



**BRENCLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH  
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
CONSULTATION STATEMENT  
OCTOBER 2021**

*Prepared in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and  
Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012-2017*





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## 1. Introduction

This Consultation Statement has been prepared in support of the draft Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Plan. It outlines the approach taken to consultation, lists the people and organisations who were consulted, summarises the main issues and concerns raised and describes how these were considered and, where relevant, were addressed in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

## 2. Background

The decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan emerged from work on a Parish Plan, including a Parish Plan survey in November 2016 that sought community views on a wide range of planning and development issues. It was decided that a Neighbourhood Plan would best enable the community to shape future development in ways that reflected their views and priorities.

A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) was formed in in September 2017 to work on the Plan on behalf of and in consultation with the Parish Council, which is the organisation responsible for the Plan. The NPSG originally consisted of three Parish Councillors and nine individuals who volunteered to be involved. Over time several members of the NPSG have withdrawn, leaving two Councillors and five other members.

## 3. Purpose and approach of consultation

In line with requirements for Neighbourhood Plans, the purpose of consultation was to try to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan reflected the views and ideas of the community, while also being responsive to the comments and advice of Statutory Consultees. Substantial efforts were made throughout the process to keep the community informed and involved:

- Events were held at critical points both to inform and seek suggestions from the community. The points raised and outcome for each event were recorded and taken into account as the Plan was developed.
- Surveys were undertaken on Housing Needs and Business & Employment.
- A variety of media were used to reach out to the community, to provide them with access to emerging ideas and key documents and seek their views:
  - Key documents were placed on a dedicated website ([www.bandmnp.com](http://www.bandmnp.com)) and were made available at public places in the parish, including public houses, community halls, the Post Office and Village Halls. Comments and suggestions were invited.
  - Regular articles were placed in Roundabout, the monthly community magazine, to provide updates, advise where further information and documents could be found and advertise events.
  - Posters were put up to advertise events.
  - Postings on social media alerted the community to events and invited feedback.

- A series of meetings were held with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the Planning Authority for Brenchley and Matfield Parish, to ensure consistency with the emerging Local Plan and draw on their planning experience.
- Statutory Consultees were approached to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan reflected wider plans, policies and laws.

#### 4. The consultation process

Among key points that emerged from the Parish Plan Survey of November 2016 were:

- Widespread acceptance of the principle of limited additional development, with a clear preference for small-scale developments, with more small houses and avoiding ribbon development;
- Prioritisation of meeting the needs of young families, first-time buyers and those wanting to downsize;
- Strong support for maintaining the rural village character of the parish and protecting the environment;
- The need to tackle problems caused by the increasing amount and speed of traffic;
- The importance for both businesses and domestic users of improving internet speed and mobile reception

During the Neighbourhood Plan process a series of events were held:

- Two Visioning Events in February 2018 provided briefing on the purpose and process of neighbourhood planning and sought community views on current concerns and key issues that the Plan needed to address. The 161 participants were asked to identify what they valued about the parish and what they saw as key challenges and opportunities for the future for different parts of the community; they also commented on what designs of housing were preferred, possible locations, traffic issues and safety. The greatest concerns were about traffic, housing, maintaining the character and beauty of the parish, super-fast broadband and shops.
- A 3-day Design Forum in March 2018 enabled people to explore ideas and issues in more detail. The Forum began with 15 oral presentations from individuals and organisations. Options for locations of development in both Brenchley and Matfield were discussed, along with ideas on design, and participants walked around each village to see issues on the ground. Displays were mounted each evening for those unable to attend during the day, with comments being written on wall charts. A final meeting, attended by 110 residents, summarised the outcomes. The main issues emerging related to: the location, type and design of housing, including a preference for any development to be in or around the villages rather than dispersed; the future of the school; and traffic. At the end of the Forum, initial ideas on policy themes for the Neighbourhood Plan were identified.
- An Interim Report in November 2018 covered the work to date, including the Visioning Event and the Three-day Design Forum and other work by the NPSG. The report also set out more detail on six emerging policy themes. An evening meeting was held, also in November 2018 and with attendance of 75, to inform local residents of the work so far, the contents of the Interim Report and to introduce the emerging policy themes.

- Drop-in sessions were run on the following two days for those unable to attend the meeting. These were attended by 50-55 residents. Comments were also sought through online and social media.
- Following further work to take into account views on the ideas in the Interim report, two more community drop-in events were held, in February and March 2019, to seek further views of the community on the draft work.
- Drop-in events were held on an evening and a Saturday morning in March 2020.
- The Covid pandemic, and associated restrictions, prevented holding further public consultation meetings. Work on the Plan nevertheless continued, including conducting surveys of Housing Needs and Business, as well as dialogue through Zoom and email with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- before the Regulation 14 consultation, letters were sent to the landowners of the proposed Local Green Spaces notifying them of the proposed designation. Following representations from some landowners and consultation with TWBC, the Parish Council removed some proposed Local Green Spaces from the draft Plan before the Regulation 14 consultation took place.

## 5. The Regulation 14 consultation

Following approval by the Parish Council of the Reg 14 Consultation draft, the Reg 14 consultation took place from 17 May to 28 June. This was advertised through a leaflet delivered to households, posters, articles in Roundabout and through postings on social media. The draft Plan and draft Sustainability Appraisal were made available online and ten drop-in events were held to enable residents to read a paper copy of the Plan and discuss issues with members of the Steering Group. The community was invited to respond online or, if necessary, on paper to a Survey Monkey questionnaire. The Plan was also sent to Statutory consultees and to a range of local organisations and businesses (see Annex 1).

Written responses to the consultation were received from:

### Statutory Consultees

Environment Agency  
 Highways England  
 Historic England  
 High Weald Joint Advisory Committee  
 KCC Natural England (Sharon Jenkins)  
 Southern Water  
 TWBC

### Other Organisations

JAC Planning  
 Tenax Schools Trust

Three individuals submitted comments by emails rather than through the Survey Monkey.

## 6. Overview of feedback

281 comments were received, comprising 120 from statutory and other organisations and 161 from individuals. These are individually tabulated in summary form in Annex 2, along with the responses to them and resulting changes to the draft Plan.

46 returns were received to the Survey, including 158 comments. Overall, 85% of respondents agreed with the vision set out in the Plan and 89% supported the Plan's overall approach. The average support for individual objectives and their related policies was 92%, with the lowest figure being 76% on Objective H2 on limiting development to the LBD. All other objectives attracted over 80% support, with over three-quarters supported by more than 90%.

The table below summarises the number of comments on each area from Statutory and other organisations and from the community.

Policy	Statutory / Other orgs.	Community	Total
Housing	49	63	112
Design	10	14	24
Business and Employment	7	19	26
Landscape and Environment	22	18	40
Access and Movement	7	32	39
Community, Leisure and Recreation	4	10	14
Other	21	5	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>281</b>

The limited number of comments on individual issues precludes more detailed statistical analysis. The following paragraphs summarise the main issues raised in the responses:

### Chapters 1-5

Most comments were on presentational issues or points of detail, or related to policy issues that were picked up later in the policy sections.

### Housing

Several comments related to the consistency of H1 with national policy, while some community comments questioned the overall level of development. There were several comments on the Limits to Built Development (LBDs), with a few wanting some extension, either to facilitate a particular development or more generally. Comments supported the need for affordable housing and housing for young families, with preference given to local people and those wishing to downsize. Concerns were expressed about windfall sites.

### Design

The main issues raised were on the need to reconcile respect for tradition with contemporary design, and on the importance of environmental sustainability.

### Business and Employment

Comments mainly related to controls on redesignating agricultural and other commercial sites for housing and on the importance of improved broadband.

### **Landscape and Environment**

There were concerns about whether development in practice was being required to respect the environment the AONB. Other comments however cautioned against environmental controls becoming a straitjacket.

### **Access and Movement**

Comments focussed on pedestrian safety and speed limits. There were divergent views both on parking and on electric charging points.

### **Community, Leisure and Recreation**

Issues raised included the need to support the school, to ensure that community services could handle the impact of development and to provide additional playground facilities.

## **7. Follow up to the Regulation 14 consultation**

The feedback received was assessed by the Steering Group and amendments and additions were made, as indicated in Annex 2. The resulting revised draft was also reviewed for accessibility to make it as easy as possible to read, resulting in the Reg 15 draft.

### **Annexes**

1. Statutory and other organisations consulted
2. Comments received, responses and changes to the draft Plan

## ANNEX 1

### Regulation 14 Consultees

#### **Statutory and other external bodies**

Environment Agency  
Forestry Commission  
Highways England  
High Weald AONB Unit  
Historic England  
Homes England  
Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group  
Kent County Council  
Kent Wildlife Trust  
National Grid  
Natural England  
Network Rail  
South East Water  
Southern Water  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Woodland Trust

#### **Neighbouring Parish and Town Councils**

Capel Parish Council  
East Peckham Parish Council  
Horsmonden Parish Council  
Lamberhurst Parish Council  
Paddock Wood Town Council  
Pembury Parish Council

#### **Community Organisations and Services**

All Saints' Church, Brenchley  
Bowls Club  
Brenchley Choral Society  
Brenchley Dental Surgery  
Brenchley & Matfield Horticultural Society  
Brenchley & Matfield Lawn Tennis Club  
Brenchley & Matfield Local History Society  
Brenchley and Matfield Parish Archive  
Brenchley Pre-School  
Brenchley & Matfield Primary School and Tenax Schools Trust  
Brenchley & Matfield Scout Group  
Brenchley Junior Football Club  
Castle Hill Cricket Club

Ebenezer Chapel, Matfield  
Howell Surgery  
Kinderversity  
Matfield & District Riders' Association  
Matfield Green Cricket Club  
Matfield Women's Institute  
St. Luke's Church, Matfield  
Squash Club  
Teise District Guides

**Respondents to the Business Survey**

The 28 local businesses that replied to the Business Survey and provided an email address

**Housebuilders concerned with major sites within the parish:**

Clarendon Homes  
Fernham Homes  
Rydon Homes  
Town and Country Housing (Peabody Group)