road with no footways. If the site were to be developed then footways would need to be installed between the site and Knights Way and the speed limit would need to be reduced to 30mph.</li> <li>• The crash record for Lenham Road is concerning with 8 'slight' incidents within a distance of around 300M since 2006. Any development that increases the amount of traffic on Lenham Road in the vicinity would need to provide mitigation by way of improving this short stretch of road.</li> <li>• If site HO-135 were to be developed then site HO-132 would be adjacent to residential development and access to HO-132 could potentially be from both Lenham Road and HO-135. This would be beneficial as it would spread the traffic flow and also allow faster and more direct access to services in Headcorn.</li> <li>• There is no public transport to the site and this would need to be addressed with a new service. Again this would logically take in the development at HO-135.</li> </ul>
Access to services – distances from bus stop/rail station/shop/GP/school	Mainly located in Headcorn village centre (approximately 1km); minimum walk along public highway with no pavement of approximately 0.3km. New doctors surgery and school located approximately 0.3km to south, accessible via a public footpath.
Impacts on existing residential amenity (including access to open space)	Not applicable – no immediate neighbours.
Availability of utilities infrastructure – e.g. water/gas/electric	Relatively remote, but likely to be some services as there are other isolated properties in the vicinity.
Air quality/noise	Not applicable.
Land contamination	Not applicable.
Flood Risk (zone/drainage)	Not applicable.
Suitability (assessment conclusion)	The site is in a remote location and would be isolated from the RSC. It would appear incongruous and would be visually harmful to the open countryside. Highway mitigation (improvements to Lenham Road) would be required. Ecological mitigation would be necessary.

<b>3. AVAILABILITY</b>	
Is the whole site available for the proposed use: e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing uses</li> <li>Willing landowner</li> <li>Willing developer</li> <li>Existing tenancy or lease agreement</li> </ul>	Willing landowner and developer.
Availability conclusion	Available.

<b>4. ACHIEVABILITY</b>	
Identification of any abnormal costs or other constraints to development which would prevent or delay this site being delivered	None.
Achievability conclusion	Achievable.

<b>Timing</b> (following assessment - when could the site be delivered?)	
now - 2016	
2016 - 2021	X
2021 - 2026	
2026 - 2031	

<b>5. CONCLUSIONS</b>	
<p>The site is in a remote location and would be isolated from the RSC. It would appear incongruous and would be visually harmful to the open countryside.</p> <p><b>REJECT</b></p> <p>Approximate Yield: 0</p>	

**ADDENDUM**

The site was resubmitted for consideration in the 2014 'Call for Sites'

There had been no change in circumstances from the previous submission to warrant a change.

<b>1. SITE INFORMATION</b>	
Reference number	HO-133
Site name/address	Knaves Acre
Landowner	Unknown
Agent	Wealden Homes
Greenfield/PDL	Greenfield
Site area (ha)	0.1
Proposed yield	3-5 dwellings
Is the site urban, adjacent to urban, rural settlement or rural	Adjacent to village.
Site origin (e.g. Call for Sites)	Call for sites

<b>2. SITE ASSESSMENT/SUITABILITY</b>	
Site description (including topography and surrounding land uses)	Irregularly shaped site extending eastwards from Knaves Acre development. Site boundaries marked by native hedges with trees, west and north boundary marked by a drain. The site is level.
Current use	Garden land associated with 35 Knaves Acre, in appearance agricultural (grazing land)
Adjacent uses	Agricultural to north and east, residential to south and west.
Planning and other designations (AONB, greenbelt etc)	Open countryside, SLA.
Planning history	<p>MA/06/0274 An application for a certificate of lawfulness for an existing development being the use of the land for residential purposes ancillary to no. 35 Knaves Acre - APPROVED</p> <p>MA/96/0308 An outline application for the erection of two detached dwellings with all matters of external appearance, means of access, siting, landscaping and design reserved for future consideration - REFUSED</p> <p>71/0414/MK2 Residential development on 3.8 acres - REFUSED - APPEAL ALLOWED WITH CONDITIONS (NON-DETERMINATION)</p> <p>68/0251/MK2 Outline application for residential development of approximately 7 acres - REFUSED</p> <p>63/0255/MK2 Outline application for residential development - REFUSED</p> <p>62/0033/MK2 Outline application for residential development - REFUSED</p>
Has site previously been considered in Local Plan Inquiry, if so, record Inspectors recommendation	Accepted in 2009 SHLAA (046).
Landscape/townscape impact - including reference to Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (inc. long distance views); cumulative landscape impact; existing screening	<p>Would appear as a reasonably organic extension to the existing village, logical in respect of existing settlement boundary; existing potential route to provide access from Knaves Acre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald</li> <li>• Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge</li> <li>• Drainage ditches running southwards towards the River Beult</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enclosed pasture</li> <li>• Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets</li> <li>• Dominance of mature oaks within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees</li> <li>• Condition Assessment = Good</li> <li>• Sensitivity Assessment = High</li> <li>• Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald</li> <li>• Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and hedgerows to replace aging populations</li> <li>• Conserve the pastoral land use and resist conversion to arable land</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure</li> <li>• Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads</li> <li>• Resist infill linear development along Maidstone Road</li> <li>• Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting</li> <li>• Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas</li> </ul>
Ecological Impacts (inc. SSI & local wildlife sites within or adjacent to site)	Grassland field which is surrounded by large unmanaged hedges (which appear to contain standard trees). Appears to be regularly managed as the grass is very short. There are records of GCN and reptiles in the surrounding area. Potential for protected/notable species to be present including bats roosting within the trees.
Trees (inc. TPO, ancient woodland within and adjacent to site)	Along boundaries and around pond; none protected or registered.
Agricultural land quality	Grade 4.
Heritage impacts (Listed building, conservation area)	Not applicable.
Archaeology (SAM etc.)	Not applicable.
PROW (within or near site)	KH 606 approximately 100m to east.
Access (Highways) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site access</li> <li>• Impact on wider highway network</li> <li>• Access to strategic/main highway network</li> <li>• Availability of public transport/walking/cycling</li> </ul>	Site accessed from Knaves Acre which is a residential no through road. The road has a good safety record and access to the wider road network would be via Oak Lane to the south and Oak Lane and Forge Lane to the north. Public Transport and access to services is available around 400m away in the centre of Headcorn. From a Highways perspective the site is considered suitable for low scale development (up to 3 properties), directly fronting onto Knaves Acre.
Access to services – distances from bus stop/rail station/shop/GP/school	Mainly located in Headcorn village centre (approximately 0.45km) accessible via highways with pavements.
Impacts on existing residential amenity (including access to open space)	Site abuts 2 adjacent residential properties. Possible disturbance to occupiers in Knaves Acre by way of increased traffic movements.
Availability of utilities infrastructure – e.g. water/gas/electric	Good.
Air quality/noise	Not applicable.
Land contamination	Not applicable.
Flood Risk (zone/drainage)	Not applicable.
Suitability (assessment conclusion)	Would appear as a reasonably organic extension to the existing village, logical in respect of existing settlement boundary. The site is in a sustainable location in respect of