

## **Comments on Sustainability Appraisal following EiP Session on 11 October 2016**

### **Binbury Park Estates and Quinn Estates**

At the Examination in Public ('EiP') Session on 11 October 2016 it was agreed that Binbury Park Estates / Quinn Estates ('BPE-QE') would provide a written rebuttal to the Council's assessment of the Binbury Park (Detling) site. BPE-QE is promoting for the development of residential, employment and complementary uses as illustrated on the information already provided to the Examination (**Documents ED 022 and ED 023**).

#### **Summary of Comments Already Made**

At previous EiP sessions in relation to housing need and alternative strategic development BPE-QE noted that:

- the Council has not fully accounted for the need for new homes, including because it has failed to take account of needs arising from London. This is not only important because of the requirement for local planning authorities to demonstrate that they have a robust five-year housing land supply but also because of the more general need to boost significantly the supply of housing (NPPF Paragraph 47);
- that failure and the failure of the Council to obtain KCC's agreement to its preferred strategy for years 6-15 of the plan period means that (all paragraph references are in the 2012 NPPF):
  - the draft plan is not sound because it is not based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements and does not therefore meet the paragraph 182 test of being "*positively prepared*";
  - the draft plan is not sound because it does not accord with paragraph 47 of the NPPF ("*identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15*") given that in the absence of an agreed transport strategy it cannot be said that sites are deliverable. The draft plan does not therefore meet the paragraph 182 test of being "*consistent with national policy*";
  - similarly, and given that the Council only has KCC's agreement to the first five years of its plan period, it is not "*consistent with national policy*" because it cannot cover a 15-year time horizon and take account of longer term requirements (paragraph 157); and
  - where the delivery of sites straddles years 0-5 and 6-10, the deliverability of these sites cannot be guaranteed because of uncertainty about the transport infrastructure situation and, in any event, there may be a need to impose Grampian-style conditions on planning permissions to restrict housing delivery until such time as transport infrastructure is delivered, particularly in the absence of any policy in relation to pooled contributions to help deliver transport infrastructure.
- the Council's approach to plan preparation is not legally-compliant. In particular the Council cannot have properly tested alternatives (specifically in relation to transport impacts) when it has not yet even completed testing of its preferred strategy. Therefore the draft plan is at odds with Regulation 12 (2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The failure to properly test alternatives also means that the plan does not meet the paragraph 182 test of being "*justified*" (ie "*the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence*");
- one illustration of this is the Council's continued failure to give due consideration to the Binbury Park proposal. The Council has been well aware of the potential of this site by way of KCC's Regulation 18 representations, BPE-QE's Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 representations, and BPE-QE's request for pre-application advice. It is also well aware of the nature of the proposed development on the site comprising somewhere between 1,000 and 1,500 dwellings, employment floorspace, a country park, and social infrastructure. Yet the Council has appraised the site as though it would deliver over 5,000 homes and without taking account of the facilities that would be delivered as part of development meaning that the site scores poorly in terms of sustainability. It has said that the results of assessing between 1,000 and 1,500 dwelling would be no different the assessment of more than 5,000 homes, an assertion that we view with incredulity. If the Council had approached assessment of the Binbury Park site on the basis of requirements

that could legitimately be secured by way of a site allocation (eg the provision of social infrastructure and enhanced public transport provision), the sustainability appraisal would have been much more positive; and

- a proper assessment of the site could then have been made against the other locations that the Council is promoting. In particular we noted at the EiP that all of the Council's options would result in "*significant negative impact*" in terms of Countryside and Heritage (page 165 of 2016 Sustainability Appraisal Appendices) and that increased emphasis on Maidstone urban area (as per the Council's preferred approach) would result in increased congestion – exacerbating the already-acute situation – and further deterioration of air quality (page 163 of 2016 Sustainability Appraisal Appendices).

We cannot see, therefore, how the draft plan can be taken forward in its current state.

### **Landscape**

At the EiP session on 11 October 2016, BPE-QE acknowledged that the MBC proposed changes made to Policy SP17 (1) and (5) addressed our objections to the policy. However, on the matter of the SA the inspector invited BPE-QE to submit a full commentary on the shortcomings of the Council's SA which is at **Appendix 1** to this note.

At the EiP we noted that the assessment of sites' relative merits is a matter of planning balance. In that regard we note a recent appeal decision (APP/V0728/W/15/3063757) where the weight given to boosting the supply of housing outweighed the harm resulting from development in a 'green wedge'.

### **Transport**

The SA of the Binbury Park proposal prepared by MBC is fundamentally flawed in failing to give any due consideration to the inherent ability of major development to deliver key supporting infrastructure, including local retail, a school, medical facilities and enhancements to public transport. These shortcomings are presented in our comments on the SA in the appendix to the statement. As noted above, the Council's overall evidence fails to adequately consider options for spatial distribution of strategic development and fails to present sufficient evidence to justify the preferred strategy. A particular weakness is the complete lack of transport impact evidence justifying the selection of the preferred spatial distribution strategy. At the EiP Session 3A (Transport Modelling Seminar) – the Inspector challenged MBC on this very point. MBC directed the Inspector to the Sustainability Appraisal for evidence of transport appraisal of spatial distribution options – specifically citing the appraisal of bus and rail access. The SA is demonstrably not an adequate appraisal of transport impact; it includes no traffic analysis beyond the preferred strategy and, as noted above, takes no account of the potential for development or LP delivered infrastructure to enhance sustainability. Further details are at **Appendix 2**.

We will be making further comments on the transport infrastructure situation at the EiP session on 17 November 2016.

**17 October 2016**

**Appendix 1**  
**DWLC's Comments on Sustainability Appraisal**

<b>Land Use:</b>				
<i>Appraisal Question:</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Council Response / Comment:</i>	<i>Quinn Response / Answer:</i>	<i>Evidence Source / Additional Notes:</i>
Will allocation of the site lead to loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land?	A = Includes Grade 1, 2 and 3A agricultural land G = Does not include 1,2, or 3A agricultural land	A = Grade 3	A / G = Site is a mix of Grade 3A and Grade 3B land and existing industrial estate (Non-agricultural grade)	<a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx">http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx</a> 1988 Agricultural land map And Grade 3 on more recent maps
Will allocation of the site make use of previously developed land?	R = Does not include previously developed land A = Partially within previously developed land	A = Predominantly greenfield/some PDL	The site includes previously developed land consisting of existing industrial estate and part of Kent Showground (10 – 15%) with remainder of the site low grade agricultural land. Adjoins A249, existing petrol station, café – restaurant garage and Highway depot	Site observation / visit
<b>Landscape, townscape and the historic environment</b>				
<i>Appraisal Question:</i>	<i>Criteria:</i>	<i>Council Response / Comment:</i>	<i>Quinn Response / Answer:</i>	<i>Evidence Source / Additional Notes:</i>
Is the allocation site likely to impact upon a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)	A = On a SAM OR allocation will lead to development adjacent to a SAM with the potential for negative impacts G = Not on or adjacent to a SAM and is unlikely to have an adverse impact on a nearby SAM	A = The SAM of Binbury Castle is situated beyond the existing industrial estate but its wider setting would be adversely affected by development of the land.	A / G = One SAM - Binbury Castle SAM is situated close the existing Detling Aerodrome Industrial Park which adversely impacts on setting of the SAM. The SAM is in a poor condition / state of repair. Remaining land to the north, east and west can be retained undeveloped as open space so wider setting of the SAM will remain unaffected. Development can safeguard and protect the SAM and its setting can be enhanced with public access and interpretation boards provided close to the SAM to allow the public to appreciate and understand the significance and history of the Castle. Binbury Castle could form part of a Heritage Trail around the site (and Thurnham Castle to the south) linked all areas of archaeological / heritage interest which could be used by the public, interest groups and school children as part of the School's curriculum.	Site observation / visit and English Heritage Listings information It appears Council have assume all the site is developed for housing without making allowance for the constraints of the site or policy requirements for public open space associated with the development (5000 houses + open space requirements couldn't fit within the site area) policy requirement to mitigate / reduce harm where appropriate.
Is the allocation of the site likely to impact upon a listed building?	A = Contains or adjacent to a listed building and there is potential for negative impacts G = Not on or adjacent to a listed building and is unlikely to have an impact on a nearby listed building.	A = The remains of Binbury Castle buildings (listed Grade II) are situated beyond the existing industrial estate and their wider setting would be adversely affected by development of this land.	A / G = One listed building - Binbury Castle is also a grade II listed building situated close the existing Detling Aerodrome Industrial Park which adversely impacts on setting of the SAM. Remaining land to the north, east and west can be retained undeveloped as open space so wider setting of the listed building will remain unaffected. Development can safeguard and protect the SAM and its setting can be enhanced with public access and interpretation boards provided close to the listed building to allow the public to appreciate and understand the significance and history of the Castle.	Site observation / visit and English Heritage Listings information.
Is the allocation site likely to impact upon a Conservation Area?	A = Within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and there is the potential for negative impacts G = Not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and is unlikely to have an impact on a nearby <b>listed building</b> (this should be Conservation Area)	G = Not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and is unlikely to have an impact on a nearby listed building.	G = Not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area. The nearest Conservation Area is Detling village and there is no intervisibility between the Site and this CA.	Site visit / MBC website <a href="http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/landscape,-heritage-and-design/hedges">http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/landscape,-heritage-and-design/hedges</a>

Does the site lie within an area with significant archaeological features / finds or where potential exists for archaeological features to be discovered in the future?	A = Within an area where significant archaeological features are present, or it is predicted that such features could be found in the future. G = Not within an area where significant archaeological features have been found, or likely to be found in the future. N = No information available at this stage	G = Some potential possibly but not in safeguarded area.	G = Not within an area where significant archaeological features have been found. Former use of the area as a WWII airfield and current use as arable field and industrial estate mean unlikely that such archaeological features would be found in the future.  Opportunity for existing airfield artefacts that may be of interest to be retained / safeguarded as part of the development and with public access and interpretation boards provided close to the features to allow the public to appreciate and understand the significance and history of the former use of the area during WWII.	Site visit and Archaeological Assessment report
Is the site located within or in proximity to and / or likely to impact on the Kent Downs AONB?	A = In close proximity to the Kent Downs AONB and / or there is the potential for negative impacts G = Not in close proximity to the Kent Downs AONB and / or negative impacts on the AONB are unlikely	A = Wholly within Kent Downs AONB	A = Site located within the AONB and includes / adjoining other existing major development (Detling Aerodrome Industrial Estate / A249 / Kent Showground / Petrol station etc) in the AONB.  AONB policy does not preclude development in an AONB and development proposals can be moderated to minimize effects on the AONB. The proposed development site makes use of land which is considered to be of lesser quality within the AONB, as it is located between the existing industrial estate and the Kent Showground, with commercial development fronting the A249. The site is also immediately adjacent to the A249 which is a physical and visual scar through the AONB. The proposed development site has been informed by the landscape assessment that has been undertaken and land to the north, with views across the Medway Estuary has been protected from development as this is considered to be of higher visual quality.	Site observation / MBC Local Plan Proposals map.
Is the site in the Green Belt? If so, is the allocation of the site likely to cause harm to the objectives of the Green Belt designation?	A = Within or adjacent to the Green belt and development could potentially cause harm to the purposes of the Green Belt designation and / or its openness G = Not within or adjacent to the Green Belt	G = Not within or adjacent to the Green Belt	G = Not within or adjacent to the Green Belt	MBC Local Plan Proposals map.
Would development of the site lead to any potential adverse impacts on local landscape character for which mitigation measures appropriate to the scale and nature of the impacts is unlikely to be achieved?  *Based upon 2012 Landscape Character Assessment and officer comment.	R = Likely adverse impact (taking into account scale, condition and sensitivity issues), which is unlikely to be appropriately mitigated  A = Likely adverse impact (taking into account scale, condition and sensitivity issues) which is likely to be appropriately mitigated  G = Opportunity to enhance landscape character or there is unlikely to be an adverse impact	R = Site forms part of the AONB, the guidelines for this area are to restore and improve. The assessment states any development on this site would be visually intrusive and harmful to the current openness of the site with long distance views to the north and the character of the AONB.	A = Site lies within the AONB which the MBC 2012 Landscape Character Assessment (amended July 2013) identifies the site as lying within the Bredhurst and Stockley Downs character area. This assessment also identifies that the landscape condition of the Bredhurst and Stockley Downs area is ' <b>poor</b> ' and visual sensitivity is ' <b>moderate</b> ' suggesting a ' <i>Restore and Improve</i> ' landscape strategy. <b>This implies that that this part of the AONB is not the same quality / condition as other parts of the AONB.</b>  There are views within the site (which will inform the design and layout of the development) but views towards the site are <b>limited as the area is well contained and enclosed by blocks of woodland and tall hedgerows</b> adjoining the A249 or local lanes which screen views or form backdrop to views. The site is not highly visible from the A249 / wider surrounding area	Site visit / detailed Landscape and Visual Assessment prepared by DWLC (Note: the scope of the assessment has been agreed with MBC landscape architect and Katie Miller at Kent Downs AONB board and will be included in the ES to accompany the application)  General points are: a) All 'greenfield' development sites are likely to result in change / adverse impact on the local landscape character of an area as countryside is becoming urban in character.  b) Large scale development requires large to moderate scale landscapes to accommodate the scale and nature of the development and may include one or more local landscape character areas depending on the level of the character /landscape assessment i.e. County / District / Site level.  c) No landscape and visual assessment undertaken by MBC to assess key aspects and issues of the site.

			<p>as existing undulating topography and woodland / treebelts and hedges screen views [see note (h) to Capacity question]. <b>Longer distance views</b> northwards <b>are limited</b> mainly to areas within the western and northern parts of the site due to internal / surrounding woodlands and undulating topography.</p> <p>Design and layout of the development can accommodate appropriate mitigation to moderate any adverse effects.</p>	<p>d) The MBC 2012 LCA <b>does not</b> consider the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development.</p> <p>e) The 2012 LCA <b>does not</b> state that "any development on this site would be visually intrusive and harmful to the current openness of the site with long distance views to the north and the character of the AONB".</p> <p>f) The assessment <b>does say</b> that "<i>the detractors include dumped rubbish and caravans in fields, large scale farm and industrial sheds, the County Show Ground when in use, as well as a stretch of electricity pylons which cut through the western parts of the area</i>". It also states in relation to views '<i>within the Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs there are views across fields, but these are limited where there are mature remnant orchard trees or blocks of woodland. Views are also limited along parts of the lanes where the hedgerows are taller. Because the majority of trees and hedgerows species are broadleaved and the arable crops are seasonal, the area would appear more open in winter. There are also longer views west of Stockbury, looking towards the Isle of Grain and the Medway Estuary. These views include large industrial estates</i>'</p>
<p>Capacity of the Landscape to accommodate change  *Based upon Landscape Character Assessment 2014</p>	<p>R = Low A = Moderate G = High</p>	N/A	<p>A / R = Whilst the site falls within the AONB it has the capacity to accommodate change as the area is a moderate to large scale landscape which is able to accommodate large scale development with minimal impact on key characteristic features in the landscape such as hedgerows and woodland areas. The site is not highly visible from the A249 / wider surrounding area as existing undulating topography and woodland / tree belts and hedges screen views [see note (h)].</p> <p>There is no 2014 Landscape Character Assessment but the Council have completed a Landscape Capacity Study in January 2015 (see notes).</p> <p>This <b>study does not assess</b> the sensitivity of the 'Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs' LCA as it is within the AONB neither have the Council appropriately assessed the site to determine its capacity, bearing in mind that AONB policy does not preclude development and major development can be permitted subject to tests set out in NPPF paragraph 116.</p> <p>The MBC Landscape Capacity Study however <b>gives guidance on how development at this location can be accommodated [see note (m)] within the AONB</b>.</p> <p>Development of the area can bring forward landscape / environmental opportunities and benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of a new (in excess 50ha) Country Park for use by residents and visitors with connections to the remaining parts of the development via 'greenways', pedestrian and cycleways and other landscape areas thereby extending the landscape infrastructure across the development. The Country Park would be located within the attractive dry valley part of the Site retaining the character of this part of the AONB and allowing</li> </ul>	<p>Site visit / detailed Landscape and Visual Assessment prepared by DWLC (Note: the scope of the assessment has been agreed with MBC landscape architect and Katie Miller at Kent Downs AONB board and will be included in the ES to accompany the application)</p> <p>The Council appointed Jacobs to carry out a Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment and also a Landscape Capacity Study: Site Assessment in January 2015.</p> <p>There are a number of comments / criticisms to be made relating to the Landscape Capacity Study:</p> <p>a) The study is in two parts, the first part of the study assesses the sensitivity of each landscape character area in the Borough, <b>apart from those LCA's within the Kent Downs AONB</b>.</p> <p>b) the second part of the Study assesses the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development (housing , mixed use employment or economic development) on a number of sites put forward for development in the early stages of the local plan process and also sites that came forward as part of the call for sites exercise in 2014 such as our site;</p> <p>c) the study contains no assumptions on the types / scale of development covering large scale (over 200 houses), medium scale (50 to 200 houses) and small scale (1 to 50 houses) or similar assumptions of economic development / mixed used development which is required to undertake a capacity assessment of this nature. In addition, an assumption setting out the anticipated mitigation measures require for each scale of development which would be included as these would be expected to meet planning policy requirements and supplementary planning guidance e.g. minimum open space requirement / introduction of landscaped areas buffers etc to achieve an acceptable development.</p> <p>d) The Binbury Park site is located in LCA1 – Bredhurst and Stockley Downs, and therefore the sensitivity of the LCA not assessed as</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• residents / visitors greater access and to experience a range of views including views northwards towards the Isle of Grain and the Medway Estuary.</li> <li>• The development would provide a bridge over the A249 which would assist in realising one of the aspirations of Maidstone Council 'Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy' (and other adjoining Authorities GI Strategies) as the area is identified as a "Priority Improvement Area". The MBC B&amp;G GI seeks to improve the area and create links between Maidstone and towns of Gillingham and Sittingbourne. The bridge would overcome one of the obstacles / constraints i.e. the A249, in making the links and would connect the site / development to the White Horse Wood Country Park to the south west allowing new residents and visitors greater connectivity to the wider footpath / bridleway network. It would also allow access from the development to the North Downs Way, (long distance recreational path) one of the main recreational routes promoted by KCC / MBC for recreational use / tourist attraction etc which is supported by Kent Downs AONB unit;</li> <li>• Provision of new areas of landscape planting and open multifunctional natural green space as well as new formal areas of open space as sports facilities for use by residents and visitors;</li> <li>• Ecological and environmental enhancements to existing wooded areas, hedgerows and trees and grassland areas and also creation of a greater diversity of wildlife habitats (new woodlands / hedgerows, mosaic of habitat types scrub / long grass / short grass areas / ponds / damp areas etc) increasing tree cover in the area as well as opportunities for existing wildlife to increase and connect to other habitats adjoining the site and other species to colonise the new habitats;</li> <li>• Safeguarding key areas of woodland and other wildlife habitats including ancient woodlands / local wildlife sites and ensuring their long term management and maintenance of these areas for benefit of wildlife with public access restricted to some areas, where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>part of the 1st stage of the Capacity Study (which is relatively detailed and covers most of what would be expected in this type of work) and this detail sensitivity assessment was not available to inform the second stage of the capacity study;</p> <p>e) The assessment methodology requires the landscape character sensitivity to be assessed using four factors: Natural factors, Cultural factors, Landscape Quality / Condition and Aesthetic factors and three other aspects: element that contribute to character (very few on the site), their significance and vulnerability to change, overall quality and condition (poor for the area) / representation of typical character (typical of the particular location but not that typical of AONB) and condition state of repair (poor for the area) and lastly aesthetic aspects of character. <b>None of these are assessed or considered in determining the sensitivity of landscape character of the site;</b></p> <p>f) The second part of study is also inconsistent with the earlier 2012/2013 Landscape Character Assessment in that the <b>landscape sensitivity is now deemed to be 'high'</b> because its character / features etc are similar to the 'Mid Kent Downs' character area and not the local character areas within which the site is situated. The Maidstone 2012 / 2013 Landscape Character Assessment assesses landscape condition as 'poor' and visual sensitivity as 'moderate' and suggests a "Restore and Improve" guidelines / strategy to change implying the landscape character of the area is not 'high' as concluded in the Maidstone Capacity Study. The landscape character sensitivity should be 'moderate' at best given the poor condition of the area.</p> <p>g) The 'Mid Kent Downs' character area is identified in the County Landscape Character Assessment and <b>covers an extensive area and most of the Kent Downs AONB</b> to the north of Maidstone. Given the size / area of the 'Mid Kent Downs' character area it wouldn't be unsurprising to find similar 'open arable landscape on gently undulating downland plateau...with a mosaic of woodland blocks and large scale fields' within the area but what is relevant, is the local character area and its key characteristics and whether the site and surrounding area is consistent with this;</p> <p>h) The second part of study finds that the <b>visual sensitivity of the site is 'Moderate'</b> in part because of its open nature with little vegetation and also 'there are few residential properties in the area which limits the number of highly sensitive visual receptors', which is correct, but the assessment ignores the fact that there are very few public rights of way (footpaths/ bridleways etc) in or adjoining the site and that the use of the PRoW is very limited and therefore the public perception of the area is limited in a similar way to residential properties. It goes on to state the sensitivity is also because of '<i>The proximity to the A249 means that this area is highly visible to vehicle travellers</i>'. This is <b>incorrect</b> as views towards the site are limited to a very fast, short section of the A249 where drivers are concentrating on the road due to the off / on slip roads associated with Highland Garage and Diner and slip road to the industrial park / Binbury Lane and the majority of the views westwards are screened by mature woodland adjoining the A249 (north of Forsters) for most of that short section of the road.</p> <p>i) Visual sensitivity also relates to how well is the landscape used, by whom and how many people 'appreciate' this area as a working</p>
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				<p>landscape from the key viewpoints, places of interest and network of public rights of way. Site visits, undertaken at different times of the year and day, indicated that the majority of the footpaths within and in the vicinity of the Site are not clearly way marked or regularly used as a number of routes were overgrown either by brambles and other vegetation or farmers crops and inaccessible to users. Whilst use of the footpaths etc wouldn't reduce the value of the area as it is nationally important designated landscape the assessment could have referred to how the landscape is valued. The ED-3 site is not highly visible and the existing industrial is not seen at all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>j) The study also identifies the <b>landscape value of the area as 'high' simply by reference to the Kent Downs AONB</b> and the level of protection afforded by this designation. Planning designation is not the only means of judging 'value' and there are a number of factors that need to be considered which are set out in the methodology including Tranquillity, Remoteness, Wilderness, Scenic Beauty, Cultural Associations, Conservation Interests and Consensus on value. None of these aspects have been considered.</li> <li>k) Lastly the assessment identifies the overriding constraint to be the AONB <b>'in the absence of a case of greater need for development'</b>. It is uncertain where the 'greater need text' is from or why a greater need is required to develop in an AONB. NPPF paragraph 116 only refers to need for development, including in terms of any national considerations.</li> <li>l) In conclusion, the assessment of the ED-3 site appears to be a complete fudge as the assessment of the ED-3 - Detling Airfield site is very high level and considers the overall landscape sensitivity (landscape character sensitivity / visual sensitivity) in limited detail, in comparison to other sites assessed, and certainly not to same level of detail as the sensitivity assessment of local character areas assessed in Part 1 of the Study nor other sites assessed as in Part 2 of the Study.</li> <li>m) However, the study provides comment on mitigation measures which state: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>"If a need for development is proven, it should be set within a landscape framework to give the outward impression of typical clay-with-flints woodland that are a numerous and distinctive feature of the Mid Kent Downs;"</b></li> <li>• <b>Supporting infrastructure, including highway access, lighting, fencing and signage should be kept to a minimum to limit the impact on the Kent Downs AONB".</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## SA Topic: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

Appraisal Question:	Criteria:	Council Response / Comment:	Quinn Response / Answer:	Evidence Source / Additional Notes:
Is the allocation of the site likely to impact upon an Ancient Woodland (AW) or Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)?	R = Includes AW / ASNW A = <400m from AW/ASNW G = >400m	A = Adjacent to ancient woodland	A = Adjacent to ancient woodland and Natural England Standing advice on AW buffers can be incorporated into the development so no impact on AW.	MBC Ancient Woodland Inventory / Magic website / detailed Ecological Assessment prepared by Aspect Ecology

			Public access can be controlled and interpretation boards provided close to the AW to allow the public to appreciate and understand the significance of the area. Development would also safeguard and protect these areas and ensuring their long term management and maintenance of these areas for benefit of wildlife with public access restricted to some areas, where appropriate.	
Is the allocation site likely to impact upon a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)?	A = Potential impacts identified by County Council Ecologist G = No likely impacts identified at this stage	G = No likely impacts identified at this stage	G = Nearest SSSI (Wouldham to Detling Escarpment) is 1.3km kilometres from the site and no likely impacts are identified at this stage	Magic website / County council / MBC records / detailed Ecological Assessment prepared by Aspect Ecology
Is the allocation of the site likely to impact upon a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) or Local Nature reserve (LNR)?	A = Potential impacts identified by County Council Ecologist G = No likely impacts identified at this stage	A = Cox Street Valley Woods, Yelsted Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located partly within the site.	<p>A = Cox Street Valley Woods, Yelsted LWS, comprising a number of wooded areas, is partly located within the site. However, areas of LWS are largely located within the open space and green buffers and adequate buffers can be provided to safeguard / protect this LWS. Public access can be controlled and interpretation boards provided close to the LWS to allow the public to appreciate and understand the significance of the area.</p> <p>Development of the area can bring forward landscape / environmental opportunities and benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological and environmental enhancements to existing wooded areas, hedgerows and trees and grassland areas and also creation of a greater diversity of wildlife habitats (new woodlands / hedgerows, mosaic of habitat types scrub / long grass / short grass areas / ponds / damp areas etc) increasing tree cover in the area as well as opportunities for existing wildlife to increase and connect to other habitats adjoining the site and other species to colonise the new habitats;</li> <li>• LWS could form part of a Nature Trial around the site link all areas of ecologist interest which could be used by the public, interest groups and school children as part of the School's curriculum</li> <li>• Long term management and maintenance of these areas will be provided as part of the development and they will be managed for benefit of wildlife with public access restricted to some areas, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Provision of a new Country Park which would be link to the White Horse Wood Country Park to the south west allowing new residents and visitors greater connectivity to the wider footpath / bridleway network enabling them to visit and experience a wide variety of habitats across the site and surrounding area;</li> <li>• Provision of new areas of landscape planting and open multifunctional natural green space as well as new formal areas of open space as sport facilities for use by residents and visitors;</li> <li>• Development would assist in realising one of the aspirations of Maidstone Council 'Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy' (and other adjoining Authorities GI Strategies) as the area is identified as a "Priority Improvement Area". The MBC B&amp;G GI seeks to improve the area and create green and</li> </ul>	Magic website / County council / MBC records / detailed Ecological Assessment prepared by Aspect Ecology

			blue infrastructure links between Maidstone to the south and towns of Gillingham and Sittingbourne to the north.	
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**Appendix 2**  
**C&A's Comments on Sustainability Appraisal**

## SA Topic: Community wellbeing

### Accessibility to existing centres and services:

Appraisal Question:	Criteria	Council Response / Comment:	Quinn Response / Answer:	Evidence Source / Additional Notes:
How far is the site from the Maidstone Urban Area or a Rural Service Centre?	R = Not adjacent to Maidstone urban Area, or a rural service and would not be more accessible to services even if other sites were allocated A = Adjacent to the Maidstone Urban Area or a rural service centre, or could be more accessible to services if other sites allocated as well G = Within the Maidstone Urban Area or a rural service centre	R = Not adjacent to the Maidstone Urban Area, or a rural service centre and would not be more accessible to services even if other sites were allocated	Whilst not adjacent to Maidstone Urban Area or a rural service centre, the site would be large in scale and mixed in use, to the extent that it will benefit from many of the sustainable characteristics this question seeks to answer. The question is essentially loaded, insofar as it is assumes that being close to Maidstone Urban Area or a Rural Service Centre are the only means to be sustainable in terms of access services. This provides the opportunity to create a sustainable new development in immediate proximity to existing large scale employment and Kent's premier tourism facilities. Since the submission of representations to the draft LP, offers of interest have been received from a national foodstore and a pub/restaurant chain to deliver community facilities at this location and there are ongoing discussions with national hotel groups to compliment the Kent Showground's conference facilities of national significance.	Thames Gateway Commission – 2050 – Call for Ideas (August 2016): The proposed development has the potential to provide the following employment opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 425 direct construction jobs per annum</li><li>• 712 indirect jobs</li><li>• 36 – 42 jobs generated by 2 form entry primary school</li><li>• 2200 jobs from the proposed B1/B2 &amp; B8 uses</li><li>• Commercial expenditure generated by the scheme per annum – circa £21m</li></ul>
How far is the site from the nearest medical hub or GP service?	R = >800m A = 400m - 800m G = <400m;	R = Site is 3772m from GP	G – The development of the site includes proposed medical provision. The SA fails to acknowledge the added value this would have to existing local villages and outlying dwellings, which currently have to travel further to access GP provision.	One of the UK's largest provider of GP facilities (GPI) has confirmed a strong interest in delivering medical provision at this location.
How far is the site from the nearest secondary school?	R = >3900m A = 1600 – 3900m G = <1600m;	R = Site is 4835m to a secondary school	The 333/4 bus services, which currently stop at the site access on Sittingbourne Road, provides direct access to Valley Park School and Invicta Grammar, with a travel time of 15mins. The criteria relies on distance and ignores connectivity.	
How far is the site from the nearest primary school?	R = >1200m A = 800-1200m G = <800m;	R = Site is 2724m to a primary school	G – The proposals include provision of a primary school. Demand from up to 1250 dwellings has the scope to sustain a two-form entry, particularly when consideration is given to accommodating latent demand locally.	The provision of a school on the site would not only serve the development; it could also serve the wider villages – in a more sustainable manner with reduced distance and need for travel.
How far is the site from the nearest post office?	R = >800m A = 400m – 800m G = <400m;	R = Site is 3772m to a post office	G – The proposals include local retail to serve the development. With mix of retail and commercial, it is clear that post office provision is likely to be delivered within this retail in form of a post-office counter – if not a full post office.	As with the primary school, this would provide a benefit to the wider community.

## SA Topic: Economy

Appraisal Question:	Criteria:	Council Response / Comment:	Quinn Response / Answer:	Evidence Source / Additional Notes:
How accessible is the site to local employment provision (i.e. employment sites or the nearest local service centre?)	R = >2400m A = 1600-2400m G = <1600m;	G = Site is 127m to the nearest employment site R = Site is over 3km to the nearest local centre	G – The answer should not include an R. The question is phrased as an 'or' and therefore fulfilling either criteria should derive a G. Regardless, the development would also deliver a local centre.	The site is immediately adjacent to existing and established employment sites (Detling Aerodrome industrial estate, Kent Showground and commercial businesses fronting the A249).
Will allocation of the site result in loss of employment land/space?	R = Allocation will lead to significant loss of employment land/space A = Allocation will lead to some loss of employment land/space G = Allocation will not lead to the loss of employment land/space	G = Allocation will not lead to the loss of employment land/space		Conversely the proposed development will provide significant new employment opportunities and in addition will support existing employment at the Detling Aerodrome industrial estate and the numerous activities undertaken at the Kent Showground.

## SA Topic: Transport accessibility

Appraisal Question:	Criteria:	Council Response / Comment:	Quinn Response / Answer:	Evidence Source / Additional Notes:
How far is the site from the nearest bus stop?	R = >800m A = 400 - 800m G = <400m	G = Site is 60m from the nearest bus stop	G	The site would generate significant additional bus provision by viably enhancing the 333/4, a matter discussed directly with Arriva, and providing the P&R facility.
How far is the site from the nearest train station?	R = >800m A = 400 - 800m G = <400m	R = Site is over 3km from the nearest train station		
How far is the site from the nearest cycle route?	R = >800m A = 400 - 800m G = <400m	R = Site is 3.9km from the nearest cycle route	A – National Cycle Route 17 runs through Detling, around 700m from edge of the Kent County Show Ground. Development on the site could secure cycle routes through the development itself and the Show Ground, based on the proposed permeability, providing access to within 800m of the cycle route.	Sustrans

### SA Topic: Flood Risk

Appraisal Question:	Criteria:	Council Response / Comment:	Quinn Response / Answer:	Evidence Source / Additional Notes:
Is allocation of the site within a flood zone?	R = Flood risk zone 3b A = Flood risk zone 2 or 3a G = Flood risk zone 1	G = Flood risk zone 1	G	
Is the proposed use of the site appropriate in terms of guidance set out in the 'Technical Guidance to the NPPF' relating to flood risk? See table 3 (page 8) of the technical guidance.	R = Development should not be permitted A = Exception test is required G = Development is appropriate	G = Development is appropriate	G	