

Maidstone Borough Council

Heritage, Landscape and Design

Landscape Planning Consultation Response Sheet

Case Officer: Marion Geary

Application No.: 23/504068/OUT

Address of site: Land East Of Albion Road And North Of Copper Lane, Marden, Kent, TN12 9EG

Proposal: Outline application with some matters reserved (access only sought) for the removal of 2 former agricultural sheds and erection of up to 117no. dwellings and associated infrastructure including partial footways on Albion Road.

Reason for consultation:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major application | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation area | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning committee report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trees (protected) | <input type="checkbox"/> Design advice | <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trees/hedges (other) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre app. advice | <input type="checkbox"/> Not known |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape/Landscape scheme | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional comments | |

Comments: Based on the available data to me and the information submitted by the applicant I have the following comments to make.

The proposal site lies within the National Character Area (NVA) 121 Low Weald. The Low Weald National Character Area (NCA) is a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the Northern, Western and Southern edges of the High Weald. It is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland.

The proposal site also lies within the Low Weald Fruit Belt of the Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Area. The Low Weald Fruit Belt has a landscape character of flat or gently undulating, small-scale, enclosed landscape with predominantly dwarf fruit trees and extensive open arable fields, with hops and pasture locally. Intermittent tall alder of poplar windbreaks, replaced in part by conifers with many ponds and some moated sites. Winding lanes with wide verges and ditches and small copses of oak standards with coppice and bluebells. Groups of Oasts and scattered hamlets with the 20th century extension of villages lends a slightly to a suburban character to parts.

Within the MBC Borough Wide Character Area the site falls under the Low Weald and more specifically the Staplehurst Low Weald Area. Key characteristics of the Staplehurst Low Weald include Low lying gently undulating clay landscape of the Low Weald Small fields with orchards, pasture, ponds and watercourses enclosed by thick native hedgerows create an intimate atmosphere. The dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where hedgerows have been lost. Large scale open fields where hedgerows have been removed for intensive arable cultivation with sparse scattered small woodlands. Winding roads with wide verges

bounded by ditches and mixed native hedgerows and Historic buildings scattered through the landscape and in the historic cores of Staplehurst and Marden.

The Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study 2015 assess the Staplehurst Low Weald as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is sensitive to change.

Guidelines and Mitigation Include -

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012
- New development should respect the local vernacular in scale, density and materials
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing species
- Conserve and enhance the hedgerows, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Conserve the pastoral land and orchards and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure, encouraging restoration and management of historic field boundaries
- Conserve the landscape setting of historic settlements
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads and hamlets
- Resist further linear development and intrusive elements along the A229
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting and encourage native hedgerows around commercial and housing developments
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting and managing a framework of vegetation in these areas

Drawing No. 22037 / SK30A titled Tree Retention/Removal Plan outlines the extent of trees to be removed in order to facilitate the development. It is a great shame the applicant has proposed to remove the line of Betula tree to create the access way when there is sufficient space to incorporate the existing trees into the scheme and create a new access point. The tree protection measures, and tree protection plan found within the report need to be secured by way of condition if the case officer is minded to approve the application.

No details pertaining to the development's landscaping are included within the application. If the application is approved then any details submitted in the reserved matters stage should include a robust landscaping scheme inline with the MBC Landscape Character Assessment 2012 for Staplehurst Low weald.

In Conclusion: I recommend conditions outlined above.

If the application is being determined by Planning Committee, or by Members under delegated authority, and makes reference to any of the issues outlined above, a further commentary will be provided

Signed: Benjamin Barrett

Date: 18/10/2023