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## Growth and Communities

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### BY EMAIL ONLY

10 July 2023

Dear Peter,

### Re: Aldington and Bonnington Draft Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 14 Consultation

Thank you for consulting Kent County Council (hereby referred to as the 'County Council') on the Aldington and Bonnington Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The County Council has reviewed the Neighbourhood Plan and sets out its comments below, following the order of the consultation document.

#### 1. Introduction

Public Rights of Way (PRoW): As a general statement, the County Council is keen to ensure that in respect of PRoW, its interests are represented within the local policy frameworks of the Parishes in Kent. The County Council is committed to working in partnership with Parish Councils to achieve the aims contained within the [County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#) (ROWIP). This aims to provide a high-quality PRoW network, which will support the Kent economy, provide sustainable travel choices, encourage active lifestyles and contribute to making Kent a great place to live, work and visit.

Although largely supported, the draft Neighbourhood Plan makes no reference to the County Council's ROWIP. The County Council strongly advises the Parish Council to ensure that reference to the ROWIP is referred to within the Neighbourhood Plan and included within the Evidence Documents. This will enable successful partnership working to continue and deliver improvements to the PRoW network in the parish. Joint delivery of this strategic plan will ensure significant benefits and assist in securing access to additional funding opportunities, particularly through development contributions.

Throughout the Neighbourhood Plan, where there is reference to Active Travel and walking and cycling opportunities, it is requested that the PRoW network should be specifically referenced. Investment in existing routes with existing rights, rather than the creation of new

routes, is of both an economic and community benefit. The PRoW network should therefore be specifically referenced within the following policies: AB4, AB6, AB8, AB10, AB12 and AB15.

## **2. About Aldington and Bonnington**

PRoW: The County Council recommends that reference should be made in this section to the dense PRoW network within the parish comprising Public Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways. Reference should also be made to the existence of the North Downs Way National Trail within the parish.

## **4. The Rural Environment**

*Policy AB1: Green and blue infrastructure and delivering biodiversity net gain*

Biodiversity: The County Council recommends that the Parish Council expands on the details within the policies in this chapter. For example, Policy AB1 refers to Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 20%, but it does not state what types of development are required to achieve it. Any policy for Biodiversity Net Gain should follow the Environment Act 2021 including the type of developments which need to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain. If the policy just states 'development', it implies that all development needs to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain and that could include development such as porches and single storey extensions.

The Neighbourhood Plan must be clear by what is meant by "biodiversity credits" – for example, does it relate to purchasing Biodiversity Net Gain credits from a third party provider within the county or from the National Register.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems: The County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, notes that there is no consideration of drainage infrastructure or surface water management from a flood risk aspect. If growth or extension to the current urban area is to be accommodated, then it is important that any potential impact on drainage infrastructure is appropriately mitigated.

The County Council would recommend that a section is included within Policy AB1 with respect to green and blue infrastructure. This policy could consider how this infrastructure should be provided and include specification on how sustainable drainage should be implemented within any new development. Good practice supports drainage which is integrated within open space, at the surface and which provides multi-functional space. This is supported in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) which promotes drainage systems which are multi-functional. For example, biodiversity, landscape and amenity benefits can be provided through surface pond systems rather than below the ground rate attenuation.

*Policy AB2: Managing the environmental impact of development*

Biodiversity: As the County Council understands, the policy is intended to require the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment with any planning application to ensure the impact of a proposal is understood – this should be clarified within policy.

The County Council would also draw attention to the following statements, with suggestions for the types of amendments which should be considered throughout the policy.

*“Fauna:*

*v. The provision of hedgehog holes in new residential fencing ~~will be supported.~~*

*vi. Development proposals that provide bird and bat nesting-boxes ~~will be supported.~~*

*vii. The provision of wildlife-friendly communal green spaces within new major developments ~~will be supported.~~ Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 1, 2; ABC L”*

Whilst the County Council does agree with these statements, the County Council does not agree to the reference to “will be supported” as each of these matters will need to be taken into consideration when assessing the ecological impacts of the proposal. For example, the County Council would not wish to see a Neighbourhood Plan support the inclusion of bird boxes when a development could have a negative impact on breeding birds. The County Council would also recommend that the policy requires integrated features rather than boxes.

## **7. Transport and Movement**

*Policy AB12: Sustainable travel*

Highways and Transportation: The County Council, as Local Highway Authority, supports the aims and objectives of this policy as it is in line with the NPPF and the County Council's [Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth Without Gridlock](#).

PRoW: The County Council advises the Parish Council that it is the Local Highway Authority for all PRoW issues.

It is recommended that reference to the ROWIP within Policy AB12 may be beneficial where investment in PRoW routes is sought through development.

The County Council supports paragraph 7.3 in respect of the consideration of Public Bridleways, although would recommend that the Parish Council refers to the ROWIP which addresses the majority of the points raised within this paragraph regarding what can be achieved through improvement planning.

Furthermore, paragraph 7.5 should make reference to the role that the PRoW networks have in Active Travel.

The County Council would also draw the Parish Council's attention to NPPF paragraphs 100 and 104.

The County Council advises that reference and consideration of these policies within the NPPF will meet the objectives 1,3,4,5 and 6 of the Plan and should therefore be included.

### *AB13: Public Car Parking*

Highways and Transportation: The County Council, as Local Highway Authority, supports the aims and objectives of this policy.

## **10. Infrastructure Improvements and Provision**

PRoW: The County Council would again express the need for reference to the ROWIP to assist in securing development contributions for PRoW improvements. The PRoW network must be included (as part of the Highway network) within the Parish Highway Improvement Plan in order to achieve the aims of the County Council and the Parish, and to ensure a holistic approach is taken across the area as a whole.

## **13. List of Evidence Documents**

PRoW: The ROWIP should be referenced within this section as it is a statutory policy document setting out a strategic approach for the protection and enhancement of PRoW.

## **Appendix D – Potential Improvements to the Public Rights of Way.**

Highways and Transportation: The Goldwell Lane/Calleywell Lane circuit – it would not be appropriate to make these roads one way or have a 20mph speed limit due to the rural nature of these roads and the fact that any speed limit reductions have to meet the criteria in Setting Local Speed Limits (which a 20mph zone would not do). This proposal should therefore be removed from the project list as it will not be supported by the County Council, as Local Highway Authority.

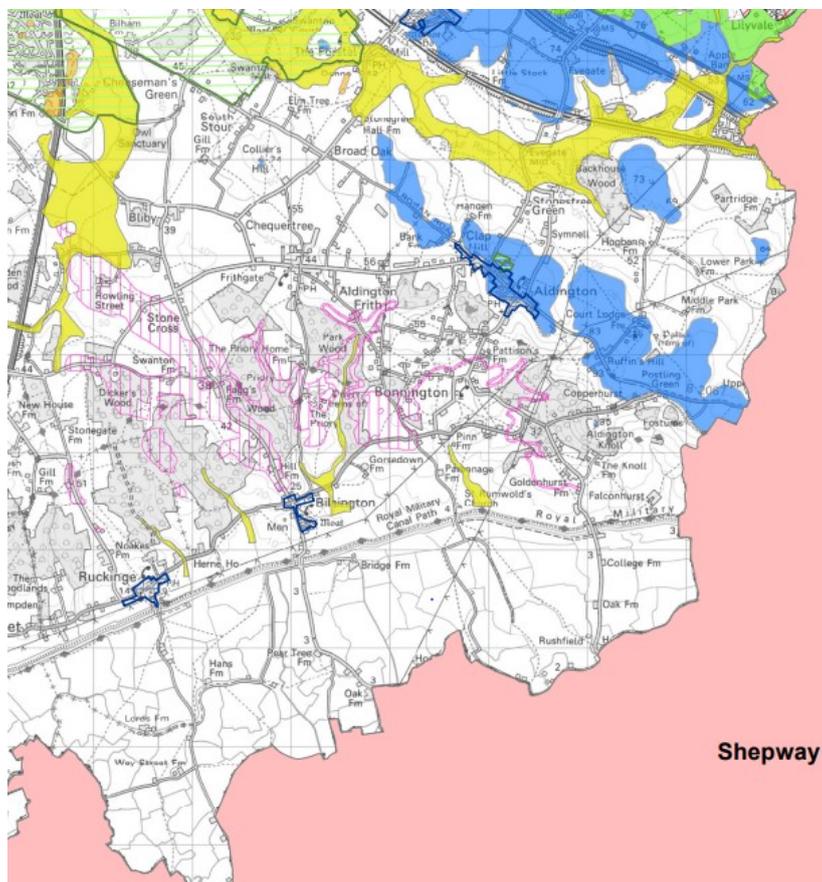
PRoW: The County Council would strongly advise the Parish Council to engage with the County Council, as Local Highway Authority, for up to date information and data in respect of the PRoW network. Some of these proposals are identified to come forward through development and 4 and 5 are currently in discussion.

The scale of costings suggested should also be discussed as part of drawing together full proposals to enable delivery of these schemes.

## Additional Commentary

Minerals and Waste: The County Council, as Minerals and Waste Planning Authority, can confirm that the Neighbourhood Plan area has no safeguarded minerals or waste management facilities. Therefore, development within the Neighbourhood Plan area would not have to be considered against the safeguarding exemption provisions of Policy DM 8: Safeguarding Minerals Management, Transportation, Production and Waste Management Facilities of the adopted [Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 \(Early Partial Review 2020\)](#).

With regard to land-won minerals safeguarding matters, there are three types of safeguarded land-won minerals in the Neighbourhood Plan area, as shown below from an extract of the Ashford Borough Council Mineral Safeguarding Map within the adopted Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 (Early Partial Review 2020).



-  Sub - Alluvial River Terrace Deposits
-  Limestone - Pauldina Limestone, Weald Clay Formation
-  Limestone Hythe Formation (Kentish Ragstone)

The Neighbourhood Plan is silent on safeguarded land-won minerals, though the existence of the adopted Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 (Early Partial Review 2020) is acknowledged. As the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose further residential development, any consideration of how to prevent the sterilisation of land-won mineral resources within its area is not required through the Neighbourhood Plan. However, it is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates that land-won mineral safeguarding is a planning constraint within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Parish Council is advised that any development proposed that coincides with any of the three safeguarded land-won minerals, will require a Minerals Assessment to address potential needless sterilisation that may occur. The County Council would therefore ask that this be reflected in the Plan.

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The County Council will continue to work with the Parish Council on the preparation and delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan and welcomes further engagement as the Plan progresses.

If you require any further information or clarification on any matter in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Simon Jones**  
Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport