

Goudhurst Neighbourhood Plan Traffic and Economy Event

Saturday 7th October, Kilndown Village Hall

Introduction

This is the second in a series of three themed workshops or events:

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

The purpose of these workshops is to:

- Present a summary of the Neighbourhood Plan 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 each topic 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

The event started with a brief welcome and call to arms from the Chairman of the Parish Council Cllr Antony Harris. Colin Willis, Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, who was on holiday for the last workshop, then gave an update on progress so far with the Neighbourhood Plan and a recap on the draft Vision and Objectives and how they set the context for today’s workshop:

Vision

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.

Traffic and transport objective:

To improve traffic in Goudhurst parish area we will have controlled traffic movement, improved parking (High Street – long / short term), implemented traffic calming (flows, reduction, hard design) and developed and encouraged flexible community transport. We will also educate (safer roads, safer lanes, separate).

Economy and employment objective

However, the economy needs traffic, white van man, tourism. We will create broadband [for] business, a community business hub / sand drive support of local shops and more local shops (ie butcher).

¹ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Spatial planning context

Michael Thornton RTPI, who is to be engaged by the parish council to support the NP, then gave a presentation outlining how NPs operate in terms of Spatial Planning² and also how the context of the emerging Tunbridge Wells Local Plan would impact on Goudhurst and the NP. Key points from the presentation (also available from <http://ndp.goudhurst.co.uk/traffic-workshop/>) were:

- NPs must be justified, reasonable and effective and this would be tested at the examination
- Subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (best practice especially in AONBs)
- And as such needed to consider all 'reasonable alternatives'
- The 13,000 additional homes over 20 years (until 2033) that TWBC is currently planning for may be revised upwards due to new government proposals

To assist with the process of identifying 'reasonable alternatives', Michael proposed considering three different growth 'options' emerging from the TWBC draft Local Plan:

- Option 1 - Focused Growth at Royal Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook, Hawkhurst
- Option 2 – Semi-dispersed – spread more growth to larger villages including Goudhurst
- Option 3 – Dispersed – spread even more to villages including Goudhurst and Kilndown
- Option 4 – Growth Corridor – A21 - Pembury / NW of RTW
- Option 5 – New Settlement

Options 1, 4 and 5 would have potentially a lower impact on Goudhurst parish and so might be considered as Business As Usual (BAU). Option 2 would have a medium emphasis or impact on Goudhurst. Option 3 would have the highest emphasis or impact on Goudhurst and Kilndown. For each scenario the potential number of houses that Goudhurst would need to accommodate might be calculated as:

- Scenario A: Low growth / Business As Usual = 2-5 houses per year based on historic growth
- Scenario B: Medium growth = 10 houses per year until 2033 or 160 homes over the plan period
- Scenario C: Higher growth = 19 houses per year until 2033 or 304 homes over the plan period

Michael proposed using these three different scenarios to help generate ideas of options or reasonable alternatives for the emerging neighbourhood plan.

Traffic and transport presentation

Simon Lees a local resident and member of the Transport Sub-Group then gave a presentation starting with the Village Questionnaire results from earlier in the summer (see attached). As well as the questionnaire results, the group had compared, where relevant, census data for 2001 and 2011, and established that there had been:

- A 3.84% increase in population over the period

² Spatial planning, also called place shaping has a wider focus than traditional land use planning. It's about identifying a vision for the future of a place which responds to local needs and circumstances, including community views, and is based on evidence. This vision is translated into priorities, policies and the identification of land for development. Spatial planning creates a framework for private investment and regeneration. How to Shape Where You Live, a Guide to Neighbourhood Planning, CPRE and NALC, Dec 2011.

- Total cars or vans in the area increased by 14.29%
- Households not owning a car or van decreased by 15.68%
- Households with 3 or more cars increased by 46.3%
- Households with 4 or more cars increased by 51.06%
- 38.2% of households had 2 or more cars compared with 28.1% in Tunbridge Wells district and 23.7% in England and Wales as a whole
- 5.7% of households had 4 or more cars compared with 2.8% in Tunbridge Wells district and 1.9% in England and Wales as a whole
- 9.3% of Goudhurst's working population work from home compared to 5.9% in Tunbridge Wells District and 3.5% in England and Wales as a whole
- 0.6% of Goudhurst's working population travel to work by bus, minibus or coach compared to 1.65% in Tunbridge Wells District and 4.7% in England and Wales as a whole
- 4.8% of Goudhurst's working population travel to work on foot compared to 10.3% in Tunbridge Wells District and 6.9% in England and Wales as a whole

The group also reviewed the Department for Transport Traffic Counts data for the Goudhurst area between 2003 and 2016 including traffic volumes on the A262:

	A262 Measured Traffic per day		
	TOTAL TRAFFIC	HGVs	LGVs
2003	11282	360	1401
2007	11186	316	1401
2011	10455	294	1502
2016	12618	256	2184

He summarised the groups key findings as:

- Total traffic has risen apparently only slightly across the period, i.e. an increase of about 12% since 2003
- Total goods traffic has risen by 38.5%
- HGVs and LGVs combined represent almost 20% of the total traffic
- HGV traffic generally has reduced over the period. However HGVs with 5 or more Axles (i.e. the largest sizes) have increased from about 13 per day in 2000 to 28 per day in 2015, an increase of 115%.

- LGVs (i.e. any transit van under 3 tons) have increased dramatically by approx 56% over the period. This could be attributable to the increase of internet order deliveries, which are likely to continue to increase
- LGVs now represent over 17% of the total traffic
- Taking the estimated figures as comparators, the A262 appears to carry between 61 and 64% of the amount of the A21 traffic in this area.

The group had also reviewed crash data.

	A21	A262
Fatal	2	1
Serious	8	12
Slight	38	52
Total	48	65

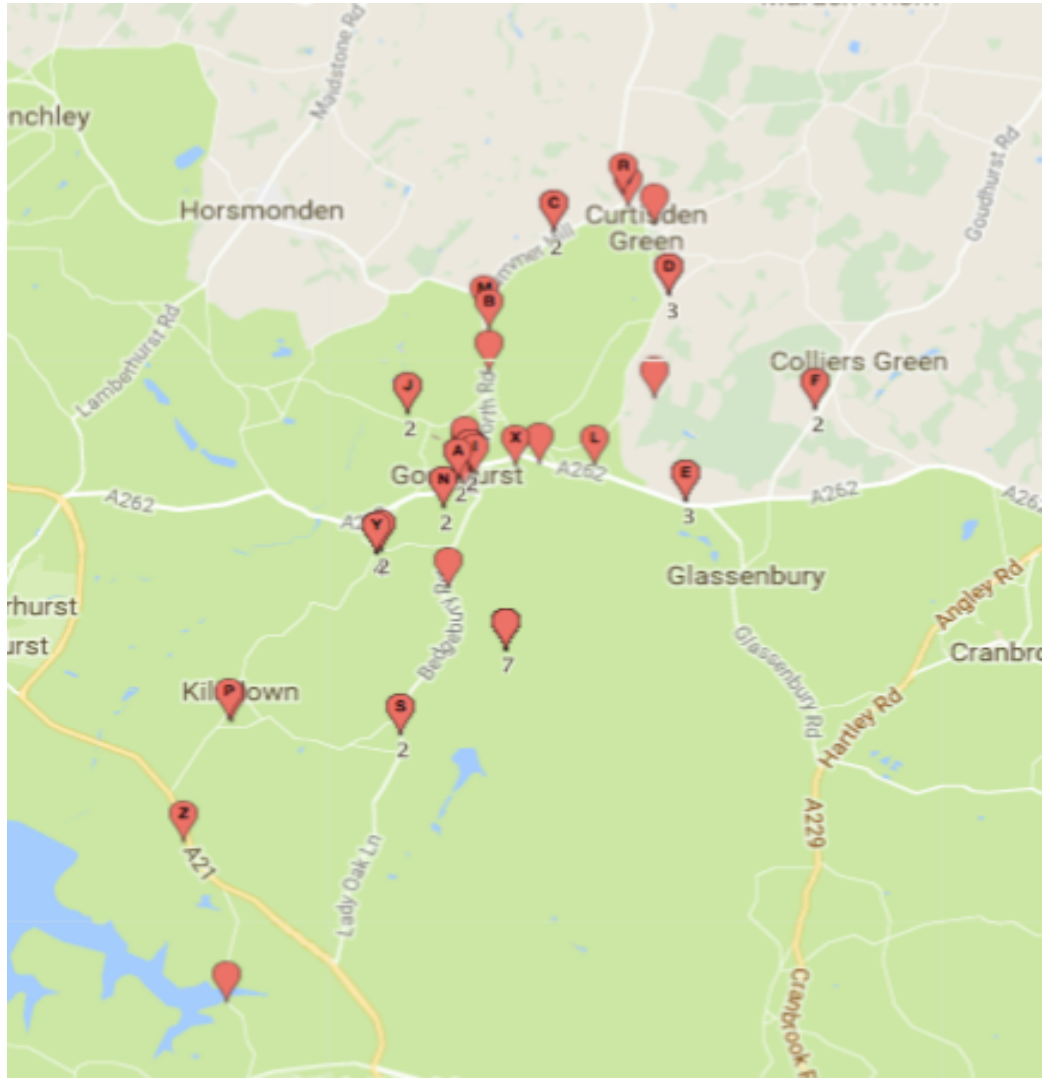
Surprisingly there have been 35.4% more accidents on the A262 despite the A21 being the major road. However, the A21 covers a marginally shorter distance within the boundary. Given that the traffic flow on the A262 is around 2/3 of that on the A21 (see above) and that accidents on it are a third greater, traffic management and safety issues through the village must be considered in any future housing development.

Economy and business

Graham Hill a local resident gave an overview of the economic issues and issues facing businesses in Gourhurst (see attached presentation). His presentation covered:

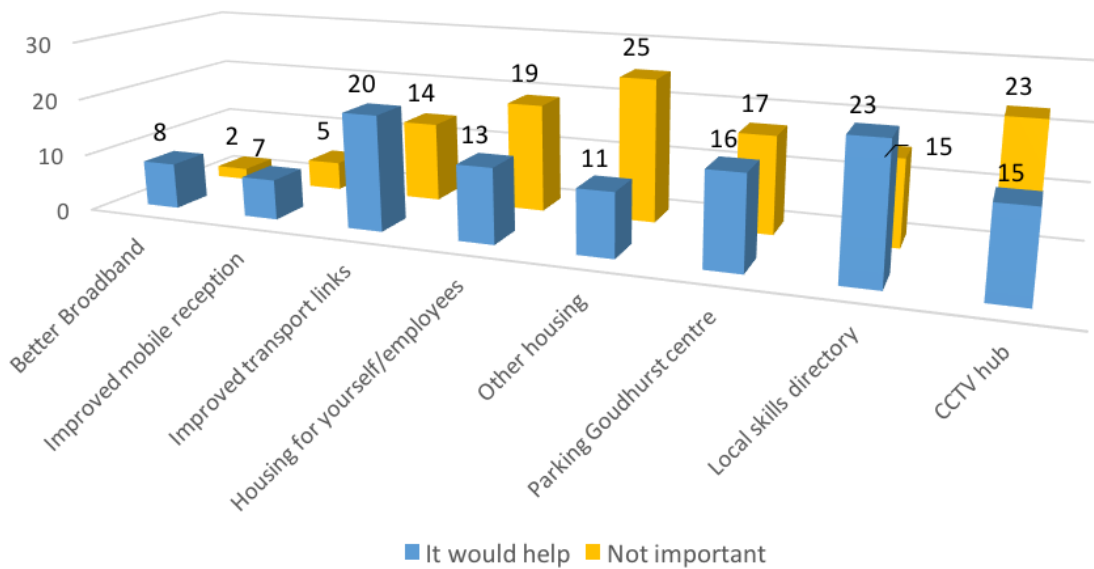
- NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework 2012
- High Weald AONB Management Plan revised 2014
- Tunbridge Wells Local Plan 2006; 2018?
- Goudhurst Rural Place Profile 2013
- Office for National Statistics Census 2011
- **Our Business Survey Results 2017**

The business survey canvassed 112 local business and had 58 responses (see figure below):



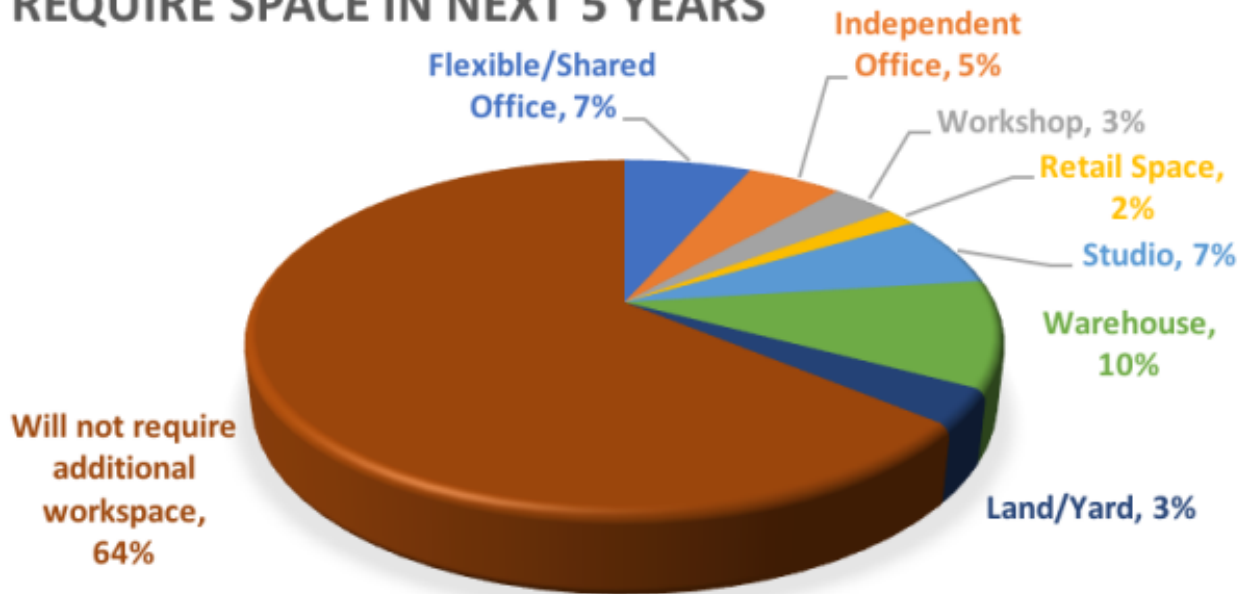
The survey revealed that that three-year survival rates for businesses had dropped over the last five years by 60%. Businesses surveyed said that the following would support business development (see over):

What would support business development



A large proportion of businesses would require news staff in the next five years and a proportion would require additional space (see below).

REQUIRE SPACE IN NEXT 5 YEARS



Residents and businesses responding to both questionnaires favoured:

- Re-using existing agricultural buildings 39%

- Brownfield land 35%
- Change of use of existing houses 16%
- Creating a new retail or business park 7%

Key issues identified

Following the presentations of the evidence, the participants were given a chance to brainstorm a list of the issues they considered most important to them. They did this for both topics of the workshop.

Traffic and Transport

Conflict between housing and transport	1
Managing the traffic / speed limits	20
Lack of sustainable transport options to access amenities	4
Mapping / organising parking	9
Public and community transport	4
Walkability / cyclability	17
Future traffic options	1
New sources of traffic – Tenterden	3
Benefit of blocked High Street	11
Horse riding and leisure	3
Accidents and the causes of	7
Suitability of the roads for traffic	2
Better co-operation with KCC Highways	2

Economy

Local services – access and lack of services	5
Converting shops to houses	5
Lack of co-operation between traders	
Improve accessibility for tourists	1
Affordability of housing for workers	12
Dormitory village – pros and cons	2
Re-used redundant agricultural land / a resource	2
Business directory	4
Business hub with super fast broadband	4
Living in the AONB	6
Lack of leisure facilities	2

Participants were then given four sticky dots and asked to prioritise their top issues (results in the right hand column – highest counts highlighted in yellow). Following this warm-up exercise, participants were split into groups at tables and asked to complete a SWOT analysis of a key topics / issues relating to the themes of the workshop. The results are shown overleaf. They were then asked to consider three different scenarios based on possible growth in housing and what the reasonable alternatives or options might be in response to the issues:

- Business as usual (BAU) or low growth (2-5 units per annum)
- Medium growth (10 units per annum)
- High growth (19 units per annum)

Topic / issue: Traffic (HGVs, speed and routes)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion (slow traffic speed) • Benefits local traders • Better safety for traffic (slower speeds) 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of A road • Congestion (air quality / inconvenience) • Width of pavements and parking • High proportion commuting via stations • Use of alternative routes ('rat runs') • Sat Nav programming
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downgrading A262 to 'B' road • Traffic management of options (eg speed limits) • Revenue gathering from fines (eg for speeding) • Current dialogue with MPs • Lorry Watch (HGV restrictions) • Drones, electric cars, decrease in diesel (lower pollution) • 40 mph speed limit from end of dual carriageway to Bew Bridge on A21 – so many accidents 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of HGVs • Speed of traffic • Impact of development elsewhere • If A262 downgraded less maintenance? • Increase in use of private vehicles.

Option 1: BAU / Low	Option 2: Medium	Option 3: High
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be proactive with lorry watch 2. Amend Kent freight Gateway (divert heaviest HGVs) 3. Engage KCC and MPs 4. Downgrade A262 to B road 5. Review speed limits 	<p>Intelligent traffic management</p>	<p>Bypass Location of large scale development adjacent to good access roads</p>

Topic / Issue: Parking

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic calming effect of parked cars on High Street • Shops depend on High St parking 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking for coffee shops • Enforcement lacking (parking, speeding etc) • Poor pedestrian access • Poor disabled access • Cause of traffic jams • HGV damage to parked cars
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public parking in the social club • Second tier above Balcombe's Hill car park (for all day parking) 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking all day on High Street blocking places for shoppers • Poor parking impacts High Street shops

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPO³ land near GP surgery for new car park • Alternative to Balcombe's Hill – more spaces • Time limited parking on High Street 	
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Option 1: BAU / Low	Option 2: Medium	Option 3: High
Extra parking at social club Marking of parking bays on High Street and footways Notices on High Street reminding parkers to be considerate of footpath users Bollards	Time limited parking on High Street	CPO land near GP surgery for new car park 2 story car park Balcolmes Hill (probably not cost justifiable) Kilndown / Curtisden Green – parking under dispersed development

Topic / issue: Supporting industry and new businesses

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional, financial, health, education and construction • Knowledge economy growing • High proportion of highly qualified residents • Agriculture • AONB • Our population is a strong potential source of new business creators 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of additional capacity (sites?) • Age profile – leaving / retiring • Small % of residents working locally • Lack of suitable employment opportunities locally • Lack of superfast broadband • High proportion of commuting • Lack of parking • Transport A262 is an A road
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business premises • Networking hub • Agriculture changing eg vineyards / retain land • Tourism • Tax break [business rate relief] • Business directory on-line • Weekend closure of High Street for special weekends • Artists and creatives studios 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New business survival rates (declining) • Loss of economic / commercial floor space • Need / lack of additional capacity for business • Changing agriculture – to housing • Business park • Extra road traffic for some types of businesses

Option 1: BAU / Low	Option 2: Medium	Option 3: High
Adapting existing farm buildings and others for business Networking and business hub Studios for artist and creatives	As before plus small newly built businesses outside AONB Networking and business hub will grow as needed	Larger business park by A21 (will need bypass) Free up agricultural land for business Mass agriculture / polytunnels

³ Compulsory purchase order

Retain agricultural land for agricultural use Transport problems at least as now	Limited business development on poor agricultural land More transport on roads / need improved road system	AONB will need bypass / better roads
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Topic / issue: Supporting retailers and tourism

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 262 – through traffic • Services and facilities good • AONB attraction / Bedgebury • 4/5 good pubs – promote F&B destination • 1st class panoramic views – best walks in Kent 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively small contribution to economy of tourism • Services and facilities – little room for expansion • Access to countryside – parking very limited • Flexibility of current businesses (lack of ...)
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage tourism • Better local tourism promotion by GPC and TWBC • Empty premises already exist – potential • More Bedgebury concerts • Tourist info ‘hub’ in existing premises • Diversity of retailers 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 262 – congestion • Loss of economic floor space to housing (ie butchers, Hughenden) • By-pass – realistic threat? • New settlement from TWBC • Let natural economic evolution dictate?!

Option 1: BAU / Low	Option 2: Medium	Option 3: High
Biz [businesses] might die out / no new demand Encourage retailers to network Farmers markets Fairs (village hall and social club) Tourist info hub Some empty premises exist	Need to expand retailer / biz premises Increased congestion / parking / pressures / air quality Use of brownfield sites for retail expansion	Threat to AONB Significant traffic volumes Shop infrastructure needs to increase proportionately and together in all 3 cases

Issue / topic: Cycling and walking

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable and low impact • Healthy • Low carbon emission / noise pollution • Congestion slows traffic for cyclists and pedestrians 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Width of pavements / lack of pavements / verges • Poor cycling rates for all but the most enthusiastic • High proportion commuting 40k and mainline stations • Poor road maintenance • Narrow roads with poor sight lines • Routes not safely linked to villages? • Lack of high vis clothing • Dog fouling, paths, plastic bags in trees
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Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create access to walking and cycling routes from village • Encourages more people to walk to work, school, shops and leisure • Section 106 agreements provide funds for improvements 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed of traffic • Size of HGVs • Congestion? • Roads too dangerous for cycling / walking • Lack of consideration by drivers
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Option 1: BAU / Low	Option 2: Medium	Option 3: High
Road maintenance Improved links to existing paths Pedestrian walkways in Goudhurst village	More road maintenance Creation more links to existing paths	Even more road maintenance 106 agreements for funds for improvements Better access to Bedgebury

Conclusion and next steps

As well as issues previously identified through the Village Questionnaire, new information or evidence has also been identified by the working groups. For example the increase in small vans / light goods vehicles and the largest five (or six) axel HGVs. Also, the larger number of accidents on the A262 compared to the stretch of the A21 in the parish.

Options identified included downgrading the A262 to a B road, intelligent traffic management and locating development adjacent to good access roads. The need for increased maintenance, improvements to existing pedestrian routes and links to Bedgebury were also identified. In terms of parking Goudhurst High Street remains a challenge with options identified including marked bays, time limited parking and a new car park. The most sustainable options could be prioritised for developer (Section 106) contributions.

The business survey showed that while business failures had increased, local businesses were still hoping to take on new employees in the next five years. Options for development included adapting existing farm buildings, small units outside the AONB or a larger business park by the A21 although this was only favoured by 7% of businesses. In terms of retail and tourism, options included farmers' markets and seasonal fairs to increase footfall and a tourist information hub. Should the high growth scenario unfold, consideration would need to be given for increasing the provision of shops but in proportion with the growth. As well as a tourism hub, business and creative hubs were also considered. A quick win that seemed well supported was a business directory – possibly on-line.

As with the results of the other workshops, further work will now be carried out to explore these options and ultimately subject them to the sustainability appraisal to identify the most sustainable or preferred options for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan either through creating policies or through the identification of projects and prioritising these for developer contributions.

The final workshop of this series on Landscape and Community will take place on 21st October at Kilndown Village Hall.

Acknowledgements

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

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|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Graham Hills | 10. Chris Wood | 19. Susan Newsam |
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| 4. Carol Buckland | 13. Mukhtar Quraishi | 22. Linda Griffin |
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| 9. Simon Lees | 18. Mark Taylor | |

Jim Boot, Community Planner 16th October 2017