

Shrubcote and Tilden Gill Residents Group,
29 Tilden Gill Road,
Tenterden, Kent, TN30 7BQ

Appeal APP/E2205/W/21/3284479

Land between Woodchurch Road and Appledore Road, known as Limes Land, Tenterden, Kent,
TN30 7AY

Please accept these further comments as part of this appeal. Our group is local to the proposed development site and our members would be greatly affected by the road proposals and loss of open amenity space. We live in the large residential area to the south of the Appledore Road opposite the proposed development on the north side. Many residents have lived most, or all, of their lives in Tenterden and have seen the dramatic changes to our town.

Transport issues

Looking at the proposals for traffic calming measures we do not believe they are sensible or designed with existing residents in mind. The Appledore Road is a main road into Tenterden, any slowing down of traffic, particularly during the rush hour, would cause more queues and delays for traffic from this part of Tenterden particularly from Shrubcote which brings traffic from Priory Way, Tilden Gill Road and soon to be a further 100 dwellings from Appledore Green. It would be very difficult to join existing traffic queues on the Appledore Road where single lane traffic priority is proposed. The plans seem to show 2 such traffic calming measures, one at each end of the Shrubcote estate, plus a pedestrian crossing between the two. Wates have gone to great lengths to say all this accompanying road works will be camouflaged so as not to spoil the avenue view of the Appledore Road. Logically the road works would have to be quite visible to be seen, particularly at night. Visually it would ruin the vista along the road. It is not true that the avenue trees are near the end of their life. We note that prospective developers follow a pattern of denigrating existing trees before cutting them down for convenience. We are also concerned as to how the large farm equipment will travel through the narrow sections, particularly the very large tractors and combine harvesters which can be 3.5 metres wide. Frenchay Farm further south along the Appledore Road has a 50 tonne weigh bridge which means large vehicles regularly use the Appledore Road. It is also a bus route and we fail to see how making vehicles queue on this busy road will help traffic flow. There will be increased fume and noise pollution from vehicle engines waiting in the queues. The Redrow development, Appledore Green, which has less than half of the 100 dwellings so far completed and occupied, is already having an effect on traffic queues at the entrance of Shrubcote at peak times. Cars trying to get in and out of Shrubcote, which includes traffic from Priory Way, Tilden Gill Road and Appledore Green will be in direct competition with the proposed new development. Appledore Road needs to have measures to keep traffic flowing, not delay it further. The proposed vehicle access will bring potentially 250 vehicles daily onto the Appledore Road at its busiest section and with the sports centre probably considerably more. Anyone going to Tenterden town or major centres such as Ashford from this part of town has to use the Appledore Road, there is no alternative practical route which does not involve a several mile detour along small rural lanes. Residents already face queues at the junction of Beacon Oak Road /A28 at peak times during the day and throughout busy holiday times. Since the Covid-19 pandemic there is much more traffic on the roads, we believe many people have stopped using public transport in favour of returning to cars. Planning for the future, if social distancing and mask wearing becomes a regular thing, there will be even more cars if there are fewer car shares and people drive their own vehicles. In summary, this proposed development will only cause increased and unnecessary traffic problems along the Appledore Road and throughout the town. The knock on effect will be felt by all residents.

Overview of impact

We do not believe this site should be built on at all but preserved as an important part of Tenterden's history.

Much has already been written by residents, the Tenterden Town Council and Ashford Borough Council in their objections and we wholeheartedly agree with all of those objections. We wanted

to add a more personal and general viewpoint as to why we think the whole site should be preserved for future generations.

Wates have completely downplayed the diverse flora and fauna and it is clear from their multitudinous reports and desk surveys that they only see the land covered in housing. We see it as part of Tenterden's long history with a rich biodiversity that has developed over hundreds of years of the land not being disturbed and we feel it should be protected as such.

The amount of development in recent years has reached a level where Tenterden's medieval history and character are disappearing. We believe Tenterden has lost much of what makes it Tenterden as the medieval rural landscape, which forms its backdrop, is built over. We strongly believe that Wates proposal should be considered in the wider context of all the other recent and planned developments which are having a cumulative effect on the town. The developers look only at the built form without seeing it in context with the rural surroundings which form a massive part of what Tenterden is all about. Only a developer could look at Limes Land and see what Wates sees. We don't recognise their assessment of the value of Limes Land, we feel it is an intrinsic part of the history of the town and to lose it would be to lose another piece of Tenterden history.

Wates has produced an application that has, in our opinion, deliberately downplayed every important aspect of the site, from the biodiversity to how many people use the land for walking. For example, the comment about sheep only being on the land sometimes. Well, if they understood sheep farming they would know that sheep are regularly moved round pastures, the sheep on Limes Land come up from Romney Marsh so if this pasture land is taken away the farmer has to find alternative grazing land. According to the Millen family, who used to own Limes Land, the deeds have long had a condition that the land should never be dug over but kept as pasture. Their family home is Limes Land Farm House which is the very old house, no 13 to 15 Appledore Road. This amazing house, which although not a listed building, is on the Historic England website as appearing on the Tithe map of 1684. Wates have downplayed this house but with the land and its medieval field layout it forms the complete setting of a farm that is hundreds of years old. The farmhouse, when viewed in its full setting of the fields behind it and the land around it, is unique and part of Tenterden's irreplaceable history. Only a developer would suggest putting any form of modern access alongside this house. (see objections on the planning portal written by Mr Stephen Millen and Mr Martin Millen)

In May 2008 a planning officer at Ashford Borough Council gave his opinion on a planning application for an adjacent area to the site that because the area fell outside the confines of Tenterden it would be unacceptable for residential development and that the area of undeveloped land, which attaches to Limes Land, would be visually harmful to the character of the countryside. With the government emphasis now on reducing climate change and increasing carbon capture by various ways, including planting 30m trees nationwide by 2025, it seems contradictory to permit developments on rural farmland where hundreds of trees and hedges will be lost. It makes no sense to say the very old, fully grown trees can be replaced by spindly saplings which will take 30 years to reach a decent size. Limes Land hasn't been dug over for hundreds of years so it must be holding onto a great deal of carbon.

The Redrow development of 100 dwellings south of our estate has wiped out 3 of the 4 remaining traditional pear and apple orchards along with the Kentish medieval landscape of boundary banks, ditches and hedges that still existed and surrounded the Grade II listed Belgar Farmhouse. It was a shocking ruination of the landscape which had made Tenterden famous. Back in the 1970's and 1980's Tenterden used to get many coach loads of tourists coming to the area for the "blossom tours" to see the traditional orchards of full size trees smothered in blossom in the spring. That has largely disappeared now. Tenterden is known as the Jewel in the Weald but increasingly that moniker has become a joke as the town disappears under a flood of executive homes which destroy the very character and history of the town. Many of the buyers come from London looking for the rural ideal, usually as second homes. Other executive homes are bought by property speculators. Tenterden also has a growing problem with airbnb properties, at the last count there were nearly 30 within the Tenterden parish, and holiday lets in general. None of these actually become part of the Tenterden community. Very few houses are built for local needs, particularly true social housing. Tenterden house prices are way beyond anyone who earns the living wage and the so called affordable housing is an ill defined nonsense that is still unaffordable for most residents in this area. All this feeds into the type of shops which open here. The estate agents, antique shops, expensive clothes shops and a plethora of restaurants and coffee shops. Gentrification of the town continues unabated.

The Tent1A and Tent1b developments of 475 dwellings were expected to fulfill Tenterden's housing need until 2030. Tent1a is nearing completion but the Tent1b development of 125 houses has yet to go before Ashford Borough Council who noted in the Ashford Local Plan 2030 that this should only go ahead once Tent1A was completed and "A comprehensive assessment made in particular in regard to highways". It would appear that highways problems are already envisaged. Tenterden also has the Appledore Green development of 100 homes currently under construction just on the opposite side of the Appledore Road. The problem we have in Tenterden is that once one large development was permitted it was seen as open season for more developers to try and force their way in. Both Ashford Borough Council and Tenterden Town Council have consistently said the Wates development isn't needed or wanted on Limes Land. This reflects the residents very strongly held feeling that it would be one step too far in this rush for developers to make as much money as possible. Even the housing secretary, Michael Gove, appearing at the Housing, Communities and Local Government select committee a few weeks ago, affirmed that he will be looking at the housing targets set because they are based on out of date figures. We welcome this review into how the figures are generated in the first place. There is a huge groundswell of anger in Kent at the amount of agricultural land being lost to housing. Kent was The Garden of England but it has lost so many fruit orchards, cob nut orchards, and hop gardens it no longer feels that it deserves that name. The balance has tipped so far in the developers favour we are losing not just what makes Tenterden but what makes Kent unique. Now we even have developers, like Wates, seeing no worth in sheep farming even though sheep farming and the wool industry is a mainstay of the local rural economy and is one of the reasons for Tenterden's growth over the centuries.

It is shocking how Wates have massaged and juggled figures to try and justify their application and they have virtually ignored or swept aside references made by the Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan which is in its final stages of development. One has to ask the question why they haven't used a brown field site in one of the urban areas like Ashford. The current Ashford local plan to 2030 quite clearly said it wants further housing development closer to Ashford. The answer is obvious, and it all revolves around money. Developers can make better profits by building more and larger houses in rural areas even if they are not needed. We applaud the work of the CPRE which has pinpointed brown field sites in Kent which could cater for new housing needs. The infrastructure already exists and it puts people closer to jobs. Those who have work that enables them to work from home can, in effect, live anywhere. We don't think that they should have priority over local families. In Tenterden, as with many other rural towns and villages, there are many families from all backgrounds who go back generations in the history of the town. There is a strong social bond and sense of community which is being eroded by these large influxes of new people who seem to want an urban life in a rural setting. This causes conflict and changes which aren't welcome.

We will finish with one thought that typifies this conflict: a lady who recently moved from London to Tenterden is now complaining about the owls keeping her awake at night and what can she do about it.

Shrubcote and Tilden Gill Residents Group