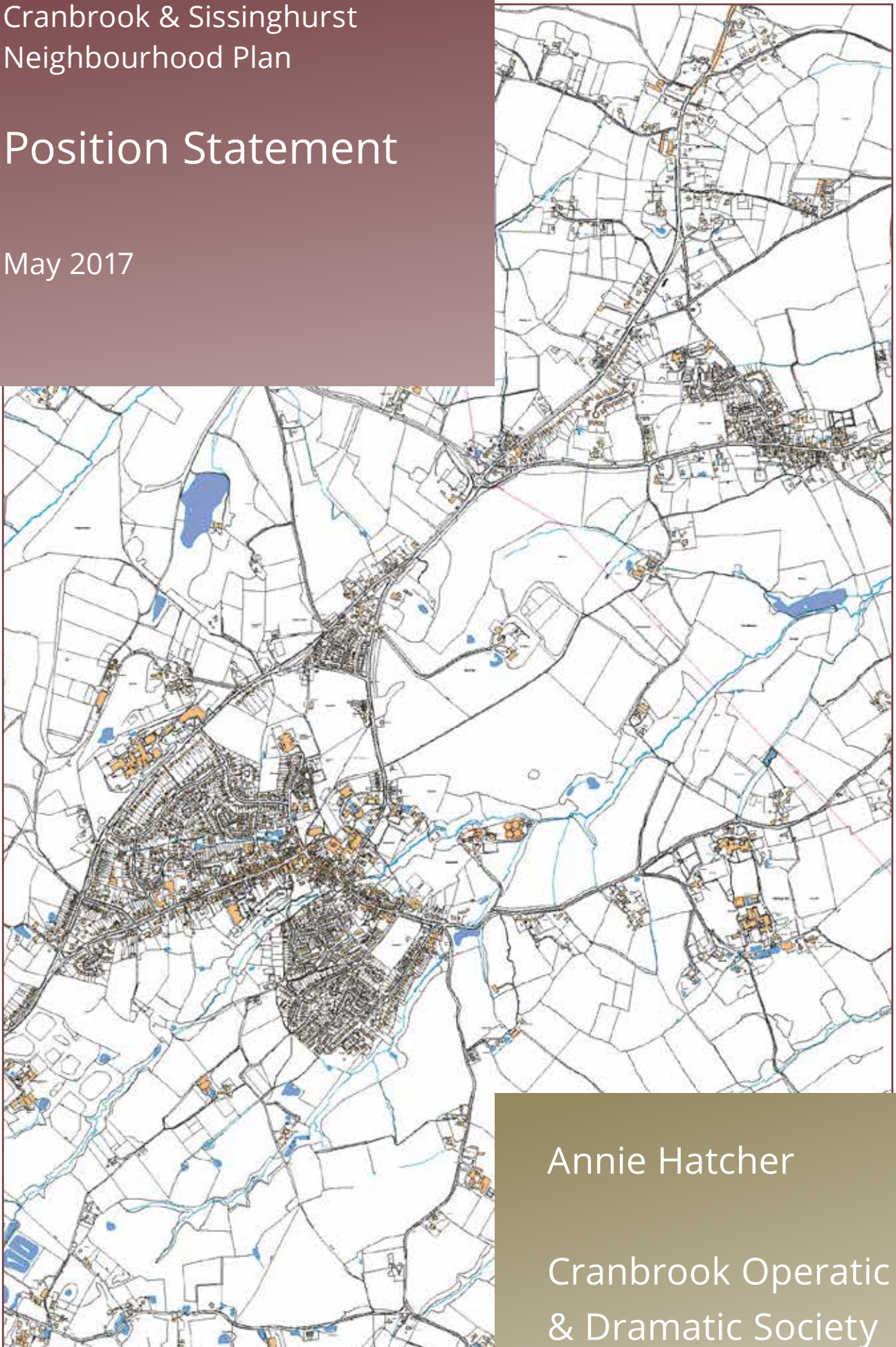


Cranbrook & Sissinghurst  
Neighbourhood Plan

# Position Statement

May 2017



Annie Hatcher

Cranbrook Operatic  
& Dramatic Society

**CRANBROOK OPERATIC  
AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY  
CRANBROOK, KENT.**

[www.cranbrookods.org.uk](http://www.cranbrookods.org.uk)





'ALICE IN WONDERLAND' – CODS CHARITY CHRISTMAS PANTO – 2011

## Our Ethos

- The CODS is an amateur theatre group. We have been active in Cranbrook for almost 100 years.
- CODS exists to encourage the performance of all forms of good quality amateur theatre; musical, drama, and comedy. The society was founded in 1919 and it's first production was the Mikado in 1920. The enthusiasm and talent continues today with CODS producing a variety of shows each year, including plays, revues, musicals and pantomimes. The society regularly enters the Kent Drama Association Festival competition and has had success in many categories. CODS also boasts a lively social scene, including after show meals, barbeques, walks, workshops, quiz nights, barn dances and theatre trips.

- CODS considers itself to be an integral part of the life of the Parish and we feel that it is imperative that we remain so. We are not an elitist group and welcome anybody from 5 – 95, who is interested in any aspect of the theatre. We are, for the most part, members of the Cranbrook community and have our day jobs as well as working on stage and backstage to provide live theatre for the locality. Members take part as stage crew, costume designers and makers, set builders and painters, lighting and sound engineers, actors, dancers, singers, directors and front of house staff.
- We produce a Charity Pantomime every year, as well as a play in the Spring, a big Autumn Musical in October and a light-hearted production in the Summer months. All these are staged, not to make vast profits, but for the enjoyment of those involved and of the audiences. All this currently takes place in the Queen's Hall Theatre at Cranbrook School.



'CALENDAR GIRLS' – CODS SPRING PLAY – APRIL 2013

## **Past, Present and Future Needs**

- At present we are tied to the Queen's Hall Theatre in Cranbrook School as our main performance venue and we thoroughly appreciate the opportunity to use this marvellous space for our productions. The Queen's Hall Theatre was built in 1977 with financial support from many local residents and CODS members and is a fantastic resource for a town the size of Cranbrook. It is however, a huge expense to both rehearse and perform in the theatre and an alternative rehearsal space would be of great benefit to our society. We need, and will continue to need a rehearsal space with a stage and piano or keyboard. This will be required on one or two evenings each week throughout the year and during the run up to a show and for performance dates. The Theatre is within the school campus and we are therefore limited to performing in the school holidays. At present CODS is happy with this arrangement, but the cost of regular use of this venue is becoming prohibitive.





'WAR SHORTS' - CODS' REMEMBRANCE PRODUCTION - SUMMER 2014



# New members

- CODS' vision for the future of Cranbrook would be a society where all residents of the parish would continue to be able to access and participate in live theatre. This is becoming more and more difficult as the cost of staging live theatre rises and audiences diminish. We would like to strengthen (or at the very least retain) our presence in Cranbrook and to make more links with other Cranbrook societies, schools and voluntary groups; widening our scope to encourage new members onstage, backstage and front of house as well as new audience members.



'THE PRODUCERS' - CODS AUTUMN MUSICAL - OCTOBER 2016

# The Providence Chapel

- Providence Chapel is a hugely important building in the history of the town. Something desperately needs to happen with this wonderful venue. It is appalling that it is being allowed to rot and in our opinion it should be saved, not only as a historic structure but as a potential arts space, a performance/rehearsal venue or even for another purpose, such as a venue for new business opportunities. Could it possibly be changed into a little theatre or recital hall?
- As part of the above we should definitely be driving for the Chapel to be renovated and access improved so that the community can have a space where it can be creative, artistic and exchange/ debate issues.



**'Beauty and the Beast' – CODS Christmas Pantomime - 2014**



# Community Hub

- Cods would be in favour of a future community centre building.
- To make it attractive any new build needs to have well-designed, attractive and appealing outdoor spaces so that general public are encouraged to use it. All areas should be accessible to disabled/young/elderly and, if resources stretched that far, should have sound-field systems/loops for hearing aid users.
- It should be a multi-purpose, self-sustaining social enterprise, providing a performance space that can also be used for classes, workshops, and that can accommodate meeting spaces, desk and office space for so called 'tiny businesses', or 'Pop Up' enterprises, in particular ones that focus on creative, tech, media.
- Any new build community space should be truly multi-purpose. For instance, small office spaces for hire, small/medium/large meeting rooms for hire, a large rehearsal/multi-use space that can be divided into smaller units for different societies (with on-line booking so that you don't have to go down in person to book).
  - Consideration be given to acoustics and flexibility of set-up, for instance seating/no seating, seating to be raked/flat, in rows/in the round chairs that can be folded away easily. If there is a community centre, then it needs to be a flexible space which can accommodate multiple activities
- Perhaps it could include an information centre for local societies (i.e. not tourist info)



**Wind in the Willows – CODS Spring Play – April 2015**

# Thinking ahead

- In addition to the above, CODS members have their own views on the future of the parish:
  - We want to retain the character and charm of the town, but not at the expense of keeping up with the times. We wouldn't want Cranbrook to be only affordable for rich retired people.
    - We are so lucky that we have an attractive town within easy commuting distance to several larger towns. Unlike so many old villages and small towns we have an advantage in that the main road bypasses the town centre. Public transport links (including good roads) to surrounding towns are vital for Cranbrook to be a vibrant place full of young working people and families with children and teenagers who are, after all, the future of any town or village.

- There seem to be struggling businesses in Cranbrook and the situation is getting worse. People need a reason to go to Cranbrook so we need to support the shops that are still there. Some of the shops in Cranbrook still have very old fashioned opening times which makes it difficult for shoppers and results in very quiet periods. One member was struck, whilst in the town on May Day – a day celebrated all over the country, that nearly all the shops were shut and the place pretty much deserted. It would be good for CODS and other local groups to support the shops and also for the town to have retail outlets which appeal to a wide range of people. Perhaps a family restaurant, or a shoe shop?
- Parking is good in Cranbrook - especially as it is free. We should also drive the community to be active in making the town an exciting and vibrant destination.



- Beyond continuing to deliver our productions, offering workshops and promoting theatre in the surrounding areas, we should be finding ways to include a wider spectrum of the community and we should aim to have some sort of youth theatre section added to our society.
- We should re-invent Cranbrook as a modern Market town, by holding a 'market' that will interest young and old alike. There's currently a focus on traditional arts & crafts, fish and meat, vegetables and artisan food. We should keep this, but why not add stalls run by local societies who are looking for new members, a Minecraft blogger, or a robotics programmer, even a pop up stall from Urban Outfitters recycled clothing. We need to begin to think outside the box to make the parish a 'go to' destination.



**'My Fair Lady' – Cods Autumn Musical – October 2009**

October 2017  
'Scrooge  
The Musical'

Christmas Panto  
2017  
'Peter Panto'

Ellen Terry Barn Theatre  
September 2018

JEEVES AND WOOSTER IN  
'PERFECT NONSENSE'

April 2018  
Alan Bennett's  
'PEOPLE'

October 2018  
'GUYS AND DOLLS'