



Response to Natural England Land North of Camer Road, Meopham

20 May 2026

1. We welcome the comments received from Connor M. Bush of Natural England dated 11 May 2026 in relation to the above site, and are grateful for the constructive feedback provided. This response has been prepared to address the points raised and to provide further clarification where requested.
2. As part of this process, we have revisited the LVIA to ensure that the effects on the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape are clearly articulated, and to provide additional clarification on the role of embedded mitigation, green infrastructure, and lighting assumptions within the assessment.

Embedded mitigation and the settlement edge

3. Natural England notes concern regarding the potential for incremental urbanisation of the settlement edge, particularly along the south-eastern boundary where the development interfaces most closely with the Kent Downs National Landscape. The proposed landscape strategy has been specifically designed to avoid the perception of urban encroachment and instead create a softened and appropriate landscape edge.
4. The landscape framework embedded within the Parameter Plan is fundamental to the design of the scheme and forms part of the mitigation embedded within the assessment. The south-eastern edge is intentionally structured as a landscape-led transition rather than a hard urban boundary. This includes:
 - A substantial area of publicly accessible green space positioned between built development and the National Landscape.
 - Strategic woodland planting, hedgerow reinforcement and new tree belts to filter views and provide long-term containment.
 - A gradation from built form to open landscape, ensuring the development reads as a consolidated part of the existing settlement rather than an extension into the wider countryside.
5. The intention is to create a landscape buffer that strengthens the settlement edge through judicious planting rather than diffuse edge at present, which in turn reduces the visual prominence and

influence of built form, and ensures the National Landscape continues to be perceived as distinct and separate from the settlement.

6. Following establishment of planting, the development would be experienced in the context of an enhanced landscape framework and contained settlement edge. Accordingly, this embedded mitigation will soften the interface and avoid the urbanising effect highlighted in Natural England's response.

Green space and beneficial landscape enhancement

7. We welcome Natural England's confirmation that the provision of high-quality green space to the east of the Site is likely to represent a beneficial enhancement that contributes positively to landscape character, green infrastructure, biodiversity and public amenity, and in this regard furthering the statutory purposes of the designated landscape.
8. The eastern green infrastructure corridor is a deliberate landscape-led component of the scheme and is integral to the mitigation strategy. This area will:
 - Provide a meaningful landscape buffer to the Kent Downs National Landscape.
 - Reflect key characteristics of the local landscape character through native planting and habitat creation.
 - Deliver new publicly accessible open space in a location that currently has no public access and thereby enhancing the recreational value and function of the landscape.
 - Strengthen the green infrastructure network and connectivity with the surrounding countryside.
9. We consider that this acknowledgement from Natural England strongly supports the conclusions of the LVIA that the scheme delivers landscape and visual enhancements alongside the mitigation of potential effects.

Lighting and protection of dark skies

10. Natural England has requested greater clarity regarding lighting, particularly in relation to the potential use of floodlighting for sports pitches and the implications for dark skies and tranquillity.

11. As set out within the LVIA, the assessment has been undertaken on the premise that no floodlighting is proposed nor required for the sports pitches. This reflects the current design intent for the development and the sensitivity of the Site in relation to the Kent Downs National Landscape.
12. To provide clarity for decision-making, we confirm that:
- The assessment of landscape and visual effects assumes no external floodlighting of sports pitches.
 - Should the need for lighting arise at a later stage, this would be subject to detailed design and assessment at Reserved Matters stage.
13. Any future lighting proposals would therefore be accompanied by a detailed lighting assessment, which would consider:
- Effects on dark skies and tranquillity.
 - Potential effects on the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape.
 - Appropriate lighting design, controls and mitigation to minimise light spill and sky glow.
14. This approach ensures that lighting effects will be fully assessed and controlled if required in the future, and that no lighting would be introduced without appropriate assessment and mitigation, being mindful of the Sites' location within the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan

15. Natural England advises that the Kent Downs National Landscape Partnership should be consulted and that the scheme should be considered against the aims and objectives of the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan. We confirm that the LVIA baseline and assessment have been prepared with regard to the special qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape and relevant management objectives. The proposed landscape framework, including the substantial green infrastructure corridor and strengthened settlement edge, aligns with the Management Plan's objectives to conserve landscape character, protect the setting of the National Landscape and deliver enhanced green infrastructure.

Confirmation of LVIA conclusions

16. In response to Natural England's comments regarding the scale and nature of change, we have revisited the LVIA conclusions, with particular focus on the south-eastern interface with the Kent Downs National Landscape. Having reviewed the assessment and the embedded mitigation, we remain confident that the LVIA appropriately characterises the nature and significance of landscape and visual effects. The assessment recognises that change will occur; however, it concludes that, with the proposed landscape framework in place, the development would be contained by a strengthened and well-designed settlement edge, responding positively and sympathetically to the National Landscape and its setting.

Annex A – wider environmental advice

17. We note the additional general advice provided within Annex A of Natural England's letter. The proposed development incorporates opportunities for biodiversity net gain, habitat creation, native planting and green infrastructure enhancement, consistent with the mitigation hierarchy and relevant national policy and guidance. These measures will be further developed and secured through subsequent stages of the planning process.
18. We trust that this response provides the clarification requested and demonstrates how the LVIA has addressed Natural England's comments. We welcome Natural England's recognition of the landscape and green infrastructure benefits of the scheme and consider that the additional clarification provided above confirms the robustness of the assessment and mitigation strategy.

Charlotte Waters

Associate – Landscape