

# Planning decisions September 2022

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22/503463/LBC	73 High Street Lenham Maidstone Kent ME17 2QG	No Comment
22/503737/FULL	1 Forstal Cottages Forstal Road Lenham Heath Maidstone Kent ME17 2JB	No Comment
22/504249/FULL	28A Maidstone Road Lenham Maidstone Kent ME17 2QJ	No Comment
22/504306/FULL	3 Hatch Road Lenham Maidstone Kent ME17 2HL	No Comment
22/504296/SUB	Chapel Mill Farm East Lenham Road Lenham Maidstone Kent ME17 2BJ	No Comment
22/504197/FULL	The White Horse Inn Lenham Heath Road Sandway Maidstone Kent ME17 2HY	We approve of this application being the provision of off-road car parking essential for this development.
22/503978/FULL	Cherry Garden Farmhouse Lenham Forstal Road Lenham Heath Maidstone Kent ME17 2JG	No Comment
22/504146/FULL	Blue House Farm Warren Street Lenham Maidstone Kent ME17 2ED	LPC Objection – see attachment below
22/504398/FULL	West Star Farm Waterditch Lane Lenham Kent ME17 2DY	No Comment
22/504387/FULL	Raglands Dickley Lane Lenham Kent ME17 2DD	No Comment
22/504351/SUB	Greenways Warren Street Road Charing Ashford Kent TN27 0HJ	No Comment

## Ref. No: 22/504146/FULL

[Demolition of large light industrial buildings and former agricultural buildings to the east of the site, reduction in hardstanding area and the redevelopment of the site to include the construction of 8no. dwellinghouses with associated landscaping and ecological enhancements. \(Alternative scheme to implemented approval ref. 19/5000455/FULL.\)](#)

Thank you for your consultation on the planning application for the redevelopment of the site at Land at Blue House Farm, Warren Street, Lenham. Lenham Parish Council have the following comments. Whilst the Parish Council can see the advantages of providing modern housing rather than converted barns **we do not consider that this proposal differs sufficiently from the previous application 21/501870/full which was rejected by MBC.**

We would remind the Planning Officer of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan which mitigates against large scale developments of this kind in the rural area (especially the AONB) on several grounds but especially in respect of sustainability. The Hamlet of Warren Street is more than a mile from the Village Centre connected only by a narrow lane from the A20 – the lane being without pavement.

Below we repeat our original objections to the previous application 21/501870/Full none of which appears to have been taken into account by this latest application.

*“21/501870/FULL is a new planning application superseding a previous application at this location ref: 19/500455/FULL/ (Conversion of a light industrial buildings to form 8 no residential units and associated building works. | The Old Dairy Buildings Blue House Farm Warren Street Lenham Kent ME17 2ED). This previous application was approved as a prior approval submission (19/500455 being the "full" secondary application).*

This new application (21/501870/FULL), however, is not part of the prior approval 18/501716/PNPA which was for 7 homes created within the existing buildings and as such Lenham Parish Council **objects** to planning application in the strongest terms. The reasons for our objection are outlined below.

### **Lenham Neighbourhood Plan**

Lenham Parish Council (LPC) has produced the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan 2021 (LNP) which sustainably contributes over 1000 dwellings to the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. LPC is not opposed to residential development in principle, provided it is in the correct location.

The LNP was approved at referendum stage on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 after submission by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to the Lenham electorate. In line with Section 38 (3A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the LNP is now part of the development plan for the Maidstone Borough. The LNP contains the Policy 6.8.3 to address Countryside Protection, this states the following:

*“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, Warren 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.”**

The following headings and numbers relate to each of the points in Policy CP1.

#### **1. Potential Visual Impact**

1.1 It will not be possible to demolish these existing buildings and rebuild an enclave of housing

without having a negative visual impact on the surrounding countryside.

- 1.2 Severe harm would result from the conversion of these farm buildings into dwellings in the AONB which is a sensitive and exposed countryside location.

## **2. Effects on Landscape Character of the Site and its Surroundings**

- 2.1 The fundamental character of this part of Lenham is that of isolated detached dwellings.
- 2.2 If permitted and implemented, this would introduce an unwelcome element of a fundamentally suburban character to the extreme detriment of the rural amenities of this area of attractive and unspoilt countryside.

## **3. Impact on Biodiversity**

- 3.1 The site currently offers the opportunity to support a variety of wildlife, including bats and nesting birds.
- 3.2 The introduction of an essentially suburban development on the site with its associated areas of hardstanding would reduce the potential of the site to support varied wildlife.

## **4. Infrastructure and Services**

- 4.1 The dwellings proposed to be located on the site would essentially form an isolated car-based housing enclave within a rural area. There are no local services within easy walking distance of this enclave and the net result of the development would be to significantly increase the use of motor vehicles on entirely unsuitable, narrow and dangerous rural lanes. If the occupants chose to walk to the nearest facilities, it would necessitate use of these narrow dangerous country lanes which do not have footways.
- 4.2 The site lies a considerable distance from Lenham Primary School and the Lenham School. Access to those schools would be extremely hazardous especially if family groups are expected to navigate the lanes using pushchairs. Similar considerations apply to reaching Doctors Surgery, the Community Centre and local shops, none of which are within easy walking distance of the site.

## **5. Impact on Settlement Pattern**

- 5.1 LPC is concerned that this planning application will become a precedent for other equally unsuitable dwellings scattered across the rural hamlets of the Parish.
- 5.2 The LNP has made provision for an additional 1000 dwellings at Lenham village in a fully sustainable and integrated manner.
- 5.3 There is no possible justification for the provision of additional dwellings at this site which is evidentially unsustainable and not capable of being integrated into the surrounding rural area.
- 5.4 LPC notes that MBC has been consistent in refusing applications for housing in isolated locations, such as at Lenham Sandpits. LPC would support MBC in the consistent application of the rural protections policies which are contained in the NPPF, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and LNP.

## **Conclusion**

For all the above reasons LPC ask MBC Planning to support consistent application of rural planning policy and reject this application. If a compromised residential scheme can be achieved using permitted development rights, then so be it, LPC can do nothing to prevent such isolated sporadic development within the AONB. LPC firmly believes however that those permitted development rights should not be used as an excuse for a more intrusive and extensive isolated sporadic development in a highly unsuitable and unsustainable location.

LPC accepts that the permission granted under reference 19/500455 and the two earlier prior notification approvals constitute a fall-back position in this case. However, following the addition of LNP to the Maidstone Borough Local Plan following the overwhelming referendum result on the 6th of May 2021, LPC considers that the planning balance has shifted. The proper application of LNP countryside protection policy CP 1 as quoted above would lead LPC to support refusal of this current application.

The application should be refused on the basis of harmful intrusion into the rural area, in a completely unsustainable location, having an undesirable impact on both the AONB and surrounding heritage assets and contrary to the provisions of development plan policy as expressed in both Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the LNP. “