August 2015

Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan

2015 – 2030

Pre – Submission Draft for Consultation 2015

For ease of reference The Plan is divided into four colour coded sections:

Orange – Foreword & Introduction
Green – Rural Environment
Red - Local facilities & Housing
Blue - Local Economy, Communications & Transport

10th August 2015

Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan

2015 – 2030

Draft Pre – Submission for Consultation 2015

Qualifying Body

Bethersden Parish Council

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1. Foreword

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. It provides an exciting opportunity for local communities to shape development and growth in their area through the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. Bethersden has been keen to take advantage of this to deliver a vision for the parish, which will meet the community's aspirations and needs for the period 2015 – 2030.

In 2002 the parish produced a Parish Plan and Design Statement, both of which proved to be very successful in reflecting the views of the community and in their subsequent implementation. They have informed the planning policies in this plan.

We expect this same success to prevail with our Neighbourhood Plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has so enthusiastically helped with this project, and we look forward to its successful implementation.

Signed by
Chairman Parish Council

2. Vision

Our vision is for Bethersden to continue to thrive, by meeting the changing needs of the community whilst preserving the distinctive rural character, landscape and setting of the parish that has evolved over nine centuries

Our vision supports the vision of the Greater Ashford Local Plan (2008) which states '"Set in the heart of the Garden of England, Ashford borough provides a safe, healthy and thriving environment that offers an excellent quality of life to all who live, work and visit the area. "

Each policy in the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Bethersden parish has been tested to ensure it meets this Vision and accords with local people's responses.

3. List of Policies

Managing our rural environment:

R 1 Views and Village Setting

R 2 Landscape Character & Design

R 3 Conservation of Fauna & Flora

R 4 Public rights of way

R 5 Local Green Space Designation

R 6 Recreation Areas & Community use

R 7 Drainage & water management

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H 1 New Residential Development

H 2 Housing Site Allocation

H 3 Site A Next to Village Hall

H 4 Site B, Next to Village School

H 5 Site C, Next to Lovelace

H 6 Local Needs Housing

H 7 Housing Design Standards

H 8 Housing Layout

H 9 Windfall Housing Development

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H 12 Parking

Economy, Communications, Transport and Infrastructure

CT 1 Business or Commercial Development

CT 2 Maintenance of local service centre

CT 3 Services

CT 4 Heavy goods traffic – New Facilities

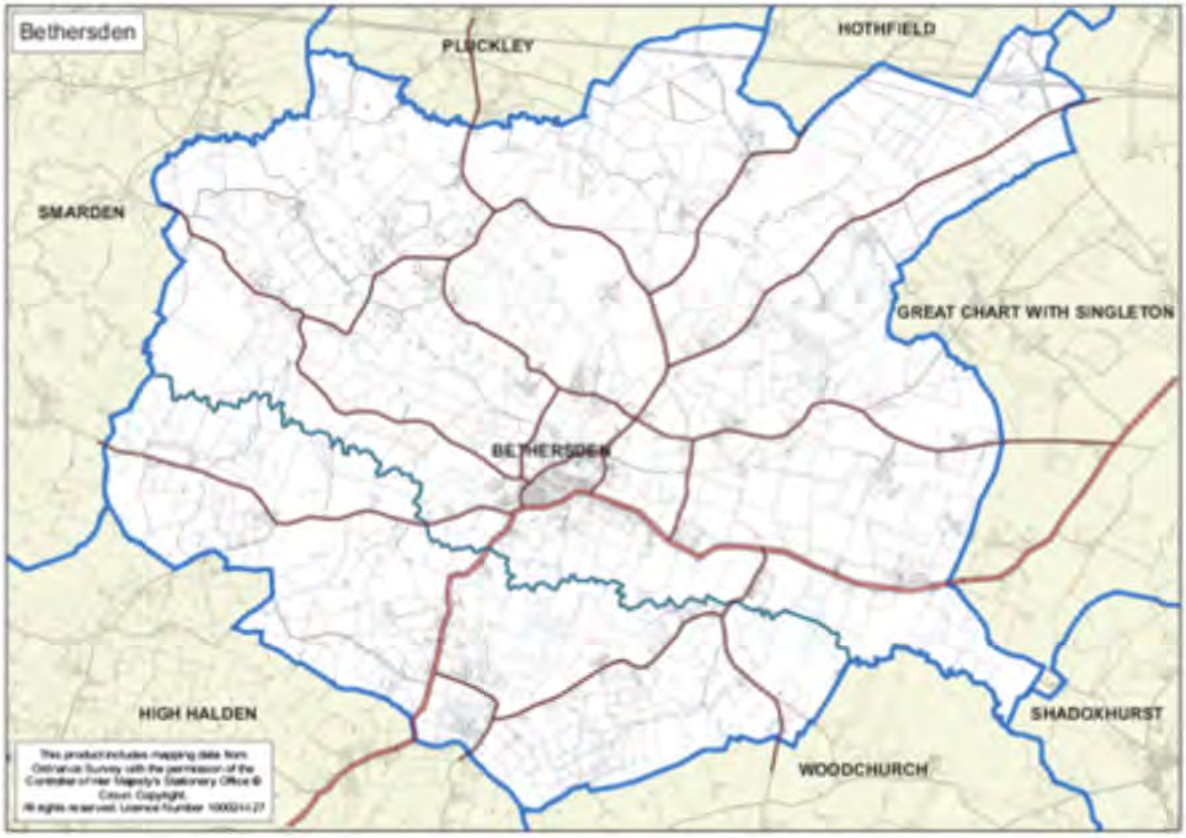
CT 5 Traffic Flow and Highway Safety

4. Neighbourhood Plan Area

Following an application from the Bethersden Parish Council on 5th December 2013, the Ashford Borough Council Cabinet approved the designation of the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan Area on the 13th February 2014. In this it formally confirmed that Bethersden Parish Council will be preparing the neighbourhood plan and are considered a relevant body under the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan Area is shown below.

The one consultation response received was countersigned by three households and supported the Neighbourhood Area Application.

The plan area is considered acceptable in planning terms and the parish council has followed due process in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations, Part 2, S.5(1).



5. Introduction

5.1 About our Neighbourhood Plan.

The Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan reflects community-wide opinion, comments, observations and concerns about its future, and surveys. It brings them together with Census information, strategic and statistical evidence into a document that is supported by robust analysis and community engagement and support that mirrors the community's overwhelming desire for Bethersden to continue to be a great place to live and work both now and for future generations.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan has been produced through a series of working groups, guided by a Steering Committee consisting of community volunteers, and members of the Parish Council. The Parish Council have played an active role in overseeing the Plan, making sure it has been produced in co-operation with Ashford Borough Council and ensuring adequate funds were available to support the project.

Bethersden parish consists of a village where approximately half the inhabitants live. The remainder live in the more rural areas around the village, including in the hamlets of Wissenden & Tuesnoad to the north west, and Brissenden to the southeast.

5.2 History of Bethersden parish

The character of Bethersden today is based on nearly 1000 years of farming. In 1640, the population had grown to 400, rose to over 1120 by the 1850s, and is now around 1400. The 1908 Ordnance Survey map shows the village in two parts, the larger part along The Street, linked by a well-used footpath across open fields (now the George Field) to a smaller group of buildings including the Forge, at the point where Forge Hill meets the A28 at Forge Corner.

The Street was mainly residential but included shops, St. Margaret's church and the pub. Forge Corner was more commercial in character, with the blacksmith's forge and carpenters workshops, ideally placed on the main road from Ashford to Tenterden. Forge Corner is now mainly residential but The Street has changed only slightly in recent years.

The George Field, which historically separated the two areas of the village, is still there today, and apart from a small number of houses on its western boundary, is now a landscaped recreation area in the centre of the village, owned by the Parish Council which also owns the Recreation Ground in Mill Road, with a wide range of sports and playground facilities.

A thriving and viable Parish has to strike a balance between its traditional character and the demands of modern life and all that that implies. Agricultural employment has declined since the middle of the last century, but a surprising diversity of other businesses has evolved, covering retail, manufacturing and service industries based in and around the village, often in converted agricultural buildings. However, the centre of the village is mainly residential in character and mostly built before the 1900s, although there has been significant development of both Council and private properties from the 1930s through the 1970s, with two smaller developments in the 1990s. The current problem of high house prices, particularly for young local families, is being met by a new development including both Local Needs houses (mainly for rent to those with a link to the village) and also houses of various sizes to meet general demand.

The need to provide a framework for the future development of Bethersden, while retaining the essential elements of its character, led to the production of the Bethersden Parish Plan in 2003. The success of the Parish Plan has led to the current work on The Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan, which extends the principles of the Parish Plan but will provide for considerably greater influence on future developments in the parish.

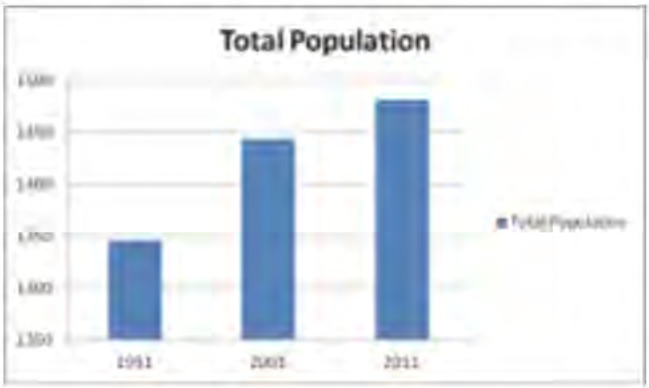
5.3 Bethersden in relation to Ashford Town & environs

The village is on the A28 road, about six miles from the centre of Ashford, our Borough town. Ashford is an important communications centre as it is located on the M20 motorway, which provides high-speed access to the national network to the west and to the channel ports to the east. The international rail station provides high-speed services to London and also the continent via the Channel Tunnel. Regular bus services from the centre of the village provide an important link to local towns.

5.4 Data Snapshot and Socio-economic profile

Population

The 2011 Census gives a population for the parish of 1481 people, an increase of 2.6% from 2001 (1443 people), which itself represents an increase of 7.2% since 1991 (when the parish had a population of 1346). This represents a total increase of 10% over the entire 20 year period.



Should the population rise by a similar rate over the next 15 years, one can anticipate a population of between 1540 - 1600 by 2030.

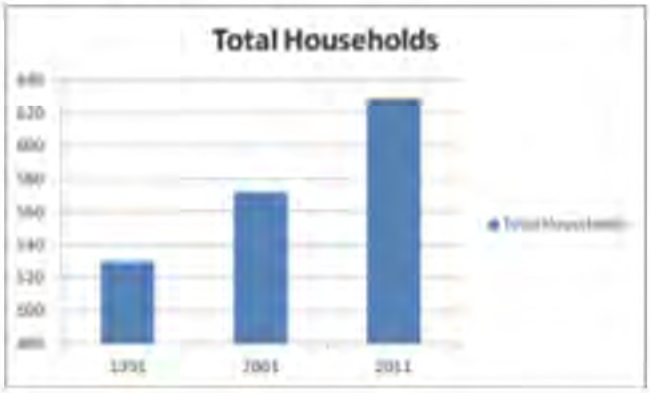
These historic trends represent some particular characteristics, with relevance to this plan. In particular, there has been a significant rise in the number of people aged over 65 since 2001 (from 261 - 364 people).

This was alongside a fall (from 272 -247) in the numbers of children.

Housing

The 2011 Census identified 629 households. This is an increase of 10% on the 2001 Census figure of 572 households. This itself represents an increase of 7.3%

from the 1991 Census figure of 530 households. Overall, there has been an increase of 18.7% in the total number of households during the 20 year period.

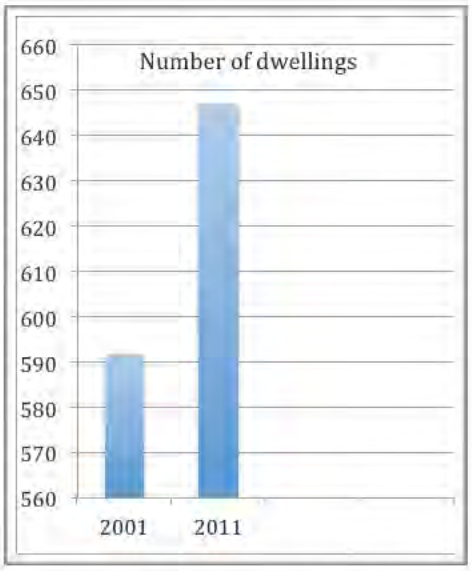


Headline trends during this period mask significant changes in household characteristics. Reflecting national trends, the most notable change has been a rise in the number of single person households (rising from 122 in 1991, to 172 in 2011). There has been a rise in the number of lone parent households (from 11 in 1991, to 41 in 2011), and despite an overall rise in the total number of households, a fall in the number with dependent children (falling from 156 in 1991, to 146 in 2011).

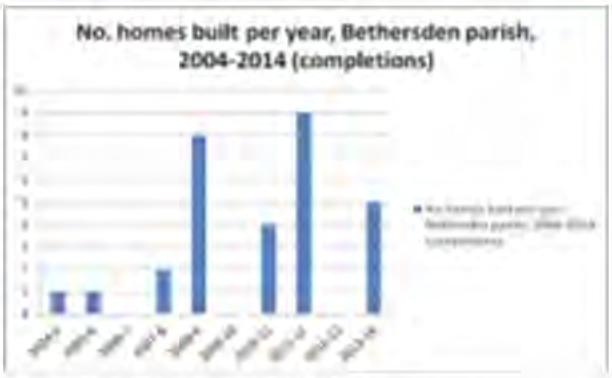
Should the number of households increase by a similar rate over the next 15 years, there would be between 680 - 710 households living in the parish by 2030, or an additional 50 - 80 households.

It is worth considering the trends in households outlined above, alongside the data regarding the

number of permanent dwellings in the parish, also available from Census figures. In 2001, 592 permanent dwellings were recorded in Bethersden, rising to 647 recorded in the 2011 Census. This represents a rise of 9.3% during the 10 year period (or 55 additional dwellings), which is very consistent with household growth patterns given above



Finally, for a different snapshot, we can look at data provided regarding the number of homes built per year (i.e. the number of completions) between 2004 - 2014, which shows 30 new homes being built in the parish during this period, more than 80% of which were windfall developments, ie not built on sites identified through Ashford BC's local plans:



Economic activity

Slightly more of the adult population were economically active (i.e. either in work, or seeking work) in 2011 compared to 2001 (rising from 57.9% - 60%), and fewer adults were looking after home and family (a fall from 7.8% - 3.8%). More people were self employed (a rise from 15.9% - 18.2% of the adult population). Interestingly, there was a fall in the number of people working from home (from 12.8% to 9.1% of the adult population). Reflecting the population changes outlined above, there was a rise in the number and proportion of retired people (from 13.7% - 16.9% of the total 16+ population).

There was a small fall in the number and proportion of people aged over 16 with no qualifications at all (falling from 300 to 295 between 2001 - 2011, alongside a significant rise in the number, and proportion, of people aged over 16 with degree level qualifications or above (rising from 208 - 334 people, or from17.7% of the total population aged over 16, to 27.1% of this group).

Travel to work

The period between 2001 and 2011 saw a small rise in the proportion, and a larger rise in the total number, of people who travelled to work by car (from 411 - 453 people). This mirrors a fall in the number of households with no vehicle at all (from 93 households in 1991, to 69 in 2001, and 59 in 2011), and a rise in the number of households with more than one car, from 303 households in 2001, to 341 households in 2011.The proportion of people who travelled to work by train remained the same between 2011 and 2001 (7.4% of the working age population), and the proportion of people who cycled or walked to work rose very slightly (from 5.7 - 5.9% during this period).

Health

Significantly fewer working age people in 2011 reported themselves as permanently sick or disabled, compared to 2001 (a fall from 4.8% - 2.4% of this group). Indeed, 64 people in 2011 reported themselves as being in 'bad' or 'very bad' health, compared to 103 people in 2001 who reported themselves as having health which was 'not good'. Census questions changed during this period, so it is difficult to compare the data. However, this would seem to be a positive trajectory.

Interestingly, however, the number of people reporting limiting long term illness increased significantly between 1991 and 2011 - from 157 in 1991, to 276 in 2011, representing an increase not only in numbers, but in the proportion (from 11.7% - 18.6%) of the population living with a limiting long term illness. Alongside this, the proportion of people providing unpaid care to a relative or friend actually fell between 2001 and 2011 (from 11.7 - 11.3%).

Despite the ambiguous data, it would seem to be the case that people Bethersden are increasingly living with long term illness, but are doing so in a way which enables them to feel they are living well and with less need for active care from family and friends.

5.5 Why we need a Neighbourhood Plan

Bethersden has always been a community that is enthusiastic about shaping its own future. It has produced a Parish Plan and a Design Statement both of which gained plaudits from the local authority for the quality of their content and presentation.

The Neighbourhood Plan is seen as a further opportunity to be involved in determining the future needs of the Parish of Bethersden. It also has the added advantage of bringing the community closer together in a joint enterprise. This is particularly useful in helping to integrate newcomers to the parish, who bring new skills and ideas, thus giving a sense of shared responsibilities for the wellbeing of all who live and work in our parish.

We recognise that we live in a time where finding the right affordable housing for the young, and appropriate housing for an ageing population, have their challenges. As do transport, local amenities, health care etc. We believe that local communities are best placed to identify some of the solutions to these issues. A Neighbourhood Plan is seen as a vital element in successfully overcoming these challenges.

The statutory nature of the Neighbourhood Plan means it carries more weight than the old Parish Plans. It is therefore our intention to include the Design Statement and unfinished elements of the Parish Plan into our Neighbourhood Plan.

5.6 How the Plan evolved

At the August 2013 Parish Fete we put on an exhibition advertising the potential benefits of producing a Neighbourhood Plan. We asked people whether we should embark on this given the effort that would be involved. The overwhelming response was that we should take advantage of the opportunity to shape our future that this represented.

In January 2014 a Parish wide survey to each household was carried out and a 40% return achieved. A public meeting was held in February at which the findings of the survey were presented. 119 people attended this from them 45 volunteers were recruited and a Steering Group and a series of working groups were formed. Further surveys were carried out on specific issues and from this a vision statement, objectives and policies emerged.

Funds were acquired and consultants engaged to help with the technical elements of the plan and the overall content and presentation.

A number of public consultations and exhibitions were held throughout the period to test opinion and receive feedback on the ideas and recommendations being put forward by the various working groups. This iterative process was carried out continually up to and including the final Draft.

The Neighbourhood Plan derived its objectives, policies, actions and authority from the community. From the outset the Parish Council & Steering Group ensured residents and businesses were as fully consulted and involved as possible in the communication and consultation, in various forms, and played a key role in formulating the Plan.

The Consultation Statement documents the community's engagement and consultation in developing this NDP. Throughout this NDP we highlight particular quotes from the community supporting particular elements.

5.7 Relationship to national and local planning policy

The Plan needs to comply with a number of conditions. It must

- Have appropriate regard to national planning policy.
- Contribute to sustainable development.
- Be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development

- plan for the area, ie the Ashford Local Plan
- Be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

The accompanying Basic Conditions Statement sets out how this Plan complies. The Consultation Statement provides details of how the community have shaped their plan.

As the Parish of Bethersden is part of the Ashford Borough Council area, the local strategic context is set by the Ashford Borough Core Strategy, 2008.

5.8. Implementing the plan

The Bethersden Parish Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan, working closely with Ashford Borough Council, the Local Plan, and various professional agencies as required.

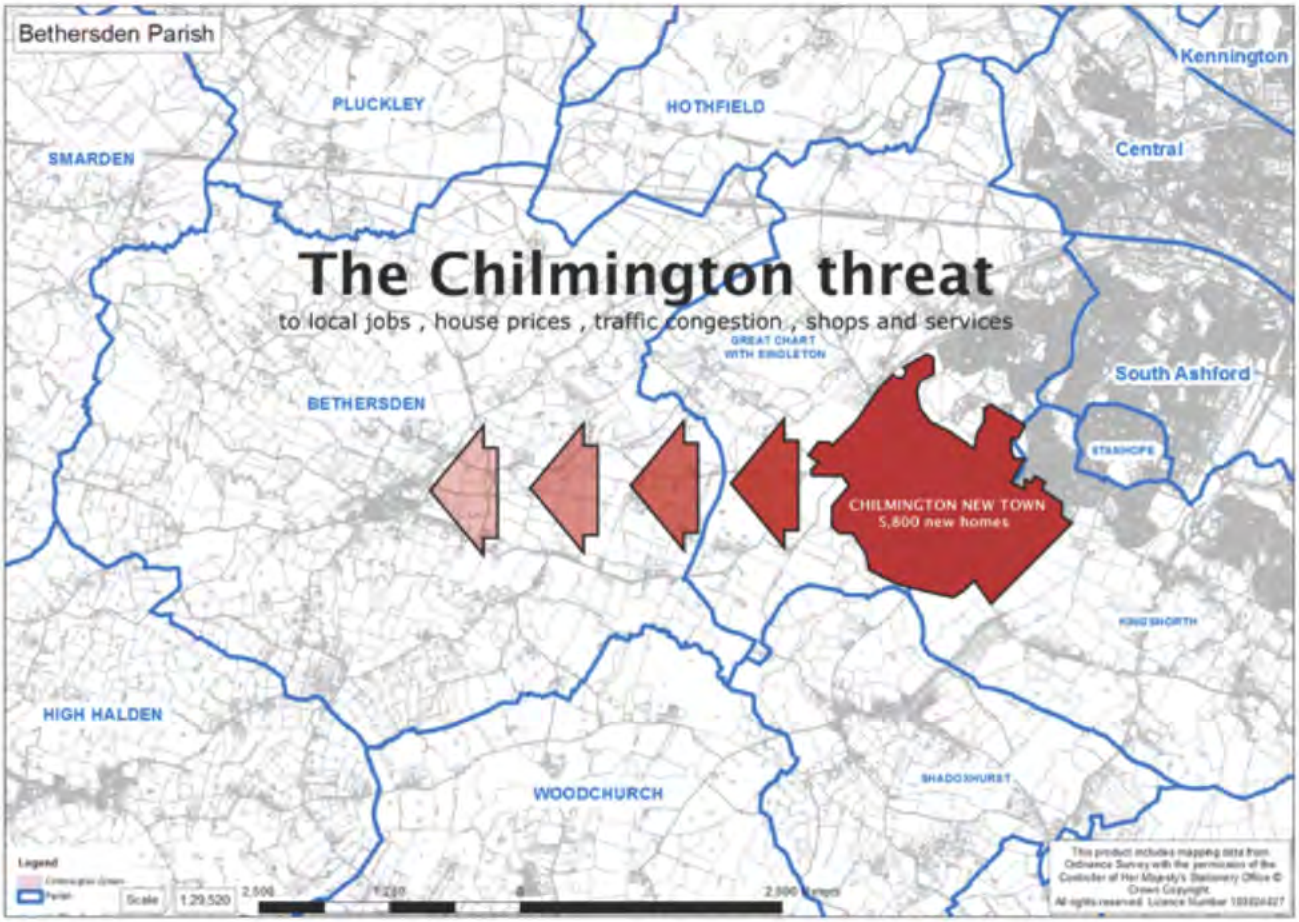
The Parish Council will also engage the support of the local community and carry out regular reviews to ensure the Plan is meeting the developing needs of the Parish.

6.0 Managing our rural environment

The parish is made up of several important landscape areas meriting protection and enhancement in their own right. They provide a rural buffer zone between the distinctive villageand

Snapshot of the community's comments from consultations

Comments gathered from consultations confirm there is a strong desire to ensure that the character and local distinctiveness of the Parish are maintained. This includes preserving the rural setting of the Parish, which is



parish setting and the urban expansion of Ashford. The policies in this plan encourage continued rural industries in these areas to ensure that the character and local distinctiveness of the Parish are maintained through preserving, among other things, the rural landscape surrounding the village and its hamlets that bring landscape value to the wider area.

made up of several important landscape areas, and the protection of a number of open spaces and views in the village. Public footpaths and bridle paths, such as that between Kiln Lane and Mill Road, are valued very highly and need to be improved and developed further, as do amenities for jogging and cycling around the village.



Rural Look and Feel

The essential character of Bethersden is that of a small relatively self-contained rural village surrounded by a wooded and agricultural landscape. At several points the fields and hedgerows reach into the village centre, ensuring the village retains close visual links with its rural setting. Open spaces and vistas in the village reinforce its rural character and contribute to a general sense of openness throughout the village that the community wish to preserve.

Community Needs

There is strong local support to preserve the rural environment and wildlife in the parish. Survey responses also show that if additional land were made available within the confines of the village, open parkland type space would be the overwhelmingly most popular use. The village supports a wide range of sports and leisure activities for all ages and the need to maintain and improve facilities is seen as being particularly important for the development of youth activities.

Objectives

Conservation is a high priority and protection of the countryside and the environment are major considerations when assessing potential sites. The following objectives have been arrived at through community engagement and the results of a survey and residents at the Parish Fete*

a) Preserve the unique character and setting of the village by retaining those open spaces that add to the distinctive open feel and reinforce the sense that you are in a village rather than an urban area;

b) Protect the rural countryside to preserve the rural setting, habitat and environment of the parish;

c) Support and allow for the expansion of the recreational needs and amenities of the community whilst preserving the rural setting of the village

d) Enhance the network of footpaths and define cycle routes to improve local communication within the parish.

e) Support industrial and commercial development of a scale that enhances the environment and complements the existing quiet and tranquil setting and quality of rural life

Local Requirements and Policies

National planning policy and practice guidance encourages local authorities to use Landscape Character Assessments to provide evidence to support a criteria-based policy approach, and to ensure that the decision making process is underpinned by a robust assessment of the landscape. The NDP team have done just this*

Policy Justification R 1: Protection of views & village setting

The village identity and rural character emerges from several distinctive areas that support a wide range of agricultural activities and high value ecological sites. These areas are identified in the Ashford Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment adopted in 2011 (see Basic Conditions Statement).

The way in which development fits within the landscape of the Parish must be determined by its relationship with the natural topography of the area. Particular landform features that contribute to the character must be protected, and views into and from a site should be a relevant factor in assessing the impact of a proposal. The pattern and composition of woodlands and field boundaries constitute valuable features in the rural open landscape. They help define the character of the Parish and should be retained and protected.

Policy R 1
Protection of Views & Village Setting

- All development proposals shall respect the identified views important to the village setting, particularly those that create a link to the open countryside and reflect the historic character of the village.

a) From School Road looking NE
b) Range of views behind the Church
c) Across and into and out of George Field See Map below.



Policy Justification R 2
Landscape & Character Design

Bethersden is fortunate in that it is surrounded by a wooded and agricultural landscape of small fields with well-maintained hedgerows, many of which have oak and other native trees as a major feature.

The woodlands, fields, meadows, traditional orchards and many field ponds, some of which have been

identified as needing conservation and greater protection, provide an ideal habitat for many forms of wildlife, including the endangered turtle dove, and great crested newt. They are important rural features on the village and wider parish doorstep that should be protected for the benefit of the community, as covered under policy TRS18 in the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD.
All new development must demonstrate how it responds to the established local character and sits comfortably alongside existing development. Supporting information shall include such items as street scenes, impact on rural views and relationship to wider context and topography where appropriate in order to properly assess the impact of the proposal and its compliance with policy TRS17 in the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD

Policy R 2
Landscape, Character & Design

- Development must be designed in a way, which protects and where appropriate enhances the established local character and sits comfortably alongside existing

Policy Justification R 3
Conservation of Fauna & Flora

The local woodlands and fields are criss-crossed by footpaths and bridle paths to create a network of recreational routes that open up the countryside to residents. These include a number which are of particular local importance because they are made of "Bethersden Marble", a type of palludina limestone formed millions of years ago, which was used for paths, chimney pieces in houses and in Parish church walls.

Policy R 3
Conservation of Fauna & Flora

- Development in the Parish shall have particular regard to conservation and protection of:

a) Ancient woodland and semi-natural woodland;

b) River corridors and tributaries;

c) Rural lanes with landscape, nature conservation or historic importance;

d) Habitats.



Policy Justification R 4
Public Rights of Way

Within the village centre, the network of public footpaths is seen as being very important to the community and needs to be improved and developed to give wider pedestrian access, with particular consideration given to pushchairs and wheelchairs.

Any new development will be required to contribute to maintaining and improving these ways, as detailed in the Delivery Strategy.

A network of cycle routes should be developed to complement an improved network of footpaths. This should include the village centre and extend to the wider reaches of the Parish to give

residents greater cycling mobility. Improvement and new construction shall create pleasant routes for walking and/or cycling and where practically

possible, access for wheelchairs and pushchairs are to be provided.

Policy R 4
Public Rights of Way

- Development in the parish shall:

A. Protect and improve existing public rights of way
B. Construct new rights of way or extensions to link development to village centre amenities.
C. Connection between Village Hall & George Field

Policy Justification R 5
Local Green Space Designation

George Field is an important part of the existing character of Bethersden and in particular; is readily appreciated by users of the footpath that crosses the area. It is a valuable central open space for informal activities, a thoroughfare and a key feature. Due to its value to the community it is designated as a Local Green Space within the remit of NPPF paragraphs 76 and 77:

Policy Statement MRE 5 - Local Green Space Designation

- The George Field, as identified on the map below, is designated as Local Green Space.



Policy Justification R 6
Recreation Areas & Community Use

The Recreation Area, together with the agricultural land extending to Bateman's corner, combine to create an unrestricted vista along the eastern edge of the village. Unless other overwhelming benefits to the village are found, this important open space should be maintained for the rural nature of the area.



In such circumstances any development proposals will need to comply with the criteria set out in NPPF para 74. Which states the land must be surplus to requirements, or the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision, or development is for alternative sport or recreation provision, which clearly outweighs the loss.

Evidence from consultation with residents indicates that there is a need for the population of the village to be demographically well–balanced, with more families attracted to live in the village. This will contribute to the sustainability of the many sports and leisure clubs, which already enjoy healthy support in the village.

Particular importance is placed on youth activities and using the conclusions of a consultation of residents regarding the recreation ground in 2012 many improvements were made to the games and children's play areas.

Policy R 6
Recreation Areas & Community Use(Map required)

- The following open spaces, shown on Map XX, which are either in recreational or community use or offer potential for expansion of adjoining recreational and community facilities, shall be maintained for recreational and community use:

a) Bull Field Cricket Ground

b) The Recreation Ground

c) Open space to the East of Mill Road with potential to provide for expansion of the adjoining recreation area and amenities

d) Village hall

Policy Justification R 7
Drainage & Water Management

The Bethersden waste and surface drainage system is under considerable strain and has over the years caused misery for local people. This policy is designed to ensure the existing situation does not continue and the authorities carry out regular inspections and maintenance.

The systems for surface, wastewater, and sewerage management should ensure that flooding does not occur.

Policy R 7
Drainage & Water Management

- New developments in Bethersden parish shall have effective & sustainable surface water, wastewater & sewerage drainage management systems.

Policy Justification R 8
Energy

Technological advances are moving faster than before. Certain technologies are out-dated even before they come on the market in favour of more efficient and less impactful innovations. This policy seeks to allow for such sensitive innovations for the benefit of the Parish.

Sustainable and Resilient Community

This plan recognises the benefits that can be obtained from sensitive new development. From the provision of housing and jobs through to the community benefits that might be achieved. Such as improved or new facilities and parish infrastructure. Benefits from new development must be channelled to provide for our existing and new parishioners in an equitable way for all, as a tangible benefit to rebalance and improve our Parish as we move forward into the 21st century.

The sites allocated in Policy H 2, 3 and 4 provide precise provision. This is permitted through the Ashford Borough Local Plan (2008), the emerging Local Plan to 2030.

New developments shall be required to contribute to and/or provide for such benefits to come to the community from developer contributions via S.106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), awaited at the time of writing.

Appropriate new community infrastructure will be in proportion to the scale of the development. Policies within the housing section provide the detail.

Community infrastructure includes measures for improving the natural environment and its resilience to climate change, the health and well being of residents and the local rural economy.

Depending on the site and location, this could include enhancements to footpaths and pavements; the preservation and enhancement of open and green / recreational space or facilities; or contribution on the part of the developers of additional funds for investment into the community, based on identified need or priority.

Policy R 8
Energy

- Energy efficient and local generation technologies for new and existing development will be supported, where the siting, scale, type and design complements the existing quiet, tranquil setting and local rural character of Bethersden Parish and subject to other policies of this plan.

- Evidence shall be provided at a scale commensurate to the development to demonstrate the potential impact of such proposals and proper assessment made by a suitably qualified professional.

7. Managing our Local facilities and Housing Requirements

Snapshot of the community's comments from consultations:
'Small scale housing to retain village character'
'Need more starter homes and local needs'
'Small sites, less traffic, safer for children'
'Ensure a balance of age and social groups'
"More elderly houses required"
'Beautiful countryside, open spaces and wildlife'

7.1 Incremental and Sustainable Growth

Census analysis since 1991 indicates a pattern of overall population growth within the village, within which certain key trends are evident. In particular, Bethersden has an ageing population, with strong growth in the 65+ age group (reflecting a widespread national and regional trend). There has been a decline in the number – and proportion – of children and families living in the village, and there has also been a significant increase in the number of single residents.

It is recognised that some housing growth is desirable to ensure a sustainable future for Bethersden, and that this should be planned to support a mixed, prosperous, and well-balanced population. This will help sustain a healthy demand for local shops, services and businesses, and a thriving future for the primary school, as well as for the many voluntary, recreational, religious, and sports organisations and activities, which are currently supported by, and offer so much to, the residents of the village.

As set out in the Village Design Statement, Bethersden has grown and evolved over time, meeting the developing housing needs of the residents while retaining a rural, open and wooded feel. Incremental growth has ensured that the essential character of the village has been maintained. It is essential that this continues to be the case in Bethersden. Feedback from the community shows they support higher quality new homes that offer clear benefits to the village and its residents, and meet the housing needs of the village, as outlined in more detail below. A proportion of these homes need to be affordable to households on average incomes, available to individuals and families in housing need with a local connection to the Parish. These homes should remain affordable in perpetuity, in order to ensure that Bethersden remains an inclusive community into the future.

7.2 A Healthy Community

An ageing population is recognised as a positive development, both nationally and locally; people are living longer lives as a result of better health, and many of us will be able to benefit from years of healthy retirement. National evidence suggests that older people are particularly likely to benefit their community by volunteering, or by contributing to arts, recreation and other community activities, so an ageing population is likely to offer many opportunities and positive aspects to the village of Bethersden. At the same time, the growth in the number of older residents is likely to lead to an increase in the proportion of people in the village living with the types of long term conditions which are particularly associated with later life, underlining the need for the promotion of health and wellbeing to be specifically addressed in this Plan.

Evidence from consultation with residents, as described below, also suggests that there is a wish for the population of the village to be well-balanced, with more families attracted to live in the village. This will contribute to the strength and sustainability of the village school, as well as other amenities such as the play school, the village hall, local businesses, and the many clubs and societies, which already enjoy healthy support in the village. An increased number of children living in the village will also support family-orientated activities such as parent and toddler groups, scouts and guides, and the annual village fete (to give some examples), all of which help to create a thriving, welcoming and friendly community for all.

7.3 Objectives

A strong and sustainable community is an important priority. As a result of community consultation (outlined in more detail below), a number of key objectives have been set out, which underpin the detailed policies which form the core of this chapter:

a). Provide new housing where it meets an identified need

b). Provides community benefit as a result of any new housing development and guided by the Delivery Strategy.

c). A range of new housing will be supported on suitable sites at appropriate lower densities to provide sufficient open space, so that the built development retains a rural character and is not intrusive in the surrounding environment.

d) Housing that is flexible and in particular meets the needs of older people, is provided at a scale that reflects local needs and located within easy access to all local amenities.

7.4 Community Feedback

Consultation with village residents highlighted a number of key issues and priorities which are addressed in this Plan. From a housing and health point of view, this included:

Support for new housing near the centre of the village, small in scale in order to maintain the rural and open character of the area, and avoiding a 'suburban' feel.

In particular, more homes which are affordable to young people starting out, and to families on average incomes

More homes suitable for older people, wishing to downsize, live in more manageable homes (particularly bungalows), while remaining at the heart of the village community

Significant support for new health amenities in the village

Strong support for improved drainage infrastructure, as a key condition of any new housing development.

In a housing needs survey conducted in 2012, a need for 21 new affordable local needs homes were identified. More than 50% were for families, and 25% were for older couples and single people. The majority of older people were looking for housing to which they could downsize, which was more manageable and all on one level.

In another survey conducted in 2013, 26 residents felt either they themselves, or someone they knew well, may be interested in housing aimed specifically at older people.

Of these respondents indicated an interest in enhanced sheltered accommodation with communal facilities; however, analysis of the economics of this type of development indicated that the level of demand was insufficient to justify the significant investment which would be required for this. Nevertheless, taken together with the other resident surveys undertaken, the results of this exercise did indicate general demand for older people's housing, which has influenced the policies in the Plan (see below).

A further survey was conducted in 2014 of current residents within the parish and living outside the parish but with a local connection (such as children at the village school). This identified a demand for 27 homes, of which 4 would be for smaller, more accessible homes for older people; 4 would be for starter and / or small homes for young single people and couples; and 12 would be for larger homes (3 bedrooms+ or calculated as 5 + bedspaces) for families with dependent children. The remainder were for other groups (including older people who did not wish to downsize, and working age couples without dependent children, for example). Around 35% of respondents identified a need for an affordable/lower cost home, whether for rent or purchase. This latter group was significantly skewed towards younger people. By contrast, of the 19 respondents within the 24 - 64 age group, 10 were looking for homes costing over £200k. The 65+ age group showed a similar pattern, with most wanting to buy a home at £200k+.

Worthy of note is these resident surveys were conducted prior to the Mill Road"exception site" housing development in the village, which will release 27 new homes to the market, of which 11 will be 'local needs' homes. The remainder will comprise 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes for general sale. This can be expected to meet some of the latent demand, and has therefore been taken account of in the figures provided below, which take account of remaining current demand, as well as future need and demand over the next 15 years.

Policy Justification: H 1 New Residential Development & H 2 Housing Site Allocation

The allocated sites below have been selected from Ashford Borough Council's call for sites. The sites were assessed through methodology provided by Ashford Borough Council with locally detailed specifications characteristic to Bethersden Parish. They were confirmed through public engagement and consultation. They comprise sites WC 5, 33 and 34 of the ABC submitted sites and are considered to meet the local growth needs identified through extensive analysis, evidence gathering and survey. The other sites submitted to ABC for consideration were discounted through their comparable impact with other sites contrary to the aims of the policies contained in this Plan. Refer to the Basic Conditions Statement and

H 1
New Residential Development

- Up to 40 additional dwelling shall be allocated on identified sites within the centre of the village and delivered in phases over the plan period to 2030.

- These will be delivered on defined sites as per Policy H 2

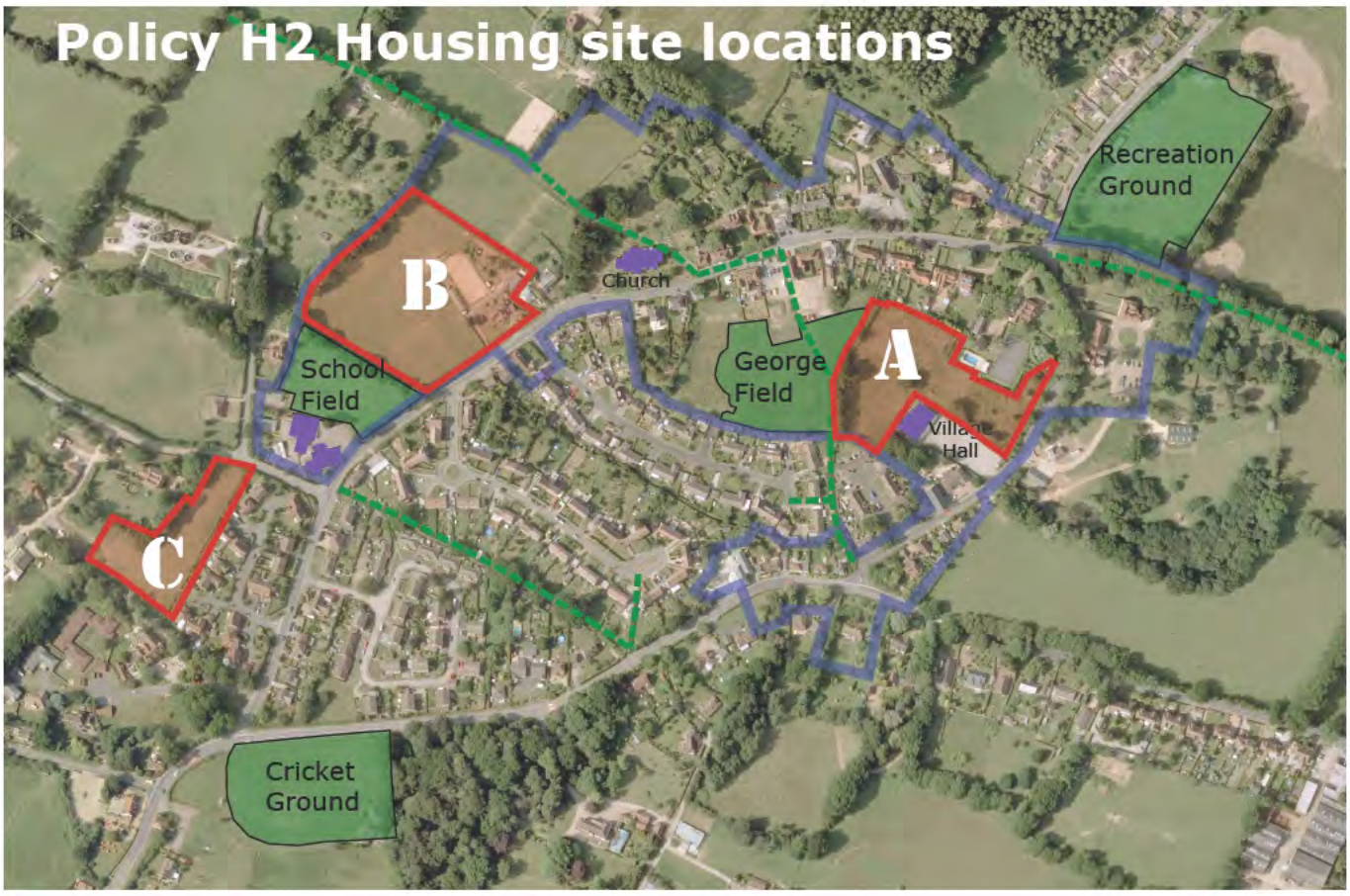
The types of property needed in the village have been informed by public survey. Refer to the Basic Conditions Statement and Housing Paper in its Appendix for more detailed information

H 2
Housing site allocations

- Only the following sites indicated on map HM1, shall be allocated for housing development:
  Site A Up to 14 dwellings (WC33)
  Site B Up to 16 dwellings (WC5)
  Site C Up to 10 dwellings (WC34)
  Part of each site to be permanent Public Open Space (POS) as per the ratio shown on the Zone diagrams.

There are a number of public benefits which residents in the village have identified as targets for future investment.

These fall into three categories: first, general benefits which are conditions of development, i.e. we would require developers to fund these essential items of infrastructure on each site, on which new homes are to be allocated; second, specific benefits associated with particular allocated sites; and third, other benefits in the village which would be generated through financial in estment hrough CIL contributions.



The first of these are addressed in this Plan, as policies; the remainder are set out in the Delivery Strategy.

Housing Paper in its Appendix for more detailed information Essential items of infrastructure which are required as a condition of development of allocated sites:

- Adequate, and in some cases, improvements to drainage and sewerage infrastructure (see relevant Green Policy)

- Designated, wheelchair accessible footpaths or cycleways from each allocated site to the centre of the village (if not already in place), in order to promote sustainable travel, as well as the health and wellbeing of all residents; and,

- Internet speed (get words - see relevant Blue Group policy)

Policy Justification: H 3
Site A Next to the Village Hall

Given site levels, and the need to protect vistas as set out in policy R 1 , particularly high value vistas down the hill across Forge Hill to open countryside and from the rear of the properties fronting The Street, development will benefit from being lower rise. This is such as single storey or chalet development with rooms in the roof where any eaves height does not exceed the standard village eaves height of 5m, as stated in the Parish Plan, whichever is the lower and relative to context, particularly taking into account the local topography.

Proposals should ensure footpath and cycle access from the rear of the Village Hall to George Field and other village services, in line with policy R 4.

This site is in the conservation area. It forms part of a large open area and is considered an important green gap in the village providing direct visual and physical links to the countryside, and linking with the highly valued open spaces to the north of the Church.

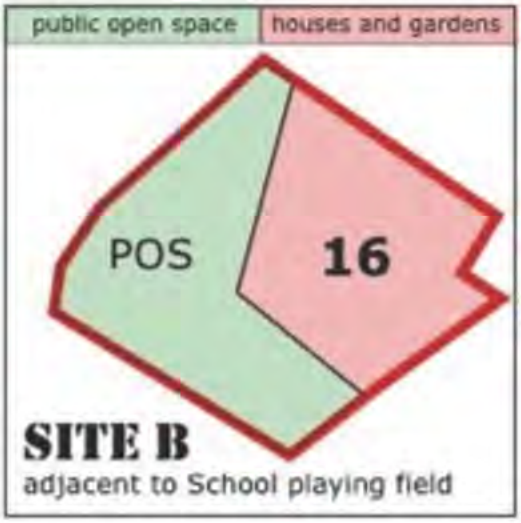


H 3
Site A Next to the Village Hall

- Up to 14 dwellings on this site shall have a mix of 3,4,5 & 6 bedspaces designed for both family and active retirement occupation in equal amounts.
- A public footpath shall be provided connecting the village hall to the footpath in the George Field.

Policy Justification: H 4
Site B Next to the Village school

For detailed justification see section 5.4 which provides survey & census data.



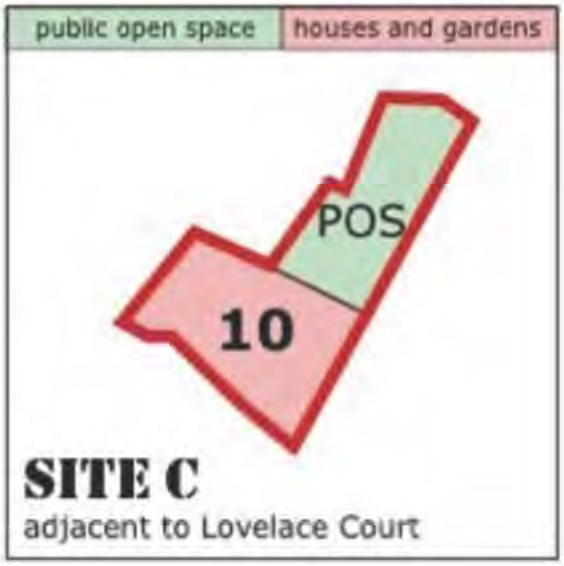
In line with policy R 1, vistas of the Church need to be preserved, particularly when entering The Street from the west. Development should be lower rise and adjacent to the existing built area.

H 4
Site B Next to the Village school.

- Up to 16 dwellings on this site shall have a mix of 3,4,5 & 6 bedspaces designed for both family and active retirement occupation.
- A car park for 20 cars and the area of public open space shall be made.

Policy Justification: H 5
Site C Next to Lovelace

For detailed justification see section 5.4 which provides survey & census data.



This site lies outside the conservation area, is semi-rural in character and close to a listed building of historical importance to the village. This will be phased to take place in the latter part of the Plan

H5
Site C Next to Lovelace

- Up to 10 dwellings on this site shall have a mix of 3,4 ,5 & 6 bedspaces designed to be affordable for both young couple and family occupation.
- Part of the public open space to provide the option of a car park for 10 cars with access from Wissenden Lane.

Policy Justification: H 6
Local Needs Housing

Housing exception are locally difficult to find. A marked amount of sites within the village have already been developed for housing. Going through the measured process of allocating housing sites it is considered unlikely, although not impossible, at this stage that future exception needs housing sites could arise without causing significant impact and potential harm to the aspects of the village and its rural setting that local people hold so special. Therefore the approach highlighted below, incorporating local needs housing as a priority within the affordable housing requirement is entirely consistent with the NPPF proving for local circumstances.

H 6
Local Needs Housing

- Approximately 35% of all housing shall be classified affordable and made available to those with an identified local need.
- This housing shall be offered for rent at 80% of open market rate or for shared equity purchase.

Policy Justification: H 7
Housing Design Standards

The attractiveness of Bethersden parish is contributed to by the interplay of the open countryside and rural and village landscapes and settlement edges by as much as by the design of its buildings and structures. This policy seeks to encourage considered development that can respond successfully to this setting and be neighbourly.

Where possible, all new housing in the parish is encouraged to be built to be adaptable, suitable for any age group and particularly for older people wishing to downsize. This does not necessarily mean smaller homes in every case, but homes which accommodate flexible living.

The new Category 2 accessible adaptable homes standard (or equivalent), is set out in the Government's Housing Standards Review (formerly the 'Lifetime Homes' standard).

In the case of the new homes planned largely for the benefit of older people choosing to 'downsize', new homes in the parish should be built to a good standard of accessibility and adaptability.

Proposals for new schemes which reflect 21st century / contemporary design, whilst paying homage to Bethersden's local heritage and traditional styles, will be encouraged. As is stated in the VDS, preference will be given for design schemes which provide 'diversity' and a variation of spacing between buildings and in relation to the road.

New developments incorporating contemporary / ecological design (including energy efficient and local generation technologies, as per MRE 9) are encouraged subject to impact on the rural nature of the area.

H 7
Housing Design Standards

- All new housing shall be designed to accord with the current adopted Village Design Statement and be adaptable to provide homes for life.
- Density of development shall not exceed 100 bedspaces per hectare and the vertical scale shall respect the site characteristics and not exceed 5m from ground to eaves.

The following images illustrate two traditional homes within the conservation area; and one modern, but traditional style home (located on the new Mill-fields estate).







The following images show examples of new build developments which reference traditional building styles, but which have a more contemporary feel. The first two homes are located relatively locally. The second two images provide illustration of effective landscaping, as encouraged by the Building for Life Standards.













The following images show examples of new build stand alone homes which a built in a contemporary style, while, once again, complementing their rural setting.



H 8
Housing Layout

- Shall include for car parking at the rate of 1 space per 2 bedspaces. The layout shall not be dominated by car access or parking and shall accord with the Village Design Statement- It shall also relate to the requirements of Built for Life from www.builtforlifehomes.or.

Policy Justification H 9
Windfall Housing

Survey work indicated that the overall demand for housing in the Parish exceeds that agreed to be allocated on specific sites in the village and the balance is anticipated will be provided by "Windfall development" in the whole of the Parish area.

Conversion of agricultural buildings under permitted development will be monitored and reviewed during the period of the plan.

H 9
Windfall housing development

- Housing development outside the immediate confines of the village will only be supported where it is seen to replace, extend or form a justifiable annex to existing housing stock.

Policy Justification: H 10
Other housing development

Subdivision of existing buildings will be supported within the village centre, where this does not involve a loss of commercial or business space, nor involve expansion onto green space & is well designed. Self build proposals will also be supported.

Further 'infill' development (additionally to the sites allocated in this Plan) is unlikely to be supported within the centre of the village, where this would result in loss of open space or gardens.

H 10
Other housing development

- Infill of the open space between houses within the village envelope will be resisted.
  Similarly infill development in the hamlets will be generally opposed but the sub-division of some larger properties in these locations may be supported where a justifiable need exists (as with annexes)

Policy Justification H 11
Footpaths and Cycleways

Refer to R 4 for details.

H 11
Footpaths and cycleways

- All new residential development shall have good footpath links to the existing network and provide cycleways where possible.

Policy Justification: H 12 Parking

Where possible developments should link to Ashford Town Centre and Pluckley Rail Station which provide rail services to London, and to other local and national networks. However it is recognised that local bus services could be more frequent and that by their very nature rural areas will have a higher level of car ownership. This must be provided for in the least environmentally impactful manner and be designed to not dominate the amenity space or street scene per dwelling.

Policy H 12

Parking for Bethersden Parish

- Car parking at the rate of 1 car space per 2 bedspaces shall be provided. In particular the design and layout shall follow the Bethersden Village Design Statement. This is where the sites shall not be dominated by car access or parking, include general amenity space around and between dwellings and incorporate soft landscaping where possible to maintain overall rural character.

8 Economy, Communications, Transport and Infrastructure

Snapshot of the community's comments from consultations:
"Improve broadband connections to encourage home working"

Local Economy

Bethersden is a rural Parish which historically relied on farming for the main source of its income and prosperity. The land continues to be farmed with a mixture of livestock and arable farming, though in line with development across the country mechanisation has considerably reduced employment and many farm buildings have been sold off or converted to different uses. Along with this the socioeconomic changes in the country as a whole and the increasing move from public to private transport have led to a move of population from rural employment to urban employment and a move of better-off people from town to country. The consequence of this is that many people who now live in the parish travel to work, either in nearby towns or commuting to London.

Low availability of workspace and jobs in rural communities can encourage local people of working age to leave the area, and prevent people of working age from moving in. A reduction in the working age population has both social and economic effects. When there is a daily exodus of people of working age the community often has difficulty maintaining many community services and facilities.

Bethersden, however, has managed to develop a large number of businesses within the parish utilizing converted rural buildings as well as purpose built premises.

Its diverse and sustainable local business community continues to grow and support the local economy, and includes commercial offices, small scale manufacturing and various kinds of workshops.

The Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan sets out to maintain and encourage the local economy in order to support the sustainability of the community. It will support the sustainable growth of all types of business and enterprise in the Parish, rural tourism and leisure facilities that benefit local businesses, residents and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside.

A survey of local businesses has been undertaken to ascertain how the Parish can further and better support the development of their activities within the Parish. This had a disappointingly low reply rate. One clear message, however, was how essential broadband and mobile communications are to business development and success, and that improvement was required.

The community sees the retention and expansion of existing services, facilities and public houses as key to the cohesion and wellbeing of the community. The Parish will support opportunities to expand, enhance or maximise existing community uses, and will promote the shared use of community and educational facilities.

Objectives:

In particular this Plan will support the following types of business development, subject to traffic, environmental, amenity and landscape considerations:
which encourages local employment.

a)Development which encourages local employment, particularly traditional rural employment sectors, as well as encouraging farm diversification schemes.
b)New business that is located adjacent to or within existing commercial zones.

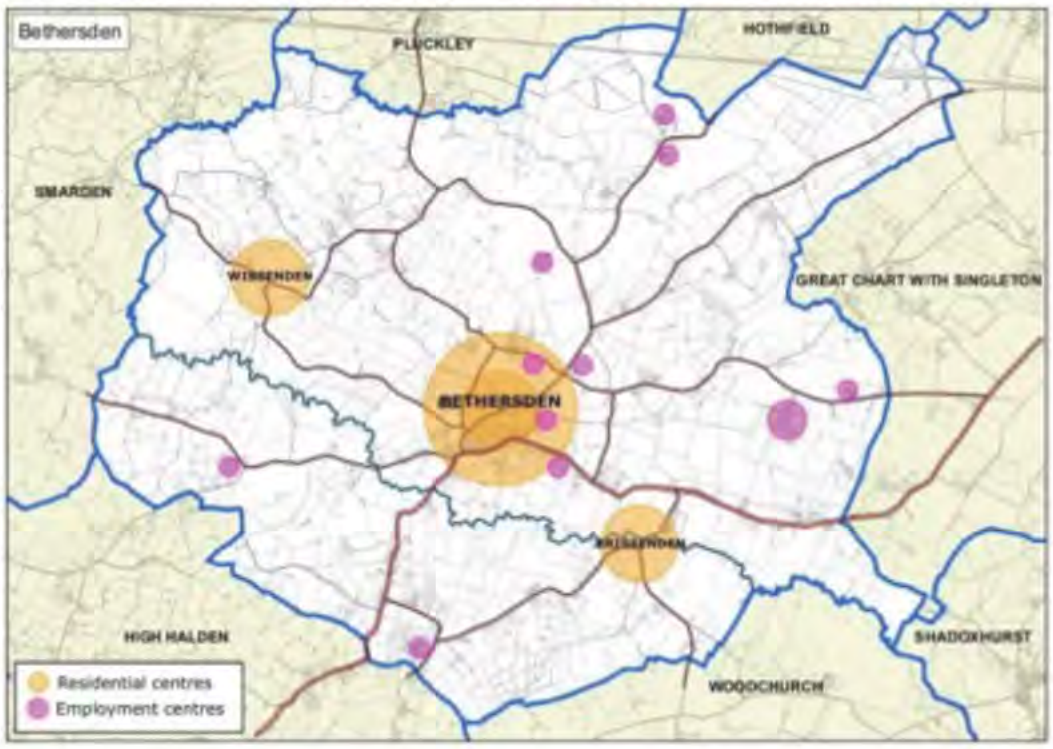
c) Conversion of existing buildings, especially underused agricultural buildings, and the small-scale expansion of existing employment premises across the Parish.

d) Services provided which support home working e.g. internet coverage and high speed internet.

e) Managing speed, traffic calming and vehicle access, especially in assessing applications for new commercial developments

f) Services provided to support commercial developments e.g. power, communications,

GENERAL RESIDENTIAL AND EMPLOYMENT ZONING DIAGRAM



connectivity will be a requirement of new sites.

g) Development that supports the vibrancy and vitality of Bethersden Parish by diversifying and enhancing the range of local shops and related commercial services for the local community.

h) A reasonable amount of small-scale new build development within or adjacent to Bethersden village and within or adjacent to the adjoining hamlets or adjacent to or within existing commercial zones.

i)Services which support home working such as high speed internet access

j)Lighting associated with commercial and industrial activities must be managed to reduce energy usage, impact on biodiversity, visual impact, reduce light pollution and any potential harm to local residents and to the local character of the area. Where this is in doubt, applications should be accompanied by a formal lighting assessment to ensure it complies with national and local requirements in District/ Rural areas.

Policy Justification: CT 1 Business or Commercial development

All new commercial development must All new commercial development must respect the character of its surroundings by way of its scale and design, not harm the surrounding landscape, and safeguard residential amenity and road safety.

Development or redevelopment must be beneficial in its widest sense. Particularly to not cause loss of employment opportunities and income. The loss of shops and related commercial services for the local community will be resisted. Industrial activity will be opposed where excessive noise impacts the local environment.

Any business development together with an increase in the number of home workers will put pressure on the speed and consistency of the Internet broadband service, particularly in the outlying hamlets and farms. There is a need to expand the high speed network to encompass rural homes, businesses and farms.

Policy Statement: CT 1 Business or Commercial Development

- Business or commercial development, which is appropriate to its setting and supports local employment, shall be encouraged.

Policy Justification: CT 2 Maintenance of local Service Centre

The village is supported by a bus service, pubs, shops and post office, making it a designated Service Centre:

Post Office/General Store, Butcher, Equestrian Tack Shop, Hairdresser, 2 pubs, The George and the Bull Inn

The facilities are popular and are a defined characteristic of the village. Policy CT 2 will help to protect these services and encourage new ones where appropriate.

This policy protects (Use Class) A4 Drinking establishments (Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not night clubs)) from a change of use for another purpose, where planning consent is required, to ensure that the vitality and viability of the village as a small service and tourism centre is maintained. For public houses in particular, the NPPF supports their contribution to local life and provides for their designation as a community asset, which at the time of writing, would remove change of use permitted development rights to any other use. At the time of writing these pubs are working well and there is no need to implement this clause. Indeed the policy below actively supports measures for improvements to our valued local commercial establishments.

Policy Statement: CT 2 Maintenance of local Service Centre

- Proposals to create new A1 shop units within the built up area boundary will be supported where there is demonstrable benefit to the retail activity.
- Loss of A1 shop units as a result of proposals for redevelopment or for a change of use where planning permission is required is not supported.

- The Neighbourhood Plan will support proposals to create new A3 café and restaurant units in the village, other than by a change of use of an A1 shop unit, and will resist the proposals for a change of use of existing A3 units to another use.

- Proposals to improve the facilities of the public houses in the village and wider parish will be supported where this is demonstrated to benefit the business. Proposals that involve change of use, where planning permission is required, will not receive support.

- The above perform a vital function in the economic and social wellbeing of this community and are greatly valued.

Policy Justification: CT 3 Services

Any new development will demonstrate how it will contribute to and be compatible with local high speed fibre Internet connectivity. A competent professional 'Connectivity Statement' shall be submitted alongside any planning applications.

These could consider for example the intended land use and the anticipated connectivity requirements of the development, known nearby data networks and their anticipated speed (fixed copper, 3G,4G, fibre, satellite, microwave, etc.), realistic assessments of connection potential or contribution to any such networks.

This policy aims to see new development connect to the internet with a minimum symmetrical speed of 25Mbps and with realistic future proof upgrades available.

Where no internet provider is available, as a minimum, suitable ducting that can accept fibre should be provided either to: the public highway; or a community led local access network; or another location that can be justified through the connectivity statement. Where possible and desirable, additional ducting should be provided that also contributes to a local access network for the wider community. Costs associated with additional works can be considered alongside affordable housing, or any other contributions in a viability assessment, submitted to the Council.

Major infrastructure development must provide ducting that is available for community owned local access or strategic fibre deployment.

Such developers are encouraged to have early discussions with local broadband groups. New developments must have the appropriate and, if necessary, additional infrastructure from the start without putting undue pressure on the existing services to homes and businesses.

Policy Statement: CT 3 Services

- Services, which support home working such as high-speed internet access shall be encouraged.where the network connection is available or is planned for the near future.

- Commercial developments, both new sites and expansion of existing sites, shall ensure the provision of the required additional power, communications, connectivity, drainage and other essential services as appropriate, to fully meet the completed site requirements, without detriment to existing users.

Policy Justification
Transport and Infrastructure policies 4 and 5

Roads - Bethersden Parish is situated on either side of the A28 Ashford to Tenterden road, which is single carriageway and has a large number of bends. The roads through the village/ parish community are B roads, and many are narrow lanes with consequent difficulties for free flowing traffic. Furthermore many of the lanes that connect the village with other villages in the area are also narrow B roads and generally unsuitable for large vehicles as two-way traffic is difficult and often requires the use of un-adopted passing places, or running over grass verges.



HGV in lane near village

The Bus Service through the village between Ashford and Tenterden runs hourly. Discussions with the local bus companies do not hold out any realistic prospect of these services being increased in the future without some significant financial subsidy from the Ashford BC or Kent CC, or from developers building premises in the parish. Therefore it is likely that the use of private cars will continue to be the primary means of transport and continue to grow.

Rail Services to London are provided via Pluckley Station, some 3 miles from the village, at 70 minutes, and via Headcorn at some 8.5 miles distance, 63 minutes.

Ashford International station at some 8 miles distant offers fast HS1 services to & from London St Pancras Station at 37 minutes, and access to Eurostar for travel to the continent.

Parking, Congestion and speeding - Bethersden Primary School is located on a dangerous road junction/corner at the western end of the main road through the village. Associated parking on adjacent roads by parents and some school staff results in the road becoming very congested, particularly at the beginning and end of each school day.





Residents of the village have expressed concern about traffic congestion, inappropriate access by HGVs and speeding along the roads in the parish.

In addition to the school, the village shops and services also attract traffic from the hamlets around Bethersden, leading to congestion and occasional parking problems. Drivers moving between the A28 and the A20/M20 also use Bethersden as a short cut.

There is also concern about the cumulative effect from one off and seasonal entertainment events, which individually residents may tolerate, but which can have a negative effect when additional events are added at other times of the year as well. Examples are the annual classic car show at Darling Buds farm, the pre Christmas events at the Reindeer Centre. and Beer Festivals at the Pubs.

Policy Statement: CT 4 Heavy goods traffic – new facilities

- Any proposal requiring planning permission to change the use of land in the Parish to General Industrial Use (B2) or distribution and storage uses (B8), or other uses, which would generate heavy goods traffic, shall provide a Transport Statement from a competent professional demonstrating that the proposal will not have an unacceptable traffic impact within the Parish.

With the proposal for extensive development at Chilmington Green (Western fringes of Ashford) now approved by the Ashford Borough Council it is likely that additional traffic will be generated in the area which will exacerbate existing congestion problems.



It is important to maintain and improve communications and transport links. Where appropriate traffic management measures will be encouraged and supported where there is evidence of need to improve highway safety. There is considerable disquiet about perceived excessive speed in roads around the parish. A Speed Watch campaign has been set up in the Parish and several survey sites have been identified and approved by the authorities as suitable for this. A number of parishioners have also been trained in the correct and safe use of the equipment. In the first week of monitoring, more than 100 drivers were noted exceeding the 30mph speed limit, with some travelling at speeds of up to 50mph

Policy Statement: CT 5 Traffic Flow and Highway safety

- Development proposals that result in the free flow of traffic in the village and ensure that speed limits are adhered to shall be supported**.**
- Proposals which will increase the number of site to road access points or which would increase traffic generation shall demonstrate in the interests of highway safety that they do not inhibit the free flow of traffic or exacerbate congestion.