

Goudhurst Neighbourhood Plan Housing and Design Workshop

Saturday 23rd September 2017

Introduction

Following the Vision and Objectives Workshop held on 9th September, the next step in developing the Goudhurst Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is a series of three themed workshops or events:

- 23rd September – Housing and Design (this report)
- 7th October – Traffic and Economy (Kilndown Village Hall)
- 21st October – Landscape and Community (Kilndown Village Hall)

The purpose of these workshops is to:

- Present a summary of the evidence gathered so far in relation to the topic/s,
- Identify and prioritise the most important issues facing the community,
- Explore the challenges these issues present using SWOT¹ analysis,
- Identify three ‘reasonable alternatives’ or options for addressing these for consideration for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

These ‘reasonable alternatives’ will then be subjected to the Sustainability Appraisal framework currently being developed by the NP editorial team to identify the most sustainable options for the emerging draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Presentations

Welcome and introduction

As for the previous Visioning workshop, the event started with a welcome from the Chairman of the Parish Council² Cllr Antony Harris. Cllr Harris updated the participants on the current status of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) Local Plan and the government’s intentions to increase the supply of housing in the south east and how this might impact on the borough and Goudhurst Parish in the future (details of the TWBC Local Plan can be found on their website:

<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/new-local-plan>).

Recap on Neighbourhood Plans

The Neighbourhood Plan Group’s (NPG) community planning advisor Jim Boot then recapped on the key aspects of NPs (see previous Visioning Workshop Report from 9th September available on the NPG’s website: <http://ndp.goudhurst.co.uk/>), the purpose of the workshop and the importance of considering ‘reasonable alternatives’ or options to address the issues emerging from the NP process. According to CPRE / NALC’s Guide to Neighbourhood Planning ‘How to Shape Where You Live’ p32:

‘the consideration of different options (also known as reasonable alternatives in a Sustainability Appraisal) can help you decide what works well and what doesn’t [for the NP], and to gather people’s views on which option they would prefer to see happen.’

¹ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

² The Steering Committee is a sub-group of the Parish Council which is the ‘qualifying body’ or organisation allowed under legislation to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

He also reported on the draft vision that received the largest number of votes at the last workshop:

Goudhurst [Parish] in 2033 will be a [collection of] vibrant, pollution free, hilltop villages that are safe, have a balanced, continuing community with sustainable housing standards, good local services, with managed traffic and walkable roads that supports change and development but remains quiet [and] unspoilt.

Also, the Objective that was developed to help in achieving that vision (first as bullet points)

- ***Picturesque jumble of designs that are characteristic to our parish,***
- ***Small scale development,***
- ***Affordable homes to rent via housing association,***
- ***Environmentally sympathetic,***
- ***'Lifetime' homes designed to adjust accommodation over the years (flexible/adaptable homes for changing family needs/working from home)***
- ***Energy efficient***
- ***Individualised character***
- ***Eco-friendly***
- ***Of materials that age well***
- ***Safe access to amenities***

And then as a more conventional Housing and Design objective:

To build on the picturesque jumble of designs that are characteristic of our parish through small scale developments incorporating affordable homes that are environmentally sympathetic (including Lifetime Homes), energy efficient, individual in character, of materials that age well and with safe access to amenities.

Affordable Housing - Housing Needs Survey

The next presentation on the Housing Needs Survey undertaken in April 2017 was by Tessa O'Sullivan who is the Rural Housing Enabler at Action for Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). Tessa presented the purpose of the survey and the key results as set out in the Executive Summary of the report reproduced overleaf:

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) undertook a parish wide survey to find out if there are shortfalls in affordable housing provision for households with local connections to Goudhurst Parish and whether there is a requirement for older people to downsize/move to more suitable housing for their needs. This report provides overall information as well as analysis of housing need.

A survey was posted to every household within the parish of Goudhurst in March 2017. 1254 surveys were distributed with 346 surveys being returned representing a 28% response rate.

Analysis of the returned survey forms identified that 83% of respondents are owner occupiers. 67% of respondents have lived in the parish for over 10 years.

High property prices and a predominance of privately owned homes means that some local people are unable to afford a home within the parish. At the time of writing the report the cheapest property for sale in the parish was a 2 bed apartment for £290,000; to afford to buy this home a deposit of approximately £43,500 would be required and an income of £70,429. To afford to rent privately an income of approximately £32,000 would be required to afford the cheapest property found available to rent in the parish which was a 2 bed house for £800 pcm.

Overall, a need for up to 18 general needs affordable homes, for the following local households was identified:

- 8 single people
- 6 couples
- 4 families
- 15 currently live in Goudhurst parish and 3 live outside but have local connections

Our analysis has also identified a need for alternative housing for 22 older households, they are:

- 11 single people
- 11 couples
- 4 of these households need affordable housing
- All 22 households currently live in Goudhurst parish
- The most frequently given reason for wanting alternative housing was due to needing a smaller home

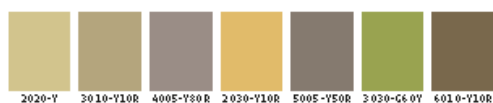
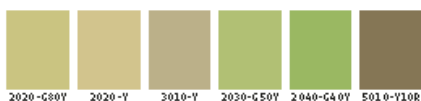
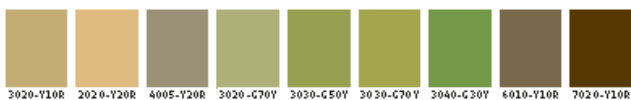
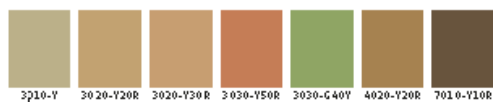
The full report can be found at: <http://ndp.goudhurst.co.uk/resources/>.

Design and Character in the High Weald

Tessa was followed by Claire Tester, Planning Advisor to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) Partnership. Claire's presentation focussed on Design. The slides from her presentation can also be found at: <http://ndp.goudhurst.co.uk/resources/>. Key points from her presentation included:

- *Paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: "The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people".*
- *Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states: "local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area and establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit".*
- *The national Planning Practice Guidance 006 Reference ID: 26-006-20140306 says the following design issues should be considered:*
 - *local character (including landscape setting)*
 - *safe, connected and efficient streets*

- *a network of greenspaces (including parks) and public places*
- *crime prevention*
- *security measures*
- *access and inclusion*
- *efficient use of natural resources*
- *cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods*
- *The Housing White Paper published in February 2017 states: “design should not be used as a valid reason to object to development where it accords with clear design expectations set out in statutory plans ... using a widely accepted design standard, such as Building for Life in shaping and assessing basic design principles”.*
- *The High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives in relation to settlements which can only be achieved through good design include:*
 - *S1 “To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside”*
 - *S2 “To protect the historic pattern of settlement”*
 - *S3 “To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald”.*
- *The High Weald AONB Partnership is to publish a draft Design Guide with Design South East in late 2017 including more appropriate alternatives to 20th C. cul-de-sacs and poor quality replica farm buildings and a colour guide or ‘palette’ of colours to be used by developers (see over).*
- *Claire particularly recommended in the meantime that the NPG develops a Character Assessment for the Parish utilising Planning Aid’s guide: ‘How to prepare a character assessment to support design policy within a neighbourhood plan’ available from: http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1271765/how_to_prepare_a_character_assessment.pdf.*

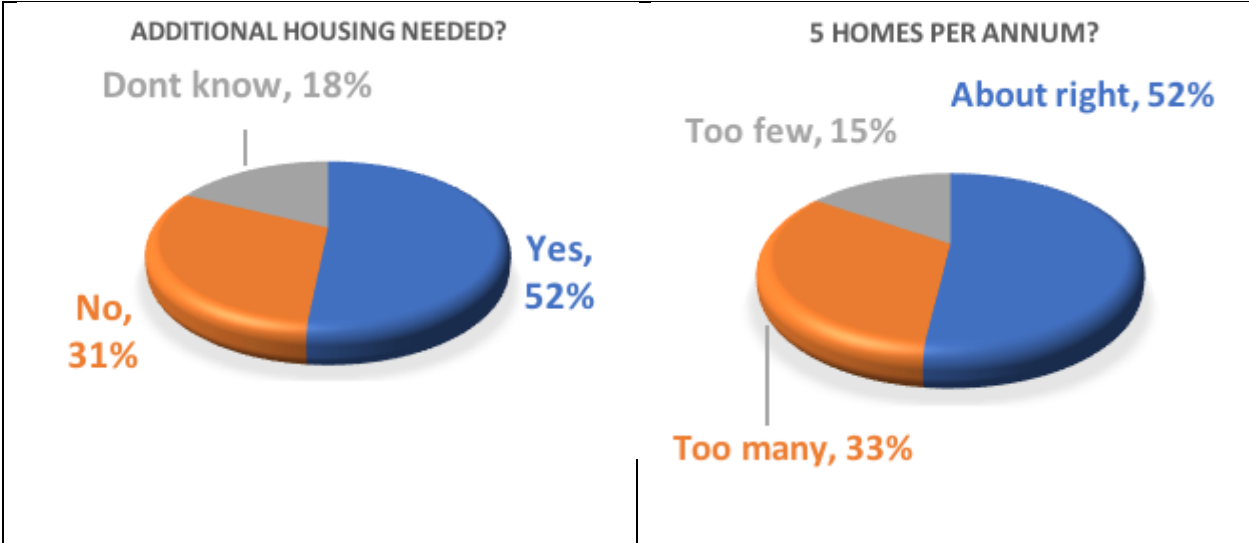


Parish Survey Results

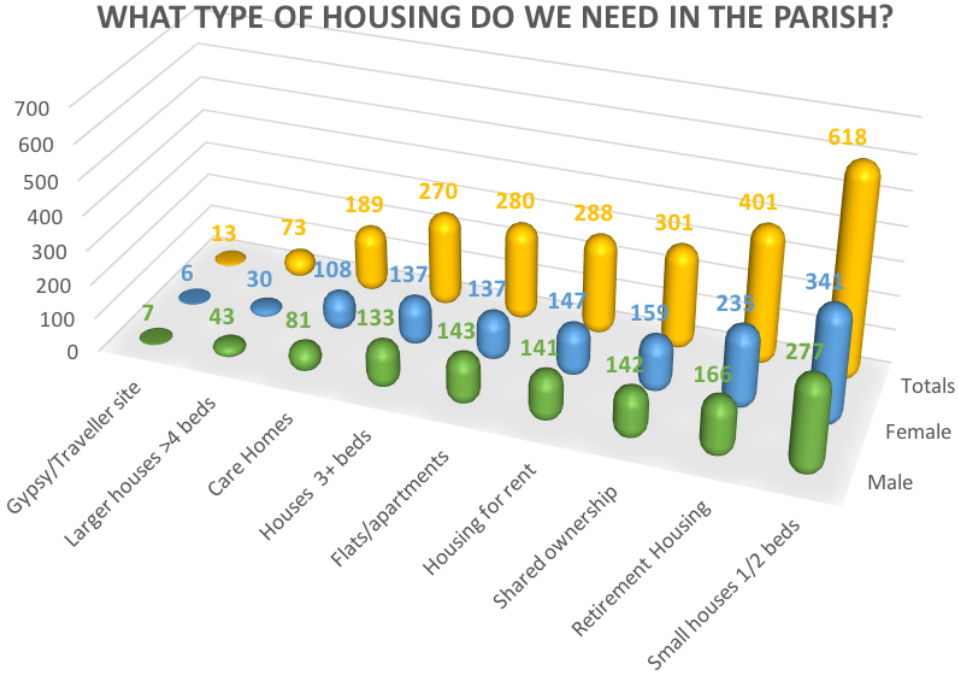
Craig Broom, Secretary to the NPG followed with a presentation of the key results relevant to the Housing and Design Theme from the questionnaire that took place in the summer. Below and over is an extract from: <http://ndp.goudhurst.co.uk/questionnaire-response-summary-housing/>.

Housing questions are a key question group in the questionnaire and the responses received will influence many of the policies of the final Neighbourhood Plan. From your responses, there is a general consensus around the need for more housing in the Parish, the types of housing that we need, the scale of any new developments and where developments should be.

Additional development is supported within the Parish with 52% believing we need new homes. A level of 5 homes per annum was suggested as a target and again 52% of the community see this level as 'about right'.

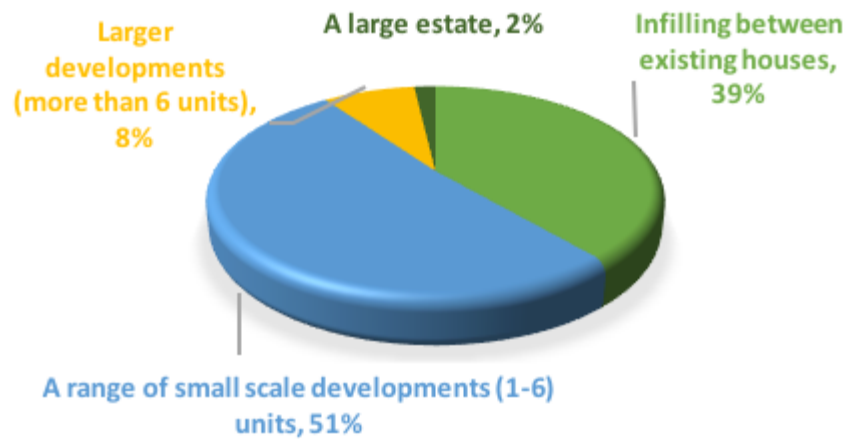


84% felt that we should support housing for people on low income with a local connection and 79% supported the inclusion of a policy which encourages and supports self-build homes for local people.

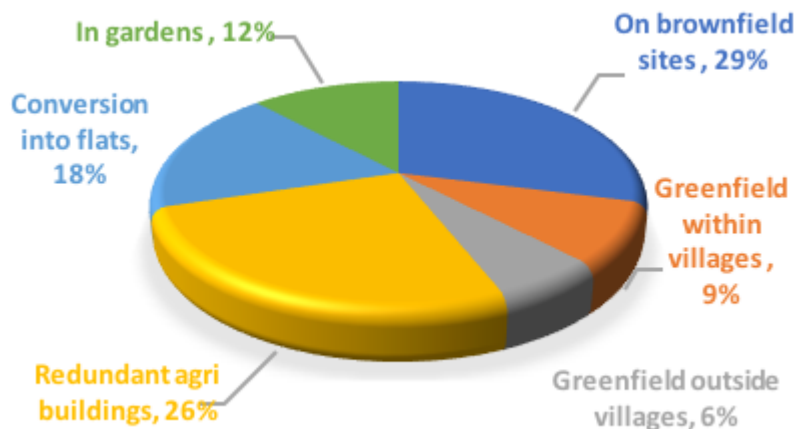


There is a preference in our community for smaller homes. This need was also reflected in our recent Housing Need Survey which highlighted the lack of smaller houses in the Parish with older residents wanting to downsize and others needing their first step onto the property ladder. Census data shows that we have twice the national average of houses in the bands F, G, H housing types and half the national average for bands C and D.

As seen in other Parishes, 90% would prefer smaller developments where the impact of development can be more easily assimilated.



There is also a preference to re-use sites before building on greenfield sites. The challenge in the Parish is the availability of such sites.



A series of Design Statements were broadly agreed with a large majority wanting to maintain the character of our settlements as well as preserving the views in and out of our settlements. There was consensus on the need for parking and outside space but questions around increased housing density and diversity of design showed a more even split across all communities.

Statistical and other evidence

Richard Hillier from the NPG then gave a review of the evidence so far identified by the Housing and Economic Development sub-groups (to follow) in relation to this theme from:

- NPPF, Local Plan and AONB Mgt Plan
- Statistical evidence ie Local Place Profile
- Research either desk or field work

Workshop sessions

To follow is a summary of the main results of the workshop sessions that followed the context setting of the presentations.

What are the 'Housing and Design' issues?

A brainstorm or brain dump was undertaken to identify the key issues. These were then prioritised by the participants using coloured dots:

	Score
1. Ancient villages evolved over hundreds of years – evolutions stops	9
2. Design is personal	2
3. Lack of space in built up area	4
4. How do we design eco-friendly houses	12
5. Sympathetic with surrounding environment	16
6. Avoid development that leads to excessive car journeys	1
7. Adequate infrastructure and sustainable local services (to be dealt with on 21 st October)	12
8. Conservation officer decisions	1
9. Losing our small houses because of extensions	3
10. Affordability of good design	8
11. Incorporating wildlife into new developments	3
12. Design must respect historic pattern of development	15
13. Build using local materials with low carbon footprint	7
14. Innovation in design and materials	9
15. Building on the AONB	11
16. Design and material that age well	9
17. Distinct policies for Kilndown and Curtisden Green	2

The issues that scored the highest were then chosen for the issues and options sessions to follow. There was some cross-over such as issues 4 and 13 which were combined. As previously indicated the participants were divided onto four tables and then each table was allocated an issue/s to consider. Rather than simply have conversations, the participants were encouraged to record key points using a SWOT analysis (see below). Each table was then asked to prioritise three options or 'reasonable alternatives' to address their issue / s.

Issue/s: Innovation in design and materials / Design and materials that age well

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of ancient woodland – management • Use local materials, clays / build in wood • Visual continuity – connecting to the countryside • Jumble – shows evolution • Lower running costs • Burning wood for fuel 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco-friendliness vs appearance • Volume house-builders – tired design • Higher capital costs • Community energy works [?] at scale • Historic houses increasingly costly to run • Community [?] need a managed environment
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build using local wood 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic cladding – cement

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce oil consumption • Variation / variety • New sources of energy / materials • Technology and innovation to improve running costs • Community based energy • Goudhurst is good at co-operation • Change can deliver improved efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate scale • Walt Disney theme village • Pastiche buildings • Mono-culture • Conservation officer!
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Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Aspire to passive houses – retrospective upgrades	Community Land Trust (CLT) to deliver community development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling development • Community services • Self-build 	Business as usual – Market housing – worked so far!

Issue/s: How do we design eco-friendly houses

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wind (up high) • Lots of south and west facing slopes (solar potential) • Land for environmental development 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old properties generally are not usually eco-friendly • New properties not easily sympathetic to existing (old) properties • Not on gas grid • Eco friendly houses can use more space • Grid capacity to absorb local solar generation
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of latest power storage technology • Use of latest waste water cleaning processes (reed beds and similar) • Insulation technology – glass fibres etc • Wood can be ‘sustainable’ Land for woodland	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing building codes still not stringent enough • Use of traditional fuel heating eg coal (ash, sulphur, smoke) – wood fires / burners³ (ash, sulphur, smoke)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Solar panels on all new development	Minimum level of sustainability – minimum building code 4 / 5 or better?	Small developments to share utility supply, waste treatment, facilities eg waste treatment reed beds = wildlife haven.

³ Wood burning stoves by burning at much higher temperatures provide very low emissions and less ash which can be used harmlessly on gardens.

Issue/s: Design must respect historic pattern of development / Sympathetic with surrounding environment

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity • Well supported / popular • Minimal visual impact • Smaller development / infills • Enhancement • Less threat to existing infrastructures 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of innovation • Impact of modern materials (thermos-insulation etc) • Not suitable for big developments • Could stifle evolving technology • Perception it is expensive to build • No diversity in style – trad materials – high carbon footprint
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local builder and supplier – industry • Easier planning • Maintains personal – house / garden balance • Retain hilltop and healthy environment • To blend sympathetic design with modern technology • Traditional crafts (men) opportunity 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow & boring mass development • Green field development • New road infrastructure • Mr Clark and government policy • Loss of AONB

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Community Land Trust development – local control and housing association. Mixed development meets local need.	Benefactor rural exception site – very strict condition, landowner and local needs met. Needs demonstrated.	Large garden sell-off. Minimum size of garden. Limited development

Building on the AONB

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected by regulations • Character assessment • Hilltop settlement • Incoming visitors (footpaths etc) 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of restrictions • Maintenance heavy landscape • Cost of repairs to listed buildings
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relax restrictions to allow redundant building conversions (in AONB) • Established farmstead settlements we can make use of • Its available and desirable • It can be done well 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoil what we have (views, walks etc) • Lines slightly blurred • Not a museum village/parish

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Re-use redundant farm and other buildings and change law to make it happen.	Use brownfield sites	Design and good landscaping to shield housing and low level not dense housing.

Next steps

As stated in the introduction, the results of this workshop along with the results of the following two workshops will be assessed using the emerging Sustainability Appraisal framework to identify the most sustainable approaches to address the issues identified through the questionnaire, other evidence and local knowledge. These will then form the basis of the policies that will eventually be included in the draft plan with the intention that these will be applied by TWBC to future planning decisions. It was commented on by Michael Thornton RTPI who attended the workshop and has just been appointed to give planning advice to the NPG that there were some other housing issues that were apparent that might need further work and that it might be appropriate at the next two workshops to have identified in advance some key issues to appraise using the SWOT analysis. This will be raised at the next NPG meeting to be held on 2nd October in advance of the 9th October workshop on Traffic and the Economy and 21st October on Landscape and the Community. The NPG will also consider whether to go ahead with the Character Assessment as recommended by Claire Tester in which case the initial meeting to identify character areas and subsequent walk-about will be advertised in the parish and on the NPG website.

Acknowledgements

Goudhurst Parish Council would like to thank the NPG for organising, hosting and facilitating and the following residents for attending and contributing to the Housing and Design Workshop:

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|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Shiona Gardiner | 10. D Nichol | 19. Patrik Sundberg |
| 2. Adrian Smith | 11. Barbara Stafford | 20. Richard Hillier |
| 3. Brian Kennedy | 12. Ed Bates | 21. Lesley Bolton |
| 4. Karen Chapman | 13. Darrel Barber | 22. Sue Batemans |
| 5. John Leavens | 14. Antony Harris | 23. Nick Leggett |
| 6. Susan Newsam | 15. Chris Smith | 24. Sonja Johnson |
| 7. Andy Freeman | 16. Linda Hall | 25. Howard Huntington |
| 8. John Fermor | 17. Sandy Elsworth | 26. Quentin Rappaport |
| 9. Paul Mantle | 18. Craig Broom | |

Jim Boot, Community Planner, 27th September 2017