

Planning Statement

**Land East of Albion Road and
North of Copper Lane
Marden**

Outline planning application with all matters reserved (except access) for up to 117 dwellings, including associated infrastructure, the provision of public open space, parking, landscaping and access.

at

Land East of Albion Road and North of Copper Lane,
Marden

Planning Statement

on Behalf of

Rydon Homes Limited

August 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is written on behalf of Rydon Homes Limited in support of the submission of an outline planning application for the erection of up to 117 dwellings, the provision of open space, including associated infrastructure, the provision of public open space, parking, landscaping and access.
- 1.2 The application is made in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of up to 117 dwellings with only means of access for determination. All other matters are reserved for later approval. The application is brought forward in accordance with the allocation of the Site within the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review (MBLPR).
- 1.3 The proposal will deliver 117 dwellings, including 40% affordable housing, set within significant informal and formal open recreation space. The development area will deliver significant Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 27.77% gain in habitats units and 59.3% in hedgerow units. It will deliver informal and formal areas of play, including local areas of play and usable green space. The Site will be accessed via Albion Road in accordance with the Site allocation (policy LPRSA295 of the MBLPR), with an emergency vehicular access and cycle/pedestrian access onto Copper Lane and will provide pedestrian links within the Site and connections to the wider network.
- 1.4 This Statement considers the Site and surrounding area, planning history, the scheme itself, relevant planning policy and provides an appraisal of the scheme in light of these considerations. It concludes that the proposal is a carefully considered scheme that meets guidance contained in the Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.5 In addition to this Planning Statement, the following reports have been prepared in support of this application:

REPORT	CONSULTANT
Design and Access Statement	OSP Architecture
Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment	Broad Oak Tree Consultants
Transport Assessment	i Transport
Framework Travel Plan	i Transport

Biodiversity Net Gain Briefing Note	Ecology Solutions
Ecological Impact Assessment and Ecological surveys	Ecology Solutions
Heritage Statement	Orion Heritage
Archaeological Desk Based Assessment	Orion Heritage
Foul Water Strategy Report	HSP Consulting
Flood Risk Assessment	HSP Consulting
Statement of Community Involvement	SP Broadway
Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan (OLEMP)	Allen Scott
Noise Impact Assessment	Cass Allen
Mineral Resource Assessment	Savills
Energy Statement	DESCO
Affordable Housing Statement	Tetlow King

- 1.6 The following plans and drawings have been submitted. Three plans are proposed for approval (Site Location Plan (S101) Albion Road – All Purpose Access (ITB15098-GA-053) and Copper Lane – Pedestrian/Cycle/Emergency Access (ITB15098-GA-026), with the remaining plans for information. The coloured site layout plan (SK25 Rev J) comprises an illustrative plan, submitted for information (but not for approval).

REFERENCE	TITLE	SCALE
S101	Site Location Plan	1:1250 @ A2
S105	Tree Retention Plan	1:500 @ A0
SK12 Rev F	Policy Area Calculations (Public Open Space)	1:500 @ A0
SK25 Rev J	Coloured Site Layout	1:500 @ A0
SK26 Rev B	Building Heights Layout	1:500 @ A0
ITB15098-GA-053A	Albion Road – All Purpose Access	1:1000 @ A4
ITB15098-GA-026C	Copper Lane – Pedestrian / Cycle / Emergency Access	1:500 @ A3
CLM/2107/1 to 10	Site Survey	1:200 @A1

2. The Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The Site is broadly located on the southeast side of the village of Marden. It comprises a large, broadly rectangular-shaped area. It is allocated in the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan Review (MBCLPR) for approximately 113 dwellings.
- 2.2 Overall, the Site measures approximately 6 hectares in area. The Site borders Copper Lane to the south and the west of the Site shares a short frontage with Albion Road. Located along the northern boundary of the Site is the recently completed residential development of Russet Grove, which is characterised by more modern housing development. To the east of the Site are open fields, defined by further agricultural land, with sporadic farm houses.
- 2.1 The Site currently comprises of agricultural land. The majority of the site comprises of a commercial plum and apple orchard with an existing vehicular field access onto Copper Lane. The gradient of the orchard land declines from the northern to southern boundary along Copper Lane. A number of ponds are located within the southern part of the site, in proximity to the southern site boundary with Copper Lane. The smaller western land parcel fronts onto Albion Road, with an existing field access. The smaller western land parcel fronting Albion Road is heavily overgrown with bramble/shrub, with two former mushroom-growing agricultural sheds located within the centre of the site. The existing boundaries of both the orchard part of the site and the smaller parcel fronting Albion Road, are well defined with established mature trees and hedgerows.
- 2.2 The Site is currently accessible for vehicles from Copper Lane. An access point is to be retained as an emergency vehicular access and shared with pedestrian/cycle access as part of the proposal. The main vehicular access to the Site will be via Albion Road. The proposed access point on Albion Road has been located to the south of the residential property known as Howlands, which is within the same landownership. Full details of the proposed vehicular/pedestrian access to the Site from Albion Road and Copper Lane, are submitted for approval.
- 2.3 The context of the Site can be seen in the image below.



Site Location (not to scale) Application Site outlined in red. Image taken from Design & Access Statement by OSP

- 2.4 Marden is defined as being a rural service centre within the Maidstone Local Plan (2017) (MLP). This is the second category of settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Borough, second only to the County Town of Maidstone, and these rural service centres are considered to have a good range of services and facilities which serve both the village and the surrounding hinterland.
- 2.5 The Site is within walking distance to the centre of the village, which is approximately 400m away, providing future residents with access to facilities and services including a primary school (1100m from Site), a church, a pharmacy, a convenience store and a number of pubs, restaurants, and shops.
- 2.6 The Site also benefits from being in close proximity to 2no. existing bus stops located circa 270m and 360m from the Site situated on Plain Road. These bus stops provide connections between Marden and Maidstone and stops between.
- 2.7 Marden has a rail station which is located approximately 1km to the north of the site. Marden rail station is situated on the South East Main Line, which provides regular services to London, Tonbridge and Ashford, and the various stations between these destinations. The local public transport connections

are considered in more detail within the accompanying Transport Assessment which demonstrates that the Site is located in a very sustainable location.

- 2.8 There are no Public Rights of Way or Bridleways within the Site itself, but there are a number of public footpaths in the vicinity of the Site. The application proposes 2m wide footways on both sides of the carriageway within the Site and to the bellmouth. The southern footway of the proposed bellmouth stops opposite Public Footpath KM281 and a proposed dropped kerb crossing will be provided to facilitate pedestrian access to the west side of Albion Road to access Public Footpath KM281. Improvements are proposed to Public Footpath KM281 which provides a convenient and safe route to the majority of amenities in Marden village centre. Improvements to Albion Road and Thorn Road are proposed to deliver a traffic calming scheme comprising of a suite of highway measures, together with the provision of additional highway improvements to pedestrian routes from the Site to village amenities (e.g additional wayfinding, tactile paving/dropped kerbs to aid pedestrian routes) and the provision of additional cycle parking in proximity to amenities within Marden. More details are provided in the accompanying Transport Assessment.
- 2.9 The roads in the local area are considered suitable for cycling. The accompanying Transport Assessment confirms that Albion Road, in the vicinity of the site frontage' does currently operate safely as a shared surface and mixed traffic environment for both pedestrians and cyclists. Therefore, there are strong opportunities to encourage walking and cycling.
- 2.10 The Site is outside of but adjoins the settlement boundary of Marden along the northern boundary. The northern boundary comprises of the recently completed housing development of Russet Grove, which is generally on higher ground than the application Site.
- 2.11 The Site is not within any protected landscapes (such as AONB or National Park). The High Weald AONB is located approximately 4km from the application Site.
- 2.12 The application Site is situated wholly within Flood Zone 1 and as such is considered at low risk of flooding from fluvial and tidal sources. The site is not considered to be a significant risk of flooding from surface water, although mitigations are required, with more details of the proposed surface water drainage strategy provided in the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment.
- 2.13 There are no Listed Buildings within the Site nor is it located within a Conservation Area. There are no Scheduled Monuments or Historic Battlefields which will be impacted by the proposed development. There are a number of Listed Buildings within the wider area, the impact of the proposal upon the character and setting of these buildings has been assessed and the application is supported by a Heritage Statement (Orion).

3. Planning History

Application Site

- 3.1 There is no relevant planning history on this Site as identified on the Council's online portal.

Maidstone Local Plan Review

- 3.2 The Local Plan Review proposes the application site for a housing allocation under **Policy LPRSA295** – Land at Copper Lane and Albion Road, Marden. This policy allocates the site for the development of approximately 113 dwellings, the policy sets out general principles for the design and layout of the development; landscape and ecology; access; highways and transportation; open space, and utilities infrastructure.

Relevant other applications

- 3.3 Whilst there is no recent planning history on this Site, there have been previous planning applications in the vicinity of the Site. These primarily concern the residential development located along the northern boundary of the application Site at Seymour Drive (formerly the Marden Cricket and Hockey Club) and subsequently built out for 124 new homes, under the name 'Russet Grove'. The site 'Russet Grove' was allocated for residential development in The Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017).

Five-year Housing Land Supply

- 3.4 The Councils published a Five-Year Housing Land Supply Addendum in November 2022. This confirmed that the Council could demonstrate a total supply of 6,239 dwellings which equates to a 5.14 year supply.

Pre-application discussions

Pre-application Meeting with Maidstone Borough Council

- 3.5 In Summer 2022, an initial pre-application advice meeting took place with Planning Officers at Maidstone Borough Council. This request was made on the basis of a scheme for 130 dwellings within the area identified by the draft Site allocation in the Reg 19 version of the MBLP. The meeting discussed the site constraints and opportunities.
- 3.6 A full written response was received mid-August 2022. The pre-application advice was broadly supportive of the principal of development on site, through a plan led process. It was considered that some improvements to the layout could be made. The informal Planning Officer feedback received included a reduction in the number of dwellings, and a loosening of the scale

of the dwellings within the south of the site, set within the proposed open space.

- 3.7 The revised proposals have taken on board these suggestions, the number of homes proposed has been reduced from 130 to 117 new homes. The scale and height of dwellings in the southern part of the site has been reduced, with single and 1 & ½-storey dwellings proposed instead.

4. The Scheme

Description of Development

- 4.1 This application seeks outline planning consent for the erection of up to 117 no. residential dwellings on the Site, including 40% affordable housing (47 dwellings), the provision of formal and informal public open space, with a new formal vehicular access to Albion Road and an emergency (pedestrian/cycle access) onto Copper Lane. This application is for outline planning consent, approval is sought with the means of access only for determination to both Albion Road and Copper Lane All other matters are reserved for later approval.
- 4.2 Although layout is a reserved matter for later approval, the submitted coloured site layout plan demonstrates how the Site can accommodate 117 homes and significant areas of additional public open space, in accordance with the draft Site Allocation in the MBLPR.
- 4.3 The indicative layout and accommodation schedule proposes a range of dwelling types and sizes to help meet a diverse range of housing needs in the Borough. The proposed mix would include 2-storey dwellings ranging from 1-bed to 4-bed properties, a limited number of apartments of 2.5 stories in height and bungalows and 1 & ½-storey dwellings.
- 4.4 A total of 47 of the proposed dwellings will be affordable units which will be secured to meet local need at the Council’s 40% policy requirement, as set out in policy SP20 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017) and the expectations of the Affordable and Local Needs Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2020. As part of this provision, a mix of dwelling types are proposed from 1-bed to 4-bed properties across the Site to meet local housing needs, including housing for older people. An indicative schedule is shown below:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Total
Market	0	16	36	18	70
Affordable Housing	16	15	12	4	47

- 4.5 The whole of the Site measures 5.98 ha and the total number of dwellings proposed on Site is 117 new homes. This would result in a density of 20dph, which is broadly similar to the existing residential areas in the village. The proposed density is comparable to the surrounding area but would still be less than the density at the neighbouring site of Russet Grove to the north, which would help to provide a better transition from the current hard urban edge of the village presented through the Russet Grove development to the semi-rural surroundings beyond the Site.

- 4.6 The remainder of the Site would be utilised for the provision of a variety of different types of public open spaces to facilitate community interaction, including a community village green, provision of a Local Area of Play, amenity green space, public formal and informal green space, and natural and semi-natural areas of open space. Drawing No.SK12 F (Policy area calculations) provides a land use budget, quantifying the proposed public open space coverage against the illustrative layout. The illustrative layout plan demonstrates the potential to provide around 3 hectares of public open space, which would be substantially in excess of the 1.55 hectares required within the draft allocation (Local Plan Review Policy LPRSA 275). The public open space would be integrated with the existing ponds and proposed attenuation basin and swales to allow a suitable landscape structure for wildlife and amenity benefit resulting in a development which is in keeping with the settlement/ rural edge character of the area.
- 4.7 The scheme will deliver significant enhancements to biodiversity. The application is supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Briefing Note (Ecology Solutions), which confirms that the Site can deliver a 27.7% gain in habitats units and 59.3% in hedgerow units. This is significantly in excess of what will be required when the Environment Act comes into force.
- 4.8 The proposal provides the opportunity for significant additional areas of publicly accessible greenspaces (potentially 3 hectares of additional open space) which can link with existing public rights of way opposite Albion Road and in addition, the wider network of public right of way (including PROW KM278) located in proximity to the site off Copper Lane. The proposed open space and ponds in the south of the site would be interconnected by meandering raised boardwalks and paths, which have educational and amenity features integrated into the design aspirations. The proposal therefore has the potential to offer significantly enhanced open space and recreation benefits to the wider community.
- 4.9 The approach to development on the Site is very much landscape-led and has been carefully designed to protect the quality of the wider landscape.

Access

- 4.10 Access to the proposed development is via an all-purpose access from Albion Road. A proposed pedestrian, cycle and emergency access is also proposed from Copper Lane.
- 4.11 The proposed access from Albion Road will take the form of a simple priority junction. The access road carriageway will measure 6m wide at its western section near Albion Road narrowing to 5.5m within the site. There will be 2m wide footways on both sides of the carriageway within the site.
- 4.12 The immediate area of Albion Road where the Site access is proposed, does not currently benefit from pedestrian footways. The proposed Site access
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junction would be designed to incorporate pedestrian and cycle access into the Site. To facilitate pedestrian access into the Site, a 2m wide footway connection would be provided on both sides of the proposed new bellmouth arrangement. The southern footway of the proposed bellmouth stops opposite Public Footpath KM281 and a proposed dropped kerb crossing will be provided to facilitate pedestrian access to the west side of Albion Road to access Public Footpath KM281. Improvements are proposed to Public Footpath KM281 which provides a convenient and safe route to the majority of amenities in Marden village centre. Improvements to Albion Road and Thorn Road are proposed to deliver a traffic calming scheme comprising of a suite of highway measures, together with the provision of additional highway improvements to pedestrian routes from the Site to village amenities (e.g additional wayfinding, tactile paving/dropped kerbs to aid pedestrian routes) and the provision of additional cycle parking in proximity to amenities within Marden. This would enable links to the existing pedestrian infrastructure which is considered suitable to provide continuous access into the Village Centre and the wider pedestrian network.

- 4.13 The roads in the local area are considered suitable for cycling. The accompanying Transport Assessment confirms that Albion Road, in the vicinity of the site frontage' does currently operates safely as a shared surface and mixed traffic environment for both pedestrians and cyclists. Therefore, there are strong opportunities to encourage walking and cycling.
- 4.14 Improvements to Albion Road and Thorn Road are proposed to deliver a traffic calming scheme comprising of a suite of highway measures, which are explained further in the Transport Assessment (i Transport) which accompanies this application.
- 4.15 The proposed Site access design is of sufficient width to enable the two-way movement of vehicles in line with the Manual for Streets guidance. The access and roadways would be of sufficient width to allow access by a fire tender and refuse vehicle. The roadways within the Site, although indicative, have been tracked and this demonstrates that there is sufficient width for refuse vehicles. Turning heads have been provided and are appropriately sized to ensure refuse vehicles can manoeuvre freely through the Site. The illustrative layout demonstrates that vehicle parking can be provided for each dwelling as well as cycle parking in accordance with Kent County Council standards. The accompanying Transport Assessment (i Transport) provides further commentary on this matter.
- 4.16 The proposed development is offering to deliver and/or fund the following transport/highway improvements in Marden, set out in table 3.4 (below) which is extracted from the Transport Assessment which accompanies the application and provides further details on how the total transport needs of the development will be met. The application also proposes a Framework Travel Plan to ensure proposes measures are provided to promote walking,

cycling, public transport and shared care use as alternatives to single occupancy car travel.

Table 3.4 Proposed Transport / Highway Improvements

No	Proposed Transport / Highway Improvements
1	Albion Road – All Purpose Access
2	Copper Lane – Pedestrian / Cycle / Emergency Access
3	New Pedestrian / Cycle Route between Albion Road and Copper Lane (through site)
4	Proposed Improvements to Footpath KM281
5a	Proposed Traffic Calming Scheme Albion Road / Thorn Road
5b	Proposed simplification of Albion Road / Plain Road / Thorn Road Junction (opportunity for environments enhancements and improved bus waiting area)
6	Active Travel Routes – Wayfinding Signing and Dropped Kerb / Tactile Paving where missing
7	Additional Cycle Parking in Village Centre
8	Financial contribution to cycle parking at library (Village Centre cycle parking)
9	Potential financial contribution to cycle parking at Marden Station

- 4.17 The proposed transport improvements set out in table 3.4 above would assist in delivering some of the improvements set out in the Marden Highway Improvement Plan (prepared by KCC highway authority in consultation with Marden Parish Council and annually reviewed).

Design and Character

- 4.18 The detailed layout, appearance, scale and landscaping are reserved for future approval; however, the coloured site layout illustrates how the site has been designed to be in keeping with the existing character of the buildings in the area and with consideration of the constraints and opportunities of the Site. The edge of settlement character has been respected with soft landscaping and enhanced amenity to reflect and complement the spacious character of the immediate area.
- 4.19 The residential parcels will be set within extensive areas of green space with retained field boundaries which will assist to retain a semi-rural feel to the edge of the settlement.
- 4.20 The characteristics of the Site enables the scheme to be sub-divided into 5 distinctive character areas. These areas respond to the existing divisions of the Site and the surrounds, the density of the development and the types of buildings in each of these areas have been carefully varied to give a sense of identity. The site layout is considered as a series of merging character areas, east to west, with a lower scale more rural edge set to the south of the site.

- 4.21 Although the application is for outline planning permission, there are indicative designs for the proposed dwellings, and an indicative materials palette, which has taken influence from the surrounding properties. The design therefore, reflects the local vernacular whilst ensuring a variety of dwellings. These are shown within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- 4.22 The proposed dwellings are of a high-quality design which has a common architectural language and development identity which is representative of the local area. The external materials, boundary walls, hard surfacing and fencing will all be of the traditional Marden village and wider Kent palette, and this ensures that the design of the dwellings harmonises with the surrounding character of the area. For a detailed assessment of the design of the scheme please see the accompanying Design and Access Statement, this explains more fully the approach to the design of the development.
- 4.23 The design of the scheme has been very much landscape-led and seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape. The scheme proposes restoring the existing north – south boundaries of the Site and integrate this into the development. The boundaries of the Site are well defined by mature trees and hedgerows and therefore the Site is considered to be very self-contained in the locality. The existing vegetation along the boundaries of the Site would largely be retained and will be enhanced in places. New landscaped planting would be introduced throughout the Site to provide a landscape buffer between the Site and the neighbouring properties and to provide additional screening of the Site.
- 4.24 The proposed open spaces will provide a mix of formal and informal recreational spaces, including walks, meeting spaces, local areas of play, and a community orchard.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 4.25 The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy report (HSP). The FRA identifies that the developable area of the Site is wholly located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore a low risk of flooding. All forms of development are considered acceptable in principle in Flood Zone 1. The Sequential Test is not required as the developable area of the Site is located within Flood Zone 1.
- 4.26 One of the key design principles of the scheme is to provide a drainage strategy utilising an appropriate Sustainable Drainage System including drainage ditches and attenuation basins, providing appropriate drainage features to development edges and within open spaces.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 A key role of the planning system is to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest. At the heart of the planning framework are statutory Development Plans which seek to guide the decision-making process. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, where the Development Plan contains relevant policies, an application for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 In this case, the Development Plan comprises of the following:

- (i) The Maidstone Borough Local Plan (MBLP), which was adopted October 2017
- (ii) The Marden Neighbourhood Plan (MNP), which was made by Maidstone Borough Council July 2020.
- (iii) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021)
- (iv) The application proposal must also be considered against national planning guidance where such guidance is material to the consideration of the application.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017)

5.3 The MBLP was adopted by the Council in October 2017. This document provides the strategic planning policy framework for the Borough over the plan period 2011- 2031.

5.4 The MBLP states that in order “to ensure an up-to-date planning policy framework is maintained, a review of the plan will be completed by April 2021.”

5.5 The MBLP is over 5 years old, as such, those policies within the Plan which relate to housing delivery are considered out of date. However, they are still relevant insofar as they do not conflict with the NPPF, relevant policies are listed below:

5.6 **Policy SS1** (Maidstone Borough Spatial Strategy), sets out the Council’s strategic approach to development which seeks to focus new development to take place within the Maidstone urban area. The Policy establishes a hierarchy of settlements and the broad location and provision of a sustainable pattern of development across the borough. It sets out that rural service centres such as Marden will be the secondary focus for housing development in the Borough. These service centres are recognised as being the second most sustainable settlements in the Borough to accommodate

growth. This policy also sets out the number of homes to be delivered over the plan period and advises that provision is made for the development of 17,660 homes. Given that this policy relates to housing delivery and is based on out-of-dates housing need figures it is considered to be out of date and as such limited weight can be given to it.

- 5.7 **Policy SP5** (Rural Service Centres) confirms that within the designated rural service centres the Council will focus new development with the settlements when it is an allocated site or broad location in the Local Plan; it is minor development such as infilling; or the redevelopment of previously developed land that is of a scale appropriate to the size of the village.
- 5.8 **Policy SP9** (Marden Rural Service Centre) allocates approximately 447 new dwellings over five allocated sites in the village but notes that further development can come forward from minor development and the redevelopment of appropriate sites in accordance with Policy SP5. Given that the MBLP is now more than 5 years old and this policy relates to housing delivery and is based on out-of-date housing need figures it is considered to be out of date and as such limited weight can be given to it. This policy also notes that there are key infrastructure requirements for the village such as: Improvements to highway and transport infrastructure including railway station enhancements, a variety of measures to improve sustainable transport infrastructure, and improvements to pedestrian access, and the provision of publicly accessible open space.
- 5.9 **Policy SP19** (Housing Mix) advocates that development should provide a sustainable range of housing sizes, types, and tenures to meet the needs of those living in the Borough now and in the future. The Policy advises that the accommodation profiles as evidenced in the latest Strategic Housing Mix Assessment 2015 (SHMA) should be used to help inform developers to determine the proposed mix of a development.
- 5.10 **Policy SP20** (Affordable Housing) This policy confirms that sites providing 11 or more dwellings, or on sites with a floorspace over 1,000m², the Council will require the delivery of affordable housing. On sites in rural service centres 40% of the development is to be affordable, and the tenure is expected to be 70% affordable rented and 30% shared ownership.
- 5.11 **Policy DM1** (Principles of good design) sets out that proposals should create high quality design and sets out a number of criteria, including providing layouts that are accessible to all; responding positively to the local, natural or historical character of the area; creating high quality public realm; and respecting the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- 5.12 **Policy DM2** (Sustainable design) states that proposals must seek to improve the sustainability of development.

- 5.13 **Policy DM3** (Natural environment) sets out that the natural environment and landscape character of the Borough will be protected against inappropriate development. Proposals should ensure the protection of landscape character, important hedgerows, protected and veteran trees, features of geological interest, and positively contribute to the improvement of accessibility of green space and links to the public rights of way network.
- 5.14 **Policy DM12** (Density of housing development) requires that all new housing be developed at a density that is consistent with achieving good design, do not compromise the distinctive character of the locality, and make efficient use of land for housing.
- 5.15 **Policy DM19** (Publicly accessible open space and recreation) sets out the expected levels of both the quantity and quality standards of publicly accessible open space provision for new housing sites. It also sets out the expected accessibility standards.
- 5.16 **Policy DM20** (Community facilities) states that residential development which would generate a need for new community facilities will not be permitted unless the provision of new, extended or improved facilities, or a contribution towards such provision is secured via appropriate planning conditions or obligations.
- 5.17 **Policy DM21** (Assessing the transport impacts on development) requires that developments demonstrate that the trips generated can be accommodated, remedied or mitigated to prevent severe residual impacts. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are expected to be provided to support planning applications for major developments.
- 5.18 **Policy DM23** (Parking standards) requires adequate parking facilities be provided within developments to meet the needs of future users. Consideration should be given to the needs of cycle parking, motorcycle parking, charging plug-in or other low emission vehicles and the mobility impaired.

Marden Neighbourhood Plan (MNP) 2020

- 5.19 Maidstone Borough Council formally 'made' the MNP on 15th July 2020.
- 5.20 The MNP does not allocate any sites for development, rather it sets out a number of policies on issues considered to be of specific importance to the community of Marden. These policies have the objective of retaining, and wherever possible, enhancing the rural Wealden character and distinctiveness of the village.
- 5.21 The following policies within the MNP are considered to be relevant to the proposal:

- 5.22 **Policy NE1** refers to surface water management and states that support will be given to development proposals that include appropriate sustainable surface water control systems designed to deliver efficient, clean water handling as well as wildlife and amenity benefits. The policy also states that schemes must be accompanied by a detailed management plan confirming operating responsibilities to ensure the permanent management and maintenance of all elements of the schemes to maximise local benefits.
- 5.23 **Policy NE3** states that all proposed developments should be designed to integrate into their surroundings in the landscape and contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of that landscape. Dense hedgerow planting with native species is the preferred boundary treatment if the strengthening of existing hedgerows or restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries is not possible. Artificial lighting systems, if deemed necessary, require sensitive treatment to reduce visual intrusion and negative impacts on wildlife.
- 5.24 **Policy NE4** refers to Biodiversity and Habitats, the policy advises that owing to the unique setting of Marden in its surrounding landscape all new development is expected to support actively the aims of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, to protect Priority Habitats and, where possible, contribute to the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. A biodiversity net gain philosophy should be implemented so that any habitat or species loss is replaced elsewhere on-site, in excess of the amount originally lost.
- 5.25 **Policy NE5** concerns landscape planting, and states that planting must be selected from native species of local provenance for landscape and visual effects and to maintain the natural rhythms of the vegetation in the surrounding area.
- 5.26 **Policy BE1** refers to the local character, this states that development proposals should be designed to protect the fabric and setting of any designated and non-designated heritage asset and respect and enhance the existing character of the village. New development must be both visually and functionally sympathetic to the existing styles and materials.
- 5.27 **Policy BE2** concerns residential amenity, the policy states that proposals for new residential development should ensure that adequate amenities are safeguarded for residents including neighbouring residents, particularly in respect of privacy, daylight, car parking, external lighting and outlook. The policy also states that development proposals should also provide or retain adequate private amenity space, and where appropriate make provision for new pedestrian routes, cycleways and bridleways within the development with linkages to the existing such routes in the vicinity of the site.
- 5.28 **Policy BE3** relates to sustainable construction and states that All development must be based upon the principles of sustainable construction and accord with the most up-to-date guidance and best practice.

- 5.29 **Policy A1** concerns community facilities and states that development proposals that help to sustain existing community facilities and provide new facilities will be supported.
- 5.30 **Policy A2** refers to open space and requires that all major development should provide or retain areas of amenity, recreation, woodland, ponds or other water features for community use. The policy also states that links should be provided between areas of open space, community facilities and the public rights of way networks.
- 5.31 **Policy In2** refers to sustainable travel and states that support will be given to developments which are designed to maximise travel on foot and by cycle that provide direct links to the facilities within the village and public transport via off-road and lightly trafficked routes.
- 5.32 **Policy In3** relates to traffic generation and states that developments that lead to additional traffic generation will be required to ensure that safe vehicular access arrangements are provided.
- 5.33 **Policy In4** refers to Marden Train Station and states that support will be given to proposals to enhance facilities at Marden Station including any development required to meet increased demand.

Emerging Policy: Maidstone Local Plan Review (MBLPR)

- 5.34 The review of the adopted Local Plan is at an advanced stage. The Local Plan Review was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 31st March 2022 with Stage 1 hearing completed during September 2022-January 2023. The Stage 2 hearings concluded on 9th June 2023. The Independent Examiner has since written to the Council on 5th July 2023 to set out their conclusions of the Stage 2 hearings. This letter advised the Council that as submitted, the Local Plan Review document is currently not sound, and recommended main modifications to the Plan.
- 5.35 The main modifications relate primarily to two site allocations at Abbey Gate Farm and Land north of Heath Road, and also to the strategic policy for development outside of the Maidstone Urban Area and the settlement boundaries for the Rural Service Centres and Larger Villages.
- 5.36 The Local Plan Review proposes the application site for allocation under **Policy LPRSA295** – Land at Copper Lane and Albion Road, Marden. This policy allocates the Site for the development of approximately 113 dwellings, the policy sets out general principles for the design and layout of the development; landscape and ecology; access; highways and transportation; open space, and utilities infrastructure.
- 5.37 When the Examiner considered draft allocation **Policy LPRSA295** at the Local Plan Hearings (stage 2 hearings), there were no outstanding matters raised.

Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that given that there was no mention of the Site in respect of the post Hearing request for main modifications, that the examiner found the Site sound and deliverable. Given the advanced stage of the Local Plan Review the emerging Local Plan is considered to hold considerable weight.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

- 5.38 The NPPF sets out the national framework for plan making and decision making, it forms part of the development plan.
- 5.39 Section 2 sets out the purpose of the planning system as being the contribution to achieving sustainable development. The objective of sustainable development is to meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to their needs. In achieving sustainable development, there are three, interdependent objectives: an economic objective; a social objective; and an environmental objective. Whilst these objectives should be used to guide development towards sustainable solutions, local circumstances should be considered to reflect the character, need and opportunities of each area.
- 5.40 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that that development proposals that accord with the development plan are to be approved without delay. It also requires that where policies are out of date, that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies.
- 5.41 Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, or the 'tilted balance'. At part (d) it states:
d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- 5.42 Furthermore, Paragraph 14 notes that: *In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided all of the following apply:*
a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan two years or less before the date on which the decision is made;
b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement;

c) the local planning authority has at least a three-year supply of deliverable housing sites (against its five-year housing supply requirement, including the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 74); and

d) the local planning authority's housing delivery was at least 45% of that required over the previous three years.

5.43 Section 5 of the NPPF refers to delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes and aims to significantly boost the supply of housing. It notes that it is important to provide a sufficient amount and variety of land, where it is needed, to meet a range of housing requirements.

6. Scheme Appraisal

6.1 This section provides an assessment of the proposals against the relevant Development Plan policies. It will demonstrate that the proposals wholly accord with the Development Plan and the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6.2 It is considered that the main material considerations in the determination of this planning application are:

- The principle of the proposed development;
- Affordable Housing and Housing Mix;
- Transport, access and parking;
- Landscape Impact
- Impact on neighbouring amenity;
- Flooding & Drainage:
- Ecology & Biodiversity;
- Arboriculture; and,
- Archaeology & Heritage

Principle of the proposed development

6.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA 2004) states *'If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise'*.

6.4 Development should therefore be determined in accordance with the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.5 Currently for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the PCPA 2004, the current development plan for the area in which the application site is located comprises of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017) (MBLP) and the Marden Neighbourhood Plan (2020) (MNP).

6.6 The application site is located immediately adjacent to the defined service centre boundary of the village of Marden and is also allocated for

development within the Maidstone Local Plan Review under Policy LPRSA295 (Land at Copper Lane and Albion Road, Marden).

Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017) (MBLP)

- 6.7 Policy SS1 of the MBLP establishes the Boroughs settlement hierarchy, in which the County Town of Maidstone is characterised as the main town of the Borough and to which development is mainly aimed. The second category of settlements are Rural Service Centres such as the village of Marden. These centres are considered to have a good range of services and facilities, strong community networks and local employment provision. The Site is located within the boundary of the Marden Rural Service Centre and accordingly, the proposal is in a highly sustainable location.
- 6.8 Policy SP5 confirms that within the designated rural service centres the Council will focus new development with the settlements when it is an allocated site or broad location in the Local Plan; it is minor development such as infilling; or the redevelopment of previously developed land that is of a scale appropriate to the size of the village.
- 6.9 Policy SP9 (Marden Rural Service Centre) allocates approximately 447 new dwellings over five allocated sites in the village but notes that further development can come forward from minor development and the redevelopment of appropriate sites in accordance with Policy SP5.
- 6.10 However, it should be noted that given that the MBLP is now more than 5 years old, and the above policies relate to housing delivery and strategy, they are considered to be out of date and based on out-of-dates housing need figures. As such limited weight can be given to these policies.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review

- 6.11 The MBLPR policy (LPRSA295) allocates the application site for residential development of approximately 113 dwellings and open space. The planning application is for up to 117 units, which is considered to be in the region of the figure set out in the MBLPR and therefore highly appropriate.
- 6.12 The density of the development parcels is 20dpa, which is broadly similar to, but slightly lower than the adjoining site to the north. Furthermore, these parcels are set within significant open space, giving the impression of lower density. The NPPF requires that best use is made of land, which is considered suitable for development, this relieves pressure on the release of land elsewhere.
- 6.13 Furthermore, whilst it is considered that the proposed development accords with Policy LPRSA25 of the MBLPR, the marginal uplift in housing numbers will also support the Council in delivering against an increasingly challenging housing requirement.

Marden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)

- 6.14 The Marden Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development, rather it sets out a number of policies for developments to conform with. The following sections of the planning Statement will demonstrate how the proposal will comply with these policies.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 6.15 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that development proposals that accord with the development plan are to be approved without delay.
- 6.16 Given the location of the Site within the defined service centre boundary, and the Site's allocation within the MBLPR, there can be no objection in principle to the development of this site for housing and in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the Council must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Housing Mix and Affordable Housing

- 6.17 Policy SP20 of the MBLP states that sites providing 11 or more dwellings, the Council will require 40% of dwellings within the development to be affordable. The application proposes the erection of 117 dwellings, therefore triggering this affordable housing requirement. The proposal would provide 40% of the homes within the outline planning application as affordable, in compliance with policy SP20 of the MBLP. It is anticipated that this would be secured through a Section 106 Agreement.
- 6.18 The indicative scheme proposes 117 units in total, 40% of this total equates to 46.8 units, this number has been rounded up to 47 homes, and the proposed development would therefore include 47 units of affordable housing. The tenure split of the proposed development will be subject to negotiation with the Council through the consideration of this planning application. Adopted MBLP policy SP20 seeks a target mix of 70% affordable rented homes and 30% shared ownership. The more recent Affordable and Local Needs Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2020 sets out a similar mix, of 67% for social or affordable rented tenures and 33% for intermediate (i.e. affordable home ownership tenures). However, emerging policy LPRSP10(B) diverges significantly from this approach, seeking an indicative mix of 75% social and affordable rented tenures, and 25% First Homes. The introduction of First Homes to the proposed affordable housing policy reflects national planning policy in place since May 2021 which establishes First Homes as the Government's preferred form of discount market sale housing (but does not currently form part of the adopted planning policy in Maidstone).

6.19 The accompanying Affordable Housing Statement prepared by Tetlow King Planning sets out the context for affordable housing provision in Maidstone Borough, including the past provision of affordable housing during the MBLP period, alongside a range of affordability indicators. The Affordable Housing Statement shows that although the Council has delivered a significant amount of affordable housing during the adopted MBLP period, there remain shortfalls against the identified affordable housing needs contained in the Strategic Housing Market Assessments undertaken in 2014 and 2021. The Affordable Housing Statement also shows that affordability in Maidstone Borough is challenging, with 1,138 households on the Housing Register in August 2023 (261 of whom have expressed a locational preference for Marden); high affordability ratios, house prices and rents. In this context, Tetlow King Planning concludes that the delivery of up to 47 affordable homes through the proposed development is a significant benefit of the scheme, and that every one of the proposed affordable homes will be occupied by a household in need

6.20 The affordable housing provision would provide a comprehensive range of dwellings aimed at meeting the diverse requirements in the Borough, including a mixture of apartments and houses ranging from 1 to 4 bedrooms including bungalows, comprising both social rented and shared ownership properties. The indicative housing mix for the affordable housing units (and market housing) is set out in the table below.

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 & 5 bed
Market	0	16	36	18
Affordable Housing	16	15	12	4

6.21 It has been demonstrated that the 117 dwellings proposed can deliver an appropriate mix of dwelling types, tenures and sizes, in accordance with the expectations of the Affordable and Local Needs Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2020 and with Policy SP20 of the MBLP.

6.22 The proposal is in outline only; however, the indicative layout provides for a mix of 1 & 2-bed apartments and 2, 3 & 4-bed houses, including bungalows. The proposed scheme provides a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings, including bungalows which can cater for older people and disabled households. This mix is varied and is considered to provide a broad range of much needed housing for the area.

6.23 It has been demonstrated that the 117 dwellings proposed can deliver an appropriate mix of dwelling types, tenures and sizes, in accordance with the latest SHMA and in accordance with policy SP20 of the HDPF. The provision of affordable housing will be secured by a Section 106 Agreement.

Transport, Access and Parking

- 6.24 An assessment of the existing transport infrastructure, highway network and public transport provision in the vicinity of the Site, has been undertaken and submitted in support of this application and demonstrates the quantum of development proposed can be delivered.
- 6.25 This outline application seeks full approval of the proposed means and design of access to the Site. A new formal vehicular access to the Site would be provided via a bellmouth on Albion Road, the access arrangement would be via a simple priority T junction. This would be the primary access point to the proposed development as required by Policy LPRSA295 of the MBLPR. It should be noted that the local highway authority (Kent County Council), have not raised any objections through the Local Plan Review process, relating to traffic impacts of the allocation of the site in the Maidstone Local Plan Review.
- 6.26 The proposed improved bellmouth into the Site would measure 6m in width, the access design is of sufficient width to enable the two-way movement of vehicles in line with the Manual for Streets guidance.
- 6.27 To facilitate pedestrian access into the Site, a 2m wide footway connection would be provided on either side of the proposed new bellmouth arrangement. There is a public right of way (KM281) (on the western side of Albion Road which is broadly opposite the proposed site access and at this point it is proposed to provide a dropped kerb crossing to facilitate pedestrian access to the west side of Albion Road in order to access an existing footpath (KM281). The improvements to Public Footpath KM281 provide a convenient and safe route to the majority of amenities in Marden village centre. The footpath enhancement work proposed comprise of providing an all-weather hard surface to the public right of way (Public Footpath KM281) to the junction with the existing footway on Blossom Way (except for a short section of the private gravel section of Public Footpath KM281 adjacent to Albion Road). In addition, the footpath enhancement work includes footway widening of Public Footpath KM281, to provide a 1.2-1.5m wide footway. Kent County Council (Highways Officer) has informally approved a scheme for the enhancement of the public right of way which is set out as Appendix I within the Transport Assessment. The enhancement of existing Public Right of Way KM281 will be secured through the grant of planning permission via a planning condition and/or a Section 106 legal agreement.
- 6.28 The Transport Assessment confirms that a junction capacity assessment has been undertaken for the proposal, and the Transport Assessment advises that the access junction has been designed with sufficient capacity to accommodate all of the potential future traffic generated by the proposed development.

- 6.29 Whilst the speed surveys demonstrate that average vehicle speeds are below the 30-mph speed limit, the application proposes highway improvements to further reduce traffic speeds, to Albion Road and Thorn Road. The traffic calming scheme comprises of a suite of highway measures to include an enhanced gateway feature at the existing 30 mph speed limit change, visual narrowing, build outs, coloured road surfacing and roundels. The full suite of proposed traffic calming measures is demonstrated at Appendix G of the Transport Assessment. The highway improvements will reduce traffic speeds, improve safety and further encourage active travel modes. The proposed highway improvements would deliver option 2 traffic calming improvement scheme which proposes the removal of the island to provide a conventional junction at the Plain Road/Thorn Road junction, whilst improving the bus waiting area in Plain Road, as demonstrated at Appendix A, page 14 HIPO24, of the Transport Statement.
- 6.30 It is also proposed to provide a pedestrian/cycle and emergency access from Copper Lane, in the approximate position of the existing field access. A removal bollard or similar will be installed to prevent vehicular access.
- 6.31 The Transport Assessment advises that the development proposals will result in an increase in vehicle trips on the wider highway network, with circa 65 two-way vehicle trips during peak AM period, and 66 two-way vehicle trips during the peak PM period. The traffic modelling included within the accompanying Transport Assessment report demonstrate that the impact of development generated traffic on the operation of the highway network is not significant (safety or capacity) and there is no need to provide capacity improvements.
- 6.32 The coloured site layout shows that internally, the Site will have a main road which winds through the Site and will connect to a number of secondary internal roads, there are a number of turning spaces provided within the Site. The access and new roadway would be of sufficient width to allow access by a fire tender and refuse vehicles.
- 6.33 Although indicative, the coloured site layout shows that car and cycle parking can be provided for each dwelling wholly within the Site and in accordance with parking standards. The application is outline in nature and therefore assessment of the internal arrangement and parking provision will be undertaken at the appropriate Reserved Matters stage. The Site benefits from close proximity to existing bus routes, the closest bus stops on Plain Road (near the Albion Road junction) are circa 270m and 360m from the centre of the site and the bus stops on the B2079 / High Street are approximately circa 740m and 830m from the centre of the site. These bus stops provide frequent connections to and from the county town of Maidstone and the stops between.
- 6.34 Marden rail station is located approximately 1km to the northwest of the site, within a reasonable walking distance (12 minutes) and comfortable

cycle distance (4 minutes). The station is situated on the South East Main Line and provides services to high order destinations such as London, Tonbridge and Ashford.

- 6.35 The centre of the village of Marden is within walking distance being only 400m from the Site, the centre of the village provides access to a number of facilities and services including a pharmacy, a church, a convenience store and a number of restaurants, pubs and shops. The village also has a primary school which is located approximately 1100m from the application site. In addition, the majority of the roads in the immediate locality are considered suitable for cycling.
- 6.36 It is therefore considered that this Site benefits from good public transportation links, and a range of services and facilities are within walking/cycling distance of the Site. As such the Site is considered to be in a highly sustainable location, and development on the Site provides real and viable opportunities for travel by modes of transport other than the private car. The scheme will therefore meet the aims of the NPPF by locating new development where sustainable modes of transport can be utilised. Furthermore, the allocation of the site in the Local Plan Review demonstrates that the Council consider the site to be an eminently suitable and sustainable location for development.
- 6.37 The Transport Assessment audits the five alternative pedestrian routes (active travel routes) from the Site at the proposed entrance on Albion Road, to the local amenities within Marden. Proposed improvements to the routes (village wide) are provided at Appendix I of the Transport Statement, which include upgrading to enable all weather/year around use surfacing, footway widening to 1.2-1.5 wide footway, delivering wayfinding/signage village wide, tactile paving across minor arms along the route (where missing). These improvements can be secured by imposition of a planning condition or a Section 106 agreement.
- 6.38 The proposed development is offering to deliver and/or fund the following transport/highway improvements in Marden, set out in table 3.4 (below) which is extracted from the Transport Assessment which accompanies the application and provides further details on how the total transport needs of the development will be met. The application also proposes a Framework Travel Plan to ensure proposes measures are provided to promote walking, cycling, public transport and shared care use as alternatives to single occupancy car travel.

Table 3.4 Proposed Transport / Highway Improvements

No	Proposed Transport / Highway Improvements
1	Albion Road – All Purpose Access
2	Copper Lane – Pedestrian / Cycle / Emergency Access
3	New Pedestrian / Cycle Route between Albion Road and Copper Lane (through site)
4	Proposed Improvements to Footpath KM281
5a	Proposed Traffic Calming Scheme Albion Road / Thorn Road
5b	Proposed simplification of Albion Road / Plain Road / Thorn Road Junction (opportunity for environments enhancements and improved bus waiting area)
6	Active Travel Routes – Wayfinding Signing and Dropped Kerb / Tactile Paving where missing
7	Additional Cycle Parking in Village Centre
8	Financial contribution to cycle parking at library (Village Centre cycle parking)
9	Potential financial contribution to cycle parking at Marden Station

- 6.39 The proposed transport improvements set out in table 3.4 above would assist in delivering some of the improvements set out in the Marden Highway Improvement Plan (prepared by KCC highway authority in consultation with Marden Parish Council and annually reviewed).
- 6.40 The submitted Transport Assessment confirms that the Site is well located to encourage travel by more sustainable modes of transport, the promotion of sustainable modes of travel will be framed by a residential travel plan. A Travel Plan is proposed as part of the application (Section 9 Transport Assessment). The Travel Plan identifies opportunities for the effective promotion and delivery of sustainable transport initiatives (e.g. walking, cycling and public transport) to reduce the demand for travel by less sustainable modes, as well as setting targets and a strategy for monitoring and any required remedial measures. It is envisioned that a Travel Plan would be secured by condition of planning or via a Section 106 agreement.
- 6.41 On site parking provision (including electric vehicle charging) will be provided having regard to local standards at the time and it is envisaged that the majority of parking would take place off carriageway, although visitor off-plot parking is also proposed. Vehicular charging points will be provided in order to enable residents to choose to use electric vehicles. While the final detail will be confirmed at Reserved Matters, this will include a proportion of on-plot individual charging points and electrical layouts for the remainder of housing designed to ensure straightforward installation at a later date.
- 6.42 The Transport Assessment (i-Transport demonstrates that the traffic impact of the scheme will not be severe, access to the Site can be achieved which

is safe and of a suitable width, and the proposal will create links between new development and existing pedestrian, cycle and public transport networks, and as such, there are genuine opportunities for sustainable travel modes to be utilised around the Site. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with policies DM21 & DM23 of the MBLP, Policies In2 and In3 of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan, and Policy LPRSA295 of the Local Plan Review.

Landscape and Open Space

- 6.43 The Site is not situated within any protected landscape designations.
- 6.44 The application submission is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which provides both a landscape and visual appraisal of the Site and its surroundings, and the potential impacts of the proposed development of the Site.
- 6.45 The LVIA confirms that the Site itself does not fall within a statutory designated landscape.
- 6.46 The High Weald AONB boundary is 4km to the south of the Site, Policy LPRSA295 of the Local Plan Review requires that the proposal on the Site should have regard to the setting of the High Weald AONB. The LVIA advises that whilst the AONB is highly sensitive to change, the Site is located a significant distance away from its boundary with extensive intervening open countryside between, and as such the proposal is not considered to have a major influence on its setting.
- 6.47 The LVIA advises that whilst a few significant effects have been identified as a result of the proposed development, these are not considered to be detrimental to the wider landscape character. Whilst it is noted that the development will change the nature of the existing views for some residents in the immediate vicinity, and will amend the built edge of the settlement, the layout is considered to be considerate and seeks to limit these effects such that most of the existing landscape features are retained and therefore the perception of negative change is minimised.
- 6.48 The landscaping of the Site is to be reserved for later determination through the approval of reserved matters. However, the coloured site layout plan and supporting application documents demonstrate how the Site can accommodate the proposed level of development as well as retaining the majority of the trees and hedgerows on the Site as part of the landscape scheme.
- 6.49 Overall, it is considered that the height, scale, massing and materiality of the proposed housing would result in a new residential neighbourhood that would make a positive contribution to the local landscape. The well-treed character and rural beauty of the local landscape would be substantially conserved.

- 6.50 The scheme recognises the local landscape character, and the proposals are considered to respect the landscape character of the surrounding area and site. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the requirements of policies DM1 and DM3 of the MBLP, policies NE3 and NE4 of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan, and the criteria listed in Policy LPRSA295 of the Local Plan Review.

Design & Layout

- 6.51 Policy DM1 of the MBLP seeks to ensure that development promotes a high-quality design, architecture and landscape. Policy BE1 of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan states that development proposals should be designed to respect and enhance the existing character of the village, and that new development must be both visually and functionally sympathetic to the existing styles and materials in the village. Policy LPRSA295 sets out criterion regarding the design and layout of proposals on the Site, including lower densities adjacent to sensitive boundaries; the existing ponds on southern part of Site should be kept free of development; and design of the Site to ensure neighbouring residential amenity is protected.
- 6.52 As the application is at outline stage, the illustrative layout which is submitted with the application is only indicative, however, this demonstrates how 117 units on site could be comfortably achieved on the Site.
- 6.53 The layout approach of the Site is very much landscape-led based on the existing landscape character and features of the Site, including the existing tree and hedgerow belts of the Site. The proposed layout respects and responds to the character of the Site and ensures that the majority of the existing trees and vegetation can be retained, it also responds to constraints and opportunities which have been identified through the site assessment process. The accompanying Design and Access Statement (OSP), provides commentary on how the Concept Masterplan responds to the site constraints and opportunities and how this is reflected in the evolution of the site layout.
- 6.54 The Site would utilise a central spine road entering from a new access from Albion Road (in accordance with the requirements of Policy LPRSA295 of the Local Plan Review) travelling west to southeast through the site.
- 6.55 Broadly speaking the site layout is considered to be a series of merging character areas, east to west, with a lower density, more rural edge set within the southern part of the Site.
- 6.56 The average density across the Site is 20 dph, however, there will be differences in density across the character areas and individual parcels.
- 6.57 There are five illustrative character areas proposed on the site, these are defined within the Design and Access Statement and are as follows:

- 1) Green Approach
- 2) Greenway of Village Streets
- 3) Community Village Green
- 4) Eastern Edge
- 5) Southern Rural Edge

- 6.58 The Green Approach comprises of the new Site access, this meanders around an agricultural grouping of outbuildings, with the 'farmhouse' facing Albion Road, and the 'outbuildings/barns' arranged around an inner quadrangle. To facilitate the access and to create a linear green approach new trees and informal landscaping are proposed, this would lead to the 'Greenway' and 'Community Village Green'.
- 6.59 The Greenway comprises of a swathe of green verges and set back dwellings, which are located to the west of the village green. The setbacks vary, helping to prove a green 'lung' through the layout, interlinked with open space to east and west. The Greenway interconnects the Site access with the village green and southern areas of the Site.
- 6.60 The Community Village Green provides an extensive, usable amenity area which creates the community heart of the proposals. This area is defined by development groupings and is set in informal and more informal landscaping edges.
- 6.61 The Eastern Edge area has a mature tree and hedgerow edge to the east and north. In the eastern part of this parcel there are a number of detached dwellings in larger plots which seek to respect the rural edge to the east. The adjoining residential development of Russet Grove is located to the north of this part of the Site, and the proposal seeks to reflect the character of this neighbouring development in the northern part of this parcel.
- 6.62 The Southern Edge is a more rural edge comprising of development pockets with lower scale dwellings set within larger plots, overlooking and providing natural surveillance to the extensive parkland setting and the existing ponds on the Site. This would provide a transition to the parkland, orchards, ponds and Greenspace to the south of the Site. The illustrative layout demonstrates how considerable areas of open space (3 hectares) could be provided, alongside 117 homes and infrastructure, providing significantly in excess of the 1.55 hectares required by the draft housing allocation.
- 6.63 The indicative design illustrates five distinct parcels of housing sporadically located along the spine road and the secondary roads, with generous open landscaped gaps between each parcel. Four ponds are shown within the southern part of the Site, three of which are existing. The fourth pond,

comprises an attenuation basin, forming part of the proposed Sustainable Urban Drainage strategy. A green corridor spans from the access of the Site and broadly follows the Site access road which continues to the middle of the Site in the Greenway area.

- 6.64 The scheme proposes areas of informal open space and amenity grassland, a community orchard, wildflower meadows, a Village Green, and a play area. The proposal will provide new facilities for the residents of the proposed development but also for the surrounding community to enjoy. The proposal would therefore bring benefits to the new and existing community in Marden.
- 6.65 Policies DM19 & DM20 of the MBLP sets out the expected levels of open space and community facilities, the supporting DAS provides further commentary on this and confirms that the scheme is considered to comply with these policies.
- 6.66 The Site will provide a number of additional footpaths within the Site which will connect the internal landscape areas together. It will also provide links to the existing Public Rights of Way which is located opposite the proposed Site access and beyond to the wider PROW network. The proposal would also create a pedestrian and cycle access through the Site which links to Copper Lane. All of which helps to link the Site towards the village centre and beyond.
- 6.67 The proposal will therefore provide connections with the existing adjoining communities in the area and these connections will help to ensure that the proposal integrates well, by maintaining and enhancing connectivity to the village centre with cycle routes and footpaths.
- 6.68 An area of parkland, orchards, ponds and usable and natural open space will be provided in the southern part of the Site, this area would be kept free of development in accordance with the Site allocation requirements of Policy LPRSA295. Based on the Indicative Masterplan, the Site would deliver BNG of 27.7% gain in habitats units and 59.3% in hedgerow units.
- 6.69 The parkland and existing ponds to the south are connected by a meandering raised boardwalk, which has educational and amenity features integrated into the design aspirations. The design intention is to create a tranquil haven that supports a broad range of wildlife, and is welcoming, clean and safe for both local residents and those from the wider area to visit.
- 6.70 The proposal is therefore considered to comply with policies DM1, DM3, DM19 & DM20 of the MBLP, policies NE3, BE1 & BE2 of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan, and the criterion listed in policy LPRSA295 of the Local Plan Review.

Flooding and Drainage

- 6.71 The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment & Foul Water Strategy report (HSP). The FRA identifies that the Site is located within Flood Zone 1.
- 6.72 Flood risk and drainage input has been provided from an early stage of design, and this input has informed the design of the scheme, which has ensured that the siting of the development has followed the sequential approach in that all built development will be located within Flood Zone 1.
- 6.73 The FRA advises that the Site is not considered to be at risk of tidal flooding or fluvial flooding.
- 6.74 The FRA confirms that the Lead Local Flood Authority, Kent County Council have been consulted on the proposed development and have provided pre-application advice which has informed the proposed drainage strategy.
- 6.75 During consultation with KCC it was noted that the existing basin in the southeast part of the Site have the potential to overtop onto Coppers Lane. Where practicable, and subject to approval from other disciplines such as ecology, it is proposed to provide a bund to the south of the basins to reduce the frequency/existing risk of over-topping.

Surface Water

- 6.76 The FRA advises that in the absence of soils which support the use of infiltration devices and / or a nearby public sewer, it is proposed to re-use the existing discharge to watercourse which is located at the southwest of the Site. The surface water drainage strategy is proposed to manage the runoff generated by the proposed development.
- 6.77 The Outline Drainage Strategy confirms that all drainage features have been designed to accommodate the runoff from all storms up to and including the 1 in 100-year storm with a 40% allowance for climate change.

Ecology

- 6.78 The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) (Ecology Solutions). A number of surveys and site walkovers were undertaken between May 2019 and July 2023 in order to ascertain the general ecological value of the land and to identify the main habitats on site. The illustrative landscape proposals have been informed by the ecological conditions of the Site.
- 6.79 The EcIA identified the baseline ecological conditions of the Site. This confirmed that the majority of the Site comprises of a commercial intensive Orchard, which limits its ecological value due to the application of herbicides

and pesticides. Species poor, semi-improved grassland was also found on site, the EclA notes that this habitat is of limited intrinsic ecological value in terms of its species content. The remainder of the Site comprises of hedgerows and trees; scrub; ponds; spoil mounds; and buildings. Further information on the baseline ecological conditions of the Site can be found in the accompanying EclA.

6.80 The EclA found the Site to contain habitats which are common and widespread across the local area and the UK as a whole.

6.81 There are no Special Protection Areas for which the Site is within the zones of influence of.

Species

6.82 The EclA noted that there was potential for the Site to support common reptile species, Great Crested Newts, badgers, and bats. As such further surveys in relation to these species were undertaken, these survey reports have been submitted in support of the planning application but are summarised below.

Reptiles

6.83 The Site provides some suitable habitat for reptiles in the form of taller grass field margins, although the majority of the Site supports a short sward grassland due to regular cutting management. Reptile surveys were undertaken between June and September in 2021 in order to assess the presence / likely absence on site. The site has been resurveyed in 2023 for reptiles.

6.84 The grassland provides limited suitable habitat for reptiles and surveys. Between June and September 2021 recorded maximum count of 7 Grass Snakes, 7 Common Lizards, and 2 Slow Worms, indicating that there is a small population of Grass Snake, Common Lizard, and Slow Worm within the site. The majority of the suitable reptile habitat is to be retained as open space. A full translocation exercise is not deemed to be merited for any minor loss of suitable reptile habitat. Instead, it is recommended that a habitat manipulation exercise be undertaken as a precautionary measure prior to any removal of suitable reptile habitat within the site, if required. The provision of new areas of species-rich grassland and scrub will provide enhanced opportunities for reptiles within the site post-development.

6.85 Given the habitats present, it is likely an assemblage of common invertebrate species would be present within the site, although there is no evidence to suggest any notable / protected invertebrates would be present. The retention of the majority of the hedgerows together with the creation of new areas of species-rich grassland, the creation of new attenuation features and

the planting of new native trees/hedges/scrub would provide new and enhanced opportunities for a range of invertebrates.

Great Crested Newts

- 6.86 There are 5 ponds within the Site itself, and a further 10 ponds within 250m of the site.
- 6.87 In May 2023 the 5 ponds on Site (ponds 1-5) were all tested for the presence of Great Crested Newts and all were found to offer poor or below average habitat for GCN. Ponds 8 & 9 were also tested. Ponds 8 – 11 were also tested in April 2021, but access to test ponds 10 & 11 were denied in May 2023.
- 6.88 The site is within 250m distance of ponds supporting Great Crested Newts (Pond 10). This has been established through previous surveys which have been completed for previous planning applications in the area. Pond P10 (in which a peak count of a single Great Crested Newt has been recorded) is in close proximity to the site (to the west), however, more recent surveys have not been possible. Based on current available data it is known that a Natural England licence may likely be required for any proposed development works within the site.
- 6.89 The majority of the site comprises suboptimal terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts and surveys of pond on site found no presence of Great Crested Newts. However, the hedgerows and grassland around the ponds, which would represent suitable habitat, are to be retained and enhanced within the development proposals. As such, any development at the site is not considered likely to adversely impact Great Crested Newts using ponds to the east of the site.
- 6.90 Furthermore, the creation of attenuation features, native scrub, wildflower grassland and long piles will provide new and enhanced habitat for Great Crested Newts. If deemed necessary a District Level Licence could be obtained from Natural England.

Bats

- 6.91 In May 2019, March 2022 and July 2023, all trees within and immediately adjacent to the site were assessed for their potential use by bats. No trees or buildings within the Site were recorded as having developed features with potential to support roosting bats.
- 6.92 Bat activity surveys were undertaken during May, July and September 2021 and May 2023. Overall, the majority of the activity recorded from the surveys was from the Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle. The activity surveys suggest that boundary features were utilised mainly with very limited use of the central orchard rows but some usage around the

ponds. A number of hedgerows (specifically hedgerows H5 & H7, and treeline TL2) appear to have a relatively greater usage by bats. The proposed scheme will retain these hedgerows and treeline.

- 6.93 The vast majority of the hedgerow network and trees are to be retained within the proposed development. The retention of the vast majority of hedgerows and tree lines, and the recommended new areas of species-rich grassland and native shrub planting would provide new and enhanced foraging and navigational opportunities for bats. The inclusion of bat boxes within the site will provide new roosting opportunities for bats.

Badgers

- 6.94 Between May 2019 and July 2023 specific surveys were undertaken within the site to search for evidence of badgers.
- 6.95 During surveys in March 2022, a total of 12 entrances were found within the scrub area in the northwest of the Site. During surveys undertaken in July 2023, the same area was too overgrown with scrub to see the entrances, however, trails of bedding were seen around the area, which could indicate a small main sett or a lower status sett.
- 6.96 As the proposal would result in the loss of the area where badger activity could be present, the EclA confirms that the Badger sett will be closed under a Natural England Licence before works commence and all contractors should be briefed regarding the presence of Badgers and of the types of activities that would not be permissible on site. If necessary, an artificial sett will be provided in open space as part of the licensing process.
- 6.97 Furthermore, the inclusion of new landscape planting and extensive open space as part of the development proposals would maintain foraging opportunities for badger. The enhancement of areas of orchard, the planting of native scrub and use of berry / fruit bearing species in the landscape planting scheme would provide seasonal foraging resources for Badgers.

Ecology Enhancement and Mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.98 The Indicative Proposals are capable of delivering significant ecological enhancement. The exact detail of this will be provided at the Reserved Matters stage, but the Outline Planning Application clearly demonstrates that this is a significant benefit of the development.
- 6.99 The layout has been developed with the biodiversity of the Site as a key consideration and has been designed to minimise the potential for any negative impacts from habitat fragmentation. The existing hedgerows along the boundaries of the Site are to largely remain and supplementary planting is also proposed along the boundaries. New areas of species-rich grassland are proposed along with the creation of new attenuation features, and the

planting of new native trees/hedges/scrub which will provide new and enhanced opportunities for a range of invertebrates. Mitigation and enhancement measures have been proposed and these have been incorporated into the proposal in order to offset the impact of the development.

- 6.100 A BNG assessment using DEFRA Metric (v4.0) has been undertaken by Ecology Solutions, the report of which accompanies this planning application. The Biodiversity returns record the following headline results for the proposed development.

		Defra BNG Metric Categories	
		Area	Linear Hedge
Baseline results (onsite)	Units	13.11	6.41
Post-development results (onsite)	Units	16.75	10.22
	Unit Change	+3.64	+3.81
	% Change	+27.77%	+59.36%

Table 7 – Ecology Solutions –August 2023 - report 8372 -Land of Albion Road, north of Copper Lane.

- 6.101 Enhancing orchard, grassland and mixed scrub habitats is a key focus of the mitigation strategy for this site. The orchard, grassland and mixed scrub habitats which are currently present within the site are of poor quality and lacking in diversity. Through additional management, it will be possible to create habitats which have a greater diversity, and as a consequence support a more diverse range of fauna. Appropriate management of good quality grassland and scrub throughout the site will further provide net gains. The results of the BNG analysis work have confirmed that the site can deliver significant net-gains to biodiversity of **27.77%**. This is in excess of the 10% which will be required under the Environment Act and above the 20% BNG required under the Maidstone Local Plan review.
- 6.102 The EclIA advises that through the implementation of the safeguards and recommendations contained in the report it is considered that the proposals accord with planning policy. The proposal is therefore considered to be in

compliance with the guidance and requirements set out in policies DM1 & DM3 of the MBLP, and Policies NE2, NE3 & NE4 of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan.

Arboriculture

- 6.103 There are no Tree Protection Orders (TPO) on any of the existing trees on the Site. Arboricultural input has been provided from an early stage of design, and the design of the development proposals have been informed by this input. The majority of trees and hedgerows are limited to field boundaries and will be retained through the development proposals where possible.
- 6.104 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been undertaken by Broad Oak Trees and is submitted in support of the application. The AIA advises that there are 3no. category A Oak trees which are all located along the southern site boundary. The site also contains a number of category B trees.
- 6.105 The AIA notes that some tree removal on site is unavoidable, however, the removals have, by design, been focussed upon lower quality elements of the tree stock.
- 6.106 The proposed residential development of the site would require the removal of 12 individual trees and 16 groups (or parts of groups), all but one (G69) of which are BS category B/C, C or U, and as such should not represent a constraint to the proposals, according to BS5837:2012. The majority are self-seeded due to a lack of maintenance or are elements of commercial orchard screens.
- 6.107 Most of the small orchard trees would also be removed (with some retained for BNG). These are a commercial crop, heavily pruned and relatively young. The AIA notes that these could be grubbed out by the farmer at any time if considered not commercially viable. As such they should not represent a planning constraint.
- 6.108 The proposed development comprises a significant amount of replacement tree planting, and this has been reflected within the design of the proposed scheme. The tree planting will provide a variety of ecological habitats and will also incorporate community orchard planting.

Impact on retained trees

- 6.109 The proposed layout has been designed with the benefit of tree constraints information to allow for trees to be retained within and surrounding the proposals, with minimal conflicts, to provide a mature setting to the development.
- 6.110 Building positioning and primary road infrastructure has avoided tree canopies and RPAs, where practical. As such only limited conflicts arise with a

number of peripheral footpaths. As these are shallow excavation construction only the potential impact on tree root systems is minimal. Only the turf will be removed, by hand tools only, the paths retained with peg and board/aluminium strip edging. These measures to minimise any impacts from footpath installation are indicated on the Tree Protection Plan. Overall, provided the trees are appropriately protected during the works, the arboricultural impact of the proposals on retained trees will be minimal.

- 6.111 The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the objectives of policies DM3 of the MBLP and Policies NE3 & NE5 of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan.

Archaeology & Heritage

- 6.112 A Heritage Assessment and Desk Based Archaeological Assessment has been undertaken by Orion Heritage, both of which are submitted in support of this application.

Heritage Assets

- 6.113 The report confirms that there are no designated or non-designated heritage assets (scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens or registered battlefields) within the Site. Within a 1km radius from the Site there are 46 listed buildings and a Conservation Area. The Marden Conservation Area is located 230m to the northwest of the Site.

- 6.114 The nearest Listed Buildings are all Grade II Listed, these are Bishop House Jewell House, Stone Pit Farmhouse, a Barn located approximately 20m north of Stone Pit Farmhouse, and Jewell Cottages. The Heritage Assessment reviews the impact of the proposal on each of these properties. The conclusion is that whilst the proposals will constitute a change within the wider rural setting of the assets, the change will have a limited affect, thereby preserving the significance of these heritage assets.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

- 6.115 The Heritage Assessment identifies two non-designated heritage assets which could be impacted by the proposal. The Heritage Assessment concludes that one of these (Holders Cottage) could be affected by the proposals, the Assessment advises that the proposals would constitute a moderate level of harm to the significance of the asset, however, this could be mitigated by additional planting along the north-western boundary and a possible set-back of any units in this area. These recommendations have been taken into account in the development of the design of the scheme.

- 6.116 *Conservation Area*

6.117 The Site is not located within a Conservation Area. The Marden Conservation Area is situated approximately 230m to the northwest of the Site. The Heritage Assessment advises that the Site falls within the wider rural setting of the Conservation Area, but due to the local topography, the curvature of Albion Road and the intervening built form there is no intervisibility between the application Site and the Conservation Area or these designated assets within in.

6.118 The Heritage Assessment confirms that the significance of the Conservation Area relates primarily to those designated assets which form the street scene along the B2079 road, and although the scheme would constitute a change in the wider setting of the Conservation Area it is not considered to adversely affect the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Archaeological Impacts

6.119 The accompanying Report advises that a review of the available evidence indicates that the study site has low to moderate potential to contain buried remains from the prehistoric periods, and a moderate to high potential for remains from the Late Iron Age and Roman periods. A low potential is considered for finds and features from all other past periods. Any remains which may be present would be of no more than local archaeological value.

6.120 As such the proposal is considered to comply with policies SP18 and DM4 of the MBLP, and the policies and guidance contained within the NPPF.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

6.121 Although in Outline, and therefore, Layout will form a Reserved Matter, the siting of the dwellings on the Site has been carefully considered to demonstrate that the proposals can deliver a suitable scheme that meets all the aims and objectives of policy DM1 of MBLP. The Indicative Layout minimises the impact on neighbouring amenity as a result of good separation distances, scale and a layout that takes account of the position of surrounding existing dwellings.

6.122 The proposed positions of roads, open spaces and pedestrian/cycle routes create appropriate block sizes to allow a variety of dwelling types and tenures with generous private amenity space and achieving no overlooking or overbearing issues.

6.123 A great deal of consideration has been given to the proposed site layout and the position of the fenestration on existing properties in order to respect the existing residential amenity of the surrounding properties. The dwelling known as 'The Howlands' Albion Road, adjoins the northern boundary of the Site, fronting onto Albion Road and is within the same land ownership. The proposed access extends into the front part of the residential curtilage of The

Howlands. The proposed access design makes provision for The Howlands to be provided with continued vehicular access, with a new vehicular access proposed.

- 6.124 The existing hedgerows and trees along the Site boundaries mean that the proposed dwellings would be well contained in the landscape and would be only glimpsed in limited views from outside of the Site.
- 6.125 A great deal of consideration has been given to the proposed site layout and the position of the fenestration on the proposed properties in order to respect the existing residential amenity of the surrounding properties. The layout is such that the proposed structures are sited away from the boundaries and thereby preventing overlooking of private gardens.
- 6.126 Given the separation distances and the existing dense and mature tree line along the boundaries of this site, it is considered that the proposed dwellings would be well screened and would not adversely impact upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring dwellings.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 6.127 The Councils CIL charging schedule was adopted in October 2018. The proposal would not be subject to CIL payments at outline stage but would be at the submission of reserved matters. The Site falls within charging zone Residential (Outside the Urban Boundary), and the CIL charge is set at £99 per m², although it is noted that this changes annually based in line with indexation.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This Outline Planning Application wholly accords with the allocation of the Site as set out in Policy LPRSA295 in the Local Plan Review. The Site is considered to be a logical extension to the settlement boundary of Marden, it is in a highly sustainable location close to local services and facilities in the village centre, and in close proximity to public bus links. The principle of development on the Site has been accepted and the Site is allocated within the Local Plan Review and the proposals respond to the policy criterion.
- 7.2 The proposal, which is for up to 117 dwellings, accords with the allocation policy (LPRSA295) which is for 'approximately' 113, it represents a small, but compliant uplift from the policy requirement. The proposal makes best use of land, within the area defined for development in the Local Plan Review and at a density (20dpa) which is considered to be appropriate to both the local area and the suburban edge location. This is within the context of considerable open space including parkland, community orchard, village green, meadowland, and an area of play. It is considered that the proposal is a sensitively designed scheme, which would relate well to existing settlement of Marden.
- 7.3 It has been demonstrated that there are no constraints to development of the Site and that it presents opportunities to provide significant ecological and recreational benefits to new and existing residents whilst delivering much needed housing. The proposal would result in a scheme that is eminently suitable within the surrounding area would make a significant contribution towards the total number of dwellings required in Marden and will help to maintain the housing land supply within the Borough.
- 7.4 The Site will deliver a policy compliant proportion of affordable housing, a mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures can be delivered across the Site to meet local housing needs, as required by the MBLP.
- 7.5 Furthermore, considerable open space significantly in excess of the 1.55 hectares required by the draft housing allocation can be delivered, totalling 3 hectares within the indicative layout, which will deliver much needed local facilities such as a community orchard, area of play, and a parkland.
- 7.6 Within this context, the scheme could deliver significantly above the required 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and in excess of the 20% Biodiversity Net Gain required within the Local Plan Review, with the proposed illustrative layout demonstrating a **27.77%** increase in Biodiversity Net Gain. This exceeds the 10% BNG that will be required to be delivered under the Environment Act and above the 20% required in the Maidstone Local Plan review
- 7.7 The scheme will deliver a suite of highway improvements (subject to agreement from Kent County Council), both on Albion Road and Thorn Road

together with improvements to pedestrian access routes from the Site to the amenities within Marden, as set out within the Transport Assessment.

- 7.8 The Site is not located within any designated Habitat Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; or Ramsar Sites. It is not in a site of Special Scientific Interest; an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Area or National Park. Nor does it have any impact on designated heritage assets.
- 7.9 The application is supported by a comprehensive suite of technical documents and reports. These demonstrate that the development of the Site would not have any unacceptable or adverse environmental impacts, which indicate that development should be restricted. Where deemed necessary and appropriate, planning conditions can be applied to ensure that suggested mitigation measures are secured.
- 7.10 It is demonstrated throughout the supporting documents, including the Design and Access Statement, that the level of development proposed is both acceptable in technical terms and also maximises the potential of the Site in accordance with the NPPF, delivering an attractive place for people to live and enjoy and therefore being wholly appropriate.
- 7.11 As this application is for outline planning permission, the matters to be reserved will include design, appearance, scale and landscaping. The future reserved matters application can ensure that these detailed aspects of the development are of the required high quality and comply with the detailed Development Plan policies on these matters. However, the application demonstrates how there are no constraints to the delivery of 117 dwellings and open space.
- 7.12 As demonstrated within this Planning Statement, the proposal fully accords with the Marden Neighbourhood Plan and Maidstone Borough Local Plan, and the NPPF. The proposal also complies fully with the Site allocation policy LPRSA295 in the emerging Maidstone Local Plan Review.
- 7.13 The Site is considered to have very strong sustainable credentials as a result of its location, the proposed development would provide much needed market and affordable homes in the area and would respect the existing landscape of the area. In accordance with paragraph 14 of the NPPF 2021, as the proposals fully accord with the development plan, planning permission granted without delay. We, therefore, respectfully request that the application be approved.