

Rummey design

Tenterden Southern Urban Extension Study
for Ashford Borough Council
Second Draft Report

10th June 2009

Contents		Page
1.0	Introduction	4
2.0	Site Analysis	5
3.0	Proposals	10
4.0	Summary and Conclusions	16

Figures and Photographs

Figure 1.1	Site Location	17
Figure 1.2	Aerial Photograph	18
Figure 1.3	Land-use	19
Figure 1.4	Facilities	20
Figure 1.5	Walking distances from the High Street	21
Figure 1.6	Walking distances from the Playing Fields	22
Figure 1.7	Key views and landmarks	23
Figure 1.8	Footpaths and by-ways	24
Figure 1.9	Existing road network	25
Figure 1.10	Topography	26
Figure 1.11	Hedgerows and woodlands	27
Figure 1.12	Designations	28
Figure 1.13	Indicative Landscape character	29
Figure 1.14	Photo location points	30
Figure 1.15	Existing watercourses and ponds	31
Figure 1.16	Key constraints, issues and opportunities	32
Figure 1.17	Built edge – Option 1- Preferred Option	33
Figure 1.18	Built edge – Option 2	34
Figure 1.19	Built edge – Option 3	35
Figure 1.20	Masterplan – Option 1 – Preferred Option	36
Figure 1.20A	Masterplan – Suboption 1A	37
Figure 1.21	Masterplan – Option 2	38
Figure 1.21	Masterplan – Option 2	39
Plate 1	View 1 – view looking north from the junction of the High Weald Landscape Trail and Smallhythe Road	40
Plate 2	View 2 – view from stream looking towards St Milfreds	41
Plate 3	View 3 View from public footpath to the east of the leisure centre looking east	42
Plate 4	View 4 View from High Weald Landscape Trail looking north west	43
Plate 5	View 5 View from High Weald Landscape Trail looking north east	44
Plate 6	View 6 View from High Weald Landscape Trail looking north east	45
Plate 7	View 7 View from Smallhythe Road looking east	46
Plate 8	View 8 View from Shrubcote lane looking south	47
Plate 9	View 9 View from Sandy Lane looking north	48
Plate 10	View 10 View from Three fields Path looking north	49
Plate 11	View 11 View from Six Fields Way, at Townlands	50
Plate 12	View 12 View from south of the leisure centre looking south	51

Plate 13	View 13 View from public footpath east of the leisure centre looking north	52
Plate 14	View 14 View from public footpath east of the leisure centre looking south	53

1.0 Introduction

Rummey Design were commissioned by Ashford Borough Council in May 2009 to undertake an outline masterplan for potential development to the south of Tenterden town centre. The objective of the project is to assist the planning authority to establish a basis for a policy for the masterplanned area.

The report comprises a site appraisal section, which covers topics including topography, access, land cover, views and landmarks and a variety of other matters of relevance. The findings of the site analysis have allowed Rummey Design to formulate an outline masterplan for the area. Four options have been developed, including a preferred option and its sub-option.

Site visits were undertaken on 19th May 2009. No formal ecological surveys were undertaken as part of this study. However the design process has involved discussions with in-house ecologists at Rummey Design. In addition, no traffic assessments or archaeology studies were undertaken.

The masterplan has identified broad development blocks, principle vehicle and pedestrian routes and access points and development capacities (assuming an average density of 35 dwellings per hectare). Vehicular access points and route layout will need to be assessed at a later date as part of a comprehensive traffic assessment. Indicative development blocks have been shown on the blocks to the north of the east-west stream. The design of the land to the south of the river is more open to design interpretation and would form the basis of further studies.

2.0 Site Analysis

2.1 Site Location

Tenterden lies approximately 13 km to the south west of central Ashford. The site comprises an area of land immediately to the south of Tenterden. It is flanked on its western edge by Smallhythe Road (B2082) and Shrubcote Lane to the east. The site is bound along its southern edge by woodland and plant nurseries. The urban fringe areas of Tenterden including the leisure centre, and primary school lie to the north. To the west lies the estate of Herondon Hall.

2.2 Designations

2.2.1 Landscape

The site is flanked on its eastern, southern and western edges by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This area is also covered by the Special Landscape Area (SLA) designated within the Ashford Borough Council Local plan (2000).

2.2.2 Conservation Areas

Tenterden Conservation area borders the site on its northern and western edges. The northern part of the site falls within the Conservation Area. This area comprises the orchard surrounding the listed building of Hales Place. The land to the west comprises the grounds of Heronden Hall.

2.2.3 Ecological Designations

There are no SSSIs, SPAs, SACs or other statutorily protected wildlife sites within 7 km of the site. However the site is bordered along part of its south-western edge by an area identified as 'Protected Sites' (Nature) with reference number 5. The area is identified on the magic website www.magic.gov.uk (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) as an area of semi-natural woodland/ ancient woodland.

2.3 Topography

The town's High Street has developed along a ridgeline approximately 60m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) which lies to the north of the site. There are a number of other prominent hill ridges surrounding the site on its eastern, western and southern flanks. The arable fields to the south of the small stream which runs in an west – east direction south of the town are predominantly flat or gently sloping being around 47m AOD on average.

The land to the north of the stream and immediately to the south of the town slopes up towards the hill ridge along which the High Street runs. The land rises from around 45m AOD around the stream to around 55m close to the leisure centre. There are some steeper banks immediately to the south of the leisure centre and the primary school. Some earth moving has been undertaken to allow for the creation of a small sports pitch immediately to the south of the primary school. These areas would require some grading works to accommodate new roads and housing. There are a number of steep banks associated with water bodies across the site.

The land to the east of Sandy Lane which comprises the orchards is predominantly flat or gently sloping and is around 45 -50m AOD.

2.4 Access and Movement

2.4.1 Vehicle Routes

No traffic assessments were undertaken as part of the study. Existing vehicle access to the site is afforded by the by-way known as Sandy Lane running to the east of the leisure centre and via Six fields Lane and the private track running to Hales Place. Private vehicle access to Hales Place is also afforded off Shrubcote Lane.

The western edge of the site is flanked by Smallhythe Road B2082, a minor road linking Tenterden to the Isle of Oxney and Rye. The eastern edge of the site is flanked by Shrubcote Lane which provides access to a modern housing development to the east of Tenterden. Existing vehicle routes and proposed vehicle access points are shown on Figure 1.9.

2.4.2 Footpaths and by-ways

There are a number of paths and by-ways cutting across the site which are indicated on Figure 1.8. Of particular importance is the High Weald Landscape Trail, long distance path which crosses the site.

2.5 Views and landmarks

Whilst there are a number of important buildings within the town, notably on the High Street, this study has focused upon key buildings which are visible from the wider landscape, notably the church. Figure 1.7 highlights key views and landmark buildings.

2.6 Existing Land-uses and facilities

Figure 1.3 indicates land-uses throughout the study area. Figure 1.4 indicates key local facilities. Figure 1.5 shows radii relating to walking distances of 250m, 400m and 800m from the church, which is assumed to be the centre of the town, Figure 1.6 indicates walking distances from the existing playing fields to the north of the leisure centre. The plan also indicates distances from the town playing fields. The site comprises areas of grazed pasture, orchards, woodlands and isolated residential units to the north of the river. To the south of the west-east stream the land comprises arable fields bordered by nurseries further to the south.

Huson Cottage and Huson Farm lie to the south west of the site. The property of Townland crosses the site, approximately 250m to the east of Smallhythe Road. Whilst the building could be retained, a significant portion of southern part of the property would need to be purchased in order to allow vehicle access to the wider site. 'The Pines' site to the south of the stream could be retained under Options 2 and 3. Under preferred option 1 it is envisioned that the property would form part of an important area of open space adjacent to the stream. This matter would need to be addressed at a later stage.

2.7 Vegetation

An ecological survey has not been undertaken, however key hedgerows and trees have been marked on through analysis of aerial photographs, maps and verification through site visits. Figure 1.11 shows there is a rich network of hedgerows within the study area, notably to the east of Sandy Lane. Some of these hedgerows may be of ancient origins. More recently planted hedgerows are located in the vicinity of the leisure centre.

Another key natural feature of the study area are the orchards in the northern portion of the site. These are currently well managed and are surrounded by belts of semi-

mature trees comprising a wide variety of species. These orchards are an attractive part of the landscape of Tenterden. The ecological importance of the orchards is discussed below. There are four distinct woodland areas within the site or fringing it, two are associated with streams and one of which is ancient or semi-natural.

2.8 Water bodies

The site is crossed by one stream and flanked on its southern and western edges by two other streams shown on Figure 1.15. One small ditch crosses the site to the east of the property known as Townlands. A series of small ditches are located to the south of Hales Place. There are seven ponds within the site. These ponds will be retained and incorporated into a linked series of open spaces and wooded 'green links'. The far southern edge of the site is bordered by a small watercourse.

2.9 Ecology

No formal ecological surveys were undertaken across the site. However the design process has involved discussions with in - house ecologists at Rummey Design. Areas of potential ecological importance include ancient hedgerows, the orchards, ponds and semi-improved grassland to the east of Huson Cottage. The area is likely to be resident to a number of protected species. The numerous ponds across the site are likely to be used by Great Crested Newts. Ecological studies should be commissioned as the next phase of works. A slow worm was found to the north of the woodland block on Six fields Lane.

Old orchards are recognised within the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) as a local habitat.

The Kentish Landscape is strongly associated with fruit growing, with orchards making a significant contribution to local distinctiveness. The terms 'traditional' or 'old' orchard, usually refer to those orchards of apples, pears, plums and cherries with large more widely spaced trees.

Kent's old orchards are found in two main areas, the north Kent Fruit Belt (between Rochester & Faversham) and the Mid Kent Fruit Belt (in the central areas of the High and Low weald and the Greensand). While the botanical diversity of the sward under old orchards in Kent is usually low owing to the high fertility of soils in the main fruit growing areas, orchards are often important for birds, bats, small mammals, invertebrates, fungi and lower plants such as lichens and bryophytes.

2.10 Archaeology

No baseline archaeological studies have been undertaken, however given the historic importance of the town and the presence of Hales Place within the site, there is potential for the discovery of archaeological remains. Further studies are therefore recommended.

2.11 Landscape Character and Views

2.11.1 National Landscape Character Areas

The site falls within the Character Area 122 – High Weald. This character area forms the core of the Wealden anticline. To the south lie the flat, open agricultural landscapes of the Romney Marshes Character Area 123. To the northwest lie the low lying clay vales of the Low Weald Character area 121.

The High Weald is characterised by a well wooded landscape, deeply incised in many places giving rise to a complex pattern of ridges and steep stream valleys

(Countryside Agency, 2002). Main roads associated with ridgelines are a distinctive element of the landscape. Irregular field patterns are common and comprise a network of hedgerows and copses.

2.11.2 Local Character Types

Historic Core

Tenterden High Street forms the historic core of the town and is protected as it falls within the Tenterden Conservation Area. The High Street is very attractive, with two wide green spaces with rows of impressive London Planes. The street gives the town its distinctive, unique character. The building line is irregular and slightly curved. It is the principle street within the town and has developed along the line of the hill ridge. The buildings form a continuous frontage and provide enclosure to the High Street. Other key urban characteristics of the town are the small lanes running perpendicular to the High Street such as Bell lane. These lanes are lined by rows of small terraced dwellings which sit hard up against the street. These developments are associated with historic burgage plots.

Generally buildings are two or three storey on the High Street with two storey buildings on the smaller lanes and surrounding areas. The church is the most prominent building within the town. Buildings comprise a rich variety of materials include red tile, wall-tied slates, weatherboard and red brick.

Modern Residential and institutional

There have been a number of post-war additions to the town. Most notably the large development of housing constructed from the 1930s to the present day to the east of Tenterden. This area is separated from the town by the orchards surrounding Hales Place. With the exception of the tree lined avenue along the B2080, the majority of the housing development lacks any unique characteristics and could easily have been built in any part of the county. There are also a number of bungalows along the southern edge of the town on Six Fields Lane.

To the south of the town are a number of large institutional buildings including the leisure centre, primary and junior schools which are set in large grounds. These modern buildings are particularly prominent in the landscape. Other large modern developments include Tescos which lies at the southern edge of the town. Modern development within the town has been developed in a rather ad-hoc manner. The traditional development of the burgage plots along the High Street has resulted in a number of backs being exposed to the countryside. Over the years the interface between the edge of these plots and the countryside have been dominated by large scale institutional and commercial units with their associated car parking.

Orchards

There are a number of orchards located throughout the study area and its surroundings. Two orchards are located within the northern portion of the site, the northern most provides the setting to the listed building of Hales Place. These orchards are attractive, well-managed landscapes and are a characteristic feature of the Kent countryside.

Enclosed Small scale pasture

There are a number of small fields adjoining the site to the south east, east of Sandy Lane. These fields are small scale and are enclosed by dense network of hedgerows and trees. These areas are of an intimate scale with attractive trees and bordering hedgerows. These fields are important elements of the local landscape. They have

been identified as places that should be kept free of development (refer to Opportunities and Constraints Fig 1.16).

Open small scale pasture

The land between the southern edge of the town and the west-east stream is an attractive area of pasture. However unlike the land to the east of the Sandy Lane, it is more open in nature and affords views to the town and church and to the wider countryside to the south. The rural nature of the area is partially eroded by the presence of encroaching urban elements including the school and leisure centre as well as the bungalows on Six Fields Lane.

Level Agricultural landscapes

The fields to the south of the river are relatively open in character. There are important views across the fields from the High Wealds Way to the town. The church tower of St Milfreds is clearly visible from the High Wealds Way to the south (Plate 1) and is glimpsed along sections of the walkway to the east (Plate 6). However the rural nature of the views is somewhat diminished by the presence of the leisure centre.

Woodland and copses

There are a number of woodland blocks associated with the site and its immediate environs, a number of which enclose streams and ponds. The woodland to the east are dominated by ash and beech. The woodlands around Sandy Lane give an enclosed, rural feel to this small pathway. Species include holly, and field maple. The small oak copse to the west of Townlands is another attractive feature in the landscape.

3.0 Design Proposals

Four options have been developed. Option 1 is the preferred option with its sub-option. Figure 1.16 shows the key constraints, issues and opportunities relating to the development of the three options.

3.1 Option 1

3.1.1 Introduction

Option 1 extends the built edge of the town significantly to the south. The site is approximately 16.25 Ha in extent with around 560 dwellings (refer to section 3.1.5 for details). In addition to this around 2.8 Ha would be allocated for a substantial screen planting along its southern edge of around 20m depth and a linear park along the southern edge of the west-east stream. Whilst the development would extend the town's southern edge and affect the setting of the town, it would avoid any impact on the orchards, and the intimate small scale landscape to the east of Sandy Lane. The proposals would also protect the setting of listed building Hales Place as well maintain separation between Tenterden and the newer housing estate to the east. The decision to protect the orchards and the setting of Hales Place has been used to offset the impact of the development on views from the High Weald Landscape Trail and the AONB.

3.1.2 Land-use

The development would be predominantly residential. Given the sites proximity to the town centre additional facilities would be limited to a new medical centre and potentially a convenience shop. These facilities would be located close to existing schools and the leisure centre. They would form the heart of the community. The area around these facilities would be designed to form a key public space and address the proposed car park. There may be an opportunity to provide a small convenience shop at the heart of the second phase of Option 1 (refer to Figure 1.20)

3.1.3 Movement and Access

Vehicle Access and movement

Vehicle access would be provided through two points off the Smallhythe Road B2082 and off Recreation Ground as indicated on Figure 1.9. The opportunity to provide access off Recreation Road would allow the dispersal of traffic and avoid traffic being concentrated on Smallhythe Road. All streets would be designed to slow vehicle speeds significantly and as a consequence avoid the area being used as rat run to avoid the High Street. No vehicle access would be provided through to Shrubcote Lane.

Private vehicle access to Huston Cottage and Huston Farm would be maintained along the by-way (Sandy Lane) to the east of the leisure centre, other vehicle users would be discouraged from using this route. As the road is a by-way, vehicle access could not be prevented but merely discouraged. However it may be preferable to re-designate the road as a bridleway and prevent all vehicle access along the northern section of Sandy Lane. There are a number of legal matters to relating to this matter that would need to be resolved.

Small lanes or homezones could be developed throughout the site and in particular along the site adjacent to the stream which runs west to east across the site. This would allow dwellings to front onto the river but avoid having a larger road (with its associated run-off problems) running adjacent to the watercourse.

Vehicle access along Six Fields Lane would be prevented through bollards. Vehicle access to the development blocks to the north of the woodland to the west of Six fields Lane would be via Recreation road and to the north of the allotments. If this was not feasible vehicle access could be afforded from the B2082 (Smallhythe Road).

As part of the proposals, parking for between 150 - 200 vehicles would be accommodated to the south of the leisure centre. Access to the park would be afforded off both Recreation Road and Smallhythe Road.

Pedestrian access

Pedestrian access to the High Street will be provided along Recreation Lane, Bell Lane , Six fields lane and Sandy Lane (refer to Figure 1.20). Pedestrian links to the housing estate east of Tenterden will be maintained whilst potential pedestrian links to Tesco should be provided. The exact alignment of the High Weald Landscape Trail south of the west to east stream may need to change, however it would continue to cross the nursery to the south of the site on its current alignment.

3.1.4 Landscape Treatment and Public open space

The development has been designed to ensure there are a number of green links across the site (refer to Fig 1.20). Substantial green links in the form of a linear park would be provided along the southern edge of the stream, which runs west to east across the site. Formal open space for sports would be provided by the existing playing fields which lie immediately to the north of the site. The park would include structure planting to break up the visual impact of the development and its impact on the setting of the town.

Development to the east of Sandy Lane would be avoided thereby providing a wide green corridor extending from the northern orchard to the wider countryside and maintaining the separation of the town and the newer development to the east.

Open spaces would be provided adjacent around the ponds to the west of Townlands. Existing streams and damp areas running down to the west to east stream could be designed as swales to form part of a sustainable urban drainage system for the development. The woodland block on Six Fields Lane would continue to be linked to the river and the wider countryside to the south.

The southern edge of the development would block views to the church from the High Weald Way and the AONB. However by extending the existing area of semi-natural woodland along the southern edge of the development, allowing for a 20m wide belt of woodland, the visual impact of the new housing could be minimised. The careful design of streets within the development could allow new vistas to St Mildred's to be created. A 20m wide planting belt would be provided along Smallhythe Road to minimise the impact on the adjacent AONB to the west.

A green link would be provided, to the south of the west-east stream along the existing hedgerow which flanks the High Weald Landscape Trail. The existing playing fields in the town (located approximately 600m to the north of the furthest southern extent of the site) would provide the allocation for playing fields for the new development.

3.1.5 Phasing, Density and Urban Design

The development would be undertaken in two broad phases. The first phase would extend up to the west to east stream and be around 7Ha in extent and comprise around 280 dwellings at an assumed average density of 40 dph. The second larger

phase (9.25 Ha) would extend to the south and comprise around 280 dwellings at a lower average density of around 30 dph.

The density assumptions made (40 dph in the northern phase 1 zone and not less than 30 dph in the southern phase 2 zone) are broad and allow for considerable variation in density within the development areas.

Phase 1 (northern site) is intended to produce a built form that provides a transition from the tight urban core of the High Street (which probably has a significantly higher density than 40 dph). Thus pockets of higher density development could be produced complimenting the existing town with narrow lanes fronted by residential properties on a fine grain and intimate scale. This fine grain and density gives Tenterden its characteristic urban form with the contrast between narrow alleyways framing views and the countryside beyond. These phase 1 sites will not, in the main, be large, but it provides an opportunity for town centre densities and urban form, perhaps in the form of two and three storey apartments or mews type developments with small scale parking courts, looking onto pedestrian routes leading directly onto the High Street. This is a good location for this type of development since they are within easy walking distance of the retail core, the two supermarkets, the sports centre and proposed medical facilities.

Further south, within Phase 1, landscape considerations become stronger and lower densities could be proposed, giving an overall density of 40 dph.

In phase 2, within the southern area different criteria apply to produce a density which should not be lower than 30 dph. The land is less constrained and is essentially a larger, unencumbered flatter parcel. Within the parcel a new landscape should be produced, framing views of the church, producing recognisable neighbourhoods, and respecting water issues; this new landscape will take space, so identified within parcels of predominately family housing at higher densities than 30 dph may be the norm.

Phase 2 (southern land) should not be developed before Phase 1 (northern land) because:

- Phase 1 'finishes off' a number of land parcels which give the current edge of the town an unfinished air, including commercial/ retail sites such as Tesco. It is desirable to complete these developments before new Greenfield land is developed.
- Phase 2 will have at least 1 vehicle access point from Phase 1 in order to produce a 'complete' development, properly integrated with the town centre.
- Phase 2, without a completed phase 1, would produce a separate settlement, which would not, in itself strengthen the town centre but which would produce a fragmented open space between phase two and the existing town centre without clear purpose or structure.

Factors, which should be planned into phase 2 at the start, should include key access points, the woodland belt to the south and west and the key view cones looking up the hill towards the church. The situation is different for Phase 1. The site is more fragmented and complex, closely related to the historic core with more sensitive ecological, townscape considerations. However it is clearly recognised that Phase 2 will have a greater visual impact on the AONB and the town's setting. For these reasons a detailed Development Brief will be necessary for a satisfactory design of the area.

3.1.6 Pros and Cons

Pros

1. Allows for large scale development. Land to the south of the river is easy to develop with few physical constraints and is of less ecological importance than the land to the east of Sandy Lane;
2. Avoids loss of orchard habitats and avoids resultant landscape and ecological impacts;
3. No impact on the setting of Hales Place;
4. Maintains separation between Tenterden and the housing estate to the east;
5. Provides excellent opportunities for large scale mitigation planting and public open space provision;
6. Avoids the creation of isolated developments to the east of Sandy Lane;
7. Minimises loss of hedgerows and trees by avoiding land to the east of Sandy Lane;
8. Disperses traffic by having access off both Smallhythe Road and Recreation Road;
9. Visual impact and extent of the development from the wider countryside beyond Tenterden is reduced by the ridgelines surrounding the town.

Cons

1. Increased visual impact on views of the town from the High Weald Way and the edge of the AONB towards the town.
2. Increased impact on the setting of the southern edge of the town

3.1.7 Sub-option 1A

Sub-option 1A is illustrated on Figure 1.20A. The southern site (Phase 1 of Option 1) will, in the future, form the southern edge of Tenterden and it is important that this urban edge is properly integrated into its landscape setting. There are Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the east and west, and the southern boundary is marked by an identifiable landscape feature, a stream. For these reasons the current boundary to the land should be marked by a substantial woodland (incorporating wetland) belt, joining the existing woodland to the east and effectively reinforcing the connection between the two parts of the AONB into one integrated whole. Option 1 shows a 20m wide belt. Option 2 provides an opportunity to significantly increase this to a width of 50m. This woodland will:

- act as landscape containment of the edge of the town;
- acts as a biodiversity (woodland and wetland) resource;
- act as a habitat corridor
- provide for water retention in the event of the heavier rainfall conditions expected as a result of climate change and the run-off from the development itself;
- augment the footpath system, providing access to the countryside for the wider human population.

Allowing for a 50m wide woodland belt along the southern edge of the site the total development area would be 14.75 Ha. The yield would be around 514 dwellings including 234 dwellings to the south (phase 2) over 7.82 Ha. In comparison option 1, showing a 20m belt would comprise a 16.25 Ha site yielding around 560 dwellings.

3.2 Option 2

3.2.1 Introduction

Option 2 would restrict the southerly extent of new development to the northern edge of the west – east stream. However development would extend eastwards to include the orchard to the south of Hales Place and a small proportion of the northern orchard to the west of Shrubcote lane. These development blocks would be developed to retain the existing pond within the northern orchard. Option 2 comprises approximately 11 Ha which at an average density of 40 dph would yield around 440 dwellings.

3.2.2 Land-use

As proposed in Option 1, facilities would be concentrated to the south of the leisure centre and would include a medical centre and potentially a convenience shop. These would be centred around the new public car park.

3.2.3 Access and Movement

Vehicle Access and movement

Vehicle access would be obtained off Shrubcote lane to the east and Smallhythe Road B2082 to the west. The road would be linked to allow traffic to move throughout the whole development. However the main street would be designed to ensure speeds would be minimised and thus prevent the route becoming used as a rat run to avoid traffic on the High Street. This main street would form the core street of the development. Smaller side lanes would be developed off this street. Matters relating to access along Sandy Lane and Six Fields Lane are discussed in Option 1.

Small lanes or homezones could be developed along the southern periphery of the site adjacent to the stream. This would allow dwellings to front onto the river but avoid having a larger road running adjacent to the watercourse.

As part of the proposals, parking for between 150 - 200 vehicles would be accommodated to the south of the leisure centre. Vehicle access to the car park would only be possible from Recreation Road. No vehicle access to the development would be afforded off Recreation Road.

Pedestrian access

Pedestrian routes to the High Street are discussed in Option 1.

3.2.4 Landscape Treatment and Public open space

The development has been designed to ensure there are a number of green links across the site. Crucially the green link between the northern orchard and the wider countryside is maintained by retaining a portion of orchard adjacent to the wooded river corridor running north to south along the western edge of the site (refer to Fig 1.21). The semi-improved fields to the south of the orchard and the woodlands along Sandy Lane would provide green corridors linking the wider countryside to the northern orchards.

Open spaces and green links around the ponds and copse to the west of Townlands would be as proposed in Option 1. Formal open space for sports would be provided by the existing town playing fields which lie immediately to the north of the site.

Increased riverine planting would be afforded along the northern bank of the west-east stream to help integrate the scheme into the wider countryside to the south and reduce its visual impact from the AONB and the High Weald Landscape Trail.

The impact on the setting of Hales Place, which lies within a conservation area would be reduced by only developing the far eastern edge of the northern orchard and through screen planting along the southern edge of the property.

3.2.5 Pros and Cons

The pros and cons of the scheme are highlighted below:

Pros

1. Restricts development to the north of the river and reduces the visual impact of the development when viewed from the High Weald Landscape Trail on the edge of the AONB;
2. Avoids significant impacts on the setting of the southern edge of the town;
3. Traffic can be dispersed by having a western and eastern access and minimising traffic impact on the High Street;
4. Maintains an ecological link between northern orchard and the wider countryside;
5. Maintains separation, albeit slightly reduced between Tenterden and the housing estate to the east.

Cons

1. Partial loss of orchards – a local habitat biodiversity action plan;
2. Partial loss of setting for the listed building Hales Place;
3. Reduced opportunities for large scale mitigation planting along the northern edge of the river.

3.3 Option 3

3.3.1 Introduction

Option 3 is a slightly amended version of Option 2, whereby the northern orchard is not developed. Option 3 comprises approximately 10 Ha which at an average density of 40 dph would yield around 400 dwellings.

3.3.2 Pros and Cons

Pros

1. Restricts development to the north of the river and reduces the visual impact of the development when viewed from the High Weald Landscape Trail on the edge of the AONB;
2. Traffic can be disperse by having a western and eastern access and minimising traffic impact on the town;
3. Maintains ecological link between northern orchard and the wider countryside.

Cons

1. Partial loss of two orchards – a local habitat biodiversity action plan;
2. Partial loss of setting for the listed building;
3. Reduced opportunities for large scale mitigation planting along the northern edge of the river
4. Creation of rather isolated development to the east of Sandy Lane.

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

All four options would allow the creation of an urban extension which would lie entirely within 800m walking distance of high quality shopping area and existing town playing fields. The topography of the town means that the visual impact of the schemes would be restricted to the immediate area to the south of the town and to the west of Smallhythe Road below the western ridgeline. Views from the east would be screened by riverine woodland although views of the development would be visible from some sections of the footpath between the B2067 and the B2080 which runs along the town's eastern ridgeline. Knock Wood would screen views from further north. The built environment of the town itself and its northern ridgeline would screen views of the site from the north. All four schemes have avoided the loss of small-scale intimate landscapes which lie to the east of Huston Cottage and Huston Farm. However there are three key areas of concern:

- the impact on the setting of the listed building; Hales Place (within Tenterden Conservation Area) resulting from Option 2 and to a lesser extent Option 3
- the loss of orchards (of landscape and ecological value) resulting from Option 2 and 3
- the impact on the southern setting of the town and views from the AONB and High Weald Trail – Option 1 and 1A and to a lesser extent option 2 and 3

The preferred option 1 has sought to avoid adverse impacts upon the setting of the Hales Place, the loss of the orchards and prevent the amalgamation of the town and older, existing housing estates to the east of Tenterden. However it is recognised that Option 1 will have a greater impact on views from the AONB to the west around Herondon Hall (although the Hall itself is below the town's western ridgeline) and from the south and from the High Weald Landscape Trail. There are also good opportunities for extending existing belts of woodland to integrate the development into the countryside. Sub-option 1A provides opportunities for a substantial 50m woodland belt which would extend the existing locally protected woodland. Option 1 and 1A will minimise its landscape impact on the intimate, enclosed landscape to the east of the town.

It should be noted that there are likely to be a number of matters relating to the potential presence of protected species, which need to be addressed by additional surveys. However all four options have been planned to provide green links between ponds and woodland blocks to the wider countryside and surrounding ancient woodland.