



COUNTRYSIDE

Places People Love

Land north of Marden

Position statement by Countryside

4 March 2019

This statement is to clarify the position of Countryside regarding its interest in the promotion of a sustainable Garden Community on land north of Marden.

Countryside is a leading UK developer with over 60 years' experience specialising in building communities. We are currently bringing forward the Russet Grove scheme in the village to provide over 120 dwellings and helped to deliver the new Marden Cricket and Hockey Club as part of that scheme.

Maidstone Borough Council (the Council) has begun the process of reviewing its Local Plan in order to find appropriate locations for future growth in Maidstone Borough. The Local Plan Review is expected to be completed by 2022 and will include land allocations to guide development until 2038.

The first part of this process is to seek submissions for sites that could be considered suitable for an allocation in the Council's revised Local Plan. This is known as a Call for Sites process and the Council launched this process on 28 February to seek sites for consideration as part of the review of its Local Plan. The Call for Sites process is open to all parties who are seeking to promote land for development through the Local Plan Review. It is anticipated that there will be submissions from many parties for potential sites across the Borough.

The Call for Sites information prepared by the Council includes a Garden Communities Prospectus. Garden Community proposals are of a strategic scale and based on a set of independently defined principles. Unlike smaller developments, the key features of Garden Communities are that they are of a scale that delivers significant new infrastructure, such as schools and healthcare services, and are comprehensively planned and designed from the outset to include large, accessible areas of green, open space. A key principle is the importance placed upon the long term local stewardship of these communities.

In light of the Council's request for potential Garden Community locations, Countryside is working with three local landowners to make a submission to the Council's Call for Sites process for a potential Garden Community on land to the north of the railway in Marden.

Whilst the majority of submissions to the Call for Sites process will not be publicly available for some time, Countryside has decided to share its intentions, highlighting the opportunity this Garden Community could present.

The key features of Countryside's submission to the Call for Sites process are as follows:

- Development under the current Local Plan has mainly been in and around Maidstone itself and dispersed to the Rural Service Centres, with limited infrastructure benefits.
- Marden could be an appropriate, sustainable location for a new Garden Community. It benefits from a mainline station, a large employment area and a good level of community facilities. It sits outside the AONB or its setting and away from Areas of Local Landscape Importance and the floodplain.

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- A Garden Community would provide significant new facilities for Marden. This could include a new secondary school, primary school, extension to the station car park, enhanced health care provision and significant levels of publicly accessible open space.
- The opportunity to improve junctions on the key roads between Marden and Maidstone, alongside the potential for improved bus services and a public transport interchange. Much of the land at key road junctions is within the control of the landowners, which provides a unique opportunity to deliver real improvements.
- Potential to create additional employment space and local economic growth in Marden.

The proposed Garden Community would be underpinned by the delivery of new homes, which would include a wide mix of housing and a broad range of tenures.

The objective of Garden Communities and the level of associated infrastructure proposed suggests that up to 2,000 new homes would be needed to make a Garden Community at Marden truly sustainable and deliver benefits to the overall community. However, the amount of new homes would be subject to detailed consideration, if the Council considers the location acceptable in principle.

It is important to note that the Local Plan Review is at a very early stage and will take several years to complete. It is also likely that many sites will be proposed across the Borough as part of the Local Plan Review process, but not all of these will be selected by the Council for inclusion in the new Local Plan. The Council will be consulting at various stages through the Local Plan process so that all views can be considered on the various development options available.

If land north of Marden is one of the options considered appropriate to be allocated in the new Local Plan, it would be several years before a planning application is submitted or any development takes place. Countryside would want to work alongside the Parish Council, local community and the Borough and County Councils to design any specific proposals forming a planning application.

Countryside has taken the initial steps on this long-term vision. Exploratory meetings have taken place with the Council to present the opportunities that this site presents.

In light of this statement, Countryside will be preparing its detailed submission to the Council's Call for Sites process. We will also be seeking to meet and speak with those living and working in Marden as we move forward through the Local Plan Review process.

For further information on this statement, please contact Paul Vicary or Lauren Whipp at DevComms on 01296 678320 or email p.vicary@devcomms.co.uk.

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