

REPORT SUMMARY

REFERENCE NO: 15/509015/OUT

APPLICATION PROPOSAL: Outline planning application for a residential development together with non-residential uses (including potentially A1 (retail), A3 (sale of food and drink on the premises e.g. restaurant), A4 (public house), D1(a) (medical use), D1(b) (crèche/day centre/ day nursery, or B1 (office), up to 0.4ha of land reserved for C2 (residential care), the reservation of 2.1ha of land for primary education (use class D1), public open space in the form of natural green space, play facilities and informal open space together with landscaping, parking footpath and cycle links and the necessary servicing, drainage and the provision of necessary utilities infrastructure, with all matters reserved for future consideration with the exception of access.

Please note that while the number of units has not been specified in the description of development, the **indicative figure is 800**.

ADDRESS: Land to the South of Sutton Road, Maidstone, Kent

RECOMMENDATION: Delegated powers be given to the Head of Planning to grant planning permission subject to the receipt of a suitable legal agreement that ensures the delivery of the necessary highway improvements, together with all other heads of terms, and the imposition of the conditions.

(see section 9 of report for full recommendation)

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The development is at a sustainable location, immediately adjoins an existing settlement, and is not considered to result in significant planning harm. Given these issues and the fact the site is allocated for housing within the submitted draft of the Local Plan, the low adverse impacts of the development are not considered to significantly outweigh its benefits. As such the development is considered to be in compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework and this is sufficient grounds to depart from the Local Plan.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

- Departure from the Development Plan
- Objection from Parish Council

WARD Sutton Vallance and Langely; Parkwood	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL Langley	APPLICANT: Countryside Properties (Ltd) AGENT: DHA Planning
---	---------------------------------------	--

DECISION DUE DATE: 30/6/16	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 13/6/16	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE 23 rd November 2015
--------------------------------------	---	--

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
14/503710/PA MEET	EIA Scoping Opinion - Development of Approximately 950 dwellings and a two form entry primary school	Environmental Statement required	17-7-15
90/2009	Langley Park Driving Range Sutton Road Change of use to 9-hole 3-par golf course. .	Refused	26.04.1996
94/0010	Langley Park Driving Range	Permitted	14.02.1994

	Sutton Road Variation of condition 03 of MA/89/0919 to allow retention of works/improvements to access.		
92/0591	Langley Park Driving Range Sutton Road Variation of conditions (ix) and (xi) of MA/89/0919E and variation of condition (ii) of MA/90/1551E to allow the golf driving range and associated floodlighting to be used by the public to 10pm. on any day. .	Permitted	16.07.1992
89/0919	'Langley Park Farm' Sutton Road Change of use to golf driving range and erection of covered area shop and clubroom.	Permitted	16-11/1989

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The application site is approximately 47.1 hectares, with a net developable area of 26.6 hectares. The site is situated to the south of A274 Sutton Road, to the east of Parkwood Industrial Estate, located within the Parish of Langley, on the south eastern edge of Maidstone. The application site is a draft allocation within the Submission Version of the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2016) ("draft MBLP") which has recently been submitted to the Secretary of State for review. Full details of the requirements of this draft policy are set out later within this report.
- 1.02 The application site can be segregated into four distinct parts - the north western area of the site currently contains the golf driving range with an agricultural field forming the south west part of the site. The land within the central part of the site is utilised by Rumwood Nurseries with trees and shrubs currently being grown within the site. The southern area of the site bounds a small cluster of houses, including a Grade II listed building, and an oast house. The eastern parcel of land is more open and is currently used for agricultural purposes.
- 1.03 In terms of topography the land is relatively flat along the eastern portion (although the land falls away to the south) however, as one moves eastwards, the land falls as it heads towards Langley. This area of the site is the most exposed visually, and contains important long distance views across to the church which lies to the south east of the application site. This church, a Grade II* listed structure is considered to be of significant importance within the locality.
- 1.04 Much of the site is extensively farmed at present as part of a nursery, and as such there are a number of relatively mature trees for sale within the site which would be removed prior to any development taking place. Within the grounds of the nursery is a large utilitarian structure which is used as part of the business premises.
- 1.05 An existing barn within the south-eastern parcel of the site is to be retained as part of this proposal, as it is currently in use.

- 1.06 The golf driving range contains a single storey structure which effectively runs as a small clubhouse, as well as a structure that is used by those practising. Beyond this, the land is manicured as one would expect, and is surrounded by dense vegetation. The driving range is lit at night when required.
- 1.07 The site is located to the south of the A274 which is a well trafficked route into the centre of Maidstone, and serves the outlying villages of Headcorn and Sutton Valance, as well as larger towns such as Tenterden further afield.
- 1.08 To the north of the site are a number of terraced properties that front onto the northern side of the A274 Sutton Road. Immediately to the west of the site is the Langley Park residential development – which has planning permission (ref: MA/13/1149) for a mixed use residential development – of up to 600 dwellings, with associated local centre comprising a convenience store, retail/commercial units and public house; a two form entry primary school (with pre-school provision and a community facility); public open space; allotments; nature conservation area; and landscaping. The first phase of development to the north adjacent to Sutton Road is under construction, and phase two has recently been permitted.
- 1.09 To the south of the site is a small cluster of housing that contains a listed dwelling (Grade II) as well as a number of properties that whilst not listed, are of some merit. These properties are set out within a fairly linear manner along a private road. Access to these properties is provided via an access road that also serves the golf driving range. Beyond these properties the land falls away to Langley Loch.
- 1.10 To the east of the site lies agricultural fields, together with a small cluster of houses that sit upon the A274. The listed Grade II* Langley Church takes a prominent position on the southern side of the A274, and is nestled within the valley.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 This is an outline planning application with all matters reserved aside from access at this point in time. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement and has been advertised accordingly as EIA development.
- 2.02 The proposed development is for a primarily residential scheme, with the provision of a new 1FE primary school (with flexibility to upgrade to a 2FE should this prove necessary), village centre and open space provision. Illustrative masterplans, and parameter plans have been submitted with the application which align with the Environmental Statement. 30% on-site affordable housing is proposed.
- 2.03 The original proposal included the following elements:
- a) An eastern all-vehicle access, via a new roundabout, onto the A274;
 - b) A hamlet of housing adjoining this eastern access;
 - c) The location of a 1FE primary school adjoining this eastern access.
- 2.04 Following consultation responses, most notably from Historic England and MBC's Conservation Officer as well as Highways England, amendments to the above elements were sought and the following changes were made:
- a) Replacement of eastern all-vehicle access with a bus-only single track road;
 - b) Replacement of proposed eastern roundabout with a simple 'T' junction access to the A274;

- c) Removal of eastern hamlet and 1FE primary school adjoining the eastern access;
- d) The provision of the 1FE primary school within the centre of the proposal, to the north of the Langley Park House hamlet;
- e) The expansion of proposed housing east of PROW KH364.
- f) Proposed signalisation of Junction 7 of the M20.

The amended Heads of Terms covering Section 106 contributions are listed in Appendix One.

- 2.05 The proposal includes the provision of a roundabout access onto the A274 along the northern edge of the application site. This roundabout would be the sole means of vehicular access, although it is also proposed that a bus link be provided to the east of the site. Pedestrian links are also proposed to the west, and the south east of the site, linking in with the existing public footpaths. The existing houses forming a small hamlet including Langley Park Farm would continue to be accessed via a private road running north west to join Sutton Road.
- 2.06 The indicative masterplan submitted shows the consolidation of the majority of the housing within the two western most parcels of land, although there remains a small element of housing protruding into the eastern field – which policy OS1 of the draft local plan seeks to retain as open space. These houses are shown as low density, and to be of no more than two and a half storeys in height.
- 2.07 Internally the plans show (indicatively) a variety of densities and building heights, with the most dense elements being located centrally, feathering out to the edge. These densities range from 40dph to 25dph depending upon the location.
- 2.08 It is proposed that a ‘village centre’ be provided within the development. The application seeks flexibility in terms of uses, to allow for retail, health, pub/restaurants, community uses within the centre. Illustratively, this has been shown as an area within the centre of the site, located upon the main access into it. Following revisions, the primary school is proposed to adjoin the village centre.
- 2.09 The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment which highlights a number of junction improvements that would be necessary should this application be approved. It is proposed that these enhancements be funded in part by this development – together with others within the locality.
- 2.10 The proposal suggests that there would be a significant area set aside for open space within the eastern parcel of the site with much of this proposed as wetlands, which forms part of the overarching drainage strategy for the site (being the lowest part). The proposal also shows a significant set back from the A274 (approximately 30metres) which would be set aside for soft landscaping provision.
- 2.11 Draft Heads of Terms have also been submitted which address the potential financial contributions that may be required.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.01 There is no relevant planning application history to this particular proposal.
- 3.02 The Council have, however, proposed this site for housing allocation and it has been included within the draft MBLP. The allocation has been subject to consultation and

significant debate through the Local Plan process and its inclusion was ratified by Full Council earlier this year. The relevant Submission draft Local Plan policy is listed below:

Policy H1 (10)

South of Sutton Road, Langley

South of Sutton Road, as shown on the policies map, is allocated for development of approximately 800 dwellings at an average density of 24 dwellings per hectare. In addition to the requirements of policy H1, planning permission will be granted if the following criteria are met.

Design and layout

1. *The majority of the natural/semi-natural open space required by criterion 1 above shall be provided on that part of the site lying to the east of PROW KH364. This area shall also incorporate SuDS surface water drainage mitigation.*
2. *The development proposals are designed to take into account the results of a landscape and visual impact assessment undertaken in accordance with the principles of current guidance, with particular emphasis on the Loose Stream/Langley Loch and Langley Church and other heritage assets adjacent to the site.*
3. *The proposals will be designed and laid-out to provide an appropriate and strong visual relationship between the new development and the hamlet of Langley Park, whilst preserving the setting of the existing listed buildings and protecting the amenity and privacy of existing residential properties.*
4. *Development should be sited in order to preserve or enhance the setting of the listed buildings surrounding the site.*
5. *A new pedestrian and cycle route will be provided running east-west from Sutton Road to Brishing Road connecting with the planned route through the adjacent site at Langley Park.*
6. *Development proposals will be of a high standard of design and sustainability incorporating the use of vernacular materials.*

Access

7. *Primary access will be taken from the A274 Sutton Road.*
8. *Secondary access will be taken through site H1(5) Langley Park subject to agreement with the Highways Authority and Borough Council.*
9. *A separate cycle and pedestrian access will be provided to site H1(5) Langley Park subject to agreement with the Highways Authority and Borough Council.*

Noise

10. *Development will be subject to a noise survey to determine any necessary attenuation measures in relation to the A274 Sutton Road.*

Air quality

11. *Appropriate air quality mitigation measures to be agreed with the council will be implemented as part of the development.*

Drainage

12. *Development proposals will demonstrate that any necessary new or improved foul and surface water including SuDS drainage infrastructure required to serve the development to ensure no increased risk of flooding off-site, will be delivered in parallel with the development, in consultation with Southern Water and the Environment Agency.*

13. *The provision of appropriate contributions as proven necessary will be sought for the improvement of flood mitigation impacting this site.*

Open space

14. *Provision of 14ha of natural/semi-natural open space in accordance with policy OS1(3) together with any additional on-site provision and/or contributions towards off-site provision/improvements as required in accordance with policy DM22.*
15. *The development will provide for a primary school within the developable area of the site, the details of which shall be agreed with the local education authority.*

Highways and transportation

16. *Provision of a new footway on the northern side of Sutton Road.*
17. *The provision of additional pedestrian and cycle crossings across the A274 in the vicinity of Langley Church/Horseshoes Lane and in the vicinity of Rumwood Court.*

Strategic highways and transportation

18. *Bus prioritisation measures on the A274 Sutton Road from the Willington Street junction to the Wheatsheaf junction, together with bus infrastructure improvements.*
19. *Package of measures to significantly relieve traffic congestion on Sutton Road and Willington Street.*
20. *Improvements to capacity at the A229/A274 Wheatsheaf junction.*
21. *Connections to the existing cycle network from Park Wood to the town centre, and by upgrading the PROW network to accommodate cycles.*
22. *Improvements to frequency and/or quality of bus services along A274 Sutton Road corridor.*

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000: policies ENV6, ENV21, ENV28, ENV32, T2, T3, T13, T21, T23, CF1
- MBC Affordable Housing DPD (2006)
- MBC Open Space DPD (2006)
- Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended)
- Submission Draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2016: policies SS1, SP3, SP5, SP17, H1(9), H1 (7), H2, DM1, DM2, DM3, DM11, DM12, DM13, DM14, DM23, DM24, ID1

5.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.01 Approximately 180 representations have been received raising the following main (summarised) points:

- The proposal would erode the open countryside;
- The proposal would result in unacceptable congestion;
- Loss of prime agricultural land;
- The site is remote from any railway station;
- There are insufficient doctors surgeries within the locality;

- Increased flood risk;
- It is contrary to the 2005 Langley Parish Plan;
- There is already an oversupply of housing within the locality;
- The proposal would come forward before any necessary infrastructure would be provided;
- The impact upon the sewerage system.

5.02 **(Neighbouring) Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council:** 'The Parish Council would like to comment on the additional / amended information relating to the above planning application, as follows: Whilst the new information addresses some of our minor concerns with the application, such as protecting building in the valley area and the Langley Church environs, it fails to respond to the major issues cited in our original request for the application to be refused. We wish to reiterate our original concerns with regard to anti-coalescence, sustainability and the huge impact the developments would have on the existing inadequate road network and infrastructure in the south east of Maidstone. In addition, our concerns regarding flooding downstream of the development have not been addressed.

In summary, the revised information that has been submitted by the applicant is merely 'tinkering at the edges' and has not addressed our major issues of concern at all. As advised previously, the Parish Council wish to see the application refused and I have attached a copy of our original detailed response, for your information.'

Previously, the Parish Council had recommended that the application be refused on the following grounds:

- The impact upon the highway network and local infrastructure;
- The potential impact upon flood risk;
- The impact upon sewerage and surface water run off;
- Insufficient time to consider this proposal;
- Developments in the south east of Maidstone coming together in a piecemeal fashion;
- The proposal would have an impact with regards to coalescence;
- There should be better liaison between Maidstone Borough Council and other local authorities to provide a more comprehensive housing strategy;
- The impact of the proposal upon the nearby heritage assets;
- There was insufficient public consultation.

5.03 **(Neighbouring) Chart Sutton Parish Council:** Wish to see the application refused on the basis that there is insufficient infrastructure within the locality.

5.04 **(Borough) Cllr Stockell:** Raised concerns that the application was submitted in outline form.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.01 **Langley Parish Council:** Wish to see the application REFUSED on the following (summarised) grounds and reported to planning committee. These matters have been raised under a series of detailed letters and submissions:

- The proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the highway network. The Parish Council refer to the recent appeal decision within Boughton Lane which identified the impact upon the highway network as severe.

- The proposal is contrary to Policy ENV32 of the Local Plan. Again, reference is made to the recent appeal decision at Boughton Lane.
- The Parish Council do not believe that there is a requirement for a new primary school within the area.
- Housing is still proposed to encroach into an area identified as being suitable for open space.
- The proposal would detrimentally impact the setting of St Marys Church.
- The proposal would result in a coalescence of Maidstone and Langley.
- The proposal would harm the rural character of the area.
- The Parish Council are concerned that the proposal would be of a higher density than suggested.
- It is requested that the application specify the maximum number of dwellings proposed.
- The proposal is contrary to the Council's strategy of dispersed development.
- The site is unsustainable.

6.02 **MBC Housing Officer:** No objections. 30% affordable housing is acceptable.

6.03 **MKIP Environmental Health Officer:** No objections subject to the imposition of conditions relating to noise and air quality.

6.04 **MBC Parks & Leisure:** Suggested in-lieu payments towards off-site open space.

6.05 **MBC Landscape Officer:**

Having reviewed section 11 of the Environmental Statement Addendum, March 2016, received on 21/03/16, concerning landscape and visual effects I would add the following comments:

- *Paragraph 11.4.2 refers to part of the Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study in the context of the relevant site specific assessment but does not refer to the sensitivity assessment for the landscape character area. It should be noted that the site specific assessment relates to the capacity of the site to accommodate solely housing development.*
- *Paragraph 11.4.84 assumes that the existing landscape character and visual amenity will decline in the future due to the absence of regular management. There is no justification for this view given that any landowner has a duty of care to maintain their trees in a safe condition. All trees that haven't reached maturity will continue to grow but this certainly doesn't predicate instability.*
- *Paragraph 11.5.2 indicates the number of trees that are likely to be removed but clearly this will be subject to the detailed layout. I would add though that, of the U category trees on site, only a small proportion are proposed to be removed. BS5837: 2012 considers these trees as being in such a condition that they cannot be realistically retained as living trees with decline/early loss expected and a life span of no longer than 10 years. It would therefore be preferable for the detailed scheme to consider the removal of most of these trees, either on a phased basis as part of a long term management plan or as part of the initial vegetation clearance phase with sufficient replanting in the overall scheme to mitigate their loss. In any case, a long term landscape management plan will be required which addresses the need for succession planting.*

- *Despite my comments, the landscape and visual effects statement broadly follows the principles of current guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment, GLVIA 3, and I therefore raise no objection on that basis.*

6.06 **MBC Conservation Officer (22 January 2016):** Initial comments raised an objection to the proposal on the following grounds:

'I object to this application on heritage grounds in respect of the setting of St. Mary's Church for reasons as detailed above based on the illustrative layout provided.'

6.07 Subsequent to this response, amended plans were submitted and the Conservation officer has withdrawn his objection, on the basis that he considered there is now less than significant harm.

6.08 **MBC Spatial Policy Officer (22 January 2016):** *'It is considered that the contribution that development of the site would make to housing land supply and in terms of the economic and social roles of the planning balance would be significant. This does need however to be set against the need to consider the environmental impact of the development. It is considered that given the comments of Historic England and the Council's Landscape Officer and also the requirements of MBWLP 2000 policy ENV32, the elements of built development including the design and alignment of the proposed site access road east of PROW KH364 need to be carefully considered and changes to the layout potentially considered. Subject to the above being considered and addressed no policy objections are raised to the proposals.'*

6.09 **KCC Development Contributions:** Object to the provision of a new school within the location shown. KCC state:

'Within the design of any new primary school, including one which is being provided to serve a new development such as this, provision for parking and drop off is required. Para 4.1.5 (page 15) of the Addendum to Planning Statement states:

"We are mindful that there is a likelihood that some car parking would be required, and the layout that has been designed would allow for such a provision if necessary, but in a sympathetic manner."

Although the detailed configuration of any school would be a matter for later consideration, it is necessary now to ensure that no impediments are imposed which would prevent the proper detailed design of the school. The County Council therefore confirms that parking and drop off provision will be required for the new primary school. This should be provided within the site area of the school and appropriate highways access should be provided by the applicant. As well as a relocation of the school site within the proposed development, the amended plan (RD155_PP_100 dated 3/3/16) now shows the land allocated for a school broken up into three parcels. A central rectangular parcel is proposed for a 1FE school, with an irregular shaped parcel of land situated immediately to the east and west labelled as 'Residential or potential area of 0.85ha for increasing primary school site to 2FE'. The overall configuration would create 'dead' spaces which would decrease the developable area of the school, creating cost and layout problems. An expansion of an established 1FE school site with land on both the eastern and western boundaries as is proposed, would severely limit the design of the school building and add significant cost to the process when compared to a site expansion on just one boundary.

The County Council has made clear in its responses to both this application and the site's proposed allocation in the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan, that

regardless of whether the proposed development generates one or two forms of pupil entry, a site of 2.05 ha is required. This request is made of every development site providing school land in Kent and is no different to other sites within the Maidstone Borough such as Langley Park or East of Hermitage Lane.

The request is in line with the County Council's statutory role as Local Education Authority to secure sufficient provision for an area. Whilst the second FE is not currently forecast to be required in the next five years (subject to a final mix from the applicant), over the longer term there are a number of factors which could trigger the requirement for additional pupil places. As stressed through the Local Plan process, the support of the Borough Council to ensure the provision of necessary strategic infrastructure provision alongside development is essential.

Notwithstanding the above, in recognition that the land beyond that required for a 1FE school may be in addition to that directly required by the development, the s106 could allow for the existing agricultural use value of the additional land to be paid to the landowner on transfer.

The County Council considers the amended application now presents a significantly less sustainable proposal with regards to education provision. The basis for relocation of the school site is generally understood, however there is no robust justification for the decrease in its size and detrimental reconfiguration. Therefore the proposal is not consistent with national policy. Paragraph 72 of the Framework states:

*"The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. **Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:***

- **give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools;** and*
- **work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted"***

*[My **emphasis added**]*

*It is acknowledged by the County Council – as Local Education Authority – that whilst the applicant has confirmed in broad terms the intent to fund a required primary school and provide land for its construction, the alterations proposed in the additional information and amended plans mean that **an objection is now raised.**'*

Should the development be assessed to produce 210 or fewer pupils then KCC would require a sum of £4.5 million towards the construction of a 1FE school and should the development be assessed to produce more than could be accommodated within a 1FE school then the cost of constructing a 2FE school at £6 million is requested. In both cases 2.05ha of land is required to be transferred at nil consideration." The Draft Heads of Terms March 2016 submitted by the applicant indicates a financial contribution of £5,625 per dwelling towards the required primary school. I reiterate that this assumes the proposed development will generate a 1FE requirement and should it generate a 2FE requirement this figure will be increased.

6.10 In addition to these comments, the County Council have also requested that the following contributions be made

- Library Bookstock £48.02 per household, equating to £38,416
- Community Learning £30.70 per household, equating to £24,560
- dwelling
- Youth Service £8.49 per dwelling equating to £6,792
- Social Care £53.88 per household equating to 43,104
- Delivery of 16 Wheelchair Accessible Homes (as part of the affordable housing element on this site), with nomination rights given in consultation with KCC Social Care.
- Towards secondary education: £11,799 per pupil generated by this proposal, which would equate to £1,887,840.

6.11 **KCC Highways:** Object to the proposal on the severe impact that the development would have upon congestion. The comments below represent the County Council's summary of the highway objection.

'The amendments to the planning application have resulted in a reduced residential component and a modified access strategy. The submitted Transport Assessment Addendum April 2016 has presented the recalculated trip generation forecasts and updated capacity modelling analysis, alongside further elaboration on the applied methodology and mitigation of impact proposals.

The findings are consistent with the original Transport Assessment³ in how they demonstrate the severe extent of congestion prevalent on the network, with extensive queuing and delays on the A229 and A274. KCC Highways does not regard any worsening of the extensive queuing and delays to be acceptable in the absence of effective measures that are supported by categorical evidence to demonstrate how the full impact of the additional development traffic will be mitigated. This accounts for the potential consequential effects of congestion on road users and local residents.

The residual traffic impact generated by the proposed development would result in an unacceptable worsening of conditions for road users and local residents which is likely to result in the increased use of minor roads as alternative routes, for which no mitigation is proposed.

The objection to the planning application must therefore be maintained due to the resulting severe worsening of congestion and associated consequential effects along the A229 and A274 corridors, and in the absence of any conclusive evidence to demonstrate that the impact of the development can be fully mitigated.

In the event that Maidstone Borough Council is minded to grant planning approval against the advice from the Local Highway Authority, and in the absence of an agreed strategic transport strategy, KCC Highways would seek agreement with the Borough Council on the use of monies equivalent to the value of the proposed highway works.'

6.12 **KCC Growth, Environment and Transport:** The planning system is plan-led. This is the first core planning principle in the Framework (paragraph 17). The position of the County Council - as Local Highway Authority - on further development (planned or speculative) at the south eastern periphery of the Maidstone built up area has been well established in the representations made by the Authority on the emerging Local Plan.

Therefore the County Council considers that the proposed scheme seeks to pre determine critical decisions on the future spatial distribution of growth in the Maidstone Borough, wholly undermining a plan led approach to meeting the long term development and infrastructure needs. This exacerbates the implications of the current piecemeal approach to development in this part of the Maidstone Borough and the associated detrimental impact this has on the sustainable provision of necessary strategic infrastructure.

Overall, following the careful consideration of the additional information and amended plans submitted, it remains the position of the County Council that the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would continue to significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole.

Planning permission **should not be granted** by the Borough Council.

- 6.13 **Highways England:** *'We agree that the proposed development alone and in combination does not have a severe impact on M20 J7 provided that the mitigation (signalisation scheme) associated with the Kent Medical Campus is fully implemented. However, the evidence provided highlights that without mitigation the junction would operate over capacity in a 2029 scenario.'*

We do not agree with the analysis within section 1.17.10, as the ARCADY modelling results show the proposed development would increase the queue on the M20 Westbound off slip which is already predicted to extend onto the Lane 1 (as detailed in 1.7.7). Any extension of a queue onto the carriageway would result in a severe impact in terms of highway safety.'

In the absence of any timescales for the development of the Medical Campus M20 Junction 7 mitigation scheme or indeed certainty around its delivery it would be necessary to ensure the required mitigation is delivered by other means. Therefore we look forward to hearing your suggestions as to how this may be ensured; for example via a suitable Grampian condition to ensure development does not come forward without the appropriate mitigation in place'

- 6.14 **KCC Ecology:** Some concern about reptile and bat surveys but assuming those are clarified the identification of ecological impacts in the ES seems adequate. Approaches to mitigating the identified impacts are outlined and these seem broadly appropriate, such that, assuming the above points are adequately addressed, we would be able to recommend that the detailed mitigation strategy could be secured by condition, if planning permission is granted. No objections subject to conditions requiring mitigation in relation to GCN, reptiles, and bats, and provision of a biodiversity method statement, ecological design strategy, landscape and ecological enhancement plan, lighting design strategy, construction environmental management plan, and enhancements.
- 6.15 **KCC Flood Team (Lead Local Flood Authority):** Originally objected to lack of levels and embankment information for the large attenuation /wetland in the eastern area of the site, but this has now been resolved following the submission of additional material. Suggest a condition regarding provision of further details of an overall site-wide drainage strategy
- 6.16 **KCC Heritage:** Raise no objections and make the following comments:

'On the basis of present information I consider the archaeological assessment for this outline application has been reasonable although the fieldwork has been targeted and minimal. There would be a need to undertake more robust and widespread archaeological evaluation of the site prior to any detailed design scheme being agreed. On the basis of the heritage assessment so far, there are no indications of widespread, significant archaeology on the site and as such archaeology can be addressed through condition.'

6.16 **KCC Archaeology** had the following comment on the original proposal.

- There is a need for more detailed and robust assessment of the historic buildings forming the Langley Park Farmhouse complex;
- Mitigation for Langley Park Farmhouse needs to be improved

On the basis of present information I consider the archaeological assessment for this outline application has been reasonable although the fieldwork has been targeted and minimal. There would be a need to undertake more robust and widespread archaeological evaluation of the site prior to any detailed design scheme being agreed. On the basis of the heritage assessment so far, there are no indications of widespread, significant archaeology on the site and as such archaeology can be addressed through condition

6.17 **Natural England:** No objections. 'Based upon the information provided, Natural England advises the Council that the proposal is unlikely to affect any statutorily protected sites or landscapes.'

6.18 **UK Power Networks:** No objections.

6.19 **NHS:** Awaiting comments on the current application. On previous EIA scoping assessment, £800,000 towards local health care was requested.

6.20 **Environment Agency:** No objections subject to the imposition of suitable conditions which address the remediation strategy/contamination.

6.21 **Historic England:** *'We are grateful to the applicant for giving such careful consideration to heritage matters in this case and welcome the revisions to the scheme that have addressed each of the issues raised by my previous letter of 17 December 2015. Most notable of these changes shown on the illustrative masterplan is development now confined to the western half of the site. The omission of housing and the school from along the eastern boundary of the site avoids the harm to the significance of the grade II' listed church of St Mary described in my previous letter. We hope that the potential this amendment provides for reinforcing the characteristic long, uninterrupted views of the spire from the north can also now be exploited when it comes to applications for reserved matters.'*

My previous concern about the erosion of the rural character in the church's setting can now be avoided, and in fact the indicative masterplan suggests enhancements to the existing landscape that have the potential to improve the setting of the church, providing that this issue continues to be given proper consideration and the applicant employs the same calibre of heritage and landscaping expertise at the reserved matters stage. The treatment of the proposed busway will be crucial to avoiding this erosion of character, and the objective should be for this to look as much as possible like a rural lane cut into the landscape, and thus largely hidden from distance. The indicative sketches of the busway give us confidence that this can be achieved, but you should give particular attention to ensuring that this concept does not become

diluted through the application of standard highway design. We are delighted that the previously proposed roundabout on the eastern stretch of Sutton Road has now been omitted. We are no longer concerned either about impacts on the setting of Langley Park Farm.

On the basis of a package of positive amendments made to the scheme Historic England is now content for planning permission to be granted.'

- 6.22 **Southern Water:** Raise no objections to this proposal and request that should this application received planning approval, the following conditions should be imposed:

'Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of foul and surface water sewerage disposal have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water.'

- 6.23 **Southern Gas Networks:** No objections.

- 6.24 **Kent Police:** Recommend condition regarding crime prevention.

- 6.25 **Kent Wildlife Trust:** Object to the application on the basis of insufficient information being provided, and the loss of high quality agricultural land.

- 6.26 **Sport England:** Object on a non-statutory basis to the application on the basis of insufficient sports provision being made and loss of existing golf driving range.

- 6.27 **Arriva** (local bus company): support the proposal in the following respects:
a) provision of bus-only route from the east;
b) provision of five-year subsidy from the development for improvements to existing buses (the 82);

Arriva suggests that provision of a bus route from the site into the Langley Park housing scheme to the west would be beneficial. In addition, turning facilities are requested at the Eastern end of the bus-only road, and a time limited free bus pass for new residents is suggested to encourage habit forming public transport use.

"There is an opportunity to positively influence people's modal choice by making bus services as attractive as possible to new developments thus reducing the impact of extra vehicular traffic generated by the developments.

The changes we have suggested are an attempt to achieve that without adversely affecting other modes.

Notwithstanding any mitigation measures, the opportunity to upgrade the A274 for bus services must not be lost and we are pleased to know that Maidstone Borough Council are, in principle, supportive of maximising the benefit that good quality bus services can bring to the transport mix in this often congested area.

Fortunately, the A274 towards Maidstone between Wallis Avenue and the Wheatsheaf has some generous borders which give the opportunity to create some infrastructure improvements by reducing the variability of bus journey times and making the bus stop waiting environment more pleasant."

- 6.28 The Council's design advisors, **Design South East** have considered the proposal on a number of occasions and had the following comments when they last considered the proposal on 31st March.

- The site analysis is considered and clear.

- The strong connections to the existing landscape are to be commended.
- The increased buffer on listed buildings that has been proposed in the amended scheme should be commended.
- The placing of the primary school at the centre of the scheme is commended. Is there potential for the school playing field to be used by the community in the summer? Could there be a connection between the village green and school playing field?
- The scheme would be improved by an additional connection to Langley Park.
- The village green is small but is balanced by the uplift in space created by the common/heath.
- The central access to the development does not seem a significant enough piece of infrastructure for a proposal of this size.
- Greater clarity is needed on the access arrangements of the existing private road.

6.29 The Council's Park's Department commented as follows:

The proposal provides in excess of the minimum requirement of onsite open space as a whole. It proposes a LEAP in a central location on the site. There are however shortfalls in various categories, including allotments, sports pitches or recreations areas for different ages.

In order to cover the shortfall in terms of outdoor sports facilities and other open space, in line with MDLP Policy DM22 I would suggest that a financial contribution is sought towards existing off-site facilities, namely at Senacre Recreation ground.

6.30 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) were consulted on the application on the basis of the Environmental Statement and made no comment.

7.0 APPRAISAL

Local planning policies – weight

- 7.01 Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that, *"due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)."*
- 7.02 Saved policy ENV28 seeks to protect the countryside by restricting development beyond identified settlement boundaries. In general terms, this policy is consistent with the NPPF, which at paragraph 17, recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. However, the draft MBLP evidence base identifies objectively assessed needs for additional housing over the plan period 2016-2031 (which will be discussed in detail below), which the draft MBLP addresses, in part, by way of site allocations for housing outside sites outside existing settlement boundaries. The draft MBLP was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination on 20 May 2016 and examination hearings are expected to take place in September 2016. The draft MBLP will deliver the development (and infrastructure to support it) to meet objectively assessed over the plan period. Saved policy ENV21 relates to the protection of the character, appearance and functioning of strategic routes within the Borough and in relation to protecting of the character and appearance of strategic routes within the Borough is not out of step with the NPPF aim of protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment and so would attract full weight.

7.03 The existing settlement boundaries defined by the adopted Local Plan (2000) will be revised by the MBLP to deliver the development necessary to meet identified needs in accordance with the site allocations in draft MBLP policies SP3 and H1. Consequently, although saved policy ENV28 continues to be a material planning consideration, as the settlement boundaries in the adopted Local Plan will not be retained in their current form and would unduly restrict the supply of housing in the Borough contrary to paragraph 47 and 49 of the NPPF.

7.04 Paragraph 216 of the NPPF states that,

"From the day of publication, decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)."*

7.05 Inevitably any major development on a greenfield site will clearly have an impact upon the environment. In this respect at paragraph 152 the NPPF advises that,

"Local planning authorities should seek opportunities to achieve each of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and net gains across all three. Significant adverse impacts on any of these dimensions should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, measures to mitigate the impact should be considered. Where adequate mitigation measures are not possible, compensatory measures may be appropriate."

7.06 In allocating the site, the Council considers its use for housing is appropriate subject to the criteria outlined within draft MBLP policy H1(10) to mitigate the impact as far as possible. On this basis, it is considered that in general, the proposed allocation is consistent with the principles and policies set out in the NPPF when taken as a whole.

7.06 In conclusion and bearing in mind the fact that the Council has agreed to use draft MBLP Local Plan policies for development management purposes, the weight to give that plan and the draft site allocation policy H1(10) is considered to be substantial and clearly indicates that the Council considers a housing allocation at the site is appropriate subject to suitable mitigation.

Principle of Development

7.08 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.09 The application site is to the east of the defined settlement boundary of Maidstone. It is therefore upon land defined in the adopted Local Plan as countryside.

- 7.10 The starting point for consideration is saved policy ENV28 of the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2000 which states as follows:

“In the countryside planning permission will not be given for development which harms the character and appearance of the area or the amenities of surrounding occupiers, and development will be confined to:

- (1) That which is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture and forestry; or*
- (2) The winning of minerals; or*
- (3) Open air recreation and ancillary buildings providing operational uses only; or*
- (4) The provision of public or institutional uses for which a rural location is justified; or*
- (5) Such other exceptions as indicated by policies elsewhere in this plan.*

Proposals should include measures for habitat restoration and creation to ensure that there is no net loss of wildlife resources.”

- 7.11 The proposed development does not fit into any of the exceptions set out in policy ENV28, which is why it has been advertised as a departure from the Development Plan. None of the exceptions against the general policy of restraint apply, and therefore the proposal represents a departure from the adopted Development Plan. It then falls to be considered firstly whether there are any material considerations which indicate that a decision not in accordance with the Development Plan is justified in the circumstances of this case. ENV32 anti-coalescence policy seeks to restrict development in South East Maidstone
- 7.12 Draft MBLP policy SP17, which relates to development in the countryside and, when adopted, will replace saved policy ENV28 is also relevant to the determination of this application. Draft MBLP policy SP3, relating to The Maidstone South East Strategic Development Location is also relevant, together with draft MBLP policy H1(10) which allocates the site for housing of approximately 800 dwellings. As such, whilst the site is located outside of the existing settlement boundary within the countryside, given the site's allocation for housing within an extension of the urban development boundary set out in draft MBLP policies SP3 and H1(7), the proposed development would accord with the policies of the draft MBLP, which should be accorded significant weight in the determination of this application.
- 7.13 It is necessary therefore to consider three main issues in relation to the proposals.
1. Does the application accord with the development plan notwithstanding its lack of compliance with saved policies ENV28 and ENV32;
 2. If it does, are there other material planning considerations that indicate that the planning permission should nevertheless be withheld;
 3. If it does not, do other material planning considerations indicate that planning permission should be granted.

As for Question 1, the non-compliance with saved policy ENV28 and ENV32 must be considered in the context of the site's inclusion within a planned eastern extension to the edge of Maidstone, albeit in a fully contained and screened setting. The Council can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply that is based, in part, on the allocation of housing sites in the draft MBLP, which will alter the existing development

boundary. Those allocations include this site (draft MBLP policy H1(10)). Accordingly, for the purposes of these applications only and in this specific respect, the application's non-compliance with saved policy ENV28 should be accorded limited weight in the determination of the application.

Questions 2 and 3 of the above test are addressed in the report's conclusions in paragraph 9.05.

- 7.14 In terms of other material considerations, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a key consideration, particularly with regard to housing land supply. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF states that Councils should;

"identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land;"

- 7.15 The Council has undertaken a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was completed in January 2014. This work was commissioned jointly with Ashford and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Councils. A key purpose of the SHMA is to quantify how many new homes are needed in the Borough for the 20-year period of the emerging Local Plan (2011-31). The SHMA (January 2014) identifies an objectively assessed need (OAN) for 19,600 additional new homes over this period, which the Council's Cabinet agreed in January 2014. Following the publication of updated population projections by the Office of National Statistics in May, the three authorities commissioned an addendum to the SHMA. The outcome of this focused update, dated August 2014, is a refined OAN figure of 18,600 dwellings. This revised figure was agreed by Cabinet in September 2014. Since that date, revised household projection figures have been published by the Government and, as a result, the SHMA has been re-assessed. At the meeting of the Council's Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on 9 June 2015, Members agreed a new OAN figure of 18,560 dwellings.
- 7.16 The draft MBLP allocates housing sites considered to be in the most sustainable locations for the Borough to meet the OAN figure will allows the Council to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- 7.17 The annual housing land supply monitoring carried out at 1 April 2016 calculated the supply of housing, assessed extant permissions, took account of existing under delivery and the expected delivery of housing. A 5% reduction from current housing supply was applied to account for permissions which expire without implementation. In conformity with the NPPF paragraph 47, a 5% buffer was applied to the OAN. The monitoring demonstrates the Council has a 5.12 year supply of housing assessed against the OAN of 18,560 dwellings.
- 7.18 Policy SP3 of the emerging local plan relating to the Maidstone urban area: south east strategic development location, sets out that land to the south east of the urban area is allocated as a strategic development location for housing growth with supporting infrastructure providing approximately 2,651 new dwellings on six allocated sites. The application site is allocated under Policy H1(10) of the emerging plan for development

of approximately 800 dwellings and sets out the criteria to be met whereby planning permission would be granted.

- 7.19 The site is located close to public transport routes and in close proximity to the Langley Park development opposite which would enhance the sustainability of the site through the provision of new retail, school and commercial development and the provision of other local services and facilities. This also represents a strong material consideration in favour of the development.
- 7.20 For these reasons, it is considered that the principle of the development is acceptable in principle, having regard to relevant national and local planning policy in the NPPF the draft MBLP, respectively. Accordingly, applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 14 of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impact of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits having regard to the policies of the NPPF considered as a whole. Accordingly, in the following paragraphs of this appraisal, detailed consideration is given to the impact of the proposed development.

Environmental Statement

- 7.21 Under EIA Regulations an Environmental Statement was submitted as part of the application material. Under Regulation 22 this was revised as part of the amendments to the proposals, namely:
- On-site revision listed in section 2.03;
 - Off-site provision off mitigation to Junction 7 of the M20.

I have been provided with all the additional information I require in line with the regulations and I consider it to be adequate.

Design Quality

- 7.22 The proposal, as far as definable given its outline status, is considered to be of high quality with an attractive indicative masterplan layout. The developer's acceptance of the reduction in the number of units (from 800 to 750) stems from a desire to maintain a spacious and generous environment while accommodating the requirement for a reduction in the developed area adjoining St Mary's Church, for conservation and landscape impact reasons. The layout consists of a clear permeable street hierarchy centred on a mixed use hub including a primary school, community and commercial uses with direct and attractive public transport access. It includes a variety of green and public spaces, including orchards, a village green, heavily wooded areas, play areas and more informal open spaces, as well as the natural and semi natural open space forming the eastern third of the site, and providing sufficient buffers to elements requiring protection, such as the Langley Park Farm hamlet at the south of the site.
- 7.23 Officers have been successful in negotiating a range of improvements to the proposal including:
- Removal of the proposed eastern hamlet and primary school adjoining Langley;
 - Integration of the Primary school into the heart of the development;
 - Provision of landscape buffers to Langley Park Farm.
- 7.24 Design quality would be ensured through the use of a planning condition to define design parameters prior to the acceptance of more detailed reserved matter applications.

Provision of educational facilities

- 7.25 The proposal provides a 1FE primary school plus an additional area for expansion should a 2FE school be required in the future. KCC's objection appears to be largely that the implementation of the additional form of entry, potentially expanding both east and west of the original 1FE school would be a more costly process than restricting expansion to one side of the 1FE school. I consider that safeguarding of land for future school expansion can be appropriately using S106 agreement to ensure a defined piece of land is retained.

Affordable Housing

- 7.26 The adopted affordable Housing DPD requires that a 40% affordable housing provision be made on developments of 15 units or more. The application proposes a 30% affordable housing provision. Policy DM13 of the emerging Regulation 19 stage Local Plan sets out target rates for affordable housing of 30% within the Maidstone Urban Area and 40% within the countryside, rural service centres and larger villages. Policy DM13 is underpinned by Policy SP3 of the emerging Local Plan (relating to the Maidstone urban area: south east strategic development location) which extends the Maidstone Urban Area to accommodate the application site and 5 other strategic housing sites set out in Policies H1(5) to H1(10). As such, as the site is an allocated housing site (Policy H1(10)) within the Maidstone urban area extension and the proposed development has come forward in accordance with the criteria set out in this policy, it is considered that a 30% affordable housing provision would be appropriate in the circumstances, in line with the views of the Council's housing officer.
- 7.27 It is acknowledged that policies contained within the Submission Version of the Local Plan do not carry full weight at this stage but carry significant weight in the determination of this application. The Local Planning Authority has a duty to determine applications as and when submitted, and cannot refuse to determine applications on the basis that the policy framework is immature.
- 7.28 As such, it is considered appropriate timing wise to apply the emerging plan policies to this allocated housing site which would bring forward earlier than anticipated, the implementation of a strategic housing site which would provide a significant proportion of the Council's strategic 5 year housing supply. Whilst a departure from the Development Plan, I am of the view that in this instance there are material considerations that indicate that a 30% affordable housing provision is acceptable in the circumstances.

Visual /Landscape Impact

- 7.29 The indicative masterplan approach is set out as part of the application material. This lays out a scheme which is designed sensitively to accord with the existing landscape and context. The site lies on a south facing slope of the Loose valley which is contained by topography and vegetation immediately on its north and west boundaries. Greensand ridges contain the valley to the east and south with Abbey Wood forming the horizon to the east at around 1km and the greensand ridge at Chart Sutton some 1.2km to the south forming the southern horizon.
- 7.30 **Visibility** varies across the site due to local vegetation and topography :
- the northwestern and northern parts of the site are not exposed to any sensitive viewpoints;

- the southwestern part of the site is partially screened from views from the south, by an incomplete shelterbelt along the southern boundary. The southwestern edge is visible from a limited stretch of the public footpath along the Loose valley and from farmland immediately to the south;
- The most visible part of the site is to the east of Langley Park Farm which can be seen from parts of Sutton Road, from the public footpath along the valley and from the public footpath that crosses the farmland to the south as far as Plough Wents Road. The eastern slopes however lie below the skyline formed by the ridge and shelterbelts that lie immediately to the north of the site.

7.31 Landscaping principles include:

- retain landscape features characteristic of the fruitbelt such as shelterbelts, hedges and parkland trees
- remove uncharacteristic detractors such as tall conifer hedges
- enhance connections to Loose stream and Langley Loch wetland and stream valley green/blue infrastructure
- reflect transition from urban to rural landscape in character of proposed settlement (from north and west to east and south) – to be reflected in densities, scale, form and character of development
- provide appropriate open space character and planting along Sutton Road frontage to reflect character transition from urban to rural

7.32 visual context – principles

- retain western shelterbelt between site and Taylor Wimpey development to west for separation and backdrop
- ensure south western parcels are broken up with planting and open space, and building profiles are fragmented along the southern edge to retain rural character of Loose valley and reduce visual prominence
- retain and enhance vegetation against north edge of Langley Park Farm to provide separation and respect setting
- provide screening and open space buffer along Sutton Road to enhance setting for development and reinforce visual backdrop along ridge
- retain view cones to St Mary's church spire from eastern parts of site especially the higher parts of the ridge
- fragment development within substantial tracts of open space within eastern parts of site to reflect urban/rural transition and character of adjacent land and to reduce visual prominence
- retain and enhance Loose valley wetland character and setting for St Mary's church
- enhance blue/green infrastructure links to Loose valley
- the new single track bus way is integrated into the open space to minimise its landscape impact.

7.33 The eastern third, proposed to be public open space, with wetlands to the south, is the most open to external views. The setting and outlook of the listed building on site are not adversely affected.

- 7.34 While the proposal will change the character of the site from urban fringe including rural and agricultural to one that is more residential and suburban, its visual impact on the wider area will be limited.
- 7.35 In proposing an element of housing, estimated at 43 units, east of the PROW KH364, the proposal contravenes the H1(10) allocation, which suggested all of the site east of that point should be open space. The housing at this point is proposed to be at a lower density (25-30 dph) than the rest of the scheme, and at up to 2.5 storeys/11 metres, lower in height than the rest of the proposed housing. Such an element is designed to form a 'feathered edge' to the rural eastern section of the site, allowing the introduction of 'green fingers' between the built elements to soften and contain the development at its eastern edge. This is considered preferable to a 'hard' edge to west of the PROW where development is proposed to be up to 3 storeys and metres high, and more in keeping with the suburban/rural edge predominating in equivalent situations in Maidstone.
- 7.36 The impacts are considered to be as follows:
- The North West area of the site is well enclosed with a substantial green buffer to proposed to the North. The main access route will provide visibility into the site, from Sutton Road. The impact on visual impact is considered moderate.
 - The south-west field is exposed to views from the south, mainly along the western part of the lip of the valley slope. The eastern part of this area is screened from the south by an existing mature tree belt. This area is considered to have a minor to moderate visual impact.
 - The nursery area to the north of Langley Park Farm is well enclosed and contained with very few views into the site being possible. A minor impact is considered here.
 - The eastern parts of the site are relatively open on the south-east facing slopes. The spire of St Mary's Church is prominent in views and there are also views from the west along the Loose valley including a view from the lip of the south-west parcel. The majority of this area is proposed to be natural and semi-natural open space and small amount of housing proposed for this area is proposed to be at a lower density than the rest of the site

In paragraph 6.05 the Landscape Officer has considered the material submitted in respect of visual impact and does not object to the proposal in respect of its visual impact. I consider that the proposal accords with clause 2 of the H1 (10) draft allocation and is acceptable in terms of visual impact.

Loss of agricultural land

- 7.37 The eastern third of the site includes approximately 18 hectares of grade 2 and grade 3a agricultural land which would be lost to agriculture should the current proposal be approved, roughly 9 hectares each. This is a material planning issue and arguably contrary to Paragraph 112 of the NPPF which seeks to focus development on poorer quality agricultural land. This should be weighed against the fact that MBC has allocated the land for residential development and natural and semi-natural open space in its draft local plan. Secondly the Local Plan policy protecting Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (ENV29) is not a 'saved' policy and thus no longer applies. Thirdly the benefits to wildlife and recreation of the creation of a publicly accessible natural and semi-natural open space are considered significant. Consequently, the loss of agricultural land should not be seen as a determining factor when balanced with the benefits of the proposal, particularly in the creation of a large amount of publically accessible open space. The Agricultural Land Quality Study of Sites in Maidstone Borough has assessed the site in the context of the quality of local agricultural land as

a whole. It concludes that “while most of the land on the Malling social association is in the best and most versatile category, in Otham parish and either side of Sutton Road poorer sub-grade 3b land is dominant, with significant patches of best and most versatile land within it”.

- 7.38 The loss of this agricultural land is a material planning consideration that engages paragraph 112 of the NPPF which states:

“112. Local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.”

- 7.39 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the Submitted Draft Local Plan (February 2016) identifies the site as being grade 2 agricultural land. Within the Summary, the SA identifies the significant loss of agricultural land in all considered alternatives (relevant are paras 3.4.33 and 3.3.12, which states *“There are negative effects on land use across all of the alternatives; with a significant loss in greenfield and agricultural land.”*

- 7.40 Secondly, the adopted Local Plan policy protecting Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (ENV29) is not a ‘saved’ policy and thus no longer applies.

- 7.41 Taking account of all these considerations, the proposed loss of agricultural land accords with the Development Plan, there being no saved policy addressing the issue. The harm caused by the loss of agricultural land is considered to be moderate and, in acceptable in policy terms, taking proper account of paragraph 112 of the NPPG and draft MBLP policy H1(7), which allocates the site for residential development and natural and semi-natural open space.

Open Space provision and the Impact on and provision of sports and recreation facilities

- 7.42 The proposal puts forward 19.77 ha of publically accessible open space in total of which 17.85 ha would be natural green space. The site area in total is 47.31 ha and therefore public open space would make up 42% and the natural green space 38% of the overall site area. This exceeds the requirement of Policy H1(10) which requires 14 ha of natural/semi natural open space.

- 7.43 The proposal involves the loss of an existing golf driving range, to which Sport England has objected as well as a perceived lack of sporting facilities to meet the need of the proposed population. The outline planning application allows for the provision of children’s play areas, a village green, primary school playing pitches as well as extensive informal parkland and wetland environment. No publically accessible sports pitches are proposed although the out-of-hours use of the primary school pitches could be considered and a suitable condition is suggested. In this case the provision of natural and semi-natural open space has been considered to be the priority given the importance of maintaining and enhancing the rural setting to the east of the site in the context of the South Eastern Coalescence policy ENV32, the setting of St. Mary’s Church and the importance of providing suitable natural habitat for ecological purposes. It is proposed that the provision of suitable play facilities is the subject of a planning condition.

- 7.44 The objection from Sport England and the request for in-lieu payments made by the parks department are considered to be addressed as follows:

The on-site provision of public open space, including play areas and a village square, is significantly in excess of the H1(10) requirement and while the vast majority is proposed to be natural and semi-natural open space, it could be used for other recreational purposes, in line with the quantum required by Submitted Draft Local Plan Policy DN22. A condition regarding the provision of open space is suggested. As a consequence, the provision of off-site in-lieu payment is considered excessive.

Historic Environment

- 7.45 As mentioned by Historic England and MBC's Conservation Officer, the amended scheme addresses concerns regarding the impact on the grade II* listed St Mary's Church, and the outlook upon it is considered much improved. No adverse impact is caused to the listed building Langley Park Farm, to the South of the site, which is proposed to be protected by a landscape buffer to its north, as well as by the playground for the proposed primary school. This is considered to provide an appropriate relationship. A condition is suggested to secure that buffer. As a consequence, the proposal is considered to involve less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset and therefore will not conflict with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF. I will apply the public benefit test in my conclusion.

The concerns of KCC Archaeology in respect of the need for more detailed and robust assessment of the historic buildings forming the Langley Park Farmhouse complex is not considered to be necessary at this stage given the outline nature of the application and Historic Englands' positive comments. It is therefore proposed to be covered this assessment through a reserved matter condition.

Highways Issues

- 7.46 The applicant proposes the following in relation to the relevant H1(10) Submission draft Local Plan Policy requirements:

16. *Provision of a new footway on the northern side of Sutton Road*

- 7.47 There is an existing, continuous footway on the northern side of Sutton Road which is provided to a reasonable standard. Furthermore, a high quality shared use route will be created across the site, set back from Sutton Road and taking advantage of the proposed area of parkland and common bisecting the site from north to south. This will have a beneficial effect on pedestrians and cyclists travelling from west to east in terms of minimising any severance effects resulting from the proposed development and enhancing amenity by enabling residents of the site, as well as the adjacent residential developments, to access the proposed primary school and village centre, Langley village and the surrounding Public Rights of Way network within a semi-rural setting away from the A274.

17. *The provision of additional pedestrian and cycle crossings across the A274 in the vicinity of Langley Church/Horseshoes Lane and in the vicinity of Rumwood Court.*

21. *Connections to the existing cycle network from Park Wood to the town centre, and by upgrading the PROW network to accommodate cycles.*

- 7.48 Pedestrian access to the site will be achieved via footway provision at the vehicular site accesses and enhancements to crossing facilities to the surrounding Public Rights of Way network. The crossing of Public Footpath KH369 from north to south across Sutton Road will be enhanced through the proposed reduction of the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph, as well as the installation of dropped kerbs and tactile paving.

Similar improvements are proposed on Sutton Road to the south of the site, where Public Footpath KH365 crosses the A274. This latter enhancement will facilitate pedestrian trips between Langley village and the on-site services and facilities. The western site access roundabout will incorporate pedestrian crossing facilities within the splitter island on the A274 (west) arm. This will enable pedestrians and cyclists travelling to/from Maidstone to link in to the shared use route that is proposed to run along the frontage of Site H1(9) – Bicknor Farm – which will in itself connect to the pedestrian and cycle infrastructure being provided in relation to the consented development of Sites H1(6) – North of Sutton Road – and H1(7) – North of Bicknor Wood – and onwards towards Maidstone Town Centre.

- 7.49 The masterplan allows for a cycle connection to Langley Park and onwards towards Park Wood.

18. *Bus prioritisation measures on the A274 Sutton Road from the Willington Street junction to the Wheatsheaf junction, together with bus infrastructure improvements.*

- 7.50 The proposal offers proportionate financial support to the enhancement of the Route 82 service, operated by Arriva which would provide reliable and high-quality bus services between the site and Maidstone Town Centre. Maidstone Borough Council has already secured substantial contributions towards bus prioritisation measures on the A274 Sutton Road and as such, the off-site highway and transportation mitigation strategy in respect to Land South of Sutton Road has focussed on junction capacity improvements (which will also benefit bus service reliability) and the aforementioned bus service enhancements.

19. *Package of measures to significantly relieve traffic congestion on Sutton Road and Willington Street.*

20. *Improvements to capacity at the A229/A274 Wheatsheaf junction.*

- 7.51 The Transport Assessment accompanying the planning application in respect to Land South of Sutton Road has assessed the potential impact and detrimental effects that could result from the vehicle trip generation of the proposed development, with consideration given to the other committed and proposed developments in the local area. Assessment of local junctions using industry-standard traffic capacity models has concluded that the proposed development would have a limited impact on their operational capacity in most cases. It is acknowledged, however, that mitigation would be required at the following key junctions on the local network:-

- A229 Loose Road / Armstrong Road / Park Way;
- A229 Loose Road / A274 Sutton Road / Cranborne Avenue;
- A274 Sutton Road / St Saviours Road;
- A274 Sutton Road / Wallis Avenue;
- A274 Sutton Road / Willington Street;
- A20 Ashford Road / Willington Street; and
- M20 Junction 7.

- 7.52 Upon modelling the capacity of these junctions with the proposed improvement schemes in place, it has been concluded that they would operate in a fashion that would successfully mitigate the increase in traffic from the proposed development and those other developments off Sutton Road considered in the Transport Assessment, for which Section 106 contributions for multi-modal capacity enhancements to the Sutton Road corridor have recently been secured by Maidstone Borough Council.

Moreover, in most cases, a degree of planning gain would be provided by these mitigation schemes, which are considered to accord fully with the objectives of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy and to which proportionate financial contributions can be made by the proposed residential developments in South East Maidstone.

7.53 It is proposed that the application provides the following mitigation in respect of the above:

- £1.46m for the signalisation of Junction 7 of the M20;
- £1.08m Bus Prioritisation on A274
- £1.435m for bus subsidy on A274.
- Equivalent to £169,136 Improvement of the junction of Armstrong Road/Park Way;
- Equivalent to £128,320 Improvement of the junction of A20 Ashford Road/Willington Street;
- Equivalent to £371,068 A274 Sutton Road/St. Saviours Road (suggested to be dealt with by Grampian condition).

Please note that the above contributions are subject to further negotiation and may alter.

22. Improvements to frequency and/or quality of bus services along A274 Sutton Road corridor.

7.54 As noted above, the applicants have discussed the potential for bus service enhancements with Arriva – the commercial operator of the high-frequency Route 82 service between Maidstone Town Centre and Park Wood Parade. The company has confirmed that it is willing in principle to extend the service to Land South of Sutton Road at a 15-20-minute daytime frequency. Arriva is also willing to investigate the upgrading of Route 82 to its high specification “Sapphire” brand, which is operated by buses equipped with free Wi-Fi, power sockets, high quality seating and audio-visual announcements. It is anticipated that the service would route direct to Maidstone Town Centre via Sutton Road, thereby offering residents of the proposed and adjacent developments with a viable and attractive alternative to car travel for journeys to and from town centre destinations.

Highways and transport mitigation - additional considerations

7.55 The applicant also proposes improvements to public footways, a high quality internal shared use route, an extension to the 30mph speed limit on A274, public transport improvements as well as substantial contributions to improve M20 Junction 7.

Highways and Transport mitigation conclusion

7.56 The approach is considered to be consistent with the need for a balanced approach to transportation, including the provision of attractive alternatives to the private car which was a significant factor in the consideration of the Adopted Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan, Policies T2 and T3, which states: *“Policy T1 of the local plan is concerned with a gradual, rather than abrupt, change from wider to more restricted access by private cars. This shift is evidenced by policy restrictions on long-term (e.g. all-day) parking provision and a progressive introduction of bus priority lanes on the major radial routes. The combination of Policies T2 and T3 on the one hand and Policies T13 and T14 on the other will have the effect of influencing modal choice in favour of public transport and the more economical use of road space”* (the Maidstone

Borough-Wide Local Plan Inspector's Report November 1999, Paragraph 6.2, Page 463).

- 7.57 KCC Highways have strongly objected to the proposal on the basis that the development would have severe impact upon traffic congestion and would conflict with Paragraph 32 of the NPPF: *"Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe."*
- 7.58 MBC have commissioned transport consultants Mott MacDonald (MM) to assess the likely impact of the proposal, and other relevant planning applications in the area. MM have reviewed all information that has been submitted by the applicant's transport consultant DHA Transport and have considered KCC's response in detail. Furthermore, MM have liaised with DHA Transport to clarify any outstanding matters.
- 7.59 As set out in section 6.10 of this report, the KCC response bases its objection on the "worsening of congestion and associated consequential effects along the A229 and A274 corridors", "the absence of effective measures that are supported by categorical evidence to demonstrate how the full impact of the additional development traffic will be mitigated" and the "consequential effects of congestion on road users and local residents".
- 7.60 The original Transport Assessment dated October 2015, subsequent Technical Notes and the Transport Assessment Addendum dated April 2016 contain detailed assessments of all the key junctions in the vicinity of the proposed site as well as towards the centre of Maidstone. Where increased delays and queuing was identified, the applicant proposes mitigation. This is the case for the following junctions:
- A229 Loose Road / Park Way / Armstrong Road
 - A229 Loose Road / A274 Sutton Road / Cranborne Avenue (Wheatsheaf Junction)
 - A274 Sutton Road / St Saviours Road
 - A274 Sutton Road / Willington Street and A274 Sutton Road / Wallis Avenue
 - A274 Sutton Road / Horseshoes Lane
 - A20 Ashford Road / Willington Street

A229 Loose Road / Park Way / Armstrong Road

- 7.61 The modelling included in the Transport Assessment dated October 2015 is based on the following mitigation measures:
- Relocation of the controlled pedestrian crossing from the A229 Loose Road north to the south arm of the junction;
 - Provision of a new controlled pedestrian crossing to the north of the junction, approximately at the existing pedestrian bridge, which would operate independently;
 - Installation of 'Puffin' technology on the relocated pedestrian crossing; and
 - Provision of separate 'left' and 'ahead' lanes on the Park way arm of the junction.
- 7.62 The results presented in the TA show the practical reserve capacity in 2029 to increase from -41.2% to -30.1% in the AM peak and -24.8% to -9.1% in the PM peak when comparing committed development with existing junction layout and with development flows with the above mitigation.

A229 Loose Road / A274 Sutton Road / Cranborne Avenue (Wheatsheaf Junction)

- 7.63 The modelling included in the Transport Assessment dated October 2015 is based on the following mitigation measures:
- Installation of 'Puffin' technology on all controlled pedestrian crossings; and
 - Cranborne Avenue arm one-way only, no entry into the junction.
- 7.64 The results presented in the TA show the practical reserve capacity in 2029 to increase from -31.8% to -16.3% in the AM peak and -40.1% to -19.8% in the PM peak when comparing committed development with existing junction layout and with development flows with the above mitigation.

Please note that this junction is already fully funded, as shown in the apportionment table and therefore it is not proposed that the application contributes to it.

A274 Sutton Road / St Saviours Road

- 7.65 The modelling included in the Transport Assessment dated October 2015 is based on the following mitigation measures:
- Remarking of the northbound A274 nearside flare to allow left and ahead traffic use;
 - Creation of a two-to-one merge lane on the northbound A274 exit; and
 - Modifications to the A274 right turn in to St Saviour's Road.
- 7.66 The results presented in the TA show the practical reserve capacity in 2029 to reduce from -15.3% to -18.6% in the AM peak and to remain unchanged (-31.9% to -31.7%) in the PM peak when comparing committed development with existing junction layout and with development flows with the above mitigation.

A274 Sutton Road / Willington Street / Wallis Avenue

- 7.67 The modelling included in the Transport Assessment Addendum dated April 2016 is based on the following mitigation measures:
- The widening of the A274 Sutton Road to provide two carriageway lanes in each direction between its junctions with Wallis Avenue and Willington Street;
 - The provision of two-to-one lane merges on the Sutton Road (north) exit of the A274 / Wallis Avenue junction and Sutton Road (south) exit of the A274 / Willington Street junction;
 - The extension of the right-turn lane on the Willington Street arm of the A274 / Willington Street junction; and
 - The provision of a controlled pedestrian crossing on the Sutton Road (north) arm of the A274 / Wallis Avenue junction.
- 7.68 The results presented in the TA Addendum show the practical reserve capacity in 2029 to increase from -38.2% to -10.1% in the AM peak and -46.4% to -19.9% in the PM peak on Wallis Avenue and from -43.7% to -23.4% in the AM peak and -45.9% to -30.6% in the PM peak on Willington Street when comparing committed development with existing junction layout and with development flows with the above mitigation.

A274 Sutton Road / Horseshoes Lane

- 7.69 The modelling included in the Transport Assessment Addendum dated April 2016 is based on localised widening of the Horseshoes Lane arm.

- 7.70 The results presented in the TA Addendum show the RFC on Horseshoes Lane in 2029 to improve from 0.973 to 0.872 in the AM peak and from 1.104 to 0.685 in the PM peak when comparing committed development with existing junction layout and with development flows with the above mitigation.

A20 Ashford Road / Willington Street

- 7.71 The modelling included in the Transport Assessment dated October 2015 is based on the provision of a left turn flare on the A20 (east) approach to the junction.
- 7.72 The results presented in the TA show the practical reserve capacity in 2029 to increase from 35.2% to 33.1% in the AM peak and from 51.8% to 39.2% in the PM peak when comparing committed development with existing junction layout and with development flows with the above mitigation.
- 7.73 MM considers that except for A274 Sutton Road / St Saviours Road where the mitigation proposed does not entirely mitigate the impact of the development traffic, the results demonstrate that with the proposed junction layouts and development traffic, all junctions perform comparatively better than with existing layouts without development traffic. The proposed measures are therefore considered effective in mitigating the developments impacts. The results also demonstrate that the development flows, subject to implementation of the proposed mitigation, would not lead to a worsening of congestion along the A274 and A229 corridors, although the new access junction would add some very limited delays to vehicles passing through this corridor. The additional delays at this new junction are however outweighed by reduced delays at existing improved junctions. It can therefore be concluded that due to reduced queues and delays resulting from the mitigation, the addition of the development flows would not lead to any effects on existing road users and local residents, nor would it result in any increased use of minor roads.
- 7.74 The applicant also proposes improvements to public footways, a high quality internal shared use route, an extension to the 30mph speed limit on A274, public transport improvements as well as substantial contributions to improve M20 Junction 7.
- 7.75 Overall MM concludes that with the appropriate mitigation measures, the impact of the proposed development is mitigated and therefore cannot be considered severe. As a consequence, it is considered that the proposal does not contravene NPPF Paragraph 32. I concur with the advice of MM and consider that the highways impact is not severe.
- 7.76 Adopted Borough Plan T2 seeks to promote bus preference measures on A274. Policy T3 seeks to ensure this by suggesting development which does not provide adequate public transport measures should be refused. Maidstone commissioned Mott MacDonald to produce the A274 Corridor Study to illustrate the potential for bus priority measures in the area of the site and concludes as follows:
- 7.1 A274 Corridor Study Summary and Conclusions.**
- 7.1.1 *Buses already experience considerable delay due to traffic congestion along this corridor. A number of large residential-led developments have been consented or proposed in line with housing allocations set out in MBC's Draft Local Plan. The developments, together with background growth in traffic that is anticipated, will increase congestion and delays.*
- 7.1.2 *Analysis presented in the transport assessment supporting the planning application for Langley Park (Site F in Figure 3.1) concludes*

that, even with some limited junction improvements, the corridor will have reached its vehicle capacity before that development was fully occupied. Consequently the transport assessment assumed that a proportion of trips would be diverted to buses.

7.1.3 In the light of these forecasts, a good level of priority for buses is necessary in order to make travelling by bus a realistic option along the study corridor. This report sets out the principles behind the design of bus priority measures, and then demonstrates how they have been applied to the study corridor resulting in proposals for schemes along the length of the corridor within the urban area.

7.77 The proposal provides £1.08m towards bus prioritisation and is considered to accord with T2 and T3.

7.78 Overall MM concludes that with the appropriate mitigation measures, listed above, the impact of the proposed development is mitigated and therefore cannot be considered severe. As a consequence, it is considered that the proposal does not contravene NPPF Paragraph 32. I have reviewed the proposed mitigation and concur with MM's analysis.

Drainage & Flood Risk

7.79 The proposed drainage strategy used the wetlands at the south east corner for attenuation purposes. Levels and embankment information of attenuation ponds has now been provided to KCC drainage and the previous objection is withdrawn. The requirement of an overall site-wide drainage strategy at detailed design stage would be covered by condition.

Ecology

7.80 The provision of over 19.77 hectares of natural and semi-natural open space in the form of parkland, common or heath land, orchards and wetland represents a welcome increase in wildlife habitat. Public access to wildlife would also be increased. Kent Wildlife Trust have suggested further details of mitigation in relation to Great Crested Newts, reptiles, and bats, and provision of a biodiversity method statement, ecological design strategy, landscape and ecological enhancement plan, lighting design strategy, construction environmental management plan, and enhancements. It is suggested that these matters are covered by condition.

Other Matters

Noise and Air quality

7.81 The illustrative masterplan proposes a substantial buffer of approximately 30 metres proposed between the proposed development and the A274. Environmental Health do not object with the proposal providing suitable conditions regarding noise and air quality are included, which are proposed.

Residential amenity

7.82 The NPPF sets out that planning should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should aim to avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development.

- 7.83 Saved policy ENV28 states that in the countryside, planning permission will not be given for development which harms the amenities of surrounding occupiers.
- 7.84 The application is in outline so the vast majority of details, apart from access, are to be resolved at a future point. Given the proposed design and density in line with the Submission Draft Local Plan policy H1 (10), I consider that suitable internal layout can be achieved. The inclusion of extensive green buffers proposed and existing retained vegetation as well as extensive open space and tree belts will provide substantial screening for existing residential uses.
- 7.85 Whilst a number of objections have been received with regards to the impact upon residential properties, it is considered that there would be no significant harm caused by this proposal to these residents in terms of overlooking, overshadowing, or the creation of a sense of enclosure. Similarly, there would be very little, if any, harm caused by noise and disturbance from the occupation of the development, only from the construction of the development albeit for a temporary period and during working hours.
- 7.86 With regards to the additional traffic movements, the majority of these will be along the main thoroughfares of Sutton Road, Willington Street and Wallis Avenue, via the new access created to the North of the site. Whilst a number of objections have been received concerning potential rat running through the lanes and narrow tracks surrounding the site as a direct result, the proposed highway mitigation initiatives set out above would alleviate any potential increase in traffic which may result, thereby negating any need to use surrounding roads.
- 7.87 Following the adoption of the recommended mitigation measures, the development is not considered to be contrary to any of the national, regional or local planning policies.
- 7.88 With regards the noise impact, the proposed development is not expected to have an 'adverse impact' on health or quality of life.
- 7.89 Environmental Protection have been consulted and raise no objection to the conclusions of the assessments. As such, subject to the relevant conditions, it is considered that the proposed development is not likely to result in an unacceptable impact existing or future residents in respect of additional noise, or air quality.

8.0 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- 8.01 Any request for contributions needs to be scrutinised in accordance with Regulation 122 of Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. These stipulate that an obligation can only be a reason for granting planning permission if it meets the following requirements: -
- It is:
- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - (b) directly related to the development; and
 - (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 8.02 Regulation 123 states that there are not more than four obligations existing for each of the proposed measures.

- 8.03 The following contributions are proposed and considered to be compliant with Regulations 122 and 123.

Affordable Housing

- 8.04 The adopted affordable Housing DPD requires that a 40% affordable housing provision be made on developments of 15 units or more. The application proposes a 30% affordable housing provision. Draft MBLP policy DM13 sets out target rates for affordable housing of 30% within the Maidstone Urban Area and 40% within the countryside, rural service centres and larger villages. Policy DM13 is underpinned by draft MBLP policy SP3 (relating to the Maidstone urban area: south east strategic development location) which extends the Maidstone Urban Area to accommodate the application site and 5 other strategic housing sites set out in Policies H1(5) to H1(10). As such, as the site is an allocated housing site (Policy H1(9)) within the Maidstone urban area extension and the proposed development has come forward in accordance with the criteria set out in this policy, it is considered that a 30% affordable housing provision would be appropriate in the circumstances, in line with the views of the Council's housing officer.

- 8.05 The proposal includes the provision of a wide variety of community infrastructure listed below:

Social Infrastructure including:

- The provision of on-site health facilities or an appropriate contribution of £800,000 towards the Orchard Langley Surgery and/or Wallis Avenue Surgery.
- The provision of a site and construction of a primary school on the site, allowing potential for future expansion (size of school to be determined).
- Provision of £600,000 towards on-site community facilities.
- Provision of 30% affordable housing including 16 Wheelchair Accessible Homes
- Provision of 19.77 hectares of public open space;
- Provision of a Landscape ecological management plan
- Secondary education: £1,887,840. towards the expansion of the Cornwallis School
- Community learning £24,560
(Toward the refurbishment required at St Faiths Adult Education Centre in Maidstone to provide additional capacity to meet the needs of the additional attendees);
- Youth Services £6,792
(Towards additional equipment required to support the additional attendees at the Fusion café Youth project nearby;
- Library bookstock £38,416
(Towards additional bookstock required to mitigate the impact of the new borrowers from this development)
- Social Care £43,104
(Towards accessibility improvements to Community Building where social care services are delivered by KCC or a third party);

- Suitable financial mitigation is proposed to compensate for elements of open space requirements should they not be provided onsite.

Highways

Appendix A attached seeks to demonstrate apportionment of highways mitigation works across the draft strategic site allocations in South East Maidstone, in order to provide a comprehensive package of highways mitigation measures which meet the CIL Regulation 122 and 123 tests. This table demonstrates how officers have sought to apportion the necessary contributions on a **pro-rata** basis (with schemes that mitigate their own impacts to be dealt with via Grampian condition). This is a dynamic process and as a consequence it is requested that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning to agree any subsequent amendments to the apportionment table to ensure the delivery of strategic South East Maidstone highways mitigations works.

Significant highways and transport improvements, namely:

- A new pedestrian and cycle route will be provided running east-west
- from Sutton Road to Brishing Road connecting with the planned route
- through the adjacent site at Langley Park.
- The provision of additional pedestrian and cycle crossings across the
- A274 in the vicinity of Langley Church/Horseshoes Lane and in the vicinity of Rumwood Court.
- Bus prioritisation measures on the A274 Sutton Road from the Willington Street junction to the Wheatsheaf junction, together with bus
- infrastructure improvements.
- Package of measures to significantly relieve traffic congestion on Sutton Road and Willington Street.
- Connections to the existing cycle network from Park Wood to the town centre, and by upgrading the PROW network to accommodate cycles.
- Improvements to frequency and/or quality of bus services along A274 Sutton Road corridor.

The above to be addressed as follows:

- £1.46m for the signalisation of Junction 7 of the M20;
- £1.08m Bus Prioritisation on A274
- £1.435m for bus subsidy on A274.
- Equivalent to £169,136 Improvement of the junction of Armstrong Road/Park Way;
- Equivalent to £128,320 Improvement of the junction of A20 Ashford Road/Willington Street;
- Equivalent to £371,068 A274 Sutton Road/St. Saviours Road (suggested to be dealt with by Grampian condition).
- Improvements to public footpath KH365 to a cycle track, Surface of KH369, surface of KH365 and dedication as cycle link.

8.06 The proposed contributions, as listed above and elsewhere in this report are considered to be necessary to make the proposed development acceptable.

9.0 CONCLUSION

9.01 The proposed development is contrary to saved policy ENV28 in that it represents housing development outside a settlement boundary in the adopted Local Plan and saved policy ENV32 in that it represents development in the countryside within the Southern Anti-Coalescence Belt constituting moderate harm. However, the proposal

delivers the allocation of the site for housing and open space within the submitted draft MBLP, which should be accorded significant weight. Draft MBLP policy SP3, which identifies south east Maidstone as the most sustainable location for housing growth with supporting infrastructure, is also relevant. The proposal will deliver housing growth in accordance with the national planning policy priority to boost significantly the supply of housing in paragraph 47 of the NPPF. Accordingly, for the purposes of these applications only and in this specific respect, the applications' non-compliance with saved policies ENV28 and ENV32 should be accorded limited weight in the determination of the application. I do not consider that the proposal conflicts with saved policy ENV21.

- 9.02 The site is in a sustainable location adjoining the settlement boundary of Maidstone in the Local Plan, which offers a good range of facilities and services. The visual impact of development at the site would be localised and would not result in any significant intrusion into open countryside beyond existing developed areas. Appropriate community infrastructure is proposed to be provided to meet the needs created by the proposal as well as a substantial amount of affordable housing. Drainage issues are mitigated. There are no objections from the Environment Agency in terms of flooding. There are no significant ecology objections or any other matters that result in a sustained objection to the development.
- 9.03 In accordance with policy guidance in the NPPF, there are three dimensions to sustainable development giving rise to the need for the planning system to perform environmental, economic and social roles. I consider that the development would provide economic benefits through delivering houses, associated construction jobs, and the likelihood of local expenditure (economic benefits commonly recognised by Inspectors at appeal). I consider there would be social benefits through providing needed housing, including affordable housing, community infrastructure, and I do not consider the impact upon existing residents would be unduly harmful. There would be some impact upon the landscape but this would be limited and localised, and otherwise there would be no significant harm to the environment. I have considered the likely impact on the historic environment and consider that the public benefits outweigh the less than substantial harm to listed buildings. As such, I consider the development would perform well in terms of economic, social and environmental roles required under the NPPF and would constitute sustainable development.
- 9.04 The development would be acceptable in terms of its impact on the landscape, drainage, biodiversity, neighbours' living conditions and highways subject to appropriate planning conditions and obligations. In relation to biodiversity, taking into account mitigation and conditions measures, it is likely there would be an improvement and enhancement of the ecological value of the site, bearing in mind the previous mainly agricultural use of the site.
- 9.05 I have considered the proposal in relation to Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act and paragraph 14 of the NPPF. It is considered that any adverse impacts would be limited and would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of providing much needed housing, including affordable housing, at a sustainable location. This is the balancing test required under the NPPF. As such, I consider that compliance with policy within the NPPF and other material considerations listed above are sufficient grounds to depart from saved policies ENV28 and ENV32. I do not consider that there are other planning considerations that indicate planning permission should be withheld.
- 9.06 The proposal represents a high quality scheme in line with draft MBLP policy H1(10) and is considerably improved as a consequence of negotiations and amendments.

Planning Committee Report

Overall the proposal is considered acceptable in planning terms subject to conditions and a legal agreement.

- 9.07 For all of these reasons, I consider that planning considerations indicate that planning permission should be granted.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

Delegated powers be given to the Head of Planning to grant planning permission subject to the receipt of a suitable legal agreement that ensures the delivery of the necessary highway improvements, together with all other heads of terms, and the imposition of the conditions.

Condition will be provided in a published urgent update prior to Committee.

10.1 Conditions

TO BE ADDED

Section 106 Heads of terms

- The provision of on-site health facilities or an appropriate contribution of £800,000 towards the Orchard Langley Surgery and/or Wallis Avenue Surgery.
- The provision of a site and construction of a primary school on the site, allowing potential for future expansion (size of school to be determined).
- Provision of £600,000 towards on-site community facilities.
- Provision of 30% affordable housing including 16 Wheelchair Accessible Homes
- Provision of 19.77 hectares of public open space;
- Provision of a Landscape ecological management plan
- Secondary education: £1,887,840. towards the expansion of the Cornwallis School
- Community learning £24,560
(Toward the refurbishment required at St Faiths Adult Education Centre in Maidstone to provide additional capacity to meet the needs of the additional attendees);
- Youth Services £6,792
(Towards additional equipment required to support the additional attendees at the Fusion café Youth project nearby;
- Library bookstock £38,416
(Towards additional bookstock required to mitigate the impact of the new borrowers from this development)
- Social Care £43,104
(Towards accessibility improvements to Community Building where social care services are delivered by KCC or a third party);
- Suitable financial mitigation is proposed to compensate for elements of open space requirements should they not be provided onsite.

Highways

Appendix A attached seeks to demonstrate apportionment of highways mitigation works across the draft strategic site allocations in South East Maidstone, in order to provide a comprehensive package of highways mitigation measures which meet the CIL Regulation 122 and 123 tests. This table demonstrates how officers have sought to apportion the necessary contributions on a **pro-rata** basis (with schemes that mitigate their own impacts to be dealt with via Grampian condition). This is a dynamic process and as a consequence it is requested that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning to agree any subsequent amendments to the apportionment table to ensure the delivery of strategic South East Maidstone highways mitigations works.

Significant highways and transport improvements, namely:

(please note these elements are subject to further negotiations)

- £1.46m for the signalisation of Junction 7 of the M20;
- £1.08m Bus Prioritisation on A274
- £1.435m for bus subsidy on A274.
- Equivalent to £169,136 Improvement of the junction of Armstrong Road/Park Way;

Planning Committee Report

- Equivalent to £128,320 Improvement of the junction of A20 Ashford Road/Willington Street;
- Equivalent to £371,068 A274 Sutton Road/St. Saviours Road (suggested to be dealt with by Grampian condition).
- Improvements to public footpath KH365 to a cycle track, Surface of KH369, surface of KH365 and dedication as cycle link.
- Connections to the existing cycle network from Park Wood to the town centre, and by upgrading the PROW network to accommodate cycles.
- A new pedestrian and cycle route will be provided running east-west from Sutton Road to Brishing Road connecting with the planned route through the adjacent site at Langley Park.
- The provision of additional pedestrian and cycle crossings across the
- A274 in the vicinity of Langley Church/Horseshoes Lane and in the vicinity of Rumwood Court.

APPENDIX A