North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan

2015 - 2031

Where town and country meet

Adopted 14 April 2016

North Loose Residents' Association

Tithe Map 1840
Boughton Lane
Cripple Street
To Maidstone
N
THE MEADOW
FRUIT PLANTATION
PASTURE
BOUGHTON FIELD
PEARFIELD ORCHARD
CHERRY ORCHARD
THE FOURTEEN ACRES
ARABLE
WOOD
ROUND WOOD FIELD
PART OF PAINES FIELD
PAINES FIELD
THE WENT GROUND
MAIDSTONE COMMITTEE
BARRETS
CORNER FIELD
MEADOW PIECE
THE OLD GROUND
EAST HOUSE FIELD
THE MAIDSTONE FIELD
THE TEN ACRES
THE FOUR ACRES
THE THREE ACRES
THE SIX ACRES
HOPS
FRUIT
GARDEN

North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan

2015 to 2031

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North Loose: where town and country meet

Vision towards 2031

Our vision is to maintain and raise the quality of life for present and future residents and businesses by improving services; by carefully managing the provision of new homes, our ancient woodlands and open spaces and also by improving ease of movement across our community - to remain where Town and Country meet.

Foreword

The Localism Act 2011 has given communities the right to shape their future development at a local level.

In this, the Localism Act provides that planning policy developed by communities shall, if passed by an independent examination and passed by a local referendum, be adopted by the Local Planning Authority. It would then become part of the statutory planning policy framework, having the same legal status as the Borough Local Plan and have significant weight when it comes to planning officers taking decisions about planning applications.

The North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan should be read as a whole and conforms with those other policies within the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, existing and Draft, and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and NPPG (2014) which set out the strategic and national policy frameworks respectively. Individual site allocations will be determined through the emerging MBC Local Plan. This plan seeks to manage positively the effects of development for the health and well-being of local residents

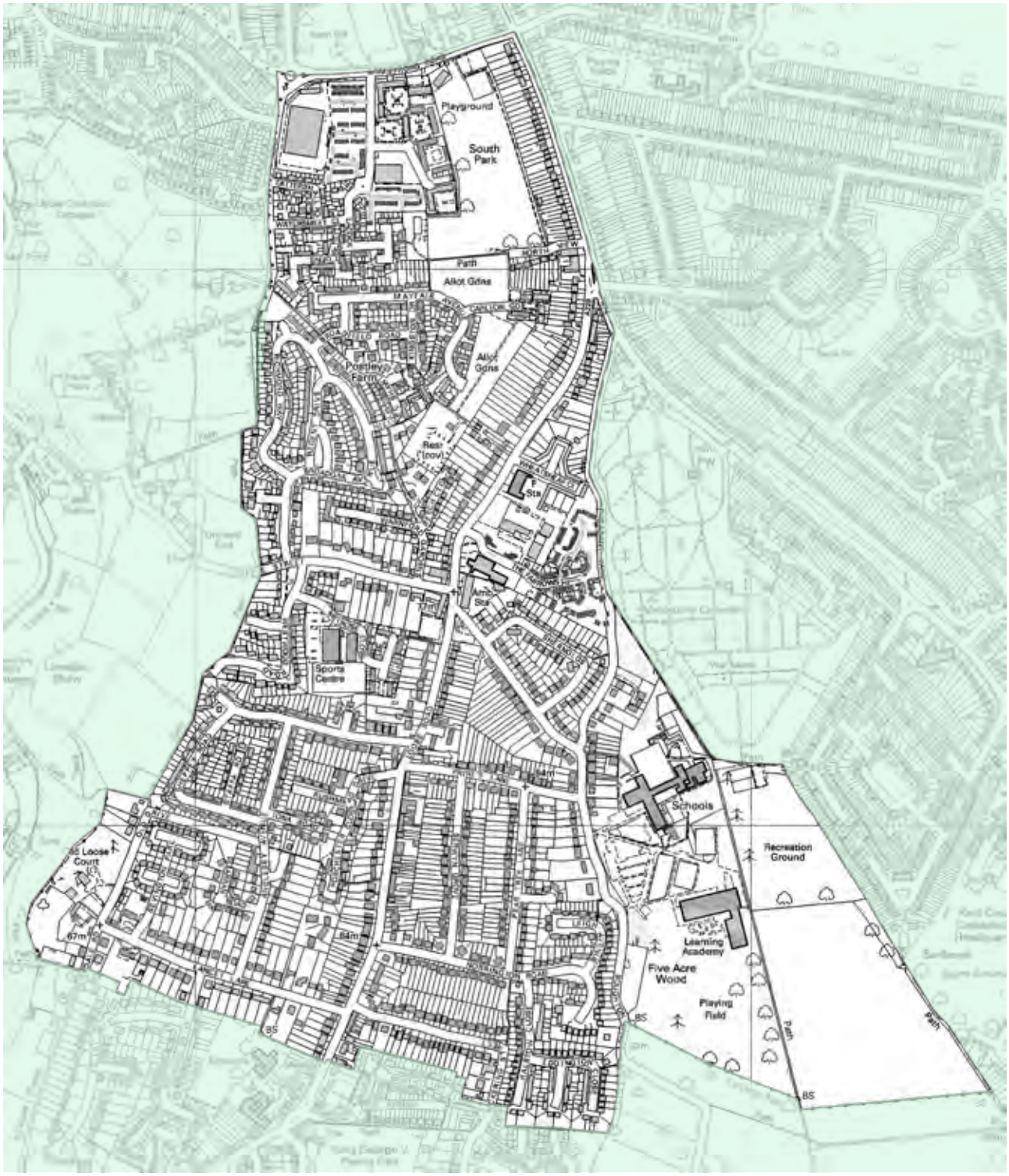
In December 2012, North Loose Neighbourhood Plan Area was approved by Maidstone Borough Council. The Forum was formally approved May 2013.

The North Loose Neighbourhood Plan reflects community-wide views, concerns and wishes about its future. It brings these together with local plan policies – emerging and extant – and locally gathered data into a coherent community drive to improve the quality of life and make North Loose an even better place to live and work, for present and future generations.

The draft plan has been produced by a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group, community volunteers, RTPI's Planning Aid, the help of Maidstone Borough Council and consultants Sophie Leon, Leon Urban Design and Community Spirit Partnership CIC.

Where town meets country *- the western boundary of the North Loose area where it meets the Loose Valley Conservation Area*

Neighbourhood Plan Area approved 18 December 2012



1 Introduction and vision

1.1 About our neighbourhood

The North Loose neighbourhood area is some 2 miles (3 km) south of Maidstone, Kent, situated at the head of the Loose Valley. The North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan (NLNDP) Area consists of a busy central spine (once a historic route into the market town), and pleasant residential areas with easy access to the countryside.

1.2 The area the NLNDP covers is the whole of the non-parished sections of South Ward and does not overlap any other adjoining parish. It currently includes 2,460 houses, 58 business premises, a school campus, leisure centre, bowls club, hockey club, allotments and services such as doctors, dentist and care home. It contains two local centres, in the vicinity of the Wheatsheaf and Swan pubs. These perform an important role giving residents the opportunity to access local shops and services by foot. They have the potential to improve as community hubs but both are currently traffic dominated with a poor quality public realm.

1.3 Neighbourhood Planning Forum – history

The Forum began its life as a community initiative in 2003, the North Loose Residents Association. It was concerned about the type and scale of development being brought forward in the area, triggered by proposals for a major supermarket in a traffic hotspot. The country's planning system at the time only permitted local people's reactive input through objections to development proposals. Neighbourhood Planning now permits communities to be proactive and to actively plan for development in their areas.

1.4 The North Loose Residents Association (NLRA) continues as an active community body and takes guidance from members over community issues. Social events and a regular newsletter are used to keep members informed, and notice boards are installed in the area with information for all members of the public. The website is also available to communicate to the widest audience possible. *www.northloose.co.uk*

1.5 On application to Maidstone Borough Council for designation of a Neighbourhood Forum, several representations were received in favour of the Association being designated as a neighbourhood forum and MBC considered the application met the criteria outlined in Part 3, S.8 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. MBC considered the plan area to be acceptable in planning terms and that the NLRA followed due process in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations, Part 2, S. 5(1).

1.6 History of North Loose

The origin of the name 'Loose' is hard to establish. Some experts believe it to be Old English for 'pig-sty' and reflects how the people once earned a living – not how they lived! Others claim that it is a reference to the stream which disappears underground for several miles and is therefore lost to view –'Hlosan' signified to lose or be lost in Saxon. Certainly the stream played an important part in the commercial life of the area. From the 17th to the 19th century the fast flowing water drove the mills that produced the fine quality paper for which the area was famous.

1.7 Kent Ragstone used to build walls, kerbs and gullies had been quarried locally since Roman times and continued to do so until the early part of the 20th century. The Tower of London is probably the most famous building to use this material.

1.8 The rich well drained soil meant that this was a thriving grain and fruit growing area and well within living memory there were apple and cherry orchards now occupied by the Fire Station and the recently demolished Ambulance Station.

1.9 The North Loose area is fortunate to be surrounded by places of historic interest although it has relatively little history of its own but does have a few sites of historic interest. The records do show Iron Age and Romano-British heritage in the area, with a Roman Road extending off the A229 heading through the Cemetery which could be surviving as a historic landscape feature and Iron Age

Top: The Loose Road, early 1920s (photo courtesy Loose History Society)
Bottom: The same view in 2014

Above: The quiet and pleasant environment is valued by residents

remains have been located to the east of the A229 and in the fields south of the New Line Learning School. The general store that stood at the corner of Cripple Street and Loose Road has long since disappeared and is now a Lloyds Bank. Next to the bank was a petrol station and garage but that too was demolished and a firm of heating engineers occupies the site.

1.10 The Loose Road is an area of particular townscape and high visual amenity which results from its landscaping and architecture and it once formed the settlement's historic core. Probably the oldest building in the area is The Swan public house which dates back to the late 17th century. There has been a public house on the site of the current Wheatsheaf since at least 1778 and possibly during the reign of Charles II. The current building on this site was completed in 1830. However the Loose Road illustrates the settlement's 19th and early 20th century suburban development.

1.11 At the southern-most part of our area is Lancet Lane a "highly desirable" location where substantial, detached Edwardian houses are the typical feature while at the northern-most part, there is a large housing development. At the western end of Lancet Lane stands the buildings and gardens of Old Loose Court. There are a few Grade II listed buildings – Bockingford Farm House and Osborne House are two built in the early to mid 19th century when the architectural style was still 'Regency'. Less than one hundred years later the occupants of Osborne House would have looked across the Loose Road to their new neighbours living in Edwardian houses but still surrounded by open fields. As can be seen in the photographs, the Loose Road is no wider than it was almost a hundred years ago but the same road now has a traffic movement every two and a half seconds and that is likely to increase. In future the Neighbourhood Forum would want to highlight and recognise any listed buildings and any other buildings of local and architectural interest.

[1]www.thewheatsheaf-maidstone.co.uk/about-us

[2]LAQM progress report 2013, Maidstone Borough Council Air Quality Action Plan 2013

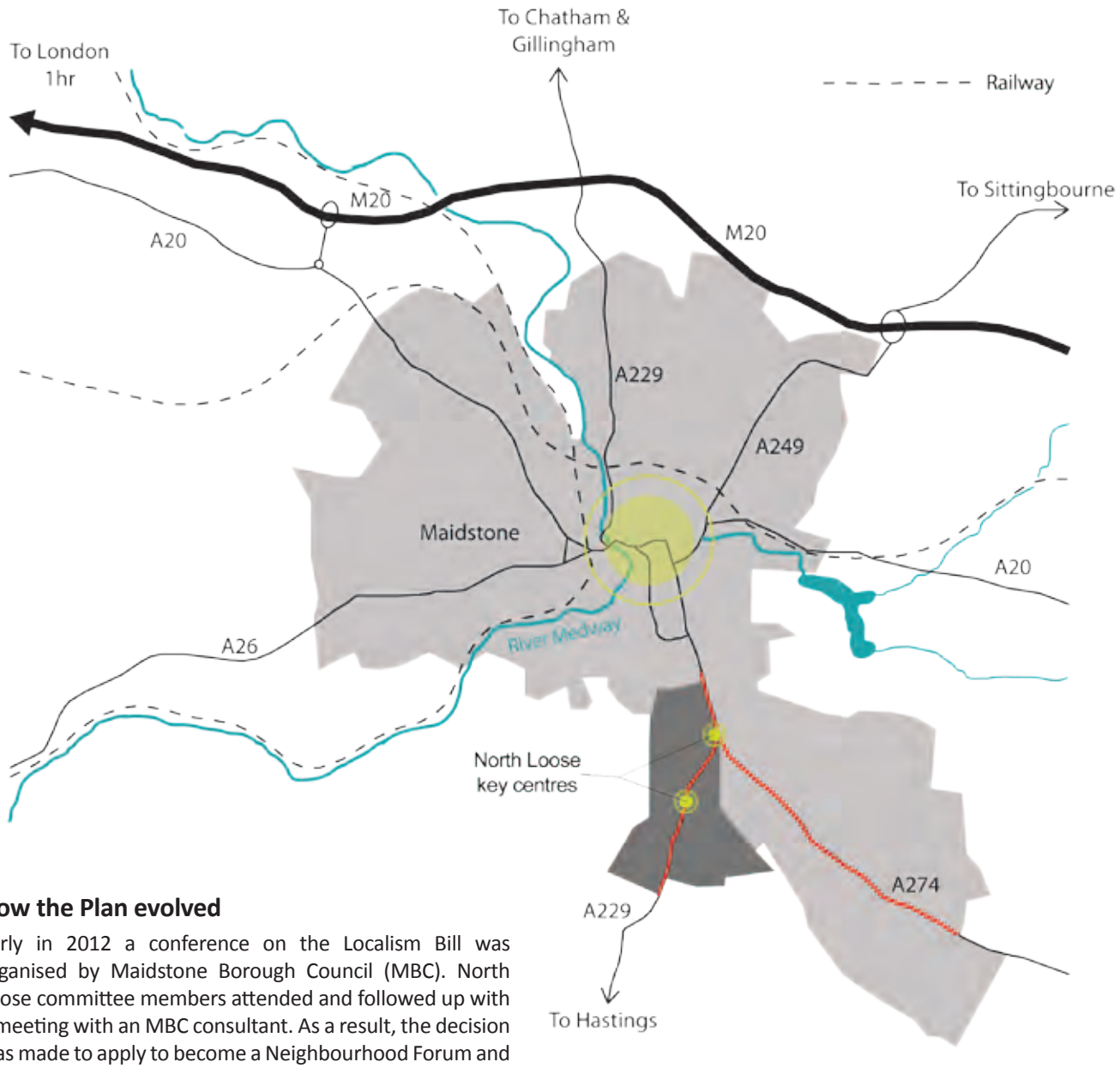
Why we need a Neighbourhood Plan

1.12 Over the years, planning developments and resultant traffic has caused lengthening delays and air pollution. This has caused a great deal of concern to residents and North Loose Residents' Association takes the lead in responding and advising members.

1.13 The area continues to come under ever more pressure from developers as this is seen as an ideal location, on the edge of the Loose Valley Conservation Area, with plenty of green spaces, attractive residential areas and yet within easy reach of Maidstone town centre. The traffic implications of each new development have not historically been taken into account by Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Highways, and the resultant traffic congestion and air pollution is lowering the quality of life of residents. Air pollution at the Wheatsheaf junction is the second highest hotspot in Maidstone. Within the same Air Quality Management Area, the highest is upper Stone Street. Both are on the same route to and from Maidstone on this stretch of the A229[2].

1.14 North Loose Neighbourhood Forum, through the forward planning enabled by our own locally focussed Neighbourhood Development Plan, therefore encourages more sustainable forms of development and to ensure that benefits are channelled for the well-being of the existing community, providing an holistic approach to improving the quality of life for residents and businesses in the area.

North Loose in relation to Maidstone



How the Plan evolved

1.15 Early in 2012 a conference on the Localism Bill was organised by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). North Loose committee members attended and followed up with a meeting with an MBC consultant. As a result, the decision was made to apply to become a Neighbourhood Forum and write our own Neighbourhood Development Plan.

1.16 The Plan has evolved through continuous engagement with residents and businesses and calls for expressions of interest from local people to join and assist with compiling their Plan. It has resulted in a boundary change for the Residents' Association area to incorporate the whole of the non-parished area of South Ward.

Our community engagement and outcomes are detailed in the attached Consultation Statement.

1.17 ## What this Plan aims to achieve

1. A more sustainable community
2. Improvements in health and well-being
3. Maintain and improve service areas
4. Encourage local business and home working and supporting retail and community uses
5. Encourage new residential development where it contributes to the viability of the Plan Area by:
   - requiring it to be well located so as not to exacerbate critical air quality and highway conditions;
   - providing residents with transport choices;
   - being well designed;
   - reducing energy consumption and managing water;
   - maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure especially the ancient woodland and contributing to local initiatives through the Developer and other contributions and funding sources indicated in the Delivery Strategy of this Plan
6. Manage and improve traffic flows through the Plan area
7. Proposing alternative movement routes and means of transport

Implementing the Plan

1.18 The North Loose Neighbourhood Forum will work in partnership with stakeholders and interested parties seeking to develop within the Plan Area to guide and encourage development that carries out the aims of this Plan.

1.19 The North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan's aims and policies will be implemented by different stakeholders and interests through the statutory planning process in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan, the wider Local Authority policies, National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance.

1.20 The North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan (NLNDP) provides a direction for change through its vision, objectives and strategy specific to its area. Flexibility will be needed as new challenges and opportunities arise over the Plan period. In this way the review period will be crucial. NLNDP is a "living" document and as such will be reviewed every 5 years.

1.21 The Delivery Strategy is also a 'live' document that will continue to be updated during the Plan period. Monitoring procedures, delivery mechanisms and infrastructure requirements may therefore change.

1.22 The accompanying Delivery Strategy sets out expectations for developers to provide community benefits in their proposals. Policy HWTA 1 provides the link between this Plan and the Delivery Strategy's requirements.

1.23 There is a cost to everything. However we consider the cost of not undertaking these improvements would create too much of a strain on services in an area already under pressure. Local improvements should be delivered through various funding streams including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) in partnership with developers in advance of any major residential developments within the neighbourhood.

1.24 Cycle routes would be delivered as a priority in advance of major residential developments in order to provide a genuine and environmentally friendly alternative to the use of the polluted and over congested main road.

1.25 Water and energy targets will be delivered by developers in accordance with MBC building regulations and development management as well as the work of Climate Local.

1.26 High quality sensitive development which contributes positively to the character of North Loose will be achieved by developers and MBC Development Management in accordance with the Kent Design Guide, Character Area Assessment for the Loose Road Area, MBC's adopted and emerging local plans and this Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Community Infrastructure Levy and North Loose Neighbourhood Forum

1.27 Maidstone Borough Council has decided that it will become a charging authority for the Community Infrastructure Levy. The timetable for the production of the CIL is expected to follow that of the Local Plan. The 'made' North Loose NDP would receive 25% of the value of development subject to CIL payments.

Lakelands sheltered housing, Loose Road

2 Health, Well-being and Transport Alternatives

Issues

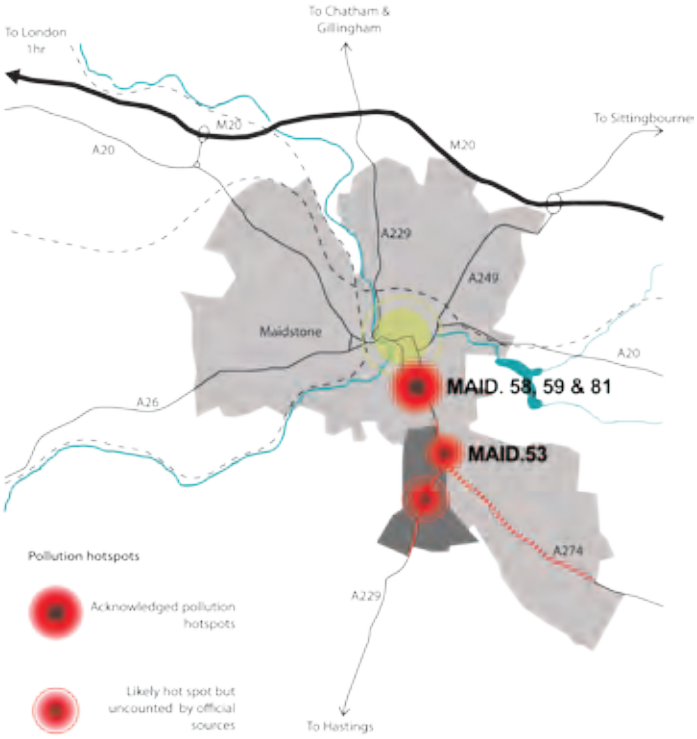
2.1 Poor air quality caused by traffic congestion is a major concern in North Loose and this is likely to be exacerbated by future development. It is therefore a priority to mitigate traffic congestion and provide convenient alternative forms of transport.

2.2 Much of the plan area is made up of residential development based on a layout of looping roads and cul-de-sacs. This has created a quiet and pleasant living environment which residents value. However, the lack of connectivity and indirect routes discourage walking and cycling and promote dependence on car travel, with negative implications for health and air quality.

2.3 The plan area contains two key centres in the vicinity of the Wheatsheaf and Swan pubs. These perform an important role giving residents the opportunity to access local shops and services by foot.

2.4 Water shortage is another major concern in the south east and scarce resources are likely to be stretched by planned development. The neighbourhood plan seeks to enhance local character while welcoming new technologies to make better use of natural resources including water management and energy.

2.5 The issues and menu of solutions highlighted in this section are important for the health and well-being of the neighbourhood – for residents, business and those moving through it. They have been arrived at through survey and consultation: see Consultation Statement.



2.6 Whilst motorways may be widened to increase their capacity as most have been built on open land, important trunk roads and primary routes rarely can. They are often constrained by ribbon development and therefore remain essentially as they were 50 or 100 years ago while attempting to cope with a significant increase in traffic. This is particularly true of the A229 running through North Loose.

The Wheatsheaf junction is a pollution hotspot

2.7 The existing draft Maidstone local plan proposes in excess of 2,000 houses to be built in adjoining parishes to the south of the NDP area. This will further exacerbate the congestion already being experienced on the A229 and A274, converging at the Wheatsheaf junction.

2.8 South Maidstone has much to commend it but for many people the noise, the pollution and the frustration created by the ever increasing number of vehicles is causing real concern.

2.9 The private car now causes the largest single impact on our area. Along with commercial vehicles, of ever increasing size and weight, our roads are in danger of becoming overwhelmed by the sheer volume of traffic.

2.10 The NLRA undertook three major traffic surveys between October 2012 and May 2013 and published the findings in a report attached in the Appendix to the Basic Conditions Statement. The statistic which caused the most concern is that there is a traffic movement every 2.5 seconds on the Loose Road throughout a 12 hour day. In an attempt to avoid the congestion, many drivers approaching Maidstone from the south will use side roads. Some of these are no more than country lanes and too narrow to pass oncoming traffic unless one vehicle pulls off the road – in some cases into private driveways.

2.11 Improving the flow of traffic on the Loose Road would reduce pollution and noise levels, reduce driver and pedestrian frustration and reduce damage to the environment where lanes and narrow roads are used as through ways.

2.12 Air quality is such an issue in the Borough that the latest Draft of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan issued March 2014 has a section on air quality and Air Quality Policies. Over 90% of North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan Area is within the Designated Air Quality Management Area for Maidstone and is within the nine 'areas of exceedence' highlighted in the Air Quality Action Plan 2013. The North Loose NDP augments these policies to provide a local focus on improving the health and well-being of people in the area.

2.13 Additionally, the community consultation raised several ways of making small improvements to traffic flow, road safety and air quality which are outside the scope of a neighbourhood plan. North Loose Residents Association will therefore approach the community later to discuss and agree a range of options to take further. Each one would be relatively inexpensive to undertake. Individually they offer small improvements but the cumulative effect would be highly beneficial to our community with positive consequential benefits to neighbouring parishes.

2.14 Real improvements are an ongoing benefit and should be considered as a positive use of capital expenditure, not a negative drain on a budget. The following is one example of how costly 'doing nothing' can be –

"Campaigners have been fighting for years to have a path built alongside a busy B Road so children can walk safely to their primary school in Bridport, Dorset. It would cost about £100,000 to lay the pathway but the local authority has chosen to provide four minibuses a day to ferry the pupils at a cost of about £50,000 per school year".

(The Daily Telegraph 16th November 2013)

Cripple Street, another busy country lane

It is not difficult to calculate that by the end of the third year it will have cost rate payers £50,000 to have nothing done and it will cost that much to do nothing every year thereafter.

2.15 These policies offer some easily attained and cost-effective solutions to the problems caused by the ever increasing number of vehicles passing through the North Loose area. The relatively low financial cost of putting these ideas into practice would soon be offset by the improvements and the real long term benefits to our neighbourhood and to our adjoining neighbours.

2.16 Recognising that North Loose acts as a major through route for vehicular traffic, the following policies are intended to manage and improve upon the current situation, in order to increase the health and prosperity of people and businesses within the Plan area and the surrounding environs, including Maidstone.

Pedestrian and cycle links

2.17 The NPPF states, para 41, "Local planning authorities should identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice." NLNDP also encourages MBC to provide for safe, convenient and secure cycle parking in the centre of town to encourage cycle commuters, as per NPPF 40.

2.18 New and improved pedestrian and cycle links, together with safe and secure town centre cycle parking, have the potential to significantly improve the quality of life. Maidstone's Draft Cycle Strategy encourages an improvement in the level of cycling in the borough as it is a healthy, non-polluting and environmentally friendly mode of transport. It is also timely as recent statistics reveal that Maidstone is now experiencing increasing levels of ill health, childhood and adult obesity, traffic congestion and air pollution.

2.19 Investment and commitment is required in order to achieve the Strategy's aim to increase the proportion of trips made by walking or cycling from 12% to 20% of all trips made in the borough by 2026. A new cycle route linking North Loose to the town centre is an aspiration of the North Loose Neighbourhood Plan.

The North Loose Area has the great advantage of being within walking and cycling distance of both Maidstone town centre and the open countryside.

(Left) Figure 1: Proposed new Cycle route and 'greenway'

2.20 However as figure 3 (page 11) shows, cul-de-sacs are widespread in North Loose and there are few through routes within the area. Although this creates a quiet residential environment it has a number of disadvantages. In particular this sort of layout can make way finding difficult, discourages walking and cycling due to the lack of direct links and channels movement onto the over congested Loose Road. In some places footpath connections exist but they are not obvious and signage is poor or the footpaths are poorly maintained.

2.21 In discussions with KCC a new cycle route and greenway is proposed (as shown in Fig 1). This does not form part of this plan but is supported by the Forum. This section of proposed route will link people within the NDP area to the town centre and Loose village. Part will utilise an existing footpath which will also be considered for use as a bridleway. The section between Old Drive and Cripple Street is now being delivered.

2.22 A Green Living Plan (GLP) will ensure that there is an efficient and consistent environmental approach to new residential dwellings to assist new and existing residents integegrate into the community and reduce impacts of new developments. It will include a set of advice and a map showing where and how to access low impact local sustainable aspects of the area such as green spaces, allotments and non-car based routes into Maidstone town centre and surrounding countryside. It is intended to contribute towards wider initiatives for reducing air pollution and resource use as well as improving quality of life, health and well being.

(Above) Figure 2: Plan showing footpaths, bridleways and connecting paths in North Loose

Health, Well-being and Transport Alternatives Policies

HWTA Policy 1: Promotion of Healthy Communities

New development will be expected to provide or contribute towards the provision of infrastructure and other measures that would contribute to the health and well-being of residents subject to an assessment that will include consideration of the development and site-specific issues and viability where necessary.

HWTA Policy 2: Air Quality

(a) In addition to meeting the assessment and mitigation policies in the local plan and AQAP, all site promoters are required to show how their proposals will maintain or contribute to an improvement in air quality in North Loose, in particular with regard to NO_2 concentrations.

(b) Development will be resisted where proposals lead to air pollution above the objective values, in order to protect the health and well-being of residents in the area.

(c) Items for inclusion in any air quality assessment carried out for the purposes of (a) are set out in Technical Appendix 1: Air Quality Assessment.

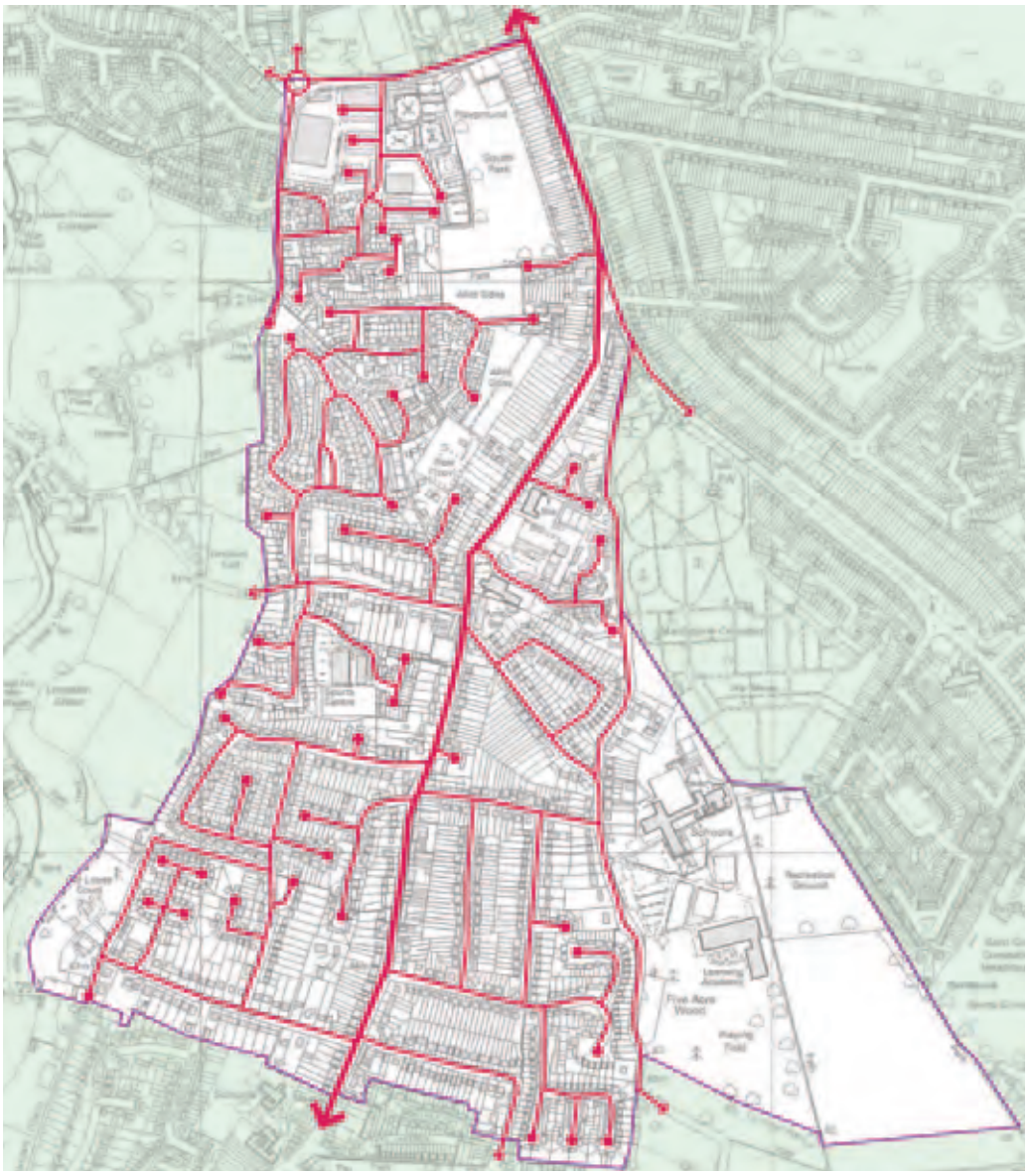


Figure 3

HWTA Policy 3: Transport Matters

Development proposals will be permitted where the cumulative impacts of existing capacity and proposed transport requirements are taken into account at local junctions within the North Loose NDP Area and where residual culmulative traffic impacts of developments are shown not to be severe (ref: para 32 NPPF).

HWTA Policy 4: Connectivity, Pedestrian and Cycle Links

New development should be well connected and demonstrate how it relates to existing pedestrian and cycle routes and take any opportunities available to provide new, or improve existing, convenient, safe and direct links for pedestrians and cyclists to local facilities and Maidstone town centre.

HWTA Policy 5: Sustainable Living

Proposals for new residential development, whether conversions or new build, will be required to submit a Green Living Plan (GLP) with planning applications in order to contribute to a coordinated approach to sustainable living in North Loose.

Items for inclusion in the Green Living Plan are provided in the Technical Appendix 2: Green Living Plan.

Mangravet Recreation Ground

Green Spaces, Sports and Recreation

Above: Allotments looking north
Left: South Park

3.1 The area of North Loose has been heavily developed over the last 40 years and the majority of greenfield areas have disappeared, predominantly replaced by housing and a small business park. This extra housing has meant more people needing more leisure and recreation facilities and therefore we need to ensure existing facilities are improved to cater for this demand.

3.2 All that remains to serve a growing population is a park at the northern boundary, a recreation ground on the south-east boundary, an allotment site which is divided by a road, two pieces of ancient woodland and a small open space.

3.3 The main park, South Park, is divided by a road which is the dividing line between our designated area and the Town Ward of Maidstone. The park, owned by Maidstone Borough Council, comprises tennis courts, hockey pitch, skate park and gardens in the Town Ward part, and a car park, three football pitches and children's play area in the North Loose part, with plans for an outside adult gym. The whole park is well used and the southern part offers an alternative pedestrian route to avoid the main road.

3.4 The North Loose Residents Association works closely with Maidstone Borough Council and Friends of South Park to achieve joint aims for the park.

3.5 It is possible that a running track could be incorporated into the park as there is no such facility in the area. The local running club, Maidstone Harriers, has its changing rooms in the Hockey Clubhouse which is adjacent to the park and therefore this needs to be explored in greater detail.

3.6 Overall, the satisfaction level of people using the park is high and North Loose Residents Association has agreed with Friends of South Park to register this as a community asset in 2016/7.

3.7 The other sports field in the North Loose area is Mangravet Recreation Ground, also owned by Maidstone Borough Council. At one time it was well used with a football pitch and a children's play area, but these facilities need upgrading to restore the Recreation Ground to full use.

3.8 The Recreation Ground, which does not have any parking facilities, backs on to a large housing estate which is outside the North Loose area. Discussions with Maidstone Borough Council planners have assured us there are no plans to build on this site; we have also met with the local ward councillor and set up meetings with local residents to get their views on how this asset could be better used.

3.9 One meeting resulted in requests for a perimeter path around the field, an adult outdoor gym, a larger skateboard area, seats , benches and litter bins.

3.10 Enhancements, including allowing car parking to encourage parents to use the field, better equipment and facilities such as changing rooms will be included in the delivery strategy. These changes would also help to develop a more secure environment.

3.11 North Loose also has a very successful bowls club, established in 1929, with an outdoor green and therefore only used during the summer months. Because of its position on the main Loose Road, parking is always an issue.

3.12 In Melrose Close off Cripple Street, the Y Centre is a leisure centre incorporating a fitness suite, rooms for meetings and a hall for indoor sports, an outdoor floodlit all weather pitch for football and a small café.

3.13 Directly to the south of South Park is an allotment site (123 plots) which is divided by a small residential road. At present there are no vacancies and a waiting list, despite a clever management initiative to divide larger

plots into two when they become available. The southern-most plots are bounded by a footpath which divides them from land owned by South East Water for a small pumping station and covered reservoir. There is also quite a good piece of grassland on this site and if in the future South East Water were to take the decision to vacate this land, it would be ideal to extend the allotments to cater for the requests for this amenity, as well as keeping a green corridor extending from Armstrong Road to nearby Cripple Street.

3.15 North Loose Residents Association acquires small but important pieces of amenity land for the benefit of residents now and in the future. There are two pieces of ancient woodland in our area. Mangravet Wood is already open to the public. We are maintaining and improving public access alongside proper woodland maintenance to encourage more wildlife and the potential for educational visits. The other piece of ancient woodland adjoins a school playing field in Boughton Lane and forms part of a green corridor which is of great importance to the area.

3.16 There are certain areas that should be retained as open space shown on Figure 4. Small plots of land such as Richmond Way are valuable in protecting and contributing to the cumulative green lung of the area. Whilst outside the Plan area the Loose Valley is considered by local residents to be the jewel in the crown and both the valley and surrounding fields that overlook it are essential to providing the link between urban and rural. Identified by residents as being used and valued, they provide a link with other open spaces and make a cohesive grouping of green areas with an open aspect. The woodlands and green spaces bring the countryside into the area and contribute to its character as being 'where town and country meet'

Above: Reservoir

Below: Mangravet Wood

GSSR Policy 1: Green Infrastructure

New development that makes a positive contribution to the existing network of green infrastructure or provides an increase in the amount of publicly available green spaces will be supported.

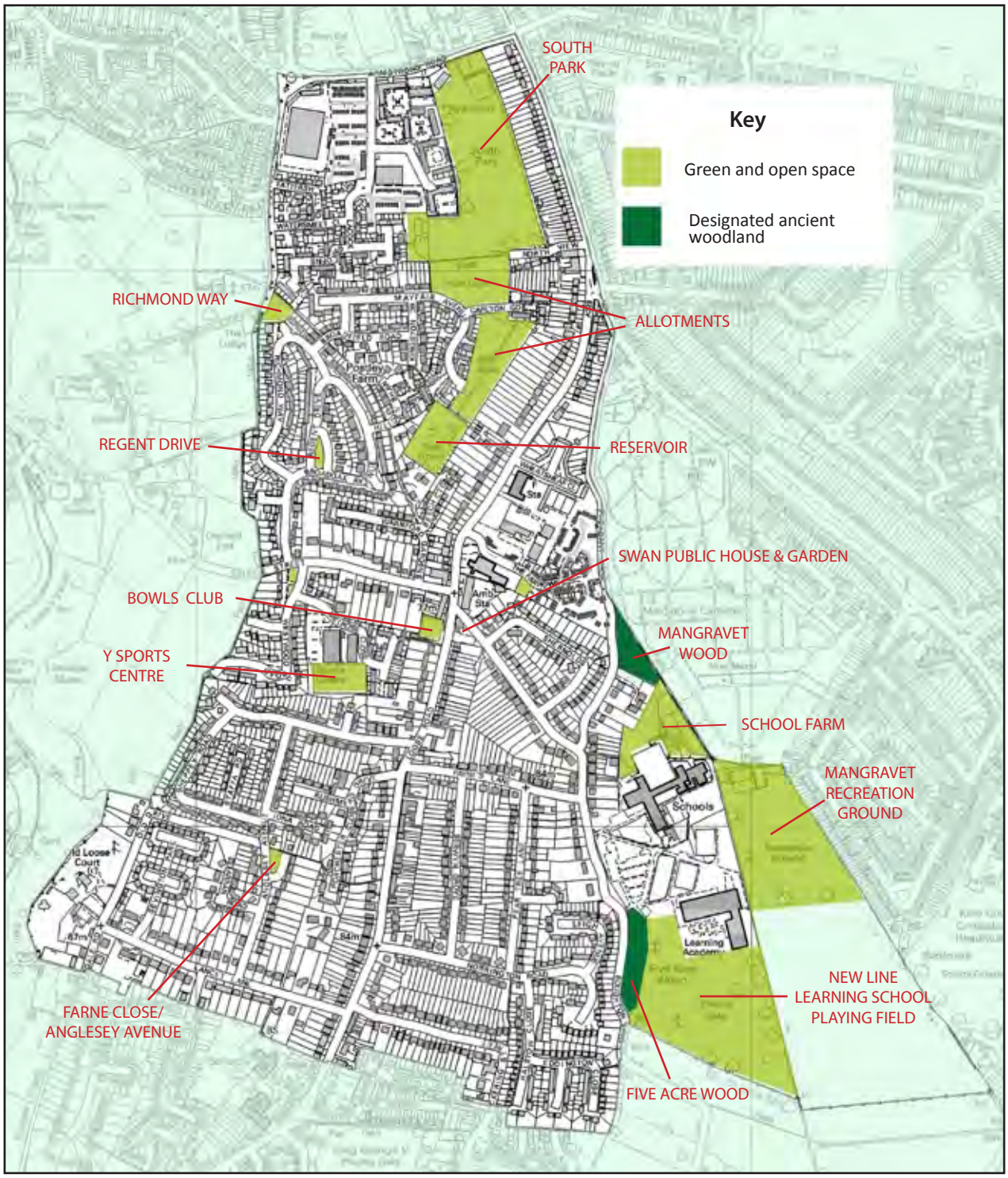


Figure 4: Plan showing existing green and open spaces in the NLRA area

GSSR Policy 2: Green and Other Spaces

The green spaces, playing fields, allotments, ancient woodlands and other areas used for sports and recreation purposes identified on Figure 4 on page 15 will be conserved and enhanced to maintain and improve the quality of life for residents, to encourage health, recreation and sport opportunities, to encourage opportunities for these areas to be used as an eductional resource, to promote biodiversity and to help manage air quality.

Ancillary development relating to the primary use of the green spaces, playing fields, allotments and other areas used for sport and recreation purposes will be supported provided that it does not adversely affect the quality and use of the area.

Proposals for new development which would result in the loss of green and other spaces will not be permitted unless an assessment clearly shows the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements or alternative provision of an equivalent or better quantity and quality would be provided on a suitably located site or the development is for alternative sports an recreation provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss. Any loss of green and other spaces should take account of the contribution that the area makes to the wider network of spaces and green corridors in the area. Any alternative provision should be made in locations that would ensure that the wider networks and green corridors are maintained and wherever possible enhanced.

Planning permission should be refused for development that results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodlands unless the need for, and the benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

Development for essential infrastructure will be supported where the benefits clearly outweigh any harm and there are no other reasonable alternative sites available.

GSSR Policy 3: New Public Open Space

The creation of new public open space will be encouraged throughout the plan area.

On cessation of any operational or functional use of the reservoir and land at Hazlitt Place Reservoir, this site, identified on Figure 4, will be used for open space, allotments or other leisure and recreational uses for the benefit of the community.

Open space at the lower end of Richmond Way

4 Sustainable Design

4.1 Natural Resources

Nationally the Energy Saving Trust estimates that by 2050, domestic and microgeneration could provide 30-40% of the UK's electricity needs. The Government is also committed to a zero carbon strategy which states that all new homes will be zero carbon from 2016. At the local level Climate Local is a Kent wide initiative supported by Maidstone Borough Council which is working towards a cut in emissions of 2.6% annually and a target of 10% of energy from renewable sources by 2020.

4.2 Domestic scale generation can provide all or a significant proportion of the energy needs of the building to which it is attached or associated. Micro energy generation can provide energy security, help tackle fuel poverty, and in some cases provide extra income for residents as well as addressing wider environmental concerns. A significant number of properties in North Loose have already benefited from improved insulation and installation of solar panels

4.3 Kent is one of the driest parts of England and Wales and this situation is likely to be exacerbated by planned levels of development. The level of water stress for South East water which supplies Maidstone is classified as Serious by the Environment Agency. (Water Stressed Areas Final Classification, July 2013). In view of this Climate Local Kent has set a target to reduce water consumption in Kent from 160 to 140 litres per person per day by 2016.

4.4 Character

In the face of considerable development pressure the neighbourhood has seen a number of housing schemes in recent years which have not integrated successfully with the established character of the area.

4.5 The Character Area Assessment for the Loose Road Area (2008) is a detailed document prepared by Maidstone Borough Council in close consultation with the local community. Further excellent design guidance is provided by the Kent Design Guide. Nevertheless recent years have seen housing developments which integrate poorly with established character in terms of their scale, roof form, landscaping and use of materials.

4.6 Most of North Loose is characterised by two storey development with pitched roofs and bungalows. Traditional materials include stock brick, peg tiles and Kentish ragstone. Away from the Loose Road much of the development has a semi rural feel with features including views to the countryside, mature trees, grass verges and established hedges. Local character is summarised in the table on pages 22/23, which highlights positive features that should inform new development in the area.

4.7 Public realm

Two locations have been identified as a priority for public realm improvements. The areas around the Swan and Wheatsheaf pubs have an important role to play. Both pubs are important local landmarks and the nearby shopping parades provide a valuable amenity. The importance of these locations and scope for improvement has previously been identified in the Loose Road Character Area Assessment. In both cases these clusters of uses are located in prominent locations on the main road where various routes meet. As North Loose faces more residential development it is important for these local centres to be strengthened and improved in order to meet local need within the area, reduce the need to travel and boost local businesses.

A typical bungalow in north Loose

Recent development in North Loose with PV panels replacing tiles

Recent developments which do not reflect local character

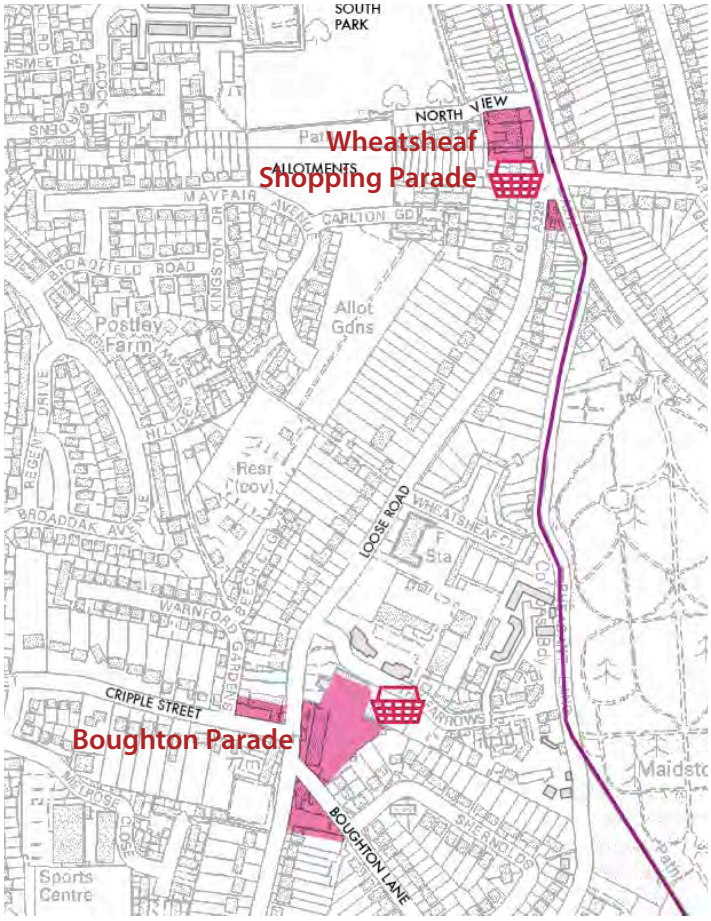


Figure 5: Two key centres

Unattractive frontage to bowls club

Street clutter detracts from the Wheatsheaf Pub which is a local landmark

The Swan Pub - a historic local landmark

4.8 **The Wheatsheaf**

As identified in the Loose Road Character Area Assessment negative features include significant street clutter of signs, barriers and lights, design and condition of the shopping parade and external environment and the dominance of traffic. In addition the Wheatsheaf section of the A229 is one of the air quality hotspots requiring the greatest reductions in Nitrogen Dioxide.

4.9 **The Swan**

While benefiting from a historic pub, attractive Edwardian terrace and some mature street trees, negative features listed in the character areas assessment include a mix of building styles that lack unity, the design and condition of the shopping parade and external environment and the dominance of traffic. Also in the vicinity communications boxes and the high fence boundary of Loose Bowls club detract from the quality of the public realm.

Scope to improve public realm in front of parade of shops

Scope to improve parade of local shops and services

Sustainable Design Policies

SD Policy 1: Public Realm Improvements

Improvements to the public realm in and around the two centres of the Wheatsheaf Shoppping Parade and the Boughton Parade indentified in Figure 5 will be encouraged and supported. New development is expected to contribute to enhancement work that could include the provision of street trees, improved shop fronts, high quality surface materials, provision of cycle parking, increased security measures and the removal of street clutter and barriers to pedestrian movement.

SD Policy 2: Materials

Preference will be given to the use of durable, attractive and locally available or reclaimed materials. The use of red and buff stock brick, Kentish ragstone and white or cream painted brickwork and slate roof tiles is encouraged.

SD Policy 3: Encouraging Sustainable Development

New development other than new dwellings which incorporates the use of solar panels and other energy generation technologies will be encouraged. Careful consideration should be given to the impact on heritage assets and buildings of local merit.

Developments of 10 or more dwellings, non-residential or mixed use development as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 will be expected to put in place sustainable drainage systems for the management of run-off unless demonstrated to be inappropriate.

SD Policy 4: Lighting

Lighting associated with any activity including leisure, recreation and business must be managed to reduce energy usage and impact on biodiversity, to reduce light pollution and any potential harm to local residents and to minimise the visual impact on the local character of the area. Therefore it is expected that consideration will be given to any lighting at an early stage of design and planning so that this can be achieved.

SD Policy 5: Design of New Housing

New development must demonstrate how it responds to its context and the established character of the area in which it is located and take account of the Loose Road Character Area Assessment. In particular developments should have regard to typical building form, roof lines, materials, openings and boundary treatments as well as responding well to its context.

Project Office
and
Contractor Parking
ROAD
AHEAD
CLOSED

Element	Typical examples
Built form	
Public realm	
Boundaries	
Materials	
Entrances	
Windows	

Table illustrating local character

Positive features

Building types include terraced cottages, semi detached houses and bigger detached properties in large plots. Houses are predominately two storey with some areas of bungalows. Pitched roofs are typical and features such as chimneys and gables create a varied roofline.

Mature trees make an important contribution to the street scene. Granite sets are used for kerbs and rumble strips to slow cars. Many streets have an informal, semi rural character with features including grass verges, tall hedges and timber fencing. Attractive signage can encourage travelling by foot and bicycle.

Typical and attractive front boundaries include Kentish ragstone walls, carefully detailed brick walls, substantial hedges and white picket fencing. In the more characterful streets such boundaries are used consistently creating a clear separation between the public street and private front gardens.

Typical, natural and attractive materials include Kentish ragstone, buff stock brick, red stock brick detailing, white or cream painted brickwork, Kent peg tiles and slate or clay roof tiles. The best buildings use a limited palette and materials are used to highlight elements such as an entrance, upper storey or bay, rather than being applied in patches as a superficial facade.

The best entrances are clearly visible and easy to access. They also create depth in the building frontage and provide space for inhabitants to personalise e.g. with pot plants. Well designed entrances use quality materials and are carefully detailed. Attractive house numbers, letter boxes, porch lights, door handles, doorbells and sidelight panels all contribute to welcoming and characterful entrances.

Tall sash windows and wide casement windows with careful brick detailing are found in characterful properties. Small dormer windows are also common. In better quality housing the windows are generously proportioned and subdivided with wooded frames. Windows can create depth in the building frontage and a regular rhythm along the street.

5 Housing development

5.1 **Considerations**

The local community, through the engagement in this Plan, said they really liked the area and the houses they live in. It has a stable population and local people feel the ambience is good with good local amenities. They value their green spaces and reasonable sized gardens. New developments are too dense and there are some extreme examples of this in the area. Parking provision should be on a case by case basis that considers housing type and locational context including visitor parking to reduce parking on roads and pavements as parking is a major problem. Increased traffic is causing air quality issues (see technical appendix). Developer contributions shall be sought through Community Infrastructure Levy, S.106 and other means, such as developer provision, as highlighted in the Delivery Strategy. In terms of house types, local people say - evidenced by responses to our questionnaire, consultations and the experience of local estate agents - the area needs more sheltered housing and bungalows. This is a fact supported by national statistics. Local age profiles show the largest increase in age range is that of 75 year olds and above. This will support downsizing thereby releasing larger family homes.

5.2 This NDP prioritises building on brownfield sites including, but not exclusively, the following list: Arriva bus depot, Armstrong Road; Papermakers Arms, Loose Road; Scout Headquarters, Pickering Street; Apollo/Celsius site, Loose Road and other potential windfall sites. Garden development is not encouraged in this Plan. The NPPF 2012 specifically excludes gardens from brownfield land definitions and so gardens are not a priority for development. Gardens, especially back gardens, can provide havens of peace and quiet and fresh air. This is particularly the case in North Loose which is characterised by heavy traffic and poor air quality, yet is close to open countryside with an expectation of quiet and low ambient noise and pollution levels. Garden development can erode the character of an area and further reduce the quality of life for neighbouring development through loss of privacy, increased activity in proximity and noise generation from vehicular movement into areas that are normally quiet. Gardens generally maintain a street's character as either leafy or semi-rural. Collectively they contribute to a 'green lung' for the area. Therefore in only exceptional circumstances will the North Loose NDP support development on gardens.

Housing Development Policies

HD Policy 1: Garden Development

Garden development will be considered only in exceptional cases where:-

1. **There is a demonstrable local need and the development has an acceptable impact on the visual and landscape amenity of the area. This may be acceptable in the case of either new build dwellings or conversion of traditional buildings. In each case ancillary works such as access, outbuildings, curtilage boundaries should similarly have no unacceptable impact on the visual and landscape amenity of the area.**
2. **The higher density resulting from the development would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.**
3. **There is no significant loss of privacy, light or outlook for adjoining properties and/or their curtilages;**
4. **Access of an appropriate standard can be provided to a suitable highway; and**
5. **There would be no significant increase in noise or disturbance from traffic gaining access to the development These developments will need to consider how the balance of benefits such as any social, economic, environmental or community benefits for the intended occupier or wider local community justifies the proposal and considers the visual impact particularly form, proportion and impacts upon the rhythm of the street.**

HD Policy 2: Housing Types, Mix, Density and Car Parking

A mix of housing types and densities that reflect local needs and demographic changes and respect the context and character of the area in which the development is located will be supported. The development of bungalows or housing to suit the needs of older people is particularly encouraged.

A case by case approach to parking will be adopted that considers housing and locational context including visitor parking.

6 Businesses and Employment

6.1 North Loose Neighbourhood Forum has undertaken a study of businesses and employment in the area, attached in the Appendix, and which has informed this section.

6.2 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out to maintain and encourage the area's small local economy and to support its growth and on-going sustainability of the community. It will support the sustainable growth of all types of businesses and enterprise in the area and will ensure that the current provision of retail and commercial areas is maintained by encouraging positive changes and where a change of use to residential is initially promoted, to explore alternative uses to control changes of use of property purpose-built for commercial use.

6.3 Noise and hours of operation are already taken into account by the Local Planning Authority when determining planning applications. Where appropriate conditions are imposed to ensure an adequate level of protection against noise especially generated outside of business hours.

6.4 **Business Survey:**
During the early stages of the Neighbourhood Planning initiative, the North Loose Residents Association surveyed 58 local businesses in the area. The results showed traffic congestion and delays at traffic lights is a common concern, raised by 31% of respondents. With a number of developments proposed for the neighbourhood, it will be important to consider the impact on traffic especially opportunities to improve upon the current situation within the built up area and considering often limited resources for highway improvements. The next biggest concerns were littering and vandalism.

Business and Employment Policies

The Neighbourhood Plan will consider the following issues which could assist businesses to thrive in the area without causing harm to the neighbourhood. It provides greater and locally specific detail supporting emerging Local Plan Policies. Business and hence employment development will be supported in the area with the following considerations:

BCE Policy 1: New Retail and Commercial Development

New retail or commercial development, including any expansion of existing premises, will be supported throughout the Plan area provided all of the following criteria are met:

a) The proposal would maintain or enhance the retail and community functions and the vitality and viability of the two key centres, identified in Figure 5 as Boughton Parade and Wheatsheaf Shopping Parade, and

b) it would have an acceptable effect on residential amenity and any landscape or parking, highway and traffic considerations, and

c) it would respect the character of its surroundings and local buildings paying special attention to its scale, bulk and design and materials, and taking into account the Loose Road Character Area Assessment.

BCE Policy 2: Change of Use of Commercial and Business Premises

Proposals that result in the loss of commercial and business premises that provide a service to the local community such as post offices, chemists, banks and shops will be required to demonstrate that either the use is no longer viable or the proposed use would provide an alternative community use. Where a lack of viability is satisfactorily demonstrated, and the building was originally built as a dwelling, there will be a preference for the unit to revert to residential use.

Appendices

Appendix of Delivery Partners

MBC Council and Councillors

KCC Council and Councillor

Loose Parish Council

Tovil Parish Council

Y Centre

Vine Church

Valley Conservation Society

Loose Amenities Association

Loose Valley Conservation Area Partnership

Loose Area History Society

South Maidstone Action on Roads and Transport

Friends of South Park

Golding Homes – Eling Court

Golding Homes – Enterprise Road

Mangravet residents

Enterprise Road residents

Glossary of terms from NPPF 2012, relevant to NLNDP

Air Quality Management Areas: Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines.

Ancient woodland: An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD.

Climate change adaptation: Adjustments to natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic factors or their effects, including from changes in rainfall and rising temperatures, which moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate change mitigation: Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Community Infrastructure Levy: A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

Development plan: This includes adopted Local Plans, neighbourhood plans and the London Plan, and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. (Regional strategies remain part of the development plan until they are abolished by Order using powers taken in the Localism Act. It is the government's clear policy intention to revoke the regional strategies outside of London, subject to the outcome of the environmental assessments that are currently being undertaken.)

Economic development: Development, including those within the B Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses (but excluding housing development).

Ecological networks: These link sites of biodiversity importance.

Ecosystem services: The benefits people obtain from ecosystems such as, food, water, flood and disease control and recreation.

Environmental Impact Assessment: A procedure to be followed for certain types of project to ensure that decisions are made in full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. (from NPPF)

Green Living Plan: A light touch and low-cost set of advice and a map showing where and how to access low-impact local sustainable aspects of the local area such as green spaces, allotments and non-car based routes into Maidstone Town Centre an surrounding countryside. It is a step towards contributing to wider initiatives for reducing air pollution and resource use as well as improving quality of life, health and well-being. With reference to *One Planet Living*, the global sustainable initiative developed by BioRegional and WWF.

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Inclusive design: Designing the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone.

Local Nature Partnership: A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, established for the purpose of protecting and improving the natural environment in an area and the benefits derived from it.

Local planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority apply to the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority and the Greater London Authority, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

Local Plan: The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

Nature Improvement Areas: Inter-connected networks of wildlife habitats intended to re-establish thriving wildlife populations and help species respond to the challenges of climate change.

Neighbourhood plans: A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Older people: People over retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly, whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to downsize from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

People with disabilities: People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.

Planning condition: A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Planning obligation: A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

Playing field: The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010.

Pollution: Anything that affects the quality of land, air, water or soils, which might lead to an adverse impact on human health, the natural environment or general amenity. Pollution can arise from a range of emissions, including smoke, fumes, gases, dust, steam, odour, noise and light.

Previously developed land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Public Realm: publicly accessible space including streets, footpaths, cycle routes and parks.

Renewable and low carbon energy: Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Site of Special Scientific Interest: Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Stepping stones: Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Sustrans: Sustrans is a UK charity helping to enable people to travel by foot, bike or public transport.

Transport assessment: A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies what measures will be required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport and what measures will need to be taken to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

Transport statement: A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising out of development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.

Travel plan: A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives through action and is articulated in a document that is regularly reviewed.

Wildlife corridor: Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

Windfall sites: Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.

ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS

Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines. The boundary of the AQMA is set to define the geographical area that is to be subject to the management measure to be set out in a subsequent action plan, to work towards the achievement of national air quality objectives, rather than to define an area of potential exceedance. (source: URS)

Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) (source: Maidstone Borough Council)

Notes

Notes

North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan

[i]Technical Appendix 1: Air Quality Assessment

An Air Quality assessment should present the following :

• Description of development, potential associated air quality effects (e.g. construction and traffic)

• Outline of relevant legislation and planning policy

• A description of the current air quality within North Loose Neighbourhood Plan Area and how it meets/ does not meet national objectives

• Evidence of consultation with MBC to identify specific borough requirements

• A description of the methodology used in the assessment for the site, which should include the following information:

- Construction phase approach
- Modelled sources included
- Site specific parameters
- Meteorological data used
- Years modelled
- Evidence of model performance or validation results
- Evidence of any emissions calculations
- Description of how results will be evaluated

• Model output data, on maps where appropriate

• Discussion of results, including assessment against the following guidance/ objectives:

- National planning Policy Framework and Guidance (NPPF)
- National Objectives
- MBCs Air Quality Policy

• Determination of impact of proposed development upon AQMA area and benefits from development

• Mitigating measures:

- Review of how the development complies with existing mitigation (e.g. AQAP measures
- Outline of any additional mitigation measures on-site or in the wider area proposed for the development

• Conclusions

• References

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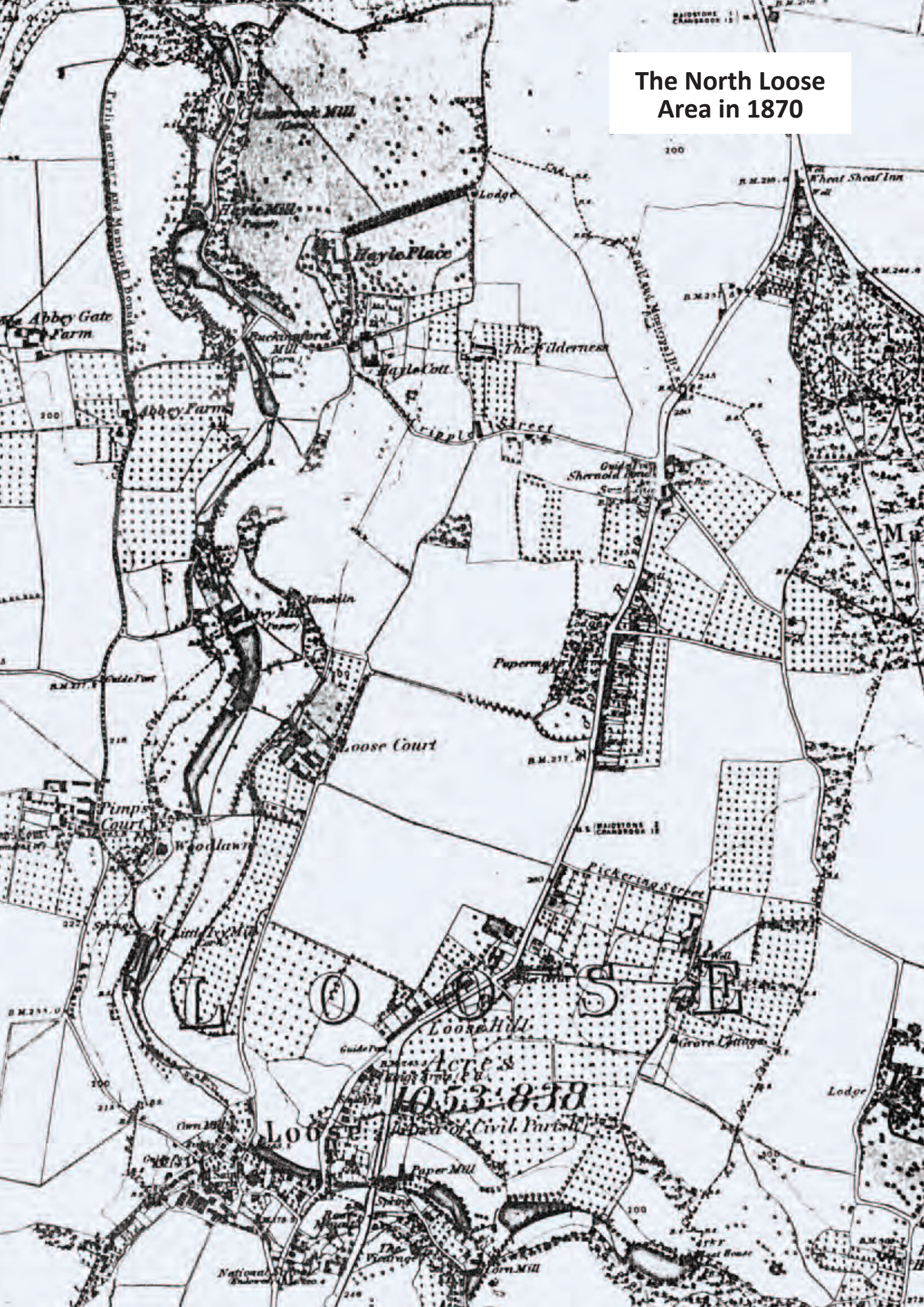
[i] Produced with advice from URS, Air Quality and Planning Teams 2014

Technical Appendix 2: Green Living Plan

A Green Living Plan may include the following:

1. Means of transport including promoting alternatives to the private motor car
2. Promoting energy efficiency and water conservation
3. Improving recycling
4. Supporting initiatives to encourage the use of local shops
5. Providing internet connection and a space for working from home and where appropriate for larger developments to provide ducting that is available for strategic fibre deployment
6. Increasing awareness of North Loose and Maidstone's Green Infrastructure, including public open spaces, allotments, ancient woodland and other green spaces
7. Provide a minimum of two car spaces per new residential unit and with charging points for electric cars
8. Plus any reasonable items required by MBC


The North Loose Area in 1870
Parliamentary and Municipal Boundary
Lodge
Heyle Place
Heyle Mill
Buckingford Mill
The Abbey Gate Farm
Abbey Farm
The Filderness
Heyle Cott.
Cripple Street
Shernold Road
Loose Court
Pimps Court
Woodlawn
Licking Street
Loose Hill
Grove Cottages
Paper Mill
Corn Mill
Wheat Sheaf Inn
LOOSE
Acres
1053.858
Area of Civil Parish

www.northloose.co.uk

Designed by Brian Patey 01622 759093

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