



PLANNING STATEMENT

Erection of 4 detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping

 Land opposite Highdown west of, Mulberry Hill, Chilham

Prepared by Hume Planning Consultancy Ltd.

On Behalf of: GSE Property Investment Ltd

Our Reference: HPC1663

Date: February 2026

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared in support of the submission of a Full Planning Application to Ashford Borough Council (as the Local Planning Authority) for development comprising of the erection of 4 x 4-bedroom detached dwellings at the Land opposite Highdown and west of Mulberry Hill, Chilham.
- 1.2 This Planning Statement provides an assessment of the proposed development against the Development Plan for Ashford Borough Council, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework and other relevant material considerations. The objective of this proposal focuses on delivering four ‘exclusive’ properties of innovative and high-quality design in accordance with the principles of Policy S41 in the adopted Ashford Local Plan 2030.
- 1.3 This proposal has been informed by a previous planning application for the erection of two dwellings at the Site (LPA ref. 20/00039/AS). This application received a resolution to grant permission on the 9th of December 2020, however the Decision Notice is yet to be issued due to the sole issue of Nutrient Neutrality in the Stodmarsh Catchment Area.
- 1.4 Since the submission of the previous application, market conditions have changed drastically, which has impacted the feasibility of the scheme for two substantially sized dwellings. Recent market testing has revealed that the very large houses, with a combined total internal floor area of over 1,300sqm, have very limited market reach, reducing the number of potential buyers. Furthermore, factoring in increasing build costs, doubts have arisen regarding the deliverability of two dwellings.
- 1.5 Therefore, the Applicant is now seeking planning permission for a revised scheme for four family dwellings which maintain the ‘exclusive feel’. The dwellings are proposed broadly within the previous footprints of the two dwelling scheme and maintain the high-quality design, ultimately meeting the aspirations of the policy allocation, but are considered to be more deliverable in terms of their size and attractiveness in the market.
- 1.6 This Statement considers the proposed uplift of two additional dwellings at the Site when compared to the previously approved scheme, which represented a high-quality, landscape-led development and forms the foundation of the current proposal. Set within the context of the LPA’s poor housing land supply position, the proposal would also make more efficient use of land which weighs heavily in favour of the development proposal.

1.7 Prior to the application submission, pre-application engagement was undertaken with the LPA in early December 2025 for the erection of four residential dwellings at the Site.

1.8 The following updated plans and documents are submitted in support of this application and should be read alongside the Planning Statement for a comprehensive understanding of the proposal:

- Drawing Package and Design and Access Statement prepared by Hollaway's Studio
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by Greenspace Ecological Solutions
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Metric prepared by Ecological Solutions
- Arboriculture Survey and Report prepared by Invicta Arboriculture
- Landscape Strategy Plan Prepared by Hillwood & Co
- Nutrient Neutrality Assessment & Mitigation Strategy prepared by Water Design Engineers
- Transport Statement prepared by Stantec



**Figure 1. Aerial Image of the proposal site taken from Google Earth
(Site Red Boundary not to Scale)**

2. Site Description & Context

- 2.1 The application Site extends to approximately 0.79ha in area and is located between the built settlements of Chilham Village (approximately 660m Southwest) and the Hamlet of Old Wives Lees (approximately 970m North). The Site lies on the western side of the connecting road, Mulberry Hill. The Site is designated as a residential allocation within the adopted Local Plan under Policy S41.

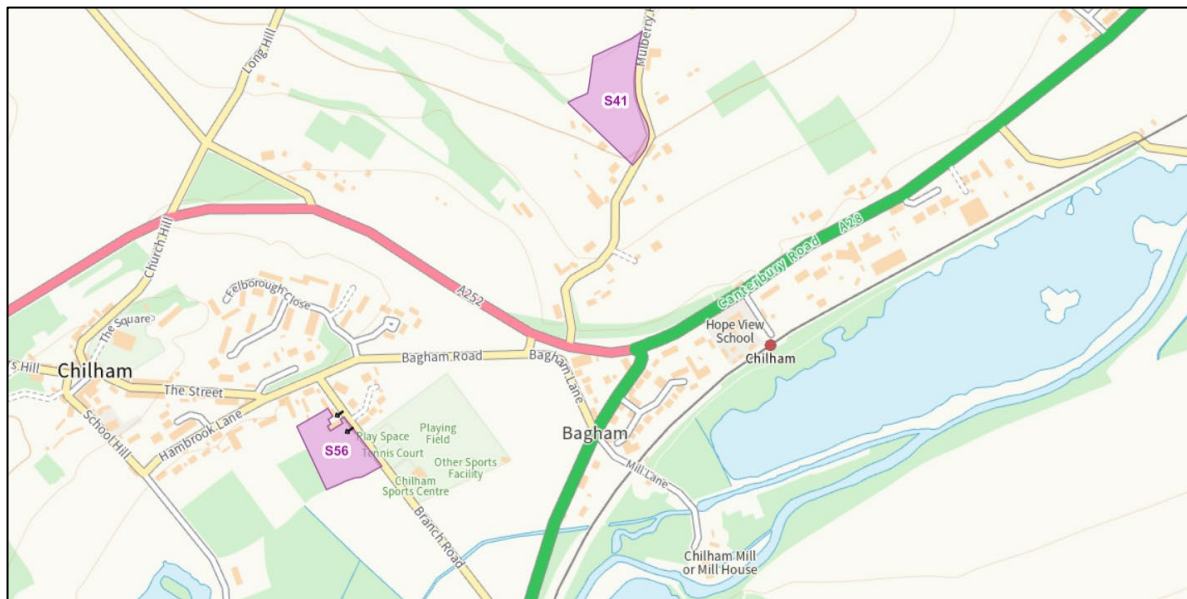


Figure 2. Extract from the Ashford Local Plan 2030 Proposal Map outlining the Policy S41 allocation

- 2.2 The Site has an existing access point off Mulberry Hill, located in the northeast corner of the Site, which features a set-back wooden gate used to access the field. The Site itself is a vacant field of an irregular rectangular shape, split in two parcels by an existing fence line.
- 2.3 The Site is bordered by existing hedges and trees along the eastern boundary and bound by vineyards to the north and west. Beyond the south of the Site, there is a small-scale commercial garage equipment company. The wider surrounding includes detached residential dwellings to the east and south of the Site.
- 2.4 The Site has a natural gradual downwards sloping topography, with a 10m change in levels (60m-50m), attributed to its siting within the Kent Downs National Landscape.

2.5 The Site is located within the Stour Catchment Area. The site has a low risk of flood, located within Flood Zone 1 and is not within an identified area for surface water flooding.

2.6 A number of services and amenities are located within the Sites vicinity, including:

- Hope View Special Education School -700m Southeast
- Chilham Train Station -750m southeast
- Speech 4 Schools -750m South
- Badgers Hill Farm & Cidery- 800m southwest
- Chilham Shop, G. R. Higgs & Son (Farm Shop) -800m Southeast
- Chilham Sports Cars dealer - 850m Southeast
- The Woolpack Hotel -900m southwest
- Old Wives Lees Village Hall - 1km North
- Chilham Recreation Ground and Sports Centre -1km southwest
- The White Horse Inn pub -1.2km southwest
- St Mary's Primary School -1.2km southwest
- Chilham Village Hall -1.6km southwest
- Octopus Swimming School -1.7km southwest

2.7 Despite the Site's countryside location, it is well connected to the A252 which provides further links to the connects the A20 at Charing and A28 at Chilham providing an alternative route between Maidstone and Canterbury. It is a 15-minute drive from Canterbury, 17 minutes from Ashford and a 40-minute drive to Maidstone. The Train Station at Chilham is located a 10-minute walk away from the Site, offering regular services to London Charing Cross via Tonbridge, Canterbury West and Ramsgate on the Southeastern railway service.

2.8 The Site Benefits from a frequent and reliable bus service. The Nearest Bus stops include the Old Alma (located 700m South) which accommodates the 1X and 1A service between Ashford international Railway Station, Ashford Park Street and Canterbury Bus Station.

Relevant Planning History

- 2.9 The existing planning history for the Site primarily relates to its designation as an ‘exclusive’ housing allocation under Policy S41 of the adopted Ashford Local Plan. The most recent and relevant planning history involves the LPA’s resolution to grant approval for two dwellings at the Site in 2020 (LPA ref. **20/00039/AS**).
- 2.10 The Proposal was first considered at Planning Committee on 15th July 2020 and later reconsidered on 9th December 2020 following a Design Southeast Panel Review on the 10th August 2020.
- 2.11 Following the deferral, the application later received a resolution to grant consent. The formal Decision Notice has not yet been issued due to the on-going Nutrient Neutrality work, which will be addressed as part of this amended proposal.
- 2.12 The earlier application established some key development principles for the Site, which alongside the in-depth contextual analysis of the surroundings and technical inputs, have guided and informed design framework for the revised proposal for four dwellings. These key parameters include:
- a) The retainment of the open and landscaped areas as proposed previously with reinforced and enhanced boundary vegetation through native hedgerow and tree planting, particularly to the Southern boundary.
 - b) The retainment of the original layout, set back from Mulberry Hill Road, with the dwellings orientated eastwards towards the road and northwards onto the vineyard. Retainment and inclusion of private gardens to the rear of the dwellings.
 - c) The previously approved access points are retained, with two separate access points leading to the upper and lower plots.
 - d) Designed with a high-quality sustainable design approach, creating executive family homes, sympathetic to their location towards the edge of the National Landscape.

- e) Retainment of the unique and different building forms between the upper and lower plots. The Upper Plots retain a traditional vernacular pitched/barn architectural style, whilst the Lower Plots retain the more contemporary and organic flat roof form. Each dwelling retains the maximum two-storey scale and massing of the original buildings; however, the built forms are broken up to accommodate the net gain of two additional dwellings.
- f) Inclusion of renewable energy sources including PV and Solar Thermal Panels, green roof elements, ground and air source heat pumps operated on a battery storage system, utilising rainwater harvesting tanks, and the addition of EV charging ports.

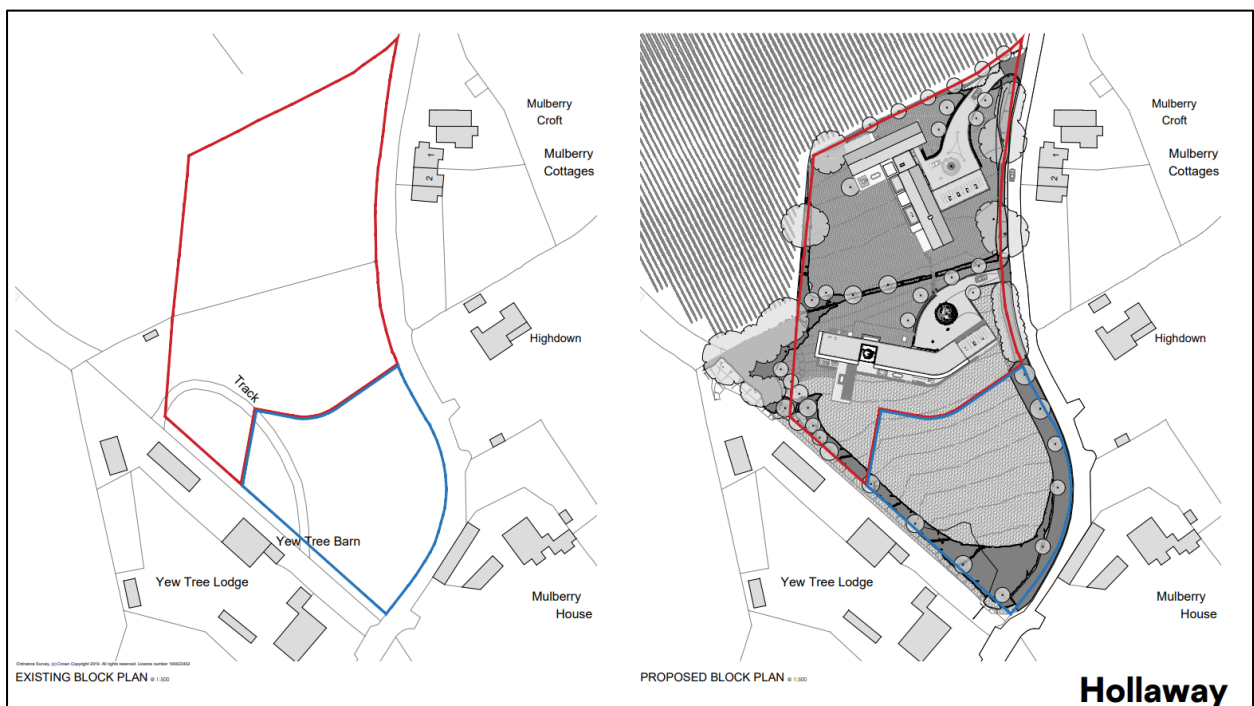


Figure 3. Drawing 18.012 002 Rev A showing the Existing & Proposed Block Plans submitted in support of Application 20/00039/AS

2.13 The technical responses received from the statutory consultees for the previous application for two dwellings, raised no objections in relation to transport, ecology, trees, noise, contamination, archaeology or drainage, with the exception of Natural England signing off on the nutrient neutrality solution. This application submission is supported by the relevant updated technical reports.

2.14 Other relevant planning history relates to the other exclusive allocation within the Local Plan, under Policy S42. This allocation is located at Land between Beechwood Farm and London Beach Golf Club, Ashford Road, St Michaels, Tenterden, Kent.

2.15 The target of the allocation seeks to provide three executive dwellings at the site, which was originally given permission on 8th June 2017 (LPA Ref. **17/00446/AS**). A subsequent application sought to achieve an additional dwelling (total of 4 homes) against the allocation yield, which was deemed acceptable by LPA and permission granted on 10th July 2018 (LPA Ref. **18/00465/AS**).

Pre-Application Engagement

2.16 In line with best practice and Paragraph 40 of the NPPF (2024), which encourages pre-application engagement highlighting its significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties, the application originally sought pre-application advice of the LPA.

2.17 A meeting with the LPA occurred on the 12th of **December 2025** and the LPA's feedback is ongoing.

2.18 The key planning matters discussed at the meeting included:

- The principle of development relating to the uplift in the number of residential dwellings proposed in light of the Allocation requirements
- Ensuring that the uplift in dwellings does not compromise the landscape and design led approach previously accepted in the original Planning Application (**LPA ref. 20/00039/AS**).
- Technical inputs required to support the planning application which included the appointment of an Arborist, Ecologist, Highway Consultant, Landscape Architect and Nutrient Neutrality specialist.
- These key matters are addressed in detail in section 5 of this Statement.

3. Proposed Development

3.1 Planning permission is sought for the erection of four detached dwellings of innovative and high-quality design, each proposing four bedrooms, parking and associated landscaping.

- 3.2 The proposed development represents a revision of the original application for the erection of two dwellings at the Site (LPA. Ref **20/00039/AS**). The revised scheme seeks to deliver an additional two dwellings whilst remaining in-keeping with the previously accepted design approach and low-density layout. The four dwellings would be sited in an almost identical footprint of the original two dwellings as outlined in red in Figure 4 below.
- 3.3 Under the previous layout, Plot 1 was sited in the upper section of the Site and Plot 2 in the lower section of the Site. Both represented long continuous building forms with Plot 1 facing Eastward running vertically and Plot 2 facing Northwards running horizontally across the Site.
- 3.4 This proposal essentially bisects these plots to create four dwellings, Plots 1 and 2 in the upper section and Plots 3 and 4 in the lower section of the Site. The dwellings are set back from the road and screened in a manner that is consistent with other residential properties along Mulberry Hill.
- 3.5 A footprint comparison is outlined in Table 1 below. This direct comparison shows the scale, footprint and overall massing of the previously approved scheme against the current proposal. The proposed dwellings occupy a combined footprint of approximately 926m², compared to the previously approved dwellings which equated a total built footprint of 1154 m².

Table 1: A comparison of the original and proposed built footprint

	Previous Application Approximate footprint (m²)	Approximate Combined footprint (m²)	% Change in footprint (m²)
Upper Plot(s)	610	466	-23.6%
Lower Plot(s)	544	460	-15.4%
Total	1154	926	-19.8%

- 3.6 The upper Plots 1 and 2 retain the traditional two-storey architecture vernacular barn style, featuring a pitched roof with a maximum ridge height of 9.5m and eaves height of 5.5m. This is paired with a single storey, flat roof sedum/wildflower carport.

- 3.7 The lower Plots 3 and 4 retain the organic two-storey contemporary flat roof line, with sedum/wildflower and a single-storey carport. Both Plots features a glass balcony wrapping around the South and West elevations on the upper level. The dwellings are approximately 6m in height.
- 3.8 The original proposal proposed two access points to the Site off Mulberry Hill Road, with each serving a dwelling. For the purposes of this application, the previous access points are retained as private vehicular entrances, with each accommodating two dwellings.
- 3.9 Each dwelling is equipped with a carport accommodating up to three car parking spaces and an EV charging point.
- 3.10 Each dwelling benefits from a private rear garden, defined by native hedging. Each garden has a length or width (depending on orientation) which is in excess of 10m.
- 3.11 There is additional soft landscaping and boundary planting proposed to enhance the existing buffers and maximise biodiversity net gain delivery on site. The Southern portion of the Site, beyond the red line boundary is to be retained and enhanced as a reptile relocation area, measuring approximately 0.21ha.

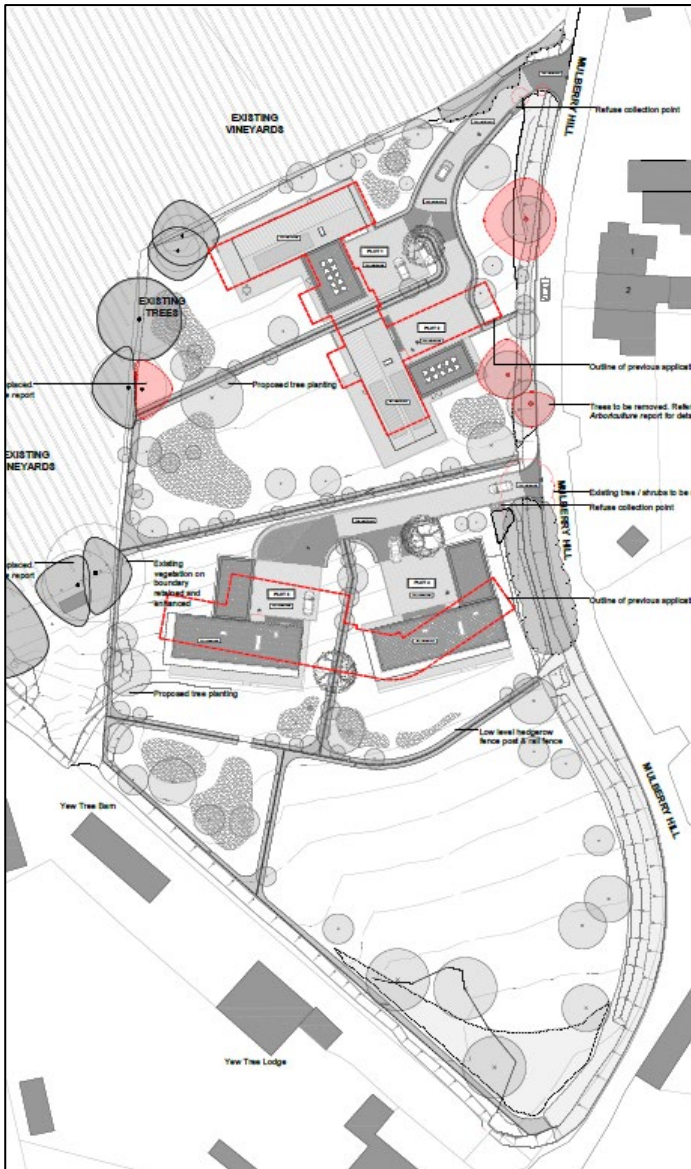


Figure 4. Drawing 18.012A 05 showing the proposed Site Masterplan



Figure 5. Drawing 0478/25/B/10 showing the proposed Landscape Strategy Produced by Hillwood & Co

4. Planning Policy Context

4.1 Decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the policies of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the Development Plan for the purposes of S38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), comprises the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (adopted 2019) and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (adopted 2025).

4.2 In addition to the policies of the Development Plan, there is other guidance which is material to the determination of planning applications including the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF), the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 and the Chilham Parish Design Statement.

4.3 The most relevant development plan policies are identified below and, these together with relevant NPPF references are addressed where appropriate within the planning assessment section below.

Ashford Local Plan (Adopted 2019)

- **Policy SP1** Strategic Objectives
- **Policy SP2** The Strategic Approach to Housing Delivery
- **Policy SP6** Promoting High Quality Design
- **Policy S41** Chilham- Mulberry Hill
- **Policy HOU5** Residential Windfall Development in the Countryside
- **Policy HOU12** Residential Space Standards (internal)
- **Policy HOU15** Private External Open Space
- **Policy TRA3 (a)** Parking Standards for Residential Development
- **Policy TRA7** The Road Network and Development
- **Policy TRA8** Travel Plans, Assessments and Statements
- **Policy ENV1** Biodiversity
- **Policy ENV3 (a & b)** Landscape Character and Design
- **Policy ENV7** Water Efficiency
- **Policy ENV9** Sustainable Drainage

NPPF (2024)

- **Paragraph 8** Sustainable Objectives
- **Paragraph 73** Small and Medium Sized Sites
- **Paragraph 83** Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- **Paragraph 84** Rural housing
- **Paragraph 116** Considering Applications on Highway Grounds
- **Paragraph 131** Achieving Good design
- **Paragraph 135** General Design Principles

- **Paragraph 189** Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Other Considerations

- **Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026**
- **Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update 2020**
Stour Valley Landscape Character Area 4C
- **Landscape Character SPD**
- **Chilham Parish Design Statement 2005**

5. Planning Evaluation & Opportunity

Principle of Development

5.1 The Site is located between the built area of Chilham and the Village Hamlet of Old Wives Lees and is allocated for residential development in the Ashford Local Plan 2030 (Adopted 2019) under Policy S41.

5.2 Policy S41 states:

“Land on Mulberry Hill is allocated for ‘exclusive’ residential development of up to two dwellings. Development proposals for this site must:

- a) *Meet a high quality or innovative nature of design, which:*
 - *Responds to and is well integrated with the natural topography of the site*
 - *Pays particular regard to its setting, and utilises design to make a positive contribution to local character and that of the AONB*
 - *Uses locally appropriate materials*
- b) *Retain and enhance the existing hedge and tree boundaries around the site to create soft landscaping along site boundaries.*
- c) *Provide dedicated vehicular accesses for each dwelling; and,*
- d) *Provide a connection to the sewerage system at the nearest point of adequate capacity, as advised by Southern Water, and ensure future access to the existing sewerage system for maintenance and upsizing purposes.”*

5.3 The terms ‘exclusive’ within Policy S41 and S42 infers to the opportunity for future occupiers to design large executive homes which exhibit the highest levels of

architecture and design standards. The purpose of this type of housing allocation is representing the top end of the housing market allocation.

- 5.4 The need for executive and very low-density development within the Borough is justified in the supporting text of the Local Plan at Paragraph 5.3:

*“The council has assessed sites on the **edges of settlement confines** across the borough that would **not be suitable for general market housing** due to the location or other constraints but could be appropriate for this type of **extremely low density ‘exclusive’ housing.**”*

- 5.5 Therefore, it is clear this allocation accepts the principle of low-density residential development in this rural location. This is also further supported by the resolution to grant permission for the erection of two dwellings at the Site (LPA ref **20/00039/AS**), which clearly establishes the suitability of the Site for residential development.

- 5.6 It is important to note that whilst the allocation states ‘*up to two dwellings*’, the wording does not specify the exact scale/ massing parameters within the policy leaving this up to interpretation of the Applicant as long as the proposal reflects a low residential density.

- 5.7 The previously proposed dwellings occupied a combined built footprint of approximately 1154m² comprising of 5-bedrooms and other amenity rooms, essentially setting an acceptable parameter for scale and massing for the application Site. The amended proposal reduces this footprint by 19.8% without compromising the exclusivity by proposing four large dwellings.

- 5.8 The proposal does not compromise the established parameters as it bisects the agreed dwellings in half, whilst in planning terms making more efficient use of the land by creating the two additional high quality sustainable dwellings.

- 5.9 The proposed four dwellings occupy an approximate combined build footprint of 926m² and the calculated dwellings per hectare for this Site (where the Site totals 0.79 ha and wider blue line boundary represents a further 0.33ha), is 3.6 dwellings per hectare. This represents ‘*extremely low density*’ development in line with the requirements of Policy S41.

- 5.10 It is relevant that the amended proposal for four dwellings has largely been driven by the challenging commercial conditions in the development industry which has affected build costs and the marketability of sites more generally since the previous application. The proposal will still deliver larger ‘exclusive’ family dwellings, however attracting a larger market compared to the two substantial dwellings with floor areas in excess of 600sqm.
- 5.11 It is important to note that such variations to the target number of dwellings in an exclusive housing allocation, have been previously accepted by the LPA. Policy Allocation S42 at *Beechwood Farm, St Michaels, Tenterden*, was granted an additional dwelling above the policy allocation number, with the LPA concluding that the layout still reflected a low density and exclusive feel as set out in the allocation policy (LPA Ref. **18/00465/AS**). This justification applies in principle to the amended proposal subject of this application.
- 5.12 Paragraph 83 of the NPPF encourages sustainable development in rural areas where it will contribute to enhancing the vitality of the rural community and nearby settlements and Paragraph 110 acknowledges that “*opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas*”. The delivery of this allocation would contribute to the wider targets of Policy SP2 in a manner that is consistent and appropriate in scale to the relative settlements of Chilham and Old wives Lees.
- 5.13 HOU5 Policy provides support for rural windfall sites where sites lie close to or adjoin one of the listed settlements (which includes Chilham village). The Site is located within walking and cycling distance to Chilham (approximately 660m Southwest) which provides further connections to Ashford, Canterbury and London via public transport including railway and bus services. It is argued that additional residential development at the Site would comply with HOU5, in addition to the Site’s Allocation under Policy S41 and the previous resolution to grant approval for two dwellings at the Site.
- 5.14 Furthermore, whilst the Site’s location is not considered to be ‘isolated’, as demonstrated by its proximity to the nearby settlements, local services and Chilham railway station, it is considered that the proposals exhibit exceptional quality of design in accordance with criteria 84(e) of the NPPF.

- 5.15 In line with Paragraphs 124 and 129 of the NPPF, efficient use of land should be prioritised and supported in meeting housing need. Given this allocation represents a specific need for exclusive rural dwellings, and principle of development for two dwellings has previously been accepted, the proposed scheme should be looked at favourably as it has demonstrated the Site’s potential to accommodate and deliver additional net gain of two dwellings (total of four). This weighs in favour of the development proposal.
- 5.16 A net gain of two additional dwellings, which would be more deliverable, would positively contribute to the Ashford Borough Council’s 5-year housing land supply position. In a recent Appeal on the 3rd November 2025 (Ref. APP/E2205/W/25/3360094), the LPA confirmed they cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply with a broad figure of 2.6-3.27 years of housing land supply. This position significantly heightens the need to make efficient use of the finite land resource in the delivery of sustainably located housing development.
- 5.17 The policy effect of the current 5YHLS position is to render the housing restraint policies of the Development Plan ‘out-of-date’ and the weight attributable to them in the decision-making process is significantly diminished. In this scenario, the tilted balance at Paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged, which promotes the grant of planning permission unless:
- i. the application of policies in this Framework (listed in footnote 6) that protect areas or assets of particular importance, provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies (of the NPPF) taken as a whole.
- 5.18 Overall, it is therefore asserted that the uplift in residential dwellings at the Site which occupies a sustainable countryside location relative to the settlement boundary, can be supported in principle. The proposed development will not compromise the high-quality nature of the scheme and will continue to meet the criteria outlined in Policy S41, which is explained in further detail below.

Design & Landscape Impacts

5.19 This proposal continues to uphold the ‘exclusivity’ envisioned by Policy S41 through its high- quality, sustainable design and low-density layout.

5.20 A key design consideration is the Site’s location on the edge of the Kent Downs National Landscape, specifically the River Valley Landscape Character Area (4C), Stour River Valley. The qualities of the landscape consist of rolling steep slopes, arable fields and parkland, rural character and tranquillity. All development within this setting must conserve and enhance these qualities as emphasised within the Ashford Landscape SPD, Local Plan Policy EN3A-B, and the Kent Downs Management Plan.

5.21 As mentioned previously, the original proposal was reviewed by the Design South East Panel, held on 10th August 2020. The panel concluded that overall, the original proposal represented:

“a well-designed and ambitious proposal which will achieve a high-quality outcome and create a long lasting and standard-setting building which successfully delivers and meets the aims and objectives of policy S41”

(Committee Report, 09/12/2020, Point 22)

5.22 The proposed development of four dwellings is guided by the previously approved design principles established through the original application. It is asserted that the design remains in accordance with Policies SP1, SP6 and S41, as well as Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF. This is demonstrated through the following features:

- There is architectural continuity between the architectural style and building form proposed previously. Plots 1 and 2 adopt a traditional a vernacular barn style featuring a pitched roof complemented by a contemporary flat roof component. Whilst Plots 3 and 4 maintain the previously approved organic contemporary design.
- All dwellings are coloured in a natural colour palette and locally sourced material sympathetic to the site’s location within the national landscape. These include stonework wall to the ground floor, vertical black timber cladding which mimics many Kentish rural buildings, Slate or clay roof tiling on the main

building and sedum/wildflower green roof. Slate roofing is a distinct feature of Old Wives Lees and the neighbouring properties along Mulberry Hill. These offer sympathetic design choices. A slim glass balustrade is featured on the upper floor balconies of Plots 3 and 4.

- The Kent Downs has a rich tradition of half-timbered and weather-boarded buildings. The change to vertical black timber cladding is a more contemporary interpretation of black painted timber detailing found within the Chilham Centre and the Kent Downs.
- A combination of flat and pitched rooflines reduces the overall massing of the dwellings and provides architectural interest. This approach is particularly important given the natural downward sloping topography of the Site which the dwellings follow. Plots 1 and 2 utilise a pitched roof which is set perpendicular to the sloping hillside. This orientation makes the buildings appear more sunken and less bulky from the main vantage points from the South. The architectural style also mimics traditional agricultural buildings which is appropriate in this countryside location. Plots 3 and 4 remain positioned in the lower section of the Site, where the original Plot 2 was assessed as being “*more organic, submerged into the ground to minimise its visual impact*” (Committee Report 09/12/20, Point 20)
- The scheme incorporates two access points retained from the previous approval. The upper dwellings share a vehicular access to the North, while the lower dwellings share a central access point. The Design panel concluded this arrangement is “*well-considered... helping to reduce the visual and ecological impact of the proposal.*” (Committee Report 09/12/20, Point 27).
- The dwellings are set away from Mulberry Hill Road in a manner consistent with the neighbouring properties reducing views from the National Landscape to the west and respecting the rural character of Mulberry Hill.
- The dwellings occupy a similar footprint to the previously approved dwellings. The uplift in two dwellings proposed as part of this application reduces the built-

up footprint by approximately 19.8%, lessening the overall massing and spatial presence of the development within the National Landscape.

- As part of the landscape assessment a high-level Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) was conducted and can be viewed in detail within the accompanying DAS. The VIA has concluded that the Site is screened by existing vegetation buffers and set back offering limited views of the Site to passing traffic and pedestrians.
- The proposed layout incorporates generous levels of mixed native planting between the dwellings acting as separation and screening between the properties. The existing tree buffers are retained, enhanced and reinforced particularly along the Southern boundary to minimise the overlooking onto Yew Tree Lodge and Barn.
- Due to the Sites proximity to the historic village of Chilham, its conservation area and listed buildings, the contextual and contemporary interpretation, scale and massing of the proposed dwellings help to minimise the visual impact on the Sites setting and does not pose harm to its heritage significance.
- The orientations of the dwellings take advantage of passive heating and utilise natural sunlight due to their east-west facing elevations.
- The dwellings integrate a range of sustainable features such as renewable energy sources such as a Ground and Air Source Heat Pump, EV charging ports, PV and Solar Thermal Pannels on flat green roofs. The green roofs and rainwater harvesting tanks are SuDs features used to manage surface water run-off. The Scheme will ensure a minimum water efficiency of 110 litres/person/day. Secure cycle storage and additional EV charging within carports are provided to support sustainable travel choices.

2.19 It is acknowledged that within the wider heritage context, there are a number of heritage assets within Chilham village. These include the following assets located beyond the southern boundary:

- *Pilgrims* a Grade II Listed Building (approximately 225m)
- *Denmark House* a Grade II Listed Building (approximately 350m)
- *Bagham Cottage* a Grade II Listed Building (approximately 350m)
- *Bagham Farmhouse* a Grade II Listed Building (approximately 350m)
- *Barn 25 Yards South of Bagham Farmhouse* a Grade II Listed Building (approximately 375m)
- Chilham Conservation Area (approximately 350m)

2.20 The application Site is well separated in distance from these heritage assets as well as being separated by intervening landscaping, existing built development and the A252 road. Because of the level of separation, the sensitive design approach and strengthened landscaping scheme, there will be no harmful impacts on the heritage setting of the Conservation Area or any nearby listed buildings as a result of the development. It is also relevant that no heritage concerns were raised on the previous application for two dwellings at the Site, whereby the current scheme adopts similar development parameters, in fact resulting in a decrease to the overall level of built form.

5.23 Collectively, the proposal represents a thoroughly considered and policy compliant low-density scheme, which delivers the high standards of design, sustainability and landscape sensitivity, as established and strengthened from the original resolution to grant scheme.

Residential Amenity & Living Conditions

5.24 In accordance with Paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF and in the interests of securing good design, the proposal safeguards the living conditions of existing and prospective occupiers for the reasons outlined below.

5.25 Given the new dwellings are located in an almost identical footprint and siting as the previous approval, the assessment made in the previous Committee Report remains relevant:

“The site area proposed for the new dwellings would provide enough space so that each dwelling would be located away from the existing B1c /B2 commercial buildings to the

south and the existing dwellings to the east, to minimise harm for the future and existing occupiers. Set back from the road and built into the hillside, the proposed dwellings would be neither overbearing nor result in overshadowing and/or overlooking of existing neighbouring properties.” (Planning Committee, 15/07/2002, Point 23).

- 5.26 A key consideration relating to the net gain of two additional units is the new relationship between Plots 1 and 2 in the upper section, Plots 3 and 4 in the lower section. Plots 1 and 2 front the West whilst Plots 3 and 4 are orientated to face the North, with the carports projecting further forward than the main dwelling creating additional distance from the habitable rooms. There is sufficient distance between Plot 2 and Plots 3 and 4. Plots 2 and 4 share a side to front relationship with a separation distance of approximately 19m. Plots 2 and 3 share a diagonal relationship of approximately 30m. Given the change in levels and this positioning and separation combined allows to minimise overlooking is. Additional tree and hedgerow planting across the centre of the Site adds further screening.
- 5.27 Plots 1 and 2 have a side-to-side relationship with a separation distance of 5m, however the side of Plot 1 is the carport which adds further separation from the main house of approximately 10m. Native hedgerow planting further defines this separation.
- 5.28 Plots 3 and 4 share a side-to-side relationship with a separation distance of approximately 14m. Plot 4’s upper storey balcony wraps round this side elevation however Plot 3 only utilises one obscure glazed window facing this elevation. Therefore, given the window positioning, materiality and the sufficient distancing privacy is ensured. Additional planting further acts as additional natural screening.
- 5.29 All dwellings offer four bedrooms and overall comply and far exceed the internal space standards set out by Policy HOU12. Plot 1 is approximately 240m², Plot 2 is 226m², Plot 3 is 228 m² and Plot 4 is 232 m². Each Dwelling is provided with private amenity space with a width or length that exceeds 10m in accordance with Policy HOU15.
- 5.30 The residential amenities of future occupiers are also considered through the provision of secure cycle storage whiting the carports and a defined refuse storage collection points at the entrance of each access from Mulberry Hill Road.

5.31 Therefore, given the careful consideration of window placements, separation distances and landscape led approach following the topography of the land is asserted that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on residential amenity and is therefore in accordance with Paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF and Policies HOU12 and HOU15 of the Local Plan.

Access, Highways & Parking

5.32 There are two access points proposed, a northern access leading to Plots 1 and 2 and a central access leading to Plots 3 and 4 from Mulberry Hill Road. Criterion c) of Policy S41 required individual access points to each dwelling which is achieved.

5.33 The Proposal is for a minor development of four dwellings and the number of vehicle movements associated with this low-density development is not significant, nor will it provide a material impact on the highway capacity of Mulberry Hill. The supporting Transport Statement, prepared by Stantec, affirms that the trip generation associated with this development is negligible and would not impact the existing road network in terms of capacity or amenity.

5.34 Each dwelling requires three parking spaces in accordance with the KCC Parking standards enforced by Policy TRA3 a) of the local Plan. These requirements are summarised in Table 2 below:

5.35 Residential Parking is mainly provided in the form flat roof single story car ports attached to each dwelling. Plots 2, 3 and 4 have the potential to accommodate 3 vehicles each given the provision of a secure garage facility. Whilst these do not count towards the parking requirements, there is sufficient hardstanding space outside the dwellings to accommodate unallocated parking spaces for residents and visitors. Therefore, the proposal is in accordance with the parking guidance.

5.36 Each carport is equipped with secure cycling storage and EV charging to promote sustainable alternative modes of transportation.

5.37 Tracking plans supporting this application highlight that the new scheme does not alter the previously approved refuse strategy (whereby bin collection will take place from the

highway). Drag distances of the refuse operatives and residents are in line with the KCC guidelines. A fire tender can also reach the Site unimpeded in forward gear.

5.38 Given the above, the proposed development is in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 116.

Ecology, Trees & BNG

5.39 The Site has a gradual downward sloping topography benefiting from established strong hedgerows and mature tree boundaries offering adequate separation and screening. Currently the red and blue boundaries consist of two fields which support improved, semi-improved grassland, scrub, hedgerows and tall ruderal habitat with scattered trees.

5.40 Planning Committee on the 15th of July 2020 considered the that “*the proposal is acceptable in regard to its ecological impact*” (Point 30), “*given a c.50m of hedgerow habitat will be planted through the site (east to west between the two dwellings)*” (Point 26). The proposal has been amended to include this habitat.

5.41 The scheme is in accordance with policy EN3a-b as outlined below:

- Dwellings sited along the natural contours of the land where natural drainage patterns are preserved. The scale and massing have been addressed through orientations and materials, with adequate separation from neighbouring properties onsite and wider landscape.
- An Arboriculture survey conducted by Invicta Arb on the 25th of November 2025, which has concluded that the arboriculture impact of the proposed scheme is low. The accompanying Tree Protection Plan and Tree Constraint Plans show there are 11 Common Ash Trees (T1-T11) and a hedgerow comprising of Field Maple, Ash and Blackthorn (G12). 5 trees are category U and pose an unacceptable risk due to Ash dieback and will be subsequently removed. The remaining trees are category B (Moderate quality and Value) and C (Low quality and value) and will be retained. As previously proposed, 10m section of the hedgerow will be removed to accommodate the formation of the central access point, however additional hedgerow planting is proposed in order to compensate for the loss and achieve hedgerow net gains (as explained in further detail below).

5.42 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal conducted by Greenspace on the 3rd of December 2025 confirmed that the proposed development is unlikely to affect designated sites of conservation and importance within the area. The Appraisal has concluded that:

- No badgers were recorded on Site.
- The Site is used by foraging and commuting bats, but this use will be retained and enhanced through the retention of hedgerows and additional planting.
- The Site has been identified as suitable habitat for dormice due to hedgerows and dense scrub present. In accordance with the ecological guidelines, further surveys will be conducted to confirm their presence onsite prior to the determination of the planning application, during the appropriate survey season, and will confirm any mitigation if required.
- Surveys have confirmed the presence of reptiles in the submission of the original application. The previously agreed strategy was to create a reptile receptor to the area south of the Site within the blue line boundary, which forms part of the Applicants wider land holding. This area is 0.21ha and will be retained and enhanced as part of this revised scheme. A precautionary mitigation strategy, including phased habitat manipulation and supervised destructive search will be utilised as part of this relocation strategy.
- It was concluded that subject to standard precautionary mitigation and habitat retention and enhancement, nesting birds and other notable species (hedgehogs' /rabbits/ other mammals) do not represent a constraint to development.

5.43 The applicant is committed to implement the following ecological enhancements

- Installation of 4 x of bird boxes
- Installation of 4 x bat boxes
- The incorporation of a wildlife-friendly planting scheme within the grounds post-development, including native plant species, would be of benefit to invertebrates, and subsequently birds and bats.

- The incorporation of bug hotels, beetle banks, loggeries and/or bee posts would enhance the opportunities within the Site for invertebrates.
 - Additional native planning
- 5.44 The previous application did not consider Biodiversity Net Gain due to no statutory requirement at the time of submission; however, this updated proposal is supported by a BNG Metric. Overall, it has been concluded that the Site can achieve a BNG uplift of 36.21% in hedgerow units (1.12 units) through the landscape enhancements.
- 5.45 Whilst the Applicant has sought to maximise the amount of biodiversity gains on the site as far as possible, the proposed development will inevitably result in a loss of 3.66 habitat units (-71.44%) due to the changes to the existing habitat. Therefore, the Applicant is committed to purchasing 4.17 habitat units from a suitable offsite BNG-registered provider.
- 5.46 It is deemed that the proposed development has demonstrated that it is acceptable with regards to ecology, biodiversity and arboricultural matters and is in accordance with Policies ENV1, ENV3a-b of the Local Plan and Paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Nutrient Neutrality

- 5.47 Natural England (NE) guidelines seek to ensure that new residential development will not cause increased nutrient pollution to specific protected sites within the UK. It is therefore a requirement of planning applications for new development within the catchment areas subject to the NE to provide mitigation measures to safeguard existing protected sites. In this instance, the Site lies within the Chilham Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) catchment which discharges into the Stodmarsh (Lower Stour) catchment, a designated Special Area of Conservation/ Ramsar.
- 5.48 As a result, a Nutrient Neutrality Assessment and Mitigation Strategy has been prepared by Water Design Engineers to support the submission of this planning application which provides the nutrient budget calculation.
- 5.49 In summary, the proposed development will generate a surplus of both total nitrogen (TN) and total phosphorus (TP) of which off-site mitigation will be required. As a result, the

Applicant has explored the purchasing of off-site credits with accredited companies recognised by Ashford Borough Council. The credits can be effectively secured by way of appropriate legal agreement.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 In summary, the proposal represents a quality development of high-quality design which demonstrates a low density, exclusive and landscape-led approach aligning with the principles of the allocation at Policy S41. The amended scheme is based on the key parameters outlined and accepted by the LPA in the resolution to grant permission for two dwellings at the Site (LPA ref. 20/00039/AS).
- 6.2 The design of the dwellings is sympathetic and sensitive to its distinct sloping topography following the natural contours of the Site. The architectural style is identical to the previously approved application where Plots 1 and 2 are of a traditional vernacular barn style featuring a pitched roof, complemented by the more contemporary roof form of Plots 3 and 4. All materials used are of a natural colour palette including stonework wall, vertical black timber cladding, Slate/clay roof tiling and sedum/wildflower green roofs.
- 6.3 The uplift in two dwellings proposed as part of this application represents a reduction in the built-up footprint by approximately 19.8%, lessening the overall massing and spatial presence of the development on the National Landscape further against the previously accepted baseline. Additional native tree and hedgerow planting along with the biodiversity/ecological enhancements on Site further allows for the built form to be blended into the rural landscape.
- 6.4 It has been demonstrated that the Site is acceptable in terms of technical matters and would have an appropriate impact (via on and off-site mitigation to be secured where necessary) in relation to landscape, residential amenity, ecology, biodiversity net gain, trees, highways, nutrient neutrality.
- 6.5 The Site's location at the edge of Chilham, a sustainable village settlement with wider connections to Old Wives Lees, provides a significant opportunity to make more efficient use of underutilised land which weighs in favour of the proposal. Moreover, the delivery of four dwellings will make a greater contribution, vis a vis the previous scheme for two

dwellings, to meeting the significant undersupply in housing land in the Borough, where the LPA can only demonstrate between 2.6-3.27 years of supply.

- 6.6 For the above reasons, when apply the tilted balance and presumption in favour of sustainable development, it is concluded that the development is both NPPF and Development Plan compliant and it is respectfully requested that permission is granted.