



# LENHAM

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

QUALITY GROWTH  
QUALITY LIFE

**REGULATION 14 SUBMISSION**

February 2016



# **LENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

## **REGULATION 14 SUBMISSION**

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## **Foreword**

Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council

In my role as Chair of the Parish Council I fully endorse the Parish Council's commitment to delivering a Neighbourhood Plan for Lenham.

The community within the Parish has seen this as an opportunity to respond to the localism agenda and also as a way of bringing together many of the thoughts, aspirations, current plans and visions for the village and surrounding parish into one overall and coherent document.

The Neighbourhood Plan does not aim to stop development but to make sure that it is delivered in a way that will benefit the whole community. We are also conscious that we have a stewardship role over significant heritage assets in our medieval village as well as over landscape assets that sit in the setting of the nationally protected North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As such we have a significant responsibility.

Development must encompass a wide range of needs, including housing, employment, education, community and leisure facilities, in order to sustain the Parish, its residents and future generations but it must also complement the heritage and landscape around it. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to provide a framework for how development should look, what it should accomplish, where it is best located and also to ensure that it respects Lenham's sense of place.

The Neighbourhood Plan is a document that has been created to encompass change, while acknowledging the importance of retaining our heritage, culture and identity.

I would like to offer my thanks to the many people who have contributed to the preparation and journey of our Neighbourhood Plan. This includes my fellow councillors, the members of the Steering Group who have done much of the heavy-lifting, the members of the HIVE groups covering Housing, Infrastructure, Village Life, and Economy that carried out the initial local research and fact-finding and the many volunteers who have worked so hard to ensure that the community has been kept well informed. I am grateful also to our consultants, Kingsley Hughes of Designscape Consultancy Limited and David Parfitt of Arborvitae LLP, who have been instrumental in helping take the Plan to completion.

This Submission Plan represents the culmination of that work but also the considerable weight of information, opinion and feedback that you have provided us with over several years.

The document presents a range of policies consistent with the key objectives of the Plan as well as being in general conformity with the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, as is required.

A full record of the consultation activity including all of the representations by you the people of Lenham is published alongside this Plan as the Consultation Statement.

Regards

Cllr Richard Greenwood, Chair of Lenham Parish Council





# LENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This Neighbourhood Plan sets out the vision, objectives and policies for the growth of the Parish of Lenham over the period to 2031.
- The over-arching Vision Statement is to
  - “Protect the heritage features of Lenham village and the hamlets of the Parish, and their setting in relation to the AONB and the rural parts of the Parish, while allowing appropriate growth”, simply summarised as “Quality Growth Quality Life”.
- Key objectives are
  - To protect the heritage of Lenham village and its setting with respect to the AONB
  - To allow and encourage the surrounding countryside to fulfil its traditional roles in relation to agriculture and, increasingly, tourism
  - To ensure appropriateness of development with respect to
    - The quantum given the constraints within the Parish
    - The location, and
    - The quality of design
- In addition to the work of our own consultants, the Plan has taken full account of the extensive landscape appraisal work conducted on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council by Jacobs Consultants. In addition, the Plan recognises and seeks to implement recent Central Government guidance on consideration of brownfield sites.
- Extensive community consultation has taken place at all stages of the Plan development and feedback from the Parish has informed the aspirations, initiatives and policies.
- The Plan is sound and in line, as is required, with the guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework and the relevant Local Plan of 2000. Account has been taken, where appropriate, of the emerging Local Plan and of guidance from Borough Officers.
- The Plan sets out
  - Non-policy aspirations and initiatives which have been identified from community consultation as important to local people, and
  - Land use policies covering environment and development issues, addressing the Vision Statement and the key objectives, which, once adopted by means of a parish referendum, will form part of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan
- As a result the Parish can deliver a notable amount of development while at the same time protecting the countryside and preserving the ‘sense of place’ associated with the Parish by ensuring growth is in appropriate locations.

- The Plan intentionally has been kept as brief as possible. It is supplemented by a number of other important documents forming an appendix to the Plan and which form the evidence base. It is important to refer to those documents for a fuller picture of all the background work that has been done in gathering the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan and how this informed the decision making process and the decisions that have been taken.
- The Neighbourhood Plan is now at an advanced stage, with this being the formal Regulation 14 Consultation Submission. The Plan will then be subjected to Regulation 16 Consultation, followed by Examination, with the intention that it is adopted by public referendum this autumn.



Credit: Monty Finch



# LENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Lenham Neighbourhood Plan is the culmination of a process of investigation, evidence gathering, assessment, and public consultation. The Plan was commenced by Lenham Parish Council in 2012, and the Plan Area was registered with Maidstone Borough Council at that time and is the whole of the Parish. Neighbourhood Plans are a new tier of planning which recently has been introduced by the Government. The intention is to empower local people by enabling them to plan their own area. The intention in this case should be to protect the rural setting, and maintain the relationship between settlements and the setting, while allowing an appropriate degree of growth in suitable locations, and of requisite quality.
- 1.2 Much work has been done on the Neighbourhood Plan, facilitated by a Steering Group and specific work groups, and the Parish Council has held meetings with the Members and Officers of Maidstone Borough Council. The early work was taken forward by the Steering Group and by the HIVE work groups which are work streams in the disciplines of Housing, Infrastructure, Village Life, and Economy, with each group having its own members and leaders. The Parish Council also has been assisted by Designscape Consultancy Limited and by Arbovitae Landscape Consultants. Maidstone Borough Council has been very supportive and has provided support, advice, provision of mapping, and part grant funding. In the course of meetings, Maidstone Borough Council also have provided more detailed support and guidance on the content of the Neighbourhood Plan, which has been taken on board in this Regulation 14 Submission.
- 1.3 Lenham Parish is a very special place, as can be seen in the many photographs included throughout this report. Geographically, the Parish is of roughly square shape and extends to approximately 5km east-west and 5km north-south, and largely comprises high quality rural landscape, being roughly equidistant between Faversham, Ashford, Headcorn, and Maidstone, being approximately 15km from each of these locations, which means Lenham Parish has been able to maintain its distinct rural character. The Parish also is seen to be located at the centre of Kent when looked at in the context of the county as a whole. This includes the fact that the Parish is the source of two of the county's most important rivers; the Stour and the Len, with the former heading east from the parish and the latter heading west. The Parish of Lenham reasonably can be considered to be located at the heart of Kent, with the spine of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) being an integral part of the parish. This can be seen in the map included at the end of this chapter.
- 1.4 The major settlement of the Parish, Lenham village, has the only working medieval village square in Kent, which has remained without significant change to the enclosing buildings since the 16th century. The centre of the village has been designated a Conservation Area since the 1970s when KCC was the planning authority and been included in the last MBC Plan dating from 2000 and the local village plans in particular that of 2007. The Conservation area contains Two Grade I listed buildings, three Grade II\* buildings and 67 Grade 2 buildings.

The village has a defined settlement boundary in the old Local Plan which is being re-defined under this Neighbourhood Plan. There is a presumption against development outside such boundaries. There are two larger hamlets namely Lenham Heath and Platts Heath which are both located in the southern part of the parish, and a number of smaller hamlets.

- 1.5 The Parish historically has included east-west routes including from London to the continent and the Pilgrims Way (North Downs Way). This pattern continues to this day, and the Parish is now crossed east-west by the A20, the M20, the mainline railway, and the HS1 Channel Tunnel Rail Link, all of which run approximately parallel to, and south of, the North Downs AONB. The Parish in many ways has a straightforward land use pattern to a large extent defined by the above landscape and infrastructure.
- 1.6 The area to the north of the A20 forms part of the North Downs AONB, while the area immediately south of the A20 provides the setting of the AONB, which is an important planning consideration. The land defined by the A20 and the mainline railway includes Lenham village and also agricultural land which it is understood is graded Grade 2 according to the Agricultural Land Classification map of London and the South East published in 2010 by Natural England, and also includes ancient woodland in the west. The area to the south of the mainline railway comprises a more mixed pattern including areas of woodland, agricultural fields, and the hamlets of Lenham Heath and Platts Heath.
- 1.7 Notwithstanding the outstanding landscape and heritage assets, the Parish currently is under intense development pressure. This has in large measure arisen from Maidstone Borough Council's call for sites process, the Borough's general response to the submitted sites to date, and policy intent to allow 1,500 new dwellings in the Parish in their draft Local Plan, and in part from speculative planning applications by housebuilder developers.
- 1.8 The character of Lenham is under threat from disproportionate growth in inappropriate locations. It is important that the essential character of the Parish of Lenham is maintained, not only for local people but as a respite for visitors. As noted by Bill Bryson:  
  
***"Taking the English countryside for granted, assuming it will always be like this, is its greatest threat."*** (The road to Little Dribbling: More Notes from a Small Island)
- 1.9 Landscape protection therefore is one of the main considerations informing the content of the Plan, in fact being the pre-eminent planning consideration, supported by clear and strong public opinion and the evidence base of landscape assessments commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council as noted below.
- 1.10 At the same time, the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates how the Parish can deliver a notable amount of development while at the same time protecting the countryside, by ensuring growth is in appropriate locations.

- 1.11 Much of the Plan process has been dedicated to listening. It is believed listening is one of the key requirements of any planning study. Listening is of even greater importance in the case of Neighbourhood Plans, as their intent is to discover the wishes of the public for their own area, and the proposals ultimately need to be endorsed by public vote. A further key issue is sustainability, which underpins the whole of the planning system.
- 1.12 In addition to this Regulation 14 Submission Neighbourhood Plan, Baseline Landscape and Urban Design Assessments were produced. These reports form part of the evidence base leading to the formulation of the Neighbourhood Plan. Together with several other documents, as noted, these form a series of stand-alone appendices to the Neighbourhood Plan. It is important to also refer to those other documents for a fuller picture of all the work that has been done in gathering the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan and how this informed the decision making process and the decisions that have been taken.
- 1.13 Important landscape appraisal work was conducted on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council by Jacobs Consultants. This included the Landscape Assessments of 2012 and 2013 and the Landscape Capacity Study of 2015. This work has been reinforced and supplemented by the landscape assessment produced by the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Consultant, and together these provide a valuable body of work in helping define areas that merit landscape protection, and by negation those areas that might be considered less sensitive and thereby more suitable for new development. Landscape quality and sensitivity has been one of the most significant considerations informing the proposals contained within the Neighbourhood Plan. Heritage and the pattern and character of the settlements in the Parish also is a key planning consideration, and provides positive design reference for the Parish in maintaining and promoting the local vernacular in terms of built forms and facing materials.
- 1.14 The consultation responses have identified clear and strong support for the Neighbourhood Plan, both in principle and content, and has provided specific direction for important decisions which have had to be taken. Residents are prepared to accept some development, especially if it can help maintain the health of the village of Lenham. Significant planning weight is attached to public opinion in the formulation and consideration of Neighbourhood Plans. That is why public engagement has been so important in the Neighbourhood Plan process.
- 1.15 The Plan also puts forward a number of policies and other measures that seek to raise the quality of the Parish and the quality of life available to residents in the Parish and visitors.
- 1.16 The Neighbourhood Plan is now at an advanced stage, with this being the formal Regulation 14 Consultation Submission. The Plan will then be subjected to Regulation 16 Consultation, followed by Examination, with the intention that it is adopted by public referendum this autumn.





Lenham Parish: The Heart of Kent

## 2 Background

### **The Principle of Neighbourhood Plans**

- 2.1 This chapter sets out the background to the Neighbourhood Plan process and its important principles. The glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is the highest level of planning in England, provides the following definition of Neighbourhood Plans;

“A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area.”

- 2.2 The advent of Neighbourhood Plans is a great opportunity for local bodies such as parishes, but also is a responsibility. By shaping development in line with local aspirations it is intended that the acceptability of development will be improved. It also is important to bring forward development that is proportionate and which takes account of public opinion and constraints such as landscape sensitivity and historic assets.

- 2.3 The NPPF notes the nature and remit of Neighbourhood Plans;

“It (the NPPF) provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.”

and at paragraph 2;

“The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans”

This means the over-arching guidance of the NPPF must be reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 2.4 It is important the Neighbourhood Plan is sound and is in line with the guidance of the Local Plan and the NPPF. This includes acknowledging the importance of sustainable development and the importance of good design.
- 2.5 The NPPF sets out further important principles in subsequent chapters. Chief amongst these are;
- i) That planning be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area. (para. 17)
  - ii) The importance of strengthening the rural economy. (para. 28)
  - iii) The importance of local people identifying local green spaces that are important to them. (para. 76)

- iv) Giving local people genuine power in terms of setting policies that will help determine planning applications and furthermore effectively in granting their own planning approvals by creating Neighbourhood Development Orders. (para. 183)

2.6 The above guidance in the NPPF should not be seen to constrain Neighbourhood Plans: it actually empowers local people and gives them the legal basis in planning law for taking forward their ideas.

### **Plan Process**

2.7 There is a set process of Neighbourhood Plan adoption that must be followed, as set out below;

i) Firstly propose a Boundary/Boundaries.

ii) Send the proposed Boundary/Boundaries to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) which in this case is Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). The LPA can be reasonably expected to Endorse the Proposed Boundaries.

iii) Write a letter to the public (perhaps every household in the Parish) showing the area(s) and explaining what sort of proposals may be brought forward for those areas.

iv) Draft Options and Public Meeting(s) and Workshop(s).

v) Final Proposals.

vi) Formal 6-week Regulation 14 Consultation carried out by the Parish Council.

vii) Formal 6-week Regulation 16 Consultation carried out by the LPA.

viii) Sent to an Examiner (similar to a Planning Inspector) to check for soundness.

ix) Goes to Local Referendum. Needs min. 50% support of those who choose to vote.

x) Becomes Adopted as soon as the Referendum is passed.

xi) Goes to the LPA (MBC) to be incorporated in the Local Plan. Becomes an integral part of the Local Plan and carries as much weight as other parts of the Local Plan.

2.8 It is essential the above process is followed. The Lenham Neighbourhood Plan is now at an advanced stage of development, being at stage vi) as noted above. This is a key milestone in the process.

### **Consultation**

2.9 One of the main principles of Neighbourhood Plans is that they address the wishes of local people. This requires a high level of consultation in order to ascertain that the



Plan really does represent the public's wishes and the public mood, and this is essential as the Plan ultimately will require the support of local people.

- 2.10 Public consultation has been carried out since the time of plan registration, including some significant well-attended public consultation events in 2014 and 2015. This consultation is reviewed in greater detail in the Consultation Statement. The key public consultation events were as follows;

9<sup>th</sup> November 2014: Neighbourhood Plan Stall at the Lenham Market with the main purpose of raising awareness and inviting the public to the two subsequent events.

16<sup>th</sup> November 2014: Major Public Consultation Event. The public were presented with what were seen to be the main issues and the drafts of the Baseline Landscape Assessment, the Baseline Urban Design Assessment, and the Interim Report. Large presentation panels presented the key issues and the purpose of Neighbourhood Plans. The public were provided with base mapping on which they could draw and note comments, and feedback forms which were gathered into a suggestions box. This feedback has been collated and analysed.

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2014: Feedback Event. The public response from the 16<sup>th</sup> was presented to the public, verbally, in a detailed transcript and in summary form by theme, with the public able to take away copies of the summary.

21<sup>st</sup> February 2015: presentation of the work of the HIVE teams, (Housing, Infrastructure, Village Life and Economy) followed by public discussion and vote in favour of creating a Plan Team of Councillors and Hive Team members to prepare the next draft. Over 60 people attended this meeting and voted to accept the reports and the Plan Team.

7<sup>th</sup> May 2015: presentation to coincide with the fact that Parishioners were mobilised for the General Election on that day. A straw poll was carried out which identified 95% support for the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The full breakdown of returns is as set out below;

<b>Straw Poll Conducted on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015</b>		
	No.	Percentage
Total Returns	530	
Supporting the Draft Nbd Plan	506	95%
Not Supporting the Draft Nbd Plan	15	3%
Spoiled Papers	9	2%

17<sup>th</sup> October 2015: Major public consultation event held at Lenham Primary School. This event was very well attended with over 200 people visiting. One of the reasons for holding this event at the school was to achieve a wider demographic as regards the age of visitors, with a higher proportion of families and children attending. The event also included a broad range of activities such as quizzes and drawing competitions, with the intention that people would stay for an hour or more, rather than just 20 minutes or so, and this proved to be the case. The contents of the

updated Neighbourhood Plan were presented, including the Plan Diagram. Again, the proposals contained within the Draft Neighbourhood Plan received overwhelming support from the public.

21<sup>st</sup> November 2015: Technical Presentation held in the Community Centre. This covered the basics of the more legalistic and procedural aspects of planning and due process, as some people have expressed an interest in these. This event was attended by 50 people.

2.11 The above events were widely advertised in the village, both physically on posters and in magazines and on the Parish Council web site. The draft plans also were available on the Parish Council web site, with hard copies also being available to view at key venues in the Parish.

2.12 The feedback provided support and guidance for the Plan as follows;

i) clear and strong support for the principle of the Plan and the fact that it is being carried out, and appreciation for those working on the Plan.

ii) clear feedback regards those aspects seen as being most important.

iii) clear support for the policies with regards to both their themes and their detail.

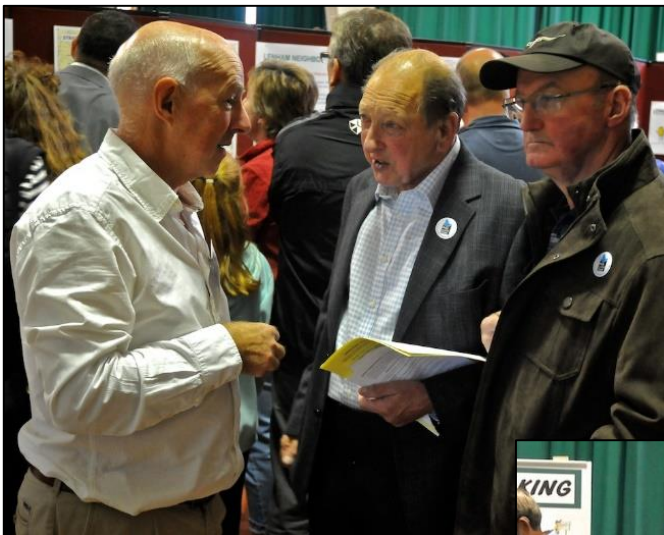
iv) clear support for development areas as set out in the Plan Diagram, especially when compared to alternatives.

2.13 Photographs of the above consultation events are included below.









- 2.14 It also has been considered appropriate to meet with the officers of Maidstone Borough Council to clarify their position relating to key planning considerations and to keep them informed of the content of the Neighbourhood Plan as it has evolved. A Meeting was held with Maidstone Borough Council on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015. This was attended by members of the Parish Council Steering Group and consultants as well as MBC officers and their Neighbourhood Plan Consultant. This meeting was held on the basis of assessing and providing guidance on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan dated 30.03.2015. The meeting was positive and lent support to the Draft Neighbourhood Plan as well as providing specific guidance on detailed matters.
- 2.15 In particular, the officers and MBC Consultant provided the following guidance;
- i) They confirmed that the MBC Plan against which the Neighbourhood Plan would be considered is the old 2000 Local Plan.
  - ii) They provided guidance on the Draft Policies as set out in that version of the Draft Plan. They advised that some of the policies would benefit from detailed re-wording, and of how this might be done, while they advised others of the proposed policies were not really Land Use Policies and would be more appropriately presented as aspirations/initiatives.
  - iii) They advised that as far as possible Lenham must be seen to do its bit regards the need to deliver housing in the Borough.
  - iv) They advised that progress should be maintained on the Neighbourhood Plan such that it can be brought forward at the earliest opportunity.

The above advice was taken on board in bringing forward the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 2.16 A further meeting was held with Maidstone Borough Council on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015, again attended by members of the Parish Council Steering Group and consultants. The strategy and content of the Neighbourhood Plan proposals were explained and reviewed, and received clear and strong support. The work done on the need to protect landscape was acknowledged and supported, as was the work on the delivery of development, in particular housing. Maidstone Council acknowledged that Lenham would be seen to do its bit regards the delivery of housing in the Borough, and agreed it would be appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to be brought forward for Regulation 14 Consultation at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.17 The above events, and the feedback and advice gathered, are all reviewed in greater detail in the Consultation Statement. The feedback, advice and support have all been taken on board in bringing forward the Neighbourhood Plan as now presented.







### 3 Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives

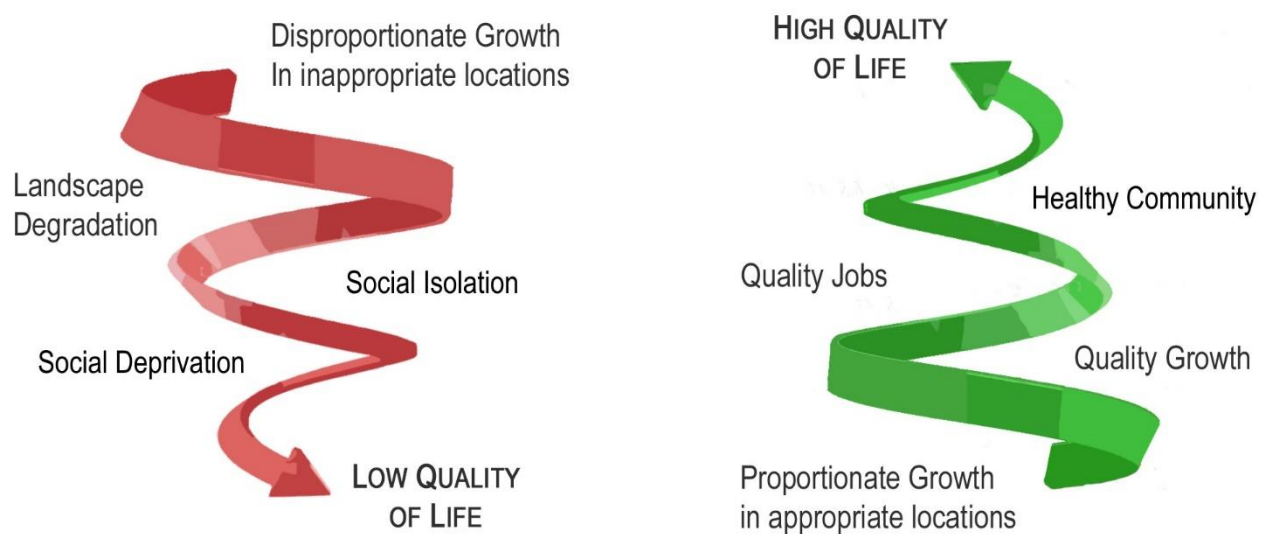
3.1 The over-arching vision of the Neighbourhood Plan is to;

***“Protect the heritage features of Lenham village and the hamlets of the Parish, and their setting in relation to the AONB, and the rural parts of the Parish, while allowing appropriate growth”.***

This leads to the sub-title of the Neighbourhood Plan, namely; Quality Growth Quality Life.

3.2 The above is based on the premise that it is possible to have an appropriate amount of high quality growth, in the right location, which is compatible with maintaining and even raising the quality of life. This includes the potential for the visual/landscape improvement of brownfield sites.

3.3 This vision contrasts with the opposing approach, in which excessive growth of poor or mediocre quality in the wrong location leads to degradation of the setting of the AONB and a lowering of the quality of life. This is illustrated graphically below.



#### Two Contrasting Visions for Growth:

The Neighbourhood Plan is committed to achieving the vision on the right.

- 3.4 It is necessary to break down the above vision into its component parts. It requires that;

***i) The unique character and heritage of Lenham village is protected and its setting with respect to the North Downs AONB and rural countryside is protected. Furthermore that the countryside is allowed to continue to fulfill a number of roles including active agricultural use, landscape amenity for local people as well as tourists and other visitors, recreational opportunities for cyclists and walkers, and habitat for flora and fauna, and that the blue-green grid is protected and wherever possible enhanced through developer contributions. Lenham Parish has countryside of high landscape quality which should be safeguarded for the needs of future generations.***

Fundamentally, this means that the unique assets of Lenham village, its Conservation Area and the surrounding countryside that is of the highest landscape value and sensitivity is protected. The built and landscape assets are an important resource for locals and visitors. The setting of Lenham is an important aspect of its character and heritage assets, while agriculture remains an important part of its rural character and economy. The community will endeavour to make walking routes more accessible through signage, providing new car parking, and publicising walks on maps in public open spaces and in printed form. Cyclists frequently use the rural roads around the parish and some clubs use the A20 for racing at the weekends, often stopping off in Lenham village to benefit from the historic setting and the village's pubs and food outlets. The Neighbourhood Plan also seeks to enable a high quality of life for residents of all age groups whilst acknowledging that young, single people may find a wider range of attractions in the towns.

***ii) The quantum of growth is proportionate and is appropriate given the constraints within the Parish.***

This has been achieved by identifying an appropriate quantum of growth given the opportunities for development sites in the Parish while recognising the constraints in the Parish, as supported by public opinion. In other words by identifying sites suitable for development rather than adopting a numbers-led approach. The people of Lenham value the high quality landscape setting and wherever possible wish to deliver growth from the redevelopment of brownfield sites, some of which already are available, while others may be forthcoming over the 20-year plan period. Some of this development is envisaged to be self-build in line with Central Government policy, and thereby more affordable.

***iii) Growth is in appropriate locations.***

This has been achieved by paying heed to the findings of the Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Capacity Study, the Neighbourhood Plan Baseline Landscape Assessment in specifically identifying the less sensitive areas, and potentially brownfield sites, and by gathering public opinion in requesting and obtaining a straight answer to the degree of support for development of various specific areas (including those put forward under the local authority's call for sites and under development proposals). It also is founded on the principle that almost all development should adjoin the village of Lenham in the interest of sustainability. A

limited amount of greenfield development also is considered appropriate. This would be carefully contained within the settlement boundary being redefined under the Plan. Importantly, the sites so identified would not impact on the setting of the AONB, would not adversely affect the countryside setting of Lenham Village or other heritage assets, and would not lead to coalescence with Harrietsham. Whilst acknowledging that Lenham has to provide new housing for a growing population, the Plan seeks to secure a village which is compact enough to be a harmonious entity, not a series of housing estates strung along major roads, but a village in the true sense that all areas are interconnected by roads, paths and that these areas relate to community focal points such as the Community Centre, the schools, the historic square, the Social Club, the Tithe Barn and the Church of St. Mary's.

***iv) Development is of high quality.***

This means that any development should be of high quality design. It should respect Lenham's sense of place achieved by identifying the components of that sense of place in the baseline urban design assessment, and requiring developers to pay heed to that sense of place in a genuine way rather than just paying lip-service to such guidance. It also is achieved by putting forward the principle of design review. It sets a marker that Lenham should not accept typical housebuilder developer estates which often are termed "anywhere" development in that they could be located in practically any part of England. The landscape setting and the square and Conservation Area are Lenham's most valuable assets for attracting tourists and other visitors from surrounding towns and from further afield. The Plan also is concerned with the refurbishment of Lenham Square and the enhancement of the Conservation Area.

- 3.5 To be truly considered successful, the Plan must achieve all of the above: protection of the landscape setting, and the right amount of development, in the right locations, and of the right quality. The vision is reflected in the policies. Furthermore, there are other aspects that can be addressed by the aspirations of the Plan.
- 3.6 The Neighbourhood Plan comprises a seamless methodology leading from the vision and goals, via the evidence base, to the aspirations and policies, underpinned by public opinion.

- 4 Constraints and Opportunities:  
Including Comparison of Alternative Development Scenarios
- 4.1 It would be possible to assess the appropriateness of developing each landholding across the Parish or each of the sites put forward under the Local Authority's call for sites. Assessment of sites put forward for development is included in the Sites Assessment Report, including SWOT Analysis identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of those sites. At a more fundamental level and in the interest of the proper planning of the area it is considered most appropriate for the Plan to consider development potential in terms of general areas according to cardinal points, being those areas adjoining the north, south, east, and west of Lenham village. This sets out the preferred way forward for land within each of those areas. It is considered important to located development in a compact form which adjoins Lenham village in the interest of sustainability in light of the services available in the village.
- 4.2 Maidstone Borough Council has commissioned two highly significant and informative assessments of landscape across the borough including Lenham Parish. These are the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment produced by Jacobs Engineering U.K. Limited in 2012 (revised 2013), and the subsequent Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment, produced by Jacobs U.K. Limited, in January 2015.
- 4.3 The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment assesses each landscape character area in terms of Condition and Sensitivity and provides guidelines for conservation and restoration as appropriate. The Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study combines the Landscape Character Sensitivity with Visual Sensitivity to generate the overall landscape sensitivity of landscape character areas.
- 4.4 These studies found that much of the Parish is of High Landscape Quality that is Highly Sensitive to Change.
- 4.5 The findings of the above reports have been confirmed and supplemented by the Landscape Baseline Assessment produced by the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Consultant, and have been instrumental in the formation of the Neighbourhood Plan. This contrasts significantly with the approach of Maidstone Borough Council to date, in which the landscape studies appear to have been accorded insufficient weight in the consideration of call for sites and in framing policies under the emerging local plan.
- 4.6 Furthermore, recently there have been discussions at a borough-wide level that development should be resisted around Junction 8 of the M20 as this forms the gateway to the Garden of England. If it is important to protect the gateway then it is all the more important to protect the garden itself, which substantially is the Parish of Lenham.
- 4.7 The analytical work produced by the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Consultant is set out in the following pages.



## **North**

- 4.8 The area to the north of Lenham falls within the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Development is strongly resisted by existing planning policy. The land to the north also is vital agricultural land Grade 2 and a large area is in a higher level environmental scheme. The possibility of significant development in the north therefore can be dismissed. The relevance of views from the North Downs AONB also should be given high prominence in Planning Policy and any Planning Decisions relating to the rest of the Parish.

## **South**

- 4.9 The growth of the village of Lenham has in many ways been defined and constrained by the mainline railway to the south. The Local Authority has regarded the railway as a “natural” boundary to development and considered that there should be no development south of the railway. Some villagers have pointed out that the area immediately south of the railway is not good farming land and was actually a part of the village in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and since declined. Furthermore, that the railway evidently is man-made and has only been in place since 1884, and so does not in any sense form a natural boundary, and that it is wrong to accord such significance and planning weight to the railway.
- 4.10 An important recent planning development is approval of the application for development of the Goods Yard, which initially was refused by Maidstone Borough Council but was upheld at appeal. It is important that Neighbourhood Plans take on board such emerging facts, in acknowledging the approval and any planning implications arising. Significantly, it sets a precedent for development south of the railway, which goes against the position previously adopted by Maidstone Borough Council. It also is significant that development in the south would be sustainable in that it would be within easy walking distance of the railway station, being just a few minutes’ walk away.
- 4.11 Local opinion also indicates that more substantial development south of the railway is considered acceptable, being alongside the southern side of the railway stretching as far as Old Ham Lane in the west. This concept is lent further support by the fact that this area does not form the immediate setting of the AONB and also the poorer sandy soil in this area. The spine road of such a development also would function as a southern by-pass for Lenham, thereby allowing access from the development and areas to the south directly to the A20 to the west of the village while avoiding the heart of the village and the Square. Developer contributions from this development also would be used toward widening Old Ham Lane as far as Ham Lane. It is important to recognise that an appropriate scale of development south of the railway has been subject to public scrutiny and received the support of public opinion, as demonstrated by inclusion in the Plan Diagram at the consultation events in October and November 2015, and the positive feedback obtained, especially when compared to potential development to the east or west of the village.
- 4.12 The consultation carried out to date has put forward the possibility that the larger hamlets of the Parish should accept an appropriate low level of growth in the interests of their continued social health. These larger hamlets comprise Platts Heath and Lenham Heath. Development in such areas is not encouraged in the

Local Authority's Local Plan but is considered appropriate for the reason as stated, and in the interests of such locations sharing a suitably modest burden of the growth of the Parish as a whole, and it is believed a low quantum of growth represents sound planning subject to public support. The consultation documents earlier in the Neighbourhood Plan process put forward the proposition that Platts Heath and Lenham Heath each should accommodate growth of up to 25 dwellings. However, this suggestion encountered strong public opposition in the case of Platts Heath. A far lesser degree of resistance was noted in the case of Lenham Heath especially as regards previously developed "brownfield" land. It is therefore considered appropriate that development in Lenham Heath should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, and this is incorporated in the Plan Diagram.

## **East**

- 4.13 The area to the east of Lenham comprises open countryside of high landscape quality and sensitivity forming the immediate setting of the North Downs AONB. It features large, open field patterns typical of a Chalk Downs setting as evidenced elsewhere in the North Downs and in the South Downs. The landscape work produced by Jacobs on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council notes the importance of "preserving the crisp edge of the Village to the East".
- 4.14 There are two small developments of note that have been brought forward recently within the Local Authority's Local Plan period. These are 12 dwellings at Groom Way and 9 dwellings proposed at Glebe Gardens. The former can be included within the figure for dwellings which already exist or are committed. They do not need to form a part of the Neighbourhood Plan but can be deducted from the headline figure of delivery of dwellings in Lenham over the Plan Period. The proposal at Glebe Gardens is resisted as it potentially could have an adverse impact on the headwaters of the Great Stour.
- 4.15 There recently have been suggestions the eastern part of the Parish could accommodate a substantial amount of growth by development immediately east of Lenham village and/or by means of a new settlement. However, such development is not considered appropriate because of the high quality landscape of the area, as evidenced by the Jacobs report and supported by the Neighbourhood Plan landscape consultant, namely being classified as of high landscape quality and high sensitivity to change. Furthermore, such a suggestion appears to be of questionable viability as regards the associated link roads and junctions that have been put forward as a part of such a proposal.
- 4.16 It has been concluded that any other further development to the east of Lenham should be strongly resisted, specifically because of the following reasons;
- i) Impact on views from the North Downs AONB and the setting of the AONB.
  - ii) Clear and strong resistance to development of open countryside to the east of Lenham Village as evidenced by public feedback.
  - iii) Impact on views from the North Downs Way/Pilgrims Way (which are in alignment through the Parish) and the former of which is classified as a walk of national importance being one of the 15 most important walks in England.

iv) Impact on views from the cross. This is an important man-made cultural and heritage feature. It also is a point at which walkers on the above walks choose to pause and reflect and take in the view, further reinforcing its significance.

v) Impact on the relationship between the centre of the medieval village and open countryside to the east. This comprises an open expansive view from the area of the churchyard and Tithe Barn. This view and relationship is considered very rare and has existed for almost a thousand years. It is considered improper that the relationship should be lost or compromised by this generation.

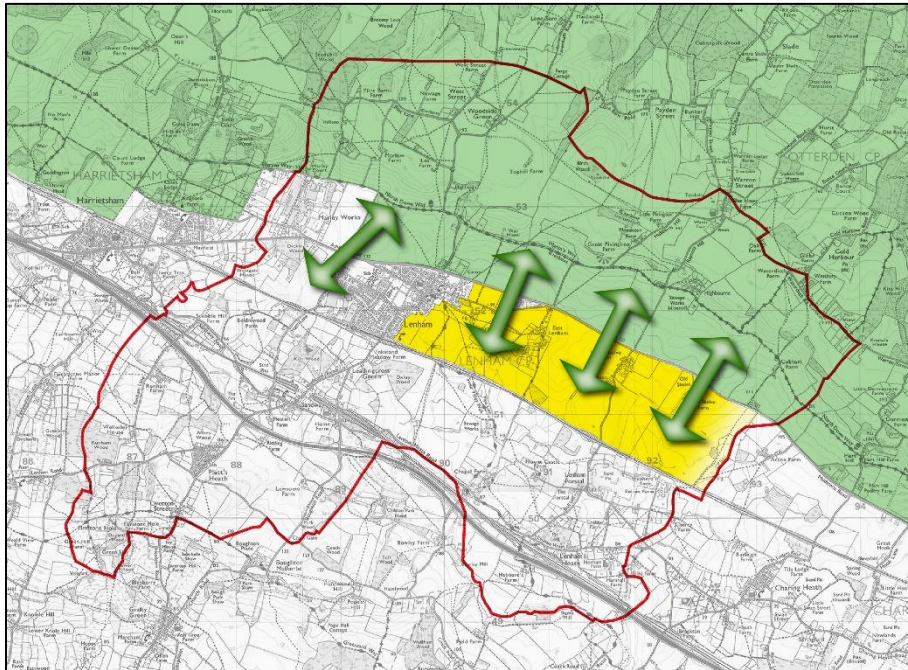
vi) Impact on the headwaters of the Great Stour which is an important Kent river, flowing through Ashford and Canterbury before meeting the sea at Pegwell Bay. Studies have indicated the excellent water quality of these headwaters provide a high quality habitat in the parish and downstream.

vii) Impact on popular walks, with the area to the east of Lenham marking the start of the Len Valley Walk (which subsequently heads west) and the Stour Valley Walk.

viii) Impact on the general openness and expansive unobstructed rural views available from the A20 to the south, which make a significant contribution to the quality of the experience of travelling between Lenham and Charing to the east.

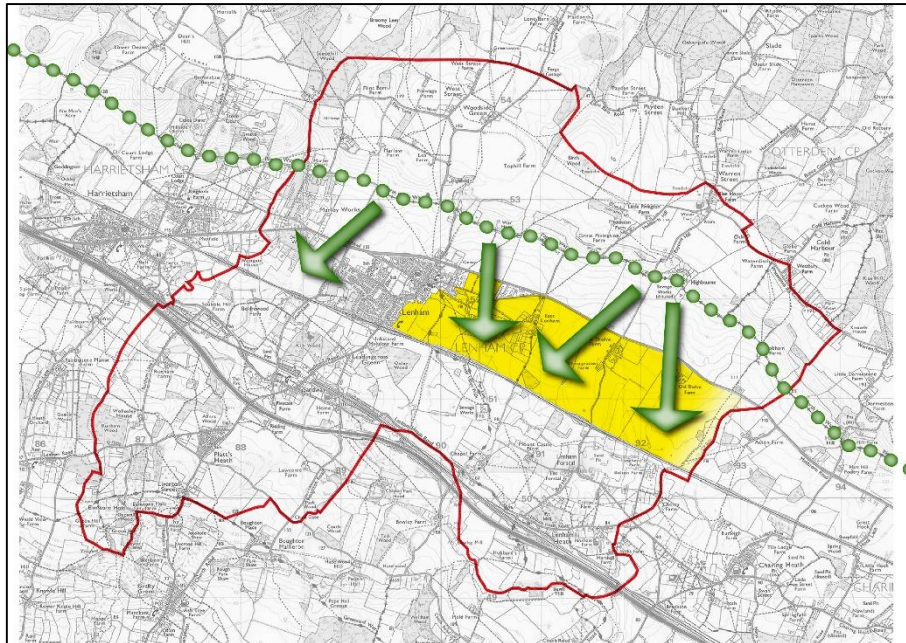
- 4.17 The above considerations are presented graphically below. Each of the points presents a significant planning consideration and each reason alone may carry sufficient weight to preclude development in the east. Cumulatively, they present a substantial body of planning weight against development in the east.
- 4.18 It also is relevant to note that there is widespread adoption of the Government's Agricultural Stewardship Scheme across the Parish. Under this scheme, farmers agree to place consideration upon aspects such as landscape, visual amenity, and habitat rather than simply produce and profit, in return for Government grant. This manifests in features such as generous hedgerows and retention of trees.
- 4.19 For the above reasons, the Neighbourhood Plan puts forward measures that development in the east of Lenham is strongly resisted. It is not intended that the area will be allocated a stringent landscape designation, as it is not desirable to prejudice the continued productive agricultural use of the land. It is instead suggested that the landowners of that land are strongly encouraged to put forward their land for the higher level Stewardship scheme, with associated grant funding. Also that any proposal for development to the east, whether a submission for allocation under the call for sites or a specific development proposals under the development control process, should be refused, other than the adaptive re-use of existing buildings and sites identified in the far south-east of the Parish in the Lenham Heath area.
- 4.20 It also should be noted that the Parish is of the firm opinion that the above considerations present a very strong and sound evidence base that would preclude development in the east given all reasoned planning judgement, even if such development was put forward by others.





#### i) VIEWS FROM AONB & SETTING OF AONB

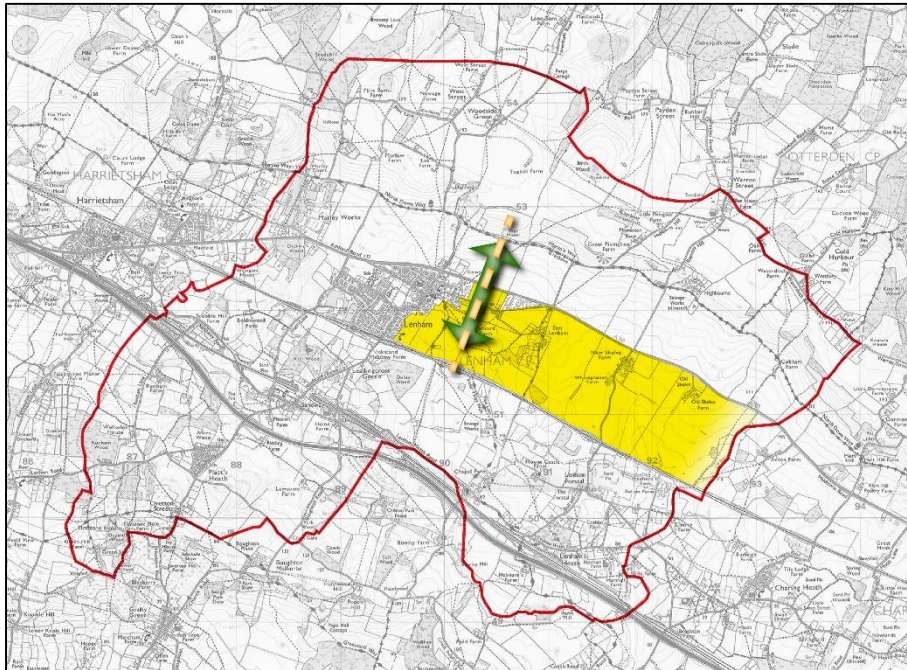
Open farmland at the foot of the North Downs forms the setting of the North Downs AONB with extensive panoramic views being gained from the scarp of the Downs.



#### ii) VIEW FROM THE NORTH DOWNS WAY/PILGRIMS WAY

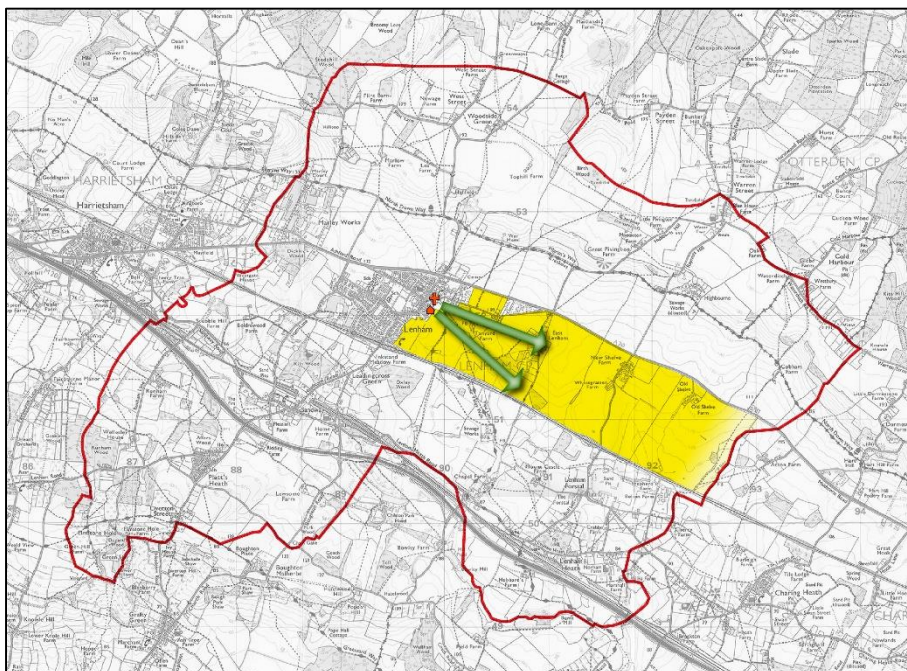
The North Downs Way is a walk of national importance. Southerly views from the North Downs Way support the amenity of the walk. A panoramic viewpoint is located at public access land adjacent to the trail, with extensive views across land to the east of Lenham. Also the picnic site at Cherry Downs adjacent to the trail offers outstanding views over east Lenham and the weald.





### iii) VIEW FROM THE CROSS AND SETTING OF THE CROSS

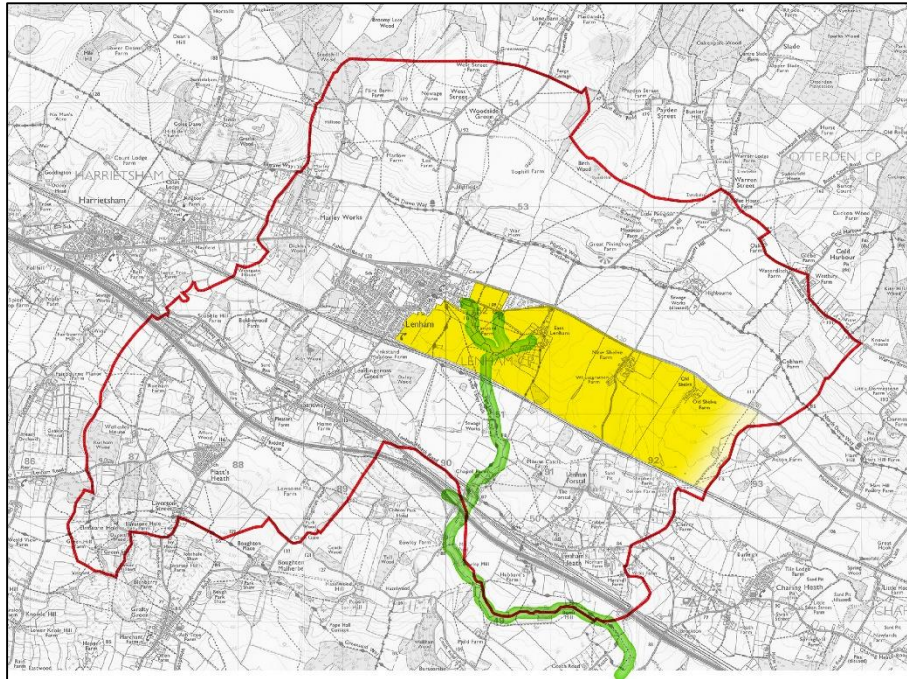
The cross memorial is located on an axis which has open views across open farmland to the east of Lenham. An unrestricted bridleway follows this axis to the south of the cross reinforcing its importance in the landscape.



### iv) VIEW FROM AND SETTING OF VILLAGE/CHURCH/TITHE BARN

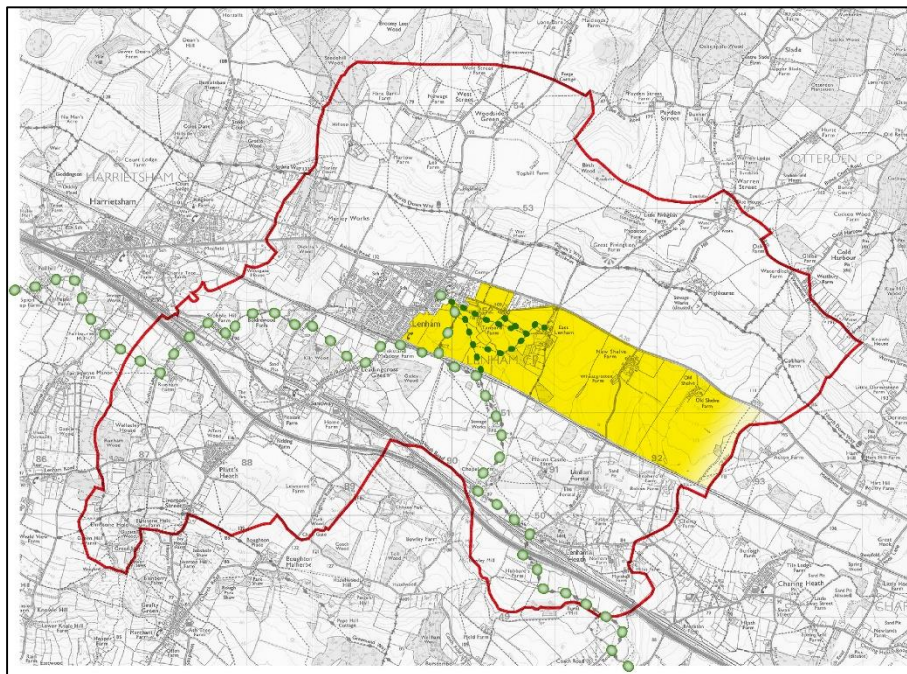
Open countryside forms an historic setting for the Grade 1 listed church and Tithe Barns. This has remained in such a direct open relationship since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.





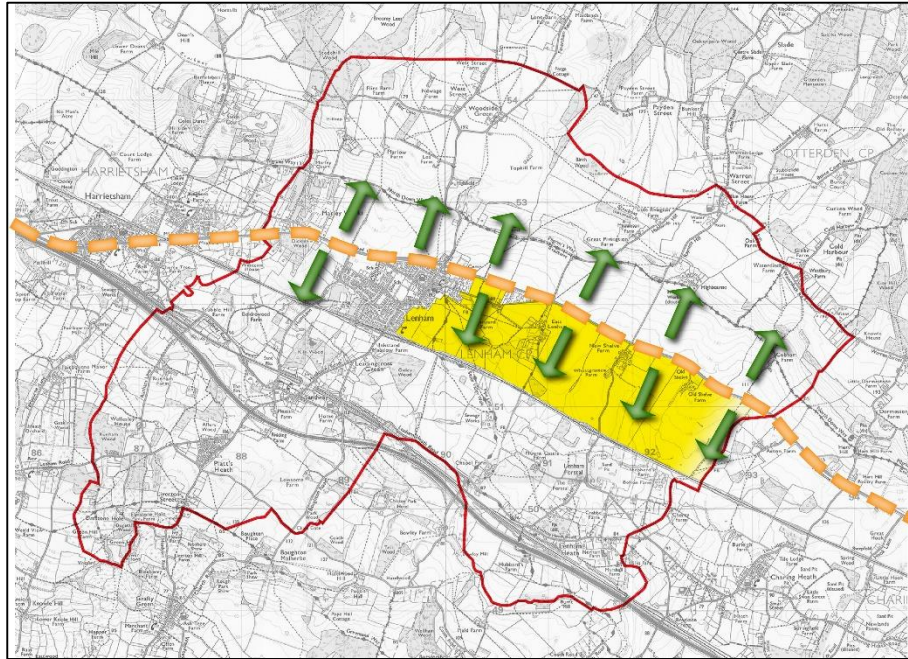
#### v) HEADWATERS OF GREAT STOUR

Headwater streams rise in the land to the east of Lenham. Two ponds are present, at East Lenham and Glebe Gardens with high levels of ecological resource. The quality of the headwaters contributes directly to the success of other wildlife sites downstream including Lenham Heath and Chilston Park.



#### vi) FOOTPATHS

The Stour Valley Walk and the Len Valley Walk pass through land to the east of Lenham. A number of additional footpaths in this area are accessible and well used. The combination of clean watercourses, high levels of land stewardship and of grazing livestock in this area combine to offer attractive public amenity.



#### vii) VIEWS FROM A20

Panoramic views of the AONB and open countryside to the south contribute to high levels of visual amenity experienced by road users on the A20.

#### West

- 4.21 The North Downs AONB and the walks, including the nationally significant North Downs Way, the Pilgrims Way, and further rural walks, have a similar relationship with the area to the west of the village. The west side of the village lacks a direct relationship between the heart of the medieval village and open countryside, the western side of the medieval village being flanked by housing estates of relatively recent construction.
- 4.22 The area has seen some relatively new construction, being development of an earlier brownfield site and Loder Close. This together with the trees around Pitt Field football ground, the existing development and Lenham Storage has created a western edge to Lenham village. Ham Lane forms a boundary line for views to and from the AONB, as well as a welcome open panoramic view when approaching the Parish from the west.
- 4.23 However, there are a number of planning considerations counting against development in the west including the following. Firstly, it is important to maintain a green gap to avoid coalescence with Harrietsham. The emerging Harrietsham Neighbourhood Plan also has identified anti-coalescence in this area as being a significant planning consideration. Secondly this area is at distance from the shops and other facilities within and near the Square. Such facilities are at or beyond what can be considered a reasonable walking distance, which could lead to car use exacerbating the issue of car parking at



the Square. It also could lead to a “them and us” mentality with residents of any new development in the west not feeling a part of Lenham. This feeling could be exacerbated if new shops and other facilities were provided in the west.

4.24 In summary, analysis by the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Consultant has identified four key landscape considerations regards landscape protection in the west;

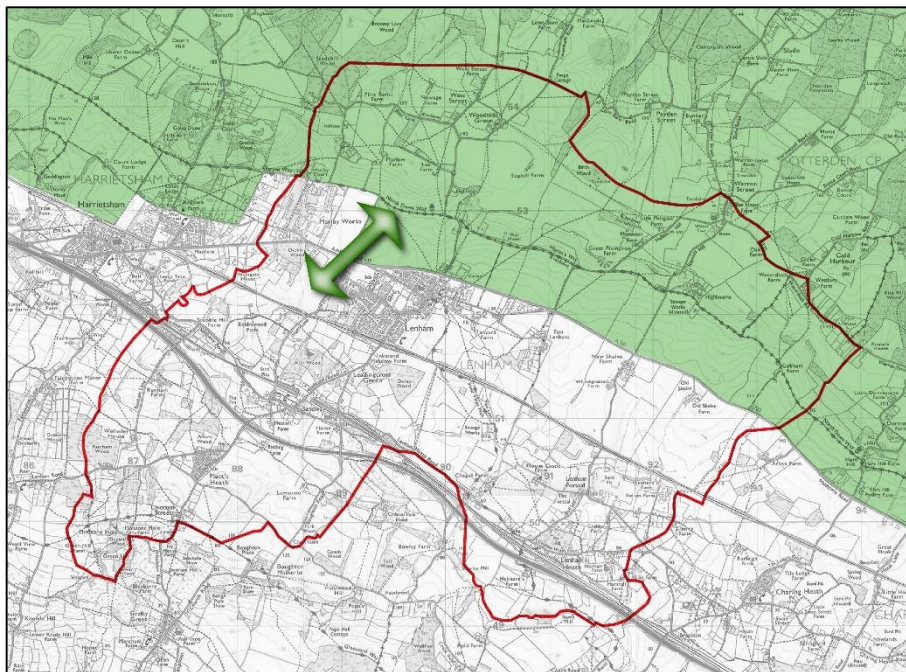
i) The relationship with the North Downs AONB and views to and from the AONB including from the North Downs Way and Pilgrims Way.

ii) The need for a clear break to avoid any sense of coalescence with Harrietsham.

iii) The presence and need to maintain expansive open rural views to the south from the A20.

iv) The presence of and need to maintain a green wedge to the south side of the A20 as, when travelling east along that road, the view opens up into a panoramic rural view having previously been constrained by the settlement of Harrietsham, by ribbon development, and by woodland. This wedge commences at the point where the road emerges from the woodland near the petrol station and Marley site and continues across the playing fields of Swadelands School, thereby maintaining an open prospect when approaching Lenham village from the west.

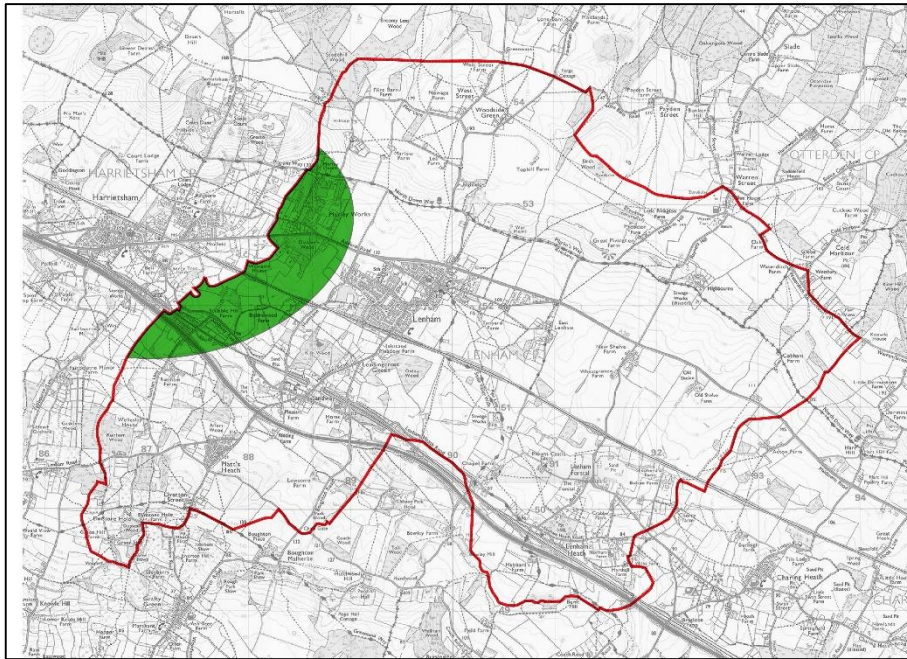
4.25 These landscape considerations are all illustrated graphically below.



i) VIEWS TO AND FROM AONB & SETTING OF AONB

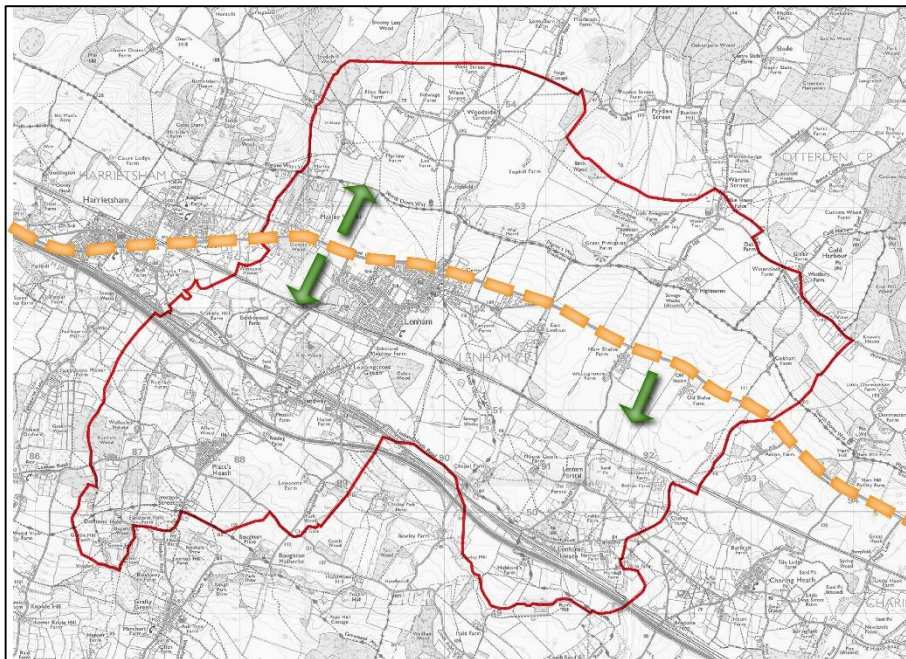
The views to and from the AONB and from the footpaths of the AONB remain important in the west as they are for the east.





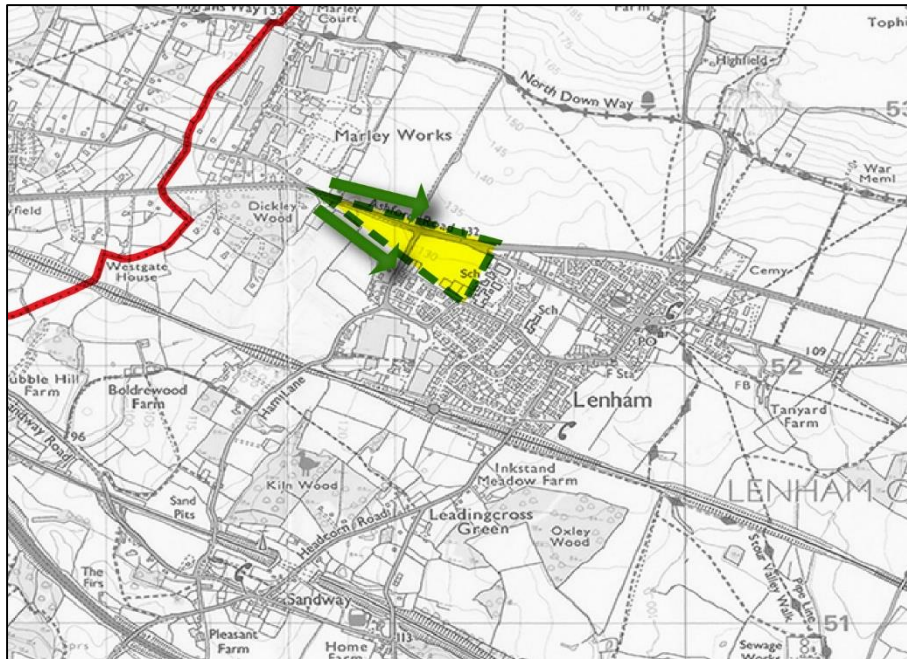
## ii) ANTI-COALESCENCE

An further important consideration in the west is the need to avoid coalescence with the village of Harrietsham.



## iii) VIEWS SOUTH FROM THE A20

The views to and from the AONB and from the footpaths of the AONB remain important in the west as they are for the east.



#### iv) GREEN WEDGE

This maintains an important open panoramic prospect when approaching Lenham from the west which contrasts with the constrained view up to this point. The side to the north is protected by virtue of its AONB status. It also is appropriate to retain and protect this southern side.

- 4.26 At the same time, notwithstanding the above landscape considerations, the western side of Lenham has the advantage of direct access to the A20 heading west while avoiding Lenham. A large proportion of traffic originating in Lenham and from the south of the Parish travelling along the A20 heads west to Maidstone and to the M20 at junction 8.
- 4.27 For all the above reasons, and in the interests of the Parish delivering a suitable quantum of growth, some limited development to the west of Lenham is considered appropriate along Old Ham Lane and this is included in the Plan Diagram. This has in part been included to assist in the widening of Old Ham Lane, by providing the necessary land to allow such widening and in providing further financial contribution obligations toward the cost of such widening in addition to those identified from development south of the railway. The extent of development has been carefully configured to avoid coalescence with Harrietsham by extending only so far as the depth of existing development at Loder Close. The area to the west of this should remain as open agricultural land, maintaining open views to and from the AONB, strengthening the anti-coalescence gap, providing native habitat in close proximity to Dickley Wood, and thereby reinforcing the blue-green grid of waterways and woodland in the Parish.
- 4.28 Other development proposals have been put forward by others in the west. There was a submission for 82 dwellings in the west adjoining the A20, put forward under the call for sites and as a formal planning application. This was



rejected by Maidstone Planning Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and removed from the Maidstone Plan by the Cabinet, and at the time of writing is the subject of a planning appeal. There is a larger site to the south of this which has been put forward in the Local Authority's call for sites, part of which also has been submitted for planning. All of these other proposals in the west should be resisted and refused. The strip of development suggested under the Neighbourhood Plan forms a small part of this wider area, supported by the landowner's evident willingness to develop.

- 4.29 It also is appropriate to consider the development potential of two significant sites in the west, namely;

- i) Lenham Storage
- ii) The Marley site

- 4.30 These sites currently include a high number of large light industrial sheds and are significant visual detractors in the setting of the AONB.

- 4.31 These sites currently are in active employment use, but it is possible they could be subject to change of use over the Local Plan period of 20 years. Each of these sites is understood to employ about 600 people, and they are therefore important employment sites in the wider planning context. In the case of Lenham Storage, there are 450 permanent staff and with agency workers the number rises to about 600 at peak. Of the permanent staff, about 60 live in Lenham. It is understood practically none of the workers at the Marley site live in Lenham. The village and these facilities sit side by side but do not interact in any meaningful way. The prevailing public opinion appears to be that they are simply there: they are neither a good thing nor a bad thing. If either of these uses should relocate in future then they might be suitable for housing subject to planning policies in effect at that time. Significantly, there is no public mood to shut them down at the present time. Because of the above reasons the plan does not actively seek to promote the residential redevelopment of these sites at the present time.

- 4.32 It also is important to be mindful of recent Central Government initiatives with regards to the consideration of brownfield sites. Government is considering the setting up of a national database of such sites. There would be a presumption in favour of the housing redevelopment of such sites, and it appears possible they may be granted automatic development rights.

- 4.33 Given the size and significance of these sites, the Parish Council has held preliminary talks with the businesses/landowners of both the Lenham Storage site and the Marley sites. Lenham Storage has indicated that, at some time in the future and possibly within the next 20 years, the company may very well be open to vacating their site. Although the buildings are well maintained they are of older construction which means they at some point over the Local Plan period of 20 years may be unviable to repair. Restrictions on height combined with the age of the buildings can put the business at a disadvantage with competitors on modern purpose-built facilities. Whole site redevelopment would both operationally not be practical nor financially viable because of planning restrictions on the height of buildings at the site. At this point the business would be better suited to other, better located premises.



- 4.34 The Marley site is more complex, and often is more correctly referred to as the Marley sites as they are used by a number of businesses, related umbrella sister businesses, and other businesses. However, some important points were raised by those businesses. They noted that most of the buildings on the site are in a relatively dilapidated state and that they struggle against their competitors who tend to be in modern purpose-built facilities. They added that there likely is not the will to make the necessary investment in building repair or new buildings, as the businesses would in any case be better suited to other, better located, premises. The Marley sites therefore also have a likelihood being available for development. Discussions have identified that some parts of the site currently are leased, but that these leases will all expire within the plan period.
- 4.35 It is stressed that there is no intention to cease the active employment use of either of these sites imminently, neither by the businesses/landowners nor proposed under the Neighbourhood Plan. It merely is the case that they may be suitable for change some time in the next 20 years.
- 4.36 It is entirely feasible that one or other, or both, of the above two sites could be brought forward for residential development within a 20-year plan period. If this were to happen, then there are a number of advantages that would arise given wider planning considerations, as follows;
- i) The Lenham Storage Site is located favourably for the Swadelands school and other facilities in the village. It also is well located to access the A20 while avoiding vehicle movements through the old heart of the village. Furthermore, it would avoid/mitigate lorry movements in vicinity of an existing residential area.
  - ii) In the case of the Marley sites, residential development, if handled well, would act to improve the setting of the North Downs AONB given that it would have lower visual impact than the existing buildings on the site. While more remote from the village, the Marley sites also have the advantage of being well located to access the A20 while avoiding vehicle movements through the village.
- 4.37 Broad-brush analysis of the two sites has been carried out to determine the likely capacity of the two sites for housing, given their physical dimensions and appropriate density, including allowance for landscape buffers around the housing and for open space within the sites. The Lenham Storage site is about 6.25ha and could deliver in the order of 200 dwellings at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare. The Marley Sites appear to total about 25ha and could deliver in the order of 625 dwellings at a density of 25 dwellings per hectare, being a lower density as is appropriate due to being a larger site.
- 4.38 These two brownfield sites potentially could deliver up to 825 dwellings, although there are considered to be significant differences between the two sites affecting their planning consideration as identified below.
- 4.39 While these two large sites have many aspects in common they are not regarded equally under the Neighbourhood Plan. Importantly, the Lenham Storage site is located south of the A20, is contiguous with the village of Lenham, and is included within the Settlement Boundary as redefined under the Neighbourhood Plan. It is within easy walking distance of the many facilities of

Lenham village. In contrast, the Marley sites are located north of the A20, are remote from the village, and are outside the Settlement Boundary as redefined under the Neighbourhood Plan, and effectively would be an independent settlement between Lenham and Harrietsham. They could however be considered appropriate for redevelopment given that they are already developed. This distinction means the two sites are considered. Looked at in planning terms, such as regards a “trigger” or “cascade” approach, there would be a greater presumption in favour of the Lenham Storage site.

- 4.40 In the case of the Marley sites, it is considered appropriate that these are in part retained for employment use. As such, this would adopt the model at Kings Hill near West Malling, albeit it at a much lesser scale. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore proposes that approximately one-third of the site is retained for active employment use while two-thirds of the site is developed for housing. It is intended that the employment component would be within new purpose-built buildings, rather than retention of existing buildings, and could be A or B1 Class. It is considered highly important that all development including for employment use is held to high account regards design quality, being the standards expected of residential development. It also reasonably should be assumed employment buildings shall be of similar height and bulk as the residential component.
- 4.41 In contrast, it is considered most appropriate that practically all of the Lenham Storage site would be redeveloped for housing, or there could be some modest employment use such as one or two small office units, or employment within a shop/a small parade of shops, albeit not impacting upon the intended number of dwellings. Again, this could be A Class or B1 Class.
- 4.42 Following the above approach, the amount of residential development delivered by these two sites would be as follows;
- Lenham Storage: 200 Dwellings approx. (as noted above)  
Being 6.25ha approx. @30/ha.
- Marley Sites: 467 Dwellings approx.  
Being 17ha approx. @27.5/ha. (as larger but not as large as considered above)
- 4.43 Under the Neighbourhood Plan these two brownfield sites could therefore deliver up to 667 dwellings, in addition to those delivered by other identified sites and windfall sites.
- 4.44 In summary, Lenham Storage and Marley (Aliaxis) have indicated that, while there are no immediate plans to vacate these sites, there is some prospect that both sites could become available for alternative uses within the Plan period. In recognition of this potential, and the clear need to plan positively for it, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies the Lenham Storage site and the Marley sites as locations for future housing growth toward the end of the Plan period
- 4.45 There are other commercial/industrial sites in the Parish which could become brownfield sites in due course, being the Morrisons site at Sandway and the Rose Lane Industrial Estate (Brake Brothers site) at Lenham Heath. These are not as large as the Lenham Storage or Marley sites, but still have the potential to deliver housing or other development in the Parish.

- 4.45 It also is appropriate to make allowance for housing that may be delivered by windfall sites, being sites that cannot reasonably be identified or anticipated at this stage. It is considered reasonable that a figure of 25 dwellings may be considered appropriate for dwellings delivered by windfall sites in this case.
- 4.46 The above analysis leads directly into the preferred growth strategy set out below at Chapter 5.



## 5 Preferred Growth Strategy and Plan Diagram

- 5.1 The spatial land-use components of the Neighbourhood Plan are shown in the Plan Diagram which was presented at the Public Consultation event at the Village Primary School on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and which is included at the end of this Neighbourhood Plan submission report. The main components are the protection of landscape of high quality and sensitivity and heritage assets, and their setting.
- 5.2 A further important purpose of Neighbourhood Plans is the identification and protection of local open areas which are considered important by local people. In the case of Lenham, these are seen to include the cricket ground, the bowls club, the allotments, William Pitt field, the area around the Pond, and the land around the Community Centre.
- 5.3 It also is important that the Parish delivers a notable amount of development, particularly housing. As mentioned, the planning intent behind Neighbourhood Plans is not that they should seek to stop development but rather that they should help shape development in a way that is more acceptable to local people. There is a significant shortage of housing in England, particularly in the south-east including Maidstone Borough. An important point made by Maidstone Borough Council is that the Parish “must be seen to do its bit for the Borough”. The meetings with Maidstone Borough Council have demonstrated that the Borough Council is not necessarily wedded to a specific number of dwellings nor to particular locations, provided a substantial number of dwellings can be delivered. This was confirmed in the latest meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015, which actually demonstrated greater support for the Neighbourhood Plan proposals than for what the Borough previously may have been intending. It is possible for Lenham to deliver a significant amount of housing, but it is of the utmost importance that such growth is located in the right location. This has been assured under the Neighbourhood Plan by taking the opportunities present in the Parish and as explained below.
- 5.4 Fundamentally, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to concentrate development on the previously developed brownfield sites identified at Chapter 4. Emerging planning guidance issued by Central Government increasingly is leaning toward the development of such sites for housing development under permitted development rights which shall be known as “Planning in Principle” (PIP). Such development may in any case go ahead, and it is sensible that this is embraced under the Neighbourhood Plan. As mentioned, the sites within the Parish currently are still in active use, and there is no intention to cease such use imminently, but discussions with the landowners have demonstrated that they likely could become available for development during the plan period.
- 5.5 Chapter 4 has identified growth areas considered acceptable as regards public opinion. Importantly, it is evident the Parish has the capacity to deliver a notable quantum of growth over the 20-year Plan period, and “do its bit” for the Borough, while at the same time protecting its heritage and high quality countryside for local people and visitors.
- 5.6 The consolidated planning for residential development within the plan period under the Neighbourhood Plan given recent approvals and completions, minor



proposals considered acceptable, and suitable development areas as identified at Chapter 4 is as follows;

#### DEVELOPMENT ALREADY APPROVED/COMMITTED:

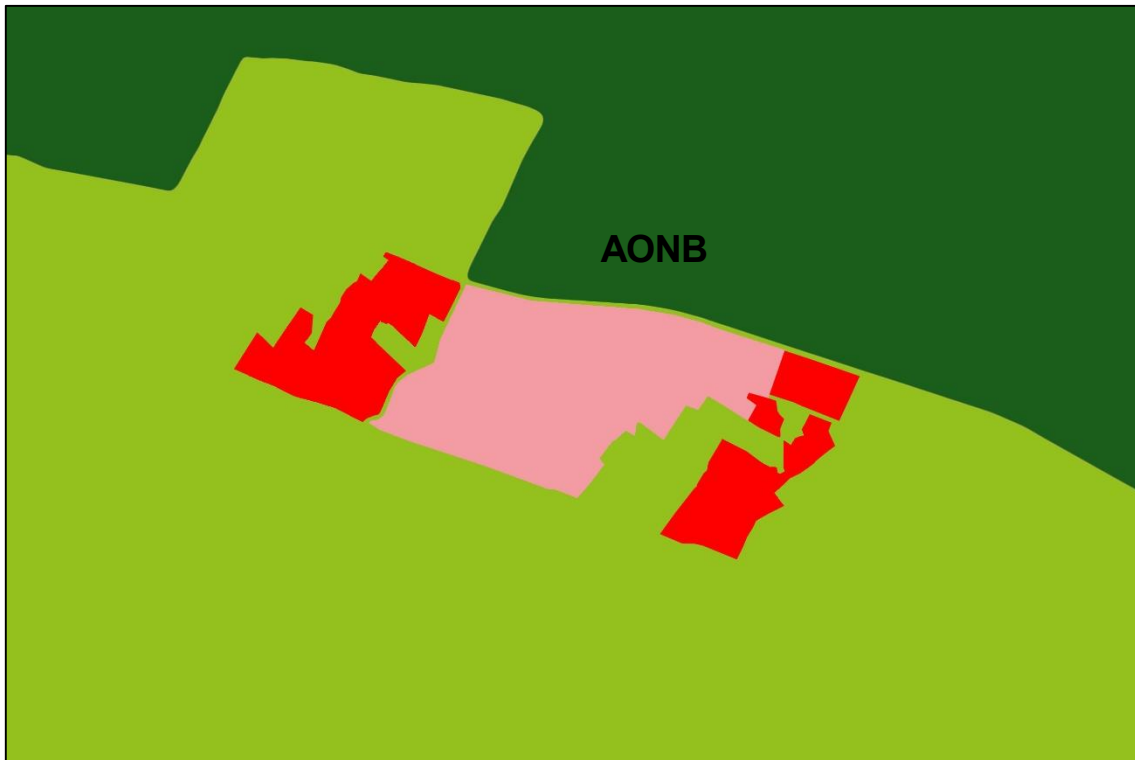
Goods Yard Approval:	70 dwellings
United Refd. Church approval:	24 dwellings
Grovelands Paddocks:	23 dwellings
Groom Way:	12 dwellings
Parapet House:	5 dwellings
Allotments Entrance:	3 dwellings
Tanyard Farm conversion:	3 dwellings
Tanyard Farm further dwellings:	3 dwellings

#### NEW INITIATIVES UNDER THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

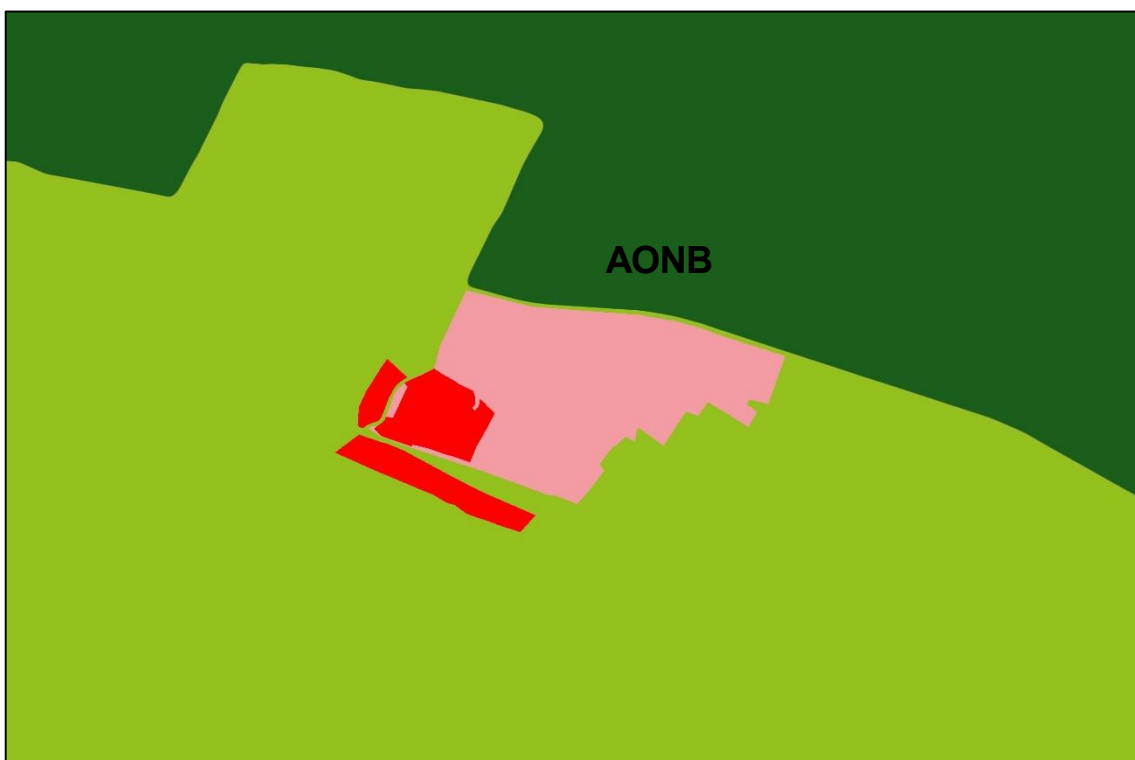
Marley Sites:	467 dwellings
Lenham Storage:	200 dwellings
Further Sites South of Railway:	175 dwellings
Old Ham Lane:	50 dwellings
Lenham Heath sites	25 dwellings
Sandway Morrisons site:	15 dwellings
Allowance for Windfall Sites:	25 dwellings
Total:	1,100 dwellings

- 5.7 The above demonstrates that the Parish can deliver a significant quantum of housing, being in the order of 1,100 dwellings. Given that this is the case, Lenham Parish without question would be seen to be doing its bit for the Borough regards the delivery of housing.
- 5.8 The Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates how this can be accommodated while avoiding impact on landscape setting and heritage assets. Public consultation has identified that the main concern of local people is the protection of the landscape of the Parish rather than housing numbers. It also should be borne in mind that benefits could arise, such as reduced visual impact of housing compared to the large industrial sheds currently on those sites, and removing lorries in and around the village and Parish generally.
- 5.9 It is not expected that the above approach will be welcomed by all local residents. There may be some local people who wish to see no development, although many people have noted the need for housing in the course of public consultation, including affordable housing. It is not possible to please all the people all the time, and this certainly is true of Neighbourhood Plans. Nonetheless, the above has followed a sound methodology and is founded upon the evidence base and the Local Authority's own scrutiny and decision-making.
- 5.10 The growth pattern put forward under the Neighbourhood Plan has placed substantial weight on the landscape appraisal work. In fact the Neighbourhood Plan is seen to better accord with the Jacobs study commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council than do Maidstone Borough Council's own intentions for the Parish to date.

- 5.11 The growth pattern put forward under the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maintain the relationship between the village of Lenham and other parts of the Parish with the AONB in the north of the Parish, and thereby protect the setting of the AONB. This is illustrated by the second concept diagram included overleaf. This strongly contrasts with the development scenario being put forward by others, including the work of Maidstone Borough Council to date and private developers, which would result in a continuous developed interface 2km long along the A20 immediately south of the AONB , which would lead to substantial negative material impact on the AONB and the setting of the AONB.
- 5.12 A further important planning consideration is highlighted by these diagrams. Under the upper diagram, much of the population would be located at significant distance from the shops, community facilities, and railway station of the village, being beyond what reasonably could be considered easy walking distance and thereby significantly increasing the likelihood of car use. In marked contrast, other than the Marley brownfield site, the Neighbourhood Plan puts forward a compact development pattern meaning people would be located within easy walking distance of these facilities.



**DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT BEING PUT FORWARD BY OTHERS**  
 This would create a continuous direct interface of built development and AONB approximately 2km long.



**DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PUT FORWARD UNDER THE NBD PLAN**  
 This seeks to minimise the interface of built development and the AONB.



## 6 Aspirations and Policies

- 6.1 It is necessary for the Neighbourhood Plan to be in line with planning context. In this case, this comprises the NPPF and the Adopted Local Plan of Maidstone Borough Council.
- 6.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is seen to be in accordance with the NPPF, and specifically that guidance which is of most relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan, including sustainability, design quality, the purpose of Neighbourhood Plans, and those specific aspects of Neighbourhood Plans which are seen as most important, such as identifying areas suitable for development, and identifying those open areas which are seen as being of greatest significance to the public.
- 6.3 The Neighbourhood Plan also is in accordance with the Local Plan: being the 2000 Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan with saved policies. The Adopted Local Plan seeks to restrain growth in the Parish in recognition of its outstanding landscape quality and sensitivity. Central Government has clarified that, when bringing forward a Neighbourhood Plan, the Local Plan in question is the existing adopted Local Plan in effect at that time (Nick Boles letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013 refers). At the same time, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to work with the emerging Local Plan where and as far as considered appropriate.
- 6.4 The Neighbourhood Plan furthermore, is in line with the latest Government emerging policies and planning direction, specifically as regards revisions to the NPPF in the bulletin released on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015. The five key likely changes are identified by Government as being;



- Broadening the definition of affordable housing
- Increasing the density of development around commuter hubs
- Supporting sustainable new settlements and helping development on brownfield land and small sites
- Helping the delivery of housing allocated in plans
- Promoting and aiding the delivery of starter homes.

6.5 All five of these points are directly relevant to the content of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan, which therefore is seen to be in compliance with latest Government policy direction.

6.6 There are a number of aspirations and initiatives put forward under the Neighbourhood Plan. These are aspects which are not land use policies but which nonetheless are promoted under the Plan. There are 7 identified aspirations and initiatives and these are set out below, preceding the Policies.

6.7 The Policies are included toward the end of the Plan. There are 16 land-use policies in all. Some of these directly relate to the Plan Diagram whereas some are non-spatial policies.

6.8 The Plan Diagram is included at the end of this document. This shows how the key policies would come together spatially.

## 7 Delivery

- 7.1 The Plan has been framed in such a way that delivery is expected to be relatively straightforward and not requiring of undue burden upon the Parish Council or Local Authority, other than review and due process.
- 7.2 One of the main components of the Plan is development on brownfield land and other appropriate land where shown in the Plan Diagram. This follows discussions with the landowners where appropriate, and partly on land within an area put forward for development under the Local Authority's Call for Sites. This demonstrates that all relevant landowners are willing for their land to be developed, and that delivery is highly probable within the plan period and furthermore is likely to be relatively straightforward. For the avoidance of doubt, there are a number of important matters of note and the support of the Plan for such development is conditional upon the measures noted at Chapters 4 and 5 including road improvements where necessary, the establishment of generous and effective landscaping and review of the proposal to ensure it is of high quality design.
- 7.3 The proposals for protection of land in the east and west also can be easily delivered. These areas can be protected while not prejudicing the continued use of this land for productive agricultural use. Furthermore, discussions with the landowner of Court Lodge Meadow to the east of the Tithe Barn have indicated that the landowner is committed to the landscape protection of this land by designation as pasture or by trust.
- 7.4 The Plan includes other non-geographic aspects that largely will be paid for by developer obligations. This comprises Section 106 contributions and CIL monies (with the chosen way forward being dependent upon the timing of CIL adoption by the Local Authority). The Parish will retain a greater share of CIL monies for works in the Parish if and when the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted. There are legal obligations on developers to pay such contributions, meaning availability of such finance is assured subject to the associated developments going ahead. It is likely that further study will be required regards the precise allocation of such monies and the detailed design of any such works (such as qualitative improvements to the Square), which can be achieved via due process of the Parish Council.
- 7.5 Given all the above, there is a high level of confidence that delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan will be straightforward and is achievable.

Designscape Consultancy Limited  
January 2016

# Non-Policy Aspirations and Initiatives

## Preamble

The following sets out the non-policy aspirations and initiatives put forward under the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan. These seek to address non-policy issues which have been identified as being important to local people.

- 1 Enhance Lenham's offer as a recreational and tourism asset for the Borough. The recreational and tourism opportunities of the North Downs Way/Pilgrims Way, Stour Valley Walk, Len Valley Walk, and Heath Corridor Walk shall be maintained and enhanced such as regards paths management and signage, including such support for cycle routes and for cyclists, and car parking in and near Lenham Village and at appropriate locations on the North Downs such as at Hubbard's Hill. This also shall include planning support for related facilities including overnight accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast establishments.**

Because this is recognised as being of significance under Policy LNP4 and is an important recreational asset for locals and an important tourism asset for visitors.

- 2 The Parish should set up a Lenham Design Review Group in an advisory capacity. This shall be independent of but shall report to the Parish Council, and shall comprise design-literate professionals and lay persons. Experience shows that this should have a minimum 6 members and maximum 10 members. The group shall have a diverse membership and care shall be taken that it does not become dominated by one profession such as architects, but rather shall include other professions such as landscape architects and graphic designers and lay persons. New development in the Parish shall be put forward for consideration by the Design Review Group which shall comment and advise the Parish Council accordingly.**

In the interests of providing an appropriate local level review of proposed developments.

- 3 Encouragement shall be provided to the creation of service sector employment hubs within unused or under-used agricultural and warehouse buildings, which wherever possible should be provided with their own dedicated broadband services in recognition of the generally poor internet service within the Parish. Such hubs can play an incubator role in**



helping establish, support, and grow local businesses. The Parish Council shall be supportive of such initiatives. Opportunities also shall be sought, and encouragement provided, for improvements to internet services in the Parish generally.

In the interest of ensuring the Parish has adequate access to the internet and ensuring that residents and businesses of the Parish are not disadvantaged as compared to residents of towns such as Maidstone.

- 4     The A20 shall be calmed to a maximum speed of 50mph from a location to the west of its junction with Ham Lane extending to just to the east of its junction with Old Ashford Road. Measures shall be taken to achieve this in liaison with Kent Highways.**

Because of the number of closely located hazards in this stretch of the road including the junctions with Ham Lane, Maidstone Road, Faversham Road and Old Ashford Road, and the need for hikers, other pedestrians, and cyclists to cross the road.

- 5     Qualitative improvements shall be carried out to the Square in Lenham village. This shall be subject to detailed study in due course. Any superfluous clutter shall be removed wherever possible. These works can be paid for by developer contributions and other potential sources of funding including grant funding.**

Because, while generally considered an attractive place, much of the surface finish and street furniture of the Square currently are of poor quality.

- 6     A speed limit of 20mph shall be applied to identified parts of the public highway within Lenham village.**

In the interests of highways safety, in the interests of enabling a fuller appreciation of heritage assets by local people and visitors, and because the application of such a speed limit is underpinned by new and emerging Government policy.

- 7     Agriculture plays an important role in the local economy and also plays an essential role in Lenham's rural character. Grade 2 and Grade 3a Agricultural Land wherever possible should be preserved.**

To help protect these areas for the growing of food being mindful of food security, and to help maintain the rural character of the Parish.

# Policies

## Preamble

- i) The following sets out the draft land use policies of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan. They seek to address the over-arching vision of protecting the heritage features of Lenham village, its setting in relation to the AONB and its surrounding landscape while allowing appropriate growth, as well as addressing other issues which have been identified as being important to local people.
- ii) Under the Local Authority Local Plan process, it is typically for policies to be prefixed by a letter which indicates their area of coverage, for instance E for Environment and H for Housing. This approach could be adopted for Neighbourhood Plans, but it is considered there is no need in this case, due to the relatively limited number of policies and to avoid any confusion with any Local Plan policies which may commence with such prefixes. The policies are instead prefixed LNP for Lenham Neighbourhood Plan.
- iii) These policies have been presented to the public in the course of consultation events. The feedback from these events demonstrates overwhelming public support for the policies: both in principle and regards their specific proposals.
- iv) It is important to be mindful that these remain draft policies, for which it appears there is a desire within the Parish. As such, they will remain in draft form until such time as they are presented for adoption by referendum, and they can be amended, omitted, and added to over the coming months in the course of formal consultation during the first half of 2016.
- v) If considered sound and passed by referendum, these policies will become an integral part of the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan and shall carry as much weight as other policies in that plan.

# Lenham Neighbourhood Plan

## Land Use Policies

LNP1	<p><b>The Parish of Lenham shall deliver a significant number of dwellings over the Local Authority's Local Plan period, with housing development being permitted on the sites as defined in the Plan. The larger areas also may incorporate some employment use, being A Class and B1 Class.</b></p> <p>In the interest of delivering housing to maintain healthy growth of the Parish and to make an appropriate contribution towards Borough-wide housing need, while being mindful of the need to protect character and heritage assets and their setting and protecting rural areas.</p>
LNP2	<p><b>New housing development shall be expected to contribute toward landscape enhancement, such as the planting of generous swathes of native woodland on part of such sites and the creation of new areas of publicly accessible open space within such development sites, and be sympathetic to the historic setting of the settlements and the setting of the AONB.</b></p> <p>This shall in part be done to ensure the visual screening of any such development but also shall be done to fulfil the objective of connecting areas of ancient woodland and to create habitat corridors, as well as to facilitate landscape improvement within the Parish generally, including contributing toward the blue and green grid.</p>
LNP3	<p><b>Any new housing development to the west of Lenham village shall take measures to avoid coalescence with the adjacent village of Harrietsham and furthermore shall ensure this evidently is seen to be the case when any such development is viewed from key publicly accessible areas such as the A20, the scarp of the Downs and the Pilgrims Way. This would be achieved by ensuring there is a generous physical distance separation between the two settlements and can in part be achieved by proportionate native woodland planting as noted above. The Len headwaters and river shall be protected and wherever necessary enhanced. The recreational and tourism opportunity of the Len valley</b></p>



	<p>walk shall be maintained and enhanced such as regards paths management and signage.</p> <p>In the interests of preventing coalescence which is widely accepted as being undesirable and to maintain landscape and recreation assets.</p>
LNP4	<p><b>Much of the Parish includes Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas which already benefit from statutory protection. Further opportunities shall be sought to extend and reinforce protection of heritage assets wherever possible, such as through updated appraisals, newly listed buildings and new or extended conservation areas, and enhanced protection of existing conservation areas such as by means of Article 4 Directives.</b></p> <p>In the interests of preserve and wherever possible enhance these heritage assets.</p>
LNP5	<p><b>The design of new development shall be mindful of the outstanding natural and built quality of the Parish, and the construction materials that have been employed in the positive built examples in the Parish. Development shall be of a design that evidently is of the place and shall not be of a design and appearance that could be in any place. This may or may not be based on the historic detailed forms of buildings in the Parish: there shall not be a presumption against contemporary design provided it is of high quality. The key design aspects shall include but shall not necessarily be restricted to the following, and applicants shall demonstrate how they have addressed these aspects in their Design &amp; Access Statements;</b></p> <p><b>i) Interest and subtlety in site layout regards aspects such as street alignments, closes, and small squares, rather than the straight roads and sweeping street geometries and cul-de-sacs which commonly may be seen in a town setting.</b></p> <p><b>ii) Frontage boundary treatments, which may include low hedges, low fences, low walls, or a combination of these rather than less well considered boundary treatments which commonly may be seen in a town setting.</b></p>

	<p>iii) Approach to the location and design of car parking.</p> <p>iv) Relationship between buildings and the street.</p> <p>v) Building massing regards height and form.</p> <p>vi) Construction facing materials.</p> <p>vii) Details such as fenestration, dormers and chimneys.</p> <p>viii) Landscape design and species.</p> <p><b>It also is stressed that such a high standard of design is expected of all tenures in order that new development across the whole Parish is of high quality and that development is “tenure-blind”.</b></p> <p>In the interests of ensuring new development is of high design quality and appropriate for the character of the Parish, and ensuring housebuilders and others appreciate that a high quality of design is expected and required in the Parish.</p>
LNP6	<p><b>New development shall be as sustainable as practicable, with reference to standards currently being drafted by MBC. New development shall incorporate habitat features such as bird boxes and bat boxes, which shall be built in as an integral part of the construction of the development.</b></p> <p>In order to be sustainable and to preserve and enhance the biodiversity in the built up area and in the Parish generally.</p>
LNP7	<p><b>Opportunities shall be sought for the provision of plots for self-builders. Wherever possible these shall comprise serviced plots with all necessary highways, drainage and utility services provided to each plot, with a housing developer constructing such infrastructure as part of a wider development and setting aside a number of such plots as an integral part of the planning agreement and contributions. Wherever possible this shall make use of Central Government funding under the Right to Build Scheme if and as rolled out nationwide.</b></p> <p>In order to provide such plots for which there is demand, furthermore to enable individuals and families to create housing where they otherwise may not be able to afford to do so, and in light of the country’s very low rate of self-build</p>

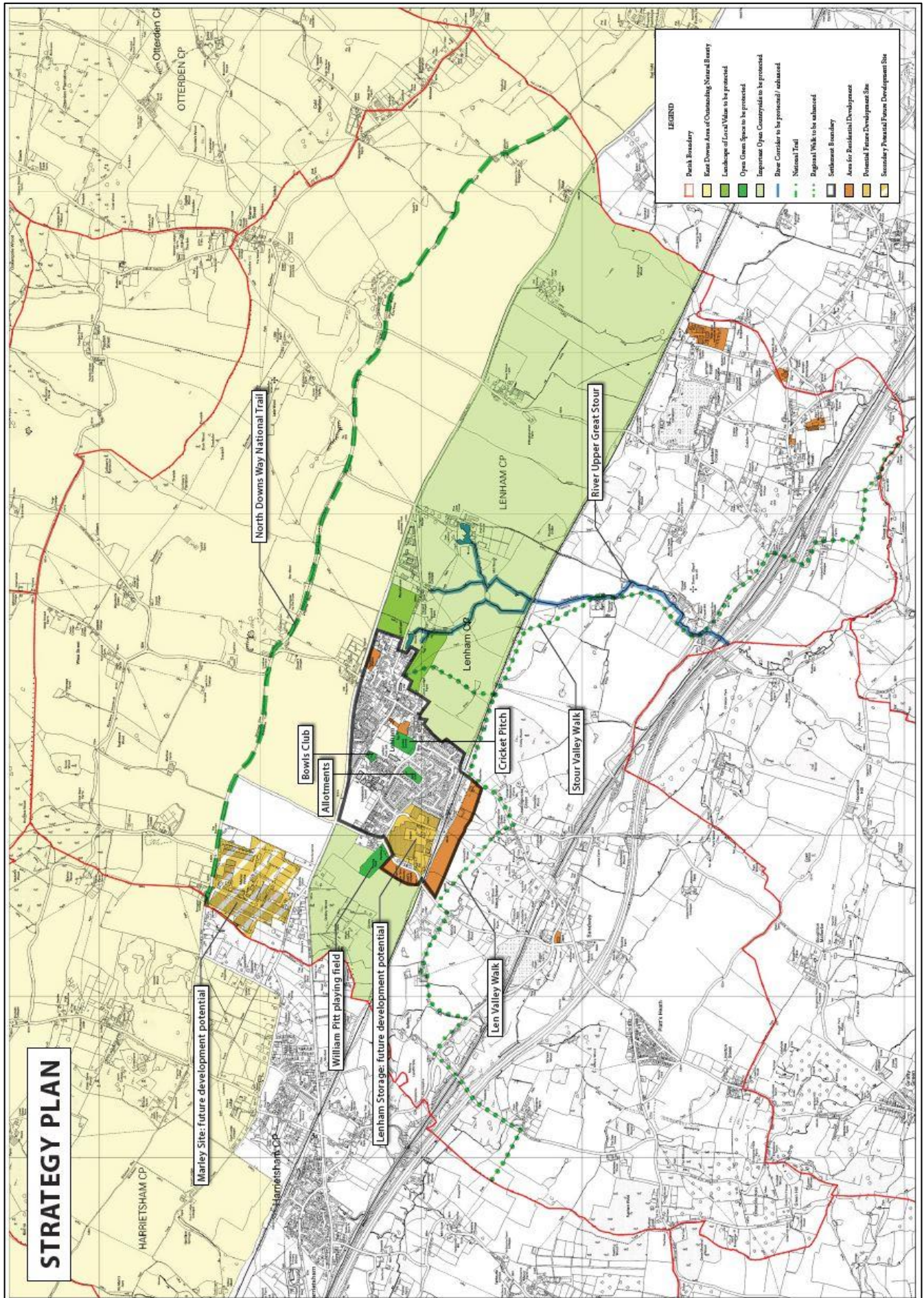
	as compared to other countries, as recognised by Central Government.
LNP8	<p><b>New Affordable Housing in the Parish wherever possible in the first instance shall be guided by the Housing Needs Survey of local people within the Parish, or an appropriate provision of housing shall otherwise be identified for occupancy by local people under the Housing Needs Survey.</b></p> <p>To help maintain the continued health and social cohesion of the Parish and to enhance the acceptability of new development to local people.</p>
LNP9	<p><b>Opportunities shall be sought to Provide Additional Car Parking in Appropriate Locations. These shall be locations within easy walking distance of Lenham Square, at/near the railway station, and provision of appropriately sensitive design and scale at suitable locations near the North Downs Way.</b></p> <p>To help alleviate pressure on car parking in Lenham Square while maintaining the viability of commercial premises at the Square and in the village generally, to encourage the use of the railway station while minimising on-street parking in the vicinity of the railway station, and to help make the most of the recreational opportunities provided by the AONB and North Downs Way.</p>
LNP10	<p><b>Opportunities shall be sought to enhance tourism related features and activities, and increase the role that tourism plays in the local economy. Such a role also is significant in the Borough-wide context. The Parish Council shall be supportive of such initiatives. This includes the protection of existing tourism assets which shall be retained for such use and enhancement of such assets where appropriate.</b></p> <p>Because Lenham already plays such a role and this role can be strengthened, and because such a role is compatible with maintaining a high quality of life for residents including protecting open countryside which has been identified as very important by the public.</p>
LNP11	<p><b>Further landscape screening of the Ashmill Business Estate shall be carried out following suitable investigations regards design and sourcing of funding.</b></p>



	<p><b>Due to its adverse impact on views from the A20, the North Downs Way/ Pilgrims Way, the North Downs escarpment, and the Memorial Cross. Support shall be sought from Kent Highways to allow such landscaping to go ahead and suitable sources of funding shall be sought.</b></p> <p>As the Ashmill Business Estate currently gives rise to adverse visual impact as seen from those locations.</p>
LNP12	<p><b>The existing ground floor retail and commercial premises in the Square shall be retained for such use and shall not be converted for residential use, subject to the permitted development rights of such premises.</b></p> <p>Because the Square is the heart of the village of Lenham and such uses are considered essential for the continued success in this role.</p>
LNP13	<p><b>The open areas within Lenham village (as defined by the NP settlement boundary and identified under the NP) shall be protected against development or from adverse impact on adjacent sites that may compromise their continued use. Such areas include the Cricket Ground, the Bowls Club, the Allotments, William Pitt Field , the area around the Pond, and the land around the Community Centre.</b></p> <p>Because these areas are considered important to the people of Lenham and in the interests of maintaining an appropriate setting for the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings, and to maintain wildlife habitat within the village. Furthermore because development of adjacent areas may have such detrimental impact and may compromise the enjoyment or continued existing use of such open areas.</p>
LNP14	<p><b>The meadow area located immediately to the east of Lenham Church and Tithe Barn shall be protected and suitably designated. This may be achieved by extension of the conservation area but it may be more appropriate that it is achieved by way of landscape designation.</b></p> <p>Due to its popularity amongst local people, because it forms a visual and footpath link between the village centre and open countryside beyond, and because it creates an</p>

	excellent setting for the church and Tithe Barn when looking back toward the village.
LNP15	<p><b>The land known as Tanyard Farm North which adjoins the Community Centre to the east shall be protected as landscape amenity and suitably protected by way of landscape designation.</b></p> <p>As it forms an important part of Lenham's unique location directly in the foreground of the AONB, due to its importance in preserving open rural views from the A20, and because of its significance in lying on the axis from the War Memorial Cross which is an important heritage asset and which forms an important part of the green infrastructure of the Parish for locals and visitors including tourists. The continued strength of the relationship between the War Memorial Cross and the village of Lenham is considered important.</p>
LNP16	<p><b>The rural area to the east of Lenham shall be protected due to its landscape and visual significance. The Stour headwaters and river to the east and the Len headwaters and river to the south and west shall be protected and wherever necessary enhanced. A suitable landscape protection designation which achieves this while not prejudicing the continued productive agricultural use of this land shall be identified and included in the Plan.</b></p> <p>Because the landscape significance and need for landscape protection of these areas was recognised in the Maidstone Local Plan 2000, was further recognised in evidence provided by landscape consultants commissioned by KCC and MBC since that time, is noted in the cumulative body of evidence provided by the Neighbourhood Plan landscape consultant, and has been identified as being very important to the public in the course of consultation. Furthermore, because the presence of the headwaters of two of Kent's most important rivers, and the need to protect the quality of water here and downstream in the interests of ecology, is considered important.</p>

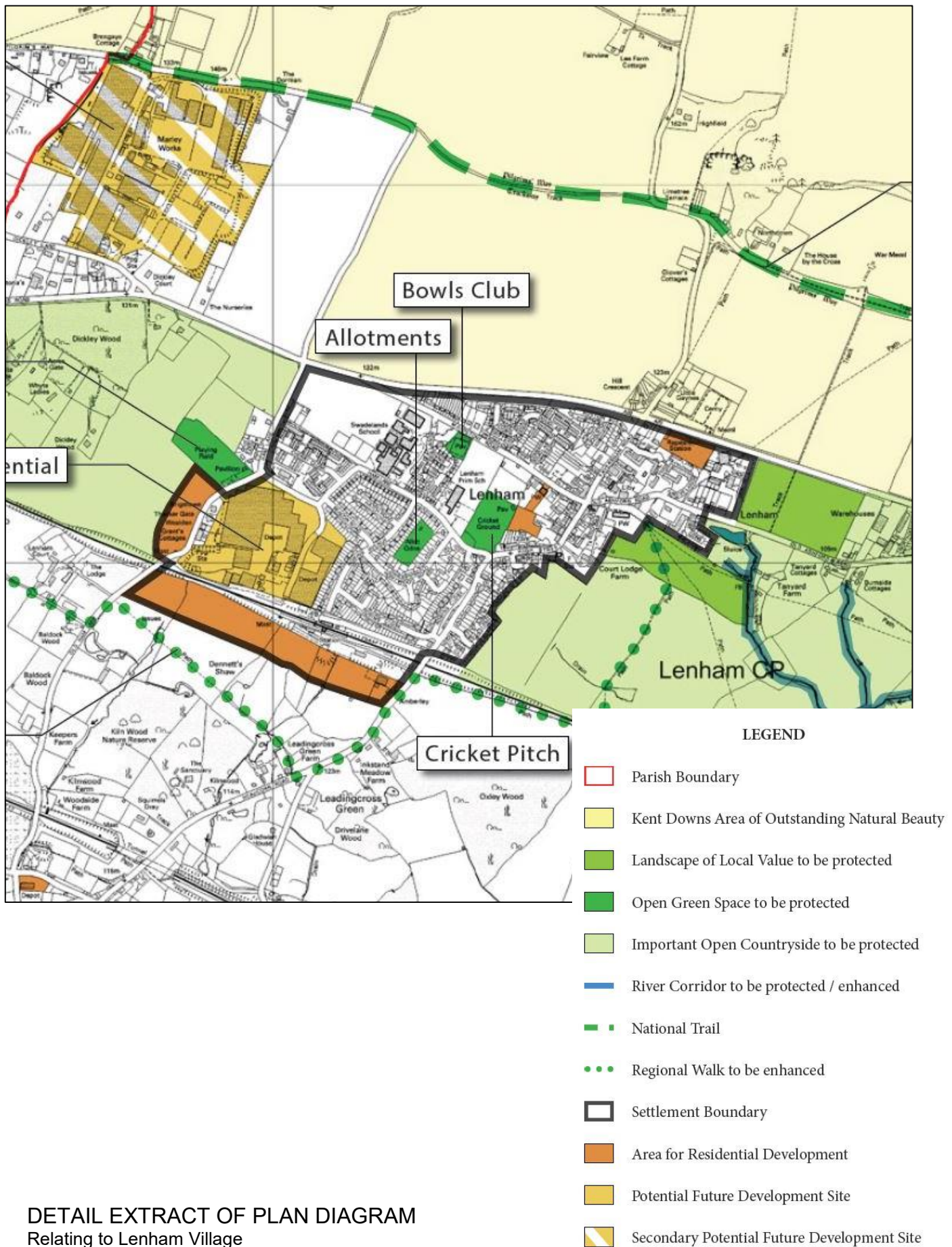




## PLAN DIAGRAM

NTS: Note this diagram also is available to view as A3 and A1.





## NOTES

## NOTES