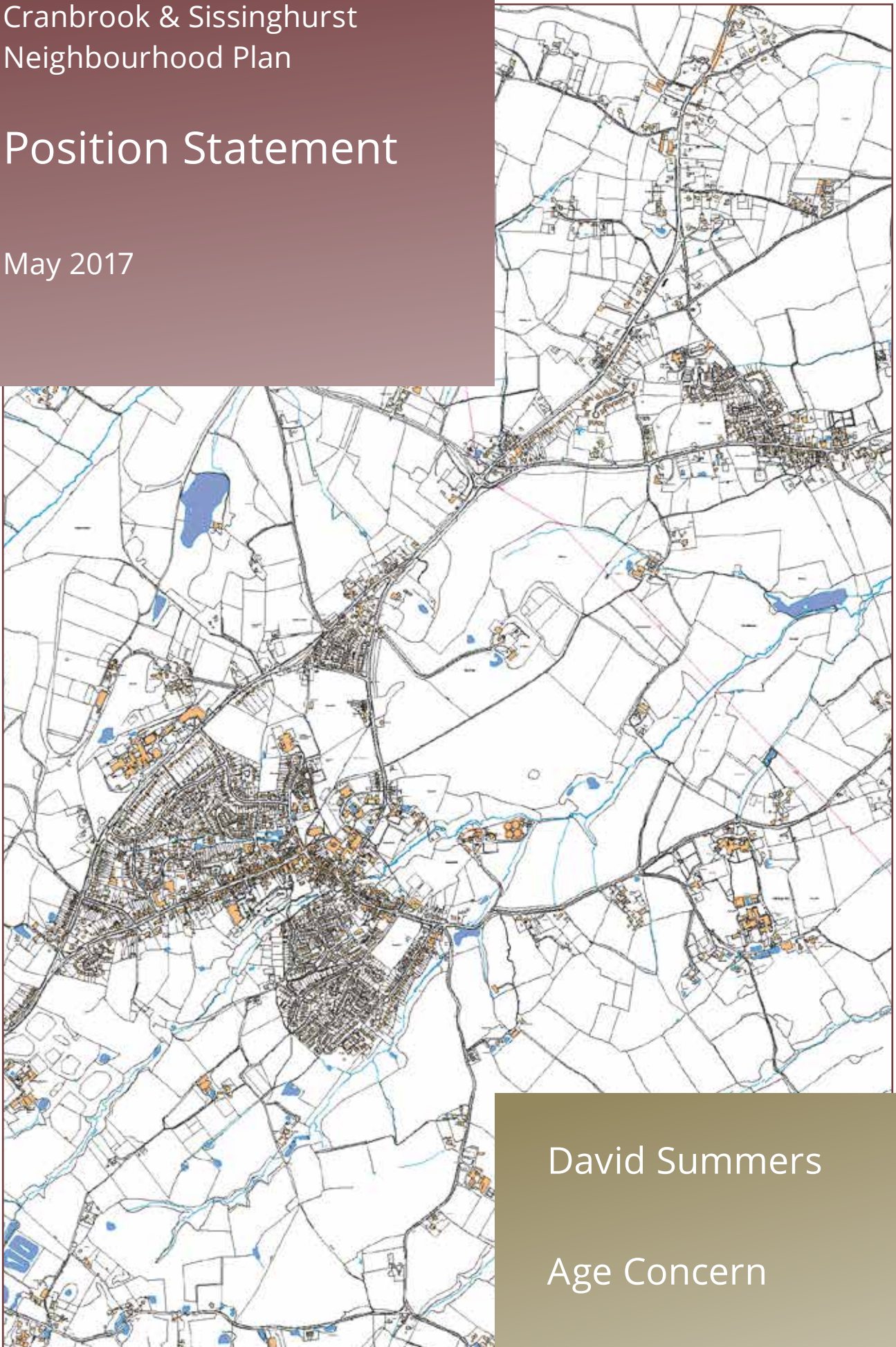


Cranbrook & Sissinghurst
Neighbourhood Plan

Position Statement

May 2017



David Summers

Age Concern

AGE CONCERN CRANBROOK AND DISTRICT

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN COMMENTS

RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION “ FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ELDERLY HOW COULD THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN CRANBROOK BE IMPROVED OVER THE NEXT 10 -15 YEARS?”

METHOD: GROUP DISCUSSIONS AT EVERNDEN HOUSE, GLEBELANDS, HORSLEY PLACE

ATTENDEES: 50-60 men and women aged 65+ - 95. Mixed socio-economic group

PROFILE: Very few of the clients interviewed have lived in the Cranbrook area all their lives. They have not in the main chosen to come to Cranbrook because of the facilities it offers; many have moved here recently under pressure from family members to sell their homes and live nearer to them. This influx has been made possible by the recent development of new accommodation in the centre of the town. About 16% of the population fall into this age range and this is likely to increase during the years ahead, accelerated if further retirement housing is built. The plan should take account of this, consciously making provision for further such housing whilst aiming to achieve a balanced housing programme meeting the needs of the community.

Many of the clients knew very little of Cranbrook beyond the High Street and Stone Street and its immediate environs. The Frythe, for instance, was unknown and there were many who had never been there and had no social contacts there. Some had moved within Cranbrook as they got older to get closer to central amenities which were otherwise made less accessible by the town's hilly topography.

Few had cars and virtually all had bus passes. The majority could not use a computer and sometimes felt isolated from knowledge of local events.

Inevitably the topics that concern them most relate to health, shopping, safety, and sociability.

A SATISFACTION

1 Good range of health facilities

1.1 Medical, dental, chiropody, physiotherapy, pharmacy and hospital services all accessible either by foot, own, car, voluntary car service, or bus

2 Good range of social facilities

1.2 Library (much used); coffee mornings, bowls, bingo, knitting club, stroke club, primary school lunch, history society, monthly concert, museum, Memory Lane, Tempo, reading group. U3A, choral society, drama society: all attract older members

1.3 Blind club was located in Cranbrook but moved to Hawkhurst on closure of council offices in 2006

Principally day time facilities e.g. CODS matinees

3 Pleasant environment

Cranbrook in Bloom; pleasing architecture; Crane Valley

4 Adequate provision of housing for the elderly at present

B CONCERNS

1 *Urban Planning*

a) Impact of expansion of population on health facilities and housing for the elderly

b) Housing on The Frythe presents problems of access to the town for elderly pedestrians because of the hilly footpath across the Crane Valley, or the longer route via the road. A substantial problem with shopping.

c) Will lessons be learned from the urban planning of The Frythe which has created a community which is cut off from the town and with only one main access? Is there scope for a small community shopping opportunity in any new large scale development?

d) The only planning view expressed was that the Police Station and Travis Perkins sites should be used for housing.

2 *Safety*

a) poor street lighting and some no go areas after dark - though most of the elderly don't go out after dark because they have no need.

b) uneven pavements make walking difficult for those with limited mobility: sticks, shoppers, and mobility scooters

c) insufficient ramps to enable mobility scooters to cross the road in the main streets

d) lack of safe crossing points as pedestrians have to negotiate parked cars which impede their sight lines of oncoming traffic

e) speed of traffic on High Street, and dangers of cars mounting pavement in Stone Street

f) fear of meeting groups of young people who are "hanging around" with nowhere to go; lack of police visibility

3 No public toilets: a substantial issue for those with bladder problems

4 *Shopping*

a) Would welcome a choice of supermarket in the town to break the Co-op monopoly.

b) Would welcome a shoe shop; ladies' drapery.

c) They are extremely concerned that there should be a Post Office, and worry about further bank branch closures since they cannot perform internet banking.

d) They would welcome greater provision of benches on the High Street for temporary rests whilst shopping.

5 *Public transport*

Bus passes are widely used and welcomed but the infrequency of service is an issue.

6 *Burial*

a) A green burial site should be provided for the parish

b) Consideration should be given to locating a further burial site as the Golford Road cemetery is likely to be full in 10 years time

7 *Voluntary sector*

There is widespread appreciation of the work carried out by volunteers to make Cranbrook a pleasant place to live. However they are very aware of the extreme difficulty in finding younger and middle age volunteers across all sectors of the community. Without these people any long term neighbourhood plan will lose its heartbeat.

David Summers
Trustee