

HEADCORN MATTERS

HEADCORN PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: 2011-2031



ISSUED BY: HEADCORN PARISH COUNCIL

2015 – REGULATION 16 CONSULTATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cllr. Lyn Selby Chair of Headcorn Parish Council would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals and organisations who have helped in the production of the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan:

Co Authors: Dr Rebecca Driver and Michael Jefferys

All the Past & Present Members of the Headcorn Matters Team, including the Steering Group, Extended Steering and Data Analysis Group with particular thanks to Chris Haynes, Hilary Hosford, James Ker and Tim Thomas.

All the Members of Headcorn Parish Council, especially those past and present who worked from the beginning as part of the Data Analysis Group with special mention to Cllr Dave Andrews.

All the volunteers who helped with the residents and business surveys.

All parishioners and business people & owners who responded to the surveys, attended open meetings or just provided comments and feedback.

Analytically Driven Limited

Riki Therivel of Levett-Therivel

Brian Whitely of Planning Aid

Irene Seijo and the team at Design South East

Sanderson Associates (Consulting Engineers) Ltd

Maidstone Borough Council

Southern Water

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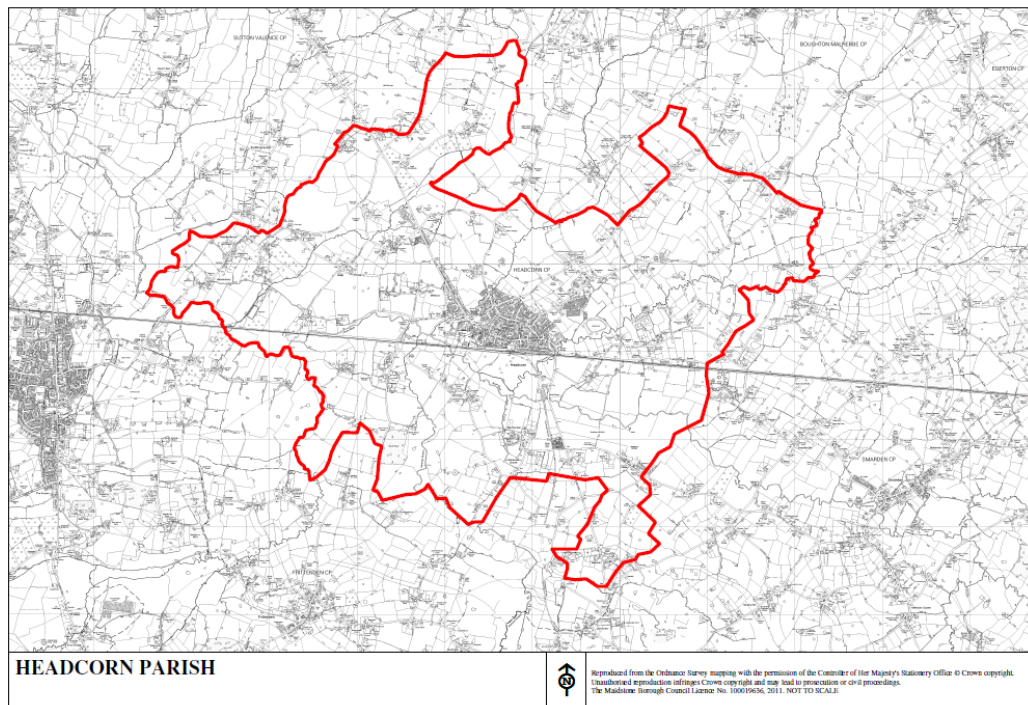
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1.0 INTRODUCING HEADCORN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Headcorn is a thriving, rural parish in the Low Weald of Kent, which is centred on the village of Headcorn. It is located within Maidstone Borough, which is the relevant Local Planning Authority, but also borders the Boroughs of Ashford and Tunbridge Wells. Figure 1 shows the boundary of Headcorn Parish, which is the designated neighbourhood plan area for Headcorn.

Figure 1 Designated Neighbourhood Area for Headcorn Parish



Source: Ordnance Survey

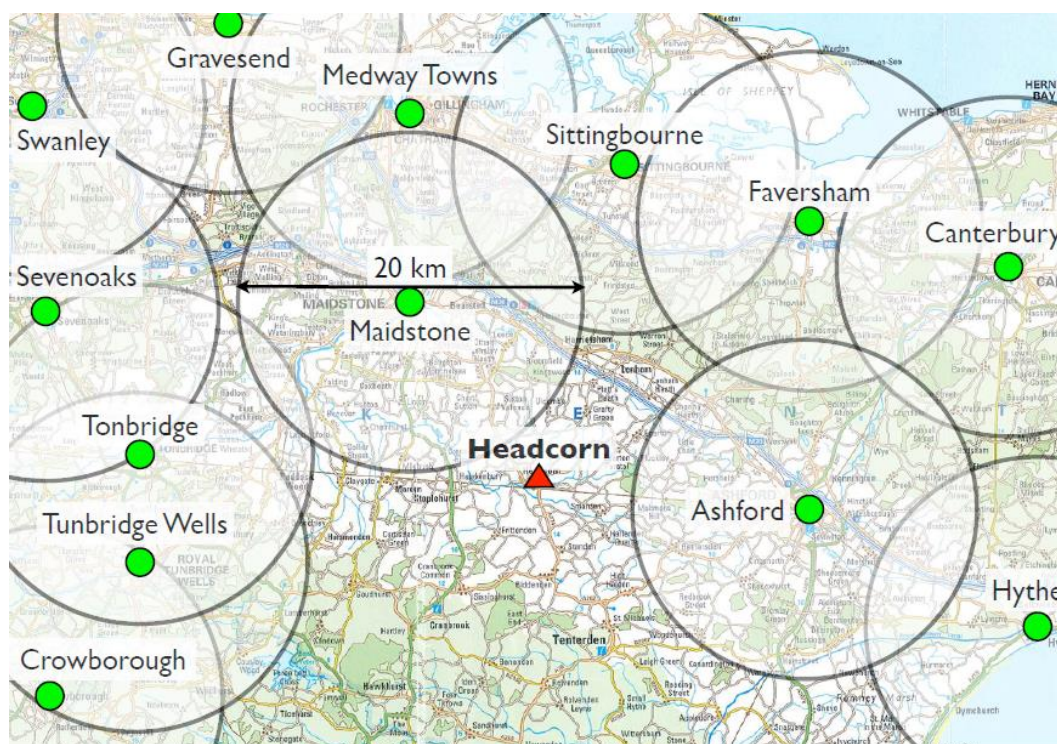
Headcorn benefits from good services, including: a popular primary school; a nursery; a doctor's surgery; three dentists; a village hall; a library; a variety of shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes; and a direct rail link to London. Maidstone Borough Council has therefore designated Headcorn as a Rural Service Centre and earmarked it as an area for future development within its draft Local Plan.¹

However, although Headcorn has many advantages, to be successful development within the Parish needs to take account of the fact that it is a rural location. As Figure 2 shows, in geographic terms Headcorn is relatively far from all major population and employment centres - almost 50% of workers in England travel at most 5km to work and almost 70% travel at most 10km to work, but Headcorn is 15.9km from Maidstone, the nearest

¹ Maidstone Borough Council issued their draft Local Plan for Regulation 18 consultation on 21 March 2014, see: <http://dynamic.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2018.pdf>. A second Regulation 18 Consultation was launched on Maidstone's draft Local Plan on 2 October 2015. The current expectation is that the Regulation 19 Consultation on Maidstone's emerging Local Plan will take place at some point in 2016.

population centre.² Furthermore, Headcorn is at least a 30-minute drive from the nearest population centre of at least 10,000 people, which is significantly higher than average commuting times in England.³ This means that Headcorn is not well placed to support growth and innovation in these key centres - as the government's new productivity policy makes clear, to contribute to growth new houses need to be close to jobs.⁴ Therefore the emphasis in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is on maximising local opportunities and supporting the needs of local people and businesses. By doing so the aim is to ensure that Headcorn is as popular at the end of the plan period as it was at the start.

Figure 2 Map of Headcorn's position relative to local urban centres



Note: Almost 70% of workers live within 10km of their workplace, with almost 50% living within 5km of their workplace. Each of the employment and population centres surrounding Headcorn (defined as having a population of at least 10,000) is marked with a green dot and the surrounding rings mark the 10km radius that would be within a normal commuting range for the majority of workers. As it can be seen, Headcorn is relatively far away from all the key surrounding employment centres. Calculations of commuting distance are based on the 2011 Census results for all workers in England with a fixed workplace. The smallest of the population centres around Headcorn is Faversham, which has a population in the built-up area of 19,829. Headcorn is a 15.9km drive from the closest employment centre, Maidstone.

² In total for England 49.4% of workers with a fixed workplace travel at most 5km to work, with 68.3% travelling at most 10km. Therefore, compared to the experiences of the vast majority of workers, 15.9km (the distance between Maidstone and Headcorn) would not be considered close to work.

³ England does not have a definition of 'remote', but Headcorn would qualify as remote under the definition of remote used by the Scottish government and both the travel times and distances between Headcorn and major population centres are significantly above average commuting times and distances. See the discussion of the implications of this for sustainability in Driver (2014).

⁴ See HM Treasury (2015). The need to support growth and innovation is a key part of the sustainability test underpinning the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.1 Why produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Headcorn?

Recognising that Maidstone Borough Council was preparing a new Local Plan and that this would impact Headcorn, Headcorn Parish Council made the decision in October 2012 to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan to help shape any development that would be proposed. Headcorn Parish was designated as a Neighbourhood Area in April 2013. The period covered by Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan runs from 2011 to 2031 to ensure the maximum compatibility with Maidstone Borough Council's emerging Local Plan, which runs for the same period.⁵

The aim of the Neighbourhood Plan has been to ensure that development in both the village and the wider parish maximises the benefits both to the existing community and to businesses operating within Headcorn Parish. Therefore, with the help of volunteers from the wider community, in particular the Headcorn Matters team⁶, Headcorn Parish Council have undertaken a significant programme of evidence gathering to support the Neighbourhood Plan.⁷ The aim has been both to create a vision for the future that matches the needs and aspirations of those living and working in the Parish, as well as to identify strategic issues, where decisions are needed up front to deal with any risks or opportunities that development might pose.

This approach of working with local residents and businesses to identify what is needed means that Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has enjoyed considerable local support. For example, at the Regulation 14 Consultation on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, 93.9% of residents who responded to the Consultation supported the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.⁸ Box 1.1 lists the steps taken so far in producing Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

Box 1.1 Timeline for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan: Steps so far

- October 2012: Formal decision by Headcorn Parish Council to introduce a Neighbourhood Plan.
- November 2012: Headcorn Parish Council launched their Neighbourhood Plan initiative at a village meeting, and made a call for volunteers.
- January 2013: Second village meeting. The project was given the name Headcorn Matters.

⁵ The time period also helps because it allows the use of the most recent (2011) Census data as a starting point to understand issues such as housing need and social sustainability.

⁶ Headcorn Matters is the name chosen by the community for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan project.

⁷ Headcorn's approach to evidence gathering has been used as a case study by Planning Aid to help those undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan to understand some of the issues involved, see <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/case-studies/view/314>. See Appendix A2 for a list of the evidence gathered.

⁸ As part of Headcorn's Regulation 14 Consultation, as well as being given an opportunity to provide general comments on the plan, residents were also asked six specific questions on the plan itself. Question 1 was "Do you support the Draft Neighbourhood Plan?, Yes/No". 93.9% responded yes, 5.2% no and 0.9% gave a qualified yes.

- April 2013: Headcorn Parish became a designated Neighbourhood Plan area, following a consultation by MBC.
- Summer 2013: Surveys of residents and businesses in parish undertaken. Mostly online, but paper option. Launched village website to help. Also did first traffic survey and survey of estate agents.
- October 2013: Decision by Headcorn Parish Council on the authors of the Neighbourhood Plan. Agreed would be Dr Rebecca Driver and Michael Jeffreys, supported by the Data Analysis Group and Steering Group for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- November/December 2013: Survey results analysed and presented to residents (two village meetings) and business community, as well as to MBC.
- Early 2014: Headcorn Parish Council were awarded a grant to help fund work on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. The grant included advice from Planning Aid England and the group started working with their advisor, Brian Whitely, in February.
- Early 2014: Started process of policy creation.
- Early 2014: Began discussions on a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- March - May 2014: Maidstone Borough Council's draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation. Assessed draft for impact on Neighbourhood Plan and used evidence to produce a consultation response from Headcorn Parish Council and the Headcorn Matters team.
- April - May 2014: Members of the Headcorn Matters team and Headcorn Parish Council held two workshops with Design SE to discuss the spatial aspects of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, in the context of Maidstone's draft Local Plan.
- May 2014: Headcorn Parish Council had a stand at Headcorn's May Fayre to allow parishioners an opportunity to see what MBC were proposing in the Local Plan and to discuss progress on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- May 2014: Members of the Headcorn Matters team attended a training session on Strategic Environmental Assessments run by URS and organised by Planning Aid England.
- May 2014: Headcorn Parish Council, supported by the Headcorn Matters team, wrote to the CEO of Southern Water to express concern about their approach to planning issues in the Parish, in light of regular sewerage leaks in the village and the strong evidence from residents and businesses that sewerage was causing significant problems.
- June 2014: Headcorn Parish Council, with the support of the Headcorn Matters team, wrote to the CEO of Maidstone Borough Council to express concern at MBC's proposed affordable housing policy for rural areas, in light of the evidence gathered for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.
- June/July 2014: Meetings with residents (x2) and business community to update and obtain feedback where policy options needed clarifying.
- July 2014: Second traffic survey (following relocation of Doctors' surgery).

- August 2014: Planning Aid England publish a case study based on Headcorn's work on gathering survey evidence, as an example of how Neighbourhood Plans should approach this task.
- Summer/Autumn 2014: Proactively sought to address constraints on development (such as sewerage capacity and primary school expansion) where evidence is clear.
- September 2014: Headcorn Parish Council and Headcorn Matters team participated in a workshop organised by Design SE on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council to discuss local issues affecting Maidstone's emerging Local Plan.
- October 2014; Instigated multi party meeting between Headcorn Parish Council; Headcorn Matters; Primary School Governors; KCC Area Education Officer; Head Teacher; KCC Ward Member; MBC Ward Member and Developers/Landowners' Agent to meaningfully explore possibility of Primary School expansion on existing site in accordance with expressed wishes of the Village.
- December 2014; KCC responded positively and publicly as a Statutory Consultee to MBC and HPC over achieving Primary School expansion on existing site.
- December 2014: Decision on need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Following consultation, Maidstone Borough Council advised that an SEA was not needed.
- December 2014: Publication of analysis of the sustainability of housing development in Headcorn undertaken by Analytically Driven Ltd to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan approved by Headcorn Parish Council.
- December 2014: Workshop chaired by Riki Therival (from Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants) and attended by members of the Headcorn Matters team to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal of potential strategic development sites in Headcorn.
- January 2015: Published an analysis of the significant problems with the foul water drainage network in Headcorn undertaken by Sandersons (consulting engineers) Ltd, following approval by Headcorn Parish Council.
- Early 2015: Headcorn Parish Council and Headcorn Matters team initiate meetings with Southern Water to discuss issues raised by the Sandersons' report.
- Spring/Summer 2015. Discussions between Southern Water and Headcorn Parish Council, supported by the Headcorn Matters team, on the problems with Headcorn's sewerage system highlighted in the report by Sandersons (consulting engineers) Ltd.
- May 2015: Headcorn Parish Council agree to issue Draft Neighbourhood Plan for a Regulation 14 Consultation.
- June 2015: Launch Regulation 14 Consultation on draft plan. Notified all statutory consultees. Publish all the relevant background material, including the site assessment exercise produced by Levett-Therivel. Meetings with residents and local businesses to discuss policy framework to take place in July. Deadline for comments 31 July 2015.
- October 2015: Maidstone Borough Council confirms that they do not consider that either a Strategic Environmental Assessment or a Habitats Regulations Assessment

will be needed for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, following consultation with the statutory consultees.

- October 2015: Revised draft Neighbourhood Plan submitted to Maidstone Borough Council under Regulation 15.

1.2 The policy environment governing Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood Plans are an important part of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and were introduced as part of the Localism Act (2011). They are designed to allow local people to shape how development within their communities takes place. Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan is used to determine planning applications in the area covered by the plan and becomes part of the Development Plan for the area, with the same legal status as the Local Plan produced by the Local Planning Authority.⁹ Although it is not compulsory to introduce a Neighbourhood Plan, it provides a potentially powerful tool for local communities to ensure they get the right type of development.

The power of Neighbourhood Plans to shape development was highlighted by the decision of the Secretary of State to dismiss an appeal for a development of 111 dwellings in Broughton Astley, because it conflicted with Broughton Astley's Neighbourhood Plan, a decision that was subsequently upheld in the High Court. This decision was made despite the fact that the local planning authority could not demonstrate a five-year land supply, meaning the housing policies in the local Development Plan were deemed out-of-date under paragraph 49 of the NPPF. To quote the Secretary of State's decision letter:

"Paragraph 185 of [the NPPF] states that, outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan, neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development. The Secretary of State regards this purpose as more than a statement of aspiration. He considers that neighbourhood plans, once part of the development plan, should be upheld as an effective means to shape and direct development in the neighbourhood planning area in question."¹⁰

Unsurprisingly, since they were introduced as part of the NPPF, communities up and down the country have embarked on the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan, with more Neighbourhood Plans emerging all the time. Between January and September 2015 alone 49 Neighbourhood Plans passed a referendum, with local people

⁹ National Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 006, Reference ID: 41-006-20140306.

¹⁰ For full background on the Broughton Astley decision, including both the High Court and the Secretary of State's decision, see the judgement of Lindblom J in *Crane v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2015] EWHC 425 (Admin).

enthusiastically embracing the opportunity to determine the development that takes place within their local areas.¹¹

The focus on meeting local needs means that Neighbourhood Plans come in all shapes and sizes. For example housing policies in Neighbourhood Plans can be very diverse, with plans including policies that:

- place limits on the number of houses that can be part of any one development;¹²
- look to phase development over time;¹³
- set the level of affordable housing that should be provided in developments within their area;¹⁴
- allocate land for custom-built housing;¹⁵ and
- finally, while some allocate specific sites for development,¹⁶ others use alternative approaches for determining where development should take place, either through general guidelines, such as not in a flood zone,¹⁷ or by only allowing development where it is either within or immediately adjacent to the built-up area.¹⁸

The fact that all these policies are in Neighbourhood Plans that have passed referendum, shows that there is no set form of what a Neighbourhood Plan should look like. However, for a Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted its policies have to be deliverable and it needs to meet certain basic conditions, such as:¹⁹

- having regard to national policies, including the NPPF itself, and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- ensuring the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- ensuring the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority;²⁰ and

¹¹ See http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/news/2015/09/21/August_September_2015_referendum_news for background on Neighbourhood Plans going to referendum.

¹² Examples of this include a limit on the size of individual developments of 30 houses in Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan and 20 in Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan. In the case of Tattenhall, which is a strategic service centre in Cheshire West, its Neighbourhood Plan has successfully withstood challenge in the courts, see [2014] EWHC 1470 (Admin).

¹³ Winslow Neighbourhood Plan is an example of phased development.

¹⁴ Broughton Astley Neighbourhood Plan, for example, sets the level of affordable housing that should be provided in developments.

¹⁵ Winslow Neighbourhood Plan is an example of phased development.

¹⁶ Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan is an example of allocating specific development sites.

¹⁷ See for examples Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan.

¹⁸ See for examples Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan.

¹⁹ The process for adoption includes a consultation, a decision on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, an examination and a referendum.

²⁰ Maidstone Borough Council has not yet introduced a new Local Plan, following the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Therefore the Development Plan for Maidstone consists of the Saved Policies from the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000, following a decision of the Secretary of State in 2007, together with relevant adopted policies. For details of Maidstone Borough's Development Plan see <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-plan/planning-guidance>.

- ensuring the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

In terms of having regard for national policy, a key part of the NPPF is the focus on sustainability, which is defined in the NPPF in the following way:

“There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating [employment and housing] development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.”²¹

Therefore to meet the Basic Conditions any policies proposed as part of a Neighbourhood Plan needs to meet the definition of Sustainability. In this respect, over and above the factors that affect all Neighbourhood Plans, one issue that plays a key role is whether the Neighbourhood Plan is for a rural location.

This is important to take into account, because geography has an important impact on sustainability. For example, the government’s rural productivity plan presents evidence showing that productivity in predominately rural areas is 17% lower than productivity in predominantly urban areas.²² In other words, from a strategic perspective, to support growth and innovation (a key part of the economic sustainability criteria in the NPPF), housing would be better located in urban rather than rural areas. Urban areas, particularly cities, are seen as key for economic growth, because they provide deep labour markets (whereby firms have a significant talent pool to draw on to fill vacancies

²¹ Department for Communities and Local Government (2012), p2, paragraph 7.

²² Productivity is measured in terms of GVA per workforce job. The figure of 17% is calculated including London. If London is excluded, productivity in predominantly rural areas is 7% lower than in predominantly urban areas. See Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2015).

and workers have lots of vacancies to choose from) and facilitate the rapid diffusion of ideas between firms. For that reason the government's productivity policy emphasizes the importance for productivity of:

"enabling people to live and own homes close to where they work".²³

Therefore, reflecting the fact that urban and rural areas offer different opportunities to support growth, in terms of housing the government's policy for supporting rural productivity is:

"to ensure that any village in England has the freedom to expand [housing] in an incremental way, subject to local agreement."²⁴

Taken together this means that government policy is for rural development to reflect local growth where needed, but to concentrate the provision of housing in urban areas, where it will be best placed to support economic growth. The emphasis in the government's productivity framework, on the importance of local need determining housing provision in rural areas, is very similar to the policy on housing on rural areas within the NPPF itself, which is that:

"In rural areas, exercising the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate."²⁵

In other words planning for rural areas needs to concentrate on meeting local needs and it is important to understand the implications of geography for sustainability, because without this a Neighbourhood Plan will not meet the basic conditions.

1.3 The policy framework underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan

Headcorn is an attractive, rural parish and residents are keen to ensure that it continues to thrive. Residents overwhelmingly identified that the biggest threat from expansion was that Headcorn would "lose the sense of being a village".²⁶ While a large number of sites in Headcorn were submitted by developers to MBC as part of their SHLAA consultation, the main characteristic of the majority of these sites is that they were individually large relative to the present size of Headcorn. For example, one site represented a 16.4% increase in the number of houses in Headcorn Parish as a whole

²³ See HM Treasury (2015).

²⁴ See Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2015).

²⁵ From Paragraph 54 of the NPPF.

²⁶ This threat was picked by 67% of respondents to Headcorn's residents' survey, out of a total of 22 options. The next four biggest threats (in order of preference), all picked by over 30% of residents, were: development more suitable for a town than a village; overstretched sewage system; increase in crime; and reduction in the amount of green space. Residents were allowed to pick a maximum of 5 threats.

and a 19.8% in the size of the village.²⁷ As such, choosing between these sites would simply be a case of choosing between alternative large, urban-style developments. Juggling site allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan will not therefore achieve one of the main policy objectives stemming from the evidence, which is to ensure that Headcorn retains the feel of a country village.

The recognition that rural areas differ from urban areas, and that they require a different approach to planning, has been a key part of the philosophy underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. This approach has been combined with an extensive programme of evidence gathering, because the key to good policy is evidence, including taking a rigorous approach to identifying what needs preserving and what big changes are needed. Therefore Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by a large evidence base including analysis of sustainability (both from a top down and bottom up perspective)²⁸ and infrastructure issues; and surveys of all residents (aged 14 and over), businesses, estate agents, and traffic movements, as well as one of the parents, teachers, pupils and governors at Headcorn Primary School.²⁹ The aim has been to create a balance, which both recognizes local circumstances and provides the flexibility needed to ensure that Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan both meets local needs, now and in the future, and does so in a way that will preserve and enhance what makes Headcorn special. Not only is this important to allow Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan to meet the Basic Conditions set out above, but without this underpinning, Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan would fail in its key purpose, namely to meet the needs and aspirations of both local residents and businesses.

Drawing the evidence together, what are the key policy messages that stand out?

- The first is that Headcorn is relatively far from all the local employment centres, secondary schools and hospitals. This has implications for Headcorn, because it will limit the amount of development that can sustainably take place. Therefore to be sustainable development needs to be both small scale and phased over time. To address this Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan sets a cap of 30 houses for any individual housing development, and introduces phasing for larger developments of more than two units. This framework meets the identified needs of both businesses and residents in the parish, is aligned with the strong preference

²⁷ This is the site listed in Maidstone's emerging Local Plan as H1(39) Land between Mill Bank and Ulcombe Road.

²⁸ Both approaches provide important, and complementary, information. Conceptually, if a top down approach identifies the need for one house, and ten sites come forward that are identical from a bottom up site assessment perspective, then if all were developed the result would be an oversupply of housing, even though the individual sites were equally sustainable. This would be a waste of resources and hence unsustainable. Similarly, without a bottom up site assessment exercise, then even if the amount of houses provided equals the top down assessment of need, the results could still be unsustainable, because there would be nothing to ensure that the best sites were chosen.

²⁹ See Appendix A2 for an overview of the evidence base and methodologies. The evidence includes three specially commissioned reports: Driver (2014) and Therivel (2015) on sustainability issues; and Sanderson (Consulting Engineers) Ltd (2015) on the state of Headcorn's sewerage system.

amongst residents for smaller developments³⁰ and matches the scale of individual developments recommended by estate agents, who struggle to sell houses in developments of more than 30 houses. However, to manage the risk that needs may change, the level of housing needed will be reviewed by Headcorn Parish Council in 2021 and 2026.

- Most emerging households in Headcorn are looking to buy rather than rent, either privately or through a social landlord. However, affordability is likely to be an issue, which means that a flexible and creative approach is needed to try and meet their aspirations. Therefore no cap will be put on smaller developments within the village, as these are often linked with emerging households, and village developments of more than nine units will be encourage to provide plots for self-build housing.
- The level of affordable housing set by Maidstone Borough (which is 40% in developments of more than 15 units, concentrating on the provision of social rented housing) was not developed with rural housing in mind and does not work in the context of Headcorn.³¹ The demand for social rented housing from existing Headcorn residents is limited, because most emerging households are looking to buy, and therefore identified demand (including from households falling into need) can easily be met from within the existing housing stock.³² This means that increases in the social housing stock within the Parish would be targeting those from elsewhere, but because of cost and distance, far from helping, could combine to create social deprivation. However, there is a mismatch between the demand and supply of shared equity housing, again reflecting the aspiration to buy amongst emerging households. Therefore, the proportion of affordable homes in developments of more than nine houses in Headcorn will be set to a more manageable 20%, with the first two out of every three units being shared equity, rather than social rented housing, to meet local demand patterns. Combined with the encouragement of self-build housing, and housing designed to meet the needs of the elderly, this means the evolution of the housing stock will be more flexible and better match the needs of residents.
- Housing development in the countryside will be restricted in line with national policy, to help preserve the benefits residents get from being surrounded by the wider countryside. This includes limiting the number to five additional permanent gypsy and traveller pitches for the remainder of the plan period.

³⁰ Headcorn's Residents' Survey showed a strong preference for smaller developments. The majority of residents (72.1%) would have preferred individual developments to be 20 houses or below, with almost 90% of residents wanting individual developments to be at most 30 houses. The reason for setting a cap of 30 not 20 was viability.

³¹ This policy was set in 2006, under the existing Development Plan for Maidstone, which did not allocate any housing developments to Headcorn, and envisaged only minor, infill developments taking place in most rural locations, including Headcorn. Although Maidstone Borough Council has investigated the viability of affordable housing in rural areas, as part of the evidence base for its emerging Local Plan, it has not looked at either the sustainability or the desirability of social housing in rural areas, which are different questions from whether a developer could theoretically afford to provide affordable housing, but are equally important within the NPPF.

³² See the analysis in Driver (2014).

- Combined with the 107 houses already given planning permission in Headcorn between April 2011 and March 2015,³³ the overall framework governing housing development in Headcorn will deliver between 250 and 280 housing units over the Neighbourhood Plan period (which runs from 2011 to 2031). This is more than the maximum level of development that would strictly meet the definition of sustainability in the National Planning Policy Framework (which is estimated to be a maximum of 145 units³⁴). However, it was felt that the proposed policy mix created the right balance between sustainability and flexibility, and would therefore minimise the risk of coordination problems, as well as ensuring that Headcorn contributed to meeting the wider housing need in a way that was appropriate for its location.
- There are significant infrastructure constraints facing Headcorn, particularly with the sewerage network, which cannot cope, and the need to ensure that the Primary School is able to expand while remaining at the heart of the village. These issues are too big for even a large development to address,³⁵ but need to be solved to avoid development either exacerbating the situation (as has historically been the case)³⁶ or creating problems. The NPPF specifies the need to identify and coordinate the development requirements, including infrastructure, for development to be sustainable. Therefore, addressing these issues has been set as preconditions that the relevant authorities need to satisfy before any large development can take place. To facilitate this, Headcorn Parish Council has already been proactively engaging with Maidstone Borough Council; Kent County Council; and Southern Water on these issues.
- The local economy, and particularly the High Street, plays an important role in Headcorn. Therefore the policies for commercial development aim to ensure the High Street remains vibrant, focusing retail development on the High Street itself, and restricting it elsewhere in the village to avoid undermining the High Street's role. The policy framework also aims to encourage small business development and identifies Barradale Farm as the key strategic site for commercial development within the parish.
- Residents are keen that Headcorn should retain the look and feel of a rural village and therefore the design and landscaping policies have been set to achieve this.
- Finally, it is important that the best sites are chosen for any development that takes place, particularly in larger developments. Therefore, Headcorn has

³³ Planning permissions involving larger developments since then are subject to a call-in request.

³⁴ See the analysis in Driver (2014).

³⁵ For example, a recent proposed development of 220 houses, or almost a 20% increase in the size of the village, would not solve either the problems with the sewerage system (as several key problem sewage pipes which would be used by the development to get sewerage to the pumping station would not have been upgraded); or the future of the primary school, even though the location of the site meant part of it was needed for primary school expansion. In the case of the primary school, although the proposed section 106 agreement offered land to KCC for primary school expansion, under the agreement KCC needed to purchase it at market prices, meaning the development itself provided no specific advantages to address this issue.

³⁶ Significant housing development has taken place in Headcorn in recent years without any upgrade to the sewerage system being either promised or delivered, despite the fact that there has been evidence for a long time that the current provision was inadequate.

completed a site assessment exercise to inform the Neighbourhood Plan.³⁷ Only the most sustainable sites will be eligible for developments involving more than two houses. Although they represent the best options for development both over the plan period and beyond, not all the sites identified by this exercise will be needed over the plan period itself. However, rather than specifying the specific sites that should come forward over the course of the plan itself, the approach in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is to simply use the rankings to shape where development should go, without being overly prescriptive on which sites are developed during the plan itself. This is because, both from a sustainability perspective and the point of view of residents, the main issues are not where development takes place, but both how much development takes place and what form it takes, with a strong preference for smaller developments. By identifying more land than is needed, but setting rules on how much land can come forward at any time, the aim has been to provide the flexibility needed to cope with changing circumstances, while still allowing for some element of spatial planning.

Overall, Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan provides a planning framework that allows Headcorn to continue to thrive on a truly sustainable basis. However, Headcorn's approach does raise three important questions: "Is it deliverable?"; "Will it generate significant unmet local demand for housing?"; and "Is it likely to impede economic development?". The answers to these questions are yes, no and no respectively.

1.3.1 Is this approach deliverable?

The answer to this is yes. Headcorn saw a large number of sites submitted as part of Maidstone Borough Council's SHLAA consultation, suggesting there is no shortage of potential sites available. In addition, there have recently been a number of successful planning applications for small scale developments (fewer than 30 houses) in Headcorn, that clearly indicate that developers in Headcorn are able to make an acceptable return from developing small sites. This is reinforced by the views of local estate agents, who all felt that it became harder to sell properties in Headcorn in housing developments of more than 30 houses.³⁸

1.3.2 Will this approach generate significant unmet local demand for housing?

The answer to this is no. If there were currently significant unmet housing demand in Headcorn Parish, then potentially introducing phased development, combined with a cap on individual development size, could result in a failure to deliver the houses that local people need. In practice, this is not the case.

³⁷ See Appendix A4, which summarises the results of the site assessment exercise undertaken for Headcorn. For the full results, see Therivel (2015).

³⁸ This view was consistently reported by all the estate agents interviewed as part of the Survey of Estate Agents undertaken by the Headcorn Matters Team. See Appendix A2 for more details.

The survey of residents asked about housing need. The responses clearly indicate that the number of new properties needed (because there were people living in a property who wanted to move out to a separate property elsewhere in the village) was more than matched by the number of properties that are likely to become available, both in the short and medium term. This means that there is no immediate imperative to build houses to meet the needs of Headcorn's residents.³⁹

In addition, phasing development over time and encouraging gradual expansion, allows the mix of housing to adapt to changing needs. This is not possible in a situation where all the proposed development for Headcorn over the plan period takes place in a short space of time, because it is concentrated in a few large developments.

1.3.3 Is this approach liable to impede economic growth?

The answer to this is no. The survey of businesses asked about what factors threatened future expansion. The availability of housing and the supply of either skilled or unskilled labour were not seen as potential constraints on expansion by the vast majority of respondents. As such, there is no economic imperative to build a significant proportion of the proposed housing development upfront. Furthermore, it is likely that the approach adopted, comprising smaller developments spread out over time, is more likely to be suitable for small scale local builders and employers, helping to promote sustained local employment.

1.4 Next steps for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan

Headcorn Parish Council was advised by Maidstone Borough Council in October 2015, following the Regulation 14 consultation, that a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment is not needed in the case of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.⁴⁰ Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has therefore been issued to Maidstone Borough Council under Regulation 15 as the basis for the Regulation 16 Consultation.

Box 1.2 sets out the draft timetable for adoption of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

Box 1.2 Timeline for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan: Next Steps

- 1.** November 2015: Revised version of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, together with supporting documents, submitted to Maidstone Borough Council under Regulation 15, for publication for its Regulation 16 consultation. Maidstone Borough Council to add the draft to their website for comments (6 week period).

³⁹ See the analysis in Driver (2014).

⁴⁰ This confirms the advice provided in December 2014.

2. November 2015: Feedback on Regulation 14 consultation findings to residents and local businesses.
3. February 2016: Examination
4. Spring 2016: Referendum
5. Spring 2016: Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is adopted for use in planning decisions

1.5 Navigating Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan

The remainder of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is organised as follows:

- **Section 2** sets the scene by providing a summary of Headcorn's landscape and setting, history, size, environment and links to the land, and the impact of its location and particularly distance from employment centres, secondary schools and hospitals. The Section includes the definition of the key habitats that apply to Headcorn.
- **Section 3** sets out the approach to creating a Neighbourhood Plan to meet Headcorn's needs. It details the Vision underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, discussing how this Vision was created and the key factors that shaped it. It also sets out five high-level Policy Objectives that, combined with the Vision, underpin the policies in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. Taken together the Vision and the high-level Policy Objectives can be used as a benchmark, to inform decisions in future about new issues that arise over the course of the plan period, which are not covered by specific policies. The Vision and the high-level Policy Objectives therefore play an important role in future proofing Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, by setting clear guidelines to judge emerging policy issues.
- **Section 4** deals with overarching policies covering housing development within the Parish, including: design policies; and policies covering building in a flood plain and protection of the natural environment; and policies on open spaces and landscape buffers.
- **Section 5** deals with policies for housing development in and around the village envelope, including: the definition of the different types of housing development that will be permitted in the village; the scale of housing development for each of these categories; policies setting the total level of development that takes place in larger developments and how that will be phased; policies covering affordable homes; the preconditions necessary for further development to be sustainable; housing density and site coverage; policies for larger developments; and policies covering micro village developments.
- **Section 6** contains policies covering the local economy and employment, including green energy generation.

- **Section 7** covers policies on infrastructure, including the recommended priorities for CIL payments and Section 106 agreements.
- **Section 8** deals with policies covering building in the countryside.
- **Section 9** assesses whether taken together the policies contained in this Neighbourhood Plan will both support the Vision and achieve the Policy Objectives underpinning the Plan. It also contains a summary table showing which policies apply to which types of development.
- **Appendix A1** contains the definitions and abbreviations used in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Appendix A2** details Headcorn's evidence base.
- **Appendix A3** summarises the results of the assessment of the sustainability of housing development in Headcorn, which was performed in order to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. See Driver (2014) for full details.
- **Appendix A4** contains a summary of the site assessment exercise, which was done to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. See Therivel (2015) for full details.
- **Appendix A5** provides an assessment of the key business sites in Headcorn.
- **Appendix A6** contains a list of references.

2.0 SETTING THE SCENE - HEADCORN PAST AND PRESENT

An important element of any Neighbourhood Plan is to understand the character of the location that the plan is being developed for, in order to assess strengths and weaknesses and to design a coherent plan strategy. This section therefore provides a brief overview of Headcorn's landscape and history to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.⁴¹

2.1 Headcorn's landscape and setting

Headcorn Parish covers 2125 hectares in the scenic Low Weald of Kent.⁴² The Low Weald is a unique landscape area, characterized by small, pretty villages and a countryside consisting of numerous farms, with small fields and ancient hedgerows, in addition to small woodland, or copse areas. Headcorn is very much part of this rural landscape, with most of the roads within the village maintaining a sense of being country lanes and benefiting from the presence of ancient trees and hedgerows.

Figure 3 Examples of Headcorn's rural setting



Note: Clockwise from the top: view from Headcorn railway bridge; view of an oast house across the fields; and view of the fields close to the village.

⁴¹ An analysis of Headcorn's economy, infrastructure, housing provision and population can be found in Driver (2014).

⁴² Under Saved Policy ENV34 of Maidstone's Development Plan (2000) the Low Weald, including most of Headcorn Parish, is designated as a Special Landscape Area. Although the emerging Local Plan envisages that this designation will no longer be used, it is proposed that the Low Weald, including most of Headcorn Parish, will be within a new designation of protected areas, known as Landscapes of Local Value, see the Regulation 18 version of Maidstone's Local Plan launched on 2 October 2015.

Headcorn is located in the south east of Maidstone Borough, on the borders with Ashford and Tunbridge Wells boroughs. Geographically it is relatively far from the main population and employment centres in Kent and beyond, meaning commuting times, distances and costs are significantly above the national average.

The village of Headcorn itself is surrounded on three sides by streams and rivers, including the River Beult, which runs to the south and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Flood risk is the main reason why Headcorn village has developed in the direction it has and why it has retained a relatively compact shape. Overall, the built-up area of the village covers 79 hectares.

2.2 Headcorn's history

Headcorn is believed to have originated in the days of the Kingdom of Kent as a den or clearing, to which pigs were driven from the northern parts of the County to feed on acorns and beech mast in the Wealden Forest. The earliest written records are references in charters of King Wihtred and King Offa, respectively, to Wick Farm, in 724; and Little Southernden, in 785.

The early development of Headcorn was linked to the church, rather than a feudal overlord. Although Headcorn does not appear in the Domesday Book of 1086, the Domesday Monachorum, the ecclesiastical survey made at about the same time, records the existence of a Church at Hedekaruna. Records show that Henry of Ospringe was appointed the first Rector of Headcorn in 1222. In 1239 the King gave the den of Headcorn, with the rectorial endowments, to the Maison Dieu at Ospringe. In 1516, following the dissolution of the monasteries, St John's College, Cambridge was given the Maison Dieu properties.

2.2.1 The history of the built environment

Headcorn's long history means that the village benefits from a significant architectural heritage. The 2013 list of buildings of architectural or historic interest has 121 Headcorn entries, including the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul (Grade I), situated at the western end of the High Street; Headcorn Manor (II*); the Cloth Hall (II*); and Shakespeare House (II). In the survey of residents in 2013 to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, views of St Peter and St Paul's church, together with the neighbouring Parsonage Meadow, were consistently identified by residents as buildings, places or views that it was important to protect. The centre of Headcorn village has kept much of its old charm, even though most of the shops and businesses have changed hands over the years, and is a Conservation Area.

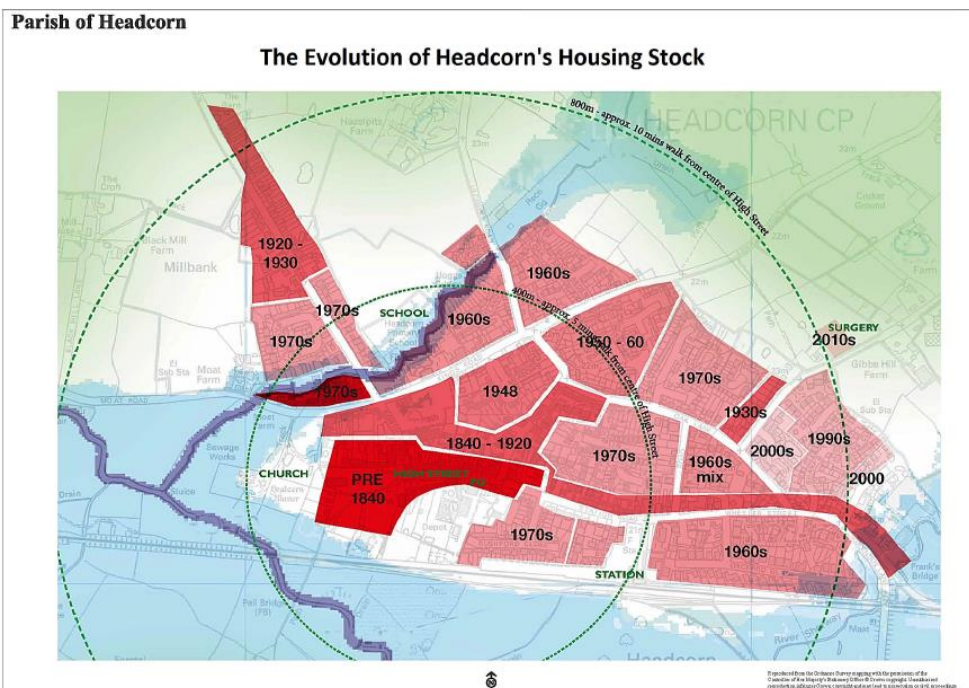
Figure 4 Examples of Headcorn's historic architecture



Note: Clockwise from top left: houses on Headcorn High Street; and Headcorn manor; view of Headcorn Parish Church, St Peter and St Paul, and Church Walk; and Church Walk.

As Figure 5 shows, Headcorn's housing stock has largely evolved slowly over time, with occasional bursts in response to economic stimulus, such as the introduction of the railway in 1842 and the electrification of the rail links to London in the 1960s.

Figure 5 Evolution of Headcorn's housing stock



2.3 Headcorn today

At the time of the 2011 Census, the Parish of Headcorn was home to 3,387 people, or 2.18% of the total population of Maidstone Borough. In total there were 1,459 households living in Headcorn, giving an average of 2.32 people per household. Headcorn's population is older on average than the population of Maidstone as a whole, with 23.6% of the population aged 65 or over (compared to 17.1% for Maidstone as a whole) and only 20.8% aged 18 or under (compared to 22.9% for Maidstone as a whole). In total, 28.4% of households in Headcorn are made up of individuals who are all aged 65 or over, compared to 20.9% for Maidstone as a whole. This means that Headcorn can expect to see fewer emerging households than the Maidstone average, as well as accounting for a higher proportion of the properties that become vacant due to the death of the homeowner. Combined this means that proportionally over the plan period Headcorn's contribution to Maidstone's assessed housing need will be significantly lower than other parts of the Borough.⁴³

The Parish of Headcorn had 1,565 household spaces at the time of the 2011 Census, meaning that 6.8% of household spaces in the Parish were vacant at the time of the Census. Just over 75% of Headcorn's household spaces were in the village of Headcorn itself, which at the time of the 2011 Census was home to 1119 households.⁴⁴ In total there were 1,211 household spaces in Headcorn village recorded in the 2011 Census, with 92 (7.6%) having no usual residents.⁴⁵ Headcorn village consists of 79 hectares, meaning that there are 15.3 household spaces per hectare within the village.

The 2011 Census showed that there were no shared dwellings in Headcorn Parish. Of the occupied housing stock in Headcorn, the largest segment (40.5%) is made up of detached dwellings, see Figure 6. Semi-detached dwellings accounted for 32.9% of the housing stock and terraced housing 13.6%. Overall therefore whole, unshared houses and bungalows accounted for 87% of the housing stock in Headcorn. Flats and maisonettes accounted for a further 9.5% of the occupied housing stock. Caravans or other mobile or temporary structures accounted for 3.5% of the housing stock in Headcorn Parish in 2011, compared to 0.9% in Maidstone, 0.6% in the South East and 0.4% in England as a whole.

On average the housing stock in Headcorn is larger than the housing stock in the rest of Maidstone Borough – 71.4% of Headcorn's housing stock has at least three bedrooms,

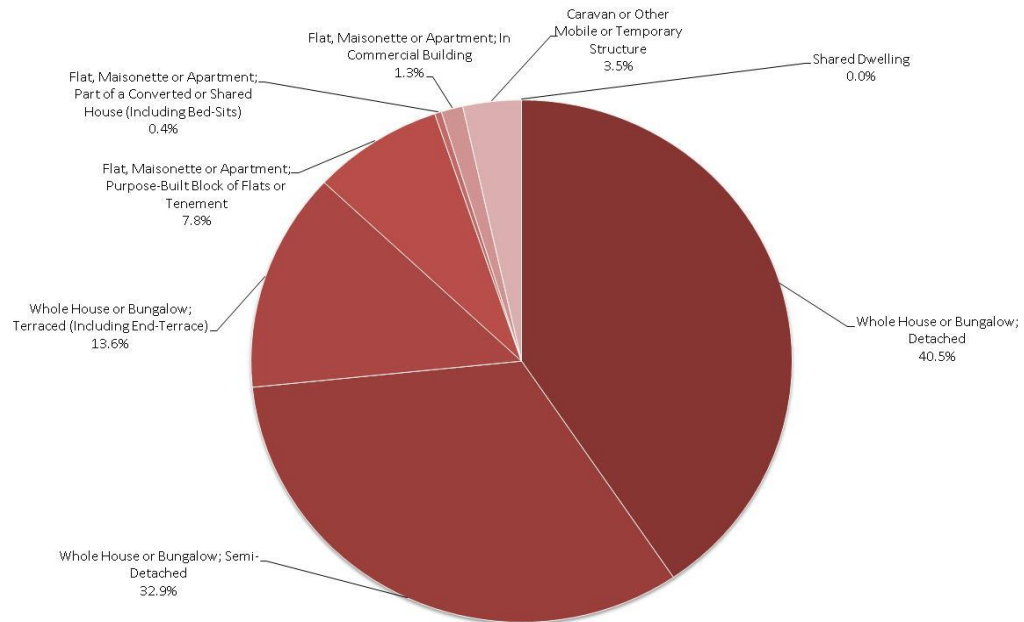
⁴³ The assessed housing need is a net housing need, which reduces the calculated need from emerging households and migration by the number of households that are expected to die off over the period.

⁴⁴ Data is based on the 2011 Census and is calculated for the geographic area given by Headcorn's built-up Area. The built-up area excludes any farm land surrounding Headcorn village.

⁴⁵ These are either empty properties or second or holiday homes. The percentage of empty properties is more than double the average for Maidstone Borough and significantly higher than the average for England as a whole. Although the 2011 Census does not provide data on why homes were unoccupied, in the 2001 Census only 16.2% of unoccupied household spaces (or 0.4% of the total number of household spaces) were second residences or holiday accommodation, suggesting that there is a limited market in Headcorn for that type of accommodation and that the majority of the unoccupied household spaces are not in use.

compared to 63.6% for Maidstone as a whole. Only 6.6% of dwellings in Headcorn have at most one bedroom, compared to 9.6% for Maidstone Borough as a whole.⁴⁶

Figure 6 Existing housing stock in Headcorn



Note: Accommodation Type - Households (QS402EW). Figures are a percentage of occupied dwellings and therefore exclude unoccupied dwellings, which made up 6.8% of total dwellings in 2011. There were no households living in shared dwellings in 2011.

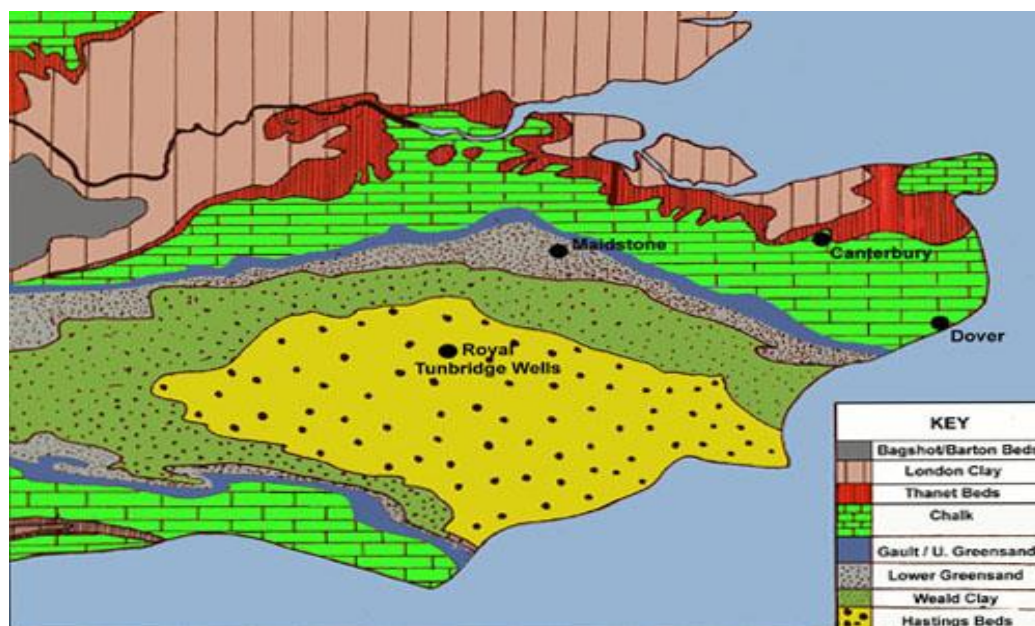
Source: National Statistics, 2011 Census

2.4 The environment and links to the land

Headcorn is situated in a unique landscape area known as the Low Weald.⁴⁷ It is recognised as a National Character Area by Natural England. Its geology consists largely of Wealden Clay (see Figure 8). The River Beult, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, passes to the south of the main settled area and is joined by a number of tributaries, two of which flow around and through parts of the settled area.

⁴⁶ The 2011 Census shows that the occupied dwellings in Headcorn Parish are made up of: 0.1% no bedrooms; 6.6% 1 bedroom; 22% 2 bedrooms; 42.4% 3 bedrooms; 19.7% 4 bedrooms; and 9.3% 5 or more bedrooms.

⁴⁷ Under Saved Policy ENV34 of Maidstone's Development Plan (2000) the Low Weald, including most of Headcorn Parish, is designated as a Special Landscape Area. Although the emerging Local Plan envisages that this designation will no longer be used, it is proposed that the Low Weald, including most of Headcorn Parish, will be within a new designation of protected areas, known as Landscapes of Local Value, see the Regulation 18 version of Maidstone's Local Plan launched on 2 October 2015.

Figure 7 Map of Geology of Kent

Agriculture, incorporating both farming and fishing, remains an important part of Headcorn's economy and is the second most prevalent type of business after the retail trade and shops. In keeping with Kent's reputation as the garden of England, agricultural activity within the Parish is extremely varied. Many of these activities, such as livestock rearing, can be labour intensive.

Figure 8 Examples of agricultural activity in Headcorn Parish

Note: Preparing the fields for the year ahead; cattle rearing; sheep grazing; an apple crop ready for picking.

In keeping with its Low Weald setting, agricultural activity in Headcorn is exemplified by a large number of small fields and associated ancient hedgerows. Many of these hedgerows can be traced back to medieval times. The Tithe Map below dates from the early/mid 1800s shows the hedgerows near to the village centre, many of which still exist today. They are species-rich and are considered to be important for biodiversity conservation locally.⁴⁸

In addition, the parish contains a large number of ponds often associated with copses of willow and other tree types. These are also very important wildlife havens, in particular for the Great Crested Newt, a European protected species. The ponds also help prevent local flooding as they act as local water sumps during wet winters when the water table on the clay is very close to the surface.

Figure 9 Tithe map of Headcorn from early 1800s



Note: Tithe map dating from before the railway was built in 1842.

Source: Ordinance survey

2.4.1 Definitions of key habitats

When considering any new building the following habitat definitions must be considered:

Wildlife Corridors

Boundary features are important biological characteristics of the local landscape, and many can be described as “Wildlife Corridors”; for example lines of trees and shrubs, grassland, other semi-natural habitats. These are usually linear habitats and often occur on agricultural land and alongside roads and railway lines. Wild life corridors are often

⁴⁸ This is particularly important in Headcorn, as it lacks any ancient woodland within the parish, although areas such as Dering Wood, Smarden are nearby.

said to act as a means of dispersal for many species by linking isolated habitats such as woodland and grassland, allowing the movement of species through otherwise open or built up terrain. They are also important in the dispersal of plants, acting as a linear habitat for the dispersal of seeds, and attracting insects for pollination. They contain a large part of the countryside's biodiversity, but are also considered important for agriculture, cultural and archaeological reasons. This is in keeping with planning guidance, which recognises the need for wildlife corridors in maintaining viable populations of flora and fauna that would otherwise suffer as a result of fragmentation and isolation. Very often these corridors link into and between ponds and their associated copses.

Ancient, and/or Species-rich Hedgerows

Hedgerows form a distinctive and highly attractive part of the Low Weald landscape around Headcorn and as such penetrate into the built-up area. Ancient hedgerows are defined as those that were in existence before the Enclosure Acts (1720-1840) in Britain, and these tend to support the greatest diversity of plants and animals. However, they are not the only species-rich hedgerows, which are defined as those containing five or more native woody species on average over a 30 metre length.

Roadside Verges

Many of the roadside verges in the country lanes that come into the built-up area of Headcorn represent small areas of semi-natural habitat, and are an important collective biodiversity resource. Road verges can often support species-rich, long-established neutral grassland vegetation as well as being backed by ancient hedgerows. They provide food and shelter for a wide range of wildlife, from birds, small mammals, to invertebrates such as butterflies and moths. Where possible, these must be maintained and integrate with wildlife corridors.

Tree Preservation

It is important that development recognises the need to preserve older trees, especially the oak as these are also very important wildlife refuges. Design of new development should ensure that roads and properties do not damage these important trees by ensuring that sufficient distance is left between new buildings and existing trees.

Woodland

Woodland cover in Headcorn Parish is limited, however the Weald ancient woodlands where they do occur are important local resources that should be retained and positively managed. Ideally plans should aim to help link these important habitats, and make sure they have an appropriate buffer from development that would otherwise disturb or damage woodland wildlife.

Unimproved meadows

Where semi-improved or unimproved lowland meadows still exist these should be protected and enhanced, as an increasingly rare biodiversity resource in the low weald.

Streams and ditches

Streams and ditches are important corridors for wildlife, and are characteristic of the low weald landscape.

The River Sherway retains many plant species characteristic of Clay Rivers such as arrow head, water plantain and yellow flag iris, and is an important local wildlife site.

There are numerous other small streams and ditches in and around Headcorn and these add to the range of plants and other wildlife found locally.

Figure 10 Examples of key aspects of Headcorn's environment



Note: Clockwise from the top left: Hazel Pits ancient hedgerow/wildlife corridor; Hedgerow in field between Lenham Road and Grigg Lane; Pond in field between Grigg Lane and Lenham Road; and River Beult (SSSI).

2.4.2 River Beult Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The River Beult SSSI was notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended, Section 17 of the Water Resources Act 1991, Section 4 of the Water Industry Act 1991 and Section 13 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 in 1994.

The River Beult flows for most of its length over Wealden clay which influences its ecology. It is one of the few clay rivers in England which retains a characteristic flora and fauna. Most clay rivers in England are mainly found in central England, but have usually been canalised for land drainage purposes.

The Beult flows through an agricultural catchment with sheep and cattle pasture, orchards and arable land. River flows are dependent on surface run-off and weirs are placed in spring to maintain levels. In common with many lowland rivers, the Beult has

suffered some enrichment with phosphate and nitrate from sewage effluent and agricultural run-off. The SSSI runs from Smarden to the Medway confluence, but excludes the upper river which is ditch-like with an impoverished fauna and flora.

The river supports a number of nationally important plants and invertebrates. In addition, the bare clay banks provide important nesting sites for the kingfisher amongst other birds.

2.5 A question of distance

Although Headcorn has a relatively strong local economy, with high levels of business ownership and self-employment, its economy is still small.⁴⁹ Therefore, even under extremely optimistic jobs growth assumptions, Headcorn's local economy is only likely to grow by enough to support 107 new households over the plan period to 2031.⁵⁰

Consequently, one factor that will limit the sustainability of development in Headcorn is distance.⁵¹ As the government's policy on promoting productivity makes clear, it is important for economic growth that housing is provided close to where the jobs are, meaning that housing growth in rural areas should reflect local needs.⁵² This will be particularly important where, as is the case for Headcorn, rural areas are relatively far from key employment centres. Indeed Headcorn is not only relatively far from all the local employment centres, but also from key services such as hospitals and secondary schools. Hence, to ensure that any development in Headcorn meets the sustainability criteria underpinning the NPPF, the focus within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has to be primarily on addressing local needs.

2.5.1 Impact of distance on employment opportunities

The impact of distance on employment outcomes influences sustainability in two important, but distinct, ways:

- The first is its impact on economic sustainability, where distance influences outcomes through the likelihood of people participating in economic activity and their productivity when they do so. For example, economists and psychologists all agree that distance, time and cost are key barriers to labour market participation,⁵³ and all these barriers apply in the case of Headcorn.

⁴⁹ 22.0% of economically active residents in Headcorn are self-employed, compared to 14.0% for England as a whole. 4.7% of economically active residents in Headcorn are both self-employed and have employees, compared to 3.2% for England as a whole.

⁵⁰ See the analysis in Driver (2014). Under the assumption that commuting patterns are unchanged, this would translate into enough jobs to support a maximum of 145 new households between 2011 and 2031.

⁵¹ See the analysis in Driver (2014).

⁵² See the discussion in Section 1.2 above, as well as HM Treasury (2015) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2015).

⁵³ These barriers would also apply, for example, to educational participation.

- The second is its impact on environmental sustainability, through its impact on commuting patterns and the choices that people make between travelling by car and other, more sustainable, modes of transport.

It is no accident that the evidence presented in the government's rural productivity policy shows that productivity in predominately rural areas is 17% lower than productivity in predominantly urban areas.⁵⁴ Urban areas facilitate economic growth because they have deep labour markets and it is easier for the rapid diffusion of ideas to take place between firms.

While people can, in theory, travel from outside to participate in an urban labour market, in practice increases in commuting times, distance or cost all act as disincentives to workers, and make it harder for them to find work.⁵⁵ For example, the impact of commuting on workers can be seen in how it affects factors such as life satisfaction, happiness, anxiety and whether daily activities are seen as worthwhile, with a significant worsening in outcomes for all these factors as distances increase.⁵⁶ Furthermore, estimates suggest that, if travel times in the UK could be cut by 10%, then labour productivity would increase by 1.2%.⁵⁷ This means that economic growth benefits when housing is provided in predominantly urban areas, allowing people to live close to where they work.⁵⁸

Compared to the experiences of workers in England as a whole, the South East, or even Maidstone Borough, the majority of workers in Headcorn need to travel longer distances to work, see Figure 11. Although some commuting to London does take place, this is not just a London phenomenon. Even excluding those travelling long distances (more than 60 km), 46.5% of workers living in Headcorn Parish travel between 10km and 60 km to work, compared to 29.3% for England and 32.6% for the South East.

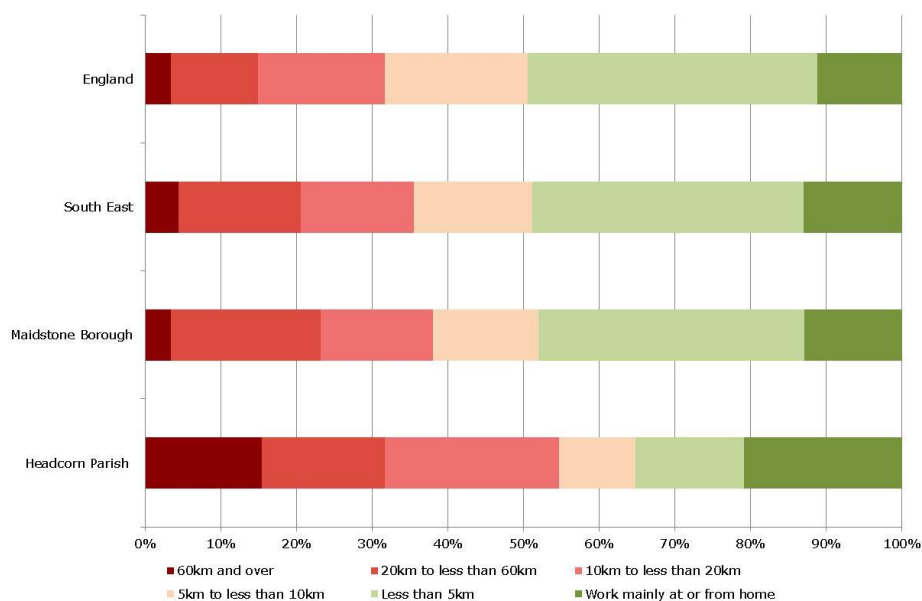
⁵⁴ Productivity is measured in terms of GVA per workforce job. The figure of 17% is calculated including London. If London is excluded, productivity in predominantly rural areas is 7% lower than in predominantly urban areas. See Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2015).

⁵⁵ See, for example, the analysis in Manning and Petrongolo (2011), as well as the discussion in Driver (2014).

⁵⁶ ONS (2014).

⁵⁷ See Crafts (2012).

⁵⁸ See HM Treasury (2015).

Figure 11 Comparing distance travelled to work, 2011

Note: ONS 2011 Census data for Distance travelled to work, all residents in employment the week before the Census (QS702EW).

Source: Analytically Driven Ltd

The reason for Headcorn's distinctive travel pattern is that Headcorn is relatively far from all the local employment centres, see Table 1. This will mean that Headcorn is poorly placed to support growth and innovation in those key centres.

Furthermore, in several cases, Headcorn's ability to support growth and innovation in these key centres will be made even harder by the fact that the main access roads are often highly congested. For example, in the case of the closest employment centre, Maidstone, traffic modelling for Kent County Council has highlighted significant problems with the main A274 route into Maidstone, which has led Kent County Council to notify Maidstone Borough Council that:

"Accordingly, the County Council – as Local Highways Authority – **strongly objects** to any further major development allocations (or speculative planning applications) on the southern approaches to Maidstone Town Centre (i.e. A229/A274). This is on the basis that the cumulative impact of recently completed (or consented) development would have an unacceptably severe impact on the local highway network, without there being sufficient certainty that mitigation can be provided and, most importantly, funded. Any further development would therefore be wholly detrimental to local residents, the travelling public and the ability of Maidstone's economy to function effectively."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Letter from Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director – Growth, Environment and Transport, Kent County Council to the Chief Executive of Maidstone Borough Council dated August 13, 2015. Emphasis as given.

Table 1 Travel from Headcorn to key employment centres

| Destination | Distance as driven (km) | Estimated commuting time by car for a 9am start (minutes) | Recommended departure time to arrive by public transport for a 9am start | Cost as percentage of gross weekly earnings for those at the bottom 10% of income distribution (%) |
|---|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Maidstone Town Hall (ME14 1TF) | 15.9 | 24-35 | 7:59am | 22.3% ^g |
| Ashford International Station (TN24 OPS) | 23.3 | 35 | 8:05am | 21.1% |
| Gillingham Station (ME7 1XE) | 32.8 | 40-55 | 7:06am ^a | 54.1% |
| Sittingbourne Station (ME10 3ED) | 34.8 | 35-50 | 6:43am ^a | 43.5% |
| Tunbridge Wells Station (TN1 1BT) | 35.2 | 40-55 | 7:48am ^a | 34.5% |
| Canterbury Cathedral (CT1 2EH) | 40.1 | 45-60 | 7:31am | 44.3% |
| Tonbridge High Street (TN9 1DB) | 41.0 | 45-60 | 8:09am | 34.1% |
| Sevenoaks Town Council Offices (TN13 3QG) | 46.7 | 45-60 | 7:48am | 58.3% |
| Charing Cross Station (WC2N 5HF) | 78.4 | 85-160 | 7:30am | 94.7-107.8% ^f |
| <i>National comparison</i> | <i>5-10^b</i> | <i>24.5^c</i> | <i>8:25am^d</i> | <i>13.4%^e</i> |

Note: Travel times and distances estimated by Google maps for journey from Headcorn Post Office (TN27 9NE) to relevant point using Google's recommended route (Note that this may not be the shortest route). Data collected on October 7, 2015, for journeys based on the arrival time of 8:50am on Thursday 8 October 2015, to allow 10 minutes for someone to arrive at their desk. Each destination has a population of at least 10,000. Cost of weekly travel for those commuting to work based on the cost of a weekly travel pass in October 2015. ASHE data shows that for those at the bottom 10% of the income distribution gross weekly earnings of all employees were £125.40 in 2014 (the latest data available). ^aNeed to change at least once. ^bMedian commuting distances for England those with a fixed workplace, based on 2011 Census. 49.4% of those living in England and 48.9% of those living in the South East commuted at most 5 km. The average commuting distance for England is 14.9 km, which is significantly skewed by those travelling very long distances. This is still closer than the closest population centre to Headcorn. ^cAverage commuting times from Manning and Petrongolo (2011), based on the Labour Force Survey 1993-2007. ^dEstimated time using average commuting times. ^eAverage UK weekly household expenditure on transport as a percentage of total expenditure, from ONS (2013). ^fLower price is for train use only. Higher price includes a zone 1 to 6 travelcard. ^gFor anyone unable to afford to purchase a weekly travel pass and instead needing to buy daily tickets, the cost of five days travel to Maidstone by bus would be equivalent to 27.9% of their income, if they were in the bottom 10% of the income distribution.

Source: Analytically Driven Ltd.

Furthermore, although Headcorn has a train station with a direct link to London, as well as a bus service that provides buses to Maidstone roughly every hour, the realities of using public transport in rural areas will also act as a barrier. As Table 1 makes clear, to arrive at a desk in all but two of these key centres by 9am would require leaving Headcorn before 8am, and in one case before 7am. Only in two cases (Ashford and

Tonbridge) would someone be able to leave after 8am for a 9am start, but in both cases they would still need to leave more than 50 minutes before their start time. This compares to average commuting times for the country as a whole of 24.5 minutes.⁶⁰ Furthermore, only in the case of commuting to Tonbridge or Charing Cross would using public transport potentially be faster.

In addition the cost of using public transport is also high, particularly for people on low incomes. As Table 1 shows, for those on low incomes (at the bottom 10% of the income distribution) the cost of weekly fares to all these employment centres will act as a significant barrier. For example, the weekly bus fare to Maidstone would be 22.3% of weekly earnings and the cost of a weekly travel pass to London (with a tube pass included) would be 107.8% of weekly earnings. The saving in bus fares to the centre of Maidstone for someone living on the outskirts of Maidstone, rather than in Headcorn, would be 7.2% of weekly earnings. Train fares to London are also cheaper from Maidstone, with savings of between 10.5% and 11.4% of weekly earnings, for someone at the bottom 10% of the income distribution, depending on whether they also needed a Zone 1-6 travel card (with the highest savings in that case). This is one reason why the policy on affordable housing in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is designed to ensure that, as far as possible, the supply of affordable housing matches local demand, as the cost of public transport from Headcorn will particularly disadvantage those who are less well off.

Overall Headcorn's location not only acts as a barrier to labour market participation, the implications of the time needed and costs involved will also reduce the use of public transport in favour of less sustainable options. Even in the case of London, which as a destination accounts for 87.2% of train usage amongst commuters from the Headcorn area, 23.8% of commuters to London from Headcorn commute by car.⁶¹ Although, for example, Tonbridge and Ashford both have a direct rail link with Headcorn, only 1.5% and 5.2%, respectively, of commuters from Headcorn to those destinations use the train, with the vast majority in each case commuting by car.⁶² It is not surprising that even though 200 houses were built in Headcorn Parish between 2001 and 2011 only two extra people now use the train.

⁶⁰ As with distance travelled, median commuting times will be much lower than the average, because of the impact of a small minority of workers doing very long journeys, which skew the results.

⁶¹ Data on commuting patterns by method of travel and destination is based on the 2011 Census for the Middle Layer Super Output Area Maidstone 017, which includes Headcorn Parish, as a full breakdown for Headcorn Parish is not available. Comparing data for the Middle Layer Super Output Area Maidstone 017 (from WU03EW) and data for Headcorn Parish (from QS701EW) shows that Headcorn Parish accounts for 64.5% of commuters from the Middle Layer Super Output Area Maidstone 017 and overall commuting patterns are broadly similar. For Headcorn Parish trains were used by 17.2% of commuters, with 65.7% driving to work. The full breakdown for the Middle Layer Super Output Area Maidstone 017 shows that trains were used by 15.6% of commuters, with 67.3% driving to work. Commuters to London account for 19.2% of commuters from this area.

⁶² Based on 2011 Census data for the Middle Layer Super Output Area Maidstone 017 for commuting patterns by method of travel and destination (WU03EW). In total 94.8% of commuters to Tonbridge and 84.5% of commuters to Ashford from this area, which includes Headcorn Parish, drove a car or van to work. Based on data for commuting patterns to Ashford, and Tonbridge and Malling Boroughs.

2.5.2 Impact of distance on education

Distance will not just affect those in need of work. In the case of secondary schools, the nearest state secondary school (Swadelands School in Lenham) is 11.4 km from the centre of Headcorn. This is much further than most pupils are expected to travel. For England as a whole, 90% of pupils travel at most 6.6 km to school, and even in rural areas 90% of pupils travel less than 9.4 km.⁶³ In other words, pupils in Headcorn aged 11 to 18 will be expected to travel longer distances than the majority of working adults. This carries a significant risk that it will have a negative impact on their educational achievements. For example, children with four to six GCSEs are 27 percentage points less likely to participate in post-compulsory (over the age of 16) academic education if they live more than 8 km away from their secondary school compared to those who live within 2 km of the school and 15 percentage points less likely to participate in post-compulsory vocational education.⁶⁴

The impact of distance on educational outcomes will particularly be felt by those from less wealthy backgrounds, and particularly those without access to a car. To reach all three of the closest secondary schools by public transport requires at least one change, often with a significant walk in between, with minimum journey times of three quarters of an hour. This would significantly disadvantage children from families without access to a car, both because it would limit their ability to participate in after school activities, as well as parental involvement in the school. The 2011 Census shows that households without a car made up 13% of the total in Headcorn and MBC estimates suggest that around a third of families living in social housing in rural areas have no access to a car.⁶⁵

In addition, there is also a significant risk that distance will undermine school choice, because it is used as a factor to determine eligibility. For example, children in Headcorn are already not eligible to attend the second closest state school, Cranbrook School, which is 11.9 km away, as it has an 8.5 km catchment area.

2.5.3 Impact of distance on health

Another key service that will be affected by Headcorn's location is access to hospitals, with the closest being 19.5 km away. The two closest hospitals are over 30 minutes away by car, and take at least 40 minutes to reach by public transport, with a change required in both cases.

Furthermore, these distances do not only affect how easy it is for patients to reach hospital by themselves. The average blue-light emergency response time for ambulances to reach patients in Headcorn is 13 minutes and 23 seconds, with the response time for less serious calls averaging 37 minutes and 41 seconds. This compares to the national standard, which is for an emergency response to arrive at the scene

⁶³ Burgess et al (2006).

⁶⁴ Dickerson and McIntosh (2013).

⁶⁵ Maidstone Borough Council (2015).

within 8 minutes of category A calls in 75% of cases. Therefore Headcorn's location will potentially affect survival rates, particularly for those over 60 who have an increased likelihood of suffering strokes, cardiac arrests and other serious medical conditions.

3.0 CREATING A VISION TO MEET HEADCORN'S NEEDS

Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is underpinned by a positive vision for Headcorn's future, supported by five high-level policy objectives. This vision and the associated policy objectives flow from the evidence that has been gathered to support Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

Vision for Headcorn

Our vision is for Headcorn to continue to thrive as a friendly, rural community with a strong local economy. We believe that Headcorn should evolve gradually over time in a way that, through appropriate choices of the scale and design of individual developments, preserves and enhances the distinctive character, landscape and setting of the village, while meeting the needs of local residents and businesses. This will be achieved by:

1. Maintaining a sense of being a country village, with a strong local community.
2. Supporting a vibrant local economy, based around the High Street, agriculture, leisure, tourism and small business enterprise.
3. Ensuring the village is supported by a robust infrastructure, designed to meet the needs of local residents and businesses.
4. Ensuring that there is a robust policy framework governing development in the countryside around Headcorn that will support both local needs and the benefits residents receive from being surrounded by beautiful countryside.
5. Ensuring that development in the Parish is managed in a way that is sustainable; promotes small scale development; is well designed; is capable of meeting the needs of local residents in different age groups and family units; and is in keeping with its setting.

Identifying a vision is an important part of any Neighbourhood Plan, as it is used to drive the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan, both individually and collectively. The key to getting this right is good evidence, taking a rigorous approach to identify what needs preserving and what big changes are needed. Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by a large evidence base including analysis of sustainability and infrastructure issues, surveys of residents, businesses, estate agents, and traffic movements, as well

as one of the parents, teachers, pupils and governors at Headcorn Primary School.⁶⁶ Drawing these together, there are a number of key findings.

The first is a very positive one - Headcorn Parish is a great place to live. When residents were asked to rate living in Headcorn on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 was very good) Headcorn's average score was 4.3. In total, over 85% of residents rated Headcorn as either good or very good as a place to live.⁶⁷ The two things they value most about life in Headcorn are the fact that it is surrounded by beautiful countryside and the High Street, which were both picked by over 75% of residents.

Figure 12 Headcorn as a community



Note: The May Fair celebrations at Days Green and the Remembrance Day parade in Headcorn, 2014.

Headcorn Parish is also a good place to do business. Indeed, one of the reasons that Headcorn is so successful as a village is that it also enjoys a thriving business community. There are 143 businesses in Headcorn Parish and around one in three residents of working age also work in the Parish.⁶⁸ When asked about how Headcorn compares as a place to do business, the business community was also very positive, giving Headcorn an average score of 3.5 [out of 5], with the majority of business owners and managers rating Headcorn as either good or very good as a place to do business.⁶⁹

It is this positive view of the Parish that was one of the main motivating factors behind the decision by Headcorn Parish Council to introduce a Neighbourhood Plan. Headcorn has been designated by Maidstone Borough Council as a Rural Service Centre (RSC),

⁶⁶ See Appendix A2 for an overview of the evidence base and methodologies; Driver (2014) and Therivel (2015) on sustainability issues; and Sanderson (Consulting Engineers) Ltd (2015) on the state of Headcorn's sewerage system.

⁶⁷ Based on the 2013 Residents' Survey for Headcorn Parish conducted by the Headcorn Matters team. All residents of Headcorn Parish aged 14 and over were asked to take part in the survey.

⁶⁸ The evidence on one in three people working in the Parish is based on the 2013 Residents' Survey for Headcorn Parish. It is not possible to get a breakdown of the number of residents working in Headcorn Parish from the 2011 Census. However, in the 2011 Census 10.9% of those in work in Headcorn Parish worked mainly at or from home and 16.3% of commuters in the Maidstone 017 Middle Layer Super Output Area (which include Headcorn Parish) lived and worked in the same area. Assuming the proportion of commuters living and working in Headcorn Parish is the same as the proportion in the Maidstone 017 Middle Layer Super Output Area as a whole, this would mean that 27.2% of Headcorn residents in employment worked in the Parish.

⁶⁹ Based on the 2013 Survey of Businesses in the Parish. In total 53% of businesses rated Headcorn as either good or very good and 33% rated Headcorn as average, with only 14% of businesses rating Headcorn as either bad or very bad.

which means that under the emerging MBC Local Plan Headcorn it is seen as a potential area for allowing some development. It is important that this development maintains and enhances the benefits of Headcorn as a place to live and do business and that it will meet the needs of the whole community going forward. To do this, one of the key aims of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is to recognize the challenges that expansion will bring and to plan strategically how to address these. So, looking to the future, what are the key messages that come out of Headcorn's evidence?

Figure 13 The changing face of Headcorn



Note: Foremans in the 1980s and now

Twenty years from now, residents would most like Headcorn to be described as: friendly, rural, peaceful, traditional and prosperous (in that order).⁷⁰ When asked about the opportunities associated with expansion, the need for housing, even affordable housing, did not feature.⁷¹ Out of 22 options, the top five from the perspective of residents were: ensure good medical facilities; protection for the countryside; boost local jobs and businesses; ensure good public transport links; and create a strong village identity. However, none of these options was picked by more than 45% of residents.

In contrast, there was a much greater consensus about the issues that expansion could cause. Of the 22 options they were given, 67% picked "lose the sense of being a village". The next four biggest issues (in order of preference), each picked by over 30% of residents, were: development more suitable for a town than a village; overstretched sewerage system; increase in crime; and reduction in the amount of green space.

This worry about losing the sense of being a village is also reflected in another key finding to emerge from the survey evidence - on the scale of individual housing developments. When asked how big individual housing developments should be, almost 90% of residents picked at most a maximum of 30 houses.⁷² This message was reinforced by the views of local estate agents, who all felt that it became harder to sell properties in housing developments of more than 30 houses. This preference for smaller developments is in keeping with Headcorn's existing experience, as the largest

⁷⁰ These five were all picked by at least 25% of residents. The other options they were given were: sustainable, affordable, beautiful, vibrant, green, and unchanged.

⁷¹ The need for housing, skilled or unskilled labour was not something that businesses felt was important - as at least 55% of businesses marked these factors as not posing a threat to future business expansion.

⁷² 33.5% picked less than 10 houses, 38.6% picked less than 20 houses and 16.7% picked less than 30 houses.

development in Headcorn, dating from the 1970s, was around 80 houses. It is much harder to integrate a large housing estate into the fabric of the village. It is not just the scale of individual developments that worried residents. When asked about the maximum amount of housing development that would be appropriate for the next twenty years, almost 90% picked an option of a maximum of 250 or below, with almost 60% choosing an option that was 150 houses or less.⁷³

Combining this evidence, the vision for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has at its heart the importance of maintaining a friendly, rural community, which will thrive because the approach to development will ensure that it can be easily absorbed within the local community, will enhance the character of the village and surrounding countryside and will help support the local economy.

3.1 Creating Policy Objectives to support the Vision

The Vision for Headcorn is underpinned by five high-level Policy Objectives, which provide a framework to inform the suite of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Each of the Policy Objectives covers a key aspect of development.

The first Objective is probably the most important, which is that Headcorn wants to retain the sense of being a country village and to develop in a way that supports community engagement. In practice, when residents were asked what it meant to be a village, key aspects were that: the village should retain a compact shape; the Primary School should remain at the heart of the village and have the sufficient capacity to accept children from the Parish; individual developments should be small scale; roads should feel like narrow country lanes rather than wide city streets; there should be a single, vibrant retail centre (the High Street), with no shops in new developments; and that there should be lots of green spaces, big and small.⁷⁴

The second Objective reflects the importance of the local economy for Headcorn, highlighted by the fact that roughly one in three residents in employment are based in Headcorn for work.⁷⁵ Headcorn enjoys high levels of business ownership, with 22.0% of economically active residents in the parish being self-employed, compared to 14.0% for

⁷³ This was despite the fact that they were told that 220 houses had been built over the previous 20 years and that they were given options at intervals of 50 up to 500 houses, with an additional option of no specific maximum. In total, 57.9% of respondents picked an option of a maximum of 150 or below, with 88.5% choosing an option of a maximum of 250 or below.

⁷⁴ Residents who attended the meeting in June 2014 were given 10 different options for what it might mean to be a village and were asked to mark the ones they felt were important.

⁷⁵ The evidence on one in three people working in the Parish is based on the 2013 Residents' Survey for Headcorn Parish. It is not possible to get a breakdown of the number of residents working in Headcorn Parish from the 2011 Census. However, in the 2011 Census 10.9% of those in work in Headcorn Parish worked mainly at or from home and 16.3% of commuters in the Maidstone 017 Middle Layer Super Output Area (which include Headcorn Parish) lived and worked in the same area. Assuming the proportion of commuters living and working in Headcorn Parish is the same as the proportion in the Maidstone 017 Middle Layer Super Output Area as a whole, this would mean that 27.2% of Headcorn residents in employment worked in the Parish.

England as a whole.⁷⁶ The choice of the sectors to place at the heart of economic development reflects the preferences of businesses, as well as the value that residents place on the High Street – 75% of residents picked the High Street as something they valued most about living in Headcorn, a score beaten only by being surrounded by beautiful countryside.

The third Objective reflects the reality that infrastructure plays an important role in sustainable development. Although some parts of Headcorn's infrastructure are strong, both businesses and residents feel that certain key aspects of Headcorn's infrastructure are not currently fit for purpose and that development could lead to further deterioration. This means that the policy framework within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan needs to address this issue proactively.

Figure 14 A typical countryside scene in Headcorn Parish



Note: Preparing the fields for the year ahead against a backdrop of ancient hedgerows and a typical cluster of dwellings and outbuildings. Agriculture is an important part of Headcorn's economy.

The fourth Objective reflects the importance of the countryside for the enjoyment that residents receive from living in Headcorn and the need to find a balance between that enjoyment and the needs of residents and businesses operating in the Parish, including the 23% of households living in the countryside surrounding the village.

The final Objective covers the overarching approach to all development in Headcorn (including housing and commercial development). Aspects that are important here are that: it is small scale – almost 90% of residents want individual developments to be at most 30 houses; well designed; in keeping with its setting; is sustainable; and will meet the needs of existing residents and businesses.

⁷⁶ 4.7% of economically active residents in Headcorn parish are self-employed in a business that employs other people (compared to 3.2% for England) and 17.2% are self-employed and working by themselves (compared to 10.8% for England).

4.0 OVERARCHING POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN HEADCORN PARISH

This section contains the policies that apply to development throughout Headcorn Parish. It covers policies on: design; protecting the natural environment; dealing with flooding and surface water management; and the protection of key communal spaces, community assets and views. The policies are designed to ensure there is a high-quality built environment in Headcorn that helps protect the environment overall.

4.1 Design policy

The aims of the design policies in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan are:

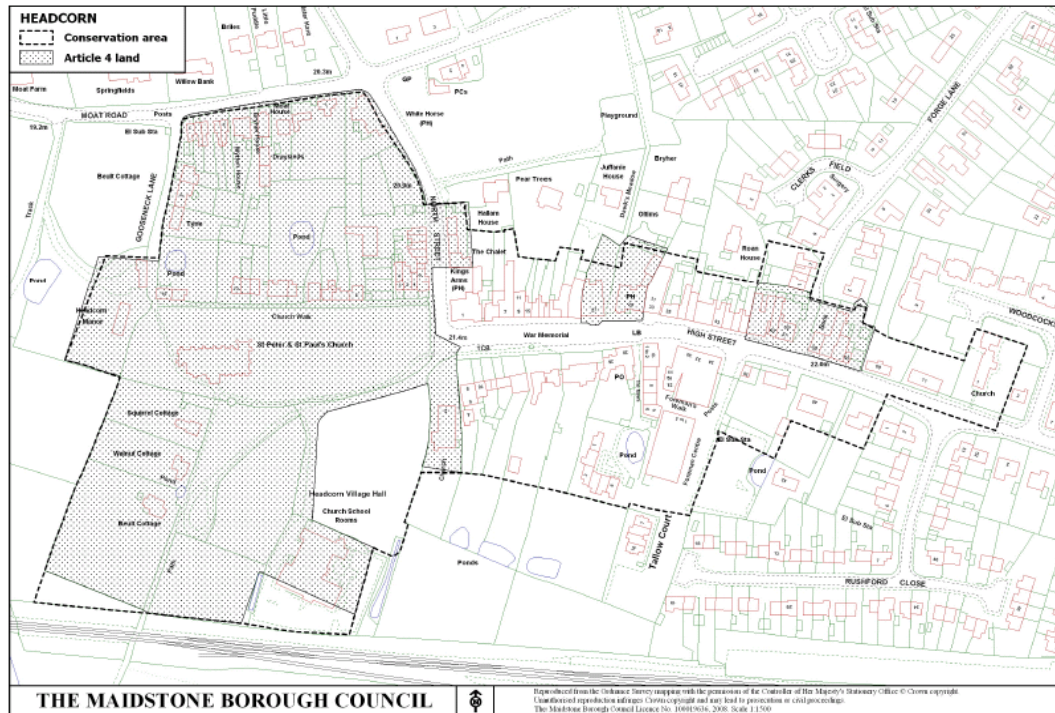
- to create well-designed homes, which will stand the test of time and be desirable both now and in the future;
- to preserve and enhance Headcorn's distinctive heritage and character; and
- to create development that is in keeping with Headcorn's position as a rural village; contributing to a high-quality built environment; providing sensitive landscaping; and reflecting its setting within the Parish.

The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, part of good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Sustainable development involves achieving positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life. A core principle of the NPPF is always to seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

Headcorn is an historic village situated in the Low Weald of Kent and the wealth of historic buildings of different ages in the centre of the village reflects Headcorn's growth over the centuries.⁷⁷ This history helps define Headcorn's unique character with its core of historic buildings, many listed, in the conservation area in the centre of the village (see Figure 15) and around the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul. The Headcorn Residents' survey demonstrated widespread support for retaining the 'sense of a village' and maintaining the traditional character of the village in any new developments.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ See Section 2 for more detail on Headcorn's history and the history of the built-environment.

⁷⁸ Headcorn Residents' Survey 2013.

Figure 15 Headcorn's Conservation Area

Source: Ordnance Survey

The rich history of the built environment in Headcorn village is also reflected in the wider countryside, with many examples of old farmhouses, some dating back to the 15th century, throughout the Parish. In addition to the traditional farmhouses, there are a number of workers' cottages throughout the Parish, many dating to the Victorian period. More recently, building in the countryside has tended to focus on barn and oast house conversions and there are a number of successful examples of these within the Parish. Buildings in the countryside, including farm buildings, tend to be clustered in small groups and this is reinforced by the existence of several small hamlets within the Parish, including Bletchenden and Hawkenbury.

The character of Headcorn Parish owes much to the variety of architectural forms and styles developed over hundreds of years. There are examples of timber framed hall houses from the 14th century, to tile hung and brick built properties with Georgian style windows from the 18th century onwards. Bricks and tiles made from the local clay are much in evidence. Key features of Headcorn's style include:

- A varied roof scape, with a distinct local feel, created by the use of: steeply pitched roofs; hipped and half hipped roofs; different roof heights and building orientations within developments; and the extensive use of Kent peg tiles.
- Most buildings of two storeys, albeit with varying ridge heights, but the use of dormer windows in some properties to create 2.5 storeys;⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Two and a half storeys is the maximum found in domestic properties in Headcorn village.

- A mix of building styles, including: oak framed buildings; brick or tile hung elevations (some use of contrasting grey bricks for decoration) and mathematical tiles in different designs; weather boarding in white paint or black stain; Bethersden marble facades with brick detailing; and many buildings with brick chimney stacks.
- Well-proportioned windows, including examples of: Georgian sash windows; Victorian sash windows; bow windows; and cottage style casement windows.
- Roads, even in the village, which feel like country lanes; and small lanes and pedestrian footpaths connecting up different parts of the village. While there is no clear pattern for how buildings relate to the road and there are successful examples of both houses that are set back from the road and houses that sit directly on the road even within the context of the main road through Headcorn (the A274). Many of the successful examples of houses being set back involve the use of native hedges or other distinctive boundaries treatments, such as traditional fencing or brick walls, combined with the creation of cottage gardens, which help preserve the rural feel.

Figure 16 Examples of developments that capture the village feel



Note: Clockwise from the top left: Church walk is part of the old part of the village, with houses of different shapes, styles and sizes creating a varied and traditional street scape; Tallow Court is a successful modern development, which benefits from good landscaping and a variety of designs; Foremans Walk in the heart of the village is a good example of the use of sympathetic design to help create a new development that complements the High Street following the replacement of the old grain silos; and The Chantry development picks up visual cues from traditional village developments such as Church Walk and uses landscaping and the positioning of the buildings to visually soften the development.

Figure 17 Headcorn village street scenes – spot the odd one out

Note: Clockwise from the top left: the approach to Headcorn from Maidstone on the A274 gives the village a strong rural impression; the same is true for other village approaches, such as Ulcombe Road; Oak Villas show that even terraced housing has a very green setting; and the Oak Lane and Grigg Lane junction is a good example of how even in the centre of the village many of the roads are reminiscent of country lanes, because of the prevalence of mature trees and hedgerows; the new Hardwicks development by the doctor's surgery stands out because of the use of significant hard standing and limited landscaping, which makes it feel very urban, rather than part of the village scene; the Chantry development is a good example of how new developments can fit in with the village scene; entering the village on Moat Road again creates a very green feel; and finally, even Headcorn High Street benefits from mature trees and grass verges, in keeping with its rural setting.

This diversity of building styles and use of materials (many derived from the local area) contributes greatly to the character of Headcorn. It is important that this diversity is retained when new development is planned. The Headcorn Residents' Survey 2013 strongly supported the use of different sizes and styles of property to ensure this diversity, as well as aiding integration into the village.

Future building should also respect the distinctive height, scale, spacing, layout, orientation and materials of the area. Development should also be sensitive to location within the village. For instance, the High Street is the densest part of the village with terraces or closely packed housing. However, even on the High Street there are several substantial properties with large gardens.

Innovative design should reflect design cues from its context within the Parish. In recent years there have been a couple of developments in the village which have taken account of Headcorn's character, using sensitive and appropriate building materials and styles and as a result have been more successful visually than many other new builds. These are the development of the former Foremans site in the heart of the village, which maintained the density appropriate to the centre of the village and took cues from its former agricultural use; and the very new Chantry scheme which uses steeply pitched roofs, different heights of houses, styles and orientation, as well as having good parking management and limited use of hard landscaping to create a visually successful development.

HNP1: Design policies for Headcorn

This policy covers all development in Headcorn, including housing, commercial and community development. New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where it:

A) Is designed to a high quality, which responds to the heritage and distinctive character of Headcorn and its rural environment and reflects the local context by way of:

- Height (including no new development of more than two and a half storeys), scale, spacing, layout, orientation, design and use of local building materials; and
- the scale, design and materials of the public realm (highways, open space, landscaping).

B) Is sympathetic to the setting of any heritage asset, and adheres to Conservation Area guidance where appropriate.

C) Promotes high quality exterior spaces, appropriate to its rural setting.

D) Safeguards the privacy and daylight of adjoining residents and will not result in unacceptable levels of light, noise, air or water pollution.

E) Ensures that any new roads visually resemble country lanes and traditional village streets in keeping with the existing street scape, for example through: the use and

retention of mature native trees and hedgerows lining the road; the appropriate choice of scale, width and layout; and sensitive choice of the way in which new buildings relate to the road.

F) Ensures that there is adequate outside space for parking at each property (with parking for at least one car per dwelling and a minimum of two cars for any dwelling of more than one bedroom) and that the spacing and screening of this parking is designed to minimise its visual impact and to avoid creating the feel of an urban environment.

G) Deals with practicalities (such as providing adequate refuse and recycling storage) effectively and incorporates them into the scheme in a way that minimises their visual impact.

4.1.1 Monitoring activities

Table 2 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP1

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|--|---|
| 1) Undertake a visual assessment of each development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at meeting the design goals within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made in future schemes. |

4.2 Policies covering the natural and historic environment

Headcorn's setting in the Low Weald of Kent means that it is a rural landscape characterized by small fields, ancient hedgerows, orchards, small wooded areas of native trees (particularly oak and ash) and natural water sources including rivers, ponds and natural soaks in keeping with the local geology and in particular the clay soil. Much of Headcorn's landscape has remained unchanged for centuries, with evidence from Tithe Maps, for example, showing that the current field boundaries in and around both the village and the rest of the Parish date back to at least the early 1800s.⁸⁰ This history means that many of the hedges in the Parish benefit from a rich variety of local flora, including species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, elder and hornbeam. This landscape not only defines Headcorn's rural setting, it also provides an ideal habitat for many different species of wildlife. The retention of many hedgerows and established native trees within the village has meant there are natural access routes for wildlife into the village itself, much to the enjoyment of many residents.

⁸⁰ See Figure 9 in Section 2.

It is important to protect this heritage, particularly given the enjoyment that residents get from being surrounded by beautiful countryside, as well as the benefits that this landscape provides to the local economy, both through tourism and agriculture.

Landowners often need to address problems on their land, such as when a tree has become unsafe. However, one of the concerns that has been raised to the Parish Council is that developers often clear trees and hedgerows before putting a site forward for development, allowing them to avoid having to agree changes with Maidstone Borough Council's Planning Department. Headcorn Parish Council is keen to discourage this where possible and to ensure that where there is a need to fell trees or clear hedgerows that these are restored by the sensitive reintroduction of native species, if a site subsequently comes forward for development.

Figure 18 Important green spaces and wildlife corridors in Headcorn village



HNP2: Protection of Headcorn's historic and natural environment

This policy covers all development in Headcorn, including housing, commercial and community development. New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where it respects the natural contours of the site and protects and sensitively incorporates historic and/or natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the site, to make best use of the site to accommodate development; to help preserve and enhance the natural environment in Headcorn, by providing a habitat for wildlife; and to sustain the historic

environment, including the contribution of these features to local character and identity.

Existing wildlife corridors and stepping stones that link with the central village and the surrounding countryside should be maintained and enhanced to allow the free flow of wildlife into the parks and gardens of the village. This includes roadside verges and hedges, which are important wildlife refuges and should be maintained where possible when development takes place.

Where trees and hedgerows have been removed from a site in the previous five years, or where it will be unavoidable to remove parts of existing hedgerows or established trees, developers must demonstrate they have looked to balance this by the provision of similar species within the development that will help maintain and enhance wildlife corridors within and around the site. In general, however, mature trees and hedgerows should only be removed as an exception and existing ancient hedgerows must be preserved as part of any new development. See Figure 18 for a map of the ancient hedgerows and key wildlife corridors that have been identified in the immediate vicinity of Headcorn village.

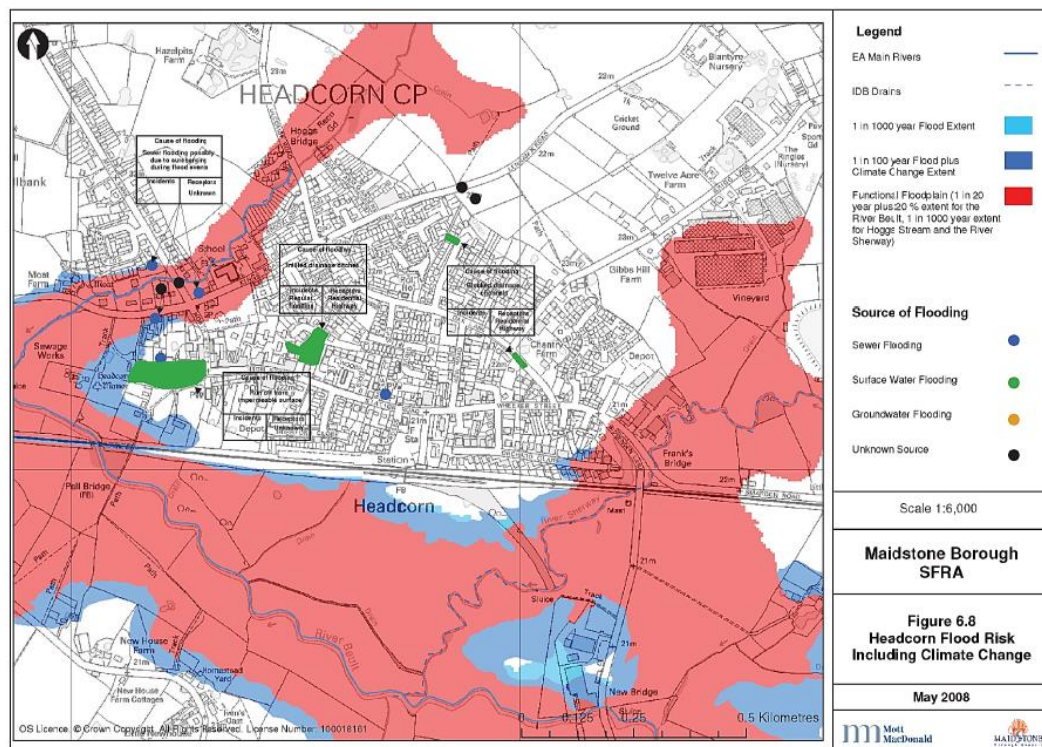
4.2.1 Dealing with flooding and water management

The village of Headcorn is surrounded by three rivers, including the River Beult, which is an SSSI. The presence of these rivers brings benefits to the Parish, for example through the variety of flora and fauna they support, meaning that it is important to protect them. However, they also bring with them significant risk of flooding, something which is exacerbated by the speed at which the River Beult and its tributaries can flood. In addition, the local geology and particularly the clay soil means that the Parish also suffers from significant problems with surface water flooding. Combined these problems can contribute to making roads within the Parish impassable after heavy rain, including the A274 to the south and Ulcombe Road within the village.

When properties are flooded they take significant amounts of both time and money to repair. In addition, flooding is not only a problem for those directly at risk. It can also cause problems for the wider community, for example through higher insurance premiums. Therefore it is very important that any development in the Parish takes place outside identified flood zones and avoids either exacerbating or creating additional fluvial or surface water flooding. As flood maps are only updated infrequently, a process that often involves homeowners reporting problems (at potential harm to their property value), the assessment of flood risk should not only take into account the latest flood maps, but also local knowledge of flood events. Assessing the risk of flooding is hard and there are significant downsides to getting this risk assessment wrong. Therefore local knowledge of flood events can helpfully supplement flood maps as evidence of flood risk. It is, however, important to recognise that the absence of any recent flood event cannot be used as evidence that flood maps are out of date - they are designed to

capture the risk of events that only occur infrequently and therefore a recent lack of flooding does not undermine that longer term modelling approach.

Figure 19 Map of the floodplains in Headcorn Village



Source: Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, May 2008

Another important aspect of water management is the treatment of foul water. The River Beult SSSI is an important nature reserve in its own right. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that sewage is properly treated before the waste water enters the river, so development should only be allowed when this criteria has been met. Southern Water has recently confirmed⁸¹ that it is currently achieving this requirement by ensuring that treated effluent is in line with its environmental permit. Headcorn Parish Council will require through the Neighbourhood Plan that the Local Planning Authority satisfy themselves that this requirement is still being achieved as part of their statutory and non-statutory consultation process for each planning application in the Parish of Headcorn seeking connection to the sewer network. This is considered necessary in the interests of safeguarding the environmental interests of existing and future residents.

HNP3: Water management and dealing with the risk of flooding

This policy covers all development in Headcorn, including housing, commercial and community development. New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted providing it:

⁸¹ Confirmed in an email on 8th August 2015.

- Is not within the Flood Plain Zones 2 & 3, as identified by the maps provided by the Environmental Agency (or whichever body is officially responsible for providing flood information) and there have been no recent flood events affecting the site that Headcorn Parish Council is aware of;
- Is able to deal with surface water run-off from the site in a way that will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, through the use of best practice techniques that are designed to address the challenges provided by the local geology;
- Has adequate drainage provision with clearly identified responsibilities for maintenance, for example of ditches and culverts;
- Will not cause damage to local streams and rivers; and
- Can be shown, where relevant, that the Headcorn Waste Water Treatment Works operated by the foul water drainage supply company for Headcorn will be able to adequately treat the projected sewage outflow from such development, fully in accordance with its environmental permit.

4.2.2 Monitoring activities

Table 3 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP2 and HNP3

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|---|---|
| 2) Undertake a regular survey of the trees, ponds and hedgerows within the Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help inform the implementation of Policy HNP2. |
| 3) Keep a record of flood events within the Parish and which properties they affect. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help inform the implementation of Policy HNP3. |
| 4) Keep a record of the effectiveness of different SUDS techniques that have been used within the Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |

4.3 Protecting key communal spaces, community assets and views in Headcorn

Headcorn village is compact, with a density of buildings within the built-up-area of around 15 dwellings per hectare, roughly the same density as seen in other villages in Kent. However, this compact shape does not mean that Headcorn lacks green spaces. The centre of the village in particular benefits from two important green spaces, which are highly valued by residents, namely:

- Parsonage Meadow, which is adjacent to the church and new village hall and used for travelling fairs and smaller events; and

- Days Green at the entrance to the village abutting the A274 from Maidstone, which is the focus of major village events, such as the May Fair.

These open spaces together also have historical significance in the village and have been in community ownership for some time: Parsonage Meadow was purchased from St John's College by Headcorn Parish Council in the 1970s; Days Green was gifted to the village by the local Day family for leisure and enjoyment in 1951.

Two other spaces have also been acquired for village use:

- Hoggs Bridge Green was donated in 1974; and
- Spires Ash in Grigg Lane was bought by Headcorn Parish Council in 1994.

It is proposed that these open spaces, together with the churchyard of St Peter and St Paul, are designated as 'Local Green Spaces' under the NPPF.

The other large open space, which is available for community use at certain times, is the playing fields to the north of Headcorn Primary School. The community also benefits both from a variety of additional open green spaces, including:

- green spaces within developments, such as Knights Way, Forge Meadows and the pond at Sharp's Field; and
- a number of green spaces on the edge of the village that are available for recreational purposes, including the allotments, the football club, the cricket club and the bowls club.

The abundance of green spaces scattered throughout the village, not just those defined as Local Green Spaces, can be seen from the aerial map used in Figure 18. Combined with the many mature trees and hedgerows these green spaces contribute to Headcorn's sense of place and the impression that Headcorn is a green village that fits in well with its Low Weald setting.

Open spaces, including sports clubs and allotments, also facilitate recreational activities. Consultations with residents to support Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, including the Residents' Survey, have revealed a shortage of sports and leisure facilities and facilities for young people, as well as demand for more informal space for dog walkers. Therefore, it is important to not only protect existing open space, but also to enhance its provision in future.⁸²

One of the aims of this Plan is to focus development on appropriate sites. To do this it is important that the green, historic and recreational spaces in and around the village should be protected. Therefore, Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan sets a policy that prohibits development in the key public green spaces. Communal green spaces within housing developments are also an important part of the look and feel of the village and therefore in general these can only be developed where the result is of material benefit

⁸² For the full details of the assessment of Headcorn's infrastructure, see the analysis in Driver (2014), and Section 7.

to surrounding residents or the Parish as a whole. In the case of recreational spaces, such as sports clubs, these are slightly different, because they are often in private hands. However, it is important that these recreational spaces are also preserved. So in general, while some development may, for example, be necessary to help upgrade facilities, the development of recreational spaces will only be allowed where the result is that the facilities provided are at least as good as the existing facilities.

However, it is not just recreational green spaces that help to promote a healthy community. There are also a number of key facilities and buildings that serve the community and play an important role in parish life, by facilitating key services and allowing the community to come together in different ways. These important buildings and community assets that serve the parish also need to be protected and retained. Therefore, Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan sets a policy protecting specific community assets, namely the village hall, primary school, library, doctors' surgery, public houses and the many churches and chapels that serve the parish.

HNP4: Protection of communal spaces and community assets in Headcorn

This policy covers all development in Headcorn, including housing, commercial and community development. New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan:

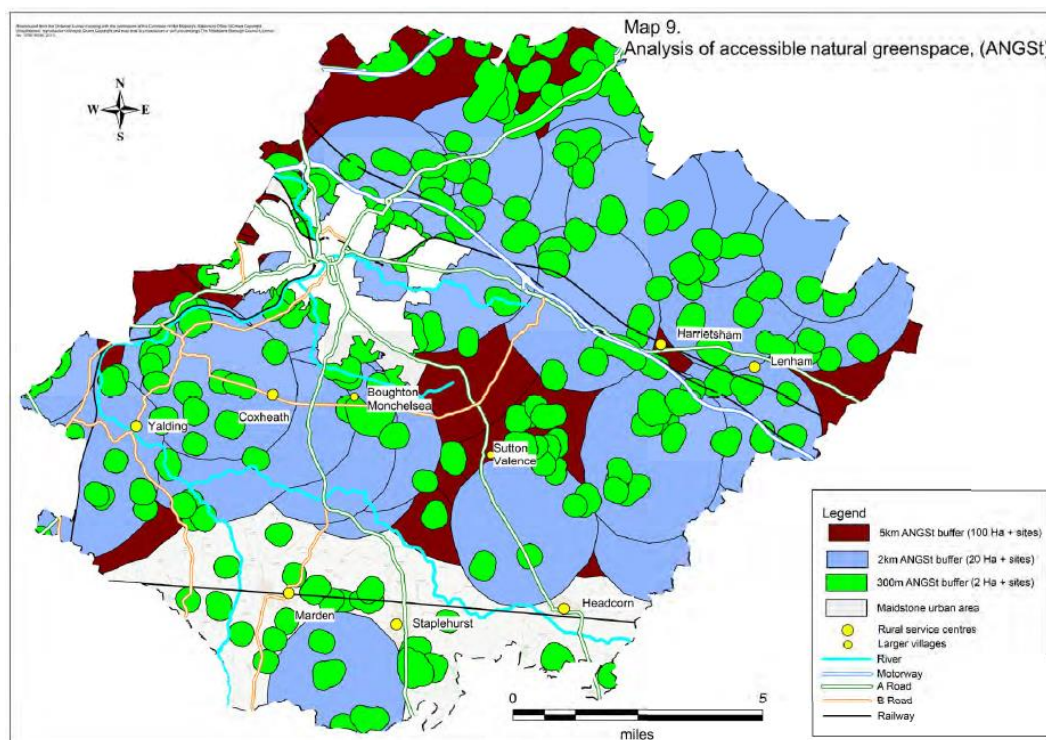
- Will not be permitted where it would result in the loss of a Local Green Space (as defined on Figure 18), or a community asset (as defined above);
- Will not be permitted in public green spaces within existing developments, unless it can be demonstrated that the development would be of material benefit to the surrounding residents, or the Parish as a whole; and
- Will only be permitted on recreational spaces within the Parish where the result is that the new facilities provided are at least as good as the existing facilities. Where the proposal involves moving a recreational space, for example a sports club, to an alternative location then the accessibility of the new location from the Village should also be at least as good as from the existing facility.

4.3.1 Projects to improve the provision of recreational and green spaces

Although Headcorn benefits from green spaces scattered around the village, the assessment of infrastructure provision in Headcorn revealed that the provision of both adventure playgrounds for teenagers and wildlife sanctuaries were seen as poor. This was in addition to concern over the availability of sports and leisure facilities in the Parish. These concerns were reinforced at the time of the Regulation 14 consultation on this Neighbourhood Plan, with many residents indicating that they would value more accessible natural green space, in which they could walk their dogs for example. Headcorn fails to meet Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt), which has been adopted by Maidstone Borough Council. This standard recommends that people live within 300m of a two hectare natural green space, within

2km of a 20 hectare natural green space and within 5km of a 100 hectare natural green space. As can be seen from Figure 20 Headcorn does not meet any of these standards.⁸³

Figure 20 Map of accessible natural green space (ANGSt) in Maidstone Borough



Note: Map 9 from Maidstone's draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Headcorn does not have any green spaces meeting the ANGSt definitions.

Source: Maidstone Borough Council (2013)

To address this, Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan contains three projects to create or upgrade recreational spaces. These are:

- to upgrade the recreational facilities at Hoggs Bridge Green, to create a space that caters for the needs of teenagers and young adults;
- to create a wildlife sanctuary, with access to the River Beult, as well as to increase the amount of accessible natural green space in Headcorn more generally; and
- to work with Headcorn Primary School and Kent County Council to preserve and enhance the recreational facilities at the school and to take advantage of the expansion of Headcorn Primary School to improve the provision of sporting and leisure space for the whole community.

⁸³ Note that in the site assessment exercise done to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, the category on the proximity of sites to recreational space was incorrectly marked as a green space of more than 2 hectares. As Figure 20 makes clear there are no spaces of that size in Headcorn. Instead the category was used to record the closest recreational green space of any size (including sports fields and allotments), see Appendix A4.

Upgrading the recreational facilities for teenagers and young adults

In the review of Headcorn's infrastructure at least a third of residents in the Parish rated the provision of adventure playgrounds for teenagers as "bad, with improvement needed now".⁸⁴ Headcorn Parish Council had already been looking to upgrade this type of facility within Headcorn. Therefore residents were also asked where would be the best location for development to support recreational activities such as a children's play area, outdoor gym equipment, or skate-park. Of the three locations suggested by far the most popular was Hoggs Bridge Green. Consequently, it is the intention of Headcorn Parish Council to upgrade the recreational facilities at Hoggs Bridge Green over the course of the plan period to introduce a recreational area that caters for teenagers and young adults.⁸⁵

HM Project 1: Upgrading the recreational facilities for teenagers and young adults

Headcorn Parish Council will seek to upgrade the recreational facilities at Hoggs Bridge Green to create an adventure playground to cater for teenagers and young adults in the Parish.

Access to the River Beult and accessible natural green space

The River Beult is relatively unique, because it is one of the few clay rivers in England and Wales to retain much of its characteristic flora. Reflecting this, the River Beult and several of its tributaries in the Parish are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, although there are a number of footpaths that cross the River Beult and its tributaries in Headcorn there is currently no open space where residents can enjoy access to the River. Therefore, as part of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, Headcorn Parish Council is investigating the possibility of acquiring land by the River Beult for the creation of a wildlife sanctuary.

Headcorn Parish Council will also investigate other possibilities for increasing the amount of accessible natural or semi-natural green space in Headcorn that would meet the ANGSt definitions, in locations that would maximize accessibility and the enjoyment of residents.

⁸⁴ In contrast, 70.3% thought that the provision of playgrounds for children under 11 was either excellent or OK.

⁸⁵ Hoggs Bridge Green was picked by 45.9% of respondents, Parsonage Meadow by 26.2% and Days Green by 21.8%, with 6.0% choosing 'Other'.

HM Project 2: Creation of a wildlife sanctuary with access to the River Beult and improving access to natural green space (ANGSt)

Headcorn Parish Council will seek to acquire land by the River Beult, for the creation of a wildlife sanctuary, which is accessible to the wider community.

Headcorn Parish Council will also investigate other possibilities for increasing the amount of accessible natural or semi-natural green space in Headcorn that would meet the ANGSt definitions, in locations that would maximize accessibility and the enjoyment of residents.

Improving the provision and access of sporting and leisure space at Headcorn Primary School

Headcorn Primary School sits in the heart of the village and its recreational and leisure facilities are an important part of the benefits that children get from attending the school. Furthermore, its expansion presents an opportunity to provide some well-located additional sporting and leisure space that can also be enjoyed by the wider community. For example, the school playing fields or swimming pool could potentially be used by the wider community outside school hours. As part of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, Headcorn Parish Council will look to work with Headcorn Primary School and Kent County Council to preserve and enhance the recreational facilities at the school and to take advantage of the expansion of Headcorn Primary School to improve the provision of sporting and leisure space for the whole community.

HM Project 3: Sporting and leisure facilities at Headcorn Primary School

Headcorn Parish Council will seek to work with Headcorn Primary School and Kent County Council to preserve and enhance the recreational facilities at the school and to take advantage of the expansion of Headcorn Primary School to improve the provision of sporting and leisure space for the whole community.

4.3.2 Views

It is not just community assets and green spaces that need to be protected, certain 'views' within the Parish also need protection to help preserve Headcorn's sense of place. The views most valued by residents in the Neighbourhood Plan survey were those of the Church of St Peter and St Paul and the surrounding area including Parsonage Meadow and the views along the High Street within the historic core of the village. These views contribute important positive features to the Headcorn Conservation Area, as well as contributing to the significance of the Parish Church and numerous other designated heritage assets, including the listed buildings that line the High Street.

There are also several key views out of the village, notably from the passenger bridge over the railway line, which gives an unimpeded vista of the water meadows of the Low Weald; from the footpath from the Church towards the railway line; and to the north and north west from the Summer Hill, Black Mill, and Hazelpits Bank towards the Greensand Ridge.

However, it is also important to preserve the way in which Headcorn sits within the landscape and in particular the views of the Low Weald from the Greensand Ridge. At present Headcorn village sits below the Summer Hill, Black Mill, Hazel Pits Bank and is not visible from the Greensand Ridge and it will be important to ensure that future development of Headcorn does not intrude in a way that would destroy the appreciation of the Low Weald from the Greensand Ridge, including the Greensand Way.⁸⁶

Figure 21 A view towards Headcorn village from the Greensand Way

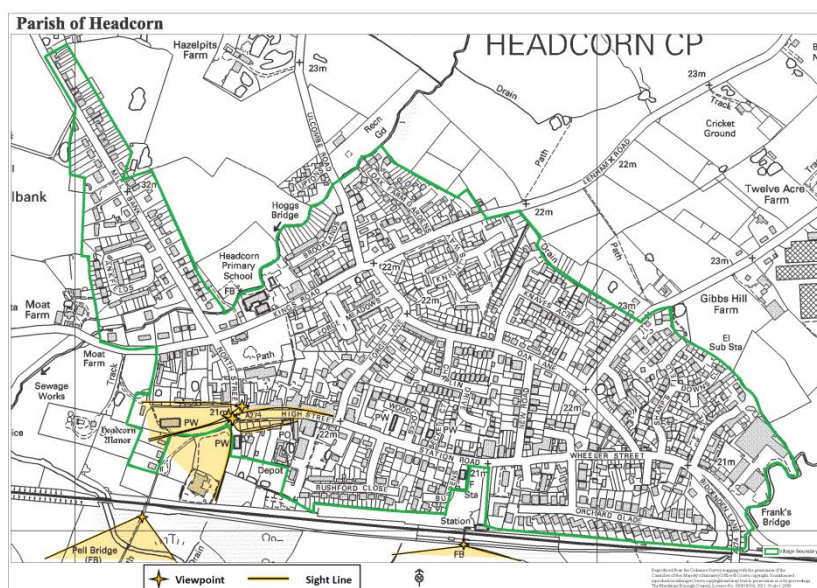


Note: View from the Greensand Ridge taken on the Greensand Way looking south to Headcorn village at grid ref 835496, north of Parsonage Farm and Charlton Court. Headcorn village remains camouflaged until you come over the final ridge as you reach the village, known as the Summer Hill, Tong Bank or Hazel Pits, depending on where you are.

HNP5: Protection of key views in Headcorn

This policy covers all development in Headcorn, including housing, commercial and community development. New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will only be permitted where it will not have a detrimental impact on the distinctive views within the village and of the surrounding countryside (particularly those identified in Figure 22, or contributing to the character or appearance of the Headcorn Conservation Area or the significance of other heritage assets) that can be seen from public vantage points within and adjacent to the built up area of the village. This includes the distinctive views to and from the nearby Greensand Ridge.

⁸⁶ The Greensand Way is a long distance path of 108 miles in the South East running from Haslemere in Surrey to Hamstreet in Kent.

Figure 22 Map of key views in and around Headcorn village

Note: Key views indicated by yellow cones.

4.3.3 Monitoring activity

Table 4 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP4 and HNP5

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|--|---|
| 5) Keep a record of potential schemes that would affect communal and recreational spaces and whether these go ahead. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess whether the policy of protecting communal spaces has been effective in practice, both in terms of protecting key spaces, but also being sufficiently flexible to allow change where this would be beneficial. |
| 6) Monitor the use of recreational spaces in Headcorn. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess whether the current level of provision meets the needs of residents in the Parish. |
| 7) Create a visual record of key views in and around Headcorn. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers and to assess whether Policy HNP5 has been successful. |

5.0 POLICIES FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN AND AROUND HEADCORN'S VILLAGE ENVELOPE

This section covers the planning policies that apply to housing developments that are either in, or adjacent to the Headcorn village boundary. It sets the policies defining the different types of development that will be possible under the Plan; the phasing of development; the provision of self-build plots and affordable homes; and housing for the elderly. It also covers: the preconditions needed for further development in Headcorn village to be sustainable; potential strategic development sites (for small and larger village developments); site coverage and housing density (in small and larger village developments); landscaping and new communal spaces (in small and larger village developments); connectivity and access (for small and larger village developments); the scale and mix of housing within larger village developments; and the policy framework for micro village developments.

5.1 Defining the types of village housing development that will be allowed under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan

Policy HNP6 provides the basic definition of the three types of housing development that will be permitted within, or immediately adjacent to, the village under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. Its purpose is to allow proposals to be treated differently, depending on their relative size, and housing developments will only be allowed in Headcorn village where they meet one of these definitions. These definitions are then used throughout the rest of the Plan, to make it clear which types of development need to conform to which policies. This policy framework ensures that the policies in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan are flexible, by recognising that different types of development will serve different purposes; be capable of bearing different levels of planning commitment; and have differing impacts on the surrounding landscape.

Policy HNP6 also serves another important function within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, which is to ensure that any development is small scale, by setting a maximum size of any individual development of 30 houses. This reflects the strong desire amongst residents for development in Headcorn to be small scale – almost 90% of residents picked an option of at most 30 houses in any individual housing development, when asked how big individual developments should be.⁸⁷ Similarly when asked whether development in the Parish should be "all in one location", or "spread across lots of different sites", 78% chose "lots of different sites".⁸⁸ Therefore, setting a cap of 30 houses is a key mechanism to ensure that Headcorn's residents get the type of

⁸⁷ In Headcorn's Residents Survey (2013) 88.8% of residents picked options that were at most a development size of 30 houses, with 72.1% picking options that were at most 20 houses. The option of setting a cap of 20 houses, rather than 30, was considered as it would enjoy majority support, but it was felt that a cap of 30 would provide more flexibility.

⁸⁸ Headcorn's Residents Survey (2013).

development they want.⁸⁹ Furthermore, as well as shaping development in the way that Headcorn residents would like, there are sensible planning and social reasons for setting this limit:

- Placing a limit of 30 houses in any new development in the village will enable proper integration of new residents to take place, maintaining social cohesion and avoiding the “them and us” situation of a large-scale housing development. It will also be more sustainable, because it means that development is more likely to match the evolution of the local jobs market, reducing the need for new residents to commute long distances and therefore making it easier to absorb any expansion in the village.⁹⁰
- A key part of the Vision for Headcorn in this Plan is to keep a sense of being a “village”, which was a strong theme to emerge from consultations with residents.⁹¹ To maintain this “village feel” it is essential to retain the pattern of gradual organic growth that has occurred in Headcorn over the past centuries and more recent decades. The housing stock in Headcorn has evolved slowly over time, through a series of small developments, at different sites, and this variety is a key part of Headcorn’s sense of place.⁹²
- Another important theme of the Neighbourhood Plan is the desire for new developments to be varied, making use of appropriate materials to reflect the diversity and interest of the many listed buildings in the High Street and throughout the Parish.⁹³ This is best achieved by different architects and designers being responsible for a series of small scale developments, not a single, monolithic estate built by one developer.
- Having development evolve as a series of small scale developments will make it easier for the housing stock to adjust to changing circumstances, as it is difficult to anticipate accurately what housing needs will be in 10 to 15 years time.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ The NPPF stresses the importance of Neighbourhood Plans: developing a “shared vision” (paragraph 183); ensuring that they get “the right types of development for their community” (paragraph 184); and being allowed to “shape” development (paragraph 185). Setting a limit on the size of individual developments is a key part of Headcorn’s shared vision and is an important mechanism to ensure development is shaped in a way that allows the right sort of development for the community.

⁹⁰ See for example the discussion in Sections 1.2 and 2.5 above, as well as the discussion in Driver (2014), on the sustainability of development in rural locations, particularly when development involves the sort of distances to the nearest urban centre that are a feature of Headcorn’s location.

⁹¹ For example, in the Headcorn Residents’ Survey (2013) 67% picked “lose the sense of being a village” as the thing that concerned them most about development, with “development more suitable for a town than a village” picked by 39.1%, being the next biggest worry. (Residents were asked to pick 5 out of 22 options.)

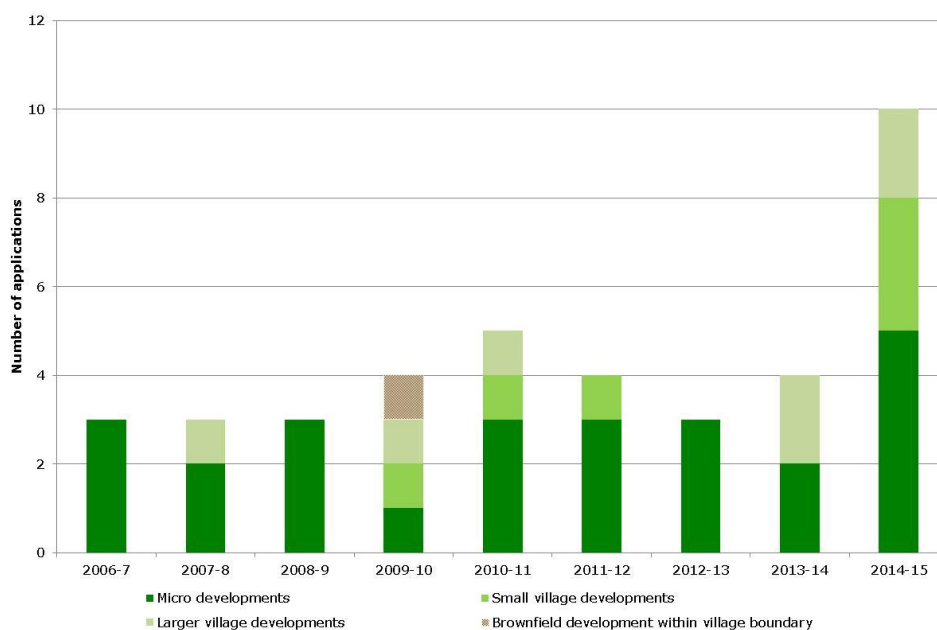
⁹² Figure 5 in Section 2 shows how Headcorn has evolved over time. This has involved small-scale developments spread out over time, with occasional spurts of growth when changes in technology or accessibility (such as the introduction of the railway in 1842, or the electrification of the line in 1960s) changed the dynamics of Headcorn’s economy, allowing it to support more housing. The largest development in Headcorn, dating from the 1970s was for around 80 houses.

⁹³ For example, in the Headcorn Residents’ Survey (2013) 93.3% picked “in lots of different styles” rather than “in just one single style” in their preferences for new housing in the Parish.

⁹⁴ Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasizes the importance of timing as an element of sustainability, Paragraph 54 emphasizes the importance of local need for housing development in rural areas and Paragraph 157 emphasizes the need to take account of longer term requirements.

- Small scale developments are also a better match to the pattern of demand in Headcorn, with local estate agents saying that they struggle to sell houses in developments of over 30 houses.⁹⁵ This possibly reflects the fact that people looking to live in a rural village location are more likely to want small scale developments, in order to better enjoy the village experience.
- Finally, as well as being both more sustainable and what residents want, it is also clear that there are no concerns over the viability of imposing a cap of 30 houses on developments in Headcorn. Figure 23 shows the pattern of planning permissions granted in Headcorn between 2006-7 and 2014-15. Only one development (a development of 44 houses on a brownfield site)⁹⁶ does not fit into one of the categories set by Policy HNP6. Indeed the average size of the developments that would be classified as larger developments under HNP6 is 18 houses, with the largest application being for 25 houses. This clearly indicates that there is no reason to be concerned that a cap of 30 houses on the size of developments cannot be successful within Headcorn.

Figure 23 Number of planning applications granted in Headcorn Parish, split by development type, 2006-7 to 2014-15



Note: Calculated from the planning application data on Maidstone Borough Council's online planning portal. Data are for the fiscal year (April to March). During the period 2006-7 to 2014-15 only one development did not meet the definitions set out in Policy HNP6, which was for 44 houses on a brownfield site within the village boundary.

⁹⁵ Headcorn's Estate Agents' Survey conducted in 2013 surveyed all the main estate agents operating in Headcorn and they all said that they struggled to sell houses in developments of more than 30 houses in the village.

⁹⁶ There are no further brownfield sites of this size either within or immediately adjacent to the village boundary, indicating that this was a one off development. For this reason it was not felt that Policy HNP6 needed to accommodate the possibility of a large brownfield site being put forward for development.

There are no further brownfield sites of this size either within or immediately adjacent to the village boundary, indicating that this was a one off development.

Policy HNP6 of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is therefore designed to encourage smaller housing developments that are spread out over time, in line with both the overwhelming preference of residents and the evidence showing what will make housing development sustainable within Headcorn. It ensures that all the development types to be permitted in Headcorn will be small scale, in keeping with its rural setting.

HNP6: Definition of allowable housing development types in Headcorn village, including maximum size

For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan planning permission for new dwellings in or immediately adjacent to the boundary of Headcorn village (as shown in Figure 24) will be granted where the proposal meets the definition of one of the three different types of development defined in this policy, and complies with all the policy requirements that apply to the relevant development type that are contained in this Plan:

- **Micro Village Development:** a development consisting of up to two dwellings, either within Headcorn village, or on land immediately adjacent to the village boundary.
- **Small Village Development:** a development consisting of more than two dwellings, within the village, or on land immediately adjacent to the village boundary. The maximum size of a Small Village Development will be nine dwellings.
- **Larger Village Development:** a development consisting of more than nine dwellings, within the village, or on land immediately adjacent to the village boundary. **The maximum size of a Larger Village Development will be thirty dwellings.**

Definitions: For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, a **dwelling** is defined as either any building, or part of a building, that is suitable for occupation by a single household unit. Therefore a building that consisted of two flats, for example, would count as two dwellings. Similarly, a building for shared occupation (where occupants, who are not part of the same family unit, share communal facilities, but have their own bedrooms) will be counted as having the same number of dwellings as there are bedrooms.

In order to count as a village development, a housing development needs to be either within or immediately adjacent to the village boundary. This boundary will evolve slowly over time, as new developments are completed. However, to provide clarity on the existing housing in Headcorn that counts as part of the village boundary for the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan Figure 24 shows the current village boundary.

Figure 24 Map of the Headcorn village boundary

Note: Purple line shows the boundary of Headcorn village. This will evolve slowly over time, as new developments are completed. The built up area of the village also includes two sites (Uptons and the Hardwicks/Doctors' surgery sites – shown with a yellow line) which were given planning permission as rural exception sites and so are not formally part of the village. In order to count as a village development, a housing development needs to be adjacent to the boundary of the village.

5.2 Policies on the extent and phasing housing development

The cap on the size of developments provided in HNP6 is extremely important for delivering the type of development that Headcorn wants. However, it is also important that Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan should deliver the scale of development that Headcorn needs. For rural areas the NPPF emphasizes that housing development should "reflect local need".⁹⁷ Furthermore, it is also important that development is phased in a way to ensure that it occurs at the "right time", to be consistent with the definition of sustainability within the NPPF.⁹⁸ Policy HNP7 therefore sets out the overall amount of development that will be allowed in Headcorn over the plan period and how this development will be phased over time.

⁹⁷ Paragraph 54 of the NPPF.

⁹⁸ Paragraph 7 of the NPPF.

Estimates of local need for Headcorn based on demand for housing amongst emerging households suggest that any such need can be met from within the existing housing stock:⁹⁹

- Gross household formation in Headcorn over the plan period is estimated to be between 376 and 452 new households, with household formation spread throughout the period.¹⁰⁰
- This needs to be offset against the number of households that are likely to cease to exist, due to death of the home owner(s). Conservative estimates suggest that between 175 and 250 households in Headcorn Parish are likely to cease to exist over the Plan period, due to death of the home owner, with actual outcomes likely to be higher.¹⁰¹ Therefore, even using the upper estimate of gross household formation, this would produce an estimate of a net increase of between 202 and 277 new households over the Plan period.
- However, any estimate of housing need not only needs to take account of expected net household formation, but also the existing availability of property that might accommodate this need. Between April 2011 and March 2015 Maidstone Borough Council gave planning permission for 107 new homes in Headcorn. This means that even using the upper limit of household formation in the Parish would produce a maximum net additional need of 170 new homes.
- Furthermore, in 2011 there were 106 unoccupied household spaces in Headcorn Parish, or 6.8% of the housing stock, double the Maidstone average.¹⁰² Excluding

⁹⁹ The fact that Headcorn has a much higher proportion of older residents and a much lower proportion of younger residents than the Maidstone average means that proportionately the contribution of the Parish to net household formation in the Borough will be significantly lower than average.

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix A3 and the discussion in Driver (2014). The figure of 452 is the pro rata share for Headcorn Parish of the estimates of household formation in Rural East from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Maidstone Borough (based on Table 42 of GL Hearn (2014)). This estimate is very similar to the upper bound on household formation in Headcorn of between 376 and 448 emerging households, which was derived from the Headcorn Residents' Survey (2013), see Driver (2014). Using 2011 Census data for the number of people living in Headcorn aged under 20 (ie those most likely to be looking to form new households over the twenty years between 2011 and 2031) and adjusting for the fact that in households aged under 65 there are on average 0.61 households per person shows that the potential level of gross household formation amongst those aged below 20 in Headcorn is 443 households, and not all these households will want to stay in Headcorn. Therefore these estimates represent an upper bound for the likely gross housing need generated by household formation in Headcorn, because it assumes that all newly formed households want to stay in the Parish. Indeed since the publication of the estimates of housing need for Maidstone Borough of 19,600 were produced by GL Hearn (2014), the baseline estimate of housing need (based purely on demographic trends) has been revised down to 17,660 (see GL Hearn (2015)). Although no breakdown was provided of for Rural East in GL Hearn (2015), again this suggests that the figure of 452 should be treated as an upper estimate for housing need in Headcorn Parish.

¹⁰¹ The estimate of 175 comes from Driver (2014) and is based on the number of people based in the Parish aged over 75 and life expectancy of 65 year olds living in the South East. As Driver (2014) makes clear, this is clearly likely to be an under estimate. Using 2011 Census data on the number of households in Headcorn where all members are aged over 65 (split by single households and households of more than one person all aged 65 and over), then estimating their split between those households aged 65 to 69, those aged 70-74 and those aged 75 and over based on the proportion in these aged groups in the population and making very conservative estimates of survival rates based on the Life Tables for the UK population published in 2015, but assuming all single person households are females (as women have a longer life expectancy than men) gives an estimate of 250.

¹⁰² This represents a sharp increase over the number of empty properties in Headcorn Parish recorded in the 2001 Census, which stood at 2.7%. Empty properties in Headcorn village itself were particularly high in 2011, accounting for 7.6% of the housing stock. Part of this increase may reflect that the fact that Maidstone

an estimate of second homes, gives an estimate of 89 homes that were empty in 2011 and available for occupation.¹⁰³ Even using the vacancy rates in Maidstone Borough as a whole, to estimate what a “normal” pattern of vacancies would look like, would suggest Headcorn Parish had 60 properties available for occupation in 2011. Again using the upper estimate of net household formation means that net need given the existing housing stock is between 81 and 110 new houses.

This would mean a maximum net need for the remainder of the plan period of 110 new homes – and delivering this number of homes would mean that Headcorn’s net impact on housing need elsewhere would be zero. However, from the point of view of estimated need within the Parish itself, it is also important to consider whether houses will become vacant for other reasons over the plan period. Estimates show that between 2011 and 2031 over 1,105 households living in Headcorn are likely to move house. Around 775 of these will want to remain in the Parish, creating a net supply of available housing of around 330 homes and this active pattern of moving will also make it easier for households to find the type of property that will meet their needs.¹⁰⁴ Therefore in terms of the housing supply in Headcorn itself, no new houses are needed in order to accommodate the needs of emerging households, even if they all wanted to remain within the Parish, as there will be more houses available than there are local households (including emerging households) wanting to occupy them.

Furthermore, even extremely optimistic estimates of the potential growth of Headcorn’s economy would suggest that a maximum of 107 additional households will be needed in Headcorn to provide the workers necessary to cover any potential increase in jobs between 2011 and 2031.¹⁰⁵ This is the same number as the number of houses that were given planning permission between April 2011 and March 2015.

It is clear from this evidence that the need for additional houses to be built in Headcorn is limited, and that any needs that do arise will be spread out over time and are likely to be concentrated later in the plan period. Given estimated household formation and the recent pattern of house building in Headcorn, there is no upfront need for houses within the Parish, quite to the contrary. It will therefore be important that the pattern of housing development within the Parish as a result of Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan reflects both the scale and timing of likely need and in particular ensures that any development is spread out over time. Without this, development in the Parish would not

Borough Council gave planning permission for 65 new homes in the fiscal year 2009-10 and their release onto the market may have coincided with the 2011 Census.

¹⁰³ The estimate of second homes in Headcorn is based on the share of second homes in the total number of empty properties in the Parish recorded at the time of the 2001 Census (which was 16.2%), as the 2011 Census does not provide a split of empty properties on that basis.

¹⁰⁴ See Driver (2014). Estimates are based on the moving intentions of those responding to Headcorn’s Residents’ Survey (2013).

¹⁰⁵ Estimates of jobs growth in Headcorn are based on the estimated growth rates provided in GVA (2014) for MBC’s Local Plan, see Driver (2014). Allowing for existing commuting patterns (both inward and outward commuting) would mean the growth of the local economy could support at most 145 new households.

meet the definition of sustainability set out in the NPPF, which is a key requirement of any Neighbourhood Plan.

The small scale of micro village developments (and countryside developments) means that they are: more likely to be spread out over time; be designed to meet the specific needs of individual residents within Headcorn Parish; and they create flexibility. In particular, the results of the Residents' Survey suggest that people are more willing to consider building on their property where there is a family member in need of a separate home. This type of development is therefore beneficial, because it is most likely to meet the needs of emerging households. The majority of emerging households want to own their own home, but affordability issues mean that owning a property in Headcorn will be challenging without help.

Therefore, for the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, there will be no cap on the number of micro village developments that can take place. As such there will be no maximum number of planning permissions for this category of development. It is clear from Figure 23 that there has been a consistent number of planning applications of this type that have both come forward and been accepted over the last nine years. As this period included the Financial Crisis (when many households will have faced financial constraints) there is no reason to expect that demand for this type of development is likely to diminish. Estimates suggest that over the remainder of the plan period up to 70 additional dwellings are likely to be built in the form of micro village developments (as well as individual developments in the countryside).¹⁰⁶ The final scale of development within this category will depend on demand from residents.

Similarly the option of bringing forward self build plots will be encouraged under Policy HNP8A, as well as the possibility of promoting a Headcorn community self build project (Policy HNP8B), as these policies are designed specifically to meet local need amongst those who might otherwise struggle to get on the housing market. It is hard to estimate how many houses might come forward under these policies, but again it is more likely to be phased over time.

However, phasing development is much harder to achieve for larger developments, where size tends to be defined in terms of field boundaries (and developers' land banks) rather than local considerations. Once planning permission is granted for the whole site, there is no way to control the build out rate. Furthermore, even with the cap on the size of an individual development provided by Policy HNP6, there is nothing to stop a developer simultaneously submitting multiple applications covering an individual plot, and there is nothing to stop multiple applications coming forward from different developers. This means that without intervention housing developments will potentially

¹⁰⁶ Since the start of 2011, 17 dwellings have been granted planning permission that would meet the definition of micro developments (or developments in the countryside). Projecting that rate of housing development forwards would suggest an estimate of 68 additional dwellings of this type over the remainder of the plan period. This is less than one third of those who said they would consider building an additional dwelling on their land in the Residents' Survey, see the discussion in Driver (2014).

be lumpy, reflecting the market failures within the UK's housing market. This is less sustainable for locations like Headcorn.

Arguably, Headcorn has no need to allocate any additional housing developments. However, recognising that the volume of micro developments is inherently uncertain, and the importance of ensuring that Headcorn contributes positively to meeting the nation's housing needs, Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan allows a limited number of larger developments, but does so in a way that means they will be phased over time, to help ensure this development can be successfully absorbed.

To achieve this, Policy HNP7 divides the plan period into four sub-periods and sets a total for the amount of development that can be undertaken within both Small and Larger Village Developments for these periods. This is designed to maximise the benefits and the sustainability of expansion in Headcorn. Two factors suggest that it would be beneficial for this type of development to be concentrated in the second half of the plan period: the fact that there has already been a significant amount of development consented in the Parish, with 107 dwellings consented between April 2011 to March 15, 94 in the last two years of that period, meaning time is needed to absorb the increase in the housing stock;¹⁰⁷ and the fact that the constraints on the sewerage system are unlikely to be solved in the short run, because of the timing of funding rounds. Therefore no Small and Larger Developments will be allowed in the first two sub-periods (which run to the end of 2021). The target expansion for each subsequent sub-period has been set to 45 new dwellings, giving a total potential expansion of 90 new dwellings within Small and Larger Village Developments over the period 2022 to 2031. Ninety dwellings is more than the number of new dwellings that is strictly needed for Headcorn, but it was considered that this approach achieves the right balance between flexibility, sustainability and recognising the wider housing need.

Under this policy, therefore, over the plan period 2011-2031, which coincides with Maidstone's emerging Local Plan, Headcorn is estimated to contribute between 250 and 280 new homes:¹⁰⁸ In addition to the 107 new houses that were given planning permission between 2011-12 and 2014-15, there will be a further 90 in small and larger village developments (permitted under Policy HNP7 over the rest of the plan period), and around an estimated 70 units in micro developments (and individual countryside developments), as well as the potential for self build plots and Headcorn community self build schemes to come forward over the remainder of the plan period. There will be no set level for these last categories of development, to ensure the Plan can flexibly accommodate the needs of residents. Furthermore, to ensure that this framework does not create unexpected problems, Headcorn Parish Council will undertake an assessment

¹⁰⁷ The need to absorb new developments is also relevant because there are potentially more in the pipeline, depending on the outcome of various call in requests.

¹⁰⁸ This range is given by the central estimate of 267 new houses in the parish plus or minus 5% to allow for uncertainty. Combined with the estimates of empty properties in 2011 (excluding second and holiday homes) and estimates of the number of properties that will become vacant as a result of the death of the homeowner, this implies that the increase in the housing supply in Headcorn will be more than sufficient to accommodate even the maximum estimate of the number of emerging households in the Parish and as such implies net inward migration.

of housing need in the Parish in 2021 and 2026. These reviews will ensure that this framework remains aligned to the needs of residents and will provide an opportunity to adjust the volume of housing to be allowed in small and larger village developments if necessary, to ensure it continues to meet local needs.

The increase in housing under this policy framework represents almost a 17% increase on Headcorn Parish's 2011 housing stock.¹⁰⁹ This is a substantial increase in the size of the Parish and significantly more than the local economy will be able to absorb. As such it implies a significant increase in the number of commuters travelling long distances by car (which is already substantially more than the national average).¹¹⁰ In addition, almost 90% of residents want at most 250 new dwellings to be built over the plan period.¹¹¹ Combined these facts suggest that this is the maximum level of development in Headcorn that would be feasible and is also close to double level of development that would meet the strict definition of sustainability in the NPPF, making any further increase difficult to justify. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed policy mix created the right balance between sustainability and flexibility, and will minimise the risk of coordination problems, as well as ensuring that Headcorn contributes to meeting the wider housing need in a way that is appropriate for its location.

HNP7: Phasing of house building in Headcorn

The Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan period 2011-2031 will be divided into four sub-periods: 2011 until 2016; 2017 until 2021; 2022 until 2026; and 2027 until 2031.

A maximum of 45 new dwellings in Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments combined (as defined in Policy HNP6) will be given planning permission in each of the two sub-periods 2022 until 2026; and 2027 until 2031. No further planning permissions for either Small Village Developments or Larger Village Developments will be allowed before 2022, as the existing scale of development in the first period is already more than could be justified under the definition of sustainability in the National Planning Policy Framework, meaning time is needed to absorb these developments.

These targets will be assessed against local need and updated as necessary, with reviews in 2021 and 2026.

¹⁰⁹ There were 1565 household spaces in Headcorn Parish at the time of the 2011 Census.

¹¹⁰ Although Headcorn has a direct rail link to London, experience suggests that the distance, time and cost of travel are too high to make it attractive to most London based workers. Between 2001 and 2011 there was a 14.8% increase in Headcorn's housing stock, but only two extra people now take the train to work – train usage is falling amongst Headcorn's economically active population, while car usage is rising.

¹¹¹ In the Headcorn Residents' Survey (2013) 88.5% chose an option for the appropriate level of total development in the Parish over the next twenty years that was at most 250 houses, with 76.8% picking at most 200 houses. In the Regulation 14 Consultation responses, 95.3% supported the idea that there should be no more than 140 to 160 new homes, over and above the 107 homes that were granted planning permission between 2011-12 and 2014-15.

Where requests for planning permissions come forward for more than the allocated number of dwellings for Small Village Developments or Larger Village Developments within any given sub-period, priority will be given to the developments that best meet the high-level Policy Objectives and individual policies within this Plan.

As Micro Village Developments, individual countryside developments and Headcorn Community Self Build Schemes are best suited to meeting the needs of residents, particularly emerging households, no maximum will be set for the number of planning permissions that will be granted for these categories of development.

5.2.1 Monitoring activities

Table 5 Monitoring activities for Policies HNP6 and HNP7

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|--|---|
| 8) Assess total scale of development in each individual category (as defined in HNP6) in each sub-period. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the Plan policies are working as expected: delivering manageable development levels that are phased over time. |
| 9) Maintain an up-to-date register, which is accessible to the public, of the dwellings that have applied for and been given planning permission for each of the development types listed in HNP6. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help developers and individuals understand the likelihood of making a successful planning application. |
| 10) Use the data from the 2021 Census (expected to be published in 2023/2024), including data on the proportion of empty properties, to assess whether any of the key sustainability arguments have changed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess whether the estimates of the level of sustainable development still hold. Where significant discrepancies emerge, this will trigger a review of the policy framework by Headcorn Parish Council. |
| 11) Undertake a housing-needs survey at the start of the 2021 and 2026 sub-periods. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess whether the level of need identified, particularly for affordable homes, is in line with the estimates underpinning the sustainability analysis. Where significant discrepancies emerge, this will trigger a review of the policy framework by Headcorn Parish Council. |

5.3 Homes for emerging households and those with special requirements

The NPPF makes clear that as a rural area the approach to planning in Headcorn should focus on local needs:

“In rural areas, exercising the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. Local planning authorities should in particular consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local need.”¹¹²

An important part of Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan is therefore focused on delivering the amount of housing that is needed. In particular, Policy HNP7 provides a mechanism to manage the quantum of house building that takes place to ensure that it meets local needs, for example with reviews of the amount of housing needed later in the plan and no caps on micro village developments, because these are most likely to directly meet the needs of existing residents. However, the requirement on rural areas within the NPPF is not just to have a policy framework that will deliver the right amount of housing, but also the right mix of housing and in particular to consider local need for forms of affordable housing (such as social rented housing). The NPPF makes clear that as part of this strategy it is important that plans should aim:

“To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should:

- plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);
- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and
- where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. Such policies

¹¹² NPPF Paragraph 54.

should be sufficiently flexible to take account of changing market conditions over time.”¹¹³

The delivery of a wide mix of high quality homes in Headcorn will be facilitated by policies such as:

- HNP1 and HNP14, which deal with issues such as design and landscaping;
- HNP6, which promotes smaller scale developments and will therefore help to ensure that there is more choice by encouraging housing to be delivered by different developers and designers; and
- HNP16, which requires houses in developments of more than nine houses to include a variety of different styles, orientations and designs and to be capable of coping with different sizes of family units and households in different age groups.

However, in addition it is also important to consider what the right mix of tenure will be and how to help boost home ownership. An important part of creating a Neighbourhood Plan is therefore to identify whether there are particular groups that are struggling to access the housing market, or particular types of housing that are in short supply. This has been a key component of Headcorn’s evidence gathering, both through surveys and the sustainability analysis.¹¹⁴

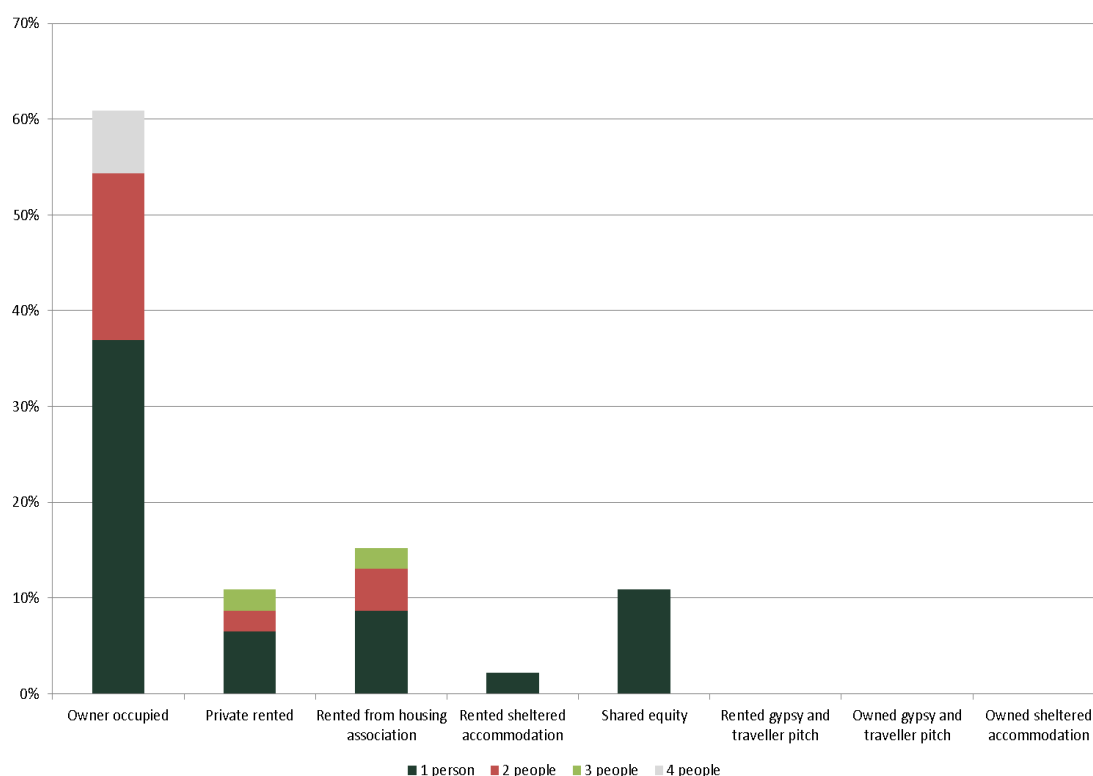
The results of this analysis shows that there is a very strong preference for buying a property amongst emerging households, with the majority of emerging households (60.9%) wanting to buy their own home (see Figure 25). In contrast, only 15.2% expressed a preference for renting from a housing association (social rented housing). As discussed in the evidence supporting Policy HNP7, purely in terms of the number of houses the needs of those looking to buy a house can largely be met from within the existing housing stock. This will be helped by an active housing market within the Parish. Even though around 70% of those expecting to move expressed a preference for remaining within the Parish, the fact that on average somewhere between 55 and 70 properties a year will come onto the market will help match supply and demand within the Parish.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ NPPF Paragraph 50.

¹¹⁴ Both the residents’ and the estate agents’ surveys addressed demand for housing in Headcorn amongst different groups. This analysis was supplemented by the sustainability report, which also assessed issues of affordability and evidence from elsewhere, such as the Census, see Driver (2014).

¹¹⁵ The higher figure includes properties where the household ceases to exist due to death of the homeowner.

Figure 25 What type of accommodation would be ideal for those forming new households in Headcorn Parish



Note: Taken from Driver (2014). Based on Headcorn Residents' Survey 2013. Result also split by the number of people who would like to move out into their own home. These figures need to be interpreted carefully for all answers involving more than one person, as the question did not distinguish between 2 people looking to establish a house together, or two people each looking to establish a separate household. In addition, in some cases those looking to move out may be hoping to form a household with another person who is not currently living with them. Results adjust for duplication where more than one family member responds.

Source: Analytically Driven Ltd

Furthermore, taking account of identified demand patterns and vacancy rates for affordable housing (as defined in the NPPF) within the Parish, the net need for social rented housing in Headcorn from both emerging households and households falling into need is zero. Using the upper estimate of household formation in Headcorn (452) and the pattern of demand observed from Headcorn's Residents' Survey (2013), shows that total demand for affordable housing in the Parish would be for 69 social rented houses and 49 shared equity houses. Allowing for households falling into need would suggest that the maximum demand for social rented housing in the Parish will be for 86 units.¹¹⁶ In 2011 there were 119 social rented dwellings in Headcorn Parish. The vacancy rate for social rented housing in the Rural East area (which included Headcorn Parish) is 5.85% per annum. This suggests that on average 7 social rented properties will be available for re-let every year in Headcorn Parish, or around 140 over the whole of the Plan period.

¹¹⁶ See Driver (2014) for details of these calculations.

¹¹⁷ Since then, another 25 units have been added as part of the Hardwicks development, which would raise potential supply to around 8 units per annum or around 160 over the course of the Plan Period.¹¹⁸ Therefore the rate of supply is expected to exceed demand by at least 50 social rented units over the course of the Plan period, in other words sufficient supply to also house those with a preference for shared equity housing.¹¹⁹ Given the challenges posed by distance that will particularly affect those on low incomes (see Section 2.5), this suggests that building large amounts of additional social rented housing in Headcorn will not be beneficial. Indeed, Maidstone Borough Council struggled to fill the units in the Hardwicks development, particularly from households with a connection to Headcorn Parish.

However, it is important to recognise that in Headcorn one of the problems faced by emerging households is the affordability of market housing. Even for a one-bedroom property the average price in Headcorn would need to fall by 15.7% for someone on median earnings to be able to easily afford it, and 60.4% for someone at the bottom 25% of the income distribution to afford it. For a two-bedroom property the necessary falls would be 60.5% and 81.4%, respectively.¹²⁰ The scale of this discrepancy means that simply building more houses is not the answer to affordability in a location like Headcorn. Even if sufficient housing could be built to achieve the necessary price falls, the result would be significant detriment to the 78.1% of households in the Parish who own their own home.¹²¹

Issues of affordability, combined with the strong demand for property ownership amongst emerging households in the Parish, mean that it has been important for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan to think creatively about how to enable emerging households to achieve their dream of getting onto the property ladder. Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan does this in three ways:

- It facilitates micro developments (as defined in Policy HNP6), which are more likely to benefit existing residents and in particular emerging households.¹²² It does this both by excluding micro developments from the cap on housing numbers in each sub-period (set out in Policy HNP7); and by excluding them from the moratorium

¹¹⁷ Estimates from GL Hearn (2014) based on data for 2008-13. As this data covers the Financial Crisis (when households will have found it harder to move out of social housing) this is likely to understate vacancy rates for the whole of the Plan period, see the discussion in Driver (2014).

¹¹⁸ In discussions with one of the local Borough Councillors, over 70% of households in the development have expressed a desire to leave. If the 25 Hardwicks units had been available throughout the plan Period then total vacancies would be expected to be 168.

¹¹⁹ See the analysis in Driver (2014), based on the demand for social housing amongst emerging households in Headcorn and the vacancy rates for social housing in Headcorn's current social housing stock calculated using data provided by GL Hearn (2014) as part of Maidstone's Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

¹²⁰ These calculations assume that the buyer has a 10% deposit and that the mortgage to income multiple is 3.5. See Table 8 in Driver (2014).

¹²¹ Furthermore, building more houses than the local economy can support will also act to suppress wages (by increasing the supply of labour relative to demand) and will therefore potentially worsen affordability rather than improving it, depending on the relative movement in house prices and wages.

¹²² For example, in Headcorn's Residents' Survey (2013) almost one third of those who would consider building on their property also said there was someone living in their home who would like to move out into a separate home.

on development in Headcorn village (set out in Policy HNP11), which is imposed until the preconditions on infrastructure delivery, which are necessary to ensure future development will be sustainable, have been met.¹²³

- It looks to encourage self build, both by encouraging developers to provide self build plots within developments (Policy HNP8A) and by looking to work with Maidstone Borough Council to find a way to facilitate a Headcorn Community Self Build Scheme that would help emerging households in Headcorn (Policy HNP8B).
- Finally, it looks to ensure that the future provision of social housing within the Parish concentrates on the provision of shared equity properties. In contrast to the excess supply of social rented housing, there is a mismatch between the demand and supply of shared equity properties amongst emerging households in Headcorn, with potential demand for 49 shared equity units over the plan period, compared to a total stock of 6 units in the Parish. While this demand needs to be heavily caveated (as respondents were not asked about their ability to afford a shared equity property), it does indicate a potential mismatch that it would be helpful to address, because it is a potential solution to affordability for those who would like to own their own home.¹²⁴ Therefore the split for social housing provision in Larger Village Developments will be in favour of shared equity rather than social rented housing (Policy HNP9).

There is one other area where there is a potential mismatch between the demand and supply of housing in Headcorn, which is housing (particularly sheltered housing) for the elderly. While Headcorn is not a good strategic location for housing vulnerable people such as the elderly (because of the time, cost and distance to key facilities such as hospitals), there is clearly a need from within the local population.¹²⁵ Therefore, as part of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, developers will be encouraged to provide some housing that is specifically designed to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled (Policy HNP10). Unless the need for specialist care makes it unfeasible, such housing should be part of a mixed development for different age groups, to ensure that it contributes to the sort of healthy communities that the NPPF is looking to promote.¹²⁶

Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has therefore tried to use creative ways to meet the needs of those in the Parish, particularly the demand for home ownership amongst emerging households. However, it is important to be realistic and to sense check these proposals. As set out in Policy HNP7, Headcorn Parish Council will be undertaking periodic housing needs surveys, to try and understand not just what residents' ideal outcomes are, but also what they will want to do if that option is not available to them. For example, if they cannot afford to buy a home in Headcorn, will they want to stay in

¹²³ While there is no numeric cap on the total number of these types of property that can be given planning permission, they will, of course, only be given planning permission where they comply with the relevant policies in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

¹²⁴ See the analysis in Driver (2014).

¹²⁵ See the discussion in Section 2.5, as well as the analysis in Driver (2014).

¹²⁶ See NPPF Paragraph 69, which emphasizes the importance of opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come in contact with each other.

the family home (to save up for longer); buy somewhere in a cheaper location outside the Parish; or move into social rented housing? Depending on the answers to these questions, the split between different types of housing required as part of the Neighbourhood Plan may need to adjust.

5.3.1 Self build housing

The definition of self build housing is when an individual, or group of individuals, directly organizes the design and construction of their new home, either building the house themselves, or working with subcontractors. It is part of the wider movement of custom build housing, where custom build housing (which includes self build housing) is defined as housing commissioned and built by individuals, or groups of individuals, for their own use, either by building the home on their own or by working with a builder, contractor or package company.

There are two main reasons to go down the custom or self build route. The first is that someone is unable to find an existing house that meets their requirements, while the second is cost. Overall estimates suggest that self builders can save between 20 and 25% on the cost of the equivalent home on the open market.¹²⁷

It is likely that a high proportion of the properties built in Micro Village Developments under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan will be some form of custom build project, geared towards meeting the needs of a member of the household. However, not everyone comes from a family with a home that is suitable to accommodate an additional dwelling.

To address this gap, Headcorn Parish Council is looking to promote the option of self build, as this has the potential to make the cost of owning a home more manageable. The focus is on encouraging self build housing (rather than the broader custom build housing), because it was judged that this is more likely to be of benefit to younger members of the community (who may have less money, but will be more able to get directly involved in the building process). As such it will complement the provision of custom build housing that is likely to occur as part of Micro Village Developments. While this option will not suit everyone, the evidence suggests that demand exists - 30% of those who either wanted to move out themselves, or knew there was someone in the household who wanted to move out into a separate household, thought that sites for people to build their own home should be given priority.¹²⁸

The problem with self-build has always been finding an appropriate plot. Therefore, to facilitate this, under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan developers in Small and Larger Village Developments will be encouraged to include up to two self-build plots within their development. As the aim is to make self-build as easy as possible, these plots should, for example, be connected to key utilities and infrastructure at the same time as the

¹²⁷ Wallace *et al* (2013), quoted in Department for Communities and Local Government (2015a).

¹²⁸ Based on the 2013 Headcorn Residents' Survey. This was significantly higher than amongst the rest of the population, suggesting that self-build is popular amongst a significant minority of those hoping to move out in the near future.

rest of the development, to cut down on cost and complexity for potential self-builders. While the inclusion of such plots will not be a requirement, to make it attractive any self build plots provided will be excluded from the cap on size of an individual development (under Policy HNP6) and from the overall limit that has been set on the number of houses to be built as part of Smaller and Larger Village Developments (under Policy HNP7). In other words, for the purposes of this policy the self build plots within the development will be treated in the same way as Micro Village Developments. Therefore, a development of 30 houses plus two self build plots would be compatible with both Policy HNP6 and HNP7.¹²⁹

As the aim of this policy is to help emerging households in Headcorn, developers should look to put in place a mechanism to try and ensure these plots go to people with a connection to Headcorn Parish. To help this process, where they have been notified by parishioners, Headcorn Parish Council will maintain an informal list of those interested in self-building who have links to the Parish. However, it will also be possible for developers to make use of Maidstone's register of custom builders who wish to acquire suitable land to build their own home, once that is introduced.¹³⁰

HNP8A: Self build housing

Small and Larger Village Developments (as defined in HNP6), can include up to two self build plots within the development, without those plots being treated as being part of the total housing numbers for that development for the purposes of either HNP6 or HNP7. The self build plots should be connected to key utilities and infrastructure as part of the development as a whole, and other ways to make self-building simple would be welcomed.

In the first instance, developers will be expected to work with Headcorn Parish Council to try and ensure these plots are allocated to those with a local connection.

Any plans to develop these self build plots should meet the policy requirements set out for Micro Village Developments (as defined in HNP6) within this Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan the definition of a self build plot is a plot suitable for the construction of a single dwelling where an individual, or group of individuals, will organize the design and construction of their new home directly, either by building the house themselves, or working with subcontractors.

Headcorn Parish Council would be particularly interested in potentially innovative solutions to helping emerging households in the Parish, for example through a Headcorn community self build scheme. Therefore Headcorn Parish Council will look to work with

¹²⁹ In the case of Policy HNP7, this assumes that no other Small or Larger Village Developments had been granted planning permission, so a development of 30 houses would be within the bounds set by the policy.

¹³⁰ See Department for Communities and Local Government (2015a).

Maidstone Borough Council to establish the demand for a Headcorn community self build scheme amongst those with links to Headcorn Parish, but would also look favourably on a proposal where a group came forward with ideas. This could, for example, be for a self build project aimed at providing affordable housing (as defined by government) directly linked to need in the Parish. The aim would be to facilitate a small scheme of up to nine units (in other words the same size as a Small Village Development), in keeping with Headcorn's aim of promoting small scale development. Recognising that it may be difficult to persuade landowners to support this type of development on the land that is most likely to be given planning permission for Small and Larger Village Developments (in other words the most suitable options for development identified as part of Policy HNP12), Headcorn Parish Council recognise that it may be necessary to look at alternative sites, provided they are in the immediate vicinity of Headcorn village. While such sites might be less sustainable overall, this would be weighed against the social benefits of facilitating home ownership amongst emerging households in the Parish.

HNP8B: Headcorn community self build schemes

Headcorn Parish Council will look to work with Maidstone Borough Council to establish the demand for a Headcorn community self build scheme amongst those with links to Headcorn Parish who would like to come together to build permanent dwellings that will allow them to get on the housing ladder. Headcorn Parish Council would also look favourably on options where a group with strong links to Headcorn come forward with such a proposal. In the first instance, the aim would be to facilitate a small scheme of up to nine dwellings; such a scheme would not count towards the amount of development set in Policy HNP7. Following completion Headcorn Parish Council will assess its success and investigate whether any additional schemes would be beneficial.

Recognising that it may be difficult to persuade landowners to support this type of development on the land that is most likely to be given planning permission for Small and Larger Village Developments (in other words the most suitable options for development identified as part of Policy HNP12), Headcorn Parish Council recognise that it may be necessary to look at alternative sites, provided they are in the immediate vicinity of Headcorn village. However, although a Headcorn community self build scheme will be exempt from the requirements of HNP7 and HNP12, it should otherwise meet all the policy requirements set out for Small Village Developments within this Neighbourhood Plan (see Table 18 for a list of relevant policies).

For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan the definition of a Headcorn community self build scheme is a scheme where a group of individuals with strong links to Headcorn Parish come together to organize the design and construction of their new homes directly, either by building the houses themselves, or working with subcontractors. The maximum size of a Headcorn community self build scheme will be nine dwellings.

5.3.2 Affordable housing

In Headcorn's case providing affordable housing over and above the needs of local population will create a number of potential problems.¹³¹ This is because Headcorn's location means that cost, time and distance will act as a barrier that prevents people in need accessing both local labour markets and key services such as secondary schools and hospitals - disadvantages that the vulnerable and those on low incomes will find particularly hard to overcome.¹³² Therefore, Headcorn Parish Council is keen to ensure that social housing provision within Headcorn is primarily geared to the needs of those with a link to the Parish, where family and other ties will help counterbalance these disadvantages. Creating an excess supply of social housing in Headcorn would be both a waste of resources and would not meet the definition of sustainability in the NPPF.

Although affordability is likely to be an issue for emerging households in Headcorn, in practice most of these emerging households are not interested in affordable housing as defined by the government, which is primarily social rented housing,¹³³ at least as their first best solution. This means that it is estimated that there will be an excess supply of at least 50 social rented housing out of the existing housing stock over the course of the plan period. Therefore, one option would simply be to set the target for social rented housing in Headcorn to zero, given the likely oversupply.

However, a small amount of affordable housing provision could be desirable, both to increase the amount of shared equity property available and to increase the supply of smaller properties. Therefore Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan sets the level of social housing to be provided in Larger Village Developments (of more than nine houses) to 20%, with 89% of residents supporting this level of provision.¹³⁴ Although the threshold at which affordable housing provision would become an obligation is lower than within Maidstone's existing development plan (ten houses rather than fifteen), the evidence shows that this level of provision is viable in rural areas,¹³⁵ and there are benefits in using the threshold for Larger Village Developments provided in Policy HNP6, as this reduces complexity.¹³⁶

¹³¹ It is noticeable that when canvassed in 2014, 72% of families in the Hardwicks development of 25 social housing units said that they would like to move out if they could. This may also reflect other issues, such as problems with noise because of how the development is laid out. However, it is certainly not a ringing endorsement of the popularity of social housing in Headcorn, particularly amongst those with no connection to the Parish – less than half of the families housed in the Hardwicks had a local connection, because most local residents who expressed an interest did not qualify.

¹³² See the discussion in Section 2.5 and Driver (2014).

¹³³ See Appendix A1 for the definition in the NPPF of affordable housing (and its components).

¹³⁴ As part of the Regulation 14 Consultation residents were also asked six targeted questions. 89% of respondents to supported this policy (see Appendix A2).

¹³⁵ See Peter Brett Associates LLP (2015). Although this analysis shows that a rate of affordable housing provision of more than 20% could potentially be viable, this is not the same as it being sustainable.

¹³⁶ The threshold for Larger Village Developments in Policy HNP6 was chosen because of the need for developments over a certain size to start incorporating different styles, mixes and sizes of houses to boost choice and help retain Headcorn's sense of place, with developments in the Parish typically being very varied. A threshold of ten houses was judged to be appropriate to impose additional planning burdens.

In Headcorn most emerging households are looking for accommodation for one person. Therefore, the ideal accommodation to meet these needs is likely to be one, or at most two, bedroom properties, see Figure 25. This is particularly true for shared equity properties. In the case of social rented housing, the majority of the existing housing stock caters for families and therefore again some smaller accommodation would be ideal, possibly with the option of flat or house sharing.¹³⁷

As the biggest mismatch identified in the demand for affordable housing is between the demand and supply of shared equity properties, the policy concentrates the provision of affordable houses (as defined by government) on shared equity homes (part buy part rent). Headline estimates of demand for shared equity property suggest that it could exceed existing supply over the course of the plan period, potentially by as many as 50 units. However, it is anticipated that not all of this demand is likely to materialise in practice, and it is important to balance likely need with the negative impacts associated with oversupply, which is why the Plan does not attempt to deliver all 50 units. However, the level of demand for shared equity property, and the extent to which there is unmet need, will be tested as part of the housing needs surveys to be conducted by Headcorn Parish Council in 2021 and 2026.

HNP9: Affordable homes

In Larger Village Developments (as defined in HNP6), the target rate is for affordable housing (as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework) to make up 20% of the total housing numbers for that development.

To match expected demand, the split between social rented housing and shared equity housing should favour shared equity, with the first two out of every three affordable housing units being shared equity. Preference should be given to smaller properties that will better meet the needs of emerging households.

Developers will be expected to work with Headcorn Parish Council to try and ensure these homes are allocated to those with a local connection.

5.3.3 Housing for the elderly and disabled

Not all those with specific accommodation needs are emerging households, or those struggling with issues of affordability. One such group is the elderly. Factors such as distance from the nearest hospitals and slow ambulance response times mean that Headcorn is not a good strategic location for accommodation for the elderly. However, it is clear that many of those who have lived in Headcorn for a long time would like to remain in the Parish if they can, but it is not always possible to meet their needs from within the existing housing stock. Around 20% of households in Headcorn expect to

¹³⁷ Current benefit rules mean that single people under 35 cannot claim housing benefit except for shared accommodation.

move in the next five years, with around 70% of these hoping to remain in the Parish. Of those wanting to move within the Parish, almost 20% are over the age of 65.¹³⁸

Although not everyone wanting to move in the over 65 age group is specifically looking for accommodation designed for the elderly, such as sheltered accommodation, it is estimated that there is likely to be demand for around 23 sheltered accommodation units in Headcorn over the next 5 years from within the existing population. At the moment it is estimated that there are around 26 sheltered accommodation units in the Parish. Depending on the mortality rates of those in sheltered accommodation, this suggests a potential mismatch between supply and demand.¹³⁹

Furthermore, given the aging population, it is likely that any mismatch will increase over time. Therefore Headcorn Parish Council wants to encourage some development that is specifically designed to meet the needs of the elderly. Overall, the preference is for mixed developments that cater for all age groups, as that is likely to create a healthier balance and be better for the community.¹⁴⁰ However, it is recognised that this might not be workable for sheltered accommodation, which may need to reach a critical number of units before becoming economically viable. In such circumstances, a small development devoted to sheltered accommodation would be acceptable, providing it was on a scale designed to meet local needs.

Although no specific need for housing for those with disabilities was identified through Headcorn's Residents' Survey, there could also be a potential need for this amongst a small minority of the population.

HNP10: Housing for the elderly and those with disabilities

Developers are encouraged to incorporate a proportion of housing specifically designed to meet the needs of the elderly and those with disabilities in both Small and Larger Village Developments (as defined in HNP6). This could be in the form of sheltered accommodation, or adapted housing, which through its design will facilitate people's ability to remain independent for as long as possible.

Unless there is a compelling reason (such as the economic viability of providing sheltered housing), such housing should be provided within mixed developments that cater for all age groups and abilities, in order to promote the type of healthy community envisaged in the NPPF.

¹³⁸ Based on Headcorn's Residents' Survey 2013.

¹³⁹ See the analysis in Driver (2014).

¹⁴⁰ See the definition of healthy communities in Paragraph 69 of the NPPF.

5.3.4 Monitoring activities

Table 6 Monitoring activities for Policies HNP8A, HNP8B, HNP9 and HNP10

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|--|--|
| 12) Monitor the proportion of affordable homes (both social rented and shared equity) that go to those with a connection to Headcorn Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess whether local demand is sufficient to justify further increases in supply. |
| 13) Review with developers how easy it has been to fill shared equity properties and monitor the proportion of shared equity properties going to those with a connection to Headcorn Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess whether local demand is sufficient to justify further increases in supply. |
| 14) Maintain a register of those interested in self-build with a strong connection to Headcorn Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help match demand in the Parish with supply. |
| 15) Monitor the proportion of self-build plots going to those with a connection to Headcorn Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure policy HNP8A and HNP8B are working as expected. |
| 16) Monitor the success of any Headcorn community self build schemes to come forward under Policy HNP8B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess each scheme for how effective it has been both for helping those with a strong link to Headcorn Parish to access the housing market, and how effective the scheme has been at integrating with the built environment in Headcorn village. The assessment of the first scheme to come forward under Policy HNP8B will be particularly important, as whether or not the scheme is successful will determine the need for further Headcorn Community self build projects in future. |
| 17) Monitor the proportion of new housing that is designed to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess whether supply is likely to be sufficient to meet local demand. |

5.4 Preconditions for housing development to be sustainable

Infrastructure plays an important role in the functioning of any village or town – the better the infrastructure, the more desirable the location. In cases where infrastructure provision is either already inadequate, or where an increase in housing numbers will render it inadequate, this has serious economic, social and environmental consequences.

The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Headcorn's infrastructure and highlighted two key problems that would be exacerbated by further development: the inability of the sewerage infrastructure to cope, and the fact that Headcorn Primary School is oversubscribed.¹⁴¹

Both these problems need to be addressed before further housing development in the village will be sustainable. Therefore under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan no further housing development will be allowed in Headcorn village (outside Micro Village Developments) until both these preconditions have been addressed.¹⁴² As the problems are most acute in the village (countryside developments typically are unable to connect to mains sewerage and are potentially closer to schools in other villages), these preconditions only apply to developments within the village. These preconditions are:

- Fixing the sewerage system: ensuring that the pipework within the village is adequate to get the sewage to the Headcorn pumping station and from there to the treatment plant. Results from a study of the entire sewerage network in Headcorn village identified that the current system has significant problems, including 15 sewage pipes that already have insufficient capacity, 14 sewage pipes that suffer from back-fall and 74 sewage pipes that are not self-cleaning due to inadequate flow.¹⁴³ Indeed, Southern Water acknowledges that its own hydraulic modelling predicts that at times of heavy rainfall sewage will emerge at low points in the network, primarily in the Moat Road area. Despite efforts by Southern Water (for example a programme of sewer jetting), during periods of heavy rain sewage emerged into Moat Road on 17 days in 2014 (almost 5% of the year), because a key sewer in the village cannot cope with current demand. Clearly, a functioning sewerage system needs to be able to cope regardless of the weather (particularly as older properties in the village are legitimately allowed use the sewerage system for the disposal of surface water), meaning capacity needs to be assessed at points of heavy rainfall, in other words at peak load.¹⁴⁴ The problems with the sewerage network are not only seen as being a significant problem by local residents (with 46% rating it as bad, improvement needed now in Headcorn's Residents' Survey); they are also seen as a significant problem by businesses within the Parish, with 60% seeing the reliability of the sewage and storm water drainage as a constraint on future expansion. Further housing development, before these problems have been addressed, would only exacerbate the situation; and
- Securing the future of Headcorn Primary School in its current position at the heart of the village: further housing development in Headcorn will necessitate expansion of the Primary School and securing an agreement to allow sufficient land behind the current school to be earmarked for future school expansion is therefore

¹⁴¹ See Driver (2014).

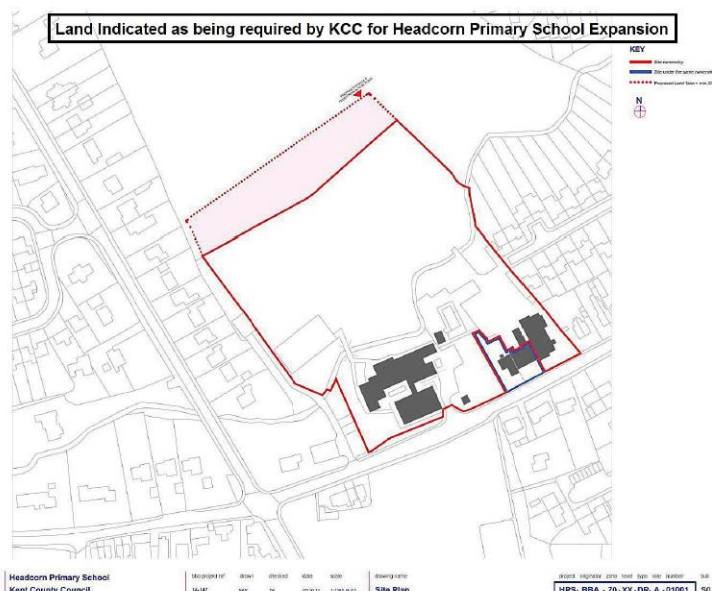
¹⁴² The reason for continuing to allow micro village developments is that these are more likely to be geared towards the needs of emerging households.

¹⁴³ Sandersons (Consulting Engineers) Ltd (2015).

¹⁴⁴ This is for the same reason that it would not make sense to assess flood risk based on average flows. A key issue for any network infrastructure is to make sure that it can cope with its peak load.

necessary.¹⁴⁵ The school plays a key role in the village community and is already significantly oversubscribed, a problem that again would be exacerbated by further housing development. Current estimates suggest that the amount of land involved is not substantial, see Figure 26. However, it is very location specific.

Figure 26 Map of estimated land needed for Primary School Expansion



Note: This map shows the current expectations of the amount of land needed. Final outcomes may differ, depending on the agreed design and layout.

It is clear from all the evidence that both the sewerage system and the future of the primary school need to be addressed. Therefore, Headcorn Parish Council, with support from the Headcorn Matters team, has already been proactively engaging with Maidstone Borough Council; Kent County Council; and Southern Water on these issues. However, it is the belief of Headcorn Parish Council that only a policy which stops any further development until these issues have been resolved will ensure that incentives are adequately aligned to achieve the necessary improvements. In particular, Headcorn Parish Council notes that significant housing development has taken place in the village in the last few years without any upgrade to the sewerage system being either promised or delivered, despite the fact that there has been evidence for a long time that the current provision was inadequate.¹⁴⁶

It is sometimes argued that more development is the key to unlocking infrastructure provision. This has not been Headcorn's experience, as even large developments are not

¹⁴⁵ The land immediately behind Headcorn Primary School is currently agricultural land, but was put forward by MBC in its Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan as a potential site for housing development, following its submission by the owner to their SHLAA consultation. As such, it is strategically important to secure sufficient land for Primary School expansion before the site is developed.

¹⁴⁶ While Southern Water has provided some properties with non-return valves, for example, to deal with the impact of the inadequacy of the sewerage system, this is just fixing the symptoms, not the cause and does nothing to increase capacity in key sewerage pipes.

expected to address existing problems.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, fixing the system will require investment by the relevant authorities and it is important that this investment has been committed before further development takes place. Headcorn Parish Council notes that Southern Water is working with the lead local flood authority (Kent County Council) to create a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) that will include Headcorn and this plan (which is due to be published in 2016) may be able to identify solution to Headcorn's problems that can be undertaken before Ofwat's next price review in 2019. However, regardless of timing it will be important that a commitment to solving Headcorn's infrastructure constraints has been made before further development.

HNP11: Preconditions for housing development in Headcorn Village

No further housing development in the form of either Small Village Developments or Larger Village Developments (as defined in Policy HNP6) will be granted planning permission until two preconditions for development have been achieved:

1. The sewerage system within Headcorn village has been upgraded to ensure that the sewer capacity is adequate to cope with existing demands on the system (including during periods of heavy rain) and will be capable of coping with the increase in sewage that will arise as a result of development, both during the period of this Neighbourhood Plan and beyond. Achieving this will involve upgrading the sewer pipes within the village and providing an assessment of the ability of both the pumping station in the village and the treatment plant to cope with increased flows and if necessary upgrading these parts of the system. Any assessment of the capacity of the sewerage system to cope should not rely on the use of sewage holding tanks within new developments, as these will not be acceptable.
2. A legally binding agreement has been entered into providing for sufficient land behind the current school to be allocated for future school expansion, in order to secure the future of Headcorn Primary School in its current position. Achieving this will involve providing an assessment of the amount of land that will be necessary to allow the school to expand to two form entry, including ensuring that the playing facilities are at least as good as the existing provision, and obtaining a signed agreement with the current landowner.

¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the s106 agreement proposed by Maidstone Borough Council for a recent planning application for 220 homes (an 18.2% increase in housing in the village) would not have resulted in key sections in the sewerage pipes between the development and the pumping station being upgraded (thus exacerbating the problems experienced in Moat Road) and would have required KCC to acquire land for the primary school expansion at market prices, even though the development involved the necessary land. As such even a development of this size would not be sufficient to provide the necessary infrastructure improvements.

5.4.1 Monitoring activities

Table 7 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP11

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|---|--|
| 18) Work with Southern Water and other interested parties such as OFWAT, the Environment Agency, Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council to identify and implement the necessary upgrades to the sewerage system in Headcorn village. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create the right conditions for further development in the village to be sustainable. |
| 19) Work with Kent County Council, Headcorn Primary School and other interested parties such as the landowner and Maidstone Borough Council to identify the amount of land needed for expansion of Headcorn Primary School and secure agreement for the land to be allocated to school expansion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create the right conditions for further development in the village to be sustainable. |

5.5 Potential strategic housing development sites in Headcorn village

One of the key characteristics of Headcorn village is that it is a relatively compact, with the vast majority of housing in the village being within 800m of the centre of the High Street (see Figure 5). The village settlement has developed in a semicircle to the north of the High Street with the railway line on its embankment forming a natural barrier to development to the south. The compact shape of the village settlement has been reinforced by flood risk, with rivers on three sides of the village. Having the High Street at its centre is part of the success of the village, as the High Street is both thriving and highly valued, with a good range of shops, restaurants and pubs. It is important that this development pattern continues under the policies in this plan, not only because the High Street is highly valued by both residents and the local business community, but also because “compact – not sprawling” was the feature of Headcorn village that was picked most often by residents when asked what it means to be a village.¹⁴⁸ Reinforcing this development pattern is therefore an important part of achieving the Vision underpinning Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan and has guided the approach to the assessment of potential strategic development sites in the village. To further reinforce this, the policy on whether a site will be considered for development sets a requirement that when it comes forward it must be immediately adjacent to an existing housing development within the village boundary (see Policy HNP6 and Figure 24), or be able to demonstrate that it cannot do so because of a physical constraint such as flood risk or

¹⁴⁸ Results from the consultation with residents in June 2014.

recreational areas used by the community. The aim of this is to ensure the development of the village remains compact.

An important requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework is the need for development to be sustainable. Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan approaches this in two ways. Firstly it is underpinned by an assessment of how much development will be sustainable, and sets policies to try and achieve this.¹⁴⁹ This is important to ensure development is sustainable in a macro sense, so that issues of over or undersupply of housing over the plan period can be addressed. However, it is also important to ensure not only that the right level of development takes place, but also that the right sites are then chosen for that development. Secondly, Headcorn has undertaken a site assessment exercise, to assess the relative sustainability of the sites that have been put forward to Maidstone Borough Council by developers and landowners as part of their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) consultations. This is an assessment of the potential strategic development sites, in other words those that would be suitable for either Small or Larger Village Developments (as defined by Policy HNP6).

A large number of factors were considered in producing the rankings, with two of the most important being the potential size of a site relative to the village; and whether or not it is within 800m from Headcorn's Post Office, which sits in the centre of the High Street.¹⁵⁰ In general small sites and sites that sit within 800m of the High Street are more likely to be marked as sustainable. In some cases sites were given two ratings, depending on how they were brought forward for development. One site, the site on the A274 in the North East of the village (HO-65A), did not perform as well as the other proposed sites on the key distance metrics (although it does sit within 800m of the High Street). However, it was considered that a small development on this site (of up to a maximum of 30 houses carefully sited to avoid intruding over the ridge on the approach to the village) would have the advantage of creating the option of traffic calming on the A274, in line with identified need.¹⁵¹

The sites that were assessed as most sustainable are shown in Figure 27.¹⁵² These sites are the ones that will best serve Headcorn's development needs both now and in the future. Therefore, Policy HNP12 prioritises those sites. In total the number of potentially sustainable sites identified by the site assessment exercise is more than would be required to meet Headcorn's short to medium term development needs. This is helpful for two reasons: firstly it means that the housing policies in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan are deliverable – it is very unlikely that none of these sites will come forward over

¹⁴⁹ See the analysis in Driver (2014) on the level of development that will be sustainable. Section 4 of this Neighbourhood Plan deals with the policy implications of this analysis.

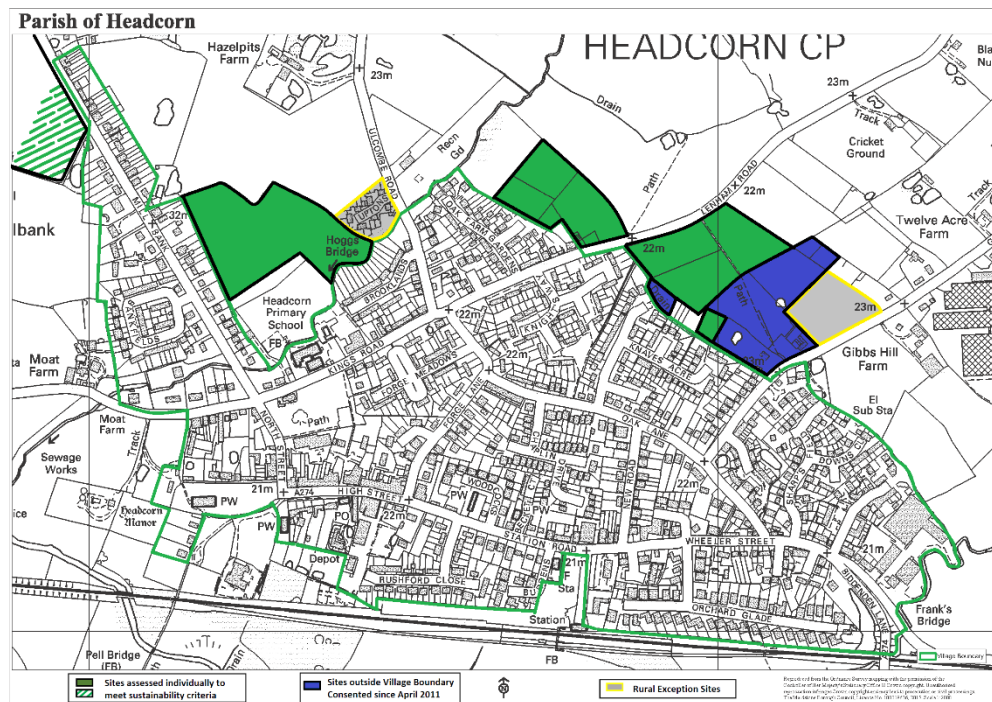
¹⁵⁰ 800m is typically seen as a good rule of thumb for a 10 minute walk. The focus of 800m from the Post Office was chosen to help ensure that the village continues to develop with the High Street at its core.

¹⁵¹ Any traffic calming measures would obviously need to be in keeping with Headcorn's rural setting, in other words it should avoid the use of traffic signals. The siting of development at this site would also need to be handled carefully, to avoid it intruding in a way that would make it visible on the ridge as you approach the village from Maidstone.

¹⁵² See Therivel (2015) for full details and Appendix A4 for a summary of a complete set of results.

the course of the plan period. Secondly it means that potential developers will have an incentive to make any planning applications as attractive as possible to guarantee the best chance of success.

Figure 27 Map of potentially sustainable options for Small and Larger Village Developments



Note: The sites marked in green were those sites that were judged as most sustainable in the site assessment exercise that was done to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood plan, see Therivel (2015) for full details and Appendix A4 for a summary of a complete set of results. The site on the A274 in the north east of the village (HO-65A) is marked with stripes to indicate that the extent of the site is uncertain, but a sustainable development is judged to be up to a maximum 30 houses providing it is linked to traffic calming. It is important to realise that while these sites are regarded the best options for development, for these sites to be properly sustainable, they need to be developed slowly over time, rather than all at once. The sites in blue are those sites that already have planning permission.

This flexibility is better than arbitrarily picking specific sites for development in the short to medium term, or imposing how and when a given site comes forward. Although Policies HNP6 and HNP7 set the size of an individual development that come forward at a specific point in time, there is nothing to stop a developer developing the site in different phases, to make best use of the site. In addition, over the longer term all these sites could be sustainable options for development if Headcorn needs to expand further. Therefore, it is highly likely that any future Neighbourhood Plan will prioritise the remaining sites that have been identified. This approach therefore allows residents and potential developers to understand where development is likely to take place both over the plan period and beyond, as well as give some priorities for the short to medium term.

In policy terms, combining the results of the site assessment exercise with a policy setting the level of development needed in each sub-period will ensure that any

development will be sustainable. Otherwise, there is a risk of creating an oversupply of houses in Headcorn.¹⁵³ The factors used in a site assessment exercise, such as flora and fauna and location relative to key services, cannot by themselves determine whether developing a site will be sustainable when it is put forward for development because they ignore the impact of other developments that are also taking place. In other words, it is important to consider the cumulative impact of development and this cannot be done purely on the basis of a site assessment exercise.

HNP12: Potential strategic housing development sites in Headcorn Village

This policy covers Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments (as defined under policy HNP6). New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted providing the site:

- is one of the sites identified as sustainable (dark or light green) in the Site Assessment Exercise that has been conducted to underpin Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan - a summary of these results can be found in Appendix A4 and the details of this exercise can be found in Therivel (2015); and
- immediately abuts an existing housing development that is part of the village envelope, or demonstrates that the reason it cannot abut an existing housing development is due to physical constraints, such as flood risk or recreational areas used by the community.

5.5.1 Monitoring activities

Table 8 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP12

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|---|--|
| 20) Monitor the sustainability ranking of the sites put forward as Small Village Developments or Larger Village Developments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to ensure that the schemes coming forward are on the most sustainable sites. |

5.6 Site coverage, housing density and landscaping for strategic village developments

Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan has a clear objective to maintain the look and feel of a rural village environment. An important component of delivering that objective has been

¹⁵³ Here it is worth remembering that following the 14.8% increase in Headcorn’s housing stock between 2001 and 2011, the proportion of dwellings in the Parish that were empty at the time of the 2011 Census stood at 6.8%, a significant increase on the 2.7% of empty dwellings recorded in the 2001 Census, as well as double the Maidstone average and considerably higher than the 4.3% average for England as a whole. For Headcorn village the proportion of empty properties stood at 7.6% of the total in 2011.

to set policies to determine the maximum size of individual development schemes with clear design guidance covering building form, layout, materials, landscaping and open space. Creating a mix of dwelling sizes in any development is another factor. However, there is a fourth factor that will influence the village feel that is not addressed by these policies – the density of the building that takes place. Even small scale developments can feel urban, if they are crammed on a small plot.

At the time of the 2011 Census, the built-up area of the village had a density of 15.3 household spaces per hectare. With 15 dwellings per hectare, assuming an average building footprint of 100m², this implies that buildings make up around 15% of the area covered by Headcorn village, with the rest accounted for by roads, paths, gardens and green spaces, etc. This is in line with the other Rural Service Centres in Maidstone Borough.¹⁵⁴

Maidstone's and Government's existing policies for rural areas is to set a housing density of 30 homes per hectare, double the existing housing density in the built up area of Headcorn village. A balance therefore needs to be struck between having a high density (for example 30 dwellings per hectare) which is more typical of suburban areas, but uses less land; and a lower density (around 15 dwellings per hectare), which is in keeping with average densities in the village and provides for more spacious sites, but takes more land from the surrounding countryside. The density is also affected by the size of the homes created - more starter homes and apartments will fit on a site than 4 or 5 bedroom houses. In addition, features on a site such as ponds, ancient trees and hedges that need to be preserved will affect the number of houses that can be built.

The evidence from the Residents' Survey and consultation is that people want a range of sizes of accommodation to be provided in new developments. In addition, it is important to be flexible to allow new development to reflect changing needs and demand for housing over the life of the Plan. Therefore, to avoid being overly prescriptive, the proposed approach is to set a maximum housing density for all strategic housing developments.

HNP13: Density and site coverage

This policy covers Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments (as defined under policy HNP6). New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted providing the housing density does not exceed 30 dwellings per hectare. Precise density should be determined by site characteristics and allow for pedestrian/cycle routes, landscape buffers, open space and protection of important features such as ponds, hedgerows and trees.

¹⁵⁴ See the analysis in Driver (2014).

5.6.1 Policies covering open spaces and landscaping within new developments

Even away from open spaces, Headcorn village is noticeably 'green' in character especially during the summer months owing to the presence of many oak trees and other native species plus ancient hedgerows and field boundaries. For example, there is a group of large trees near the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, which creates a parkland feel; the historic part of the High Street is lined with horse chestnuts and some of the Victorian houses in the village back on to a large area of private allotments and gardens. Smaller pockets of land, ponds and footpaths contribute to local visual amenity.

Headcorn Parish Council is keen to ensure that new developments retain this 'green' feel, in keeping with Headcorn's rural setting. This will be achieved by seeking to retain key landscape features and habitats, as well as appropriate landscaping, particularly of the barriers around developments, and successful private and public green spaces. In the case of communal green and recreational spaces, to help promote the creation of additional green spaces Headcorn Parish Council is happy to undertake maintenance of newly created communal and recreational spaces that will benefit the whole community.

In the case of private green spaces (or gardens) their success will depend on two factors: whether they will work well for the intended inhabitants in terms of size and layout; and how they sit within the development and particularly within the local street-scape. There is no clear pattern for how buildings in Headcorn relate to the road and there are successful examples of both houses that are set back from the road and houses that sit directly on the road. Many of the successful examples of houses being set back involve the use of native hedges or other distinctive boundaries treatments, such as traditional fencing or brick walls, combined with the creation of cottage gardens, which help preserve the rural feel.

HNP14: Landscaping in developments and the encouragement of new open and recreational spaces in Headcorn Village

This policy covers Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments (as defined under policy HNP6). New development in Headcorn village, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where it:

- Protects and enhances existing landscape features and habitats;
- Is sensitively landscaped, making good use of native plants, including trees such as oak, horse chestnut and ash as well as fruit trees, to protect and enhance the green nature of the built environment in Headcorn;
- Retains, and where feasible reinforces, the traditional boundary treatment of the area;
- Makes appropriate use of landscape buffers between new and existing developments where they will help create and enhance wildlife corridors; and
- Creates garden spaces that will both work well for the intended inhabitants and help create an attractive overall environment within the development.

For Larger Village Developments developers are required to provide communal open and recreational space within developments (this may be for children, sports pitches, allotments, amenity space, etc) or provide a commuted sum to contribute to these facilities elsewhere. In such cases, Headcorn Parish Council will take responsibility for the maintenance of these areas if required.

5.6.2 Monitoring activities

Table 9 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP13 and HNP14

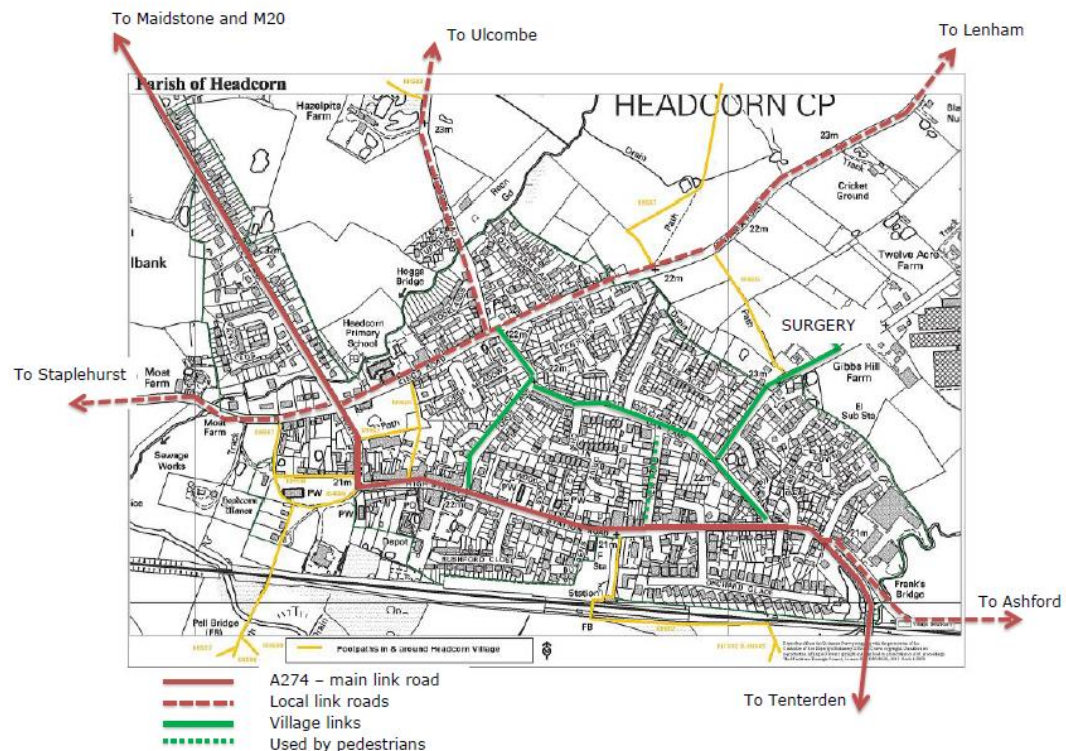
| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|--|---|
| 21) Undertake a visual assessment of each development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at blending in with the existing built environment in the village in terms of spacing, landscaping and layout. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |
| 22) Record the number of homes per hectare in Small and Larger Village Developments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess whether Policy HNP13 has produced any unanticipated consequences. |

5.7 Policies on connectivity and access

Connectivity and access are an important part of the success of development schemes in the village. They determine:

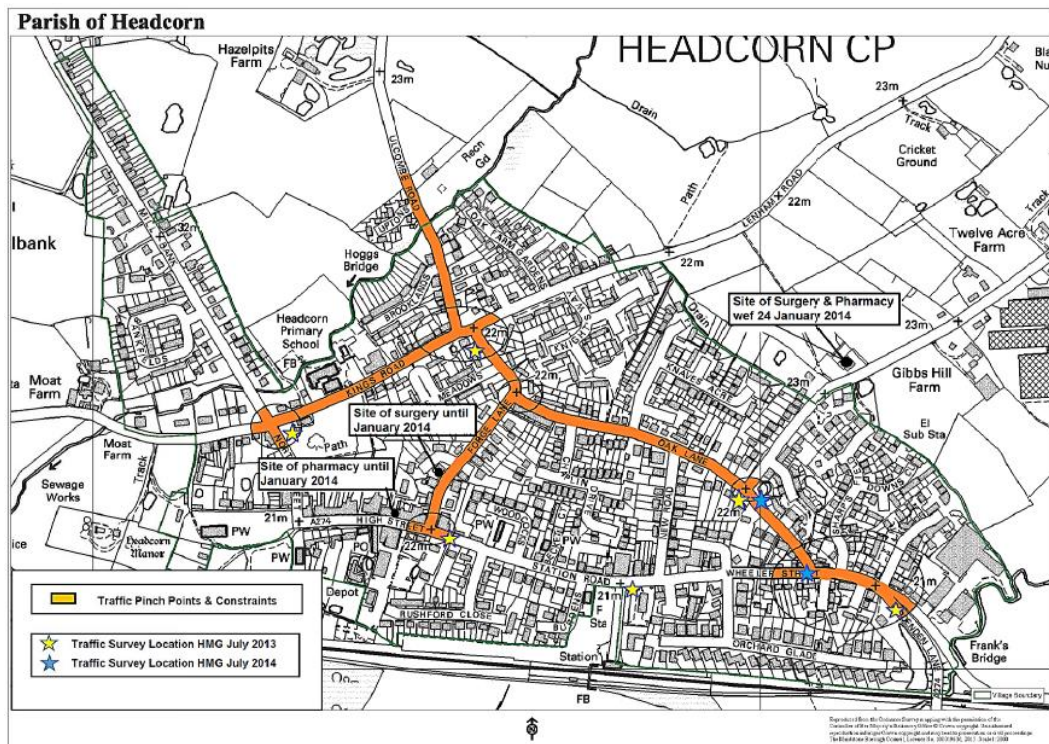
- how the development will sit within its environment;
- how residents interact with the rest of the village (for example are they encouraged to walk, or is using a car a necessity); and
- how easy it is for all residents to access both the countryside surrounding the village and the High Street at the village core.

At present Headcorn is well served by a series of roads and pathways that radiate out from the village core, see Figure 28. These help foster both the commercial viability of the village High Street, as well as a sense of community connection, by encouraging people to walk around the village. Therefore, connecting new housing to the rest of the village by maintaining and enhancing this system of paths, roads and alleyways, enabling access on foot and by bike, will be essential. In addition, this system of roads and pathways also allows good access to the countryside from Headcorn, with a network of footpaths connecting to the lush water meadows of the River Beult to the south and the attractive agricultural land in other directions. This easy access to the surrounding countryside is highly rated by residents and needs to be retained and enhanced through new developments.

Figure 28 Map showing connectivity within the village

Note: The road marked with a dotted green line is New Road. This is a private road, but is used by pedestrians to access the train station.

However, while access by foot or by cycle will play an important role in the success of a development, how vehicular access is organised will also have an important impact on the development's success. For example, the creation of "rat-runs" can be harmful both for traffic flows in the village as a whole and for the residents of the development itself. In addition there are certain key pinch-points within the village that could be exacerbated depending on how access was organised. For example, there is a bridge at the start of the Ulcombe Road that only allows a single lane of traffic.

Figure 29 Map showing traffic pinch points within the village

Note: Based on the results of Headcorn's traffic surveys. See Jefferys (2015) for more details.

As well as fostering connectivity, how access is organised within developments (both to the development as a whole and to individual houses within the development) have an important impact on how a development will sit within its village setting. For example:

- residents were keen that sites should have a single point of access onto the existing road network, to reinforce the development of clusters of houses rather than ribbon development;¹⁵⁵ and
- depending on how access is organised there is a risk that where several new developments interconnect they end up creating a large, urban style estate by default, which is contrary both to the existing character of the village and to what residents want.

HNP15: Connectivity and access

This policy covers Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments (as defined under policy HNP6). New development in Headcorn village, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where it:

¹⁵⁵ Two out of three residents picked option B when asked to choose between "A: All the houses in a new development should have their own point of access onto the existing road system, so that they line the existing roads or B: New developments should have a single point of access onto the existing road system, allowing the development of clusters of houses". Headcorn Residents' Survey 2013.

- Creates safe and well connected housing areas within the village, promoting and enhancing links both to Headcorn High Street and to the countryside that can be easily accessed by foot and cycle;
- Creates a self-contained development, to avoid creating large estates by default;
- Is accessed in a way that avoids creating harmful rat runs;
- Is accessed in a way that avoids creating the appearance of ribbon development along the existing road network (for example with direct vehicular access to all the houses in the development to an existing road);
- Avoids where possible choosing access routes that will exacerbate key pinch points for traffic flows within the village;
- Takes advantage of opportunities to enhance road safety, for example by enhancing existing junctions that will be key for the access of the development in a way that is appropriate for Headcorn's rural setting; and
- Makes best use of pre-existing site access (for example to facilitate the retention of hedgerows) unless reasons such as road safety require alternative access routes onto the existing road network to be provided.

5.7.1 Monitoring activity

Table 10 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP15

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|---|--|
| 23) Monitor the success of access arrangements to new developments and where traffic problems occur in the village. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes, as well as identified problems within the wider village. |

5.8 Policies covering the mix and design of housing within Larger Village Developments

Reflecting the preferences of residents, one of the five high-level policy objectives underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is that development in the Parish is managed in a way that is sustainable; promotes small scale development; is well designed; is capable of meeting the needs of local residents in different age groups and family units; and is in keeping with its setting. In addition, for the more successful of the larger developments in Headcorn, one of the things that is noticeable is that they typically include a variety of different styles, orientations and designs.

By virtue of their size, Larger Village Developments (those between 10 and 30 dwellings) have the ability to incorporate more variety, both in terms of design and also in terms of the type of household they cater for. This is beneficial, as it will help to both preserve and enhance the character of Headcorn village on the design front, and also to promote healthy communities, by encouraging a mix of different family sizes and age groups. To encourage this, and to reinforce policies HNP1, HNP8, HNP9, and HNP10, policy HNP16 sets a requirement that Larger Village Developments should have a mix of styles, orientations and size.

HNP16: The mix and design of housing in Larger Village Developments

New development in Larger Village Developments (as defined in policy HNP6), that is in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where it helps promote a varied street scape and will meet a wide range of needs by ensuring that the proposed development includes:

- buildings that are in a variety of different styles, orientations and designs; and
- dwellings designed to cope with different sizes of family unit and households in different age groups.

5.8.1 Monitoring activity

Table 11 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP16

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|---|---|
| 24) Undertake a visual assessment of each Larger Village Development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at meeting the design goals within the Neighbourhood Plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |
| 25) Keep a record of the number of dwellings of different sizes (ie number of bedrooms) and with different target audiences in developments in the village. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess how successful the policies in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan have been in meeting the needs of different groups and whether there are any mismatches between assessed demand and supply. |

5.9 Policies for Micro Village Developments

Micro Village Developments (developments of one or two houses within Headcorn village) form an important part of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, which aims to facilitate this type of development. The reason is they are more likely than other types of development to help meet the needs of emerging households, given both affordability

issues and the link between readiness to consider building and having someone within the household who would like to move out. However, although they play a potentially important role in helping to tackle affordability, they still need to sit successfully within the built environment in Headcorn.

The size of Micro Village Developments (just one or two houses) means that it would be both disproportionate and unfeasible to place the same conditions on them as are required for either Small or Larger Village Developments. However, Micro Village Developments do face some challenges, such as concerns over how they will affect the street scene and whether the loss of garden space will have a significant negative impact on the look and feel of the village. Therefore, over and above the overarching policies covering issues such as design that are set out in Section 4 of Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan, Policy HNP17 sets the framework on landscaping and access that applies to specifically Micro Village Developments.

HNP17: Micro Village Developments

New development in Micro Village Developments (as defined in policy HNP6), that is in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where:

- The choice of materials, scale, height and form means it will fit unobtrusively with any existing building and contribute to the character of the surrounding street scene;
- The resulting gardens for both the new and any existing properties will be appropriate for size of the dwellings and therefore any target occupants both now and in the future; and
- It will not cause or exacerbate traffic problems (for example by blocking lines of sight at junctions, or contribute to on-street parking, or creating vehicular access that will be difficult to use, for example, because of poor lines of sight).

5.9.1 Monitoring activity

Table 12 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP17

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|---|--|
| 26) Monitor the number and location of micro village developments that are given planning permission. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To assess whether the volume of micro village developments will have a significant impact on the built environment within the village. |

6.0 POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Headcorn's economy will play an important role in ensuring that Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is sustainable – it is the needs of the local economy that are driving the proposed housing development. Overall, social sustainability criteria suggest that there is no need to expand the housing stock, as local housing needs can be met from within the existing stock of housing.

Headcorn has a diverse and vibrant local economy, with 143 businesses within the Parish Boundary; an additional 25 businesses within the Headcorn Borough Ward; and a further 50 businesses within a 5km radius from the village centre which is considered to be part of the Rural Service Centre Catchment area. The majority of these are small businesses – over 75% of businesses employ at most 5 people in the Parish, with the largest businesses only employing between 21 and 50 staff in the Parish.¹⁵⁶ These businesses cover a diverse set of sectors, with no particular concentration on any one sector. The largest two sectors, however, are retail (accounting for 19% of businesses surveyed) and agriculture (9.5%).¹⁵⁷ The benefits of this strong local economy are:

- low levels of unemployment - at the time of the 2011 census only 2.3% of Headcorn residents aged 16 to 74 were unemployed, compared to 3.4% for Maidstone as a whole and 4.4% for England;¹⁵⁸
- high levels of business ownership – 22% of economically active residents in Headcorn Parish are self-employed, compared to an average for England of 14.0%, and 15.5% for Maidstone;¹⁵⁹ and
- strong local demand - almost one in four businesses have at least half of their customers based in Headcorn itself, while over one in two have at least half of their customers based within a ten mile radius of Headcorn. Over 75% of businesses operating in Headcorn Parish think that the majority of their customers are based in Kent itself.¹⁶⁰

However, although Headcorn's local economy is successful, it is also small in absolute terms, meaning there will be a limit to how much housing growth it will be able to support over the plan period. Even under extremely optimistic growth assumptions,

¹⁵⁶ Based on the 2013 Survey of Businesses in the Headcorn Parish. Asked how many employees the business had in Headcorn Parish in addition to the owner/manager: 23.8% of businesses reported that they had no employees other than the owner; 54.8% employed between 1 and 5 people; 11.9% employed 6 to 10 people; 2.4% employed 11 to 20 people; and 7.1% employed 21 to 50 people. No businesses reported employing more than 50 people in the Parish. Including the owner/manager, the average number of employees in the Parish per firm is estimated to be between 9 and 4 employees/firm (depending on whether the top or bottom of the reporting band is used. Using the mid-point of each band (and including the owner/manager) gives an average of 6.5 employees per firm in the Parish.

¹⁵⁷ Based on the 2013 Survey of Businesses in Headcorn Parish.

¹⁵⁸ Unemployment in the Census is defined as: All people usually resident in the area at the time of the 2011 Census aged 16 to 74, who were economically active unemployed. A person is defined as unemployed if he or she is not in employment, is available to start work in the next 2 weeks and has either looked for work in the last 4 weeks or is waiting to start a new job.

¹⁵⁹ Based on 2011 Census.

¹⁶⁰ Based on the 2013 Survey of Businesses in the Headcorn Parish.

growth in Headcorn is likely to create a maximum of 161 jobs in the Parish, enough to support 107 working households.¹⁶¹ Under more reasonable growth assumptions, the likely jobs growth is projected to be enough to support between 73 to 85 households.¹⁶² This means that, given Headcorn's location, any increase in the housing stock over and above the amount supported by growth in the local economy will trigger commuting patterns that involve above average journeys, typically undertaken by car.¹⁶³

The central role of Headcorn's local economy in supporting the sustainability of housing development in Headcorn means that it is important to not only have the right policies for housing development, but also to have the right framework to support jobs growth within the local economy. The approach taken within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is therefore to support growth in the local economy by both supporting small business enterprise¹⁶⁴ and certain key sectors, particularly the High Street; leisure and tourism; and agriculture.¹⁶⁵ If successful, high levels of local employment, linked to small businesses, will help reinforce both the success of the local economy (by providing a ready set of potential customers for a wide range of services) as well as the strength of the local community (by fostering local ties).

6.1 Promoting the role of Headcorn High Street

Both local businesses and residents identified the High Street as an important part of Headcorn's success. For example, 75% of residents picked the High Street as something they valued most about living in Headcorn.¹⁶⁶ In total around 50 businesses are located within the central village area, in and or around the High Street. A key role for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is therefore to try and ensure that the policy framework will help support the continued success of the High Street. To achieve this, the policy framework within the Neighbourhood Plan has four elements:

- Firstly, one of the key criteria for site selection for housing development is whether the site is within 800m of the centre of the High Street, to ensure that the village continues to develop with the High Street at its core;¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ In most households of working age more than one person works. The calculated ratio of jobs per household is based on the number of those in work in Headcorn as a ratio of the number of households with at least one person aged under 65. This gives a ratio of 1.5 jobs per household, see Driver (2014).

¹⁶² See the analysis in Driver (2014).

¹⁶³ It is noticeable that following the building of 200 new houses in Headcorn between 2001 and 2011 only two extra people commuted by train in 2011.

¹⁶⁴ Residents are keen for Headcorn to continue its tradition of fostering a strong local economy, based around small businesses. When asked about encouraging new businesses, less than 10% of residents felt that new businesses employing more than 50 people should be given priority, while over 60% felt sole traders should be given priority and almost 80% wanted businesses employing between 1 and 10 people to be given priority. Based on the 2013 Residents' Survey for Headcorn Parish. Residents were allowed to pick more than one option.

¹⁶⁵ These were the sectors identified as important in the Survey of Businesses in Headcorn Parish (2013).

¹⁶⁶ Headcorn Residents' Survey (2013).

¹⁶⁷ The rule of thumb is that 800m is equivalent to a 10 minute walk.

- Secondly, the policy on connectivity and access (HNP15) for strategic village developments aims to promote and enhance links to Headcorn High Street that can be easily accessed by foot and cycle;
- Thirdly, no new retail units will be permitted in locations that will compete with the High Street, for example through the introduction of a shop within a new housing development, to avoid diluting the footfall and viability of the village centre; and
- Fourthly, change of use within the High Street itself will be limited, to avoid the loss of ground floor retail and business units.

Having a good range of shops and businesses is an important part of encouraging customers to shop in the High Street. This is one reason why Headcorn Parish Council was disappointed by the decision to relocate the chemist to the outskirts of the village as part of the new doctor's surgery. While the reason for that decision was the proximity to the doctor's surgery, in general Headcorn Parish Council considers that it is important to ensure that the retail options in the Parish are concentrated on the High Street itself to ensure it continues to flourish.

Therefore, under the Neighbourhood Plan no new retail units will be allowed in the village away from the High Street itself and outside the village will only be permitted where the nature of the business is appropriate for Headcorn's rural location. An example of the type of business that would be allowed is a nursery or farm shop, while an out of village retail-park, for example, would not be appropriate for Headcorn's location. This approach reflects the fact that Headcorn is a village and therefore is not big enough to benefit from a hierarchy involving centre, edge of centre and then rural areas, as edge of centre retail units in particular would risk undermining a key village asset, namely the High Street. Furthermore, as the vast majority of housing in Headcorn is within 800m of the centre of the High Street (see Figure 5), there is also no compelling need for this type of supplementary retail activity on sustainability grounds.

In order to ensure the High Street continues to thrive, it is also important that there is a good range of business units available for use. The General Development Orders confer certain rights on building owners. For example, subject to certain conditions, change of use can take place without the need for planning permission. However, the exceptions to this are buildings located in Conservation Areas or individually listed as being of architectural or historic importance.

The centre of Headcorn Village is designated a Conservation Area and a number of buildings within the Conservation Area are themselves listed. Therefore the policy on promoting the High Street in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan includes a presumption against permitting change of use for ground floor retail and business units on the High Street into dwellings. This approach is supported by residents.¹⁶⁸ However to provide

¹⁶⁸ Headcorn's Residents' Survey (2013) showed that 54.6% of residents agreed that new houses in the Parish should be "Never allowed where this would involve a change of use from businesses or shops to residential, as this will preserve employment opportunities", with 45.4% choosing "Allowed to replace businesses and shops, to free up brownfield sites for housing development".

some flexibility, the policy will only apply to the ground floors of buildings in the Conservation Area and will not to apply to the upper parts of buildings otherwise in retail use.

HNP18: Promoting the role of Headcorn High Street

This policy covers retail and retail warehouse units within Headcorn Parish and retail and business units located on Headcorn High Street. New development in Headcorn, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will not be permitted where:

- The building is located within the village Conservation Area and the result would be a change to residential use of the ground floor of the building from any of the retail use classes: A1 (Shop); A2 (Financial & Professional Services); A3 (Food & Drink); A4 (Drinking Establishments) or A5 (Fast Food Takeaways); or B1 (Business Uses).
- The result would be the introduction of a retail unit (Classes 1 – 5) or retail warehouse unit in a village location (including edge of village) that threatened the overall economic vitality and viability of the established retail and business centre of the village. In particular new retail units (Classes 1 – 5) and wholesale units will not be allowed in any new village housing development, or on land abutting the village envelope.
- The result would be to create a Retail Class A (1 – 5) or retail warehouse development that would be in direct competition with the High Street and of a sufficient scale that it could risk undermining the viability of the High Street as a whole.

In general planning permission will not be given for any Retail Classes A (1 – 5) or retail warehouse units in the wider countryside or rural areas of the Parish, unless:

- It can be demonstrated that the purpose of the development is in keeping with Headcorn's rural location;
- It will help support the rural economy (for example farm shops);
- It will avoid the appearance of ribbon development through appropriate choice of siting and access, by making use (where possible) of existing access and reflecting the established development pattern within the surrounding countryside of the Parish, which involves small clusters of dwellings and agricultural buildings, with significant gaps in between that provide views out to the countryside;
- The traditional boundary treatment of the area is retained, and where feasible reinforced;
- There is direct access from the site to an existing highway or driveway, without the need to cross additional field boundaries; and
- It will not cause or exacerbate traffic problems, for example by blocking lines of sight at junctions; contributing to on-street parking; or creating vehicular access that will be difficult to use, for example, because of poor lines of sight.

Any development covered by this Policy will be required to respect the scale, height and form of existing surrounding buildings, together with the character of the surrounding area and should have signage and shop frontage that is appropriate for its setting.

An important part of ensuring the High Street provides a successful village centre is to ensure it is as attractive as possible. While much of the High Street retains its charm, there are one or two areas that could be improved. Therefore Headcorn Parish Council is proposing a project to continue to upgrade the look and feel of the High Street over the plan period.

HM Project 4: Improving the frontage in the High Street and Wheeler Street

Headcorn Parish Council will seek, through a "project village centre" to improve the frontages on the High Street and Wheeler Street, wherever opportunities arise. This will involve removing unsightly temporary structures, encouraging traditional shop fronts, improving street frontages where development takes place and reinstating appropriate walls and fencing and tree planting.

6.2 Promoting tourism in Headcorn

Headcorn is well placed to attract local tourism as it is situated in the Low Weald in the centre of the county of Kent. In its own right it is an attractive village with a High Street containing many old buildings and a variety of local shops. As well as shops there are a number of eating establishments, ranging from public houses to coffee shops and takeaways. It is in this light that Headcorn continues to attract day trip visitors. However, for those wanting to stay longer Headcorn also has a number of establishments providing accommodation including the Weald of Kent Golf Course and Hotel and a number of bed & breakfast establishments located in and around the village, as well as self-catering accommodation.

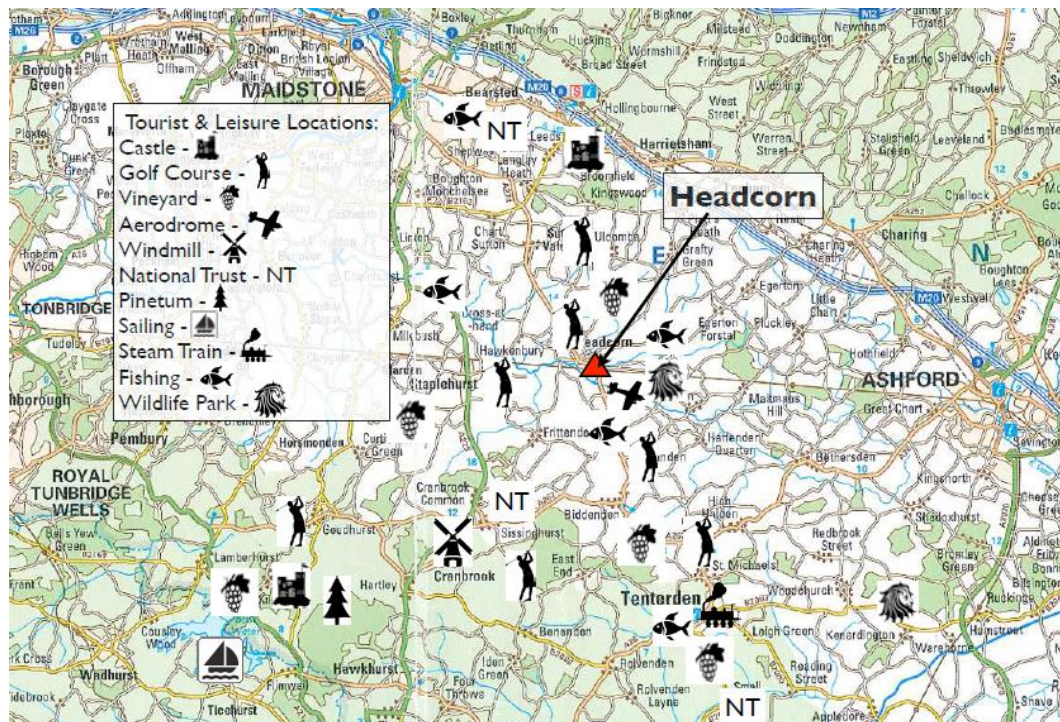
In addition to the village itself, to the south of the village is Headcorn Aerodrome a leading parachuting centre, as well as the centre for many other flying activities. The aerodrome presents an excellent opportunity for visitors to watch the flying, picnic or visit the Lashenden Air Warfare Museum. Annually the aerodrome hosts a joint military vehicle and flying event, which attract a lot of visitors.

Other attractions in Headcorn include The Wildlife Heritage Foundation's Big Cat Sanctuary, which is just outside the village. Although this is not open all year round, it hosts very popular open days that attract visitors from miles around. In addition, there are also several venues where you can go fishing. The Weald of Kent Golf Course and Hotel is also a popular venue for those wanting a round of golf.

As well as the main attractions in Headcorn itself, the surrounding area of the Low Weald is crossed by many footpaths and country lanes. This means Headcorn has become a centre for cyclists to begin and end their rides. The country lanes around the village are quiet and largely flat, making good and safe cycling territory.

Headcorn's position in the centre of Kent also makes it an ideal base to visit the large number of tourist attractions in the area. These include Leeds Castle, several National Trust properties, including Sissinghurst and Scotney Castles. All are within 30 minutes driving from Headcorn.

Figure 30 Map of tourism sites and activities in the vicinity of Headcorn



Businesses in Headcorn identified tourism as an important sector to promote, because of its impact on spending in the local economy. Therefore, under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan business activities that help to promote tourism, such as hotels, B&B's, restaurants and holiday cottages will be supported, provided they are in keeping with Headcorn's rural character. As with retail space, it is important that any new activities within the village do not undermine the central role of the High Street. However, tourism activities can also help support the viability of the rural economy and therefore this type of development will also be considered in the countryside surrounding the Parish. However, where such activities are located in the countryside, they must respect the existing settlement pattern of small clusters of buildings and should not involve the erection of new buildings in the more isolated parts of the Parish.

In addition to the specific policies on development activity to support tourism, accessibility will also play an important role in the success of the tourism and leisure sector in the Parish. Visiting Headcorn is facilitated by the fact that the village has a central pay and display car park, as well as free off street parking near the centre. In

addition there is a frequent train service from London and the Kent Coast.¹⁶⁹ Buses also run roughly once an hour from Maidstone to Tenterden, Monday to Saturday, and from and to Maidstone on Sundays. However, to ensure the necessary facilities remain fit-for purpose, Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan also includes policies to improve parking facilities, not just for cars, but also for bicycles and coaches. One of the reasons for this is that Headcorn Parish Council recognises that ease of access is key to ensuring tourist activity in Headcorn continues to thrive.

HNP19: Promoting tourism in Headcorn

This policy covers business activities that facilitate tourism and leisure activities in Headcorn, such as hotels, B&Bs, and holiday cottages. Tourism development in Headcorn, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where:

- It will be small scale and fit unobtrusively with any existing building and the character of its setting, for example through its choice of materials, scale, height, form and signage;
- It can be demonstrated that the development will benefit the local community and is in keeping with Headcorn's rural character; and
- It will not cause or exacerbate traffic problems, for example by blocking lines of sight at junctions; contributing to on-street parking; or creating vehicular access that will be difficult to use, for example, because of poor lines of sight.

Where the proposed development is located in the countryside surrounding Headcorn Parish, then it must also:

- Avoid the appearance of ribbon development through appropriate choice of siting and access, by making use (where possible) of existing access and reflecting the established development pattern within the surrounding countryside of the Parish, which involves small clusters of dwellings and agricultural buildings, with significant gaps in between that provide views out to the countryside;
- Involve the conversion of an existing permanent building, or demonstrate that any existing structures on the site are inappropriate for conversion and that there will be significant benefit associated with allowing a new building;
- Avoid locations situated in more isolated parts of the Parish (in other words locations that are not within 100m of at least two established dwellings), unless the proposal involves the conversion of an established building;
- Retain the traditional boundary treatment of the area, and where feasible reinforce it; and

¹⁶⁹ Note that the timing issues and time needed to get from Headcorn to urban centres on public transport outlined in Section 2.5 will be less important for tourist activity, which is less time sensitive, than they will be for daily commuting patterns.

- Have direct access from the site to an existing highway or driveway, without the need to cross additional field boundaries.

6.2.1 Headcorn Aerodrome

Headcorn Aerodrome is also known as Lashenden Airfield. The Aerodrome is based at Shenley Farm, and was first used by one aircraft in the 1920s, before serving as an advanced landing ground for Canadians and then Americans in World War II. Today, as a private civil airfield and parachute centre, it also houses an Air Warfare Museum, the Air Cadets of 500 Squadron and a helicopter company, together with 10 other aviation and tourism related businesses. The aerodrome currently consists of around 5500m² of built space, together with the associated airfield runways.

Figure 31 Headcorn Aerodrome



The Aerodrome is an important part of the local economy and helps put Headcorn on the tourist map, both through flying and parachuting activities, as well as the annual Air Show. However, its presence in the Parish does create some tensions, with around a third of residents worrying about aircraft noise. In addition, the absence of footpaths on the section of the A274 south of the village renders the aerodrome unsuitable for safe pedestrian access, resulting in a high dependency on motor vehicle access.

The Aerodrome has permission to operate as it currently is and this will not change. However, the Neighbourhood Plan is about planning for the future. Therefore, the question is if, for example, the owners of the Aerodrome wanted to expand the type of flying that was possible (by changing the runway to a solid surface to allow larger aeroplanes to land and take off) should this be permitted?

On balance, it is considered that the right policy mix is to support the Aerodrome as a tourist attraction operating under its existing rules, with the vast majority of residents supporting this approach.¹⁷⁰ This would allow for the upgrading of facilities to support tourism activity, providing these will not significantly increase noise levels, but would involve maintaining a grass (rather than hard surface) runway, to ensure it remains a home for smaller light aircraft. Where possible, Headcorn Parish Council would like to encourage the introduction of noise reduction measures associated with the use of the Aerodrome.

HNP20: Headcorn Aerodrome (aviation and tourism)

Planning permission for modest, proportional development at Headcorn Aerodrome will be allowed for tourism and aviation related uses, providing any such development:

- will not cause a significant increase in the noise associated with the operation of the airfield;
- is in keeping with Headcorn's rural setting; and
- is subject to the same strict regulations imposed on the current use of the airfield.

Depending on the proposed development, further conditions may be imposed to ensure that such continuing and further uses do not impact adversely on the neighbouring and surrounding residential settlements. Planning permission will not be granted to upgrade the runway from grass to hard surface.

6.3 Promoting employment sites in Headcorn

Headcorn's location, which is relatively far from both local urban centres and motorway access, means that it will not be a good strategic location for large employment sites within Maidstone Borough. However, Headcorn has a thriving local economy, based around small and medium sized enterprises, and it is important that the Neighbourhood Plan continues to support this. In addition to the Aerodrome, work on the Neighbourhood Plan has identified six employment sites within the Parish that are designed to support multiple businesses.¹⁷¹ Several of these sites have issues such as access and therefore overall the best employment site in Headcorn for significant expansion to benefit small and medium-sized enterprises is the Barradale Farm site.

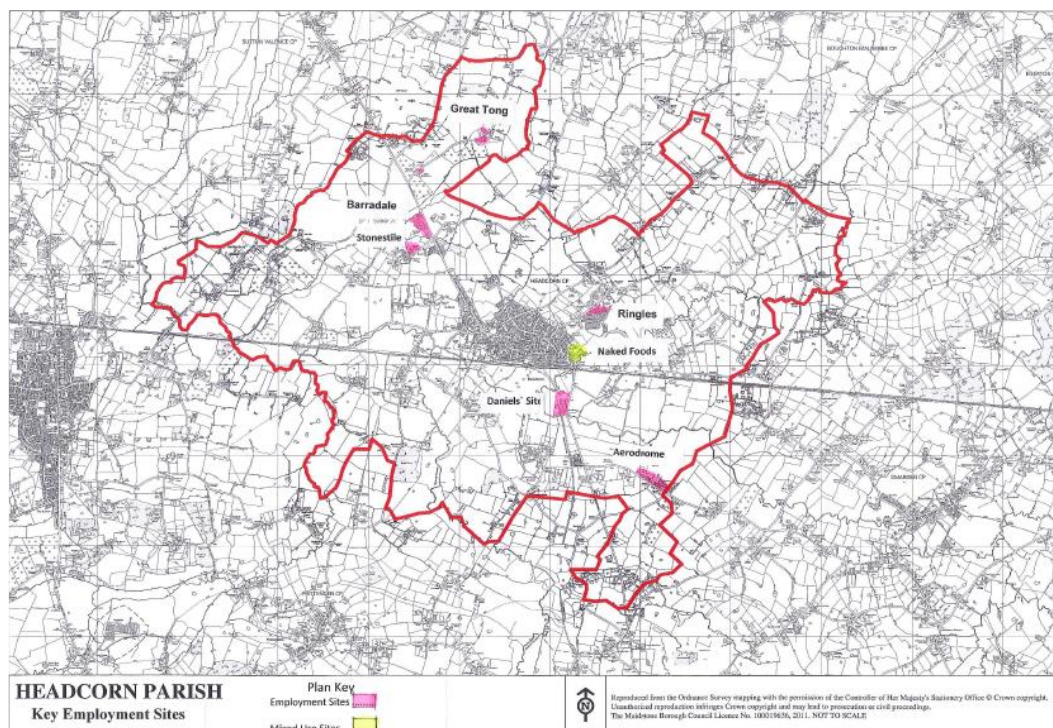
Therefore Headcorn Parish Council is looking to promote the Barradale Farm site as a strategic employment site within the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in line with Maidstone Borough Council Draft Local Plan, as the Regulation 18 Consultation under Policy EMP1 (4) proposes allocating land to the rear of Barradale Farm for a further 5500m² of

¹⁷⁰ In meetings with residents in June 2014, 97.5% of residents supported this approach.

¹⁷¹ See the assessment in Appendix A5.

business space in User Classes B1; B2; and B8. Headcorn Parish Council supports this proposed expansion of employment development, subject to meaningful highway improvements and speed attenuation measures on the A274.

Figure 32 Map of key employment sites within Headcorn



In addition the Headcorn Parish Council would like to see any further development at Barradale Farm being done in a way that would facilitate the option of creating a link to the neighbouring Stonestile Business Park to the west in future. A new shared access onto the A274 would allow the existing access to Stonestile Business Park to be sealed permanently, thereby reducing heavy commercial and other vehicles using the notoriously dangerous and accident prone Stonestile Crossroads. This would therefore facilitate any future expansion of the Stonestile Business Park site. Multiple ownerships within the different sites, and the fact that much of the benefit of this access arrangement would be felt by Stonestile Business Park, mean that it is not possible or appropriate to set this as a condition for expansion of the Barradale Farm site. However, the option of creating this access arrangement in future would be valuable for the Parish, as it would facilitate both improved road safety and the potential expansion of additional business premises. Therefore expansion will not be allowed at the Barradale Farm site where the proposed layout would block the possibility of creating this access in future. The creation of this access link will be a condition of any expansion of the Stonestile Park site, to avoid exacerbating existing traffic problems.

HNP21: Promoting key employment sites – Barradale Farm

Over the period of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan (2011-2031), planning permission for up to an additional 5500m² of B1; B2 and B8 development will be allowed at the Barradale Farm site on land to the west of the existing development providing:

- individual units are no more than 500m² each; and
- significant highway improvements and speed attenuation measures on the A274 are incorporated by way of Conditions.

The creation of an access link between Barradale Farm and the neighbouring Stonestile Business Park to the west is strongly encouraged, with the aim of providing a new shared access onto the A274 that would allow the existing access to Stonestile Business Park to be sealed permanently. Therefore, planning permission will not be granted where the siting and layout of the proposed development would block this as a future option. In general, the layout of any expansion should aim to facilitate the possibility of creating this access.

HNP22: Promoting key employment sites – Stonestile Business Park

The creation of an access link between Stonestile Business Park and the neighbouring Barradale Farm to the east is being promoted under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, with the aim of providing a new shared access onto the A274 that would allow the existing access to Stonestile Business Park to be sealed permanently. Planning permission for new development on the Stonestile Business Park will not be granted unless it provides for the creation of this access and the existing Stonestile Business Park access is sealed.

As well as the larger employment sites identified, Headcorn also has a multitude of smaller employment sites, including farms, which support a single business. These other employment sites within the Parish are, by definition, significantly smaller and are likely to only be able to support a modest extension of existing buildings. It is important for the overall health of the local economy that businesses within the Parish are able to grow. However, any expansion that necessitates the need for additional building will need to be balanced by issues such as maintaining Headcorn's rural character and ensuring there is appropriate access.

HNP23: Supporting small business development

This policy covers business activities (excluding retail, retail warehouse, tourism and leisure activities) that are designed to support small and medium-sized enterprises in

the Parish, including farms. Business development in Headcorn, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where:

- It is of small scale;
- It will fit unobtrusively with any existing building and the character of its setting through its choice of materials, scale, height, form and signage;
- It can be demonstrated that the development is in keeping with Headcorn's rural character; and
- It will not cause or exacerbate traffic problems, for example by blocking lines of sight at junctions; creating extra on-street parking; or creating vehicular access that will be difficult to use, for example, because of poor lines of sight.

Where the proposed development is located in the countryside surrounding Headcorn Parish, then it must also:

- Avoid the appearance of ribbon development through appropriate choice of siting and access, by making use (where possible) of existing access and reflecting the established development pattern within the surrounding countryside of the Parish, which involves small clusters of dwellings and agricultural buildings, with significant gaps in between that provide views out to the countryside;
- Involve the conversion of an existing permanent building, or demonstrate that any existing structures on the site are inappropriate for conversion and that there will be significant benefit associated with allowing a new building;
- Avoid locations situated in more isolated parts of the Parish (in other words locations that are not within 100m of at least two established dwellings), unless the proposal involves the conversion of an established building;
- Retain the traditional boundary treatment of the area, and where feasible reinforce it; and
- Have direct access from the site to an existing highway or driveway, without the need to cross additional field boundaries.

6.3.1 Monitoring activity

Table 13 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP18, HNP19, HNP20, HNP21, HNP22 and HNP23

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|--|--|
| 27) Monitor the number of retail and wholesale units in Headcorn Parish and their locations and occupancy levels. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess whether the policy of promoting Headcorn High Street has been successful. |
| 28) Undertake an assessment of each tourist development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has |

| | |
|---|---|
| the design, landscaping and economic development goals within the Neighbourhood Plan. | been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |
| 29) Monitor complaints about noise levels associated with Headcorn Aerodrome. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To alert Headcorn Parish Council to any escalating problems and guide whether further development is desirable. |
| 30) Monitor employment patterns and the availability and cost of business spaces within the Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess the need for promoting additional employment space within the plan period. |
| 31) Undertake an assessment of each new business development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at meeting the design, landscaping and economic development goals within the Neighbourhood Plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |

7.0 ENSURING THAT HEADCORN HAS THE RIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure always plays an important role in development, and the history of Headcorn is no different. The strength of its infrastructure (including the railway station, primary school, library, vibrant High Street and doctor's surgery) are the main reasons why Maidstone Borough Council has designated Headcorn as a Rural Service Centre (RSC). However, while some areas of infrastructure are valued by local residents and businesses, others, such as the sewage and storm drainage system are seen as bad by the majority residents, and businesses regard them as a constraint on future expansion. In addition, while popular, Headcorn Primary School is currently oversubscribed. Therefore it is likely that some aspects of Headcorn's infrastructure, such as the sewage and storm drainage system and the primary school will act as a constraint on development in the absence of substantial investment.

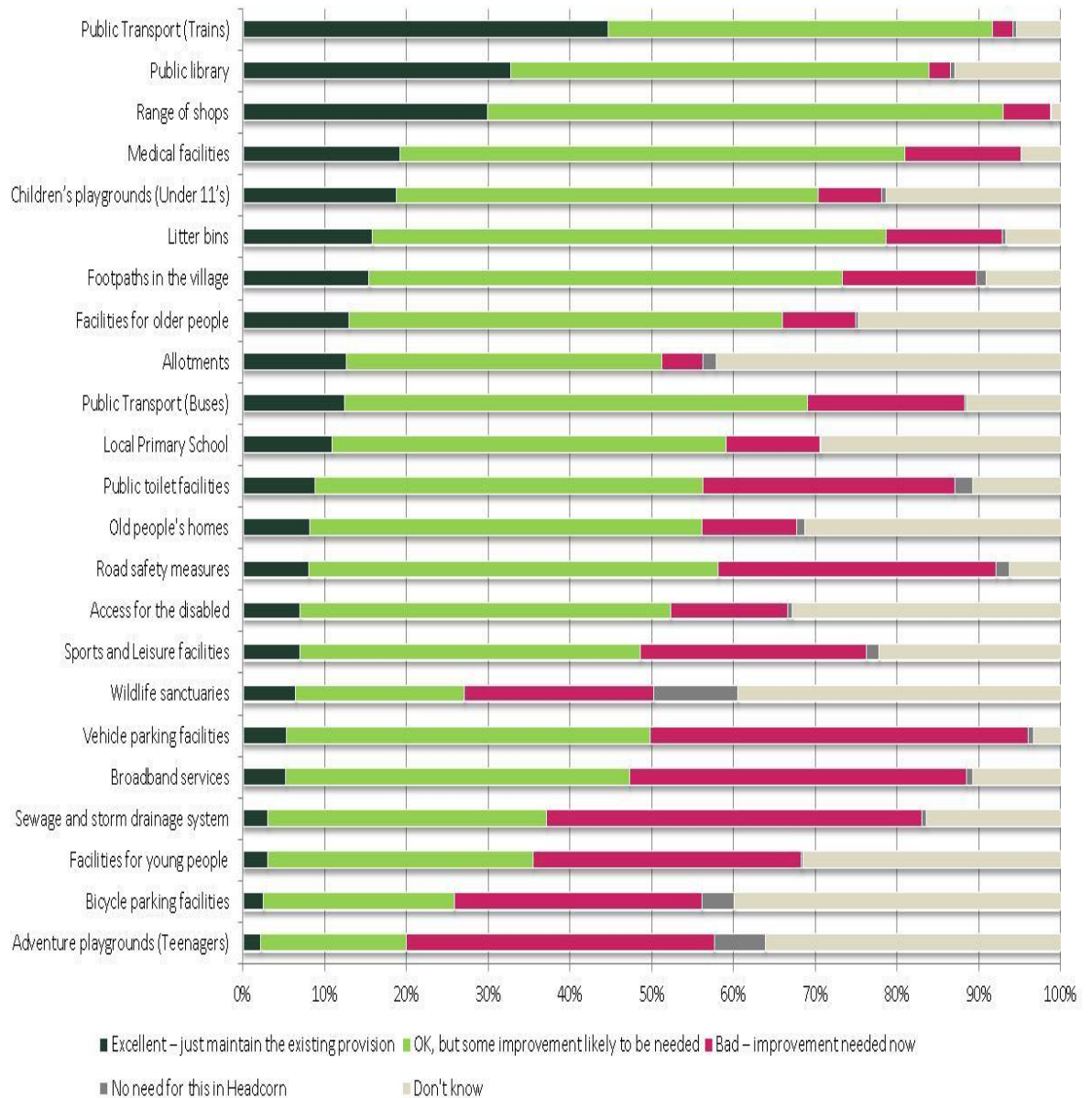
In order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Headcorn's infrastructure, residents were asked to assess 23 different aspects of the infrastructure and services in Headcorn in light of the development that is likely to take place over the next 20 years.¹⁷² The results are shown in Figure 25, ranked by the percentage of residents choosing to rate the option as "Excellent – just maintain the existing provision". The clear winners here are the train service,¹⁷³ followed by the Public Library and the range of shops. Headcorn also benefits from an excellent Village Hall.

The weakest areas of Headcorn's infrastructure, where at least one third of Headcorn's residents rated them as "bad – improvement needed now", are: vehicle parking facilities; sewage and storm drainage system; broadband services; adventure playgrounds (teenagers); and road safety measures. Bicycle parking facilities also scored poorly, with more people rating them as bad than rated them as either excellent or ok combined, something which was also true for the sewage and storm drainage system and adventure playgrounds for teenagers. Other potentially problematic areas were sports and leisure facilities and facilities for young people more widely, as well as wildlife sanctuaries and the public toilets.

¹⁷² Results from Headcorn's Residents' survey 2013. Question asked was: "Thinking about how the village is likely to develop over the next 20 years, how do you rate the provision of the following in Headcorn? [TICK ONE OPTION FOR EACH SERVICE]". Residents were given 5 options to assess each service: Excellent – just maintain the existing provision; OK, but some improvement likely to be needed; Bad – improvement needed now; No need for this in Headcorn; and don't know.

¹⁷³ Note that for those who have chosen to live in a rural area having a train station will be a definite benefit. This is not the same as suggesting that having a train station renders a location sustainable, which will reflect factors such as time, cost and distance on a locations ability to support growth and innovation elsewhere, as well as actual commuting patterns.

Figure 33 How is the provision of different services and infrastructure rated in Headcorn?



Note: Taken from Driver (2014). Based on Headcorn Residents' Survey 2013. Question asked was: "Thinking about how the village is likely to develop over the next 20 years, how do you rate the provision of the following in Headcorn? [TICK ONE OPTION FOR EACH SERVICE]". Residents were given 5 options to assess each service: Excellent – just maintain the existing provision; OK, but some improvement likely to be needed; Bad – improvement needed now; No need for this in Headcorn; and don't know.

Source: Analytically Driven Ltd

The aim of this Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure that Headcorn's infrastructure is robust and will support the needs of residents and businesses in the Parish, both now and in the future. In two key cases, the sewerage system and the Primary School, the problems identified would be exacerbated by further development. Both these issues therefore need to be addressed for further housing development in the village to be sustainable.

This means the policy framework within this draft Neighbourhood Plan sets two preconditions and puts in place a policy (HNP11) that means that no further housing development will be allowed in Headcorn village (outside Micro Village Developments) until both these problems have been addressed.¹⁷⁴

However, sewerage provision and primary school access are not the only challenges for Headcorn's infrastructure. Therefore this section sets out the remaining policies governing infrastructure provision, as well as a set of projects that have been identified by Headcorn Parish Council, which do not directly relate to planning policy, but where action by the Parish Council and interested parties could help improve Headcorn's infrastructure.

7.1 Road network, traffic management and road safety

Currently, with the exception of parking and the need for improved road safety, most aspects of Headcorn's transport infrastructure are seen as adequate by both residents and the business community.¹⁷⁵ The policies within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan therefore aim to ensure that Headcorn's transport infrastructure remains strong overall and that, where possible, opportunities are taken to enhance the existing provision. Therefore, for example, policies on access aim to ensure that development does not create or exacerbate traffic issues, and that all opportunities are taken to enhance connectivity and access when development takes place.

7.1.1 Road safety

Over one third of Headcorn residents ranked road safety as bad, improvement needed now.¹⁷⁶ When asked specifically about traffic issues, the key concern was excessive traffic speed, followed by traffic danger to pedestrians and then excessive traffic volume.¹⁷⁷ Traffic noise was much less of a concern, although over 60% of residents were still either very, or slightly concerned.

Work with residents suggests that the two priorities for improving road safety and traffic management are:¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ See HNP11. The reason for continuing to allow micro village developments is that these are more likely to be geared towards the needs of emerging households. As the problems are most acute in the village these preconditions only apply to developments within the village.

¹⁷⁵ However, it is worth noting that the cost of using public transport (both buses and trains) will act as a potential constraint on development targeted at those on low incomes, because it will have a significant impact on their ability to access jobs markets outside Headcorn itself. Cost concerns around public transport accounted for three of the top four options chosen when residents were asked what would encourage them to use their car less, with: keeping the over 60s bus pass picked by 43%; cheaper rail services picked by 35%; and reduced cost of buses picked by 24%. The other main factor that residents felt would reduce their car usage was increased frequency of buses, with 38% of residents picking that option. Results from Headcorn Residents' Survey, 2013. Respondents could pick more than one option.

¹⁷⁶ Headcorn Residents' Survey 2013.

¹⁷⁷ See Jefferys (2015) for the results of the traffic surveys done to support Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

¹⁷⁸ See the analysis in Driver (2014) of the results of the June 2014 meetings with residents.

- Introducing a pedestrian crossing at the station; and
- Introducing traffic calming measures such as a traffic island at the northern edge of the village on the A274 towards Maidstone, to slow traffic into the village.

The measures that received support tended to be those that were also in keeping with Headcorn's rural setting. Therefore, for example, the introduction of traffic lights at the White Horse crossroads (the Moat Road, Kings Road, A274 junction) received much less support, as did the option of making Oak Lane and Forge Lane one way, to help improve the safety of the junctions onto the A274.

In the context of traffic calming that works in a rural context, one additional suggestion has been made, which is to use repeated physical markings of the speed limit on the road surface on the sections of the A274 approaching the High Street from both the north and the south that are within the 30mph speed zone. This approach has been successfully introduced in several villages in Sussex and would act to reinforce the speed limit.

Figure 34 Use of road markings to reinforce the speed limit



Note: An example of the use of road markings to reinforce the speed limit from Broad Oak village in Sussex. These reminders appear at regular intervals throughout the village to slow vehicles on a long, straight stretch of the A265. More elaborate examples can include the use of a different coloured road surface (typically red) to create an even stronger reminder.

HNP24: Priorities for improving road safety in Headcorn Village

Headcorn Parish Council has identified three priorities for improving road safety in Headcorn village and will seek to work with developers and the relevant authorities to deliver these improvements. The priorities are:

1. Introducing a pedestrian crossing at the station;
2. Introducing traffic calming measures that are in keeping with Headcorn's rural location, such as a traffic island, at the northern edge of the village on the A274 towards Maidstone, to slow traffic into the village; and
3. Introducing physical markings of the speed limit on the road surface on the sections of the A274 approaching the High Street from both the north and the south that are within the 30mph speed zone.

HM Project 5: Improving road safety

Outside the priorities for improving road safety identified in Policy HNP24, Headcorn Parish Council will seek to work with residents, developers and interested bodies, such as Maidstone Borough Council and KCC Highways, to identify problem areas and improve the safety of roads in Headcorn Parish, including in rural areas.

7.2 Parking

Both vehicle and bicycle parking in Headcorn scored badly in the survey of Headcorn's residents. Excluding don't knows, almost half of Headcorn residents rated these as bad, improvement needed now.¹⁷⁹ In the case of vehicle parking, discussions with residents and businesses in meetings at the end of 2013 revealed that the biggest problem for parking is commuter parking on residential roads, followed by the cost of parking, although the availability of parking is an issue for some.

The issue of commuter parking is not one of the availability of parking spaces in the station car park. The traffic survey conducted in July 2013 revealed that the station car park was only three quarters full. The issue appears to be one of cost causing commuters to park in residential roads in Headcorn to avoid paying for car parking - charges for parking in the station car park range from £5.70 for a day, £25.50 for a week to £984.50 for an annual car parking ticket. To put this in context, the weekly cost of parking in the station would be 20.4% of the weekly income of those at the bottom 10% of the income distribution; 10.1% of the weekly income of those at the bottom 25%; and 4.8% of the weekly income of those on median earnings.

In discussions with residents at the meetings in June 2014, four out of five felt that Headcorn needed more car parks. However, the choice of location was very revealing, with a majority against the option of a car park on Moat Road (which would be very accessible to the High Street), but in favour of one south of the station (which would require people to cross the railway line to access the village). It is clear therefore that reason for this choice is a desire to reduce commuter parking in the village, rather than to improve the accessibility of parking in the village itself. However, as the problems are caused by cost rather than accessibility, commuter parking on residential roads would not be solved by the introduction of a car park south of the station, as this would need to charge in order to be viable.

Controlling commuter parking on residential roads is more likely to be achieved by other measures, both of which found favour with residents:

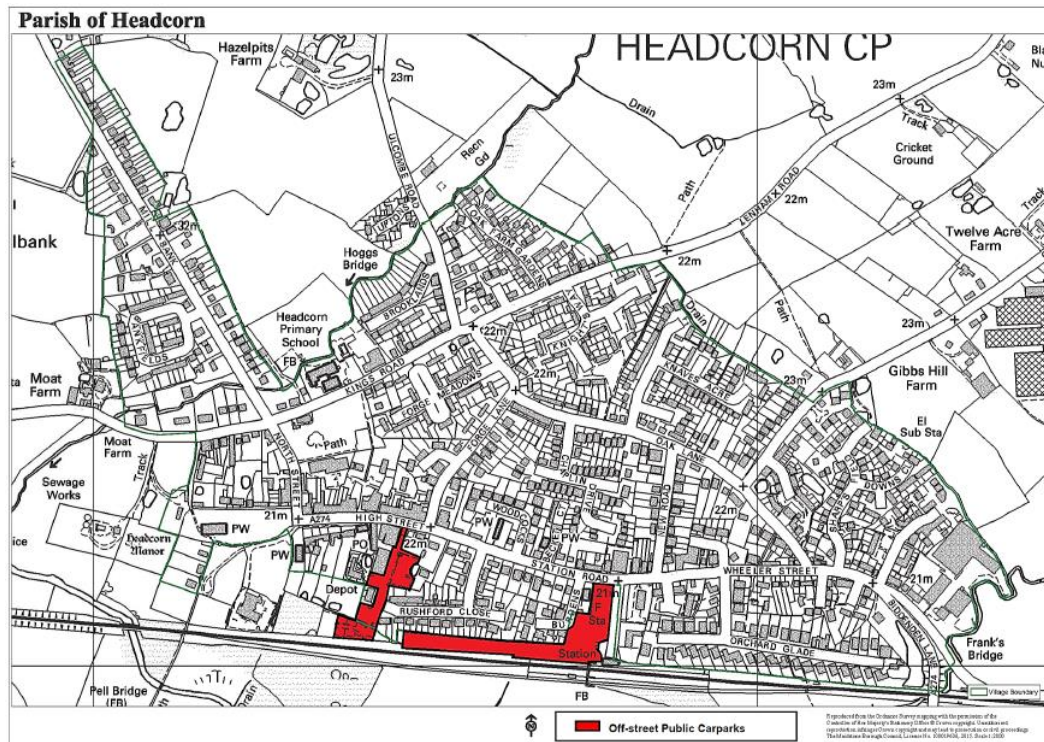
- Introducing additional parking restrictions; and
- Improving the enforcement of existing parking restrictions.

¹⁷⁹ Headcorn Residents' Survey 2013.

In the case of enforcement, residents were asked in the meetings held in June 2014 if they would be prepared to contribute towards the cost and four out of five supported the idea.

Finally, four out of five responses at the June 2014 meeting were in favour of introducing a coach park/drop off point to assist with tourism.

Figure 35 Map of off-street public parking facilities in Headcorn village centre



Note: This covers two of the strategic parking facilities in Headcorn. The staff and public parking associated with the new doctors' surgery is not shown because the map does not show that development, which only opened in 2014.

The approach to parking in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is therefore:

- to aim to ensure that all new developments have adequate parking provision, to reduce the need for on-road parking in residential areas;¹⁸⁰
- to include a provision banning the loss of strategic parking sites within the village;
- for the Parish Council to work with parking providers and interested parties to try and improve the operation of the existing strategic parking sites within the village, particular the parking next to the Foreman's centre, where multiple ownership and interest groups make the effective operation of the car park difficult. This will include, where necessary, the introduction of better signage advertising the parking facilities. Ideally the Parish Council would like to see parking in the Foreman's car park free for the first one or two hours, to encourage footfall on the

¹⁸⁰ See the Design Policy, HNP1.

High Street, with charges for longer stays to avoid the car park being used for commuter parking;

- for the Parish Council to work with the relevant parking enforcement agencies to try and improve both enforcement within the village and to identify where additional parking restrictions are necessary;
- for the Parish Council to continue to work with interested parties to identify a coach drop off point within the village; and
- to identify and introduce bicycle parking options on or close to the High Street.

If necessary, the Parish Council will investigate the need to increase the Parish Precept to cover the cost of enforcement.

HNP25: Provision of parking in Headcorn Village

Under Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan no new development will be permitted where it would result in the loss of strategic parking facilities in the village that support either the High Street, or key services such as the train station or Doctors' surgery.

HM Project 6: Improving parking in Headcorn Village

Over the course of the plan period, to improve parking within the village Headcorn Parish Council will work with:

- The owners and managers of the Foremans Car Park, The Trustees of St John's College, their legal advisers, Maidstone Borough Council, together with all other relevant stakeholders and interested parties, with the committed intention of creating and maintaining on an on-going basis, a convenient and centrally located car park to cater for the needs of the village community. The options for development will include improving signage advertising the existence of the car park in a way that is in keeping with its position on Headcorn's High Street. Ideally the Parish Council would like to see parking in this facility free for a short period, to encourage footfall on the High Street, with charges for longer stays to avoid the car park being used for commuter parking;
- The residents and the relevant parking enforcement agencies to try and improve both enforcement within the village and to identify where additional parking restrictions are necessary to deter long term on-street parking by commuters, whilst still maintaining as much of a non-urban street scene as possible;
- Interested parties within the business community to identify a coach drop off point within the village; and
- Interested parties within the business community to identify and introduce bicycle parking options on or close to the High Street.

7.3 Broadband

Broadband provision is increasingly a prerequisite for any economy to flourish.¹⁸¹ This is particularly true for areas like Headcorn, where distance from major urban centres means that residents are much more likely to need to work locally. Indeed in 2011, 18.9% of those in work in Headcorn worked mainly at or from home, compared to 10.3% for England as a whole.¹⁸² The Kent County Council Community Broadband scheme has a roll-out programme for the delivery of standard (up to 17mbps) and superfast broadband infrastructure (24mbps+), with the programme for the built up area of Headcorn village covering the period of October 2014 to the end of 2015.

It is important that effective broadband provision is maintained in the Parish, not just in existing properties, but also in new ones. BT has an obligation to provide a landline to every household in the UK. In addition, developers are expected to want to facilitate high speed broadband provision to make their developments marketable. However, there have been instances where developers have not contacted BT early enough in the process for fibre and ducting to be laid, or where they have relied on a national agreement with a cable provider that is not active in the area, leaving new housing developments with little or no connections. Therefore, this policy seeks to ensure that all strategic housing developments in the village are connected to superfast broadband.

The policy covers housing in Small and Larger Village Developments, because these are the developments where occupiers are most dependent on the developer to have installed the right infrastructure from the start. The aim is to ensure that this infrastructure is installed in a way that will future proof developments, by making sure that even if the most up-to-date form of broadband connection is not yet available within Headcorn village, the relevant infrastructure is provided to facilitate such connections once it reaches the village. While it is expected that community and commercial development will also want to comply with the same high standards, to ensure the longevity of the development, it is acknowledged that this needs to be a commercial decision based on the intended usage. Therefore no specific condition is proposed for this type of development, but developers will need to demonstrate why they have decided not to install the relevant high-performance broadband option, because it will help determine whether the proposal would make good use of the land to be used for the development. Similarly for micro village developments and individual countryside developments, it is assumed that individuals will want to install the best possible option, but it is left to them to judge what is necessary.

¹⁸¹ This is why broadband provision was the first policy in the Government's 10-point plan for improving rural productivity. See Defra (2015).

¹⁸² Data from 2011 Census for Headcorn Parish (QS702EW).

HNP26: Provision of broadband in Headcorn

This policy covers Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments (as defined under policy HNP6). New development in Headcorn village, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted providing there is a Planning Condition that specifies that:

- The necessary infrastructure will be provided to ensure that all new dwellings in the development will be served by a superfast broadband connection (or the appropriate future standard for high-performance broadband delivery) installed on an open access basis; and
- The broadband provision is provided in a way that will enable future repair, replacement or upgrading, for example through direct access from the nearest British Telecom exchange.

Where it can be demonstrated that it is not possible to provide the relevant high-performance broadband at the time of construction (for example where it is not yet available in Headcorn), then the Planning Condition should state that:

- the necessary infrastructure should be installed to allow for a connection in future; and
- at the same time the infrastructure should also be installed to allow households to use the best available alternative on an open access basis, until it is possible to upgrade.

There will be no standard planning condition for high-performance broadband provision in community and commercial development as part of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. However, developers of community and commercial buildings will need to detail what broadband provision will be available (if any) and (if applicable) demonstrate why the expected use of the building means that it is not appropriate to install the relevant high-performance broadband option, to allow planners to judge whether this is acceptable.

7.4 Sewerage provision in new developments in Headcorn

The analysis for this Neighbourhood Plan shows, sewerage provision in Headcorn is completely inadequate and in need of a total overhaul. The problems are so extensive that no individual development is ever going to be able to be able to cover the costs of the necessary upgrade of the entire system – and in practice developers are not expected to undertake remedial works, as they are only responsible for the impact of their own development. For this reason Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has introduced a precondition on future housing development in the village (HNP11), which is that no development will be permitted in the form of small or larger village developments until the sewerage system within Headcorn village has been upgraded to ensure that the sewer capacity is adequate to cope with existing demands on the system (including the

peak demands that occur during periods of heavy rain) and will be capable of coping with the increase in sewage that will arise as a result of development, both during the period of this Neighbourhood Plan and beyond.

However, even once this precondition has been fulfilled, it is important that sewerage provision remains effective and is not undermined by new developments. Therefore Policy HNP27 sets out the requirements for sewerage provision within small and larger village developments, as well as larger commercial developments (more than 150m²) in Headcorn village. As part of this policy the use of holding tank solutions for sewage storage that are then pumped into the main sewerage network will not be acceptable. The reasons are that the existing evidence, based on Headcorn's experience, suggests that they are not reliable; they create the need for regular pumping activities; and they require land to be allocated to sewage storage that could be used for other purposes. To avoid creating an unacceptable burden, micro village developments and small commercial developments are exempt from this policy. The policy does not apply to individual countryside developments, which typically are unable to connect to the sewerage network.

HNP27: Sewerage provision in developments in Headcorn Village

This policy covers Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments (as defined under policy HNP6), as well as any commercial or community developments with a floorspace of more than 150m² in Headcorn Village. New development in Headcorn village, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted providing there is a Planning Condition that specifies that:

- the developer will undertake any upgrading of the existing sewerage network between the development and the main pumping station for Headcorn village that is necessary to cope with the anticipated demand created by the development (calculated taking into account the impact of any other developments that have already been granted planning permission, and the need to assess capacity using peak not average demand); and
- the sewerage solution proposed for within the development meets best practice guidelines and avoids using land unnecessarily for sewerage storage and the need for avoidable sewage pumping activities.

7.5 Energy generation and protecting the environment

In the last couple of years several proposals for commercial green energy generation have been proposed in the Headcorn region involving large solar energy farms. This has generated considerable local opposition, and led to the formation of vocal protest groups. This is understandable:

- large solar farms are visually intrusive; and

- are likely to reduce, not increase, the number of local jobs available, both by reducing the amount of farmland under cultivation and by undermining Headcorn's ability to generate tourist income. (Large solar farms are not the backdrop tourists usually look for when deciding on where to stay.)

Given the likely impact on jobs and tourism, large commercial energy generation projects are not compatible with the high level objectives underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan and particularly the need to support the local economy to help ensure housing development in Headcorn will be sustainable. However, these concerns need to be offset against a global need for sustainable energy and UK government commitments to green energy targets.

As a compromise therefore, Headcorn Parish Council will limit the amount of land that can be allocated to green energy generation and setting restrictions on the location (with developments a minimum of 0.8km (0.5miles) from the nearest house) and set up (no new pylons) of projects to minimise the impact on surrounding households. At the same time, however, new developments (particularly commercial developments) will be encouraged to invest in green energy generation options and energy efficiency to help boost Headcorn's contribution. This proposed policy mix won almost unanimous support in meetings with residents in June 2014.

The maximum size of any green energy project (not just solar power), will be limited to up to five hectares. Headcorn Parish Council notes that a two hectare large scale Solar Array should produce around 1MegaWatt per year of solar generated power. This equates to enough energy to power between 182 and 216 homes.¹⁸³ Therefore limiting the size of any green energy project to five hectares is equivalent to generating between 30% and 35% of Headcorn's domestic energy usage, well in excess of Headcorn's contribution to UK government targets on energy generation.

HNP28: Commercial energy generation in Headcorn

This policy covers all commercial green energy generation projects in Headcorn. New commercial green energy generation development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted providing:

- The size of the development is a maximum of 5 hectares;
- The development does not require the installation of new pylons to connect the project to the national grid, as these would be visually intrusive in the Low Weald landscape;
- The development is a minimum of 0.8km from the nearest dwelling (unless that house is owned by the developer); and

¹⁸³ The current average UK household consumption is between 4630kwh/year and 4800kwh/year. The figure of 216 homes is calculated assuming the lower usage and 11.5% efficiency for the solar array. Using the higher usage and 10% efficiency would give the 182 figure.

- The screening and landscaping of the development will minimise its visual impact.

In addition, any land used for the development will not qualify as a brownfield site in future, but will need to be restored to its rural character once any development has finished. Therefore adequate funding will need to be provided upfront to ensure that this is possible.

7.5.1 Policies to promote energy efficiency

On its own green energy generation and options to protect the environment were not seen as a priority by residents, with the exception of rainwater harvesting in both individual homes and within developments. However, as an alternative to large scale commercial green energy generation, residents felt that the introduction of environmentally friendly measures in new homes and commercial developments was an attractive option.

HNP29: Promoting energy and water efficiency

This policy covers Small Village Developments and Larger Village Developments (as defined under policy HNP6), as well as any commercial or community developments with a floorspace of more than 150m² in Headcorn. New development in Headcorn, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted providing:

- It can demonstrate how it will contribute to either energy generation or a relative reduction in energy usage, so that the energy needs associated with the development will be lower than for standard properties of the type proposed;
- It employs best practice options for promoting efficient use of water, for example through rainwater harvesting; and
- The solutions employed will not undermine the utility and comfort of the intended users.

In addition, any commercial or community developments with a floorspace of more than 150m² in Headcorn should achieve "BREEAM excellent" on water efficiency.

Although no specific requirements are set for small commercial developments (less than or equal to 150m²), micro village developments and individual countryside developments, applicants are encouraged to meet similar standards.

7.6 Priorities for infrastructure spending in Headcorn

In Maidstone's emerging Local Plan, published in March 2014, the Council set out a list for the Borough as a whole of ten infrastructure priorities for residential developments

and five priorities for business and retail developments, to allow the Council to prioritise the delivery of infrastructure where there are competing demands on developer contributions.¹⁸⁴ However, this proposed prioritisation does not make sense in the context of Headcorn, given the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Headcorn's infrastructure. Therefore, to ensure that any spending on infrastructure in Headcorn better serves the needs of the community, Headcorn Parish Council is proposing that these priorities should be reordered in the case of developments in Headcorn, to improve effectiveness.

HNP30: Priorities for infrastructure spending in Headcorn

Where there are competing demands for developer contributions towards the delivery of infrastructure for new development proposals, the demands will be prioritised in the manner listed below, which ranks infrastructure types in order of importance.

Infrastructure priorities for residential development will be:

1. Utilities (particularly sewerage provision and broadband)
2. Education (particularly the expansion of Headcorn Primary School)
3. Public realm (particularly road safety priorities, parking and connectivity)
4. Open Space (both for wildlife and community enjoyment)
5. Emergency Services (including police)
6. Libraries (to ensure existing provision in Headcorn remains strong)
7. Social Services
8. Health
9. Affordable Housing (particularly shared equity)
10. Transport

Infrastructure priorities for commercial and community development will be:

1. Utilities (particularly sewerage provision and broadband)
2. Public realm (particularly road safety priorities, parking and connectivity)
3. Education (particularly the expansion of Headcorn Primary School)
4. Open Space (both for wildlife and community enjoyment)
5. Emergency Services (including police)

7.6.1 Priorities for infrastructure spending by Headcorn Parish Council

Once Maidstone Borough Council introduces a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) then 25% of the money raised from developments in the Parish will be allocated to Headcorn Parish Council for spending on local community needs.¹⁸⁵ This money is separate, for

¹⁸⁴ This is Policy ID1 and was designed to cover all infrastructure priorities, not just those funded through CIL payments.

¹⁸⁵ This assumes that Headcorn has introduced its Neighbourhood Plan.

example, from the money that Kent County Council will receive for the primary school, or investment by developers in infrastructure within their development. The purpose of this money is to help improve infrastructure more widely and the priorities for this spending by Headcorn Parish Council will be:

1. Introducing a pedestrian crossing at the station;
2. Introducing traffic calming measures, such as a traffic island, at the northern edge of the village on the A274 towards Maidstone, to slow traffic into the village;
3. Introducing physical markings of the speed limit on the road surface on the sections of the A274 approaching the High Street from both the north and the south that are within the 30mph speed zone;
4. Improving vehicle parking in the centre of the village;
5. Introducing bicycle parking facilities on or near the High Street;
6. Upgrading the recreational facilities at Hoggs Bridge Green to create an adventure playground to cater for teenagers and young adults in the Parish;
7. Creating a wildlife sanctuary with access to the River Beult;
8. Upgrading the sports and leisure facilities in the Parish;
9. Improving connectivity; and
10. Improving coach parking facilities in the village.

Wherever possible Headcorn Parish Council will look to raise additional funding through grants, as well as to work with the local community, local businesses and developers to try and achieve as many of these priorities as possible. Where, for example, grant money is only available for a specific project then Headcorn Parish Council will prioritise that project, to help make effective use of funds.

7.7 Monitoring activity

Table 14 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP24, HNP25, HNP26, HNP27, HNP28, HNP29, and HNP30.

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|---|--|
| 32) Monitor traffic safety within the village, for example through speed watch and liaison with the police on accident rates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess whether traffic problems in the Parish are worsening and to identify key areas for further improvements. |
| 33) Monitor the effectiveness of parking restrictions and enforcements within the village. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform Headcorn Parish Council about the need for improvements to either enforcement or restrictions. |
| 34) Monitor the amount and use of parking provided within key parking facilities in the village. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the amount of parking provided is not being reduced over time and that usage in individual sites justifies its continued designation as a strategic parking |

| | |
|---|---|
| | site. |
| 35) Monitor the options for high-performance broadband provision and their availability in Headcorn. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess what the appropriate standards are and to lobby for upgrades in provision for Headcorn as a whole. |
| 36) Monitor the effectiveness of sewerage provision in Headcorn village. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess whether the current level of provision meets the needs of residents and to allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |
| 37) Undertake a visual assessment of each green energy development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at meeting the design and landscaping goals within the Neighbourhood Plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |
| 38) Monitor the use of green energy and water management options within developments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |
| 39) Monitor infrastructure spending and provision within the Parish. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess whether the current level of provision meets the needs of residents and businesses in the Parish. |

8.0 POLICIES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE IN HEADCORN PARISH

Headcorn Parish is very much part of the rural landscape typical of the Low Weald, with buildings (including farm buildings) scattered throughout the countryside, typically clustered in small groups. This development pattern is reinforced by the existence of several small hamlets within the Parish, including Bletchenden and Hawkenbury. However, there are still parts of the Parish with no buildings to break up the countryside.

Figure 36 View of Headcorn's rural setting from the Greensand Way



Note: Headcorn's rural setting is typical of the Low Weald of Kent. Even Headcorn village is heavily camouflaged, remaining hidden in the landscape and it will be important that future development in the parish does not alter this. Photo taken at grid ref 835496, north of Parsonage Farm and Charlton Court, looking south towards Headcorn village.

The surrounding countryside, its peace and the opportunity for walks from the village were highly valued in the Residents' Survey. For these reasons the majority of new housing will be concentrated in and around the existing village, with very limited development in the countryside in order to maintain Headcorn's attractive setting in the Low Weald.

In all 22.6% of Headcorn's housing stock and 23.3% of Headcorn's households are situated in the countryside in Headcorn Parish.¹⁸⁶ The evidence gathered to support

¹⁸⁶ The difference between these two is accounted for by the fact that there is a much lower proportion of unoccupied properties in the countryside in Headcorn than there is in the village itself. At the time of the 2011 Census unoccupied properties stood at 7.6% of the total housing stock in the village, but only 4.0% of the housing stock in the countryside surrounding Headcorn village. In both cases the proportion of unoccupied properties was higher than for Maidstone Borough as a whole, where empty properties made up 3.4% of the housing stock.

Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan indicated a strong desire for people to be able to stay in the area and the potential need to provide accommodation for grown-up children or elderly relatives. Therefore some limited development could be desirable in the rural area surrounding the village (just as it would be in the village) to meet this type of need and it is not something that is opposed by the majority of residents – only 36.4% of residents felt that the countryside in Headcorn was definitely not suitable for development.

However, both Maidstone Borough and national government policies place significant restrictions on building in the countryside and there is a risk that too much development could harm the look and feel of the countryside surrounding Headcorn – something residents value highly. The approach in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is to use national guidelines on the types of new housing allowed in the countryside, but with the Neighbourhood Plan providing guidance on issues such as the siting of any development.

Figure 37 Examples of typical rural architecture in Headcorn Parish



Note: Development in the countryside of Headcorn Parish typically involves small clusters of buildings, used for either agricultural or domestic purposes, with fields on either side giving views out to the countryside. These photos show some typical examples of the grouping of buildings and historic architecture in Headcorn countryside. Clockwise from the top left the examples come from: Ulcombe Road; Plumtree Road; Love Lane; and the view across the fields towards Grigg Lane.

The policy covering new housing development in the countryside under the National Planning Policy Framework is:

“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

- the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; or

- where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets; or
- where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting; or
- the exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling.

Such a design should:

- be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;
- reflect the highest standards in architecture;
- significantly enhance its immediate setting; and
- be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.¹⁸⁷

It will be very important to get the balance right between building that could benefit the community and preserving the unique feel of the countryside surrounding Headcorn. To ensure that any flexibility does not have a damaging impact on the countryside there will need to be strict controls over what is possible. For example, it will be important that any new development reflects the existing settlement pattern. This could be achieved, for instance, by dividing an existing large house into two, or converting an outbuilding. It will be important to ensure that:

- new development reflects existing settlement patterns within the Parish, with development taking place within small clusters of buildings, avoiding where possible the use of isolated settings and open countryside, or creating the appearance of ribbon development;
- development is small scale and the cumulative scale of new development does not dominate the established dwellings;
- there are limited opportunities to manipulate the system so that, for example, planning permission for a new dwelling will not immediately trigger permission for further dwellings;
- conversion of agricultural buildings should focus on redundant buildings, and avoid picking buildings for conversion which will need to be replaced;
- any new buildings reflect Headcorn's rural setting through appropriate design and landscaping; and
- any loss of agricultural land for domestic use is limited.

HNP31: Policy for building new dwellings in the countryside

New buildings will generally NOT be permitted in the countryside. The exceptions are where: it is needed for a rural worker, because it is necessary for them to live close

¹⁸⁷ National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 55.

to where they work; it involves the reuse of a redundant, permanent building, or brownfield site; the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset, or would help secure its future; or it is an exceptional new dwelling, as defined by the NPPF. For planning permission to be granted, any proposal will need to demonstrate that:

- There is a justification of need, with any scheme being assessed on its own merits;
- The choice of materials, scale, height and form means it will fit unobtrusively with any existing building and the character of the immediate local area;
- The conversion of any buildings to residential use will not result in the loss of significant employment opportunities;
- The development respects the setting of any listed buildings, or other buildings that contribute towards the character of the countryside or exemplify the development of the Low Weald;
- The development is sensitively landscaped, making good use of native plants, including trees such as oak and ash as well as fruit trees, to protect and enhance the green nature of the rural landscape in Headcorn;
- The traditional boundary treatment of the site will be retained and where possible reinforced;
- The siting and access reflect the established development pattern within the surrounding countryside of the Parish, which involves small clusters of dwellings and agricultural buildings, with significant gaps in between that provide views out to the countryside; and
- It will not cause or exacerbate traffic problems, for example by blocking lines of sight at junctions; contributing to on-road parking; or creating vehicular access that will be difficult to use, for example, because of poor lines of sight.

There are some recent examples in Headcorn of planning permission being granted for a dwelling associated with an agricultural exception site where the dwelling is introduced, but no attempt is made to undertake the agricultural use proposed. As agricultural exception sites are often in open countryside, it is important that this practice is discouraged.

HNP32: Planning permission for agricultural exception sites

Where planning permission is being sought for a dwelling to support an agricultural exception site, the conditions for this permission will include a requirement that applicants will need to demonstrate within five years that the revenues from the intended use of the site are sufficient to cover at least half of the household's income (including any benefits or pension payments), or the earnings of one person on the national minimum wage (calculated at the rate of the national minimum wage for someone aged 21 or over who works seven hours a day, 260 days a year), whichever is lower.

Where it is not possible to demonstrate that this level of revenues has been achieved, except under exceptional circumstances (such as prolonged and severe weather conditions, or where the applicant demonstrated at the time of the original application that more time would be needed to establish revenues, for example where orchards need to mature), planning permission for any dwelling associated with the site will be withdrawn and the applicant will be required to restore the site to agricultural use.

In cases where applicants had argued in their original application that it would take longer than five years to establish revenues, then they will need to demonstrate at the five year point that sufficient progress has been made to secure future revenues and will be expected to demonstrate that the revenues are sufficient to meet this test within the agreed extension to the time frame. Otherwise again planning permission for any dwelling associated with the site will be withdrawn and the applicant will be required to restore the site to agricultural use.

8.1 Gypsy and traveller pitches

This section covers the policies governing gypsy and traveller development within Headcorn Parish, namely the maximum number of pitches to be given permanent planning permission and the framework governing the siting and layout of potential pitches.

For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan a gypsy and traveller pitch is site (or part of a site) that is (or will be) occupied by one household, where the occupants meet the definition of gypsies and travellers provided by the DCLG.¹⁸⁸ For planning purposes the DCLG defines "gypsies and travellers" as:

"persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.

In determining whether persons are "gypsies and travellers" for the purposes of planning policy, consideration should be given to the following issues amongst other relevant matters:

- a) whether they previously led a nomadic habit of life
- b) the reasons for ceasing their nomadic habit of life
- c) whether there is an intention of living a nomadic habit of life in the future, and if so, how soon and in what circumstances."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ DCLG (2015b).

¹⁸⁹ DCLG (2015b).

8.1.1 Identifying the appropriate target level of gypsy and traveller pitches for Headcorn

Headcorn's relatively remote location means that Headcorn is not a good strategic location for gypsy and traveller accommodation, over and above locally identified needs, because such development would not meet the definition of sustainability set out in the NPPF. In this regard, large scale gypsy and traveller sites (of more than one or two pitches) would be particularly problematic. This is because the same considerations around the impact of remoteness on the desirability of a location for development (for example distance to secondary schools, hospitals and employment centres), apply to the gypsy and traveller community as they do to the settled population.¹⁹⁰

One thing that is very noticeable in any assessment of the housing stock in Headcorn is the high numbers of caravans and other mobile or temporary structures, as the 2011 Census showed that 3.5% of households in the Parish live in a caravan or other mobile or temporary structure. This compares to 0.9% of households in Maidstone Borough as a whole, 0.6% in the South East and 0.4% in England. Although not all those households see themselves as gypsies and travellers, the 2011 Census reveals that gypsies and travellers also account for a much higher proportion of the population than elsewhere, with 1.3% of the population in Headcorn classified as a gypsy and traveller, compared to 0.5% in Maidstone Borough as a whole, 0.2% in the South East and 0.1% in England.

¹⁹¹

Looking forward, the results of Headcorn Residents' Survey did not identify any demand for gypsy and traveller pitches either for owner occupation or for rent amongst emerging households, even from the 2.5% of the survey respondents from households who were living themselves in a static mobile, either on their own land or a rented site.¹⁹² This is important, because there is tension between the settled community and gypsy and traveller community, in part because of perceptions of unfair treatment on the former. Many of the survey responses expressed a belief that gypsies and travellers have found it easier than the settled community to get planning permission. This belief is founded in part on the fact that for the Parish as a whole the number of caravans or mobile or other temporary dwellings increased by 21% between 2001 and 2011 and that caravans or mobile or other temporary dwellings now make up over 12% of dwellings in the countryside surrounding Headcorn village. Furthermore, since October 2011 planning permission has been granted for 9 permanent gypsy and traveller pitches and 22 temporary pitches in Headcorn.

¹⁹⁰ Planning policies on gypsies and travellers stresses the importance of sustainability, see DCLG (2015b) and in particular paragraphs 8 and 13.

¹⁹¹ There is clearly a mismatch between the number of gypsies and travellers and number of mobiles in the parish, which is particularly stark in the countryside surrounding the village. However, some of this discrepancy will be accounted for by the Shenley Park development close to the airfield.

¹⁹² However, enormous care is needed with these results, as the small size of the sample of those living in a static mobile within the survey, the low numbers of gypsies and travellers in the Parish and the fact that living in a static mobile will be a poor proxy for someone coming from a gypsy and traveller background, means that these results will not be robust and cannot be used to rule out potential need from emerging gypsy and traveller families in Headcorn.

Although there is no identified Headcorn specific need, any policy on the target number of pitches for Headcorn must also take account of assessed need elsewhere. The evidence underpinning Maidstone Borough Council's emerging Local Plan was gathered before the government issued a new definition of gypsy and traveller for planning purposes that emphasizes the importance of being able to demonstrate a nomadic lifestyle.¹⁹³ Maidstone's evidence identified the need for 187 permanent gypsy and traveller pitches to be provided in the Borough over the period October 2011 to March 2031. This identified need was for 105 permanent pitches over the period 2011 to 2016 and 82 pitches over the remaining plan period to 2031. However, the evidence also showed that roughly half of the gypsy and traveller community never travels, suggesting the estimates of need are likely to be revised down.¹⁹⁴

Since 1 October 2011, MBC have granted planning permission for 75 permanent gypsy and traveller pitches in Maidstone Borough, meaning the current period shortfall is for 30 pitches.¹⁹⁵ However, in addition they have also granted permission for 33 temporary pitches over the same period.

Communities and Local Government Planning Policy for Traveller Sites suggests temporary pitches can be used to make up the number of pitches where there is a lack of a five year supply of deliverable pitches.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, if temporary pitches were included in the MBC count, there is no shortfall. However, in the long term Maidstone clearly needs to provide permanent alternatives. In these circumstances there is a need to determine what would be a fair allocation for Headcorn.

MBC recognise that dispersal of gypsy and traveller pitches across the Borough is likely to minimise the impact of development. Not all parishes are suitable for gypsy and traveller development, meaning there are 31 parishes that could take gypsy and traveller development. One pitch per parish would therefore deliver the necessary level of additional development needed for the period 2011 to 2016 and a further 2.65 pitches per parish would deliver the estimated need over the remainder of the plan period. Allowing for a dispersal pattern that means that larger parishes, such as Headcorn, take more development, then over the whole of the plan period Headcorn would need to contribute 5 gypsy and traveller pitches, see Table 15.

Table 15 Option for dispersal of gypsy and traveller pitches in Maidstone Borough

| | 2011 to 2016 | 2016 to 2031 |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| MBC Target Pitches | 30 | 82 |

¹⁹³ See DCLG (2015b). The definition is provided at the start of this section, as well as in Appendix A1.

¹⁹⁴ See Brown et al (2012) and in particular Table 7.1.

¹⁹⁵ MBC confirm this data is accurate dated 18th February 2015.

¹⁹⁶ See paragraph 27, DCLG (2015b).

| | 2011 to 2016 | 2016 to 2031 |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Pitches/Parish | 0.97 | 2.65 |
| Pitches in large parishes | 1 | 4 |
| Pitches in small parishes | 1 | 2 |

Note: Based on dispersal across 31 parishes in Maidstone Borough. Green Belt, AONB and SSSI would restrict the potential dispersal of gypsy and traveller development in some parts of the borough. Taking these restrictions into account would mean that of the 41 parishes within MBC 8 parishes would not be suitable for development and a further two would be unsuitable as they appear to be fully developed. 10 parishes would be deemed large and 21 would be deemed small. Large parishes would consist of the five Rural Service Centres (Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst) plus the five larger parishes of Boughton Monchelsea, Coxheath, Hollingbourne, Sutton Valence and Yalding.

The Government states that its overarching aim for gypsy and traveller policy is:

“to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.”¹⁹⁷

Headcorn Parish Council believes that five additional permanent gypsy and traveller pitches would represent a fair allocation for Headcorn of the number of pitches needed in Maidstone over the remainder of the plan period and intend to set that as the target level of gypsy and traveller development within the parish. Combined with the nine permanent pitches that have already been granted planning permission in Headcorn since 2011, this would mean that permanent gypsy and traveller pitches made up 5% of the amount of development envisaged in Headcorn Parish over the period 2011 to 2031 and that Headcorn would contribute 7.5% of Maidstone’s total assessed need for gypsy and traveller pitches.¹⁹⁸ Headcorn Parish Council consider that this is the maximum that the parish could take given that: sustainability considerations imply that Headcorn is not a suitable strategic location for developments of this type; the fact that Headcorn already has a higher share of gypsy and traveller development (1.3% compared to 0.5%) than the Maidstone average; and the concerns over unfairness noted above.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, if a large site were to come forward elsewhere in the Borough, reducing the number of pitches needed overall, Headcorn Parish Council would expect to reduce the target level of development for Headcorn.

Maidstone Borough Council’s emerging Local Plan identifies 23 permanent pitches. One of these (GT1(2) Little Boarden, see Figure 38), is in Headcorn Parish and therefore within the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Area. This is an existing gypsy and traveller site containing three pitches and its current planning status is one pitch with permanent

¹⁹⁷ Paragraph 3, DCLG (2015b).

¹⁹⁸ Since October 2011, 9 permanent pitches and 22 temporary pitches have been granted planning permission in Headcorn parish.

¹⁹⁹ In the Regulation 14 Consultation on Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan 50% of respondents wanted to see fewer gypsy and traveller pitches allowed in the parish over the plan period.

planning consent and two pitches that have temporary consent, which expires in December 2015. Therefore this allocation results in a net gain of two permanent pitches and Headcorn Parish Council supports this proposal.

Figure 38 GT1(2) Little Boarden, Boarden Lane, Headcorn



Source: Maidstone Borough Council (2014)

This implies that a further three permanent pitches would be needed in Headcorn over the plan period. Headcorn Parish Council does not propose identifying specific sites, but where sites come forward, they will need to comply with the policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Not all planning applications for gypsy and traveller pitches are for permanent planning permission. The limit on the total number of gypsy and traveller pitches to be given planning permission under Policy HNP33 is framed in terms of permanent planning permission, because that is the need that Maidstone Borough Council has to address.

However, in keeping with the strict rules governing development in the countryside as part of this Neighbourhood Plan, Headcorn Parish Council believes that applications for temporary planning permission for a gypsy and traveller pitch should not normally be granted. Permanent planning permission is more appropriate than temporary permission, because it is more likely to give the applicant a permanent stake in the community and because it is usually accompanied by greater scrutiny of the site's suitability. Only in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear need within the Headcorn community, will temporary permission therefore be granted. Where temporary planning permission is granted, there can be no presumption that the applicant will be able to convert this into permanent permission in future.

HNP33: Limits on planning permission for gypsy and traveller pitches

The maximum number of gypsy and traveller pitches to be granted permanent planning permission in Headcorn Parish over the remainder of the plan period (to 31 December 2031) will be set to five pitches. This total will include the specific allocation of two permanent pitches at Little Boarden (see Figure 38).

Temporary planning permission (for up to three years) for a gypsy and traveller pitch will NOT generally be granted, but may be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Where temporary planning permission is granted, there can be no presumption that the applicant will be able to convert this into permanent permission in future.

In order to be granted planning permission, any proposed development will need to comply with the relevant planning policies, including the policies within this Neighbourhood Plan, in particular HNP34.

For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan a gypsy and traveller pitch is site (or part of a site) that is (or will be) occupied by one household, where the occupants meet the definition of gypsies and travellers provided by the DCLG.²⁰⁰

8.1.2 Policies governing the siting and set up of gypsy and traveller pitches in Headcorn

Policy HNP31 sets a framework for new dwellings for the settled community in the countryside in Headcorn whereby the presumption is that planning consent will not typically be given, and where it is it will be only allowed for small developments that are strictly controlled to ensure that their visual impact on the countryside is limited. The reason for this is that the countryside surrounding Headcorn village is highly valued by residents, meaning that it is important to protect it as part of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

²⁰⁰ DCLG (2015b).

However, it is not just the settled community that potentially want to live in the countryside. Gypsy and traveller developments tend to be contentious, because they are often in open countryside (and therefore in locations that would not generally be given planning permission if the application came from the settled community) and frequently spring up without prior consent. Furthermore, their impact can often lead to harm to the appearance of the countryside, including in some cases developments that due to their scale and siting would be more appropriate for a suburban environment, which is undesirable. The result of this type of development led to an appeal being recently turned down in Headcorn, because the Planning Inspector felt that it would severely harm both the appearance and the character of the countryside.²⁰¹

It is important to ensure that any future gypsy and traveller developments in Headcorn avoid creating these types of problems, both to help preserve the value that residents get from being surrounded by beautiful countryside and to avoid situations where applicants invest in infrastructure for a development that will not be acceptable in the long run. This means that it is important to be clear which policies potential developments need to conform with and these requirements are set out in Policy HNP34. This policy includes a requirement for potential developments to abide by the design policy HNP1, because many of the issues raised by that policy (such as privacy and parking) are also relevant for gypsy and traveller developments. This is particularly true where the proposed development includes the creation of a utility block or outbuildings, as that will be part of the built environment in Headcorn. Policy HNP34 also sets out the conditions that will be associated with gypsy and traveller applications, which simply reflect the conditions for this type of development currently in use.

HNP34: Planning permission for gypsy and traveller pitches

This policy covers planning permission for all gypsy and traveller pitches in Headcorn, including applications for temporary permission. For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan a gypsy and traveller pitch is site (or part of a site) that is (or will be) occupied by one household, where the occupants meet the definition of gypsies and travellers provided by the DCLG.²⁰² Planning permission for gypsy and traveller pitches, in accordance with Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, will be dependent on the proposed scheme complying with the relevant policies within this plan, in particular policies HNP1, HNP2, HNP3, HNP4, HNP5 and HNP33. In addition the scheme should demonstrate that:

- There is a justification of need;
- The choice of scale, height and form means it will fit unobtrusively with the character of the immediate local area and that it will be small scale and will not dominate the immediate surrounding area;
- It is not situated in more isolated parts of the Parish;

²⁰¹ Appeal A: APP/U2235/A/13/2198352 and Appeal B: APP/U2235/A/13/2198345.

²⁰² DCLG (2015b).

- The traditional boundary treatment of the site will be retained and where possible reinforced;
- Any loss of agricultural land will be limited;
- The siting and access reflect the established development pattern within the surrounding countryside of the Parish, which involves small clusters of dwellings and agricultural buildings, with significant gaps in between that provide views out to the countryside;
- There will be direct access to the site via an existing highway or driveway, without the need to cross additional field boundaries; and
- It will not cause or exacerbate traffic problems, for example by blocking lines of sight at junctions; contributing to on-road parking; or creating vehicular access that will be difficult to use, for example, because of poor lines of sight.

Finally, any approved application for a gypsy and traveller site will be conditional and the following conditions will apply:

- Use of the site will be restricted to residential use and no business activity or the storage of business paraphernalia will be allowed.
- Site should be well planned with soft landscaping and should positively enhance the environment by blending in to the existing natural landscape.
- Site should have limited hard standing enough to satisfy safe egress and access and not be enclosed with high walls and fencing that give the impression that the occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community.
- The number of days for visiting caravans, which increase the number of caravans above those allowed within the planning application, will be limited.
- Lighting of the site must not interfere with neighbours and must be sympathetic to its local environment.
- Details of foul drainage must be approved by the local authority.

Where temporary planning permission is granted, applicants will be required to restore the site to its original condition and use once the permission has expired.

8.2 Monitoring activities for developments in the countryside

Table 16 Monitoring activities for Policy HNP31, HNP32, HNP33 and HNP34

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose |
|--|---|
| 40) Undertake a visual assessment of each countryside development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at meeting the design and landscaping goals within the Neighbourhood Plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |
| 41) Monitor the number of new dwellings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to |

created in the countryside in Headcorn Parish and their location, as well as whether they have been granted permission under the relevant national policies covering isolated dwellings and agricultural exception sites (currently Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

assess how the policy is working in practice and to inform future planning applications.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>42) Monitor the number of new gypsy and traveller pitches given planning permission in the countryside in Headcorn Parish and their location, as well as whether they have been granted permanent or temporary permission.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to assess how the policy is working in practice and to inform future planning applications. |
| <p>43) Undertake a visual assessment of each gypsy and traveller development once it is completed to assess how successful it is at meeting the design and landscaping goals within the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow Headcorn Parish Council to be able to share information with potential developers about what has been successful and why, and where they believe improvements could be made to future schemes. |

9.0 SUMMARY OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan has been driven by evidence: evidence on the needs and preferences of residents and businesses; evidence on individual issues, such as the state of the sewerage network; and evidence on sustainability, both in terms of which potential sites are likely to be most sustainable and what the implications of sustainable development, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, are for Headcorn. At a high level, these findings have been combined to create a vision and a set of high-level policy objectives to underpin Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. However, the same approach has also been taken to creating the individual policies within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. The belief is that this approach is the best way to deliver a robust planning framework for Headcorn that will ensure the parish continues to thrive.

The focus on sustainability has played an important role in shaping Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. In particular, the realization that Headcorn is relatively far from all the surrounding local employment centres, as well as key services such as secondary schools and hospitals, presents some significant challenges when trying to ensure that development will be sustainable. To meet these challenges the policy framework underpinning the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that any development will be both small scale and phased over time, to help maximize the benefits by ensuring it is designed to match local needs, including the needs of local businesses. Evidence strongly suggests that if expansion is too rapid it will create problems – certainly over the period 2001 to 2011 the creation of an additional 200 new homes in Headcorn saw the proportion of empty properties rise from 2.7% to 6.8% of the housing stock (double the Maidstone average).

9.1 How do the policies met the vision underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan?

The vision underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is: for Headcorn to continue to thrive as a friendly, rural community with a strong local economy. We believe that Headcorn should evolve gradually over time in a way that, through appropriate choices of the scale and design of individual developments, preserves and enhances the distinctive character, landscape and setting of the village, while meeting the needs of local residents and businesses. This will be achieved by:

1. Maintaining a sense of being a country village, with a strong local community.
2. Supporting a vibrant local economy, based around the High Street, agriculture, leisure, tourism and small business enterprise.
3. Ensuring the village is supported by a robust infrastructure, designed to meet the needs of local residents and businesses.
4. Ensuring that there is a robust policy framework governing development in the countryside around Headcorn that will support both local needs and the benefits residents receive from being surrounded by beautiful countryside.

5. Ensuring that development in the Parish is managed in a way that is sustainable; promotes small scale development; is well designed; is capable of meeting the needs of local residents in different age groups and family units; and is in keeping with its setting.

So how do the policies in Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan combine to deliver both the Vision for Headcorn, and the associated high-level policy objectives? No individual objective could be achieved through a single policy, because each objective has several aspects. This is also true for the overarching Vision for Headcorn. Instead it is important that the policies combine together to deliver an effective framework to govern planning in Headcorn. Table 17 shows the link between individual policies and the Vision and high-level policy objectives underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 17 The link between individual policies and the Vision and high-level policy objectives underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan

| Vision and high-level policy objectives | Individual policies |
|---|--|
| The vision is for Headcorn to continue to thrive as a friendly, rural community with a strong local economy. We believe that Headcorn should evolve gradually over time in a way that, through appropriate choices of the scale and design of individual developments, preserves and enhances the distinctive character, landscape and setting of the village, while meeting the needs of local residents and businesses. | HNP1, HNP2, HNP4, HNP5, HNP6, HNP7, HNP8A, HNP8B, HNP9, HNP10, HNP11, HNP12, HNP13, HNP14, HNP15, HNP16, HNP17, HNP18, HNP19, HNP20, HNP21, HNP22, HNP23, HNP30, HNP31, HNP32, HNP33 and HNP34 HM Projects 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 |
| Maintaining a sense of being a country village, with a strong local community. | HNP1, HNP2, HNP4, HNP6, HNP7, HNP8B, HNP13, HNP14, HNP15, HNP16, HNP18, and HNP30 HM Projects 1, 2, 3 and 4 |
| Supporting a vibrant local economy, based around the High Street, agriculture, leisure, tourism and small business enterprise. | HNP18, HNP19, HNP20, HNP21, HNP22, and HNP23 HM Project 4 |
| Ensuring the village is supported by a robust infrastructure, designed to meet the needs of local residents and businesses. | HNP4, HNP11, HNP15, HNP18, HNP24, HNP25, HNP26, HNP27, HNP28, HNP29, and HNP30 HM Projects 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 |
| Ensuring that there is a robust policy framework governing development in the countryside around Headcorn that will support both local needs and the benefits residents receive from being surrounded by beautiful countryside. | HNP1, HNP2, HNP3, HNP4, HNP5, HNP15, HNP18, HNP19, HNP20, HNP21, HNP22, HNP23, HNP28, HNP31, HNP32, HNP33 and HNP34 HM Project 2 |
| Ensuring that development in the Parish is managed in a way that is sustainable; | HNP1, HNP2, HNP3, HNP4, HNP5, HNP6, HNP7, HNP8A, HNP8B, HNP9, HNP10, |

| Vision and high-level policy objectives | Individual policies |
|--|--|
| promotes small scale development; is well designed; is capable of meeting the needs of local residents in different age groups and family units; and is in keeping with its setting. | HNP11, HNP12, HNP13, HNP14, HNP15, HNP16, HNP17, HNP18, HNP24, HNP25, HNP26, HNP27, HNP29, HNP31, HNP32, HNP33 and HNP34 HM Projects 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 |

9.2 Summary of which policies apply to different development types

This section summarises which policies apply to the different types of development, to help potential applicants know which policies they need to consider.

Table 18 Summary of the policies that apply to different types of housing and commercial development

| Policy number | Policy description | Micro Village Developments | Small Village Developments | Larger Village Developments | A Headcorn Community Self build | Countryside Developments | Gypsy and traveller Developments | Community Developments | Retail & Retail Warehouse Developments | Tourist and Leisure Developments | Strategic Employment sites | Small Business Developments | Commercial Energy generation |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| HNP1 | Design policies for Headcorn | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | |
| HNP2 | Protection of trees, hedgerows and ponds | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| HNP3 | Dealing with the risk of flooding | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| HNP4 | Protection of communal spaces and community assets in Headcorn | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| HNP5 | Protection of key views in Headcorn | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| HNP6 | Definition of allowable housing development types in Headcorn Village, including maximum size | Y | Y | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP7 | Phasing of house building in Headcorn | | Y | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP8A | Self build housing | | Y | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP8B | A Headcorn community self build scheme | | | | Y | | | | | | | | |
| HNP9 | Affordable homes | | | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP10 | Housing for the elderly and those with disabilities | | Y | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP11 | Preconditions for housing development in Headcorn | | Y | Y | Y | | | S | S | S | | S | |

| Policy number | Policy description | Micro Village Developments | Small Village Developments | Larger Village Developments | A Headcorn Community Self build | Countryside Developments | Gypsy and traveller Developments | Community Developments | Retail & Retail Warehouse Developments | Tourist and Leisure Developments | Strategic Employment sites | Small Business Developments | Commercial Energy generation |
|---------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | village | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP12 | Potential strategic housing development sites in Headcorn Village | | Y | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP13 | Site coverage and housing densities for Small and Larger Village Developments in Headcorn village | | Y | Y | Y | | | | | | | | |
| HNP14 | Landscaping in developments and the encouragement of new open and recreational spaces in Headcorn Village | | Y | Y | Y | | | | | | | | |
| HNP15 | Connectivity and access | | Y | Y | Y | | | | | | | | |
| HNP16 | The mix and design of housing in Larger Village Developments | | | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP17 | Micro Village Developments | Y | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HNP18 | Promoting the role of Headcorn High Street | | | | | | | | Y | | | S | |
| HNP19 | Promoting tourism in Headcorn | | | | | | | | | Y | | | |
| HNP20 | Headcorn Aerodrome | | | | | | | | | S | | S | |
| HNP21 | Promoting key employment sites – Barradale Farm | | | | | | | | | | S | | |

| Policy number | Policy description | Micro Village Developments | Small Village Developments | Larger Village Developments | A Headcorn Community Self build | Countryside Developments | Gypsy and traveller Developments | Community Developments | Retail & Retail Warehouse Developments | Tourist and Leisure Developments | Strategic Employment sites | Small Business Developments | Commercial Energy generation |
|---------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| HNP22 | Promoting key employment sites – Stonestile Business Park | | | | | | | | | | S | | |
| HNP23 | Supporting small business development | | | | | | | | | | | Y | |
| HNP24 | Priorities for improving road safety in Headcorn village | | S | S | | | | | S | | S | | |
| HNP25 | Provision of parking in Headcorn village | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | S | S | | S | |
| HNP26 | Provision of broadband in Headcorn | | Y | Y | Y | | | S | S | S | S | S | |
| HNP27 | Sewerage provision in developments in Headcorn Village | | Y | Y | Y | | | S | S | S | S | S | |
| HNP28 | Commercial energy generation in Headcorn | | | | | | | | | | | | Y |
| HNP29 | Promoting energy and water efficiency | S | Y | Y | Y | S | | S | S | S | S | S | |
| HNP30 | Priorities for infrastructure spending in Headcorn | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| HNP31 | Policy for building new dwellings in the countryside | | | | | Y | | | | | | | |
| HNP32 | Planning permission for agricultural exception sites | | | | | S | S | | | | | | |
| HNP33 | Limits on planning permission for gypsy and traveller pitches | | | | | | Y | | | | | | |

| Policy number | Policy description | Micro Village Developments | Small Village Developments | Larger Village Developments | A Headcorn Community Self build | Countryside Developments | Gypsy and traveller Developments | Community Developments | Retail & Retail Warehouse Developments | Tourist and Leisure Developments | Strategic Employment sites | Small Business Developments | Commercial Energy generation |
|---------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| HNP34 | Planning permission for gypsy and traveller pitches | | | | | | Y | | | | | | |

Note: "Y" indicates the policy always applies. "S" indicates that the policy will apply in some circumstances.

A1 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Affordable Housing | <p>The National Planning Policy Framework defines Affordable housing as Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.</p> <p>Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.”²⁰³</p> |
| Affordable rented housing | The NPPF defines affordable rented housing as housing that is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). |
| Community asset | The key community facilities serving Headcorn Parish. These are the village hall, primary school, library, doctors’ surgery, public houses and the many churches and chapels that serve the parish. |
| Custom build housing | Custom build housing, including self build, is housing commissioned and built by individuals, or groups of individuals, for their own use, either by building the home on their own or by working with a builder, contractor or package company. |
| DCLG | Department for Communities and Local Government |
| Defra | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| Dwelling | For the purposes of Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan, a dwelling is defined as either any building, or part of a building, that is suitable for occupation by a single household unit. Therefore a building that consisted of two flats, for example, would count as two dwellings. Similarly, a building for shared occupation (where occupants, who are |

²⁰³ Department for Communities and Local Government (2012), Annex 2, Glossary.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| | <p>not part of the same family unit, share communal facilities, but have their own bedrooms) will be counted as having the same number of dwellings as there are bedrooms.</p> |
| Gypsies and travellers | <p>For planning purposes the DCLG defines “gypsies and travellers” as: persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.</p> <p>In determining whether persons are “gypsies and travellers” for the purposes of planning policy, consideration should be given to the following issues amongst other relevant matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) whether they previously led a nomadic habit of life b) the reasons for ceasing their nomadic habit of life c) whether there is an intention of living a nomadic habit of life in the future, and if so, how soon and in what circumstances. |
| Gypsy and traveller pitch | <p>For the purposes of Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan a gypsy and traveller pitch is site (or part of a site) that is (or will be) occupied by one household, where the occupants meet the definition of gypsies and travellers provided above.</p> |
| Headcorn community self build scheme | <p>For the purposes of Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan the definition of a Headcorn community self build scheme is a scheme where a group of individuals with strong links to Headcorn Parish come together to organize the design and construction of their new home directly, either by building the house themselves, or working with subcontractors. The maximum size of a Headcorn community self build scheme will be nine dwellings.</p> |
| Intermediate housing | <p>The NPPF defines Intermediate housing as homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes</p> |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| | for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing. |
| KCC | Kent County Council |
| Larger Village Development | For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, a Larger Village Development is defined as a housing development consisting of more than nine dwellings that is either within the village or on land immediately adjacent to the village envelope. The maximum size of a small village development is 30 dwellings. |
| Local Green Space | Local Green Spaces are green areas of particular importance for local communities. Neighbourhood Plans can designate an area as a Local Green Space, which means that no new development will be allowed, except under very special circumstances. The policy framework governing Local Green Spaces is given in paragraphs 76-78 of the National Planning Policy Framework. |
| MBC | Maidstone Borough Council |
| Micro village development | For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, a Micro village development is a development consisting of up to two dwellings, either within Headcorn village, or on land immediately adjacent to the village envelope. |
| NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| RSC | Rural Service Centre |
| Self build housing | Self build housing is when an individual, or group of individuals, directly organizes the design and construction of their new home, either building the house themselves, or working with subcontractors. |
| Self build plot | For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan the definition of a self build plot is a plot suitable for the construction of a single dwelling where an individual, or group of individuals, will organize the design and construction of their new home directly, either by building the house themselves, or working with subcontractors |
| Small Village development | For the purposes of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, a Small Village development is a development consisting |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | <p>of more than two dwellings, within the village, or on land immediately adjacent to the village envelope. The maximum size of a small village development is nine dwellings.</p> |
| Social rented housing | <p>The NPPF defines <i>Social rented housing</i> as housing that is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.</p> |
| SSSI | <p>Site of Special Scientific Interest</p> |
| Travelling showpeople | <p>For planning purposes the DCLG defines “travelling showpeople” as: members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family’s or dependants’ more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.</p> |
| UK NEA | <p>UK National Ecosystem Assessment</p> |

A2 HEADCORN'S EVIDENCE BASE

The analysis in this Neighbourhood Plan makes extensive use of a variety of data sources provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), including: the Census data for 2001 and 2011; the Business Register and Employment Survey; and the ONS mapping tool for rural-urban classifications. In most cases the data for Headcorn refer to Headcorn Parish, but where the data refer to either Headcorn Ward or Headcorn Village (i.e. the built-up area of Headcorn) that is made clear in the text.

In addition to national statistical sources, the analysis in this report also uses the evidence collected by Maidstone Borough Council to inform their emerging Local Plan, in particular the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) produced by GL Hearn (2014) and the Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land Forecast produced by GVA (2014).

A2.1 Survey evidence for Headcorn

The report also draws heavily on a series of surveys by the Headcorn Matters Team, which were undertaken to provide Headcorn specific information to inform the Neighbourhood Plan for Headcorn Parish.²⁰⁴ These surveys, and the approach used, have been used as a case study produced by Planning Aid to help other Neighbourhood Planning groups think about how to gather evidence.²⁰⁵ In total, six surveys of Headcorn were undertaken. This evidence has since been supplemented by evidence gathered from feedback sessions with residents and businesses in the Parish; the position statements gathered from the Primary School and various local sports clubs; as well as the responses to the Regulation 14 Consultation on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.

A2.1.1 Headcorn Residents' Survey, 2013.

This was a survey of all residents of Headcorn Parish aged 14 and over, with volunteers canvassing the dwellings in the Parish to talk to residents and to give fliers to all households to alert residents that the survey was being conducted. The Parish Council also used other means to alert eligible participants, such as notices on the village green and on the village website. Participants were given the option of responding on-line or on paper and asked questions in a variety of multiple choice and free text forms. The survey achieved 797 responses and it is estimated that these responses represent 612 households. Based on the data for the 2011 Census, the estimated response rate was over 28% of the eligible population and around 42% of households. Questions included asking participants about: their vision for Headcorn; what they value about living in the Parish; threats and opportunities of development; appropriate size of individual developments; support for overall development; preferences on where to build; preferences for specific types of

²⁰⁴ These surveys could not have been undertaken without the help and support of a large number of volunteers based in Headcorn.

²⁰⁵ See: <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/case-studies/view/314>.

housing needed, including housing for gypsies and travellers; housing need from within the household and friends and family; moving expectations; size and tenure of property occupied; views on local infrastructure; views on design and environmental issues; travel patterns; traffic issues; work patterns and local employment needs and preferences; demographic details; and length of time in the Parish.

A2.1.2 Headcorn Survey of Businesses, 2013.

This was a survey of owners and managers of businesses based in Headcorn Parish. Participants were given the option of responding on-line or on paper and asked questions in a variety of multiple choice and free text forms. The survey achieved 55 usable responses, which is a 38.5% response rate, based on the estimate of 143 businesses operating in the Parish at the time of the survey, who all received notification that the survey was taking place and how to participate. Questions included asking participants about: their views on Headcorn as a location to do business; constraints on future expansion; number of employees in the business; number of employees living in Headcorn; the location of the majority of their customers; commuting patterns of the respondent; type of business; sectors that should be encouraged as part of the Neighbourhood Plan; and what would encourage businesses to locate in Headcorn.

A2.1.3 Headcorn Estate Agents' Survey, 2013.

This was a survey of seven estate agents, who are the main estate agents selling and renting properties in the Parish. This survey was conducted face-to-face, based on a discussion guide. Participants were asked a series of questions to help explore the demand and supply conditions in Headcorn's property market.

A2.1.4 Traffic surveys.

Two traffic surveys were undertaken: one in 2013 and one in 2014 (to gather evidence of the impact on traffic movements of the relocation of the doctors' surgery to the outskirts of the village). The surveys were conducted mid-week, during school term time in both the morning and evening, as well as key points during the day. See Jefferys (2015) for full details.

A2.1.5 Survey of Headcorn Primary School, 2014.

A survey conducted by Headcorn Primary School of parents, pupils, teachers and governors to gather evidence on their preferences for the future development of the school and how to cope with the need for expansion.

A2.1.6 Feedback sessions

As well as the formal surveys, residents and businesses were given opportunities to feedback informally during a series of meetings held during 2013 and 2014 and these

responses have also informed Headcorn's evidence base, particularly the poster sessions held in June 2014, which allowed participants to use stickers to respond to a series of questions.

A2.1.7 Position statements

As well as the surveys, Headcorn Parish Council also requested position statements from Headcorn Primary School and various clubs and societies in Headcorn (including the bowls club, cricket and tennis club, football club and badminton club), to help understand their needs. A position statement was also requested from the doctor's surgery, but this was not provided.

A2.1.8 Regulation 14 Consultation responses

The Regulation 14 Consultation on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, which closed on July 31, 2015, provides helpful evidence from residents, businesses, developers and statutory consultees. As well as open ended responses, in the consultation with residents, residents were asked six specific questions to help guide further development of the plan. These questions covered:

- whether they supported the plan overall (93.9% yes);
- whether they supported that there should be no more than between 140-160 additional new homes (on top of the 109 with definite planning permission) between now and 2031 (95.3% yes);
- whether they agreed that the level of social rented and shared equity homes in new developments should be 20% (89.0% yes);
- whether they supported the strategic sites identified on the sites map (73.3% yes);
- of the sites identified on the site map, which three sites should be a priority (66.8% said yes to land northwest of Maidstone Road, 28.4% to land between Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank, 57.0% to land on the north side of Lenham Road, 57.2% to land on the south side of Lenham Road, and 63.3% to land between Knaves Acre and Kent Cottage); and
- whether they agreed with the proposed limit of 5 gypsy and traveller pitches in the parish between 2015-31 (43.8% yes, 5.2% no, 2.2% the limit should be higher, 50.0% the limit should be lower).

A2.2 Specially commissioned reports

As part of the evidence gathering for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, Headcorn Parish Council commissioned three specialist reports covering the overall sustainability of house building in Headcorn; a site assessment exercise; and an assessment of the state of Headcorn's sewerage system.

A2.2.1 Analysing the overall sustainability of housing development in Headcorn

Headcorn Parish Council commissioned Analytically Driven Ltd to analyse how much housing development would be sustainable in Headcorn over the period 2011 to 2031. The assessment uses the definition of sustainability within the National Planning Policy Framework, which defines sustainability in economic, social and environmental terms. A key part of the analysis is to assess whether Headcorn is right location for housing “to support growth and innovation” (which is a crucial part of the NPPF’s definition of economic sustainability). The results show that Headcorn is relatively far from key urban centres – the time, distance and cost of travel to the nearest urban centres will act as a significant barrier to those hoping to enter the labour market. This means that for development in Headcorn to be sustainable it needs to be geared to local needs. See Driver (2014) for full results and Appendix A3 for a summary of the key results.

A2.2.2 Sustainability appraisal of possible strategic development sites in Headcorn

It is important not only to consider the question of how much development is needed overall, but also where that development should best take place. Therefore, Headcorn Parish Council commissioned the internationally-renowned consultants Levett-Therivel to undertake an assessment of the sustainability of potential strategic development sites in Headcorn village. See Therivel (2015) for full details and Appendix A4 for a summary.

A2.2.3 Headcorn foul drainage assessment

The results from the Residents Survey and the Survey of Businesses in Headcorn Parish, as well as observed overflow at the manhole in Moat Road and the results of the Water Cycle Study by Halcrow Group Limited (2010) for Maidstone Borough Council all highlight significant problems with the sewerage system in Headcorn.

To identify how prevalent the problems are, where the problems are located and what impact any identified problems might have on the feasibility of further housing development in Headcorn, Headcorn Parish Council commissioned Sanderson (Consulting Engineers) Ltd to undertake an assessment of the sewerage system in Headcorn village. This followed explicit advice from the Head of Planning at Maidstone Borough Council that in order to be considered as a constraint, more specific information on the relevant issues was needed.

The study was a modelling exercise based on information provided by Southern Water, which is the company responsible for sewerage in Headcorn. Results from the study identified that the current system has significant problems, including:

- 15 sewage pipes that already have insufficient capacity, including 9 locations, totalling some 432m linear run, on the main distribution network;
- 14 sewage pipes that suffer from back-fall (where sewage is trying to flow uphill);
- 74 sewage pipes (around 60% of the sewerage network in the village) where the pipes are not self-cleaning due to inadequate velocity; and
- 6 sections of sewage pipes that suffer from all three problems.

These problems are in evidence throughout the village and include several sections of major pipework that are important for the functioning of the entire sewerage system in the village – in other words, problems are not simply confined to small, localised areas. The results also highlighted that Southern Water's records are far from complete, with at least some data missing for 45% of the manholes in the village, suggesting further problems might emerge when more accurate records are available. For example, the problem section of sewerage in Moat Road could not be modelled, because Southern Water's records suggested that sewage flowed in both directions, something that is unheard of in engineering terms.

Southern Water acknowledge that their own hydraulic model of the sewerage system in Headcorn predicts that in periods of heavy rainfall flooding does occur at low points in the network,²⁰⁶ particularly in the Moat Road area. This is because surface water inundates the sewerage system and compromises its functioning. This will reflect the fact, amongst other things, that many older properties in the village are legitimately allowed to discharge surface water into the sewerage system, because they predate the rules forbidding this.

Southern Water is working with the lead flood authority (Kent County Council) to progress a Surface Water Management Plan, which will identify potential solutions to the significant problems in Headcorn. Headcorn Parish Council welcomes this and looks forward to discussing how the situation can be improved. Until then, Headcorn Parish Council considers that Southern Water's own modelling work demonstrates that there is inadequate capacity in the sewerage system in Headcorn.

As with any network, the sewerage system needs to be able to cope with peak load demand, so it is important that the sewerage system is able to function regardless of whether it is raining or not. Therefore the approach to assessing the capacity of the system should be based on when the volume of material using the system will be at its highest, rather than basing calculations of capacity on average flows. This is for the same reason that it would not make sense to assess flood risk based on average conditions.

The problems identified by the work of both Sanderson (Consulting Engineers) Ltd and Southern Water, make it extremely important that Maidstone Borough Council treats this issue appropriately in the planning process. The state of the sewerage system in Headcorn is a serious "constraint" in planning terms and developments should not be permitted if they will exacerbate the situation.

²⁰⁶ In other words, sewage escapes from the system. This occurred on 17 days during 2014 at Moat Road, almost 5% of the year.

A3 SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN HEADCORN

This appendix summarises the results of the analysis of the sustainability of housing development in Headcorn, which was undertaken to help underpin Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, see Driver (2014) for full details. The purpose of the analysis is to answer the question of how much housing development would be sustainable in Headcorn over the period 2011 to 2031. The assessment uses the definition of sustainability within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which defines sustainability in economic, social and environmental terms.

A key part of the analysis is assessing whether Headcorn is right location for housing to support growth and innovation (which is a crucial part of the NPPF's definition of economic sustainability). The results show that Headcorn is relatively far from key urban centres – the time, distance and cost of travel to the nearest urban centres will act as a significant barrier to those hoping to enter the labour market, for example, as well as important services such as hospital care. Not only will the distances involved make it harder for households to effectively engage in these labour markets, unless there are local jobs available in the Parish locating in Headcorn would result in commuting patterns that are significantly above average in terms of time, distance and cost. This makes Headcorn a less desirable location relative to other, better connected, options, particularly for workers on low incomes, as the cost of commuting would account for a significant proportion of their income, potentially leading them to be excluded from the labour market.

The key arguments in Driver (2014) on the impact of distance are presented and updated in Section 2.5 of this Plan. However, the key message is that in order to be sustainable, housing growth in Headcorn should be targeted at addressing local needs, rather than Borough-wide considerations. Headcorn is not a good strategic location to meet housing needs elsewhere in Maidstone Borough, whether those needs are for those in employment, or more vulnerable members of society. This message is supported by the recent publication of the government's policy on boosting productivity and growth, which emphasizes the importance of providing housing close to where people work, and that the provision of housing in rural areas, such as Headcorn, should reflect local need.²⁰⁷

To understand how much housing would be sustainable in Headcorn, Driver (2014) also assessed the level of local need, and these results are summarised in Table 19. Overall:

- The assessment of local jobs' growth suggests that enough jobs will be created over the plan period to support between 73 and 107 additional households. Allowing for some commuting, in line with existing commuting patterns, suggests that even under extremely optimistic assumptions a maximum of 145 new homes would be required over the plan period. This suggests that economic sustainability criteria would support the need for some housing growth in Headcorn, but that this growth should be limited to a maximum of 145 new homes. Furthermore, sustainability criteria suggest that

²⁰⁷ See HM Treasury (2015) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2015).

this growth should be phased over time, rather than provided up-front, to better match jobs' growth patterns.

- The assessment of new household formation within Headcorn Parish, combined with the likely availability of properties from within the existing housing stock, suggests that to meet emerging needs in the Parish the net need for new dwellings over the plan period is zero. This means that social sustainability criteria would not support the need for new housing development in Headcorn Parish over the period 2011-2031. This is reinforced by the fact that the proportion of empty properties in Headcorn at the time of the 2011 Census, at 6.8%, was twice the average for Maidstone Borough, while empty properties in the village made up 7.6% of the housing stock.
- The assessment that social sustainability criteria do not support the need for additional house building in Headcorn is also true when the demand for affordable (social rented) homes is assessed. For social housing, likely demand amongst the local population in Headcorn is less than the estimated supply of properties onto the market given observed vacancy rates. This reinforces the fact that social sustainability criteria would not support the need for new housing development in Headcorn Parish over the period 2011-2031.
- There are two potential exceptions where demand for specific types of housing might outstrip supply, although in practice the net need for new homes will be limited in both cases and any increased supply should be phased over time. The first is the potential need for sheltered accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly within the Parish. The second exception is that of shared equity property, where there may be demand for up to 49 units over the plan period, although here affordability issues may limit actual (as opposed to hypothetical) demand in practice.
- The results show that there is a significant gap between the cost of property for sale in Headcorn and the incomes of even those on median earnings. Indeed even the difference between the cost of property in Headcorn and property in Maidstone is significant - for all except one bedroom properties, purely the difference in prices between the two locations is more than three times median earnings, and in the case of four bedroom properties the difference is more than four times. Furthermore, to allow someone on median earnings with a 10% deposit and a mortgage of 3.5 times earnings to buy in Headcorn, the average cost of property in the Parish would need to fall by between 15.7% (for a one bedroom property) and 81% (for a four bedroom property). The size of this discrepancy means that increased housing development in Headcorn will not be the answer to affordability – even if sufficient development were undertaken to achieve falls of these magnitudes, the result would be to cause significant harm to the 78.1% of households who are home owners in Headcorn. This means that alternative ways of addressing housing affordability will need to be explored, such as self-build and windfall housing.
- An assessment of the need for new housing from an environmental perspective would never suggest that more housing was needed than either social or economic criteria would justify. The only exception to this would be if it could be demonstrated that the choice of location would preserve more environmentally valuable land elsewhere. However, Headcorn's relatively remote location and its distance from local urban

centres mean that this would not be a consideration here, as Headcorn is not a good substitute for land needed to meet development needs elsewhere.

- All the analysis, from an economic, social and environment perspective, suggests that properly phasing development would be preferable to the upfront provision of any housing development in Headcorn.

Table 19 Summary of the analysis of the level of housing development in Headcorn supported by sustainability considerations

| | Number of households over plan period | | Phased or upfront? |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Supply | Demand | |
| Total number of new households supported by jobs growth in Headcorn | | 73-107 | Phased |
| Number of households in Headcorn (including commuters) supported if employment patterns are unchanged | | 99-145 | Phased |
| Number of existing homes that are likely to become available ^a | 507-596 | | Phased |
| Number of homes needed to support household formation in Headcorn (gross) | | 376-452 | Phased |
| Net need for houses from within the Parish (with no house building) | | 0 | - |
| Number of homes available for those outside the Parish (with no new building) | 55-220 | | Phased |
| Number of affordable (social rented) homes likely to become available through vacancies | 140 | | Phased |
| Maximum estimated demand for affordable homes | | 86 | Phased |
| Net need for affordable homes from within the Parish (with no house building) | | 0 | Phased |
| Number of affordable homes available for those outside the Parish (with no new building) | 54 | | |
| Maximum housing growth supported by residents | | 150 | Phased |
| Environmental considerations | | As low as possible | Phased |
| Amount of new housing sewerage system can support | | 0 | - |
| Amount of new housing Primary School can support | | 0 | - |

Note: Taken from Driver (2014). ^aEstimate allows for those moving out of the Parish and expected number of deaths. The higher number also includes the number of household spaces that have no usual residents (excluding estimates of second homes).

Source: Analytically Driven Ltd

A4 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL VILLAGE HOUSING SITES

This appendix summarises the results of a site assessment exercise which was done to help underpin Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan by considering the sustainability of potential strategic development sites in Headcorn village, see Therivel (2015) for full details. The site assessment exercise supplements the analysis of the overall level of housing development in Headcorn that would be sustainable in Driver (2014). It is important that the two pieces of analysis are considered in tandem – if developing a site leads to an oversupply of housing, then even if the site itself is judged as potentially suitable for development, its development would be unsustainable in a macro sense. Similarly, unless the site chosen for development is suitable, the overall results would not be sustainable even if the amount of development proposed coincides with the identified level of sustainable development.

The site assessment exercise undertook a sustainability appraisal of 20 potential strategic housing development locations in Headcorn Parish. These sites represent the sites submitted to Maidstone Borough Council as potential sites for housing development in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment consultations that Maidstone Borough Council undertook between 2012 and 2014. Sites south of the train station were not considered because they are prone to flooding, are near the River Sherway / River Beult Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and are difficult to access.

The Therivel appraisal used a framework based on the March 2014 sustainability appraisal of the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan, but adapted to the requirements of Headcorn. For instance:

- reference to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Green Belt were removed as this is not relevant to Headcorn;
- references to employment centres and secondary schools were also dropped, as all sites in Headcorn would be inaccessible if judged against these criteria; and
- finally for recreational sites of more than two hectares, Headcorn does not have any recreational sites of this size, and so sites were simply judged relative to the nearest accessible green space of any size (including sports facilities and allotments). Note this last category has been incorrectly labelled in the report on site assessment and should not be used to indicate a site's accessibility to accessible natural green spaces that would meet Natural England's ANGSt definitions.

Decisions on whether sites should be allocated focused primarily on the sites' accessibility to services and the village centre. The more distant sites were considered to negatively affect the open countryside and/or would lead to ribbon development; would increase the likelihood that people would travel by private car; and would reduce the potential for improving services for existing residents. The size of the site was also a determining factor: larger sites were thought to have the potential to overwhelm the village with too many new homes, especially if they were all built at once rather than phased over the plan period.

Each site was allocated one of five colour codes from dark green (most sustainable) to red (least sustainable). The report also considers what measures should be put in place to

Figure 39 Map of sites close to village considered in the site assessment exercise, with their sustainability ranking

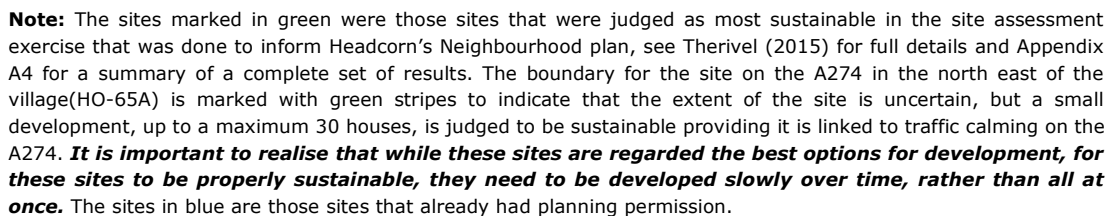


Table 20 Summary of the results of the site assessment exercise

| | Site* | Potential no. of new homes** |
|-------------------|--|------------------------------|
| most sustainable* | HO-133 Knaves Acre (Land A) | 1-3 |
| | HO-134 Knaves Acre (Land B) | 2-5 |
| | HO-144A Old School Nursery, Station - if replacement nursery is available | 5-10 |
| | HO-70A King's Road - with land for primary school expansion | 50-100 [¥] |
| | HO-65A North west of Maidstone Road: small development on SE end of site linked to traffic calming on A274 | Up to 30 |
| | HO-135 Grigg Lane and Lenham Road | 60-120 [¥] |
| | HO3-238 Land at Lenham Road | 25-50 [¥] |
| | HO-7 Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank | 80-160 [¥] |
| | HO-30 Elizabeth House, Grigg Lane | 4-12 |
| | HO-105 Moat Farm: southern part of site | 100-200 [¥] |
| | HO-144 Old School Nursery, Station if no replacement nursery | 5-10 |
| | HO-131 Lenham Road | 12-25 |
| | HO-132 Lenham Road | 17-35 [¥] |
| | HO2-174 South of Grigg Lane | 27-55 [¥] |
| | HO3-262 Tong Farm | 35-50 [¥] |
| | HO3-278 Land at Moat Road | 25-50 [¥] |
| least sustainable | HO-24 Maidstone Road | 73-147 [¥] |
| | HO-36 Twelve Acre Farm, Grigg Lane | 15-30 |
| | HO-65 North west of Maidstone Road | 301-603 [¥] |
| | HO-70 King's Road if no land for primary school expansion | 50-100 [¥] |
| | HO-152 Greengates, Lenham Road | Up to 10 |
| | HO-153 Great Love Farm, Love Lane | Up to 2 |
| | HO3-261 Land at Tong Farm | 75-150 [¥] |

* Note that some sites show up twice depending on how they would be developed, with "A" being used to indicate that it is an alternative proposal to the one put forward by developers.

** Where a range of houses is given the higher number uses the proposed density of 30 houses per hectare in Maidstone Borough Council's Emerging Local Plan (where applicable taking account of the proposed housing numbers put forward by developers), and the lower number shows the capacity of the site if the existing density of houses in the village (of 15 houses/hectare) is used. In cases where the landowner has proposed significantly lower densities, or where the team considered that it was appropriate to only develop a small section of a site with a maximum number of houses allowed, then instead of a range a maximum number is given.

[¥]Regardless of the site assessment ranking, where sites have the capacity to take more than 30 homes, other evidence shows that to be sustainable they need to be developed in units of up to 30 homes at a time.

A5 ASSESSMENT OF KEY BUSINESS SITES IN HEADCORN

One of the reasons that Headcorn has a strong (albeit small) local economy, with high levels of business ownership, is that it benefits from a number of business sites in the Parish that help support clusters of small to medium sized businesses. While access issues means that the Rural South area of Maidstone (which includes Headcorn) will have limited strategic attractiveness as employment space,²⁰⁸ nonetheless these employment sites can help support the local economy. This Appendix provides an overview of the key business sites within the Parish. The location of each individual site is shown in Figure 32 in Section 6.3.

A5.1 Barradale Farm, TN27 9PJ

Barradale Farm business site is strategically located about 1.5km north of the village centre fronting and with direct access to the main A274. It consists of some 5004 m² of recently constructed industrial buildings mainly in Use Classes B1 (Business Use); B2 (General Industrial Use); and B8 (Warehousing & Distribution). Barradale Farm evolved as a brownfield development based on the replacement of former deep litter chicken sheds and the total site consists of 2.92Ha. The present buildings comprise Phase 1 which derives from the replacement of former poultry houses. Overall, the Barradale Farm site was assessed as “very good” in the assessment of employment sites undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council, with a recommendation to “protect and maintain”.²⁰⁹

A5.1.1 Capacity to expand

Headcorn Parish Council judges that the Barradale Farm site is best positioned for expansion to support the needs of the business community over the plan period. It has direct access to the A274, with pavement available for most of the way into the village. Maidstone Borough Council Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation under Policy EMP1 (4) proposes allocating land to the rear of Barradale Farm for a further 5500m² of business space in User Classes B1; B2; and B8. Headcorn Parish Council supports the proposed expansion of employment development, subject to ensuring that meaningful highway improvements and speed attenuation measures are introduced on the A274.

A5.2 The Ringles Business Park, TN27 9LY

The Ringles Business Park is located on Grigg Lane, some 1.75km from the village centre. The Neighbourhood Plan recognises that the access to the Ringles is not ideal, because the carriageway in Grigg Lane is only 5m wide and the existing built environment is largely residential, with the more recent addition of the village surgery and pharmacy. Access and egress via Oak Lane is also far from ideal. In addition, although the site can readily be

²⁰⁸ See GVA (2014a).

²⁰⁹ See GVA (2014a).

accessed by pedestrians from the village centre, certain lengths of Oak Lane and Grigg Lane are without pavements, which could lead to potential pedestrian safety issues.

The Ringles Business Park consists of 1062m² of predominantly B1 development that has evolved by the exercising of Permitted Development Rights under the General Development Order. This development has involved the change of use and conversion of existing redundant agricultural buildings on a unit by unit bases rather than demolition and replacement. Currently there are a further 930m² of mainly disused agricultural buildings and around 28,500m² of mostly redundant horticultural glasshouses.

The existing and potential business space at The Ringles is outside the floodplain. However, part of the overall Ringles site, situated towards its south east boundary and extending to about 2.35Ha, is within the Environment Agency designated Floodplain Zones 2 & 3 where prohibition on development prevails.

This site was not assessed in the assessment of employment sites undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council.²¹⁰

A5.2.1 Capacity to expand

The location of the Ringles, which only has access to the A274 via narrow village roads, means that it is not ideal as a business location for activities that would require significant heavy vehicular access. However, the site has established user and access rights that have existed for well over half a century. The Ringles site currently has a further 930m² of mainly disused agricultural buildings that could undergo a change of use and conversion to business space, without the need for Planning Permission by virtue of Permitted Development Rights conferred by the General Development Order. Given the proximity to residential settlements, B1 (business) development is considered more suitable in this location.

However, the 28,500m² of mostly redundant horticultural glasshouses are too large to come within the scope of Permitted Development Rights. The local employment market is unlikely to be able to sustain such a large element of additional business space, particularly in view of access issues with the location of the Ringles Business Park and Headcorn more generally. Therefore, whilst these glasshouses would qualify as a brownfield site, it is considered that allocating these glasshouses for either business or housing development during the Neighbourhood Plan Period to 2031 to be unsustainable in terms of access; education provision; highways; sewerage and market saturation and that development consideration should be deferred until the subsequent Plan Period from 2031 onward.

A5.3 Stonestile Business Park, Stonestile Lane, TN27 9PG

This site derives from the sub-division and conversion of the former *Thames Valley Eggs* distribution centre, which had a long standing Existing User rights for distribution activities.

²¹⁰ See GVA (2014a).

The units on this development are held under four separate ownerships, each with their own designated parking. Total employment space at this site extends to some 1310m². Access is via a single, shared point direct onto Stonestile Lane, which is a single, narrow track highway leading out on to the A274 at the Stonestile Crossroads. Sight lines in both directions along the A274 at this point are notoriously bad.

This site was not assessed in the assessment of employment sites undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council.²¹¹

A5.3.1 Capacity to expand

Access difficulties mean that the Stonestile Business Park is not a suitable location for expansion under the current access arrangements. However, Headcorn Parish Council notes that it would be possible to create an access link between the site and the Barradale Farm site. Therefore, Headcorn Parish Council would prefer any further development at Barradale Farm being done in a way that would facilitate the creation of a potential link to and from the neighbouring Stonestile Business Park to the west, to provide a new shared access on to the A274. This would allow the existing access to Stonestile Business Park to be sealed permanently, thereby reducing heavy commercial and other vehicles using the notoriously dangerous and accident prone Stonestile Crossroads. This would potentially mean that some expansion of the Stonestile Business Park could also be possible. Such expansion would be conditional on the creation of a link with Barradales Farm to provide access from the site to the A274.

A5.4 Great Tong Farm, Great Tong, TN27 9PP

Great Tong Farm is still a predominantly arable, working farm. However, the conversion of around 1088m² of former redundant agricultural buildings to business use has meant that the site now supports around 16 business units. Access is via a long narrow roadway, and Great Tong Farm is around 3.25km linear distance north of the centre of Headcorn village. The absence of pavements on the A274 renders the estate unsuitable for safe pedestrian access, resulting in high dependency on motor vehicle access.

This site was not assessed in the assessment of employment sites undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council.²¹²

A5.4.1 Capacity to expand

Accessibility issues mean that this is not a site that is suitable for significant expansion. However, some expansion might be possible where the aim was to create small business units that would not result in a significant increase in vehicular movements.

²¹¹ See GVA (2014a).

²¹² See GVA (2014a).

A5.5 Daniels Group Site, Biddenden Road, TN27 9LW

This site is located some 1.5km south from the village centre on the main A274. The site originated as the *Unigate* milk processing, bottling and distribution site and it is understood that the location was probably established during the inter war years (1919 – 1939) and subject to significant remodelling of the buildings during the 1960s and 1970s. The total site consists of 3.35Ha and has established user rights for industrial activity. The current operations are shared by two businesses, Daniels Group (fruit juice manufacturers) occupying some 5163m² and local transport company Locks Transport occupying some 1728m². Whilst the site is located on the A274, there is no pedestrian pavement from the Smarden Road junction making access on foot extremely dangerous.

Overall, this site was assessed as “good” in the assessment of employment sites undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council, with a recommendation to “protect and maintain”.²¹³

A5.5.1 Capacity to expand

The operations of the two occupying companies cover more or less the entire site, suggesting that there is little scope for expansion at the Daniels Group Site without significant redesigning of the buildings, layout and access/circulation patterns. In addition the site is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3. These factors, combined with poor pedestrian access along the A274 south of the village, mean that this is not a site that has been selected for expansion within the Neighbourhood Plan. However, Headcorn Parish Council would look favourably on a proposal for expansion to meet the needs of the existing businesses, providing the proposal was in keeping with Headcorn’s rural character.

A5.6 Mixed Use Site: Naked Foods, Smarden Road, TN27 9HH

Located just inside Smarden Road, just off the A274, This brownfield site has been previously known as Kent Seal Foods and Shearway Foods. Totalling some 1.32 Ha most of the buildings dated from the 1950s – 1960s with later additions and comprising a variety of former production and storage buildings. The site has experienced increasing vacancy rates more recently. Part of the site is the Environment Agency Designated Flood Plain. The site was assessed as “poor” in the assessment of employment sites undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council with a recommendation to manage and monitor.²¹⁴

Part of the site to the north east at the rear was granted Planning Permission for 14 dwellings under Planning Reference MA/13/1105. This consent has not yet been implemented. Buildings on this part of the site to the rear have recently been demolished in advance of this housing development. The recent history of this sited directs that it should be classified as a “mixed use site” for the proposed of the Neighbourhood Plan. Assuming a continuing commercial presence is envisaged for part of the site, this will imply that such

²¹³ See GVA (2014a) assessment of Headcorn South site.

²¹⁴ See GVA (2014a) assessment of Headcorn South site.

commercial activity/development would more appropriately fall within Use Class B1 by virtue of the proximity of the consented residential development, in accordance with the Maidstone Borough Council *Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land Forecast*.²¹⁵

A5.6.1 Capacity to expand

The site's poor rating and issues with occupancy mean that this site is not likely to see expansion over the plan period. Indeed part of the site has already been demolished to make way for housing development. However, its proximity to the village would bring benefits from maintaining some employment use on the site, providing the proposed development use was suitable for its proximity to a residential area.

A5.7 Headcorn Aerodrome, TN27 9HX

Headcorn Aerodrome is also known as Lashenden Airfield. The Aerodrome is based at Shenley Farm, and was first used by one aircraft in the 1920s, before serving as an advanced landing ground for Canadians and then Americans in World War II. Today, as a private civil airfield and parachute centre, it also houses an Air Warfare Museum, the Air Cadets of 500 Squadron and a helicopter company, together with 10 other aviation and tourism related businesses. The aerodrome currently consists of around 5500m² of built space, together with the associated airfield runways.

This site was not assessed in the assessment of employment sites undertaken for Maidstone Borough Council.²¹⁶

A5.7.1 Capacity to expand

Headcorn Aerodrome is an important part of the local economy and helps put Headcorn on the tourist map, both through flying and parachuting activities, as well as the annual Air Show. However, its presence in the Parish does create some tensions, with around a third of residents worrying about aircraft noise. In addition, the absence of pavements on the section of the A274 south of the village renders the aerodrome unsuitable for safe pedestrian access, resulting in a high dependency on motor vehicle access.

On balance, it is considered that the right policy mix is to support the Aerodrome as a tourist attraction operating under its existing rules, with the vast majority of residents supporting this approach.²¹⁷ This would allow for the upgrading of facilities to support tourism activity, providing these will not significantly increase noise levels, but would involve maintaining a grass (rather than hard surface) runway, to ensure it remains a home for smaller light aircraft. Where possible, Headcorn Parish Council would encourage the introduction of noise reduction measures associated with the use of the Aerodrome.

²¹⁵ See GVA (2014a) assessment of Headcorn South site.

²¹⁶ See GVA (2014a).

²¹⁷ In meetings with residents in June 2014, 97.5% of residents supported this approach.

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For more information contact:

Headcorn Parish Council,
Parish Office,
Headcorn Village Hall,
Church Lane,
Headcorn,
TN27 9NR
Phone: 01622 892496
Email: headcornparishclerk@gmail.com
<http://www.headcornpc.kentparishes.gov.uk/default.cfm>