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Places People Love

Rob Jarman
Head of Planning and Development
Maidstone Borough Council
Via email

c/c - Gavin Ball, Principal Planning Officer, Strategic Planning, Maidstone Borough Council
(via email) & attendees of PPA meeting of 2nd Sept 2020.

28th September 2020

Dear Mr Jarman,

RE: Marden Garden Community, Maidstone, Kent

I refer to the meeting with MBC Members and Officers on the 2nd September 2020. The meeting was part of a series arranged as part of the pre-application engagement set out in the Planning Performance Agreement. The Q&A session gave rise to a number of action points, our response to which will form matters for discussion at a future meeting. Please find below our response to the matters raised.

(a) Homes and Employment for ex-Military Personnel

Countryside Properties is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant demonstrating its support for the armed forces community. Countryside are committed to employing ex-Armed Forces personnel. Countryside has been recognised with the Bronze award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which encourages employers to support the armed forces community and inspire others to do the same.



The development at Marden will deliver both market and affordable housing. There are a number of ways the Marden Garden Community can assist current and ex-armed forces personnel:

- The 'First Homes' scheme is designed to help access to home ownership. When introduced, this will comprise a quarter of all 'affordable housing'. The Government's consultation response¹ highlights how the scheme has been designed to assist serving members and veterans of the Armed Forces, who will be able to purchase a First Home in the location of their choice without having to meet local connections criteria.



¹[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907214/200728_PUBLICATION Govt response FH condoc v4.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907214/200728_PUBLICATION_Govt_response_FH_condoc_v4.pdf)



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- In terms of the remaining tenures, housing allocation schemes² can provide for ex-service personnel to be afforded additional priority when applying for social housing. This would assist in terms of providing better access to other forms of tenure, such as affordable rented and shared-equity properties.



(b) Range of residential homes

Countryside are committed to the full delivery of 40% Affordable Housing.

We understand from our recent discussions that MBC are considering the implications of the draft SHMA (2019) and how this will impact future policy, including tenure split. MBC will be aware that the SHMA does not presently factor in the Government's proposals for 'First Homes', which will become a mandatory percentage of the affordable housing mix. Members should take comfort that the Stantec Report for MBC (para 6.5.4, p39) concludes that Marden Garden Community would remain viable when the SHMA (2019) mix of affordable housing is applied. Countryside expect the Marden Garden Community to deliver an appropriate mix of housing and tenures for both private and affordable that are reflective of planning policy and local housing need at the time.



Countryside's developments carry a signature style and character, with designs that reflect our commitment to quality. Countryside have delivered schemes that reflect Development Plan requirements for Nationally Described Space Standards.

The Vision Document includes a 60-120 bedroom 'Care / Nursing Home' (C2 Use) in the local centre. This would make a significant contribution to meeting the need for Housing with Care or Residential Care bed spaces.

² <https://www.stepforwardhomes.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Housing-Option-for-Serving-and-Ex-Military-Personnel.pdf>



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(c) Building for Life 12 and its successor Building for a Healthy Life

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the latest edition of and new name for Building for Life 12. The new name reflects recent changes in legislation and BHL also recognises the findings of the three-year Healthy New Towns Programme led by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

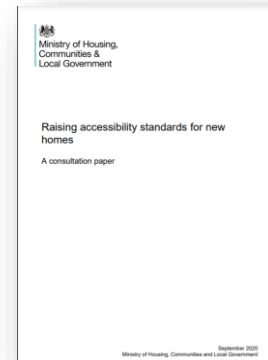
BHL is a design tool designed to help structure discussions about proposed new residential development. BHLs England's leading process for creating well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. Countryside are committed to utilising BHL. Countryside are recognised for the quality of our development and a number of our schemes feature in the BfL (2018) Guide. Countryside's Horsted Park³ development in Chatham, Kent is an example of our commitment to BfL.



³ <http://www.builtforlifehomes.org/schemes/go/81>

(d) Accessible Homes

Maidstone's SHMA (2019) highlights the potential requirements for housing to be built to M4(2) and M4(3) housing technical standards (accessibility and wheelchair standards). The Government (MHCLG) is presently consulting on further enhancing the standard for accessible housing for all new properties in England. The options being considered would result in higher accessibility standards and making homes more adaptable from day one. Countryside deliver schemes that include M4(2) and M4(3) properties and Marden Garden Community can play an important role in delivering accessible homes.



(e) Self-Build

Based on the Council's evidence, the need for self-build housing is very modest. However, if there is a demonstrated need for a small proportion of self-build plots at Marden Garden Community, these could be made available.

(f) Provision of Broadband and facilitation of working from home

Marden is currently served by Superfast Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) broadband, which offers download speeds of up to 80Mbps. This provision is above the UK average speed of 54Mbps based on 2019 Ofcom research.

The Government has an ambition to deploy 'Full Fibre' to the Premises (FTTP) broadband to cover the whole of the United Kingdom by 2025. Full Fibre is defined as having gigabit capability (download speeds up to 1Gbps). To assist this ambition, Openreach is installing Full Fibre broadband to four and a half million homes and businesses by end of March 2021, and 20 million premises by 2025 by partnering with developers of new residential and mixed residential/commercial sites.

Countryside has a framework contract agreement with Openreach whereby all our new sites are served by Full Fibre (FTTP) broadband which is installed ahead of the first residents moving in. The entire Marden development will therefore have Full Fibre broadband from day one.

Notwithstanding the national Full Fibre roll-out, when considering the scale of the Marden development, building a FTTP network to the garden community would provide an opportunity for further upgrades to the local network.

In addition to full fibre broadband, a number of other measures are proposed to encourage and facilitate home working:

- first, large numbers of home workers may make good use of informal meeting spaces/coffee shop proposed on the site.



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- second, a proportion (particularly those who are self-employed and home-based) may in time favour more formal provision in the form of managed workspaces. Countryside's proposal includes a work hub located close to the train station. The Local Centres also offer opportunities in this regard.
- Opportunity for live / work accommodation within the design of homes.

(g) Design Speed for Roads

As detailed as part of the Outline Transport Assessment submitted in January 2020⁴, the road hierarchy within the site has been designed to follow the principles of the 'Kent Design Guide: Designing for Movement'.

The Minor Access Roads, which typically serve between 50 and 100 units comprise the majority of the internal estate roads. In accordance with the Kent Design Guide, these roads will be developed with a design speed of between 15 and 20mph.



The main spine roads will be developed to a Local Distributor Route standard. In accordance with the Kent Design Guide, this road will be designed with a speed limit of between 20 and 30mph (with a maximum speed of 20mph in the vicinity of schools and play areas). Associated traffic calming features will be implemented to ensure that this design speed is achieved.

The Local Distributor Routes will form connections with Major Access Roads. A design speed of 25mph will be provided for these routes, which will be reduced to 20mph within the vicinity of schools and play areas and in locations where high pedestrian and cycle movements are likely, again in accordance with the Kent Design Guide.

⁴ Page 20, Outline Transport Assessment, DHA January 2020



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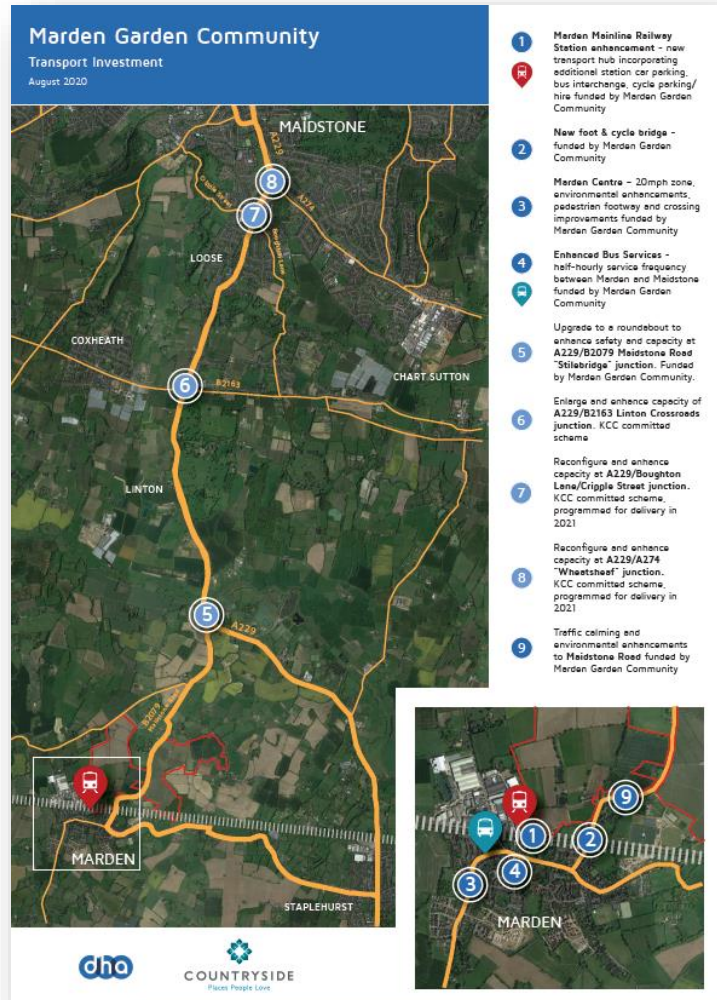
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(h) Highway mitigation measures and timing

The Transport Investment briefing note circulated to Members in September (opposite), details the transport investment in Marden and along the A229 Corridor.

With specific regard to off-site highway works to be delivered by Countryside:

5 It is proposed that the A229 Linton Hill / A229 Staplehurst Road / B2079 Maidstone Road priority junction at Stilebridge be upgraded to a roundabout for both highway safety and capacity reasons. Following recent engagement with Kent County Council Highways and Transportation (KCC H&T), it has been noted that this proposal is acceptable to the Highway Authority in principle. This scheme would be implemented early in the development build-out programme.



6 **7** **8** Dialogue with KCC H&T is ongoing regarding the principal A229 junctions to the north of Stilebridge (including Linton Crossroads, the Swan junction and the Wheatshaf junction), for which improvement schemes have been identified by the Highway Authority. KCC H&T remains committed to delivering these schemes within the next 2-3 years. Countryside are proposing appropriate support to ensure that they provide sufficient mitigation for the proposed development.



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(i) Improvements to bus services

Discussions with both Nu-Venture and Arriva have been undertaken regarding bus service enhancements facilitated by the proposed development. As detailed in the January 2020 Outline Transport Assessment, the proposals include improvements to the quality and frequency of services between Marden and Maidstone via Linton Crossroads. To offer an attractive and viable service for existing and future residents, it is considered that a half-hourly frequency should be provided.

The illustrative masterplan has been developed to allow bus service permeability. High quality bus stops would be provided, equipped with lit, sheltered waiting facilities and raised kerbs to allow for level boarding and alighting.

Countryside is also willing to support the KCC Hopper bus model, should this be considered viable by MBC for development to the south of Maidstone, particularly in relation to potential links between Paddock Wood, from where access to the Medway Valley Railway Line to Maidstone can be achieved.

(j) Rail Station Improvements & Network Rail

As part of the development proposals, significant improvements are planned to Marden Railway Station, including:

- a new commuter car park to the north of the railway line with a 'Kiss-and-Drop' facility.
- New/upgraded pedestrian/cycle bridge
- Bus turnaround facility
- Station improvements



There is ongoing and constructive dialogue between Network Rail, Southeastern and Countryside, as evidenced by the expressions of support contained within the January 2020 submission⁵ and in Network Rail's letter of September 2020

(k) Rail Capacity

The issue of rail service capacity is one that affects all major development proposals and is considered as part of Network Rail's route planning process at a Kent-wide level.

⁵ Appendix D, Transport Assessment, DHA Transport 2020



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Countryside is nevertheless in dialogue with Network Rail on this matter. As detailed above, Network Rail are supportive of the proposals. It should be noted that both the introduction of High-Speed rail services from Ashford and East Kent in 2009, and the forthcoming commencement of Thameslink services from Maidstone East, will continue to free up capacity on train services via Marden.

Marden is the only Garden Community site located within walking distance of a mainline train station. This provides an opportunity to reduce car use, alongside a range of other measures to promote walking and cycling.

(l) Maidstone Cycle Forum

Countryside will engage with the Maidstone Cycle Forum over the coming months to ensure that the development masterplan maximises the opportunities for cycling.



(m) Kent Fire and Rescue Service

Our transport consultants have contacted Kent Fire & Rescue Service who have provided advice in relation to their standards and how they assess proposals. The access strategy proposed would provide suitable means to access the site for fire tenders. The internal road network would also provide suitable means of access for fire tenders. As part of the evolution of the Masterplan, we will liaise with Kent Fire & Rescue to ensure compliance with their standards.

(n) Surface Water Drainage

As detailed in the Vision Document (Jan 2020), 98% of the site lies within Flood Zone 1 – the area of lowest probability of flooding and deemed suitable for development from a flood risk perspective. Only 2% of the site is in Flood Zone II and this area is not proposed to be developed. The Maidstone SFRA (2020) assesses the impact of climate change on the current Flood Zone (Appendix D) and concludes that the site would remain unaffected.

The site is not in:

- Groundwater source protection zone (p77)
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (p78)
- An area of high risk of groundwater flooding
- An area of risk from flooding from a reservoir
- An area of risk from coastal or tidal flooding
- An area reliant upon flood defences



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As detailed in the SFRA (2020), a very low percentage of the site is within areas presently of risk of flooding from surface water (Appendix K). The appendix also confirms that only 1% of the total site area feature on the EA Historic Flood Maps.

The site is split into two surface water catchments, both of which eventually drain to the River Beult. The Masterplan can accommodate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), which store or re-use surface water at source, decreasing flow rates to watercourses and improving water



quality. The Marden Garden Community includes 68ha of various types of open space. This significantly exceeds the requirements (38ha) derived from MBC standards and will ensure that SUDs can be accommodated together with sufficient usable open space. Detailed opposite is a picture taken in February of a detention basin at Marham Park that remains dry unless needed to store water in extreme rainfall events.

(o) Access to recreational Open Space

The Vision Document details the significant quantum (68ha) and types of open space proposed. A range of typologies have been proposed, including formal sports pitches, play areas, allotments and community orchards, natural and semi-natural greenspace and amenity greenspace.

The residential areas are connected by corridors of green space containing footpaths and cycleways. This provides a comprehensive network of green corridors which also connect to the principal areas of open space, which are within easy walking distance from the homes.

The Masterplan is illustrative at this stage, albeit it is based on technical assessments and delivering on Garden Community Principles. It delivers an overall quantum of open space that can accommodate all the needs arising from the development. We are committed to working with Officers and Members to shape the Masterplan.





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(p) Type and deliverability of employment space (including retail)

There will be local demand for local services which is generated as the resident population of the Garden Community starts to grow. We have sought to ensure that the scale and range of retail and associated offer is complementary to and does not negatively impact on the viability of existing shops and business Marden. The Local Centre, which will also include a community centre, is situated adjacent to the proposed new school and close to Marden station. The submissions to MBC as part of the Stantec assessment detailed the scale and quantum of facilities proposed in the local centre. This is reproduced below for Members' information:

District / local centre	Description	Uses	Quantum
1	Local Centre and Community Hub	Adaptable building for shop (A1), farm shop, nursery (D1), community centre (D1), care home (C2)(p36)	(a) Multi-use community buildings: c600sqm. (D1) (b) Local food store: 400sqm (A1). (c) Small scale retail / food and drink / medical / services: c400sqm. (A1, A3, D1) (d) Care / Nursing Home (see below) (e) New Healthcare Centre (see below)
	Care / Nursing Home in the local centre	C2	60-120 bedroom
	Healthcare Centre	(D1) - Replacement medical centre	Size to be determined by further discussions with CCG. Stantec report indicates 0.17ha.
2	2 x Neighbourhood hubs	Flexible; D1 (Nursery / Dentist) A1 (Shop) / A3 (Restaurant / Café), B1(a) (office) Community building (C3)	c.300sq.m (total)
3	Transport and work hub (near Marden Station)	Flexible space, may be used for office accommodation, small business workspace, gym, coffee shop, etc	Circa 1,100sq.m

The Masterplan includes provision for a Primary School and nursery. The scale of both will meet the full needs arising from the development.



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In addition, the site can accommodate up to 5ha of employment adjacent to the existing Pattenden Lane industrial estate. This could accommodate c16,000sqm of employment. We have assessed potential employment creation based on:

- 28% B1 (office / R&D) (4,479 sqm),
- 29% B1c/B2 (light and general industry) (4,590 sqm) and
- 43% B8 (6,931 sqm)

This has been assumed in accordance with the balance of floorspace requirements identified under baseline jobs growth in the Economic Development Needs Survey (EDNS) Stage 2 (table 2.12). As highlighted in the EDNS, there is demand for smaller industrial and warehouse property, light industrial, office and affordable workspace for small SMEs. There could be a cross functional approach to afford flexibility and respond to market demands. Therefore, we are open minded to amending this employment mix.

Countryside's assessment (June 2020) details how 1,431 jobs would be met on-site. This is a significant quantum and would assist in reducing the need to travel. In addition, 530 jobs would be created in the local economy and 230 jobs during the construction period.

Countryside are committed to delivering on the Garden Community Principles and are happy to work with the Council to further refine the employment offer should this be deemed necessary.

(q) Health Centre

We recognise that the planned growth in Maidstone Borough will lead to a need to increase capacity for health facilities.

Through engagement with West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (WKCCG), it has been confirmed that whilst there is some current capacity at Marden Medical Centre, additional capacity would be needed to accommodate the additional impact generated by the scheme, which is estimated to be approximately 2.2 full-time equivalent GPs.

WKCCG noted that an approach to mitigation could involve relocating the current Marden Medical Centre. The WKCCG recommended that the masterplan for the proposed development safeguard land within the site for a new medical practice. This has been accommodated within the proposed local centre. Other approaches to mitigation could also be adopted, including redevelopment and expansion of the existing practice should this be deemed more appropriate.



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The above response draws from information submitted to MBC. We look forward to receiving further feedback from Members and Officers to help shape the proposals.

Yours Sincerely

David Moseley MA(Hons) DMS MRTPI
Senior Planning Manager
Countryside Properties [Strategic Planning]