

19 MAY 2023

**LAND AT CHERRY GARDENS
LITTLESTONE
KENT:
PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

BY

MARTIN NEWCOMBE¹

20th August 2022

D163. Petham (TR080251) R



Martin Newcombe Wildlife Management Consultancy
01233 720229

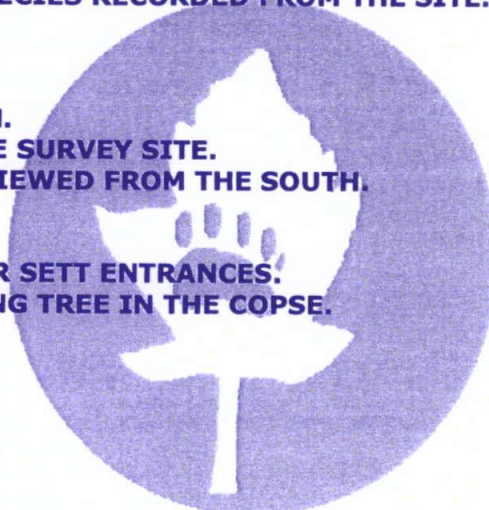
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document was compiled in order to report upon a preliminary ecological survey of land on the northern edge of Littlestone, Kent¹. The survey site consists of a level area of grass which is surrounded by hedging to the north and by fencing on the other sides, and which is normally managed by cutting rather than grazing. The site is semi – urban insofar as there is residential development to the south, south – east and south – west, grazing land to the west, and a golf course to the north. There were no buildings on site, but there was a small broadleaved copse on the south – eastern corner which was an extension of a wooded area that extended over the survey boundary. The property is located at approximately three metres OD and the soil is aeolian sand and alluvium. The location of the survey site is shown in Figure 1 whilst there is a sketch map of the layout of the site in Figure 2.

1.2 There are the following designated **sites** within approximately one kilometre of the survey site:

- The golf course on the northern boundary is part of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest² and a Ramsar site³. It is also part of the National Habitat network⁴.
- The Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Special Area of Conservation⁵ and Special Protection Area⁶ is located approximately 560 metres to the east.

1.3 It is proposed to develop the site⁷.

¹ OS / TR080250 – approximate centre. Grid reference taken from <http://gridreferencefinder.com/#>

² Hereafter 'SSSI.' SSSIs are protected by law to conserve their wildlife or geology.

³ Ramsar Site is a wetland site designated as being of international importance under the Ramsar Convention which came into force in 1975 under the auspices of UNESCO.

⁴ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

⁵ Hereafter 'SAC.' SACs are defined by the European Union's Habitats Directive, in order to protect the habitats and species listed in annex I and II of the directive which are considered to be of European interest.

⁶ Hereafter 'SPA.' SPAs are strictly protected sites classified in accordance with the European Union's Birds Directive and protect rare and vulnerable birds and regularly - occurring migratory species.

⁷ Drawing Services Ltd, undated. Hereafter 'the block plan.'

2.0 METHODS

2.1 The site **visit** took place on Friday 5th August 2022 and took approximately one hour, during which time the entire site was visited. The purpose of the visit was to carry out ecological scoping surveys as follows:

2.1.1 A search was made for any species, or habitat suitable for any species that are specifically **protected** for conservation purposes by wildlife legislation⁸ such as badgers, bats and common reptiles⁹, using appropriate established techniques e.g.:

- Assessment of potential habitat for reptiles by comparison of the habitat on site with descriptions of potential reptile habitat given by Gent and Gibson (2003) as augmented by earlier personal experience.
- Identifying plants using Stace (2019) and Poland and Clement (2009).

2.1.2 A search was also made for species¹⁰ that are included within the short list of the national **Biodiversity Action Plans** and associated lists¹¹. For birds, a search was made for species which are included within the red part of the national bird '**Red List**'¹² as well as any other species that were recorded within the Kent Red Data Book¹³, Kent Rare Plant Register¹⁴ and other similar publications.

2.1.3 The **biological records** for one kilometre around the site were obtained from the Kent and Medway Biological Record Centre and the database of setts held by the East Kent Badger Group was also consulted.

⁸ Mostly, this included species listed in <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3408> as being protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and related legislation.

⁹ E.g. common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) and slow – worm (*Anguis fragilis*).

¹⁰ Or habitat suitable for species.

¹¹ Biodiversity Steering Group, 1995 as amended. Hereafter known as the 'BAP.' Also, the species subject of Biodiversity 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services>).

¹² Stanbury (2021).

¹³ Waite, 2001. Hereafter referred to as 'KRDB.'

¹⁴ <http://bsbi.org/kent>

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 The **vegetation** of the survey site was probably closest to Rodwell's (1992) MG7 *Lolium perenne* leys. Although the conditions were dry and the grass had been cut without regrowing, so this could not be definitely determined.

3.2 The following evidence of species, or habitat suitable for any species which are specifically **protected** under wildlife legislation was found:

- A badger sett was found in the copse.

3.3 The following evidence of any **BAP**, KRDB or other notable species was found on site:

- **House sparrow** was seen feeding on site. House sparrow is a red list species.

3.4 The **biological records** showed the following notable records within one kilometre of the survey site:

- Three records of great crested newt¹⁵ between 1998 and 2001 from Romney Warren Golf Club, approximately 174 metres to the north of the survey site.
- One record of great crested newt dated 2018, at approximately 724 metres to the south of the survey site.
- One record of hedgehog¹⁶ dated 2007, from approximately 500 metres to the southwest.
- One record of common lizard¹⁷ 968 metres south of the survey area in 2017, is the nearest record.
- The nearest record of grass snake¹⁸ was approximately 770 metres north of the survey site in 2013.

¹⁵ Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Habitat Regulations 2019.

¹⁶ *Erinaceus europaeus*. Hedgehog is a species of 'principal importance' under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) and is protected from deliberate harm by Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

¹⁷ *Zootoca*. All common reptiles are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

¹⁸ *Natrix helvetica*.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Short surveys such as this one are good at giving a sample of the ecological value of a given site and showing which species, if any, require more detailed survey¹⁹.
- 4.2 The **methods** of the survey have been used extensively elsewhere with consistent results and accord with good practice guidelines²⁰. Signs of protected species and their habitat parameters are reasonably obvious to an experienced surveyor and ecological surveys of this type are valuable in terms of helping to determine whether protected or notable animals or plants are likely to be present, are present, or have been present in or around a site and whether further, more detailed Phase 2 survey is required for certain species. However, the results of a survey are partially decided by the time of year at which the survey takes place, the stages in an organism's life cycle, and the accessibility of the site. At this site, access was complete.
- 4.3 The **vegetation** type of the site is a widespread and common one²¹ which is widespread throughout the British Isles.
- 4.4 The presence of **house sparrow** on the site is purely as a feeding bird; there is no suitable habitat for the bird to nest in anywhere on site. The impact, therefore, upon this species will be negligible, but mitigation is required because of its status.
- 4.5 The presence of a **badger** sett in the copse on the survey site does not pose a direct threat to any part of the proposed development. However, because of its situation in one corner, and because of the highly - developed nature both of the proposed development and the existing surrounding development, as well as the fact that the sett is associated with and probably part of a much larger sett which is located a few metres to the east, there is likely to be a large amount of badger activity in the survey area and its surroundings. The block plan shows a badger corridor along the eastern edge of the proposed development, but this will need to be securely fenced and protected against closure or interference by the residents of the proposed new properties. In addition, there will be a need for the badgers to access other areas to the west of the proposed development, which will happen and cause damage to gardens. It is therefore proposed that a badger management

¹⁹ Stork and Samways, 1995.

²⁰ E.g. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2013; British Standards Institute, 2013, Collins, 2016.

²¹ Rodwell, 1998.

strategy must be incorporated into the plans for the site so that these matters and others²² can be carefully considered; the presence of the badger corridor alone is unlikely to be the only requirement. The badger sett of which the one on site forms part is an extensive main one and, according to the East Kent Badger Group records, has been present for at least seventy years. When the adjacent houses in Orchard Drive to the east were built, great care was taken to protect the badger sett and the same care will be required at this site if the continued existence of this sett is not to be threatened.

4.6 The KMBRC record showed that four species of concern occurred within one kilometre of the survey site:

- The proximity of the three records of great crested newt within 250 metres of the survey site is significant, due to their protection. The Great Crested Newt Conservation handbook²³ states that *'At most sites, the majority of adults probably stay within around 250m of the breeding pond, so the density of individuals gradually decreases away from the pond.'* As a result, there is a possibility that, during the terrestrial stages of their lives, newts could be found on the survey site. As a result, there will be a requirement for a suite of reasonable avoidance measures to be put in place during construction.
- There was no evidence hedgehog on site, and just the one KMBRC record of hedgehog from 2007. Hedgehogs could conceivably feed on the survey site in season, but due to the management of the site by grass cutting, there are unlikely to be any animals nesting on the site.

4.7 Consideration was also given to a wide range of other protected species that might occur on site, but none were found. For example:

- There were no suitable trees and no buildings on site which offered habitat for roosting **bats**; the trees in the copse were too small to hold roosts. As a result there is no impact and no need for mitigation.
- No scrub or hedgerows are being affected by the proposed development. As a result, there is no impact on **dormouse**²⁴ which does not occur in this part

²² I.e. the extent to which badgers will be allowed to forage in the developed area, the need for above and below – ground badger fencing, the long – term management and ownership of the sett etc.

²³ Langton et al, 2001.

²⁴ Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019. They are found in the nearby woodlands including Yockletts Bank, Stubbs Wood and Waddenhall Wood.

of Kent²⁵. and therefore there is no impact and no requirement for mitigation.

- The cut – grass habitat has removed habitat for **reptiles**, and the KMBRC records are few and distant. It is therefore considered that there is no impact on common reptiles and no requirement for mitigation.
- The hedgerow and copse will be used by nesting **birds** in the breeding season²⁶. Because wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, any works affecting the hedge or copse must take place outside this period, as must any arboricultural works in the copse.

4.8 The potential development proposals for the survey site will not directly affect the **designated sites** in the area, other than increasing the footfall on the nearby SSSI.

4.9 In **summary**, therefore, there is a badger sett on site which will need to be adequately protected both during construction and afterwards. Reasonable avoidance measures will be required for great crested newts. Breeding birds in the copse and hedgerow must be considered during the breeding season.

4.10 It is also strongly recommended that, in order to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework²⁷ and to supply some positive ecological benefits, some of the wildlife conservation measures and **mitigation** suggested by Gunnell, Murphy and Williams (2013) for instance, should be incorporated into any proposed Scheme by means of a biodiversity plan for the completed development. This should include:

- A range of bird nest boxes should be erected on the site for breeding birds. In particular, this should include house sparrow nesting boxes on all the buildings.
- A range of Schwegler bat boxes should be erected on the site for the purposes of supplying bat roosting opportunities.
- Any areas which are to be reseeded or landscaped should be reseeded with a suitable wildflower seed mix to encourage pollinating insects.
- In order to support the needs of bats and nocturnal insects, any lighting that is erected on site should be either low - pressure sodium lamps or mercury lamps fitted with ultraviolet filters. The brightness of lamps should

²⁵ Young *et al*, 2015.

²⁶ Which is approximately mid – March to July inclusive.

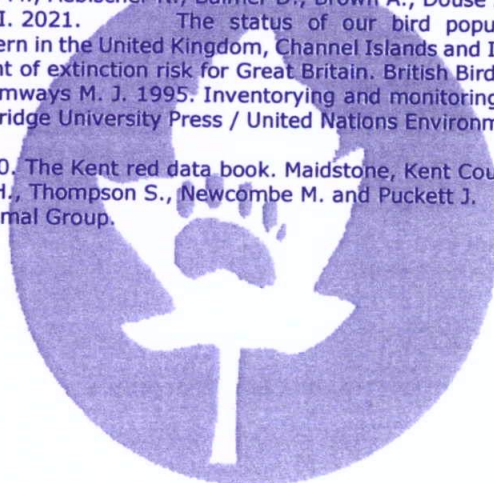
²⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021.

be kept as low as possible and be directed to where it is needed to avoid unnecessary spillage of light. Lighting should not be upwardly - directed light and lighting durations should be limited by fitting timers to all external lights.



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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED FROM THE SITE (All data approximate) (Notable species in red)				
	SCIENTIFIC NAME	VERNACULAR NAME	NOTES	NO SPP
MOSESSES				
	<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>	A moss		
	<i>Bryum sp.</i>	A moss		
	<i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>	A moss		3
VASCULAR PLANTS				
	<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple	In the northern hedgerow .	
	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	In the copse.	
	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow		
	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Hedge Garlic		
	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley	In the copse.	
	<i>Arctium sp.</i>	Burdock		
	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Mugwort		
	<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Cuckoo Pint	In the copse.	
	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam	In the northern hedgerow .	
	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle		
	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle		
	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	In the northern hedgerow .	
	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cocksfoot Grass		
	<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild Carrot		
	<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Common Couch		
	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	Spindle	In the northern hedgerow .	
	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	In the copse.	
	<i>Gallium aparine</i>	Goosegrass		
	<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	Dominant in the copse.	
	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed		
	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog		
	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox Eye		
	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Wild Privet	In the northern hedgerow .	
	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle		
	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birdsfoot Trefol		
	<i>Ononis repens</i>	Restharrow	In the northern hedgerow .	
	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Poppy		
	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain		
	<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry	In the northern hedgerow .	
	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Blackberry		
	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elderberry		
	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort		
	<i>Smyrniolus olusatrum</i>	Alexanders		
	<i>Thelycrania sanguinea</i>	Dogwood		
	<i>Trifolium sp.</i>	Unidentified Clover		
	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging Nettle		
	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Gelder Rose	In the northern hedgerow .	37
INSECTA LEPIDOPTERA				
	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	Meadow Brown		
	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	Small White		2
BIRDS				
	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Sparrowhawk		
	<i>Asio otus</i>	Long-eared owl	Has bred in the copse.	
	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon		
	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Swallow		
	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Feeding on site.	
	<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie		
	<i>Picus viridis</i>	Green Woodpecker		7
MAMMALS				
	<i>Meles meles</i>	Badger	Sett present	1
Total number of species:				50

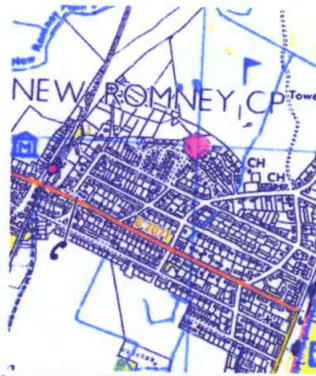


Figure 1: THE SITE LOCATION.
 REPRODUCED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE ORDNANCE SURVEY LICENCE NO. 100016414.

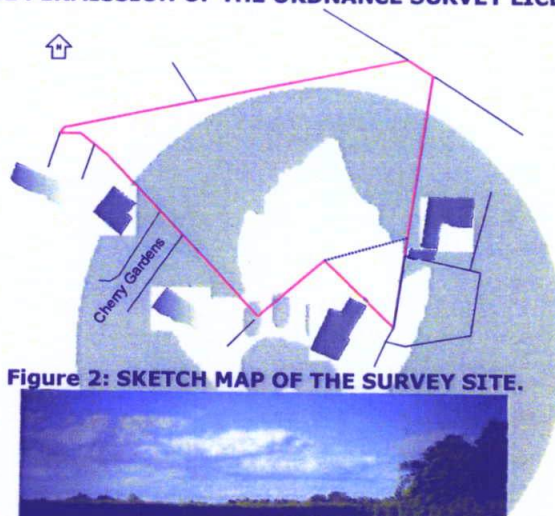


Figure 2: SKETCH MAP OF THE SURVEY SITE.



Figure 3: THE SURVEY SITE VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH.



Figure 4: THE HEDGE.



Figure 5: THE COPSE.



Figure 6: ONE OF THE BADGER SETT ENTRANCES.



Figure 7: BADGER SCRATCHING TREE IN THE COPSE.

ⁱ Martin Newcombe is principal of MN Wildlife, a small ecological practice in Kent, which has now been operating for over 30 years. Martin studied botany and zoology at college before qualifying as a further education lecturer. His interests and that of his practice are in mammals and woodland matters, with extensive experience in badgers, bats, dormice, deer, woodland management and conservation and general ecology. He holds a Natural England (NE) bat class licence level 2, and a NE dormouse licence, and has also held many NE badger licenses.

J Smith
Hydene

Highways and Transportation
Kroner House
Eurogate Business Park
Ashford
TN24 8XU

Tel: 03000 418181

Date: 23 March 2023

Our Ref: TJ

Pre- Application: PAP/2022/167
Location - Land off Cherry Gardens, Littlestone, New Romney, Kent, TN28 8QZ
Proposal - Proposed 9 no. dwellings

Dear James,

Thank you for your request for pre-application advice relating to the above site, I have the following comments to make relating to highways matters.

This proposal site benefits from an allocation in the Folkestone and Hythe District Local Plan for approximately 10 dwellings. Policy RM1 applies and it is noted that none of the specific requirements listed under this allocation relate to highway matters, other than access via Cherry Gardens.

A development of this size would not need to provide a specific transport statement or assessment. Typically a 9 dwelling proposal would put 4 or 5 additional vehicle movements onto the network in the peak traffic hours. This is not a volume that would cause concern in relation to impact on the wider highway network in terms of capacity or safety.

Access to the proposal site would be via Cherry Gardens. This road is of sufficient width to take the additional traffic without a problem and it's junction with Blenheim Road benefits from good visibility due to the wide verge and footway.

With regard to layout, continuing the same layout as the neighbouring Cherry Gardens is not out of keeping in terms of roadway / footway layout. However for such small development you could have this as a shared space as long as there was an entry feature (usually a ramped entry) and change in materials to signal a change in driven environment to drivers.

You will need to demonstrate by providing a vehicle track drawing than an 11.4m refuse vehicle can enter the road, turn and exit in a forward gear.

As this is a small development, taking into account the turning area, all maximum carry distances for residents/operatives for kerbside collection would be met.

No specific detail or commentary has been provided regarding the form of the covered parking on plot. Garages do not count towards the number of allocated parking spaces for each dwelling due to residents tendency to fill them with anything other than their cars. Car barns / car ports are acceptable.

Two, Three and Four bed properties need to provide a minimum on plot parking provision of 2 spaces. I would encourage you to provide additional on plot space for the four bed units as these are likely to have higher car ownership.

The layout to access the car barns/garages for plots 3 and 4 (Drawing DS2353/10) appears to show side access to the covered parking. The driveways do not appear to have sufficient width to allow access independently. If this is intended as a wider shared driveway, this would be easier but perhaps unpopular with home owners. If the latter, the front driveway width looks to need widening slightly on the northern side to allow vehicles to pull out of the parking in one movement

A minimum of 2 visitor parking spaces on street should be provided. These should not obstruct the turning head. I also note that 'future access' is indicated on the concept drawing where the visitor spaces are shown. Visitor spaces should not be placed where they will obstruct access to private land.

Secure cycle parking will need to be provided on plot. I note that Plots 1, 6 and 9 show separate cycle storage using a shed in the back garden. Where this is not provided, garage storage is acceptable. Where storage in a car barn is proposed, this should allow for the resident to remove the cycle without having to remove the car to do so.

The Proposal and Conceptual drawings provided show different layouts, so it is not possible to confirm if the above has been met in full without confirmation of the actual proposed layout.

I have enclosed our minimum parking space (and covered parking) dimensions for your information.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council guidelines require developers to ensure there is sufficient space for wheelie bins to be moved to roadside for collection without being obstructed by residents parked cars i.e. the driveway should allow sufficient width for parking and relocating the wheelie bin. Please ensure this is taken into account.

Where driveway lengths are oversized for a single vehicle and are more than half a car length again, this can lead to some residents parking an extra vehicle on plot, even though it doesn't fit, then obstructing the footway/carriageway. Any driveways in this situation should either be extended to allow an additional vehicle on plot fully, or reduced in length to prevent this occurring (plots 5 and 6 Drawing DS/2353).

As detailed above, the traffic generation from a proposal of this size does not cause concern in relation to the impact on the wider highway network.

If the items listed above are fully taken into account with any emerging design fix, I do not foresee any reason that the proposal would generate a recommendation of refusal on highway grounds.

If you would like to clarify the specific design further I will be happy to provide more detailed comment.

I hope the above is helpful, if you require any clarification please come back to me.

Yours sincerely

Tony Jenson
Senior Development Planner

Table 8 : Minimum Car Parking Space Dimensions

	Length	Width
Cars – Minimum ¹	5.0m (6.0m for parallel spaces ²)	2.5m
Disabled Car Space	5.5m	3.7m
Cars – Abutting hard boundary on one side ³ – Minimum	5.0m	2.7m
Cars – Abutting hard boundary on both sides ³ – Minimum	5.0m	2.9m
Garage – One Car ⁴	7.0m	3.6m
Garage – Two Cars ⁴	7.0m	6.0m
Car Port/Car Barn – One Car ⁵	5.0m	2.5m
Car Port/Car Barn – Two Cars ⁵	5.0m	5.5m
Car Barn – One Car ⁶	5.5m	2.9m
Car Barn – Two Cars ⁶	5.5m	5.4m
Tandem Parking – First Car	6.0m	2.5m

¹ Where space abuts a footway or carriageway, 0.5m setback should be provided

² Applicable where car parking spaces are provided parallel to, and abutting, a carriageway, aisle or drive

³ Typically in a car park, rather than residents driveway

⁴ These dimensions refer to internal dimensions

⁵ These refer to car barns/car ports that are open on all sides

⁶ These refer to car barns that are enclosed

Important Notes:

Any advice given by Council officers for pre-application enquiries does not indicate a formal decision by the Council as the Highway Authority. Any views or opinions are given in good faith, and to the best of ability, without prejudice to the formal consideration of any planning application.

The final decision on any application that you may then make can only be taken after the Planning Authority has consulted local people, statutory consultees and any other interested parties. The final decision on an application will then be made by senior officers or by the respective Local Planning Authority and will be based on all of the information available at that time.

Very faint!

You should therefore be aware that officers cannot guarantee the final formal decision that will be made on your application(s).

Any pre-application advice that has been provided will be carefully considered in reaching a decision or recommendation on an application; subject to the proviso that circumstances and information may change or come to light that could alter that position.

Kent County Council has now introduced a formal technical approval process for new or altered highway assets, with the aim of improving future maintainability. This process applies to all development works affecting the public highway other than applications for vehicle crossings, which are covered by a separate approval process. To assist developers and designers, KCC offer a free outline technical review of proposals affecting highway assets. This is separate from the planning process but will help ensure that your proposals will be acceptable to the highway authority at the implementation stage. To find out more and request an application form, email: assetmanagement@kent.gov.uk

It should be noted that the weight given to pre-application advice will decline over time.