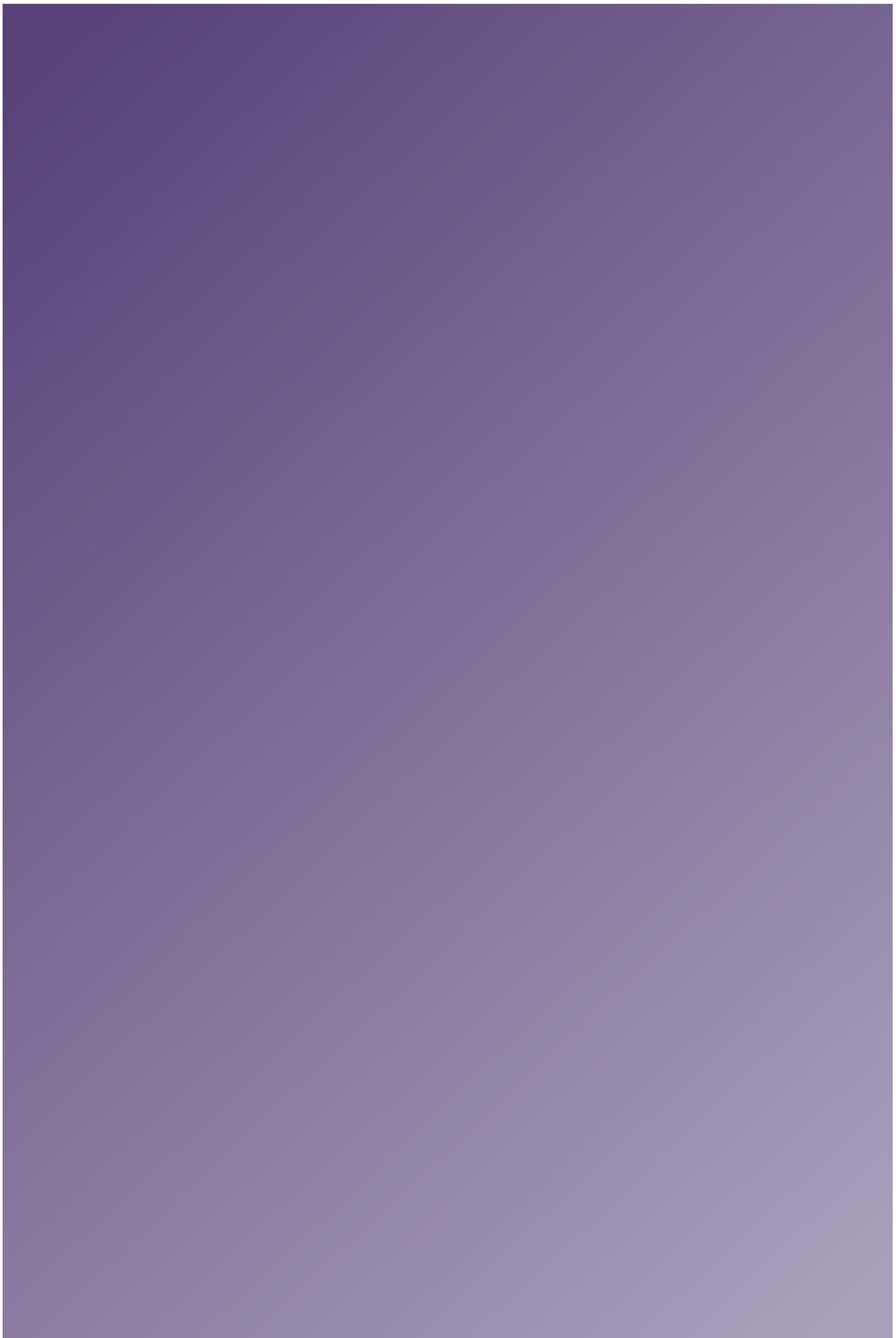


May 2018

Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood
Development Plan

Interim Report







This report contains independent advice and recommendations from Feria Urbanism on the continuing development and preparation of the Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood plan. This is based on the outcomes of a series of consultation and engagement events held during early 2018.



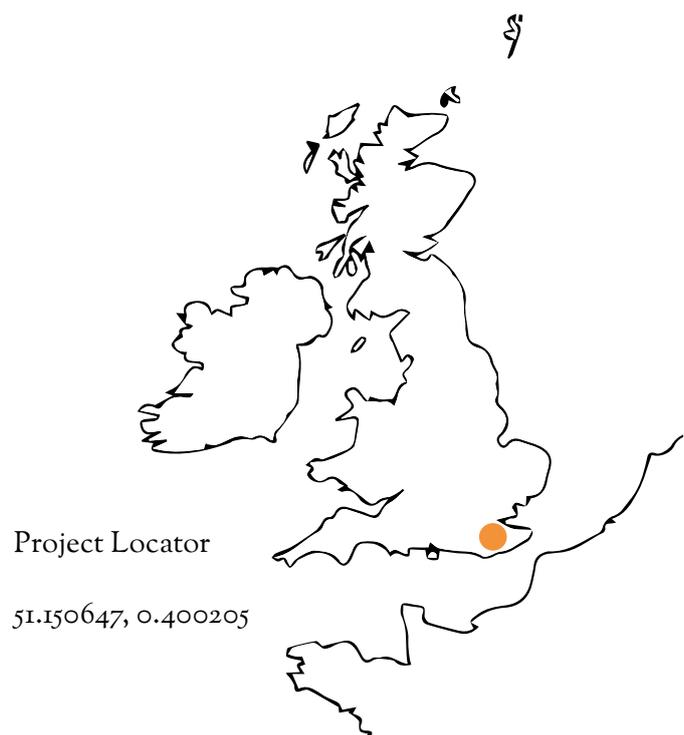
Feria Urbanism is a planning and design studio that specialises in urban design, urban planning, neighbourhood strategies, public participation and community engagement. Established in 2007, we have been involved in a diverse range of planning and design projects across the UK.

Contact for further information

- Richard Eastham
- richard@feria-urbanism.eu
- www.feria-urbanism.eu
- + 44 (0) 7816 299 909
- + 44 (0) 1202 548 676

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The consultation & engagement work so far



Two community visioning events were held in February 2018 and a three-day design forum was held in March 2018. The neighbourhood plan steering group successfully promoted these events that were well-attended. A total of 173 people attended the visioning events across the two evenings, and over 200 people attended the design forum across all three days.

About this report

As part of the process to develop the Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan, successful community visioning events were held in February 2018 and a three-day design forum was held in March 2018. While the visioning events had a community focus as they sought to uncover the main issues of concern to local interest groups and residents, the design forum provided a platform for more detailed discussions about development and land allocations. The design forum directly addressed the subject of housing growth and different development scenarios, along with other planning matters.

The results of the visioning events can be found in a separate report and the various individual outcomes of the design forum have been captured in an annotated slideshow. All materials linked to both events are available on the Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan website ¹.

Based on the consultation and engagement process so far, this interim report seeks to draw some conclusions at this stage. These conclusions focus on two areas:

- 1/ A range of draft planning policy topics that have emerged from the engagement work (pages 14 — 21). These draft topics are supported by recommended actions to develop them into more fully-formed planning policies.
- 2/ The emerging spatial strategy, showing how various land parcels currently being considered for development could be successfully integrated (pages 22 — 27).

¹ <https://www.bandmnp.com/>



The visioning events helped uncover some key issues that were taken forward into the design forum for further testing.



The design forum was collaborative and interactive, testing ideas and options.



A wide variety of issues were addressed during the design forum, but potential housing sites were a key focus of debate.

Relationship between the Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood Plan and the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan

The Government introduced the opportunity for local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans through amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Localism Act 2011, and through the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, which set out the requirements for neighbourhood plans.

Neighbourhood plans are policy-based land use plans that need to be in general conformity with both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and with the local plan for the area, in this instance, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) Local Plan.

Neighbourhood plans are produced by community forum groups or parish or town councils. Neighbourhood plans can influence or allocate new housing; produce design policies for allocated sites and general design policies; protect or identify new community facilities; and identify green spaces to be protected from any future development proposals and more.

The TWBC Development Plan for the borough currently comprises the saved Local Plan 2006 policies, the Core Strategy 2010 and the Site Allocations Local Plan 2016. The TWBC planning team is currently preparing the replacement plan for the plan period to 2033. The first draft of this is due to be published later this year. The content and scope of this draft local plan will have a direct influence upon the Brenchley & Matfield

Neighbourhood Plan area. This is because the neighbourhood plans need to be in general conformity with the local plan for the area. Paragraph 31 of the revised NPPF — currently in draft and out for consultation — states that:

“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”

Given that a draft of the replacement TWBC Local Plan is due to be published in the next few months, it is recommended that the Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood Plan process makes no decisions until it has reviewed the scope and content of the draft local plan. This review will allow a greater understanding of the strategic policies that it must be in general conformity with and which non-strategic areas it can continue to influence, shape and direct. There needs to be a constructive and ongoing dialogue between TWBC and Brenchley Parish Council to clarify this relationship.

The housing numbers that must be accommodated by the parish are currently not known and/or made public at the time of this report. Similarly, the specific housing site allocations that may be required to deliver those numbers are also currently not known and/or made public at this time. A further unknown is if site allocations are to be made by the TWBC Local Plan or by the Brenchley & Matfield Neighbourhood Plan.

At some stage, an agreement will need to be reached between the local planning authority (i.e. TWBC) and the qualifying body (i.e. Brenchley Parish Council) about which plan — neighbourhood or local — contains the formal housing site allocations.

Summary of received position statements

As context to the emerging planning policies and the spatial strategy, it is important to first consider the range of position statements received by the design forum. The design forum event received 19 position statements from various clubs, societies, amenity groups and individuals.

A wide range of opinions were expressed through this process of gathering and presenting statements. Much of the focus within the received statements was on the main settlements of Brenchley and Matfield and land uses and activities around these areas. Short summaries of all statements that were received follow here.

01 / *Brenchley and Matfield Primary School Year 6 Children*

A delegation of children from the school spoke about the need for a new school building due to its state of disrepair, and how they would like this new building to include more communal spaces. Another focus of their presentation was on the provision of sports and recreation, and access to nature via safe and enjoyable cycle paths. The children were also keen to establish local work experience opportunities to enhance their future employment prospects.

02 / *Brenchley and Matfield Primary School Governors*

This presentation explained in further detail how the current school building is in disrepair, leading them on to their main focus: the need for a new school. A Community Interest Company (CIC) called “Brenchley 21” has been established to develop the project. It was stated that members of the CIC have a strong personal interest in the future of the parish. The CIC plans to redevelop the current school site for housing to fund the development of the new school, to be located on land immediately south of the Brenchley Road. This new build would also include a new sports pitch to the east, but detached from the main school site.

03 / *Graeme & Karen Stevenson*

Graeme Stevenson presented the views of himself and his wife. The couple felt that any new development in the parish must respect the AONB and Conservation Area in its design and layout. Their general opinion was that more housing would lead to traffic issues, and that there is a need to improve public transport to address this. The couple believe that commercial premises need investment and that a safe pedestrian and cycle link is needed between Brenchley and Matfield villages.

04 / *Gray's Community Café*

A presentation was given on behalf of the owners of Gray's Café. The café supports adults with mild learning difficulties and mental health issues, which allows them to develop social skills and confidence. Gray's buys local produce and keeps prices low to retain the support of the villagers. The prominent location beside the road means the

café benefits from passing trade, and the owners are currently looking into a delivery service for the elderly. Gray's Café is an integral part of the local community and many people value its warmth and friendliness.

05 / Regalpoint Homes

Regalpoint Homes spoke about land they have an interest in, located to the east of Gedge's Hill. The site measures 0.8ha and currently contains an MOT workshop which hopes to relocate to larger premises in Paddock Wood. Planning permission for housing was refused on the site due to the loss of economic use, but Regalpoint Homes argued that there is no demand in the area to take on the premises and that TWBC does not have a five-year housing land supply and so should support redevelopment to residential. Their proposal involves the conversion of existing buildings, although local residents are concerned about potential access difficulties from a steep driveway onto a tight bend on a main road.

06 / Brenchley Eagles Football Club

Paul Usher presented on behalf of the Brenchley Eagles Football Club, emphasising how it is well-loved within the parish. Since its formation in 2014, the sense of community in this junior football has been strengthened and the club has progressed significantly through the league. The coach highlighted how "lifetime friendships are made over bacon baps" at Gray's Café, which is located adjacent to the pitch. The club needs more pitch space and more picnic tables beneath the trees and is currently fund-raising for this with a "Brenchley's Got Talent" competition.

07 / Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Kent

Liz Akenhead spoke on behalf of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). The group is keen to retain the beautiful countryside around the parish and promote higher density development on brownfield land to prevent urban sprawl. The group advocates higher density housing, with the example of Cranbrook given to illustrate how attractive historic towns are often those with the highest densities. Similarly, the group warns against bungalows, as they are land hungry and often do not always remain single storey. CRPE accept there is a need for a certain amount of development, but feel this should be limited and evidence-based.

08 / Matfield Green Cricket Club

Matfield Green Cricket Club offers traditional non-league village cricket for all ages. The focus of their presentation was on sportsmanship, English village culture and fostering a strong sense of community. The visible pitch in Matfield Green draws in passers-by, yet the club prefers to stay small. The players are keen to promote a harmonious way of life through cricket.

09 / Castle Hill Cricket Club

The club is run by a trust which owns the ground and its buildings (machinery store, changing pavilion and clubhouse) inalienably for the purpose of a cricket club. The original landowner who donated the land and his successors in title retain a ransom strip at the edge of the road. There is no general public access, except during cricket matches or training, when anyone may enter and will be

welcomed as a spectator, free of charge. As well as a senior team, the club has an active junior section. Membership is open to all and the bulk of the membership is from or around Brenchley and Matfield. The club does not expect to undertake any major redevelopment in the next 20 years. However, the following works are expected to be undertaken during this period: Resurfacing of the drive into the car park and up to the clubhouse; Replacement of the machinery store with one of approximately the same size on the same site; Improvement to the changing facilities which may involve an extension to the changing pavilion.

10 / Jane Buckley & Paul Spedding

Jane and Paul encouraged participants to think more creatively about social and economic sustainability, with aspects such as affordable housing. The pair advocated for zero-carbon homes, the use of local materials, the provision of charging points for electric vehicles, the reuse of water, and retrofitting sustainable features to existing public buildings. They would like to see a reduction in car use, traffic calming measures, local food growing, wider involvement with schools, and a community energy scheme.

11 / Rydon Homes

Rydon Homes have been granted planning permission for 20 dwellings in Matfield. The presentation emphasised their fabric-first approach to sustainable design. This included the use of high thermal mass, SUDS, an attenuation pond, open space, and a sensitivity towards the local context. The allocation includes affordable housing and smaller units, with ecological enhancement in partnership

with Natural England. The team stated that they are open to further suggestions from the community and plan to work with residents to refine the detailed design.

12 / John Watson, Ruth Baker & Mike Crotax

These three residents teamed up to give a presentation on what they believe should be the priorities of the neighbourhood plan. The group felt that any development and amenities must be on small sites and distributed evenly throughout the parish, including affordable housing and perhaps sheltered and key worker housing. They felt that better connections between the villages are needed, and that it is important to retain the rural setting as found at Matfield Green. The group highlighted traffic issues and suggested that developers could fund traffic-calming and larger improvements to infrastructure.

13 / Hand Consultancy

Michael Hand of Hand Consultancy spoke of a land interest behind Matfield House (Site 18). This is an infill site which adjoins existing residential properties, with a developable area of 2.85ha. The site has a capacity for up to 80 dwellings of mixed sizes, to deliver proportionate growth and sustain local services. Hand Consultancy propose to “respect” the Conservation Area boundary by building outside of it, on land which is enclosed and does not disrupt any Public Rights of Way. The presentation emphasised how this type of infill development is a good alternative to large-scale greenfield development.

14 / *Simon O'Donnell*

Simon spoke of his concern over the limited supply of affordable housing, with the suggestion to provide such accommodation for key workers including local teachers and nurses. He highlighted how smaller sites may not provide any affordable housing and advocated a reduction in the plot number threshold. In conclusion, he stated that there could be the possibility for rural exception sites with a generous land owner to be taken over by a housing association, therefore providing 100% affordable housing on a single site.

15 / *Simon Galwey*

Simon expressed that we, the current generation, are merely custodians of land and it is our responsibility to pass it on in better condition than we inherited. He advocated the use of several small sites over single large developments, with consideration of energy use, high quality design and affordability. He wishes to prevent large lorries passing through the villages and encourage investment into small businesses, with essential infrastructure such as WiFi. Simon believes a children's playground is needed in Matfield and that the two villages need to be better linked.

16 / *Brenchley & Horsmonden Surgery*

Representatives of Brenchley and Horsmonden Surgery submitted a written position statement. In this, they state that while they appreciate there is a need for housing in the villages, the building of a significant number of new units would mean that Brenchley and Horsmonden Surgery would have to redraw its boundary to meet the increased number of residents seeking to register at the practice.

The existing services offered at Brenchley and the branch surgery in Horsmonden may need to change given the problem of finding new GPs and clinical staff. The members conclude by saying that maintaining a clinically safe and manageable patient list is vital to Brenchley and Horsmonden Surgery.

17 / *David Berry*

In his written position statement, David Berry lists the sites from the TWBC "Call for Sites" process and states which he believes would be unsuitable or suitable for development. David lists sites 23, 236, 111, 383, 214, 333, 341, 410, 76, 127, 393 and 215 as unsuitable for development, with reasons such as their disruption to the village character, landscape and access issues. David nominates site 399 for commercial development only and lists the following sites for light commercial or housing development: 208, 401, 353, 18, 242, 36, 414, 220, 348, 242, 406, 41, 103, 80, 34, 417, 439, 41, 403 and 427. David goes on to list criteria that these allocations must follow in order to be successful, such as affordability, high quality design, parking and a proportionate increase in amenities.

18 / *Ready Call*

Ready Call volunteers provide support for the elderly and unwell. In their written submission, the members state that there is a significant need for this volunteer service, to include a regular meeting place for the elderly with dementia. Families contact Ready Call on a daily basis, to provide services such as taking their elderly parents shopping, checking their medicines, visiting them or offering food. Ready Call recognises that there is a need for this type of care but it is not within their remit.

The volunteers state that people are very neighbourly in the village, but the lack of social services is leading to increased demand on Ready Call. The service acknowledges a growing concern of loneliness amongst the older population and believes more needs to be done to combat this.

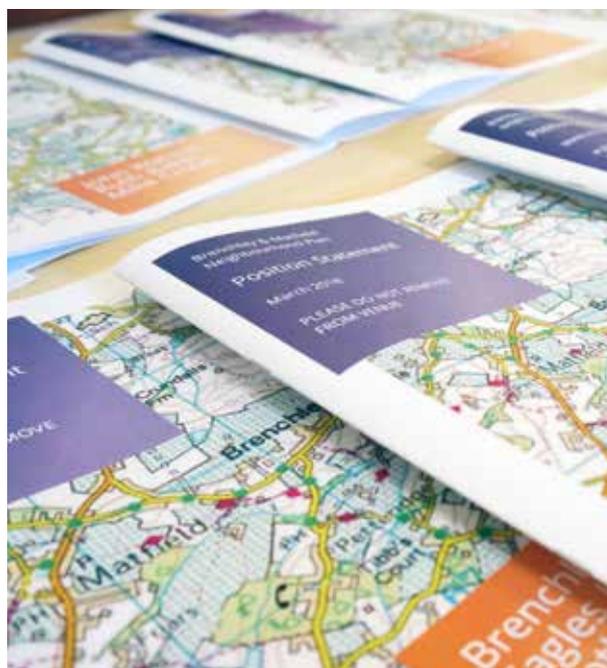
19 / St. Luke's

In his written submission, Reverend Andrew Axon welcomes the provision of additional housing to meet the needs of a growing population. He encourages a housing priority to provide affordable homes in the community for families, younger people and single residents, and homes for older residents wishing to downsize. With an increase in population, Andrew hopes to see an increase in church attendance, yet worries that the location means many will travel by car. He states that this will create an increased demand for parking, which is currently limited, and traffic-calming is needed for church service times. Andrew will discuss with KCC and the Parish Council the best way to address the major risk for the elderly and disabled when crossing the busy road beside the church.

/ Position Statement Conclusions

These position statements form an important part of the evidence base for the neighbourhood plan. Together with the results of the visioning events and the design forum, they are a record of community aspirations and concerns, as well as the intentions of landowners and developers.

As further work on developing the planning policies is undertaken, the neighbourhood plan steering group is encouraged to revisit these statements and seek to link the preferred outcomes expressed within the statements to specific sites and development opportunities across the neighbourhood area. This process can help ensure delivery of various social and community infrastructure elements over the neighbourhood plan period.



The design forum event received 19 position statements from various clubs, societies and amenity groups. Copies of the statements can be found on the neighbourhood plan website: <https://www.bandmnp.com/>

Emerging Planning Policy Themes & Topics



The design forum was a collaborative and consultative process that brought together many groups and individuals involved in the planning process. Alongside its focus on developing an effective spatial plan for the future of the parish, there was debate and discussion on the range of planning policies that could provide the main content for the Brencley & Matfield Neighbourhood Plan. At the conclusion of the design forum, these had broadly fallen into six distinct categories, as follows:

- Access & Movement; Housing; Leisure & Recreation; Design Quality; Business & Employment; and Community.

The following section provides an overview of each policy theme and the range of possible specific policies and actions within each theme. This approach results in a possible range of 36 policies/actions for inclusion in the emerging neighbourhood plan.

Access & Movement

Policy Theme & Actions

Many local residents have concerns about the impact of vehicular traffic, but this policy topic needs to consider all modes of access and movement if it is to deliver a holistic solution to the issues within the parish. The policies within this section are likely to include parish-wide approaches together with specific interventions.

Policies will need to follow a user hierarchy, first addressing the needs of the pedestrian, then the cyclist, and then public transport user, service vehicles and then the car driver.

The opportunity for a non-vehicular connection between Brenchley and Matfield was often mentioned in the position statements through a dedicated footpath and cycle route between the two, both north and south of the settlements. Other specific interventions include expanding the 30 mph speed limit to the outer edges of the villages; introducing a 20 mph speed limit within the village centres along with measures to enforce this; introducing new pedestrian crossings at key locations, and allocating land for electric charging points. New developments could provide funds for a community shuttle bus.

Five areas that have been identified as future planning policies or projects are listed on the right.



Walking is the primary mode of travel but it is not an attractive option across the parish. A range of effective measures are required to address this.



Greater distances can be covered by bike than on foot, helping link the main villages, but the necessary infrastructure to make it attractive is not in place.



Buses provide connections to larger towns for those that cannot or do not wish to drive. The plan needs to offer support for better bus services, where it can.



The impact of HGVs can be detrimental to quality of life. The plan needs to offer support for new routing options to avoid sensitive areas, if it can.



Car parking within new developments needs to be sensitive and appropriate to the context, to minimise the visual impact upon the village character.

Housing

Policy Theme & Actions

The topic of housing is often contentious due to issues of site locations, the scale of change and design quality. This policy theme needs to therefore address these issues and shape housing development which works for the community and complements the local rural character. For development to be seen as a worthwhile addition to the parish, it is critical that tangible community benefits are delivered as a direct consequence of house building. Without such clear outcomes, there will be an understandable reluctance within the community to accept the potential growth.

Within this topic, the approach needs to consider the parish as a whole (e.g. affordability) and define the detail of certain development sites (e.g. site specific allocations). Suggested parish-wide policies included preventing smaller dwellings from being developed into larger homes; providing a higher proportion of affordable housing than is required by the local plan; and facilitating a more coordinated approach between landowners to ensure linked-up developments. Other topics included a mixed community of young and old living in new homes on the existing school site; and support for custom build houses.

Five areas that have been identified as future planning policies or projects are listed on the right.



Making sure the various housing allocations fit together effectively to create a sustainable spatial strategy will be key role of the plan.



New development must deliver the necessary uplift in social and community infrastructure, keeping pace with a growing population.



The right housing locations in the parish must be agreed, through a working partnership with the TWBC Local Plan process.



The right housing mix is required, including a need for smaller units for older people and younger buyers who wish to stay in the parish.



New homes need to be affordable for local people. The types of affordable and social housing, and the percentage, should meet local needs.

Leisure & Recreation

Policy Theme & Actions

Within the topic of leisure and recreation, there has been particular focus on the idea of a social and sports hub centred around the existing facilities of Gray's Community Cafe, the Memorial Hall, bowls and tennis. Brenchley Eagles Football Club play home matches on the adjacent pitches. The players and their families enjoy the pitch side atmosphere, before and after games.

Policies and projects to enhance this include increasing the pitch and picnic table provision on the site and focusing any new leisure facilities within this area, to further strengthen its intensity and vibrancy. Locating the new school sports pitch immediately south of the existing pitches could further strength this cluster of uses.

In terms of parish-wide leisure and recreation, suggestions include supporting specific locations for new children's play areas around the parish and using the anti-coalescence "green gap" policy between the main settlements to open up new recreational routes, including those for horse riders.

Five areas that have been identified as future planning policies or projects are listed on the right.



Increased public access to open countryside surrounding the main settlements, especially for horse riders, could be a key aim of the plan.



Small interventions, such as benches, social spaces and picnic tables, can lead to greater social interaction and community spirit.



Backing for local sports teams could be integral to the plan, with policies that support future expansion or forward investment plans.



Nurturing a social and sports hub around the current sports facilities and the adjacent Gray's cafe could become a key policy within the plan.



A site for an equipped children's play area should be identified in Matfield and the children's play equipment in Brenchley should be improved.

Design Quality

Policy Theme & Actions

From discussions, many anxieties about new development expressed by residents are about the quality of the development, rather than the principle of development itself. There is therefore a need for the plan to ensure that new buildings are of the highest quality.

One stand-out point within the Brenchley & Matfield plan could be the encouragement of modern or contemporary design in certain locations, while seeking to retain the traditional local character of the wider parish. This is worth pursuing in more detail as it could become an exemplar policy for other neighbourhood plans.

Suggested sustainability policies include the implementation of sustainable design, such as “eco-buildings” and “zero-carbon” homes. In terms of design and materials, suggested policies are the use of a palette of traditional materials and a requirement for developers to present their designs to the parish council prior to making an application. Historic settlements can benefit from carefully designed parking courtyards, therefore reducing the dominance of parked cars.

Five areas that have been identified as future planning policies or projects are listed on the right.



There is a willingness to see a proportion of high quality contemporary or modern designs in new development to provide a truly 21st Century legacy.



Designs should be appropriate for the site and respond to the context. The aim should be to deliver award-winning architecture.



Creative and thoughtful designs for 21st Century living are to be encouraged, supporting lifestyles and the family units of the future.



New architecture could be green, with landscape works integrated from the outset to ensure a softer approach to the built environment.



Architecture should be resource efficient with respect to energy, water, land use and materials. Policies should seek the highest standards.

Business & Employment

Policy Theme & Actions

The parish needs to be a place to live and to work, to maintain its economic base and dissuade too much out-commuting. Therefore, business and employment are needed to help the parish flourish.

This includes encouraging retail provision in key locations; encouraging local employment which could further sustain local retail (e.g. small office spaces close to shops and services); support for working from home within new properties (e.g. home office spaces); the provision of small office units within larger residential developments; more joined-up bridleways to support equestrian businesses; and support for tourist accommodation.

There is also a wish to see better communication infrastructure. This would include improving the phone signal and internet speeds, making home working and small offices more attractive. Phone signals could be boosted by installing a mast on the church spire so as not to disrupt the rural landscape. It should be noted that neighbourhood plans are limited in their powers to encourage investment of this type, that is often strategic or national in nature.

Five areas that have been identified as future planning policies or projects are listed on the right.



Small-scale office and employment spaces could be considered within new housing developments, or a larger business hub with shared resources.



Local food and drink can become a focus for local employment and new retail opportunities. What more can be done to support this?



Communication infrastructure, such as mobile signals and broadband, needs further investment and improvement.



Working from home is likely to offer greater employment opportunities in future. New homes could accommodate this with dedicated spaces.



Village shops are both an economic and social activity. Support for retail outlets can be provided by the neighbourhood plan.

Community

Policy Theme & Actions

The policy theme of social and community infrastructure runs through many different areas, which have traditionally been segregated into their own category, for example education and retail. The approach suggested here is to wrap these topics together to demonstrate the interrelated nature of these areas and how they all support quality of life within the parish.

Suggested areas include site-specific policy support for the new school project (i.e. the land swap either side of the main road in Brenchley); encouraging further investment into the cluster of social and sporting activity in Brenchley; support for small-scale social spaces within existing and new developments, such as benches, pocket parks and small squares; establishing a community energy project; and increasing the availability and/or marketing of local produce. Site 18 – north of Matfield House, Matfield – was put forward as being suitable for a community garden, orchard or allotments. This could link into the other policies (e.g. local produce, new small-scale retail) and provide many social and mental health benefits to parish residents.

Five areas that have been identified as future planning policies or projects are listed on the right.



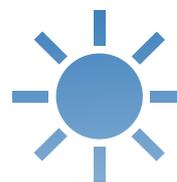
If a new school is built, this is likely to be a key driver of social and community investment and the plan could provide policy support for this.



All new residential areas could include small, dedicated places for positive social interaction, where generations can mix and exchange ideas.



Through policy, the plan could seek to secure locations for a community orchard or similar growing spaces, to help provide local produce for sale.



Community energy schemes can be supported through the neighbourhood plan, with site-specific policy support.



The Kent countryside is well-known for fruit growing. The plan can support greater promotion of local produce.

Summary of the six policy themes



ACCESS & MOVEMENT — Including discreet car parking that is integral to good design.



HOUSING — Ensure new homes are built in the right place and are of the right size.



LEISURE & RECREATION — Including investment in a sports and social hub.



DESIGN QUALITY — Ensure that new architecture is of the highest quality.



BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT — Create a thriving living and working village.



COMMUNITY — The continued success of existing and support for new operations.

Emerging Spatial Strategy

The debate and discussion during the design forum led to the development of a draft spatial strategy to guide future development within the parish. This drawing was created to allow different options and outcomes to be tested against a range of criteria. *It must be stressed that this draft spatial strategy drawing will be subject to further consideration, testing, consultation and engagement with a wide variety of groups, actors and agencies and is certainly not final or fixed.*

Based on the drawing that emerged at the end of the third day, there follows a series of spatial strategy scenarios that have been subject to further consideration since the Design Forum for possible appropriateness and suitability. These different scenarios — and the supporting commentary — can become the basis for future dialogue between Brenchley Parish Council and/or the Steering Group and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and for constructive conversations within the local community.





The Current Situation

The built environment elements of the parish comprise the three main settlements of Matfield, Brenchley and Petteridge. The smallest of the three is the hamlet of Petteridge and while it once contained a variety of industrial and employment uses in the latter part of the 20th Century, these have now gone. The village is now almost entirely residential in nature, with some very limited social and community facilities, such as the Hopbine pub.

The highly picturesque village green in Matfield, edged to the north by grander properties (such as the Grade I listed Matfield House) and often host to village cricket matches, provides a memorable image of the parish. Matfield also supports a small village butcher's shop and two pubs (the Star and the Poet) but no longer has a post office or general food store.

The larger village hall and the smaller pavilion building are situated south of the village green.

Brenchley lies to the east of Matfield and hosts the primary school and an important cluster of social and sporting facilities — the popular Gray's community cafe, a nursery and crèche (Kinderversity), the Memorial Hall and adjacent bowling green, football pitches and tennis courts. It also has a small village shop and post office and a butchers.

It is from this baseline assessment that possible future scenarios have been developed. The approach taken was as follows:

- How can future housing growth protect and enhance existing community facilities and also bring new investment into future facilities?
- How and where can the existing settlement patterns accommodate new growth in the most sensitive and sustainable way?



Scenario 01 — Current Projects & Proposals Only

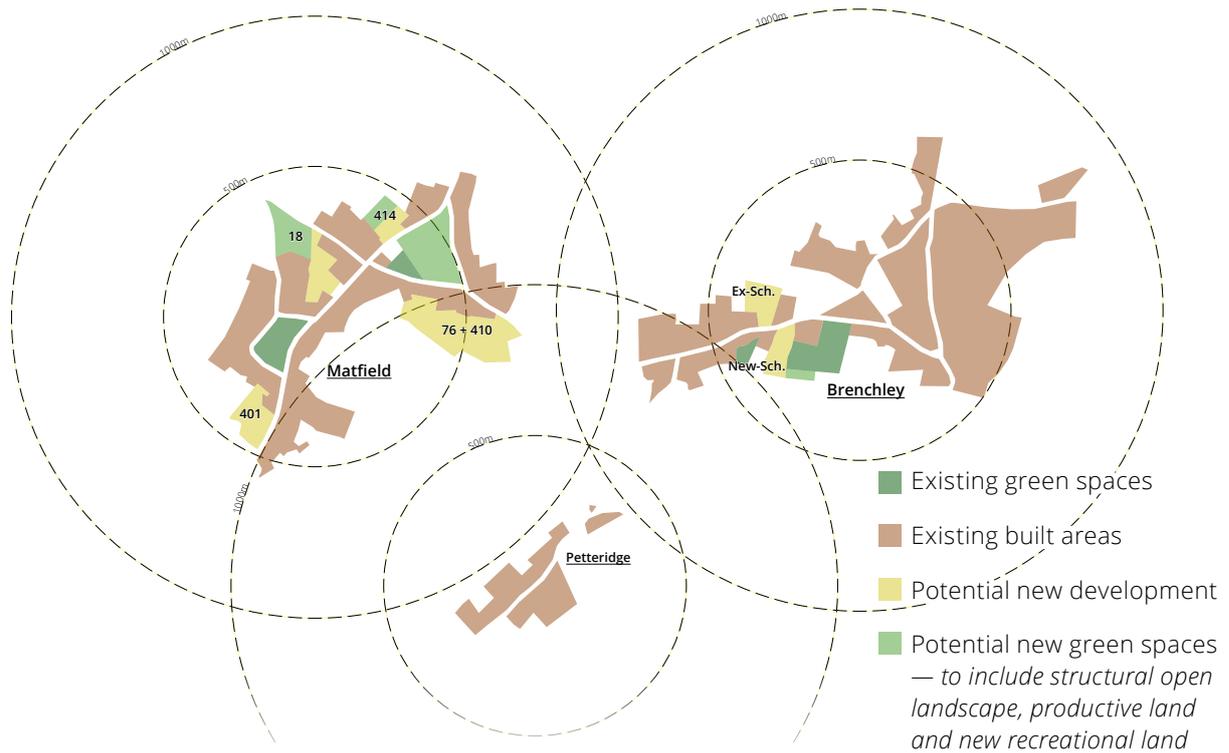
The diagram above shows in yellow the new development options based on proposals which already have planning permission or are being actively pursued at this time by groups within the parish. In Matfield, this includes site 414 that is controlled by Rydon Homes and has an extant permission for 20 new homes. Meanwhile, in Brenchley, a project being led by the Brenchley 21 CIC is seeking to build a new school south of the main road and release the land to the north for around 50 new homes. The value generated by the new homes would be used to fund the construction of the new school. See position statement no. 02 on page 9.

If just these two projects are brought forward and delivered on the ground, they will have a limited influence upon the settlement patterns in both villages in that neither village will

grow significantly, nor will the limits to build development be extended in any significant way. A consequence of the school swap will be a strengthening of the current community focus south of the road. Being closer to the existing cluster of activities (e.g. Memorial Hall, Gray's, tennis bowls, football etc) will further boost the significance of this cluster.

The full benefits will only be realised however, if effective walking links between the various elements of the cluster are introduced. For example, the school site users should be able to access the existing sports pitches to the east without first having to first head north to use the main road before dropping back south.

Although a green frontage is proposed, the development of site 414 will start to close a gap between areas of existing development, further intensifying Matfield.



Scenario 02 — Further Development in Matfield

Assuming the current projects and proposal in the first scenario do come forward, this second scenario adds to this a greater level of development, focused on Matfield only. Land to the south of the village hall is developed (site 401). This site lies just outside the 500m walking catchment centred on the Chestnut Lane / Maidstone Road / Brenchley Road crossroads, so is close enough to support existing facilities without the need to drive, and it sits opposite existing development so cannot be considered “ribbon development” — a form of growth that many local people do not wish to see.

Site 18 sits north of Matfield House and was the subject of a position statement during the design forum — see statement no. 12 on page 11. While the position statement expressed

a wish to develop the far north-west corner only, providing a green gap to the south, this diagram shows the reverse. Higher density development to the south, within the Conservation Area — which will automatically demand a higher standard of architectural quality — and a preservation of the green approach from Five Wents. There is, however, local opposition to this idea from residents of Chestnut Lane.

It is acknowledged that there is considerable opposition to the development of sites 76 and 410. This opposition was expressed at the visioning events and both during and after the design forum. It is shown here as a possible development option that could help deliver a cluster of energy efficient south-facing homes and provide funding and/or land to deliver the widely-supported traffic-free link between Brenchley and Matfield.



Scenario 03 — Further Development in Brenchley

In this diagram, the new and/or enhanced traffic-free routes have been shown, to the north and south. While the northern route could generally use existing rights of way (upgraded and with some minor additions), the southern route would also require upgrading of some rights of way and a length of new right of way to be secured. The development of sites 76 and 410 can provide a positive south-facing edge overlooking this route.

This diagram also shows a greater level of development within Brenchley, to help counter-balance the growth in Matfield. Balanced development between the two settlements is seen as an important aim and outcome of the neighbourhood plan, so that no one village feels it is being required to absorb all the burdens (and benefits) of new development.

Site 34 lies to the south of the Brenchley Road / High Street and could accommodate some limited development on a south-facing slope. Its location immediately to the east of the current sports pitches means that good walking and cycling connections would be required. A similar message applies to the new school, i.e. the site should not become cut off from its surroundings in a way that requires those on foot or on a bike to travel via the Brenchley Road for very short trips.

Site 406 on Holly Bank, although in a Conservation Area, was seen as a possible further infill site, with limited development. This could be similar in scale and form to the nearby Lawns development, a scheme widely praised by local residents.

These two areas, plus the school swap, were seen as the logical extents to new development in Brenchley, to keep the village compact.

Summary of the scenario testing

- The development scenarios in this report are not exclusive of other options and none of them should be treated as proposals. They have been developed through the design forum process to allow the testing of ideas, options and outcomes.
- Other viable scenarios may well exist and the local community is encouraged to share their ideas. However, it is recommended that the steering group and/or the parish council seek to establish a preferred spatial strategy, thereby helping provide confidence to residents and landowners/developers alike.
- A preferred spatial strategy can only become more established through close cooperation with TWBC planning team. The neighbourhood plan team needs to understand the strategic policy approach in the emerging TWBC Local Plan to then assess how this can be made to fit with the neighbourhood plan ambitions.
- It should be noted that the need for Brenchley & Matfield to accommodate a substantial level of new development through the replacement TWBC Local Plan is yet to be formally established. Various strategic options are under consideration — such as a new garden village within the borough — and these could have a direct impact on the level of development required within the parish, bringing numbers down or up. Until more is known about these strategic options, the scenarios need to remain flexible and adaptable.
- Greater technical knowledge about the various sites is required (e.g. topography, soil conditions, flood and drainage characteristics etc) to allow greater confidence about the suitability of land for development. It is understood that TWBC are undertaking such technical assessments and this information needs to be shared with the neighbourhood plan group so it can further develop its preferred spatial strategy.
- A balanced approach towards new homes in the two main settlements is encouraged, so as not to cause divisions and discord within the community — “share the pain, share the gain” is a useful refrain here.
- New developments in and around both settlements can contribute to joint infrastructure, such as the “green traffic-free super-highway” link requested by many people. If development is focused in only one of the two main settlements then financial support for joint infrastructure is less likely to happen.
- Encouraging compact settlement patterns creates a positive intensity to living and working that will make the revival of retail facilities and other community projects within the centre of the villages more likely. Dispersed development — for example, locating large areas of housing away from the main settlements, south of the parish at Kipping’s Cross — will fail to create the critical mass needed to better support social and community facilities.

Next Steps

The work completed so far gives the Brenchley & Matfield neighbourhood plan steering group a strong framework for the creation of a first full draft of a neighbourhood plan. The steering group may also decide to organise around a somewhat different structure, as the conclusions from the design forum are not fixed. However, following further engagement with the local community, the steering group may wish to continue with this strategy.

The two main component parts – i.e. a policy framework and spatial strategy – are now well-developed if by no means final. Through continued conversations and engagement with the public, further detail can now be added to this framework to create the pre-submission consultation version of the neighbourhood plan. It is acknowledged that only a small percentage of the resident population were directly engaged with the Visioning Events and the Design Forum and further, wider engagement is now necessary.

Emerging Planning Policy Themes & Topics

This report sets out six policy themes with five policy and/or action points in each – 36 policy/action points in total. Each of the individual policy/actions identified by the icons over pages 15 — 20 can be taken forward by the group and developed in more detail. Some of these will require focused research to support the evidence base for the plan. This could be desktop or field research (e.g. architectural design guides) or survey/questionnaire research (e.g. demand for employment space). The level of research needed to add the detail will vary

from topic to topic. Members of the steering group can organise themselves to create “task and finish” groups to push this element forward. It is also recommended that a review of the 36 policy/action points is undertaken by the steering group as a next step, to make sure they are the right ones to take forward.

Emerging Spatial Strategy

This element requires an engagement with TWBC to move it forwards from here. This is not straightforward, as more technical knowledge about the sites is required and there are still no definitive housing requirements from TWBC (expressed in numbers) for the parish or the individual settlements. That said, there is now a concept drawing that can be influenced/shaped by this information as and when it comes forwards.

The diagram sequence on pages 23 — 26 in the report “unpacks” the drawings that were developed at the design forum to show how the different scenarios could be arranged or linked. But this report is keen to stress that these are not the only ways to develop this aspect of the plan and that opposition exists from various quarters to the ideas shown.

It is understood that TWBC has offered to run site allocation workshops with neighbourhood planning group in their area later this year to coordinate a joint response to housing allocations. It is expected that the spatial strategy diagrams in this report will be a useful input to such a workshop session.



