

Session 3B –Alternative Strategic Development

Inspector's Question 3.1

Should it be concluded that there would be a shortfall of supply against the OAHN, what alternative means would be available for making up a shortfall if that is measured in: (a) hundreds or (b) thousands?

Council's response:

3.1.1 It is the Council's position that an OAHN of 18,560 dwellings can be met through contributions made from completions, planning permissions, allocations, broad locations and windfalls set out in the Housing Topic Paper (SUB005) as supplemented by statements to this Inquiry.

3.1.2 If it were concluded that there was a shortfall of supply against the OAHN, the Borough Council would wish to retain the Local Plan's spatial strategy as set out in the Spatial Vision and objectives and Policy SS1.

3.1.3 The Spatial Strategy Topic Paper (SUB 007) sets out in more detail the hierarchy of settlements within the borough and the constraints operating which provide the basis for the distribution of development proposed in the Local Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal confirms that the distribution of housing development included within the Local Plan is the most sustainable alternative.

3.1.4 Following extensive research, the Borough Council has concluded that there are no further suitable, available and achievable brownfield opportunities available in the borough to meet any additional housing need.

3.1.5 The Borough Council considers that sites in areas where specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted (as listed in footnote 9 to Para 14) should not be given priority for allocation. In the borough this would amount to not allocating sites which would have a significant adverse impact on 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; the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; conservation areas or other designated heritage assets and locations at risk of flooding.

3.1.6 In order to follow the most sustainable spatial strategy, should a shortfall of hundreds of dwellings be found, the Borough Council's preference would be to locate such development primarily at the edge of Maidstone.

3.1.7 In order to follow the most sustainable spatial strategy, should a shortfall of approximately a thousand dwellings be found, the Borough Council's preference would be to locate such development in the first instance at the edge of Maidstone with the residual requirement distributed between Rural Service Centres with the exception of Lenham whose broad location designation will exhaust all suitable, available and achievable housing sites.

Inspector's Question 3.2

What scope may exist for addressing any shortfall by provision outside the borough boundary and how might that be accommodated having regard in particular to the timescales of the preparation of other Local Plans?

Council's response:

3.2.1 It is the Council's position that an OAHN of 18,560 dwellings can be met through contributions made from completions, planning permissions, allocations, broad locations and windfalls set out in the Housing Topic Paper (SUB005) as supplemented by statements to this Inquiry. For this reason, provision outside the borough boundary has not been sought from authorities within the Housing Market Area (HMA).

3.2.2 Following detailed analysis, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (HOU 002) concludes that boundaries of the Maidstone HMA extend into the eastern parts of Tonbridge and Malling Borough, encompassing the settlements and rural hinterland of Aylesford, Snodland and Kings Hill. In addition, the Maidstone Rural East sub area of Harrietsham, Lenham and Headcorn fall within the Ashford HMA. The SHMA concludes that there is justification to distinguish Maidstone from Medway in market terms (Para 2.39) but that given a level of functional interaction between the northern parts of Maidstone and the North Kent area (in particular Medway and Swale), particularly in commuting terms they should be considered as part of the Duty to Cooperate and in developing the overall strategy for housing requirements and distribution (Para 2.42). In terms of meeting any housing need outside Maidstone Borough, the SHMA would indicate that parts of Tonbridge and Malling and Ashford Boroughs would be the areas most closely related to the borough with less obvious connections to Swale Borough and Medway towns.

3.2.3 In terms of plan making in these areas, there is little scope for any needs emerging from the borough to be accommodated.

3.2.4 Tonbridge and Malling Borough has full Local Plan coverage which the Council is seeking to update. They have completed a SHMA (jointly with Maidstone and Ashford Boroughs). The Council is in the process of completing the gathering of evidence and is preparing an initial consultation document. As it is Maidstone Borough Council's position that an OAHN of 18,560 dwellings can be met through the provisions of the Local Plan, no approach has been made to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to accommodate further housing from Maidstone Borough.

3.2.5 Consultation on the Regulation 19 Ashford Borough Local Plan (which covers the period to 2030) recently closed. The Plan does not increase the number of homes to be developed during the plan period to accommodate the needs of Maidstone Borough. The Borough Council did not make representations to request that such an uplift be included in the Local Plan. Given the very limited overlap with the Ashford Housing Market Area and the stage reached in plan making, it is unlikely that further housing arising from Maidstone Borough could or should be accommodated in Ashford Borough. Regarding the more tenuous housing market links, the Swale Borough SHMA (ORD 039) concludes that there is enough evidence to show that a Swale centred HMA is a pragmatic response to a less than clear cut geography although the evidence highlights strong links in the west with Medway (Sittingbourne and the

Isle of Sheppey) and Canterbury (Faversham and rural areas) in the east. There is no evidence of strong links with Maidstone Borough (Paras 2.57 – 2.61). Consultation on main modifications to the Regulation 19 Local Plan (plan period 2014-31) recently closed and it is likely that further examination hearing sessions will take place later this year. The Plan does not increase the number of homes to be developed during the plan period to accommodate the needs of Maidstone Borough. The Borough Council did not make representations to request that such an uplift be included in the Local Plan. Given the weak housing market links identified and the stage reached in plan making, it is inappropriate that Swale Borough should accommodate further housing arising from Maidstone Borough.

3.2.6 The Medway SHMA (ORD 038) draws somewhat different conclusions regarding the local HMA geographies to those reached as part of the Mid-Kent and West-Kent SHMAs, which may be explained by the approach adopted by a different SHMA consultant. The SHMA Report asserts that sub-authority variations cannot be accurately captured and therefore defines the Medway HMA to include the full extent of neighbouring local authorities Gravesham, Swale, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling. The SHMA acknowledges a link with Maidstone Borough, assessing the strongest relationship to be with the north of the borough (Para 2.105). An Issues and Options consultation stage has recently closed on the Medway Local Plan 2012 – 2035. The Borough Council's response to the consultation confirmed that the Council does not agree with the proposed Medway HMA definition as it remains inconsistent with the findings of the Mid-Kent SHMA, with insufficient weight given to market factors which show a clear distinction between the housing markets in the two local authority areas. As the Borough Council does not recognise a strong link with the Medway HMA, no representations have been made concerning an uplift in housing land supply to accommodate any additional housing requirement from the borough. Given the weak housing market links identified, it is inappropriate that Medway Council should accommodate further housing arising from Maidstone Borough.

3.2.7 In conclusion, given the relatively tight Housing Market Area which is focused on Maidstone Borough and the stages reached in the Local Plan processes of adjoining authorities, there is limited scope to address any housing shortfall by provision outside the borough boundary.

Inspector's Question 3.3

What is the updated position in respect of the availability of the Invicta Park Barracks site?

Council's response:

3.3.1 At the time of plan-making, the Borough Council consider that there is a reasonable prospect that the site will come forward in the Plan period. The 26.2ha site is eminently suitable for housing development. In accordance with the NPPF core planning principle to encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), it is considered appropriate to designate this sustainable site as a broad location for housing development.

3.3.2 In order to update the Inquiry, a meeting was held with representatives of the Ministry of Defence in September 2016. A letter from the Ministry of 13 Sep 2016 (Appendix A) makes it clear that no announcement can be made about the future of individual sites until publication of the Estate Optimisation Strategy. The MoD is actively looking at options

whereby the Royal Engineers regiment at the barracks could be better served closer to the training area and the military units that they operate alongside. The Department is also conscious that this particular barracks site appears to offer a large sustainable brownfield site suitable for a housing led scheme. Planning work on the constraints, opportunities and capacity of the site has been carried out by MoD consultants this year and they will continue to refine this work. The Ministry reaffirm that it is appropriate that the Council continue to promote the site for a general or indeed specific allocation for housing in the Local Plan on the basis that it could be brought forward after 2025 and within the latter part of the Local Plan period.

3.3.3 The housing trajectory indicates clearly that the Invicta Park Barracks site is not expected to deliver housing until post 2026.

3.3.4 The Council will monitor very closely policies in the plan including H2 and H2(2) annually following its adoption. In relation to this broad location the Borough Council will be conscious of lead times associated with bringing forward the broad location including allowing adequate time for the determination of an application, commencement on site, and build-out rates. Monitoring of the key local plan targets will indicate if there is a need to amend the approach in parts of the plan.

3.3.5 The Local Plan states that the Council considers it prudent to commence a review of the plan and its supporting evidence in a timely manner and a review of the local plan will commence by 2022. Thus, if it is clear at this stage that the MoD will not be releasing the Invicta Park Barracks in time to generate 1,300 dwellings, there will be a formal opportunity to review progress of housing delivery. A Local Plan review is considered the preferred approach as this will allow the monitoring of all contributions to housing provision by this time; an updating of housing need and the consequences for housing (and associated land uses and infrastructure. However, the Borough Council, in common with the HBF, consider that the site is suitable. At this stage the Borough Council also consider that there is a reasonable prospect that it will come forward in the Plan period.

3.3.6 A Local Plan review is considered the preferred approach as this will allow a comprehensive approach to

- monitoring of all contributions to housing provision by this time;
- an updating of objectively assessed housing need based on the latest Government projections;
- a re-appraisal of market conditions and viability;
- a new Call for Sites, if necessary; and
- the consequences for housing (and associated land uses and infrastructure being reflected comprehensively within the Local Plan.

Inspector's Question 3.4

Should the Ministry of Defence determine (before the Examination is completed and the Report submitted) that the Invicta Park Barracks will not be surplus to requirements during the Plan period, how should the consequential loss of 1,300 dwellings in the later period of the plan be addressed?

Council's response:

3.4.1 Following communication with the MoD, the Borough Council consider that there is a reasonable prospect that the site will come forward in the Plan period.

3.4.2 Should the Ministry of Defence determine (before the Examination is completed and the Report submitted) that the Invicta Park Barracks will not be surplus to requirements during the Plan period, the Borough Council would in the first instance absorb part of the loss from the housing surplus of 855 dwellings.

3.4.3 In meeting the additional requirement, the Borough Council would wish to retain the Local Plan's spatial strategy as set out in the Spatial Vision and objectives and Policy SS1.

3.4.4 The Spatial Strategy Topic Paper (SUB 007) sets out in more detail the hierarchy of settlements within the Borough and the constraints operating which provide the basis for the distribution of development proposed in the Local Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal confirms that the distribution of housing development included within the Local Plan is the most sustainable alternative.

3.4.5 Following extensive research, the Borough Council has concluded that there are no further suitable, available and achievable brownfield opportunities available in the Borough to meet any additional housing need.

3.4.6 The Borough Council considers that sites in areas where specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted (as listed in footnote 9 to Para 14) should not be given priority for allocation. In the Borough this would amount to not allocating sites which would have a significant adverse impact on 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; the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; conservation areas or other designated heritage assets and locations at risk of flooding.

3.4.7 In order to follow the most sustainable spatial strategy, should this site not be available, the Borough Council's preference would be to meet the residual housing need in the first instance at the edge of Maidstone with any residual requirement distributed between Rural Service Centres with the exception of Lenham whose broad location designation will exhaust all suitable, available and achievable housing sites.

Inspector's Question 3.5

Can Golding Homes show examples of the claimed housing supply shortfall?

Council's response:

3.5.1 This is a question for Golding Homes. The Council will not be responding.

Inspector's Question 3.6

What is the Council's response to the Golding allegations in relation to housing supply?

Council's response:

3.6.1 The Borough Council has not sought to respond to points concerning affordable and self-build housing which are covered in other sessions.

3.6.2 The Golding Homes response to the Regulation 19 Local Plan agrees with the OAHN of 18,560 dwellings. The Housing Topic Paper (SUB 005) updates the evidence to 31 March 2016 and illustrates how 19,325 dwellings will be delivered in the plan period. There is consequently a surplus rather than an absolute shortfall in housing land supply.

3.6.3 There is no double counting between sites where development has commenced and those which are shown for future delivery. If development has not commenced on a site, it will continue to be recorded as having extant planning consent. If all dwellings have been completed on a site, these will be counted as housing completions and deleted from the extant consents list. Where development has commenced, a site will be recorded on the housing monitor in two ways: those dwellings which have been completed are counted towards housing completions, those which remain uncompleted are counted towards the extant planning consents.

3.6.4 There are no duplicated or time expired sites (at 31 March 2016) listed as planning permissions within the Housing Topic Paper Appendix C Table 8.10 (SUB 005). It should also be noted that the Borough Council has netted off 5% of planning consents to allow for non-implementation even though this is above the locally derived evidence of expired sites in the Borough.

3.6.5 The net dwelling contribution is calculated for all planning permissions and completions to ensure that any loss of dwellings is taken into account in the monitoring of housing supply.

Inspector's Question 3.7

The estimated cost of a Leeds-Langley Relief Road has been put at £50-£80m. Can Golding estimate what 'significant contribution' could be made to that road by their proposed development and what other sources of funding would be needed?

Council's response:

3.7.1 The Council primarily understands this is a question for Golding Homes. The provision of Leeds-Langley Relief Road is supported by the County Council, and it is understood that some early feasibility work is being undertaken by the Highways Department. However, this Council is not proposing such a scheme in the submitted plan, and does not consider it to be necessary to support the plan as submitted. There is no traffic modelling provided by the proposer of this development from which it is possible to determine the use of the proposed new road by occupants of this development. For this reason it is not feasible to calculate a contribution towards this road which would be considered reasonable, proportionate and fairly related to the development. Any further contributions above and beyond such a contribution

would be inappropriate in planning terms.

Inspector's Question 3.8

When might such a road be available for use?

Council's response:

3.8.1 The Council primarily understands this is a question for Golding Homes. The Council does not consider that such a project could be fully delivered in the plan period of the submitted Local Plan given the absence of any published feasibility, viability, or environmental assessments, and no identified funding.

3.8.2 The Golding Homes submission includes the provision of a purpose-built, strategic link road between the A274 Sutton Road and the A20 Ashford Road, as they state that the existing local highway network could not be enhanced to the required standard and that the road is necessary to achieve the capacity of 5000 homes at this site. The Borough Council consider that there are a number of reasons which indicate that such a road will not be available during the plan period.

3.8.3 Kent Highways have raised concern that such infrastructure could not be viably provided by the developer(s) in addition to the site's other infrastructure and service requirements.

3.8.4 Should sufficient developer finance not be available, no alternative funding streams have been identified. The Maidstone Integrated Parking Strategy Research Option Appraisal Report, 2012 (TRA 015), JMP states that the modelling and cost benefit results are inconclusive as to whether the SEMSL scheme has the potential to generate sufficient journey time benefits with which to off-set the costs of construction and maintenance of the scheme (Para 9.109).

3.8.5 The submission made by Golding Homes states that discussions have been held with the owner of the land situated between the Consortium's land and the A20 and there is a recognition and support of the potential benefits of a road through that land to relieve the traffic pressure on Leeds and Langley. This is different from an agreement between the parties or an acquisition of the necessary land for a road which is essential for the delivery of a comprehensive new settlement.

3.8.6 The Borough and County Council see this potential new road as a possible long term proposal. There is currently no agreement with KCC over road alignment; design; safety auditing; land acquisition or delivery in the plan period and for this reason the Local Plan cannot protect the alignment of a route. Rather the Maidstone Borough Council Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-2031 states that Kent County Council will establish the justification for and delivery of such a project and that, although further assessment is required, delivery of such a project may be feasible post 2031. The Borough Council will work with the County

Council in identifying the potential as well as possible timescales for such a scheme at the first review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and determine then whether the project should move forward as a specific Local Plan policy (Para 9.74). Consequently, the Local Plan considers it appropriate to give detailed consideration to the potential construction of the proposal post 2031 at the first review of the local plan (which will commence in 2022) (Para 17.126).

3.8.7 Given the lack of clear justification; absence of agreement with the local highway authority over alignment, design or costing; lack of agreement with landowners over the availability of the land required for road construction and the absence of funding streams outside the development there can be no certainty that the road can be funded or therefore available for use during the plan period.

Inspector's Question 3.9

The Local Plan period runs to 2031. When would the first delivery of housing in a new settlement occur and how much housing could be delivered by 2031?

Council's response:

3.9.1 The Council primarily understands this is a question for Golding Homes. There is a possibility if a planning consent was granted that a small proportion of the dwelling numbers may be delivered within the plan period, but the Council does not believe that the full number could reasonably be delivered by 2031, especially given the likely infrastructure requirements of a new free-standing settlement.

3.9.2 There is considerable doubt about the availability; achievability and suitability of this proposal. At best, even if the site were to be considered suitable, the following factors would add significant delays to achieving any residential development on this site:

- site acquisition (including arrangements with the consortium; multiple owners at the centre of the site and surrounding landowners to achieve major new road infrastructure);
- evidence gathering in terms of, for example, landscape, trees, habitats and species, archaeology; highways
- masterplanning the site (the proposer seeks the use of Enquiry by Design process);
- securing agreement with infrastructure and utility providers to the provision of necessary infrastructure to serve the site;
- preparation of drawings including detailed highway schemes; site layouts; landscaping proposals (including 40ha of public open space) and supporting documents;
- submission of outline/ detailed planning consents;
- the determination of the planning application(s);
- discharging conditions;
- securing residual funding for the Leeds - Langley bypass proposal and completion of the road;
- securing development finance;

- contracts with other developers;
- build programme

At worst, the proposal may not contribute any dwellings during the plan period with adverse consequences on the housing land supply including the 5 year housing land supply.

Inspector's Question 3.10

What areas of land do the Representors propose for which land use?

Council's response:

3.10.1 This is a question for Quinn Estates.

Inspector's Question 3.11

How does the 177.5ha site in the SA relate to the 70.44ha site referred to in the R19419 representations and where do they overlap?

Council's response:

3.11.1 This is a question for Quinn Estates.

Inspector's Question 3.12

How much employment floorspace could be provided?

Council's response:

3.12.1 This is a question for Quinn Estates.

Inspector's Question 3.13

Why did the SA addendum consider a wholly residential development rather than the mixed development sought by the Representors?

Council's response:

3.13.1 The site was submitted by the Representors during the Council's Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation in October 2015 for 1,250 dwellings, a 100 hectares Country Park, 24 hectares employment floor space and a Park and Ride facility.

3.13.2 External consultants AECOM were appointed to undertake a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan, including omission sites submitted during the Regulation 18 Local Plan October 2015 consultation.

3.13.3 AECOM received the site proforma for the site from the Council that outlined the applicants mixed use proposal. The proforma was prefixed as 'HO', whereas other mixed use sites were previously prefixed as 'MX'. The site was therefore incorrectly appraised by AECOM as a housing site option. The potential housing yield figure included in AECOM's SA for site

HO3-313 was based on an average density of 30 dwellings per hectare for the entire site with a total residential yield of 5,325 dwellings.

3.13.4 The SA is an evidence base document that informed the Strategic Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessment SHEDLAA (2016) (HOU 007) and the site allocation decisions in the Local Plan. As outlined in the SUB 002(I), the appraisal process within the SA is based largely on an objective assessment of potential effects that is dependent upon the site footprint and proximity to a range of services and environmental receptors. The assessment results in a broad 'red, amber, green' categorisation to identify potential issues and opportunities based on distance thresholds. The quantum and site use does not affect this element of the assessment and is not factored into the appraisal at this stage to ensure that sites are considered consistently.

3.13.5 Therefore an error in the categorisation of the site in the SA addendum would not have affected the appraisal findings for this site. The site was correctly assessed in the Council's SHEDLAA (2016) as a mixed use site and was not allocated in the Local Plan.

Inspector's Question 3.14

The submitted Local Plan seeks to meet the assessed needs for housing and employment outside the designated AONB. How do the Representors address Framework criteria for major development in the AONB and especially the second bullet point of paragraph 116?

Council's response:

3.14.1 This is primarily a question for representors.

Inspector's Question 3.15

How would the Council assess the major mixed development proposal against the Framework tests?

Council's response:

3.15.1 The NPPF is clear that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty (Para 115). One of the core planning principles of the Framework is to contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Para 17). Local Plan policy SP17(5) accords with this policy approach. Any development which would not conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) would therefore be contrary to national and local policy. The Borough Council does not consider that the development of a 177ha principally greenfield site within the AONB with 40ha of residential development; 24ha of additional commercial units; extensive car parking and associated roads, lighting and activity would conserve and enhance the AONB.

3.15.2 Nor does the Council consider that the proposed development meets the exceptional circumstances tests of Para 116 of the NPPF.

The need for the development

3.15.3 The Local Plan identifies the objectively assessed housing need as 18,560 dwellings which the housing sites in the Local Plan should meet.

3.15.4 The net requirement for additional B Use Class floorspace for the 17 year period 2014 to 2031 is identified in the Qualitative Employment Site Assessment (GVA, September 2014, ECON 002) as shown on the table below.

Net Employment Land Requirement 2014-2031

	Net additional land 2014-31 (Ha)	Additional floorspace 2014-31 (sqm)
Office	1.6	24,000
Industrial	-3.9	-15,600
Warehouse	1.3	6,500
Total	-1.0	14,900

3.15.5 The Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 – 2031 (TRA 007) makes no reference to the need for further park and ride sites and commits only to undertaking a full and independent review of Maidstone Park and Ride provision and act on recommendations by 2017 (Para 10.2). There is no expressed need for further park and ride sites.

3.15.6 There are two country parks serving Maidstone Borough which are owned and managed by Kent County Council – Teston Bridge Country Park on the River Medway and White Horse Wood Country Park on Detling Hill. The latter site is very close to the proposed new country park. White Horse Wood is also set within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and offers beautiful countryside, local history and panoramic views. The site hosts the medieval ruins of Thurnham Castle; traces of an Iron Age settlement and an abundance of wildlife interest. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (ENV 017) does not identify a need for a country park in the borough.

The cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area

3.15.7 Of the two proposed land uses for which there is an identified need within the plan area, the Council has followed the NPPF advice that plans should allocate land with the least environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework (Para 110). The Local Plan demonstrates the scope for development elsewhere outside the designated area. The Housing and Employment and Retail Topic Papers 2016 (SUB 005 and SUB 003) set out how the objectively assessed needs will be met without the need for large scale allocations within the AONB. The Local Plan can meet the objectively assessed needs for housing and business in less constrained locations and there is no justification for park and ride and a country park in this location.

3.15.8 The Local Plan allocates a range of housing and business sites all of which are outside the AONB. The Local Plan also allocates development abutting the Kent Downs AONB. The NPPF contains no specific protection of the setting of the AONB, nor, unlike large scale development within the AONB, any in principle objection to larger scale development within the setting. Nevertheless, the Borough Council recognise that there should be sufficient mitigation accompanying any allocation within the setting of the AONB. The importance of the Kent Downs AONB setting is recognised in the AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019, which includes policies to protect the AONB from inappropriate developments in its setting unless they can be satisfactorily mitigated.

3.15.9 The NPPF therefore draws a distinction between the capacity of the AONB to accommodate major development and the capacity of the setting of the AONB to do the same. The Borough Council does not consider that this distinction is appropriately reflected in Local Plan Policy SP17 and proposes the following amendment:

Ref.	Proposed change	Reason
PC/73	<p>Amend Policy SP17 criteria 5: to read:</p> <p><i><u>'The distinctive character of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the extent and openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt will be rigorously conserved and enhanced where appropriate;</u></i></p> <p>Amend Policy SP17 criterion 6 to read:</p> <p><i>'The <u>distinctive landscape character of the Greensand Ridge, Medway Valley, Len Valley, Loose Valley, and Low Weald as defined on the policies map, will be conserved, maintained and enhanced where appropriate as landscapes of local value;</u></i></p>	<p>To ensure the policy is consistent with the NPPF.</p>

3.15.10 The Local Plan allocations demonstrate the scope for developing elsewhere outside the designated AONB, whilst recognising the context of the setting of the AONB.

3.15.11 Whilst there is no identified need for a Park and Ride Car Park, the proposed site is considered to be too far from Maidstone town and the motorway junction to be likely to be effective in securing modal shift, in particular due to the length of the onward bus journey and return. Even if a site were required for Park and Ride, selection outside the AONB would be preferred for this major development.

Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

3.15.12 New built development of this scale would have a significant detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities.

3.15.13 This site is located within the Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs area of the Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (ENV 001). The Assessment states:

"To the south of Lower Cox Street, Detling Aerodrome Industrial Estate is a very uncharacteristic feature of the North Downs comprising a variety of industrial sheds as well as parking areas for lorries. The small industrial estate is also the site of the historic Detling Aerodrome, which was bombed by the Luftwaffe during the Second World War. Close by, the Kent County Showground is a detracting feature when it is used for shows, when large

marquees are erected within the otherwise open fields.” (Para 1.5)

3.15.14 The Landscape Condition is assessed as Poor – in part because of the Detling Aerodrome Industrial Estate which is seen as a detractor. The sensitivity of the landscape is assessed as Moderate. The Guidelines for this area are to Restore and Improve.

3.15.15 The site proposer considers that containment provided by strong belts of trees and woodlands and undulating topography except on the southern and northern boundaries helps justify the suitability of the site. This is to fundamentally misunderstand the purpose of the AONB. The test of development impact still applies even if there are limited or no public views of it as, if allowed, the argument could be repeated, with a potentially more serious cumulative impact on the urbanisation of the countryside and for these reasons would be unacceptable.

3.15.16 Whilst further development may give the opportunity to screen the existing detractor, the scale of built development, associated road and parking infrastructure, lighting (and the impact on dark skies) and general activity would be visually intrusive and harmful to the current openness of the site with the long distance views to the north. The proposal would urbanise and have a detrimental impact on the character of the countryside and would not conserve and enhance this valued and protected landscape.

Local Plan Spatial Strategy

3.15.17 The spatial strategy locates development within, or close to, existing settlements to take advantage of existing infrastructure and to ensure that services and facilities can be reached by a choice of sustainable modes of transport. This site is in a remote location and has no local amenities. It is unclear which ‘range of community, sport and recreation facilities’ would viably be provided at this location, but 1250 dwellings is unlikely to represent a sufficient critical mass to attract investment in a wide range of community or commercial facilities. Overall, the Local Plan allocates sites for housing and business use in less constrained and more sustainably sited locations and this strategy is considered more sustainable than allocating isolated remote areas within landscape designated of national importance.

3.15.18 In conclusion, the scale of development is inappropriate within the Kent Downs AONB and does not meet the exceptional circumstances and public interest tests of Para 116 of the NPPF.

Inspector’s Question 3.16

Detling Airfield is included in Policy DM21 as an employment site to be retained. What scope would there be under that policy to redevelop or intensify that site for business use?

Council’s response:

3.16.1 Policy DM21 designates Detling Airfield as an Economic Development Area for B1; B2 and B8 Uses.

3.16.2 DM21 does not explicitly allow further business uses within designated Economic Development Areas. This is not the intention of the policy and therefore a Modification to this

policy is proposed:

Proposed Modification

Policy DM21 (additional criterion) (PC/66)

3. Within designated Economic Development Areas, the redevelopment of premises and the infilling of vacant sites for business uses will be permitted.

3.16.3 The Final Qualitative Employment Site Assessment Appendix II (ECON 002(B)) states that the site has 'Some potential to deliver new capacity within the site on vacant / underutilised land however this may be limited by other development constraints'.

3.16.4 The NPPF encourages the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield) land, provided that it is not of high environmental value (Para 111). The Detling Airfield EDA is located within the Kent Downs AONB and is therefore of high environmental value. Nevertheless, the character of the designated Economic Development Area already comprises built form with areas of open land enclosed between development. The impact of small scale redevelopment, or infilling of vacant sites, with sensitive designs and landscape within the designated EDA as envisaged by the Employment Site Assessment may be acceptable. In order to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (NPPF Para 17) and protect and enhance valued landscapes (NPPF Para 109), such proposals should also bring the opportunity to enhance the existing area by ensuring high quality designs of an appropriate scale are accompanied by significant landscaping within, and at the edge of, the development. These important requirements should be achieved through a modification to Policy DM21:

Policy DM21 (additional criterion) (PC/67)

6. Within designated Economic Development Areas located within the countryside proposals should ensure high quality designs of an appropriate scale and materials are accompanied by significant landscaping within, and at the edge of, the development.

Proposed Modification (PC/68)

Policy SP17 - The Countryside (additional criterion)

The countryside is defined as all those parts of the plan area outside the settlement boundaries of the Maidstone urban area, rural service centres and larger villages defined on the policies map.

1. Provided proposals do not harm the character and appearance of an area, the following types of development will be permitted in the countryside:

i. Small-scale economic development, including development related to tourism and open-air recreation, through:

a. The re-use or extension of existing buildings;

b. The expansion of existing businesses; or

c. Farm diversification schemes;

d. Development within designated Economic Development Areas located within the countryside.

Inspector's Question 3.17

What are the implications of this decision for the Local Plan allocation.

Council's response:

3.17.1 In the light of this recent Planning Committee decision it is important to affirm that the allocation of Woodcut Farm in Policy EMP1(5) remains a key element of the Local Plan's strategy for meeting the economy's future needs for employment land. No alteration to the submitted Local Plan is proposed in response to the Planning Committee's decision.

3.17.2 In taking its decision, the Planning Committee chose to rely, in part, on policies in the adopted Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan (2000). These policies will no longer be part of the Development Plan once the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan is adopted and an adopted Local Plan which includes the EMP1(5) allocation would have full weight in the determination of a future planning application. Given those circumstances, there is every prospect that a policy-compliant scheme would be granted consent by a future Planning Committee.

Inspector's Question 3.18

How does the Council propose to address those implications and would this involve any alternative proposals?

Council's response:

3.18.1 As stated in the response to Q3.17, no alteration to the submitted Local Plan is proposed in response to the Planning Committee's decision.



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Defence Infrastructure Organisation
Ramillies Building Second Flr Zone 1
Marlborough Lines
Monxton Road
Andover
Hants SP11 8HJ

Sue Whiteside
Principal Planning Officer
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone Hose
King Street
Maidstone
ME15 6JQ

Telephone [MOD]: [REDACTED]
Facsimile [MOD]: +44 (0)
E-mail: [REDACTED]

12 Sep 2016

Dear Ms Whiteside

Invicta Park Barracks, Maidstone

Thank you very for your time and that of your fellow officers last week for meeting with myself and Louise following the earlier meeting in May.

As advised previously, the MoD, has been developing its Estate Optimisation Strategy, (known as the Footprint Strategy) that will enable it to progress a programme of rationalisation of its defence estate portfolio. The objective being to provide the Armed Forces with a better quality and more cost efficient estate. In addition the programme will see the MoD continuing to be a major contributor to the provision of surplus public land for housing development and economic regeneration.

To date, the MoD has already declared its future plan to vacate some 35 sites as part of its target to reduce the size of the built estate by 30% by 2040

Whilst no decisions about the future of other individual sites, not mentioned in previous announcements, can be made at this time, we are looking at options whereby the Royal Engineers regiment at the barracks could be better served closer to the training area and the military units that they operate alongside. Again this is subject to further ongoing work but the timelines for this could see the site being released in the 2025-2028 horizons.

The Department is also conscious that this particular barracks site appears to offer a large sustainable brownfield site suitable for a housing led scheme. Planning work on the constraints, opportunities and capacity of the site has been carried out by our consultants this year and we will continue to refine this work.

It is therefore appropriate that the Council continue to promote the site for a general or indeed specific allocation for housing in its Local Plan on the basis that , if declared surplus to defence needs, it could be brought forward after 2025 and within the latter part of the Local Plan period.

We will continue to update you on the programme and as advised DIO will be happy to attend the Local Plan Examination in October. I will also confirm when the Footprint Strategy is announced.

In the interim Louise will continue to liaise with you and the team to assist in any further studies that support an allocation for future redevelopment of the Barracks..

Yours sincerely

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Robert J C Smith BSc MRICS
Assistant Head
DIO Acquisitions & Disposals