

HEADCORN PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2011-2031



Issued by Headcorn Parish Council

Consultation Statement
As required under Section 15 of
The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

Submission Date: November 2015

Headcorn Matters:
A Neighbourhood Plan for Headcorn Parish
A Thriving Community in the Heart of the Weald

1. Introduction

The Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan will provide the planning framework in the Parish for the period 2011 to 2031.

Following a consultation carried out between 15th June 2015 and 31st July 2015 under Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (*the "Regulations"*), Headcorn Parish Council ("HPC", the Qualifying Body under the Regulations) is now submitting a plan proposal to the Local Planning Authority, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). Part of the submission that HPC is required to make is a statement under Section 15 (2) of the Regulations that:

- Contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
- Explains how they were consulted;
- Summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
- Describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.

This consultation statement fulfils one of the requirements contained in the Regulations under Section 15 (2).

2. Pre-Engagement & Evidence Gathering

Prior to the Regulation 14 consultation HPC carried out an extensive community engagement action plan which included a number of evidence-gathering exercises. The time line of, and activities covered in this engagement action plan are set out below:

- October 2012: Formal decision by HPC to introduce a Neighbourhood Plan.
- November 2012: HPC launched their Neighbourhood Plan initiative at a village meeting, and made a call for volunteers.
- January 2013: Second village consultation meeting at which the proposed path to produce the Neighbourhood Plan was shared with the residents, whilst in addition making a call for volunteers to help undertake the work. The project to deliver the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan was given the name 'Headcorn Matters'.
- April 2013: Headcorn Parish became a designated Neighbourhood Plan area, following a consultation by MBC.
- Summer 2013: Surveys of residents and businesses in the Parish undertaken. The surveys were carried out mostly online, but there was also a paper option. Launched village website to help publicise the initiative. Completed first traffic survey and survey of estate agents most active in the Headcorn housing market.
- October 2013: Decision by HPC on the authors of the Neighbourhood Plan. Agreed would be Dr. Rebecca Driver and Michael Jeffreys, supported by the Data Analysis Group and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- November/December 2013: Survey results analysed and presented to residents (two village meetings) and business community, as well as to MBC.
- Early 2014: HPC were awarded a grant to help fund work on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. The grant included advice from Planning Aid England, and the Headcorn Matters team started working with their advisor from Planning Aid England, Brian Whitely, in February.
- Early 2014: Started process of policy creation.
- Early 2014: Began assessment, and informal consultation with MBC, on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to support the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan.
- March - May 2014: Maidstone Borough Council's draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation. Potential impact of the Local Plan on the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan was assessed. The work done to inform the Neighbourhood Plan to was used, where relevant, as evidence in the HPC response to the MBC LP Regulation 18 consultation.
- April - May 2014: Members of the Headcorn Matters team and HPC held two workshops with Design SE to discuss the spatial aspects of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan in the context of Maidstone's draft Local Plan.

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- May 2014: HPC had a stand at Headcorn's May Fayre to allow parishioners an opportunity to see what MBC were proposing in the Local Plan and to discuss progress on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- May 2014: Members of the Headcorn Matters team attended a training session on Strategic Environmental Assessments run by URS and organised by Planning Aid England. May 2014: HPC wrote to the CEO of Southern Water to express concern about their approach to planning issues in the Parish, in light of the long history of periodic overflows from the sewerage system within the village and the strong evidence from residents and businesses that sewerage was causing significant problems and a concern.
- June 2014: HPC wrote to the CEO of MBC to express concern at MBC's proposed affordable housing policy for rural areas, in light of the evidence gathered for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.
- June/July 2014: Two consultation meetings held with residents and the business community to update and obtain feedback where policy options needed clarifying.
- July 2014: Second traffic survey (following relocation of the doctors' surgery).
- August 2014: Planning Aid England publishes a case study based on Headcorn's work on gathering survey evidence, as an example of how Neighbourhood Plans should approach this task.
- Summer/Autumn 2014: Proactively sought to address constraints on development (such as sewerage capacity and primary school expansion) where evidence is clear.
- September 2014: HPC and Headcorn Matters team members participated in a workshop organised by Design SE on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council to discuss local issues affecting Maidstone's emerging Local Plan.
- October 2014; Instigated multi party meeting between HPC; Headcorn Matters team; Primary School Governors; Kent County Council (KCC) Area Education Officer; Head Teacher; KCC Ward Member; MBC Ward Member and Developers/Landowners' Agents to meaningfully explore possibility of Primary School expansion on existing site in accordance with expressed wishes of the Village.
- December 2014; KCC responded positively and publicly as a Statutory Consultee to MBC and HPC over achieving Primary School expansion on existing site.
- December 2014: Following consultation, MBC issued a preliminary advice that an SEA was not needed to support the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan, the advice being subject to there being no material changes between the then current draft of Neighbourhood Plan and the Regulation 14 version.

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- December 2014: Approval and publication by HPC of a report analysing the sustainability of housing development in Headcorn that was undertaken by Analytically Driven Ltd to inform Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.
- December 2014: Workshop chaired by Riki Therival (from Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants) and attended by members of the Headcorn Matters team to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal of potential strategic development sites in Headcorn.
- January 2015: Approval and publication by HPC of a report analysing the very significant problems with the foul water drainage network in Headcorn that was undertaken by Sandersons (Consulting Engineers) Ltd.
- Early 2015: HPC and Headcorn Matters team initiate meetings with Southern Water to discuss issues raised by the Sandersons report.
- Spring/Summer 2015. Discussions continued between Southern Water and HPC on the problems with Headcorn's sewerage system highlighted in the report by Sandersons (Consulting Engineers) Ltd.
- May 2015: HPC agree to issue a draft Neighbourhood Plan for a Regulation 14 Consultation.
- June 2015: Launch Regulation 14 Consultation on draft plan. Notified all statutory consultees. Publish all the relevant background material, including the site assessment exercise produced by Levett-Therivel. Meetings with residents and local businesses to discuss policy framework took place in July. Deadline for comments was 31 July 2015.
- October 2015: Following consultation with the statutory consultees, MBC confirmed that it does not consider that either a Strategic Environmental Assessment or a Habitats Regulations Assessment will be needed for Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan.
- November 2015: Revised draft Neighbourhood Plan submitted to MBC under Regulation 15.

As can be seen, for the last three years no stone has been left unturned in developing a Neighbourhood Plan. It has a robust evidence base, that reflects the wishes of Headcorn Parish residents and businesses and it seeks to deliver a truly sustainable future for Headcorn.

3. Regulation 14 Consultation - Engagement

The following tables contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted and how they were consulted:

Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Planning Consultees - June 2015		
Statutory and Commercial Consultees	Method of Consultation	Responses
Age UK	Electronic	
Ashford Borough Council	Electronic	
Boughton Malherbe Parish Council	Electronic	
British Red Cross	Electronic	
Broomfield & Kingswood Parish Council	Electronic	
Chart Sutton Parish Council	Electronic	
Citizens Advice Bureau	Hard Copy	
CPRE	Electronic	
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council	Electronic	
DHA Planning	Electronic	1
East Sutton Parish Council	Electronic	
English Heritage	Hard Copy	
Environment Agency	Electronic	1
Federation of Small Businesses	Electronic	
Harrietsham Parish Council	Electronic	
Headcorn Anglican Church	Electronic	
Headcorn Baptist Church	Electronic	
Headcorn Catholic Church	Electronic	
Headcorn Methodist Church	Electronic	

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Homes & Communities Agency	Electronic	
Highways England (Agency)	Electronic	1
Historic England	Electronic	1
KCC Education	Electronic	
KCC Highways	Electronic	
KCC planning	Electronic	
KCC waste	Electronic	
Kent Ambulance	Electronic	
Kent association for the Disabled	Electronic	
Kent Fire & Rescue	Electronic	
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce	Electronic	
Kent Liberal Jewish Community	Electronic	
Kent Police	Electronic	1
Lenham Parish Council	Electronic	
Loose Parish Council	Electronic	
Maidstone Borough Council	Electronic	1
Medway Internal Drainage Board	Electronic	1
M&M Ethnic Minority Communication Advisory Group	Electronic	
Mobile Operators Association	Electronic	
National Grid	Electronic	
Natural England	Electronic	
Network Rail	Electronic	
NHS Primary Care	Electronic	
Southeast Water	Electronic	
Southern Water	Electronic	1
Sport England	Electronic	1
Staplehurst Parish Council	Electronic	
Sutton Valence Parish Council	Electronic	

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Tovil Parish Council	Electronic	
Tonbridge & Malling Council	Electronic	
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Electronic	
UK Power Networks	Electronic	
Ulcombe Parish Council	Electronic	1
Weald Of Kent Protection Society	Electronic	
Wealden Homes	Electronic	1
Woodland Trust	Electronic	
Other Commercial/Organisational Respondents	Method of Consultation	Responses
Gladman Developments Ltd	Unknown	1
JCN Design (Persimmon)	Unknown	1
Planning Aid England	Electronic	1
Headcorn Parish		
Residents & Business of Headcorn Parish	Leaflet Drop	215

Residence & Business of Headcorn Parish

Leaflet drop to each premise in the Parish organised, some 1,650 premises. The 'leaflet' comprised:

- a summary of key features of the Neighbourhood Plan,
- formal notice of the consultation starting on 15th June 2015,
- details of where the full Neighbourhood Plan could be viewed: in hard copy either at the Library or the Parish Office; and online by visiting: <http://www.headcornpc.kentparishes.gov.uk> website,
- a number of specific questions on the plan, and
- how to provide comments and feedback.

The leaflet also confirmed it was possible to purchase a copy of the plan from the Parish office for a small fee to cover printing costs.

Two open public sessions were advertised in the leaflet and held on the evening of Friday 3rd July and the morning of Saturday 11th July, where the full Neighbourhood Plan could be viewed along with large displays of key policies and graphics from the Plan.

At both sessions, visitors were able to meet members of the Headcorn Matters team and provide their feedback on any part of the plan. In particular, the Headcorn Matters team were keen to get feedback in the following areas:

- Vision for Headcorn
- New Housing, numbers and site (prioritization)
- Local Economy
- Tourism
- Transport

Announcement of the consultation was also posted on the village notice boards, parish website and on facebook.

At the close of the consultation on 31st July 2015, 215 individual responses from Residents and Businesses from Headcorn Parish had been received.

4. Regulation 14 Consultation - Response

The following pages summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted and describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.

Comments on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan as a whole

MBC and several of the developers asked for more details on the evidence and reasoning behind the Plan. This has been provided, by expanding and, where necessary, updating the arguments in Sections 1 and 2 of the Plan, in particular, but also throughout the Plan where required.

Some developers raised concerns about the length of the Plan. Therefore improved signposting was added into the Plan, both within the introductory section and through the addition of a single table (Table 18), which provides a check list of the policies that apply to different types of commercial and housing developments. The aim is to make it easier for readers to negotiate the plan.

One developer queried whether the Plan should have been subject to an SEA. HPC started considering the need for an SEA at an early stage in the policy development process, in line with the Regulations. The Plan has now been screened twice for the need for an SEA, in December 2014 (at an early stage in the Policy formation) and for the Regulation 14 version of the Plan, with an opinion provided in October 2015. On both occasions the statutory consultees confirmed that they did not consider that an SEA was needed. HPC highlights that the Neighbourhood Plan has been underpinned by a significant amount of evidence, including a top down assessment of the sustainability of development in Headcorn (Driver (2014)) and a bottom up site assessment exercise (Therivel (2015)). Therefore, considerations of sustainability have informed Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan throughout.

There were some questions over whether some of the policies within the Plan would meet the Basic Conditions. Examples of Neighbourhood Plans that have introduced similar policies and have been successful at both examination and referendum (and in some cases against challenge in the High Court) are therefore provided in Section 1.2. Clearly, each Neighbourhood Plan will be unique and will be driven by local circumstances, meaning policies need to be justified on a case by case basis. However, the fact that other Neighbourhood Plans have contained similar provisions should provide comfort that Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan will meet the Basic Conditions as well. HPC believes, in particular, that the emphasis on understanding sustainability in the rural context is key to meeting this aspect of the Basic Conditions. Achieving a Plan that delivers sustainable development for Headcorn Parish lies at the heart of both Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF, and the use of extensive evidence on what local

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residents and businesses both need and want to underpin the policy framework, underpins HPC's view that Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

HPC disagrees with some developers that the Vision underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan is not a positive one, and notes that it very much represents a "shared vision for their neighbourhood" (in line with paragraph 183 of the NPPF), being based on extensive evidence gathering of the wants and needs of local residents and businesses. HPC notes that a more "pro-growth" approach had been assessed in the context of the sustainability analysis underpinning Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan (which was published in Driver (2014)) and that it was concluded that the potential downsides outweighed potential benefits. Furthermore, in the context of Tattenhall's Neighbourhood Plan, it has been accepted in the High Court that a policy option that does not command popular support cannot be considered a "reasonable alternative".

Several developers queried whether the Neighbourhood Plan should be aligned to the emerging Local Plan in order to meet the basic conditions. The Regulations are very clear that it is the existing Development Plan for Maidstone Borough that is relevant for the Basic Conditions. In addition, the emerging Local Plan is still at a very early stage, having just completed a second Regulation 18 Consultation in October. Indeed, although the context is different, at a planning appeal in August, when asked by the Inspector how much weight should be given to policies in the emerging Local Plan, a senior MBC planning officer responded that only very limited weight should be given to it, given the stage that it was at and the number of steps remaining.

One developer suggested that the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan should not be allowed to progress before the emerging Local Plan was in place. Both the NPPF and the law are clear on this point. Neighbourhood Plans can come forward before an emerging local plan.

One developer queried the use of Census data on distance travelled to work and whether the right data had been used. They were correct to spot that workplace distances rather than residents' distances had been used. However, this data had only been used for illustrative purposes, to highlight the issues raised in work by academics such as Professor Crafts, Professor Manning and Professor Petrongolo, meaning it was not core to the arguments themselves. However, updated data has been provided in Section 2 of the Plan and the new data strengthens the arguments about distance within Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan. It is important to note that this data had not been used in the calculations of sustainable housing numbers themselves, which were based on responses from Headcorn's residents. However, as Footnote 69 on p35 of Driver (2014) makes clear, if the calculations used a lower figure for people working in the same areas as they lived (as would be the case if this data were used), then the resulting sustainable housing growth would fall not rise. Throughout the work on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, the aim has always been

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to take the highest possible number for identified need, to minimise the risk of under delivery of housing. Therefore, the numbers associated with economic sustainability have not been updated on the basis of Census data rather than on the Residents' Survey responses, as this would reduce estimated need. This approach of always taking the highest possible estimate is now illustrated on p66-67 of the Plan, which discusses how the assessment of housing need for the Parish was calculated and is another reason why HPC believes that Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

MBC raised a concern that the Neighbourhood Plan would not contribute to meeting its Objectively Assessed Housing Need. As the assessment of need provided with Policy HNP7 now makes clear, this is not the case, as the amount of housing envisaged in the Plan is significantly more than the assessed need for Headcorn itself. Furthermore, the approach taken is also completely aligned to the Government's recently published productivity policy, which vindicates Headcorn's approach to economic sustainability.

None of the neighbouring authorities, which were all consulted, raised any concerns about the form of the plan, or the scale of housing provision envisaged. Ulcombe Parish Council, who would be directly affected given the proximity of Ulcombe and Headcorn villages, was very complimentary. In rural areas (such as Headcorn) the NPPF Paragraph 54 makes clear that providing no concerns are raised based on a duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities (for example to support economic activity in an adjoining Borough), housing should be targeted at addressing local need.

MBC queried the ability of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan to deliver a wide mix of quality homes. HPC consider that the delivery of a wide mix of high quality homes in Headcorn will be facilitated by policies such as:

- HNP1 and HNP14, which deal with issues such as design and landscaping;
- HNP6, which promotes smaller scale developments and will therefore help to ensure that there is more choice by encouraging housing to be delivered by different developers and designers;
- HNP7 which includes a commitment to undertake housing needs reviews in 2021 and 2026, allowing the mix and quantity of housing to be provided to be adjusted if necessary;
- HNP8A, HNP8B, HNP9 and HNP10, which aim to address the identified needs of different groups, including finding creative ways to address issues of affordability when emerging households have no interest in social rented housing;
- HNP16, which requires houses in developments of more than nine houses to include a variety of different styles, orientations and designs and to be capable of coping with different sizes of family units and households in different age groups; and
- HNP17, which looks to encourage Micro Village Developments, which by their nature will be very different, depending on the preferences and needs of those applying.

MBC queried the based date for the Neighbourhood Plan. This date is aligned to the dates for Maidstone’s emerging plan, which is in line with the practice of many Neighbourhood Plan groups. This issue was queried with Planning Aid (who have been advising Headcorn on their Neighbourhood Plan), following MBC’s comment. Planning Aid felt there was nothing in the Regulations which would suggest that the choice of period covered by Headcorn’s Neighbourhood Plan was inappropriate and it is in line with common practice for most Neighbourhood Plans. Sticking with the existing dates is helpful, because it means there is no need to rework the evidence on housing need, but changing the dates would probably have limited overall impact on the policy outcomes envisaged under the plan. A developer also queried whether the dates used should be fiscal years, rather than calendar years, in line with MBC practice. However, MBC’s emerging local plan is simply dated 2011-2031 and does not specify whether it is a calendar or fiscal year.

Historic England mentioned that the photos provided had been useful. Therefore, additional photos have been added to illustrate both life in Headcorn and specific issues to do with the siting and design of housing in the Parish, including in the countryside.

Finally, several developers picked up on the “getting to Headcorn is easy” comment in the preamble to the tourism policy, but took it out of context. The full sentence read “Getting to Headcorn is easy, as the village has a central pay and display car park as well as free off street parking near the centre.” In other words the sentence was referring to the accessibility of tourist attractions within the village, rather than commuting patterns. Reflecting the intent of the original wording, the sentence now reads “Visiting Headcorn is facilitated by the fact that the village has a central pay and display car park, as well as free off street parking near the centre”.

As well as open ended responses, in the Regulation 14 Consultation with residents, residents were asked six specific questions to help guide further development of the plan. These questions covered:

- whether they supported the plan overall (93.9% yes);
- whether they supported that there should be no more than between 140-160 additional new homes (on top of the 107 with definite planning permission) between now and 2031 (95.3% yes);
- whether they agreed that the level of social rented and shared equity homes in new developments should be 20% (89.0% yes);
- whether they supported the strategic sites identified on the sites map (73.3% yes);

- of the sites identified on the site map, which three sites should be a priority (66.8% said yes to land northwest of Maidstone Road, 28.4% to land between Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank, 57.0% to land on the north side of Lenham Road, 57.2% to land on the south side of Lenham Road, and 63.3% to land between Knaves Acre and Kent Cottage); and
- whether they agreed with the proposed limit of 5 gypsy and traveller pitches in the parish between 2015-31 (43.8% yes, 5.2% no, 2.2% the limit should be higher, 50.0% the limit should be lower).

Comments on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan by Policy

HNP1 - Design Policies for Headcorn

Comments from Historic England that the uniform height in Headcorn, with no building exceeding 2.5 storeys, was significant and could be made clearer in the policy. Accordingly, policy HNP 1 now stipulates very clearly a maximum height of 2.5 storeys.

HNP2 - Protection of Headcorn's historic and natural environment

Historic England note that despite the title of this section, many of these features are in fact historically significant spaces or features and that it might be helpful to decision makers to raise the importance of their historical, as well as natural interest. Therefore the policy is renamed to from "Policies covering the natural environment" to "Protection of Headcorn's historic and natural environment", following recommendation from Historic England and updated to reflect comments on the historic environment and the importance of not just protecting, but enhancing the natural environment.

Additional definitions of key habitats (which is relevant for this policy) also added in Section 2, following comments from the Environment Agency. The Parish's network of trees, hedgerows and ponds, for example, stand out as features that reflect the history of human management of the landscape and contribute to its historic rural and agricultural character and identity. Historic England supports the Plan's identification of the Parish's network of trees, hedgerows and ponds. HPC has incorporated Historic England's comments and reworded the first paragraph to reflect their suggestion that new development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will be permitted where it respects the natural contours of the site and protects and sensitively incorporates historic and/or natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the site to make best use of the site to accommodate development; to help preserve and enhance the natural environment in Headcorn by providing a habitat for wildlife; and to sustain the historic environment, including the contribution of these features to local character and identity.

DHA Planning commented that figures showing hedgerows should identify those that are deemed to be ancient hedgerows, suggesting that the policy is unclear as ancient hedgerows should be individually identified. It believes that the lack of detail and

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the absolute terms of the policy make significant elements of the plan undeliverable. Figure 18 shows the important green spaces and wildlife corridors within the village. These are seen as the most important hedgerows and corridors supporting this policy, which should be maintained.

It was noted that the Great Crested Newt is a European protected species. The text has been revised.

It was suggested that there should have been a map identifying Tree Protection Order (TPO) woodland and key individual tree preservation orders in the Parish. The core of the village is covered by the Conservation Area where trees are protected. Outside this there are numerous TPOs, which would be difficult to identify in detail on a map. In addition, there are small woodland TPO's on the old Kent & East Sussex railway line to the south of Headcorn railway station as well as at Shenley crossroads.

States that if the Parish Council seeks to designate land as Local Green Space then this should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared.

General comments supported the need for decent sized open areas/parkland/woods for walking and leisure and also supported the need for habitat corridors/sanctuaries and nature reserves.

HNP3 - Water management and dealing with the risk of flooding

Southern Water (SW) made a number of constructive suggestions to the wording and confirmed that they agreed with the necessity to co-ordinate development with the provision of any necessary infrastructure and that they would seek planning policies and conditions to facilitate this. SW updated Headcorn Matters on reference to the Maidstone Borough Council Water Cycle Study (2010) informing that resulting from continuous monitoring SW had identified additional capacity at Headcorn WTW. Supporting text was added to state that Southern Water had confirmed it is operating within its environmental permit. Given the importance of the River Beult's status as an SSSI, the policy wording now includes a requirement that (where applicable) it should be clear that the relevant permits can be adhered to before planning permission is granted.

SW indicated a willingness to undertake assessments of the sewage network to determine on a site by site basis whether existing local capacity was sufficient to meet anticipated demand from a proposed development stating that more capacity can be provided by the provision of additional local infrastructure in parallel with new developments. Nearest points of adequate capacity should be established as part of the mechanism for site allocation policies and that planning conditions facilitate the delivery of any

requisite local infrastructure. These suggestions have been worked into the revised text together with some re-wording of the Policy itself.

On the issue of surface water surcharge from existing buildings SW recognises that the system is not designed to take such water that should be the responsibility of appropriate land drainage. SW confirm that they are working with the KCC as Lead Local Flood Authority to progress a Surface Water Management Plan that includes Headcorn identifying solutions so that the sewerage system can function as intended. SW proposed amendments have been incorporated as appropriate.

Southern Water confirmed that their operations of the Headcorn Wastewater Treatment Works were in accordance with the environmental permit and reference to this has been amended in the supporting text in this policy.

The Medway Drainage Board highlighted the importance of flooding risks in Headcorn and its suggested addition of information about flooding on roads in the Parish has been included.

HNP4 - Protection of communal spaces and community assets in Headcorn

Points made by Historic England suggesting the designation of key historic open spaces in the village as Local Green Spaces under the NPPF have been taken on board in the text and policy.

Comments by Sport England suggesting taking a more pro-active stance in the Plan on future sports and leisure provision have been addressed and informed by other comments and feedback from residents. This has led to three new projects in the Plan:

HM Project 1 - Upgrade the recreational facilities for teenagers and young adults (previously HNP27);

HM Project 2 - Creation of a wildlife sanctuary with access to the River Beult and improving access to natural green space (previously HNP28); and

HM Project 3 – Upgrade sporting and leisure facilities at Headcorn Primary School (to ensure that the expansion of the school enables community use of those facilities).

Policy has been renamed from ‘Protection of communal spaces in Headcorn’ to “Protection of communal spaces and community assets in Headcorn” and additional supporting projects have been included in the Plan, as outlined above.

Added in protection for community assets following advice from MBC.

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Following advice from Historic England, the designation “Area of Important Open Space” has been changed to “Local Green Space” to align with the NPPF, and expanded on their historic significance in the supporting text.

Comments by Sport England suggesting taking a more pro-active stance in the Plan on future sports and leisure provision have been addressed and informed by other comments and feedback from residents, particularly on desire for recreational spaces suitable for dog walking.

HNP5 - Protection of key views in Headcorn

Historic England suggested that it might be useful to include in the policy the following text:

“New development in Headcorn Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, will only be permitted where it will not have a detrimental impact on the distinctive views within the village and of the surrounding countryside (particularly those identified in Figure 16 and contributing to the character or appearance of the Headcorn Conservation Area or the significance of other heritage assets) that can be seen from public vantage points within and adjacent to the built up area of the village.”

This suggestion has been accepted and following discussion regarding views of the Greensand Ridge the policy text and wording has been updated to recognise the view to and from this Ridge.

HNP6 - Definition of allowable housing development types in Headcorn village, including maximum size

There was clear concern from developers and MBC about the legitimacy and evidence for this policy.

HPC regards this as a key policy within the plan and it serves two purposes: one is to allow the policy requirements within the Plan to vary depending on the size of development and, secondly, to set a cap of 30 dwellings on the size of an individual development. This approach enjoys very strong support from residents (who were explicitly asked about this in the residents’ survey) as well as from estate agents. The rationale for the policy was therefore expanded to make clear why the policy is justified, but the policy itself is left unchanged.

HPC notes that several other Neighbourhood Plans have successfully imposed a cap of this nature, including Tattenhall, which is the Cheshire West equivalent of a rural service centre. Therefore, there is no reason why the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan cannot

do this, and the evidence supporting it in the case of Headcorn is significantly more extensive than in the cases of other examples such as Tattenhall and Hook Norton.

Kent Police raised concerns about the impact of housing numbers on crime, which would support the adoption of smaller housing developments.

HNP7 - Phasing of house building in Headcorn

Strong support amongst residents for the impact of this policy on housing numbers in the Parish.

This policy was queried by developers and MBC. However, the NPPF makes clear that it is important to consider the timing of developments and other Neighbourhood Plans, such as Winslow, have used phasing (albeit by allocating sites).

This is a key policy for Headcorn, because without it development is likely to significantly exceed assessed need, which would be contrary to Paragraph 54 of the NPPF, and the Government's recently published policy on promoting productivity.

To make this reasoning clear, an explicit assessment of housing need in Headcorn is now provided. This had originally been contained in Driver (2014), but it was thought to be helpful to make it explicit within the NP, given the queries over evidence. Three different methods for assessing gross housing need amongst emerging households are discussed (including one based on MBC's SHMA calculations) and the highest number is used to minimise the risk of under provision. The assessment then makes clear how the net need has been calculated – again always using the option that would maximise need. This analysis makes clear that any need for additional housing in Headcorn is extremely limited, if not non-existent.

It was felt by HPC that some limited housing within Small and Larger Village Developments (as defined by HNP6) could be helpful, to minimise the risk of coordination failures, but this should be provided later in the plan period. Recognising that Southern Water's funding round made it unlikely that the requirements of HNP11 would be satisfied until the early 2020s, as well as the risk that very significant development might occur in the village in the short term it was decided to alter the timing of this policy. Therefore, the same amount of housing will be delivered through the types of development covered by this policy (90 units), but it will be divided over the last two periods of the plan. In addition, the reviews of housing need (previously contained under the monitoring activities) have been added to the policy (for 2021 and 2026) to ensure Headcorn's assessed needs can be met and targets adjusted if necessary.

Finally, although the amount of housing in Small and Larger village developments is set using this policy, overall there is no set cap on housing development within Headcorn, as micro developments and community self-build are not included under the policy. This will provide the necessary flexibility to meet emerging local need.

Kent Police raised concerns about the impact of housing numbers on crime, which would support the lower housing numbers.

HNP8 - Self build housing

MBC and developer comments about the difficulty of imposing a self-build plot quota on developers have been recognised, however the policy remains and encourages self-build without making it a requirement.

To provide an incentive to developers to do this, self-build plots provided will be outside the cap on development size (HNP6) and will not count towards numbers in HNP7.

Definition of 'self-build' and 'custom build' is now explicit (as suggested by MBC).

This specific policy is now looking to promote self-build, as this is more likely to help younger residents with less capital, who have more energy and micro developments will act to provide opportunities for custom build more generally.

Following MBC comments about group self-build options, possibly as affordable housing, this policy introduces an option for community self-build for those with strong links to Headcorn under Policy HNP8B.

HNP9 - Affordable homes

In responses from residents, 89% supported this policy.

MBC queried this policy, on the grounds of Borough-wide need. However, this policy was developed to meet identified need in Headcorn (in line with Paragraph 54 of the NPPF). To make it clear how need was calculated, explanation of the calculations in Driver (2014) was added to the text.

HPC asked for more details on MBC's headline assessment of need, including: how many of the households on the register are already living in affordable housing, which would indicate a coordination problem, not a need problem; whether there is more than one application per household; how many applicants picking Headcorn also picked Maidstone itself; how many applicants had links to Headcorn; etc. However, after several requests from HPC the housing department was unable to supply this data and had given no indication of whether it was possible to provide the data, so HPC decided to retain the existing analysis of need in Headcorn, which is based on the Residents' Survey, to underpin the proposed provision within this policy. This evidence suggests that demand for social rented housing can be met from within the existing housing stock in Headcorn.

HPC notes that although the policy on affordable housing in Maidstone's Development plan envisaged 40% provision, the Development Plan itself envisaged only minimal housing growth in Headcorn, meaning the policy was not developed with housing in Headcorn in mind. Although the emerging Local Plan also envisages 40% affordable housing in rural areas, it has only been tested on viability not sustainability grounds. HPC believes that the impact of distance to employment centres, secondary schools, hospitals, ANGSt space etc. will particularly disadvantage those on low incomes (the intended recipients of affordable housing). This means sustainability considerations make it important to align provision to local need. This includes the split between shared equity and social rented housing, with Headcorn's Residents' Survey identifying significantly more demand for shared equity housing.

Finally, HPC notes that although the headline rate for provision is lower than envisaged by MBC (20% not 40%) it will apply for smaller developments (with a threshold for provision of 10 not 15 houses), meaning the impact of this policy on provision may be less negative than believed by MBC.

HNP10 - Housing for the elderly and those with disabilities

Policy renamed to "Housing for the elderly and those with disabilities" following MBC comments. This policy is not specifically designed to provide affordable housing, but to recognise wider need within the community.

Following developer comments, clarification was added that the aim is (wherever possible) these dwellings should be integrated within schemes, rather than provided in isolation, in line with NPPF requirements on promoting healthy communities.

HNP11 - Preconditions for housing development in Headcorn village

Following the response from Southern Water the section relating to Sewerage and School Expansion has been separated in to two distinct preconditions.

The comments of Southern Water, as well as developers, are noted, however, the preconditions are retained.

Policy explanation has been clarified to make clear that developers are not expected to undertake the upgrade to the sewerage system, as it is not their responsibility, unlike a contribution to the cost of extending the infrastructure to accommodate the effects of their developments which is. The responsibility to timely deliver a system that performs to accepted standards with the loads imposed by the existing housing and planned development lies with the service providers and the Local Planning Authority and this is a key reason why commitment by the relevant authorities is needed before further development takes place. This requirement is included in Policy HNP11.

The fact that Southern Water's own hydraulic modelling shows that sewerage is expected to emerge at low points in the system (in periods of heavy rain) is noted. However, HPC does not accept that because the cause is heavy rain, there is no problem with the capacity of the system. Network infrastructure needs to be able to cope with periods of peak demand, which in the case of Headcorn's sewerage system is periods of heavy rain. Although HPC notes that many of the older properties in the village are legitimately allowed to discharge surface water into the sewerage system, the need to properly cope with peak demand still needs to be factored in to any calculation of capacity.

The solution to this may be increased sewerage capacity, or changes to the way that surface water is managed. However, until the necessary changes are both identified and implemented, Headcorn's sewerage system cannot cope.

It is fully understood that there is a statutory right for developers to have a connection to drainage and sewage disposal, but it is equally clear from experience in the village that recent new housing has exacerbated the problem of flooding and sewage in certain streets. The LPA (MBC) will also need to impose and enforce conditions to ensure that sewerage and drainage is adequate in any new development. Conditions imposed on developments in the past have clearly been unsatisfactory, therefore the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan seeks to repair the gap that exists between statutory obligations and reality.

Natural England supports this policy and the Environment Agency felt that improving Headcorn's ability to deal with high flows via the waste and storm system will help improve the water quality in the River Beult.

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HNP12 - Potential strategic housing development sites in Headcorn Village

Word “housing” added to policy name to clarify purpose of policy. Rather than specifying exactly how and when sites should come forward, this policy leaves it to developers, but combined with HNP7 will allow control over the phasing of housing provision.

The approach taken means that no one site is crucial for the plan, so if an individual site does not come forward, it does not present problems for overall delivery.

HPC considered that allocating sites and deciding on phasing would be unnecessarily arbitrary. The policy also provides the flexibility needed to be compatible with HNP6, while still helping to promote the most sustainable sites.

Residents on balance supported the sites identified as a whole, (73.3%), but there was much less support for individual sites.

Various developers queried why or how sites had been included:

- HO65A (land north west of Maidstone Road) is less attractive than some sites in terms of distance, but was included because it offers the prospect of traffic calming on the A274, a key road safety aim. However, the extent of any development will be small (no more than 30 houses), therefore the results of the assessment of the site as a whole should not be seen as an indicator of the sustainability of a small segment of the site. Given the size of the development envisaged under the Plan, it is likely that the site would be within 800m of almost all the key services in the village (except the station and the GP). This site was the most popular amongst residents.
- HO-70/HO-7 land between Ulcombe Road and Mill Bank. The developer flagged that excluding the top site made access difficult and therefore both sites should be included because it is key to the delivery of the Plan. HPC note that this site is not key to the Plan (see above). The identified site was very unpopular with residents (only 28.4% supported), so HPC considered dropping the site. On balance, HPC decided to retain the southern-most part of the site (HO-70) in the event the developer was able to find a way to provide access via the A274 – the mandated means of access for the contained in the March 2014 Reg 18 Local Plan. HPC notes that in the planning application for this site KCC, was expected to buy land for primary school expansion at market prices, meaning there is no specific benefit for including this site, or the additional site associated with it.
- Gibbs Hill Farm (HO2-174 – land South of Grigg Lane). The developer queried why this had not been included in the list of sites. This site is more than 800m from the centre of the High Street, which was a key requirement for inclusion given the

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value associated with the High Street and also scored low in terms of several other key sustainability criteria. An assessment of the distances associated with this site shows that it is in line with the other developments given this ranking.

HNP13 - Density and site coverage

The emerging Maidstone Local Plan seeks a density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare. In the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan 30 dwellings per hectare is a maximum, this approach is supported by Planning Aid.

Average densities in Headcorn village in 2011 were 15.3 dwellings per hectare.

For housing development within Headcorn village, the maintenance of housing character has a higher significance than achieving a minimum density figure. The appropriate density for a housing site should result, in every case, in a housing development in character with the surrounding area, respecting its natural and historic environment. This policy is aligned to Section 7 on the NPPF on good design, which recognises the importance of promoting and reinforcing local distinctiveness and ensuring that development fits with the existing built environment.

HNP14 - Landscaping in developments and the encouragement of new open and recreational spaces in Headcorn Village

With reference to comments from Natural England this policy section has been strengthened to emphasise protection of the existing landscape in new developments as well as creating future landscape features.

The reference to fruit trees in this policy is retained, as it is seen as an important aspect of promoting wildlife. However, HPC note that it is in the context of landscaping developments.

It is noted that in developer responses that they support new open spaces within new developments.

HNP15 - Connectivity and access

General concern over safe access for new and existing developments that this policy pursues, but generally supportive of the policy.

It is noted that one developer took the opportunity to confirm they would be providing a new footpath on Oak Lane and improvements to the junction of Oak Lane and Wheeler Street.

Comments on need for improved road safety has been addressed as part of HM Project 5.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP16 - The mix and design of housing in Larger Village Developments

Comments supportive.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP17 - Micro Village Developments

Some comments, but no objections.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP18 - Promoting the role of Headcorn High Street

MBC commented that the use of certain limiting or restrictive wording in the policy in the first bullet point should be expanded to include business (B1) uses in addition to retail and they made representations in respect of the loss of retail units in the Conservation Area only and not over a wider area of the village. Amendments to the wording have been incorporated to take account of these representations by MBC.

MBC further commented about the need for a hierarchy to allow edge of centre developments before those in the countryside. Having considered this comment, HPC considered that the village was too small for this approach to work and it was not needed on sustainability (car usage) grounds, because the vast majority of housing was within 800m of the centre of the High Street.

Comment about competition was discussed. This had originally been suggested by MBC and was felt to be helpful, because it emphasizes the importance of promoting the High Street and thus of retaining this Policy.

Historic England felt that the policy provided a “sound basis for sustaining the value of the historic environment to the local character and distinctiveness of Headcorn by supplementing the Council’s local plan policies”.

HM Project 4 (previously project 1) Improving the frontage in the High Street and Wheeler Street was supported by consultation responses.

It was decided not to add a map to go with this project, as it is a project for HPC to take forward, rather than a specific planning policy. Therefore, any issues will be identified on a case by case basis.

In terms of loss of retail units in other areas, the High Street was seen as the priority for this policy, and the existence of the Conservation Area makes resisting change of use to residential possible. Outside the High Street, a more flexible approach is needed, because of permitted development rights.

HNP19 - Promoting tourism in Headcorn

Comments supportive.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP20 - Headcorn Aerodrome Comments supportive.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP21 - Promoting key employment sites - Barradale Farm & HNP22 - Stonestile Business Park

These above policies are inter-linked. In respect of Section 6.3 of the supporting text to these Policies, note has been taken of the representations made by MBC by the addition of a new paragraph to this section confirming HPC’s promoting of Barradale Farm Business Park as a strategic employment site within the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in line with Policy EMP 1 (4) of Maidstone Borough Council Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation version.

Following representations, some tidying of the wording in the narrative text to Section 6.3 of the Neighbourhood Plan has been incorporated with reference to highway improvements and the recommendation for the Barradale and Stonestile Business Parks to

share a new common access on to the A274. It has been made clear in the supporting text that what is required is for any layout to facilitate, and not block this as an option, not for Barradale's itself to provide access.

MBC also queried protection on employment space. This has been addressed by adding to the policy on building in countryside to protect significant employment sites more generally from conversion to residential use.

HNP23 - Supporting small business development

Comments supportive.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP24 - Priorities for improving road safety in Headcorn Village

A significant number of comments were received from residents regarding concerns over road safety and these were all supportive of the policy. However to further strengthen the application of this policy, the project HM Project 5 - Improving Road Safety, has been added to the Plan to provide a mechanism to identify address specific problem areas.

HNP25 - Provision of parking in Headcorn Village

A significant number of comments were received from residents regarding parking and as a result this policy has been split to separate planning issues from the project aspects of this policy. HM Project 6 - Improving parking in Headcorn Village, has been added to the Plan in order that that various initiatives in this area can be pursued without the need to link them to a particular development.

HNP26 - Provision of broadband in Headcorn

Some queries were received from developers on what this means for them. The Plan has been clarified so as to make clear that the aim is to future proof development, and this has been made clearer in supporting text. Recent government policy on promoting productivity in rural areas prioritizes provision of broadband.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP27(previously HNP29) - Sewerage provision in developments in Headcorn Village

Comments from Southern Water and developers were noted. There was a significant level of support from Headcorn residents and HPC strongly believes that (as with any network) it is appropriate for the network to be able to meet peak load requirements (which in Headcorn's case means during periods of heavy rain). Even when the system has been upgraded (in line with HNP11), it will be important that sewerage from new developments can reach the pumping station without meeting a constraint, otherwise the system will begin to deteriorate again. As such, this policy is seen as preventative.

Policy remains unchanged

HNP28(previously HNP30) - Commercial energy generation in Headcorn

Planning Aid provided the only feedback and questioned the restrictive nature of the policy, it was felt that the limited feedback on this policy did not give a mandate to consider any major shift in direction. The only change is to convert from miles to kilometres for consistency with the rest of the plan.

HNP29(previously HNP 31) - Promoting energy and water efficiency

Comments from Environment Agency on importance of efficient water usage for commercial developments taken on board and reference to "BREEAM excellence" added.

HNP30(previously HNP32) - Priorities for infrastructure spending in Headcorn

HPC noted MBC's comments about conflicts between the listing of priorities in MBC's emerging plan and the Neighbourhood Plan. However, it is important that infrastructure provision in Headcorn reflects local needs, including for affordable housing. This last factor is particularly important given the NPPF provisions for building in rural areas (NPPF Paragraph 54).

It was noted that a number of responses were received from residents and they were supportive of this policy and the priorities listed.

HPC considered the response from Kent Police and moved emergency services (including police) up to the fifth position on the list. HPC recognise and appreciate the support that police provide. HPC thought that some of the infrastructure priorities that were higher (such as road safety and open spaces) would help reduce the need for police, for example by providing more for young

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adults to do. Utilities (especially sewerage) is a clear priority for Headcorn and needs to be number one on the list. However, the utilities also cover broadband provision and HPC note that this was the first objective in the Government's 10-point plan for raising productivity in rural areas.

HNP31(previously 33) - Policy for building new dwellings in the countryside

MBC commented on the ambiguity in this policy. This policy has therefore been amended and clarified in accordance with policy ENV28 of the Maidstone Local Plan and the direction of the NPPF to make it clear what development is not permissible in the countryside surrounding the village.

The policy was also updated to remove the references to extensions and annexes, reflecting comments received. The policy is now explicitly aligned to NPPF in terms of what will be permitted. A provision preventing conversion of buildings that are used for significant employment provision has been added following comments from MBC.

The comment by MBC encouraging economic development over residential development in the countryside is reflected in a modification of this policy, which does not allow loss of an active economic use to residential use. In terms of encouraging the conversion of buildings for employment rather than residential use, conversion for business use is supported by the policies in Section 6 of Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan (especially HNP19 on tourism and HNP23 on small business development), in line with Section 3 of the NPPF. However, it was felt unhelpful to require landowners to prioritise business development and such a requirement could not be justified under sustainability considerations.

HNP32(previously HNP34) - Planning permission for agricultural exception sites

Limited comments.

Policy remains unchanged.

HNP33(previously HNP35) - Limits on planning permission for gypsy and traveller pitches

Residence responses to the consultation indicated support for the policy to limit new sites in the parish to a total of five pitches between 2015-31 with 43.8% of respondents supporting the proposal. However, this is an area of tension in Headcorn and 50% of respondents supported a smaller number of additional pitches.

Analysing comments from respondents requesting less pitches reveals a high number supporting a zero increase in pitches. This is not a tenable position for the plan as the plan supports controlled increase in all forms of residential development whilst respecting the rural setting of Headcorn and its sense of being a village.

Many negative comments regarding traveller sites relate to lack of planning enforcement and fairness in the planning system which is perceived to be too much in favour of gypsy and travellers. HPC notes that at the core of the new DCLG planning policy for traveller sites is an overarching aim to ensure fairness and equal treatment of travellers whilst respecting the interests of the settled community.

Comments from the statutory and commercial consultees resulted in two comments, one from Ulcombe PC who are supportive of the approach in the plan and MBC who are concerned that the policies will restrict the size of future pitches. Regarding size, HPC considers this is adequately dealt with in the proposed gypsy and traveller policies and the wider plan which recognises what the scale of future development in Headcorn should follow.

Definition of a 'gypsy' and a 'traveller' has been updated in line with new government guidance and definition of a 'pitch' added to the policy to reflect this.

HPC considered that some management of overall numbers was appropriate and that this policy framework provided the best option. Although there would be support for reducing the number allowed, it was felt on balance that this would be unhelpful.

HPC noted that MBC had consulted on an additional site in the Parish in its recent (October 2015) Reg 18 Local Plan consultation. Whether to allocate this site was discussed, but on balance it was felt the site could come forward under the policy without a specific allocation and, given the site had not been included in the Reg 14 consultation on Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan, it was decided it was preferable on balance to omit the site.

Although the figures on gypsy and traveller pitches provided by Ulcombe Parish Council (UPC) were not added to the policy preamble, HPC notes UPC would support Headcorn's approach and the concerns raised by Headcorn's residents. More information on how the experience in Headcorn compares to both the Maidstone Borough and national experience has been added as context.

HNP34(previously HNP36) - Planning permission for gypsy and traveller pitches

Definition of a gypsy and traveller updated in line with new government guidance and definition of a pitch added to policy to reflect this.

The need to ensure sites with temporary permission would be restored to their original state was recognised and included in the policy.

5. Regulation 14 Consultation - Analysis of Responses

See Appendix for summary of responses to Consultation 14