

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW
REGULATION 18 PREFERRED APPROACHES CONSULTATION DECEMBER 2020
POLICY SP4(A) HEATHLANDS GARDEN SETTLEMENT
SUMMARY OF LENHAM PARISH COUNCIL POSITION

1.0 Lenham Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 Lenham Parish Council (LPC) has produced Lenham Neighbourhood Plan which will sustainably contribute over 1000 dwellings to Maidstone Borough Council housing land supply. Lenham Parish Council is not a NIMBY organisation.

1.2 Lenham Neighbourhood Plan (LNP) has recently been endorsed at Public Examination. Maidstone Borough Council has resolved that the Plan would have been put forward for Referendum but for Covid 19 health restrictions. LNP therefore carries significant weight as a material planning consideration.

1.3 The Plan, as endorsed by Examination, contains the following Policy to address Countryside Protection:

“6.8.3 One of the distinctive characteristics of the countryside beyond Lenham village is the existence of small hamlets and settlements such as Sandway, Platts Heath, Lenham Forstal, Lenham Heath, West Street and Woodside Green, which are set within the wider landscape setting of the Parish which includes the Kent Downs AONB. At various points across the Parish there are important views of the AONB and the open countryside. This locally distinctive context provides a strong sense of identity and character to the countryside in the Plan area.

Countryside Protection: Policy CP1

The Lenham Local Policies Map defines the settlement boundary for Lenham village which is extended to include the Strategic Housing Delivery Sites. All proposals for new development in the countryside beyond the settlement boundary for Lenham will be assessed in terms of:

- 1) the potential visual impact of the development;**
- 2) the effects upon the landscape character and heritage assets of the site and its surroundings;**
- 3) the potential impact upon the biodiversity of the area;**

- 4) **the capacity of infrastructure and services available to support the proposed development; and,**
- 5) **the relationship of the proposed development to the setting and character of the rural hamlets and settlements within the countryside beyond Lenham village.**

Development proposals should seek to protect the rural environment of the Parish, such that there are no adverse impacts upon the character of the countryside. Proposals which fail to demonstrate that any such impacts can be mitigated will not be supported.”

- 1.4 LPC believes Countryside Protection, Policy CP1, is a significant constraint to the Heathlands proposal which should have been at least considered in the Sustainability Appraisal and the Consultation Document.

2.0 Contribution to Sustainable Development

- 2.1 Lenham Parish Council fundamentally opposes the ‘Heathlands’ proposal because Lenham Heath is an isolated location remote from the main centres of employment at Maidstone, Swale, Medway Towns and Ashford. Locating five thousand dwellings at Lenham Heath would require residents to drive at least 10-15 km to work and to reach other key services such as hospitals. Compared to other locations close to the urban area of Maidstone, for example, Lenham Heath would increase the need to travel.
- 2.2 If Maidstone Council selects Lenham Heath as a location for major residential development it will be deliberately creating a settlement pattern which will not limit the need to travel. This is contrary to government planning policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 103) and elsewhere. Because of the additional energy required to fuel the additional travel the proposal is also contrary to government policy on climate change and limiting harmful emissions. For the same reasons, the proposal is contrary to Maidstone’s own policies on climate change, emissions and global warming.
- 2.3 Lenham Parish Council believes there are other locations, on the periphery of the urban fabric of Maidstone where major residential developments could be located and efficiently served by a high-quality public transport system. Such a system, as well as serving the new developments, could link into the existing built-up area providing existing residents with a genuine choice of travel mode.

- 2.4 The establishment of an efficient network of high-quality public transport in Maidstone, part funded by new development, could encourage modal shift, reduce emissions and improve air quality throughout the urban area. The requirement to contribute to enhanced public transport should be imposed on all residential schemes with immediate effect.
- 2.5 Appendix A is a review of potential housing supply from various sources. This review demonstrates that Maidstone can meet its housing requirement in full from sustainable locations without having to make recourse to fundamentally isolated Garden Community locations such as Heathlands.

3.0 Transportation Considerations

- 3.1 Local roads and public transport are overstretched and congested. Lenham cannot take much more development, let alone the 5000 houses and 5000 jobs proposed in this Consultation.
- 3.2 At the start of the project local residents were promised that the scheme would deliver a new motorway junction on the M20. It is now extremely uncertain whether the proposed 'business case' for the new motorway junction can ever be made in reality.
- 3.3 The Heathlands project is to deliver a new railway station on the slow Ashford to Maidstone rail line. There is no technical work to demonstrate whether or how this new station could be delivered. One of the Maidstone Borough committee reports talks about closing the existing Lenham station to deliver a new Heathlands station. Such a proposal would be completely counter-productive not least because the existing 1000 dwellings in Lenham, as well as the 1000 additional dwellings to be delivered in Lenham Neighbourhood Plan, rely on improved access to the existing Lenham railway station.
- 3.4 Transport analysis commissioned by SOHL demonstrates that the A 20 does not have the capacity to accommodate development on the scale envisaged without wholesale dualling of the A20 through Lenham and Harrietsham. Such dualling would be very difficult and expensive to achieve and extremely damaging to the local environment. Kent County Council, as Highway Authority (letter dated 17th April 2020), has expressed severe reservations as to whether the three linked roundabouts on the A20 at Leeds Castle could cope with the additional 1000 dwellings released in Lenham Neighbourhood Plan, let alone the further 5000 dwellings proposed in this Consultation. If the project is forced through despite this congestion it may prejudice the possibility of ever completing a Leeds - Langley bypass because of the resultant gridlock at Junction 8 on the M20.
- 3.5 LPC believes that the Heathlands proposal is fundamentally flawed because the Consultation fails to give any detail of the offsite transportation improvements which would be required. These are likely to be varied, costly and uncertain. Such offsite

works are highly likely to involve the need for third party land and associated ransom payments. There is no clear evidence that these additional cost and delay factors have been fully factored into the planning considerations.

4.0 Consultation

4.1 The Parish Council was informed of the Heathlands proposal at a very late stage on the same day that it was announced to the local press and news media. The Borough Council engaged in what can best be described as a ‘telling’ exercise.

4.2 The Parish Council considers the approach taken by the Borough Council flies in the face of government planning policy contained in the NPPF, at paragraph 72, for example. Paragraph 72 requires the local planning authority to be:

“working with the support of their communities.”

The situation at Heathlands is the reverse of the approach set out in the NPPF.

4.3 LPC has repeatedly asked MBC for access to the documents which the Council says it has to support the evolution of the Heathlands proposal since 2019. Unfortunately, the Parish Council has repeatedly been denied access to these documents. MBC has cited commercial confidentiality as a reason for refusing to share basic environmental information which would have allowed the Parish Council to engage constructively in the consultation process.

4.4 The Parish Council believes the failure to engage in a positive manner with the local communities is a significant weakness of the Heathlands project. The request to be given information, which continues to be described in the Borough website, remains unresolved.

5.0 Infrastructure

5.1 It is completely unfair to house some 12,500 additional people in an isolated location such as Lenham Heath. The project would mean most of the occupants of the new houses having to travel expensive long distances by private motor vehicle to reach basic services such as hospitals, secondary schools, and employment.

5.2 The Council’s own consultants, in the published Sustainability Appraisal (SA), express severe doubts as to whether the dream of a garden community at Lenham Heath can actually ever be delivered in a practical and sustainable way (see SA paragraph 8.6). Of the three locations proposed for garden communities, the consultants identify Lenham Heath as the worst performing option in terms of sustainability (see SA paragraph 8.9). To locate 5000 houses in such a spectacularly isolated location would generate excessive journeys by private motor-vehicle.

6.0 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.1 Because Heathlands is so remote the area has little existing infrastructure to serve the proposed new settlement. It will therefore be relatively expensive to establish a new settlement making provision for all the essential services which will be needed. A garden community at Heathlands would therefore be a significant drain on Community Infrastructure Levy receipts which potentially will divert resources from other parts of the Borough which are urgently in need of support and reinforcement (see SA paragraph 8.6).

7.0 Employment

- 7.1 The Consultation Proposals announced by the Borough Council expect Heathlands to deliver as close to 5000 jobs as possible. There is no evidence from an expert chartered surveyor to support the proposition that an isolated location such as Lenham Heath could ever support investment on sufficient scale to generate anything like this number of new jobs.
- 7.2 Even if new jobs on this scale could be located at Lenham Heath the majority of the workers would reside in nearby larger towns such as at Swale, Medway, Maidstone and Ashford. Such commuting over distances in excess of 10-15 km would be wasteful of resources and would generate excessive carbon emissions contrary to government policy on climate change.
- 7.3 The majority of the jobs provided at Heathlands are likely to be in low-skilled, low-wage B8 storage and distribution type uses. There is no certainty, or even likelihood, that the employees in these jobs will be able to secure access to the new houses being provided at Heathlands. Only 20% of those employed in one major transportation firm in Lenham currently live within the local ME17 postcode. The rest of the workforce travel long distances some of them over 30 km. Experience of large mixed-use freestanding developments such as Kings Hill demonstrates it is quite unusual for an individual to both live and work within the community.
- 7.4 We are faced, therefore, with the very inefficient prospect of the residents of Heathlands having to commute over long distances to find employment. At the same time, those employed in any new jobs which could be provided at Heathlands are likely to be commuting at distances of some 10-15 km from existing dwellings in Ashford, Maidstone and the Medway towns.
- 7.5 Lenham Parish Council believes that the selection of Heathlands would be creating a pattern of growth which would not limit the need to travel. Quite the reverse would be the case. This is explicitly contrary to Government planning policy contained in the NPPF at paragraph 103. Objective 7 of the Sustainability Appraisal (page 6) specifically refers to the need to reduce travel and encourage sustainable and active alternatives to motorised vehicles to reduce road traffic congestion.

8.0 Environment

- 8.1 Most local people moved to Lenham and Lenham Heath because it is relatively remote, tranquil and isolated from urban intrusion. Building 5000 houses and providing for up to 5000 new jobs at Lenham heath would destroy the peaceful local environment.
- 8.2 The Local Plan Review Preferred Approaches Consultation Document shows the footprint of the Heathlands Garden Settlement proposal on the Key Diagram (Figure 5.3) which appears at page 54. The Key Diagram shows the Ashford to Maidstone railway line. The development footprint is shown extending to, but not to the north of, the railway line.
- 8.3 The Consultation Document contains another plan, at page 78, which shows another very different development footprint for the Heathlands Garden Settlement. This footprint extends some 1000 metres (1 km) further to the north close to, but not joining with, the A20 Ashford Road.
- 8.4 The additional footprint extends almost to touching distance with the allocations made in the Neighbourhood Plan causing severe coalescence between the new community and Lenham village.
- 8.5 The additional footprint extends very close to the southern boundary of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It would not be possible to effectively screen such a massive urbanisation project from one of the nation's most valuable countryside assets.
- 8.6 Lenham Heath itself has the benefit of numerous local environmental assets. These include:
- Woodlands;
 - Nature reserves;
 - Headwaters of the River Stour;
 - Stour Valley Walk long-distance footpath;
 - Listed Buildings and other heritage assets.

These assets would be overwhelmed and destroyed by massive urbanisation on the scale suggested. The proposal includes Lenham Sewage Treatment Works and a major sand reserve. There is no clarity as to how the development will deal with these constraints and whether a reduction in capacity would result.

- 8.7 Policy SP4(A) in the Consultation Document refers to Heathlands Policy SP4 (A) (3) (a) states the settlement will provide 5000 new homes.
- 8.8 Paragraph 6.74 of the Consultation Document refers to the potential for an additional 2000 new homes to be provided to the north of the railway line.

- 8.9 It is not clear whether these additional 2000 new homes to the north of the railway line are part of the 5000 dwellings referred to in SP4 (A) (3) (a) or additional to them.
- 8.10 Lenham Parish Council is therefore at some difficulty in responding to this Consultation as regards the following questions:
- 1) Is the footprint limited to the railway line as shown in the Key Diagram or does it extend to the foot of the Kent Downs AONB as shown in the Heathlands Garden Settlement proposal?
 - 2) Is the Parish Council being consulted on a proposal limited to the railway line, 5000 dwellings, or 7000 dwellings reaching to the foot of the Kent Downs AONB?
- 8.11 Each of these two different footprints have very different implications for the environment and local residents.
- 8.12 It is not clear which of the two footprints have been assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal. This lack of clarity is a fundamental technical difficulty with the consultation exercise.

9.0 Natural England Consultation on the Stodmarsh Wetlands

- 9.1 An advice note was published by Natural England in July 2020. The note is in relation to the eutrophication of the Stodmarsh wetlands. This results from poor water quality in the River Stour. Lenham is impacted by this consultation in relation to harm caused to the internationally important nature reserve caused by pollutants contained within the River.
- 9.2 It is not clear at the moment whether Lenham Wastewater Treatment Works (WTW) will need to be rebuilt as a result of this issue. If the WTW is to be rebuilt (or significantly altered) it is not clear what impact this new plant would have on the amenity of the proposed Garden Village.
- 9.3 It is also not clear whether the new rebuilt works would have capacity for the additional dwellings proposed in the Heathlands consultation document.
- 9.4 Lenham Parish Council has seen no evidence in the form of a revised development proposal, for example, to indicate whether the additional WTW plant will have a severe impact on the amenity and capacity of Heathlands to provide an attractive new housing environment.

10.0 Pollution

- 10.1 A policy of concentrating major urbanisation at an isolated location such as Lenham Heath would increase greenhouse gas emissions beyond that which would occur if the housing were to be provided closer to the main urban area of Maidstone where 75% of the Borough's population live and work.

11.0 Political Process

- 11.1 Attendance at the many Council meetings which have been held over the last 12 months indicates that the selection of Lenham Heath is primarily the result of political considerations. The technical Sustainability Appraisal of the plan (see paragraph 8.9) concludes that Lenham Heath is the worst performing option in terms of sustainability. Despite this conclusion Lenham Heath remains preferred.
- 11.2 See Appendix A for an analysis as to how Maidstone could provide the entire housing requirement without recourse to unsustainable proposals such as Heathlands Garden Community.

9.0 Windfalls

- 12.1 Analysis of the Council's own data demonstrates that if windfalls are projected to continue at current rates over the balance of the plan period then it would not be necessary to provide a second garden community at Heathlands in addition to that proposed at Lidsing. See Appendix B for a more detailed commentary on Windfalls.

13.0 Duty to Cooperate

- 13.1 The Consultation implies cooperation with Ashford Borough Council to locate either a new motorway junction or massive employment or both within that Borough boundary. There is no evidence that Ashford has agreed to cooperate, in fact consultation with local parish councils in Ashford Borough rather implies the reverse is the case.

14.0 Potential of the Leeds-Langley Corridor

- 14.1 The Council's 'Preferred Approach' document deals with the development potential of the Leeds-Langley Corridor very briefly at paragraphs 6.86 – 6.89. The consultation document confirms that although the 2017 Plan required this potential to be clarified, the work necessary to complete the review has yet to be undertaken. There is every reason to delay progress on the Review of the Local Plan until this essential piece of work has been completed and published for consultation.

- 14.2 The Leeds-Langley work is an essential, but missing, piece of the jigsaw which should be undertaken before a satisfactory review of the Local Plan can progress any further.
- 14.3 It is possible to explore the potential of the Leeds-Langley Corridor to explore growth by the provision of a sustainable quality bus-based network linking with Maidstone Town centre. This could be achieved without the provision of a Leeds-Langley bypass if that item of infrastructure is regarded as too difficult or too expensive to deliver.

15.0 The Uttlesford Case History

- 15.1 Uttlesford District Council's draft local plan was submitted for examination in January 2019 and proposed three new garden communities – Easton Park, North Uttlesford and West of Braintree. These proposals were expected to deliver around 18,500 homes in total. The three garden communities made up one of five bids that shared an award of £3.7m funding from the MHCLG in March 2019.
- 15.2 However, inspectors Louise Crosby and Elaine Worthington told the council in January 2020 that the plan had failed to provide enough detail on the exact locations of the three schemes. They raised doubts over the proposed housing delivery numbers and the cost of the required transport infrastructure. "We cannot find the plan sound based on vague, blurred annotations of broad locations, especially for something as significant as three large new communities," the inspectors said.
- 15.3 The inspectors also said the council had not "adequately demonstrated that the garden communities proposed in the plan are financially viable and therefore developable." The inspectors warned that the "withdrawal of the plan from examination is likely to be the most appropriate option". Members of Uttlesford District Council voted to withdraw the document from examination at the meeting on 30th April 2020.
- 15.4 Lenham Parish Council is concerned that the Borough Council might be about to make the same mistakes as those made at Uttlesford. If the Local Plan Review has to be withdrawn from Examination there would be a significant delay in producing and consulting on a revised document. This would both be very expensive and cause significant problems for Maidstone's housing land supply during the interim period.

16.0 Prematurity

- 16.1 It is acknowledged that the project will have a 15-year delivery phase. The 5000 houses would therefore require to be delivered at an average rate of 200 dwellings a year. At the enquiry into the 2017 Maidstone Local Plan the Inspector reduced the delivery rate at Lenham to 1000 houses from 2021 to 2031. This is an average of 100 dwellings a year. The reduction was made because of an evident low market

capacity for sales at Lenham. An average delivery rate of 200 dwellings per annum at Heathlands must therefore be regarded as an absolute maximum. There is a risk that sales will not be achieved at that rate in practice and financial returns would be held back.

- 16.2 Whatever the outcome of the current consultation on the algorithm Maidstone will need to provide something like 1000 to 1500 dwellings per annum. Over the 25-year delivery phase of Heathlands, Maidstone will therefore need to find a total of something approximating to 25,000 to 37,500 new homes. Whilst the 5000 dwellings from Heathlands would be helpful with this mathematical exercise, it would not resolve the entire Maidstone housing supply problem. In order to meet its housing needs in full Maidstone will need to look to the periphery of the town where, as the sustainability appraisal points out, some 75% of the Borough's population live and work. Heathlands does not fix the problem of Maidstone's ongoing housing land requirements. The way to resolve this problem is to complete the work on the Local Plan Review and look at the entire urban periphery of the town. This work is a requirement of the 2017 Local Plan and has yet to be completed.
- 16.3 One of the first objectives of the Garden Village project, when it was announced in 2019, was to secure the land options. Not one option has been secured and several smaller landowners have indicated they will not participate in the project. The Borough Council as local planning authority has now published support for the development of this land. It is far from certain whether the landowners will wish to engage with a public sector project especially in view of the uncertain infrastructure requirements and cost profile associated with it. Landowners will be advised and will expect to receive a fair return for their participation. Announcements regarding "land value capture" are less than helpful in this regard.
- 16.4 The Council's own 2020 annual monitoring statement confirms that Maidstone currently has a very healthy supply of housing land. This arises in part from a plentiful supply of windfall sites which is higher than was previously predicted. At the 9th November Council meeting MBC stated the Plan Review was being promoted at this time to avoid an increase in housing numbers arising from the Government's proposed new housing algorithm. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has confirmed reports that the Government is to delay this work. More homes are to be built in urban areas, particularly in the Midlands and the North.
- 16.5 It may be prudent for MBC to be the first plan under the new system (whatever that might be) rather than the last plan under the old system. If it were to be the last plan under the old system the Maidstone plan would be immediately out of date and in need of further very expensive review and updating.

APPENDIX A
ANALYSIS OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN:
ALTERNATIVE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTIONS

1. The Housing Requirement 2022-2037	-	18,210 dwellings
2. Known Housing Supply Includes 947 dwellings already provided for from Lenham.	-	12,420 dwellings
3. Balance (or shortfall) [(1) minus (2)] i.e. Additional housing to be found in the Local Plan Review.	-	5,790 dwellings
4. "Northern Emphasis"		
Binbury Park GS	-	5,392 to 3,235
Lidsing Urban Extension	-	3,317 to 1,990
Total potential supply Northern Emphasis	-	8,709 to 5,225
5. "South East of Maidstone Urban Extension"		
M20 J8 GS	-	3,583 to 2,150
Langley Heath GS	-	2,592 to 1,555
South of Leeds	-	2,563 to 1,538
Total potential supply South East of Maidstone Urban Extension	-	8,738 to 5,243
6. Conclusion:		
a) Either "Northern Emphasis" alone could meet the entire shortfall or "South East of Maidstone Urban Extension" alone could meet the entire shortfall;		
<u>OR</u>		
b) A selective combination of "Northern Emphasis" with "South East of Maidstone Urban Extension" could meet the entire shortfall;		
c) It is not necessary to pursue rural Garden Settlements at Marden, Staplehurst, Pagehurst Farm or Lenham Heath to meet the shortfall.		

APPENDIX B
Housing Land Supply
Commentary by Lenham Parish Council

Housing Land Supply

1. The Maidstone Borough Council Housing Land Supply Update Paper (1st April 2020) contains the following overview and summary:

“Summary of the Councils Housing Land Supply 2019/20 include:

• At 1 April 2020 the Council can demonstrate 6.1 years’ worth of deliverable housing sites against the Local Plan housing target of 17,660 dwellings.

• The 5-year housing land supply is made up of detailed planning consents (89%), outline planning consents (5%), allocated sites with planning consent pending (1%), allocated sites with no consent (1%) and a small sites (1-4 units) windfall allowance of (4%).

• The 20-year supply position has a surplus of 1,566 dwellings measured against the housing target of 17,660 dwellings.

• There were 1,304 dwellings (net) completed during the monitoring year 2019/20, bringing the total completed dwellings for the Local Plan period to 7,741.

• Work has commenced on sites totalling 3,705 dwellings at 1 April 2020, and this indicates that good progression is expected on dwelling completions during 2020/21.

• In 2019/20 more units were completed on greenfield rather than brownfield sites; and,

• Maidstone’s has a 141% result measured against the Housing Delivery Test.

As at 1st April 2020 the Council has a 20-year housing land supply of 19,226 dwellings, which exceeds the Local Plan housing target of 17,660 by 1,566 dwellings. This is a considerable improvement on the position published after the Local Plan inspector issued his ‘Interim Findings from the Examination of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan’ on 22 December 2016 (examination document reference ED110) of -85 dwellings. The improvement can be attributed to intensification of dwellings on sites allocated within the Local Plan, sustained levels of windfall planning permissions, and a revised windfall allowance that takes account of changes to national policy to include all sites not identified through the Local Plan, rather than just brownfield sites.”

2. Clearly the Borough Council is in a strong position with regard to immediate and long-term housing land supply. There is therefore no need to use any expedited procedures to produce a revised Local Plan for that reason.

3. Sustained levels of windfall permissions continue to add to the supply. Windfalls are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as “Sites not specifically identified in the development plan”. There are several ways in which the windfall supply can be dealt with within the Local Plan Review. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

Maximum Supply

4. The MBLP Review ‘Preferred Approach’ document at paragraph 5.9 (page 41) comments on windfalls as follows:
“the historic windfall delivery rate on small sites (<1 Ha) has been applied, this stands at 472 dwellings per annum.”
If that current rate of windfall allowance was continued over the entire 15 years of MBLPR (2022 – 2037) the resultant supply from this source alone would be 7080 dwellings (15 x 472 = 7080).
5. With the relaxation of permitted development allowing changes to office buildings, rural farm conversions and other sources there is every reason to assume that this plentiful windfall supply will continue to hold up. That level of windfall supply would probably be the maximum level which would result.

Moderate Supply

6. The MBC Housing Land Supply Update Analysis Paper (1 April 2020) deals with the windfall sites contribution at Section 8.0 (page 9). Table 8.1 Completed windfall dwellings (new NPPF definition) shows completions arising yearly from windfalls from 2000/9 to 2019/2020.
7. For the six years from 2008/9 to 2013/14 windfall completions averaged 269. For the six years from 2014/15 to 2019/20 completions averaged 319 dwellings per annum. This demonstrates that windfalls are both reliable and increasing over time.
8. The overall average between 2008/9 to 2019/20 is 294 dwellings per annum.
9. If the supply of windfalls over the last 12 years was assumed to continue at the rate of 294 dwellings per annum, the total windfall allowance over the 15 years 2022 to 2037 would be 4410 dwellings (294 x 15 = 4410).

Minimum Supply

10. The MBLP Review ‘Preferred Approach’ document at paragraph 5.12 (page 41) states that the Plan includes a windfall allowance of 2728 dwellings 2020-2037. This allowance is 181 dwellings per annum. It is some 113 dwellings per annum less than the average amount of windfall supply of 294 dwellings per annum which has been achieved over the last 12 years.

Preferred Approach to Windfalls

11. The Maximum Supply, at 472 dwellings per annum, might be regarded as ambitious and difficult to rely on. Lenham Parish Council does not support this level of allowance although the Parish Council recognises that in reality unidentified windfall sites in fact may continue at a very high level.
12. Lenham Parish Council does not Support the Minimum Supply at 181 dwellings per annum. This figure is only some 56% of the rate of windfall supply over the last six years 2014/15 to 2019/20. At this level the windfall allowance would considerably understate the level which might reasonably be expected to be achieved over the next 15 years of the Plan to 2037.
13. The Parish Council believes that a Moderate Supply approach to the windfall allowance is the most robust and reliable figure. It continues the trend from the last 12 years, despite changes in permitted development which might indicate that the increasing trend of windfall supply might actually continue in reality.
14. As a consequence, Lenham Parish Council would support a windfall allowance in the Plan of 294 dwellings per annum. Such an allowance would result in a total windfall supply of 4410 dwellings over the 15 years of the Plan.
15. The current windfall allowance within the Plan is 2718 dwellings. If the allowance were to be increased to 4410 then an additional 1692 dwellings would be included within the supply. That amount of 1692 dwellings would not then need to be found on other (mainly greenfield) sites within the Borough.
16. The current total housing need figure is 5790 dwellings. If this were to be reduced by 1692 dwellings the resultant housing need figure would be some 4098 dwellings.
17. Of the housing need of 5790 dwellings, the preferred approach document allocates 2700 dwellings to be found from garden communities up to 2037. Two locations are selected for garden communities, Lidsing and Heathlands.
18. The revised, November 2020, Sustainability Appraisal at paragraph 8.4 draws the following conclusion about garden communities:

“The SA found that: The scenarios that performed most strongly were Scenarios 3 a-c (One garden settlement approaches). This is primarily because they would concentrate development where there is the greatest number and range of jobs, services and facilities, and the best opportunities to use sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and bus, thereby also helping to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. These scenarios would also provide a garden settlement, which offers the opportunity to design-in from the outset a

development that encourages energy and water efficiency, cycling and walking, and a sense of community. Set against this is the experience from elsewhere however, suggests that garden settlements can often be car dependent, despite best intentions, and can also have long lead-in times, which means that they can take a long time to develop a critical mass capable of supporting the range of jobs, services and facilities characteristic of a sustainable community. They could also divert homes and investment from elsewhere in the Borough for existing communities in need. Garden settlements, in principle, offer an attractive and potentially relatively sustainable solution to meeting the Borough's needs but it is important that a realistic assessment of their deliverability in practice underpins any decision, so that the vision can genuinely be turned into reality. The top-down appraisal of refined spatial strategy options found little difference between Scenarios 3a, 3b and 3c – the individual appraisals of the three garden settlements should be referred to in order to understand their relative sustainability merits."

19. Paragraph 8.9 of the Sustainability Appraisal report reads as follows:

"8.9. The SA found that the garden settlement option that performed most strongly in sustainability terms was Lidsing, followed by North of Marden, Heathlands performed least well across the range of sustainability objectives."

20. Lenham Parish Council agrees with and supports the conclusions of the Council's own chosen expert planning consultants as regards the suitability of the candidate sites for a new garden community. Lenham Parish Council believes Heathlands is not and could never be a suitable and sustainable location for a garden community on any scale.

21. Lenham Parish Council would request that Maidstone Borough Council adopts a 'moderate approach' to windfall supply. That approach would continue the average previous 12 years of windfall supply in the Borough across the next 15 years of the Review Plan period. Such an approach would add some 1692 dwellings to the identified supply. The housing requirement to be found from garden settlements could then be reduced from 2700 dwellings to a more modest and achievable 1008 dwellings.

22. As a consequence of this reduction Lenham Parish Council would recommend that Heathlands, the worst performing garden community, should be deleted in its entirety from the Local Plan Review, so as not to 'divert homes and investment from elsewhere in the Borough for existing communities in need.'