

Ashford Borough Council Planning Application number 18/00413/AS

Land at Lenacre Hall Farm, Sandyhurst Lane Boughton Aluph, Kent

Objection comments

14 April 2018

INTRODUCTION

Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association (SLRA) has been active for over thirty years representing the collective interests of the residents of Sandyhurst Lane and all adjacent roads, which constitute its neighbourhood of 340 dwellings. The mission statement of the Association is *"Protecting the rural character of Sandyhurst Lane and the adjoining area"*.

The application to which we are responding is for full planning permission for 21 dwellings. However, there is an existing valid and registered hybrid planning application for full planning permission for 21 dwellings, together with outline planning permission for a further 68 dwellings (application number 17/01613/AS). It is therefore pertinent that some of our comments in this response are made in cognisance of the known plans for the eventual further development of the site with a total of 89 dwellings, in the same way that the Applicant has submitted with this application documents such as the Statement of Community Involvement, which was prepared for the hybrid application for 89 dwellings.

In order to comment on the previous hybrid application, accurately reflecting the views of residents in our area, we carried out a survey, inviting residents to give their opinions on a range of relevant factors, and to provide any additional comments. We received 106 responses, a summary of which can be found in Appendix 1. Most of these survey results are relevant to the new application and are referred to within this submission where it is appropriate to do so.

Objections to Planning application

Our objections are based on a number of key themes, mostly mirroring the Policies in the submitted Ashford Local Plan 2015-2030

TRANSPORT

Sandyhurst Lane is a winding two lane rural road narrowing in places to 5m. Of its 1.8 miles total length, 1.25 miles is signposted as "No footway" and is predominantly without street lighting.

Access to all public transport is either from Faversham Road (Canterbury and Ashford) or Potters Corner (Maidstone and Ashford), the latter along the unlit part of the Lane with no footpath.



Sandyhurst Lane has long been used as a route for through traffic, for which it is patently unsuitable, and suffers from traffic congestion at both ends during the morning and evening peak hours. In particular, long delays occur at the Faversham Road (A251) junction. Furthermore, the planned addition of 375 dwellings and 20ha of further commercial development at Eureka Park (Policy S20, Draft Ashford Local Plan 2030) will inevitably lead to even more displacement traffic from Trinity Road using Sandyhurst Lane. The proposed pedestrian/cycle access to/from Eureka Park to Sandyhurst Lane will cause an increase in the use of the Lane by both cyclists and pedestrians. The proposed development on land at Lenacre Hall Farm (LHF) exclusively uses Sandyhurst Lane for vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access to the wider Ashford transport network.

The proposed development of 21 dwellings would represent a 7% increase in the total number of dwellings in Sandyhurst Lane and its immediate side roads. The Application provides for 65 parking spaces implying a further increase of up to 60+ cars using the Lane and commensurate increase in pedestrian and cycle traffic.

The Applicant's Transport Statement, which accompanies the planning application, claims (para 8.11) that this development will increase peak hour traffic by only 4% to 5%. This contradicts the statement in application 17/01613/AS that the same 21 dwellings will increase peak hour traffic by 7% to 8%. Given that 21 dwelling represents an increase of 7% in the number of dwellings in the area, this suggests that the original figure is more likely to be correct and that the revised lower figure is not justified.

Furthermore, should this application be approved, it will open up the prospect of the full development of the site with 89 dwellings, which the applicant admits would increase peak hour traffic by **24% to 26%**. This is a totally unacceptable and unsustainable increase on top of the already excessive traffic congestion and delays.

During the construction phase, all site traffic - materials and operatives - will need use of the Lane, for access, queueing and parking, adding not only to peak time congestion but also significantly increasing commercial vehicle movements throughout the working day.

In the SLRA survey of residents in the local area, **100% of respondents agreed that Sandyhurst Lane is not suitable for the increase in vehicular traffic which would result from the proposed development.**

The SLRA opposes this development on the grounds that it “*would generate levels and types of traffic movements, including heavy goods vehicle traffic, beyond that which the rural roads could reasonably accommodate in terms of capacity and road safety*” on Sandyhurst Lane and at its access junctions, contrary to Policy TRA7 *The Road Network & Development in the Draft Local Plan.*

The SLRA opposes this development as, during the construction phase, the proposed development site is, de facto, a new employment site which should not be permitted since it fails to demonstrate how it will meet the requirements of paragraphs

c. there would be no significant impact on the amenities of any neighbouring residential occupiers; and,

d. it can be demonstrated that the development will not generate a type or amount of traffic that would be inappropriate to the rural road network that serves it.

of Policy EMP5 New employment premises in the countryside in the Draft Local Plan.

URBAN/RURAL BOUNDARY

Since originally set out in the Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF - 2006), it has long been recognised that Sandyhurst Lane/Lenacre Street provides the urban/rural boundary on the northern side of Ashford. If permitted, this development would be on the rural side of this boundary.

This boundary has recently been implicitly confirmed in Policy S20 of the Draft Ashford Local Plan 2030 and explicitly by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), in their review of electoral arrangements for Ashford Borough Council, 2017, which states:

“We received a number of submissions suggesting that Sandyhurst Lane be included wholly in the Downs West ward. We have therefore made a small modification to the ward boundary between Downs West and Goat Lees to include the entirety of Sandyhurst Lane, Lenacre Street and Eastwell Grange in Downs West.”

*“The submissions we received strongly opposed the inclusion of part of Sandyhurst Lane, Lenacre Street and Eastwell Grange in the Goat Lees ward and cited good local evidence that supported its inclusion in a ward of a more rural than urban nature. **We have therefore amended the boundary between Goat Lees and Downs West to include the whole of Sandyhurst Lane within the Downs West (rural) ward.**”*

In the SLRA survey of residents in the local area, **99% of respondents were opposed to any large scale developments on the north (rural) side of this boundary.** In a wider 2016 survey of Boughton Aluph & Eastwell residents for the Neighbourhood Plan, **91%** of 482 respondents considered it was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ to maintain this urban/rural boundary.

The SLRA opposes this development on the basis that it is contrary to both the spirit and intention of the GADF and the more recent LGBCE recommendation and violates the recognised urban/rural boundary north of Ashford.

The SLRA opposes this development on the basis that it fails to comply with both the objectives and criteria for large development set out in paragraphs

- a. To focus development at accessible and sustainable locations which utilise existing infrastructure, facilities and services wherever possible and makes best use of suitable brownfield opportunities***

and

- b. To protect and enhance the Borough’s historic and natural environment including its built heritage and biodiversity***

of Policy SP1 Strategic Objectives in the Draft Local Plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Applicant seeks to demonstrate the acceptability of the proposal to the local community by stating the results and conclusions of the public exhibition held on 9th August 2017, reported in the Statement of Community Involvement, submitted as part of the Application.

The SLRA argues its conclusions are unsafe because:

a) as the only organisation which represents the views of ALL the residents of Sandyhurst Lane and its environs, we consider ourselves to be a major “Interested Party”, yet these views were not sought through the SLRA being invited to attend or comment during the “local consultation” nor formally invited to participate in any consultation which pertains to THIS Application.

As a result of this continuing exclusion, the SLRA resubmits the results of its original consultation of all the properties in the SLRA area. These are shown in Appendix 1 and can be summarised as:

Q1. Sandyhurst Lane/Lenacre Street has long been recognised as a natural boundary of the rural environment. No large scale developments should take place north of this boundary.						
Strongly agree & agree		Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
105	99.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	106
Q2. Sandyhurst Lane is not suitable for the resultant increase in vehicular traffic.						
Strongly agree & agree		Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
106	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	106
Q3. The proposed dwellings are out of character with the surrounding area.						
Strongly agree & agree		Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
98	92.5%	6	5.7%	2	1.9%	106
Q4. The site is prime agricultural land which should not be built upon.						
Strongly agree & agree		Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
103	97.2%	2	1.9%	1	0.9%	106
Q5. The proposed street lighting is out of character with the area and will result in unacceptable light pollution.						
Strongly agree & agree		Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
104	98.1%	2	1.9%	0	0.0%	106
Q6. The development and the traffic associated with it will result in an unacceptable increase in the level of environmental noise.						
Strongly agree & agree		Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
105	99.1%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	106
Q7. The local infrastructure (medical facilities, schools, public transport, etc) is already under severe strain and unable to support the demands						
Strongly agree & agree		Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
106	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	106

The SLRA results are reinforced by the earlier Neighbourhood Plan survey, carried out by BA&E in 2016, (in which 482 residents completed the survey, representing close to half of the households in the Boughton Aluph, Eastwell & Goat Lees parish), with the following results:

- a. Three quarters (75%) of respondents felt that BAE1 Lenacre Hall Farm, Sandyhurst Lane (*then* 100+ dwellings), leisure and sheltered housing was unsuitable for development

b. 95% of respondents stated that they would be concerned about increased traffic and congestion when thinking about new housing development in the parish

c. 91% of those interviewed stated that it was important (73% very important and 18% important) to maintain the rural/urban boundary in the parish, specifically along Sandyhurst Lane.

b) The Applicant states that 502 people were invited to attend their Consultation exhibition on 9 August 2017 (para. 2.2). 34 completed feedback forms and a further 12 responses were received through the website and by email, a total response of 46 (9.2% of invitees). The summary of the Statement of Community Involvement, para 6.1.1, states that 66.6% of respondents agreed that they would like to see high quality housing in the area, equating to 6.1% of invitees. However, half of respondents did so “with some reservations”, (para. 5.6) **i.e. of the total 502 invitees, only 3.1% gave unqualified support.**

The Applicant reports respondent replies to the question on “best use of the site” but neglects to ask for preferences to continue its use as farmland. In the SLRA survey, 103 respondents (97.2%) agreed it should be retained as agricultural land.

The SLRA opposes this Application as it fails to meet the criteria set out in Policy ENV5 *Protecting important rural features in the Draft Local Plan.*

ENVIRONMENTAL

The Draft Local Plan includes emerging policies relevant to nature conservation contained within:

Policy ENV1 – Biodiversity

“Development should avoid significant harm to locally identified biodiversity assets, including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and the Ashford Green Corridor as well as priority and locally important habitats and protected species.”

In this case, Tile Lodge Wood, a specified wildlife habitat, and the ancient woodland on Lenacre Hall Farm that directly abuts the site are at risk. Protected species of concern are bats and birds and possibly newts.

Policy ENV5 – Protecting important rural features

“All development in the rural areas of the Borough shall protect and, where possible, enhance the following features:

- a) ancient woodland and semi-natural woodland;*
- b) river corridors and tributaries;*
- c) rural lanes which have a landscape, nature conservation or historic importance;*
- and*
- d) public rights of way.”*

In this case, relevant features are:

- the ancient woodland on Lenacre Hall Farm (LHF) and Tile Lodge Wood (TLW)
- the rural lane which marks the urban rural boundary (Sandyhurst lane)
- the public rights of way that cross Sandyacres sports facility and footpath AE207 which runs across Lenacre Hall Farm and connects to the north-west on to Lenacre street.

Relevant information regarding the woodland:

The woodland is documented as ancient.

Natural England identifies the following significant effects from adjacent land that may have an effect on ancient woodland:

- *damaging or destroying all or part of them (including their soils, ground flora, or fungi)*
- *damaging roots and understorey (all the vegetation under the taller trees)*
- *damaging or compacting soil around the tree roots*
- *polluting the ground around them*
- *changing the water table or drainage of woodland or individual trees*
- *damaging archaeological features or heritage assets*

Nearby development can also have an indirect impact on ancient woodland or veteran trees and the species they support. These can include:

- *breaking up or destroying connections between woodlands and veteran trees*
- *reducing the amount of semi-natural habitats next to ancient woodland*
- *increasing the amount of pollution, including dust*
- *increasing disturbance to wildlife from additional traffic and visitors*
- *increasing light pollution*
- *increasing damaging activities like fly-tipping and the impact of domestic pet*
- *changing the landscape character of the area.*

Natural England's Standing Advice for ancient woodland (January 2018) is for the creation of a buffer zone of at least 15m from the edge of the woodland to avoid root damage.

Specific issues concerning the LHF ancient woodland:

The LHF ancient woodland is very small; it is therefore highly vulnerable to fragmentation and other damage caused by development.

There are several issues that contravene the Natural England Standing Advice:

1. The proposed footpath access gate is within the 15m protection zone of the woodland. If this planning submission is a stand-alone application, then this gate leads nowhere but into private farmland and gives access to the back of the wood. This increases the possibility that people will enter the woodland causing damage, not to mention the increase in damaging activities like fly-tipping and the impact of domestic pets. Fencing is hardly a deterrent, particularly to cats. This gate should be omitted and appropriate planting made if the application is permitted.



Photo showing the gate abutting the woodland

2. The pedestrian link to Sandyhurst lane proposed next to the “village pond” (21 homes is hardly a village by any stretch of the imagination!) exits onto a dangerous bend in the road. In order to accommodate this exit extensive visibility splays have been proposed. These include cutting the under storey of a part of the ancient woodland that verges onto Sandyhurst lane and pruning overhanging branches, as well as cutting back suitable hedgerow screening. This would be a major cause for concern under Natural England Standing Advice. Given the size of the proposed development this footpath exit should be scrapped, to minimise unnecessary hedgerow damage and damage to the ancient woodland.
3. Connectivity between LHF wood and TLW has been ignored in this application. The previous hybrid application proposed increasing the connectivity between the two woodlands by planting an ecological corridor. No additional planting is proposed between the woodlands. This means that the connectivity between the two woodlands would be adversely affected (see later comments on bats)
4. The light pollution from homes, street lighting and additional cars, even given sensitive street lighting schemes, will have an adverse effect on the woodland wildlife. Sandyhurst lane has one set of subdued street lights. This is essentially a dark area and even 21 homes will have a major impact.
5. This is clearly changing in the landscape of the area from its rural nature, increasing disturbance to wildlife from additional traffic and visitors and reducing the amount of semi-natural habitats next to ancient woodland.
6. The construction phase has the potential to cause a major impact on the wood, increasing dust and pollution and changing the water table or drainage of woodland.

Protected species issues:

Bats.

Relevant legislation in England is the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended); the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000; the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006); and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010).

This development is likely to affect bat foraging and commuting habitat and may affect roosts in the ancient woodlands.

The areas of significant value to bats are the woodland edges, tree-lines and hedgerows, in particular the hedgerow forming the commuting corridor between the LHF wood and TLW.

Bats are particularly sensitive to light and to interference with this corridor may contravene the bat protection guidelines. The close proximity of the development to the ancient woodland is likely to affect bat activity in/out and within the wood.

Of great concern is that the Preliminary Ecology Report for this site not does accurately represent what the 2017 bat survey* revealed and could be misleading.

(* Bat Activity Survey by Joe Bullard, 28/09/17, submitted with application number 17/01613/AS)

The present report states:

“4.14 The habitats on-site were considered to have some potential to support foraging and commuting bats, with areas of broadleaved woodland, an optimal foraging habitat for many UK bat species, as well as a network of connective hedgerows and treelines. Bat activity transects were undertaken on the site from May to September 2017, recorded activity was generally low, small numbers of common pipistrelle bats were recorded commuting and foraging along the hedgerow connecting Tile Lodge Wood LWS and the compartment of ancient woodland north of the site boundary. Little to no activity was recorded along the southern site boundary adjacent to the Sandyhurst Lane, this may be due to the relatively fragmented and gappy nature of the vegetation as well as possible disturbance from cars and street lighting.”

The 2017 report states:

*“5.2 Four remote recording devices were set up in areas across the site and left to record for five consecutive nights in May, June, July, August and September. **These Anabats revealed a greater use of the site by bats than the transects would have suggested.** The most recorded species was the common pipistrelle followed by Myotis sp. **Activity [sic] was greatest on the tree lines and hedgerows with direct connectivity to the on-site and adjacent ancient woodland compartments.**”*

Of particular note, the 2017 report gives more detail on the species present:

*“4.5 Myotis calls can be particularly difficult to identify down to species level using call analysis software, especially if calls are brief or distorted. However, the clearer calls were analysed revealing that **at least Daubenton’s and Natterer’s** were recorded using the site, with the majority considered likely to be **Natterer’s** owing to the steep calls with high starting frequency. Given the **consistently high number of passes of these species**, it is likely that the habitats on-site form at least part of their core foraging habitat.”*

*“4.9 **Brown long eared bat** were recorded during the **activity surveys along the ancient woodland edge to the east.** Brown long-eared bats are **typically under-recorded** owing to their low amplitude calls and reliance on their excellent sight and hearing to forage, it is therefore possible they are **present across the site in greater numbers than this survey data would suggest**.....As with Myotis species, brown long-eared bats are a short-range echolocation species and therefore **particularly sensitive to loss of habitat connectivity** (Frey-Ehrenbold et al., 2013).”*

Analysis of the Anabat 1 recorder positioned on the hedgerow connecting corridor between the woodlands revealed not only the highest number of bats across the whole of the LHF site

but high numbers of bats in September- particularly Pipistrelles (which are a Kent BAP species) and Myotis. **This contradicts the reported comments of numbers being generally low.**

Given that Anabat recordings gave a much more realistic indication of bats present, to state in the present report (para 4.14) "*Little to no activity*" was found on the southern margin of this site when no Anabat recorders were placed on these margins is at least misleading, especially since the 2017 report acknowledges (para 5.2) that Anabats revealed a greater use of the site by bats than the transects alone would have suggested.

Great crested Newts

Wildlife survey questionnaires of residents living close to LHF carried out last year indicate a number of properties have ponds, with all but a few reporting newts present. These ponds need to be surveyed as they are within the 500m zone to establish presence or absence of great crested newts.

One resident has clearly shown GCN in his garden in March 2018 (see comment and photo in objection comment by F Dunkerley of Pippins,(which lies directly opposite the wood). This shows a great crested newt and indicates it is possibly migrating to the pond on the wood. There are concerns about the eDNA survey conducted last year and submitted with the hybrid application, as it was particularly dry season and ponds were unusually dry. The pond in the wood has high sedimentation levels, which give false negatives for eDNA, so further survey work needs to be done to assess the woodland pond and garden ponds.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

a) Soil assessment of the land

This site does not seem to have been assessed accurately. It is classified as being part of the "Hothfield Heathy Farmlands (p. 45) which described as having "*inferior quality of the soils, generally poor and acidic or subjected to seasonal water logging*". However agricultural soil survey reveals that this site has high quality, grade 2 soil (*DEFRA magic maps/agricultural land classification - <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/magicmap.aspx>*).

Historical maps also show that it has been used as productive land in the past since pre 1900 (<http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.KLIS.Web.Sites.Public/ViewMap.aspx>, aerial photo 1990). The fact that it is used for grazing horses at present is simply a choice of the land owner, the consequences of grazing and trampling by the horse will not affect the grade 2 value of the soil, indeed the manure may enhance the nutritive value!

Ashford Landscape Character Assessment for D39 (p. 48 of Landscape and Visual Appraisal): Comments refer only to Sandyacres sports ground and appear **not to** mention this triangle of land which belongs to Lenacre Hall farm. It describes the area as "medium parcel of flat recreational ground with football pitches, tennis court, club house and car park" This triangle of land is part of the Lenacre Hall Farm and has been used for farming as far as historic maps show pre 1900. (ref: <http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.KLIS.Web.Sites.Public/ViewMap.aspx> 1897-1900 map)

b) Visual amenity

From Sandyacres

From footpath AE207

From residencies abutting the site

The photos in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal show views when leaves have fallen over autumn and winter – which is over 6 months of the year. The houses will be clearly seen during this time. The **height** of the dwellings is of particular concern as they will be seen above the tree line at all times of the year. Contrary to the statement in the report, this site will be clearly seen from Sandyacres and footpath AE207 and Sandyhurst lane properties.

Sandyacres is used widely as a wedding venue precisely because of its rural setting. Residents on Goat Lees have stated that they value the close proximity of the countryside and the effects on their well-being. Dog walkers and the football club users report the quality of the rural environs. (Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan survey 2016/2018)

Goat Lees residents currently use the footpaths that cross the Sandyhurst farmland; these are rural circular routes and are very popular. However these paths will lose their rural nature when the Eureka development occurs. Consequently the only footpath within a circular accessible route to Goat Lees residents will be the one that crosses Sandyacres and Lenacre farm, footpath AE207. It is imperative that this amenity maintains its rural setting and is not encroached by urban development.

Sustainability

The Planning Statement refers to the proximity of the local primary school in Goat Lees, but fails to take into consideration the extra demands from planned housing on Eureka, a strategic site in the draft Local Plan plan. KCC estimates an extra 88 - 94 places will be needed to accommodate this development alone. Goat Lees school is currently oversubscribed with no room for expansion (ref: Cllr Michael, Trustee).

This application fails to make the case for sustainability, as there is no availability at the local school and other schools are not within acceptable walking distances. This will add to the school traffic, further increasing congestion at the two junctions either end of Sandyhurst Lane.

Built Character

The design of the proposed development is at variance with the local built character, which comprises a linear development of detached or semi-detached, low density, three or four bedroomed properties set in a semi-rural environment, providing open rural views to its majority.

The proposed development itself is a clustered, medium/high density mix of smaller 2/3/4 with two larger 5 bedroom properties of unsympathetic design, with limited outdoor living space and car parking provision which will be visible from both the nearby AONB and from most of the existing properties in the area.

In our survey of residents in the local area, **92% of respondents agreed that the proposed dwellings are out of character with the surrounding area.**

The design does not seem to address the previous KCC comments on rear parking, notably rear parking spots for plots 1-6 and 9-13 and rear access to gardens for plots 1-6 and 12.

Plots 1-3 seem to have tree protection fences across their gardens which cut the garden in half or give them no garden at all.

Plots 4-6 are badly positioned, whenever a car enters the site at night, their headlights will shine into these dwellings.

Shared car ports are not popular with users and give rise to neighbour conflicts – this will add to the problem of parking.

There is no reference to street lighting in the Design and Access Statement or the Planning Statement, but the Preliminary Ecological Assessment includes reference to a “*sympathetic lighting scheme*”, which should only be installed if there is “*a significant need*”.

It is therefore not clear whether or not street lighting is to be a feature of the development and this should be clarified.

Notwithstanding “sympathetic” street lighting design, concentrating the unrestricted domestic light spill from 21 properties in such a relatively small “urbanised” area will also be a significant contributor to light pollution.

In our survey of residents in the local area, **98% of respondents agreed that street lighting is out of character with the area and will result in unacceptable light pollution.**

We also have concerns about the amount of noise which is likely to be generated by a compact site of 21 dwellings.

In our survey of residents in the local area, **99% of respondents agreed that the development and the traffic associated with it will result in an unacceptable increase in the level of environmental noise.**

The SLRA is opposed to this Application in that it fails to meet the criteria set down in Paras, a, c), d), e) and f) of Policy HOU5 in the Main Changes to the Local Plan - Residential windfall development in the countryside, and Policy ENV4 Light Pollution and Promoting Dark Skies in the Draft Local Plan.

Flood Risk

Policy ENV6 Flood Risk in the Draft Local Plan states:

“Proposals for new development should contribute to an overall flood risk reduction. The sequential test and exception tests established by the National Planning Policy Framework will be strictly adhered to across the Borough, with new development preferably being located in Flood Zone 1. Development will only be permitted where it would not be at an unacceptable risk of flooding itself, and, there would be no increase to flood risk elsewhere.”

The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy document which accompanies this planning application states that the site is located in Flood Zone 1 and claims that “the proposed development will have no impact on flood risk elsewhere”.

However, many residents refute this latter claim.

Comments received include:

“The site naturally slopes towards a pond and a low point in Sandyhurst Lane which can be prone to flooding in times of heavy rain. An increase in hard landscaping and therefore run off will increase the risk of flooding in this location.”

“Surface drainage in this area is already inadequate. In addition, many of the houses do not have mains drainage. The end of our garden is regularly waterlogged in the winter months, and the sloping nature of the proposed site could cause considerable drainage problems in the area”

“Drainage issues will be a big problem due to sloping gardens. Where will the water go? My garden has the lowest point in Lenacre Street. Garden floods with excessive rain fall and generally soaks away into the field.”

The SLRA challenges the assumption that the proposed development will have no impact on flood risk in the locality and opposes the proposed development on the grounds that it contravenes Policy ENV6 Flood Risk in the Draft Local Plan.

Local infrastructure

The SLRA has serious concerns about the ability of local infrastructure to support the additional population associated with the proposed 21 new dwellings. Reference has already been made to traffic issues in Sandyhurst Lane and the Goat Less primary school. There are also concerns about the adequacy of local medical and dental facilities, schools in general and public transport.

In our survey of residents in the local area, **those who already rely on the local infrastructure**, 100% of respondents agreed that the local infrastructure (medical facilities, schools, public transport, etc) is already under severe strain and unable to support the demands which will result from this development.

Of particular concern is the capacity of the local broadband network. The Utilities Statement which accompanies the planning application simply states:

“It is not known whether there are fibre optic cables in the vicinity” (para 2.5.3)

No accompanying evidence is presented by the Applicant on how they will overcome existing capacity constraints.

The SLRA therefore opposes the proposed development on the grounds that it fails to demonstrate how it will comply with paras (a) and (d) of Policy SP1 Strategic Objectives or what provision it has made to contribute to improvements in the local infrastructure in accordance with Policy IMP1 Infrastructure Provision in the Draft Local Plan.

The SLRA also opposes this Application on the basis of its LEGITIMACY

The SLRA has a fundamental objection to the submission of this planning application, which flies in the face of the democratic process. The proposed development is part of one which was originally submitted to Ashford Borough Council (ABC) for consideration for inclusion in the Ashford Local Plan 2030. ABC referred it to Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish Council (BA&E PC) for consideration for inclusion in their Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

BA&E PC carried out a comprehensive assessment of the larger site (SHEELA), in accordance with the procedures adopted by ABC as part of its assessment of sites for the Draft Local Plan. On this basis the site scored -14.

The Applicant states their view, in the Planning Statement (para 5.10.4), that the scoring is not reflective of the realities of development potential at the larger site and an objective and balanced assessment would allow for a more accurate and positive score for the site, but does not support this view with any evidence.

In addition to its SHEELA appraisals in 2016, BA&E also conducted a Neighbourhood Plan survey of its electorate. This showed that the larger site was the least popular of all the seven sites considered, with 75% of respondents opposed to its inclusion in the Plan. BA&E PC then issued a Decision Letter to the Applicant on 10 January 2017, in which they stated that

“the Parish Council took the view that it is not minded to consider the Lenacre Hall Farm site for land allocation in the Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan”

and

“75% of respondents to our household survey opposed development on your site. As such, we do not believe the Parish Council has a mandate to include it for land allocation in our Neighbourhood Plan.”

As the site is located in a Neighbourhood Plan area, it has not been included by ABC in either the Draft Local Plan or the Major Changes to the Draft Local Plan developed to meet the shortfall in the Five Year Land Supply target demanded by central government.

This site is neither necessary to meet the Borough strategic housing needs, nor those of the Draft BA&E Neighbourhood Plan.

The Applicant seeks to justify this application by claiming, in para 5.10.5 of the Planning Statement, that:

“The Neighbourhood Plan is at an early stage of development however and since no draft version has yet been published, no weight can be attributed to any outputs from the group.”

The SLRA proposes that the Application should be rejected on the basis of its “prematurity” and because it fails to comply with overarching Policies set down in the Draft Local Plan, which the Neighbourhood Plan will need to reflect and adopt in its own planning policies.

The SLRA argues this application seeks to circumvent all the accepted democratic processes set down to ensure that the views of the community are given due weight in resisting such opportunistic, unwelcome and unnecessary housing development.

The SLRA proposes that it should be rejected.

Appendix 1

Results of opinion survey of residents conducted by Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association (in association with Kennington Community Forum)

Q1. Sandyhurst Lane/Lenacre Street has long been recognised as a natural boundary of the rural environment. No large scale developments should take place north of this boundary.										
Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
98	92.5%	7	6.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	106
Strongly agree & agree			Neutral			Disagree & strongly disagree				
Number		%		Number		%		Number		%
105		99.1%		0		0.0%		1		0.9%

Q2. Sandyhurst Lane is not suitable for the resultant increase in vehicular traffic.										
Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
104	98.1%	2	1.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	106
Strongly agree & agree			Neutral			Disagree & strongly disagree				
Number		%		Number		%		Number		%
106		100.0%		0		0.0%		0		0.0%

Q3. The proposed dwellings are out of character with the surrounding area.										
Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
80	75.5%	18	17.0%	6	5.7%	2	1.9%	0	0.0%	106
Strongly agree & agree			Neutral			Disagree & strongly disagree				
Number		%		Number		%		Number		%
98		92.5%		6		5.7%		2		1.9%

Q4. The site is prime agricultural land which should not be built upon.										
Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
87	82.1%	16	15.1%	2	1.9%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	106
Strongly agree & agree			Neutral			Disagree & strongly disagree				
Number		%		Number		%		Number		%
103		97.2%		2		1.9%		1		0.9%

Q5. The proposed street lighting is out of character with the area and will result in unacceptable light pollution.

Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
89	84.0%	15	14.2%	2	1.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	106	
Strongly agree & agree				Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree					
Number		%		Number		%		Number		%	
104		98.1%		2		1.9%		0		0.0%	

Q6. The development and the traffic associated with it will result in an unacceptable increase in the level of environmental noise.

Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
98	92.5%	7	6.6%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	106	
Strongly agree & agree				Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree					
Number		%		Number		%		Number		%	
105		99.1%		1		0.9%		0		0.0%	

Q7. The local infrastructure (medical facilities, schools, public transport, etc) is already under severe strain and unable to support the demands which will result from this development.

Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
98	92.5%	8	7.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	106	
Strongly agree & agree				Neutral		Disagree & strongly disagree					
Number		%		Number		%		Number		%	
106		100.0%		0		0.0%		0		0.0%	