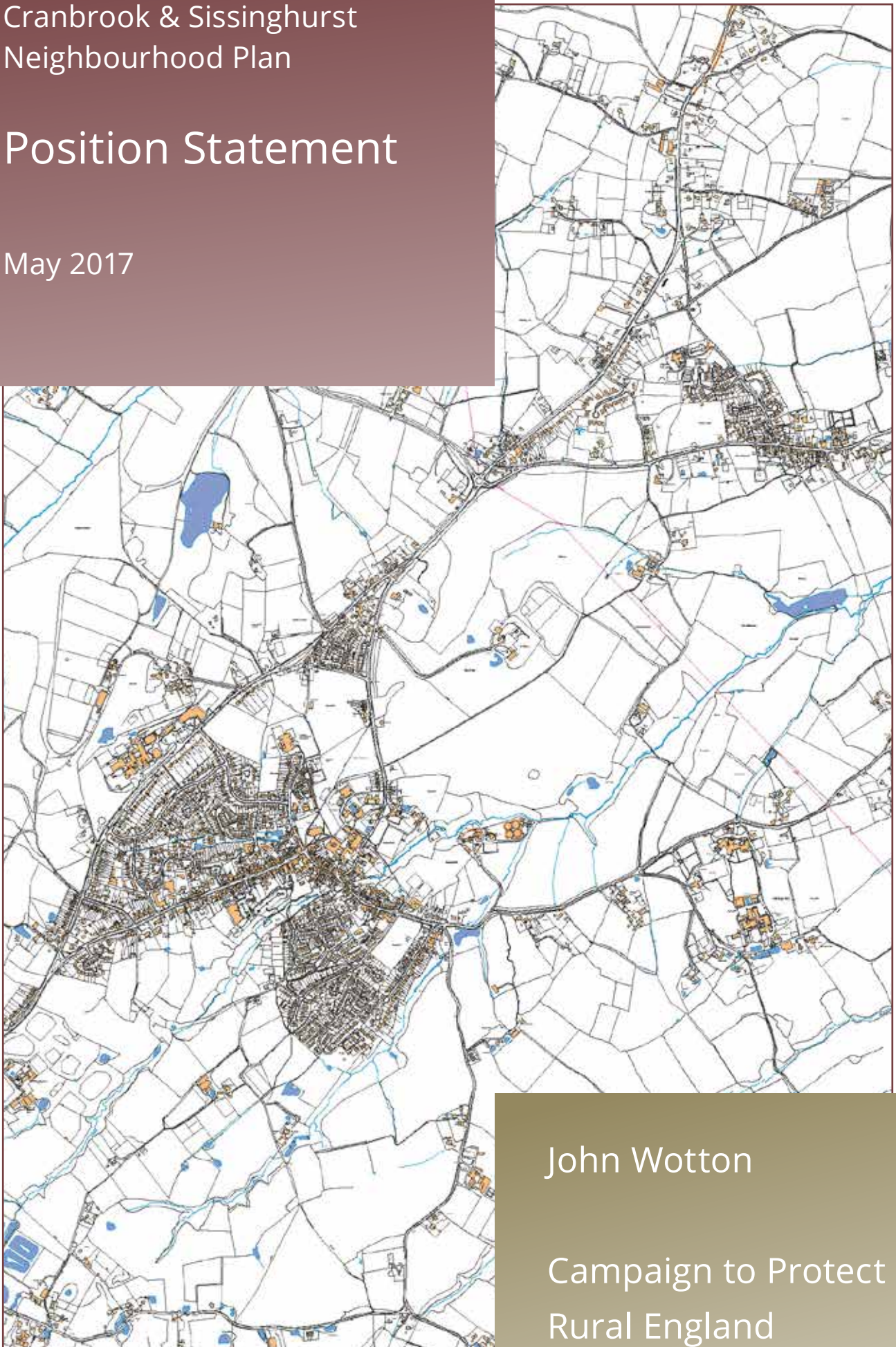


Cranbrook & Sissinghurst  
Neighbourhood Plan

# Position Statement

May 2017



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Campaign to Protect  
Rural England

## **CPRE Kent, Tunbridge Wells District Committee**

### **Initial Observations on the Preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Cranbrook & Sissinghurst**

1. Small market towns are a quintessential aspect of rural England and Cranbrook is an outstanding example of such a town. The superb conservation area, covering the heart of the town, is largely unspoilt and includes many important listed buildings and structures and other heritage assets.
2. Despite 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development to the east and west of the historic centre, the town retains a compact urban footprint, surrounded by fields and woodland. The town as a whole, and the conservation area in particular, remain closely connected with the surrounding countryside, with important views of and from the conservation area.
3. The greater part of the Parish lies within the High Weald AONB, which enjoys special protection under NPPF and the remainder, in the north of the Parish, comprises equally attractive countryside. We support the high level of protection given to all AONBs by the NPPF
4. Of the other settlements within the parish, both Sissinghurst and Wilsley are of historic importance, recognised by their separate conservation areas. The High Weald AONB is characterised by a dispersed pattern of settlement and there are thus a number of farmsteads and other small settlements spread throughout the Parish which are of historic importance and make a positive contribution to the landscape.
5. CPRE supports sustainable development which meets local needs and accords with the principles and specific protections provided under the NPPF. As general policy, CPRE adopts a “brownfield first” approach to development, to limit urban and suburban spread into the countryside.
6. We also support strong local involvement in the planning process and wish to assist the Parish Council, as far as we are able, with the Neighbourhood Planning process on which it has embarked.
7. With these considerations in mind, CPRE accepts the need for some further development, including new housing, in the Parish, subject to the constraints imposed by planning law and national and local planning policies. In general, such developments should be: on a small scale; well-designed, respecting local building traditions; sustainable; and well-connected to the town or other settlement of which they will form part. Such developments may help to sustain the vitality of Cranbrook as a local centre and support the valued range of services which it provides.
8. It must be recognised, however, that national law and policy on planning (including the protection of heritage assets, ancient woodland and the AONB), correctly interpreted, severely constrain the scope for development, particularly large-scale development, in this Parish.
9. The impact of new development on the conservation areas and other heritage assets and on the AONB should be minimised. The green spaces in Cranbrook are an important part of its character, which limits the scope for developments within the Cranbrook conservation area, or the town as a whole, without harming its character
10. The fullest possible use should be made of brownfield sites in the Parish, within the current Cranbrook LBD, or within the footprint of other existing settlements. Some small-scale, well-designed development in the town, and in villages, hamlets and isolated settlements in the Parish may be acceptable.
11. We are not at this stage advocating particular sites for development, nor, with one exception, are we currently opposing any specific site for future development. The exception to this is

the current application for outline planning permission for up to 180 homes at Brick Kiln Farm. We have consistently opposed major housing development on this site (and the adjoining Copt Hall Oast site) throughout the consultation on and adoption of the Council's current Site Allocation Document and in our comments on the current outline planning application. We do not accept that the criteria for permitting major development in the AONB are met in this case and believe that the Crane Valley forms an important part of the setting of Cranbrook.

12. By the time of the Design Forum, Tunbridge Wells District Council is expected to have published a consultation on Issues and Options for the purposes of the next Local Plan and we will be considering and commenting on that document.
13. We look forward to participating in future work on the NDP.

30/4/17