

# About this Exhibition

We are experiencing unprecedented pressure for development and expansion of our settlements, both for house building and business growth.

In Cranbrook, land has already been allocated for 250 houses, and in Sissinghurst 60 homes are currently being built.

But this is just the start of what we will be required to build. Across the whole borough of Tunbridge Wells, at least 13,000 new homes must be built by 2033. This number may rise, and Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish must take a share of this.

Neighbourhood planning is a right introduced through the Localism Act 2011 that allows communities to shape development in their areas through the production of neighbourhood development plans. These neighbourhood plans become part of the local planning framework and the policies contained within them are used in the determination of planning applications.

We are writing this neighbourhood plan to try to manage, shape and influence development. We need your help to decide where you think this development should ideally go, what it should look like and how much we can accommodate before we harm the character of our historic settlements and landscape.

Please take some time to read the headline policies in each of the chapters:

- Heritage
- Landscape
- Community & Culture
- Business & Employment
- Land Use & Social Infrastructure
- Access & Movement
- Development Opportunity Areas

Please make your comments on the postcards provided.

# Recent Activity on the Neighbourhood Plan

Building on the results of various successful consultation, engagement, and design events held earlier this year, the team of volunteers working on the plan have been busy in September and October. Divided into task groups, and with the help of extra volunteers from the parish, we have been gathering further data and researching the different ideas that have been put forward from the community since the start for the process.

The deadline for completing the recent questionnaire was the end of September. We have been pleased that those who responded took the time to read the supporting material and provide considered feedback on priorities for the emerging plan and what we may have missed.

We distributed the questionnaire both digitally on the parish council's website, via the "In the Know" e-newsletter and through our own email lists. It was also made available in print at the parish office and over 600 were delivered by hand in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst.

## Your Greatest Concerns

The questionnaire results tells us that your greatest concerns are in relation to housing availability (affordable and smaller sizes for downsizing), protection of landscape and rural character (including settlements and routeways), protection of our heritage buildings, good quality design and layout of new developments, provision for business and community spaces, and infrastructure (medical, schools, roads, and parking).

The data we have gathered is now being collated and the hard work will begin – shaping the neighbourhood plan itself. The emerging planning policies seek to address these issues at the neighbourhood level, where possible, but must also be in general conformity with both local planning policy (as contained in the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan) and national policy (as contained in the National Planning Policy Framework).

## Housing Needs & Site Assessments

Running alongside this work writing planning policy, the team of volunteers are undertaking two important tasks – a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst, and a Site Assessments of land put forward in the TWBC "call-for-sites" process. This work is being supported by the technical team from London-based firm AECOM, and is supported by grant funding.

A HNA identifies the "unconstrained expression of demand" for new homes. By doing our own parish-only assessment we can add local specificity and depth to what is initially a crude calculation derived from population growth estimates. It will not just look at total numbers of homes needed, but also the detail of housing mix required.

The Site Assessments work is the supply side of the equation and will consider the many constraints to development, such as environmental and infrastructure factors. This will enable us to understand the capacity of the landscape to absorb development without negatively impacting upon it.

To protect, preserve and enhance the rich heritage of the parish the neighbourhood plan will need to:

- Preserve, enhance, and revitalise the historic centres of Cranbrook and of Sissinghurst to strengthen their roles at the heart of the community for future generations. Any new development should have regard for the rich heritage of the parish.
- Create living and working environments that respond to the rich and outstanding heritage of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst.
- Maintain and enhance the surrounding townscape setting of the town and village centres, its roofscapes, landmark buildings and views.
- Maintain and enhance the surrounding historic farmsteads and farmyards.

## Draft Policy Headings

- Protect, preserve and enhance existing heritage buildings and other structures and items of interest both within the Conservation Areas in the parish and outside these areas, so that any new development does not detract from them. This includes emerging heritage assets, twittens and lanes, dual height pavements, farm buildings and farmyards, field patterns and agricultural structures.
- Preserve and enhance public heritage buildings for community use. Included in this will be the following buildings and their settings: Cranbrook Windmill, Cranbrook Museum, The Providence Chapel, The Vestry Hall, St Dunstan's Church, Sissinghurst Castle, St. George's Institute, Trinity Church and any listed in the Cranbrook, Sissinghurst and Wilsley Conservation Area Appraisals.
- The Providence Chapel should be restored and revitalised so that it becomes an integral part of the social and community life of the town.
- Views of key buildings and of the landscape should be protected and not damaged by new development.
- Retail premises and their shop fronts should be maintained and improved to high standards preserving a traditional style and should be sympathetic to the surrounding buildings. Support and advice should be available for shop owners.
- Density of new buildings in and near the town and village centres should be managed and sympathetic to the current layouts and densities.
- Design for new buildings should respect local styles and use vernacular materials.
- Roof heights should be managed, and views protected.
- Imaginative designs should be encouraged, provided they meet certain requirements, to be determined. Developers should be required to seek advice from local conservation bodies.
- The green settings of both Cranbrook and Sissinghurst should be preserved and enhanced. Development of playing fields and green areas should be avoided. Where necessary, trees and vegetation lost during development should be replanted elsewhere.

To protect, preserve and enhance the special landscape of the parish, the neighbourhood plan will need to:

- Protect and enhance the rural landscape character of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst parish, by ensuring that any proposed new development makes a positive contribution to its distinctive character.
- Complement the work of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council by undertaking our own Landscape Character Assessment.
- Identify and protect distinctive features, such as ancient woodlands, hedgerows, field patterns, ponds, and watercourses.

## Draft Policy Headings

- Protect and enhance the rural lane network by increasing the protection of their distinctive historic features such as sunken lanes with multiple ditch and bank features, ancient hedgerows with veteran trees, stubs and grown-out laid hedges, braided routes and droveways.
- The avoidance of suburbanising features, such as pavements and street lights, while seeking effective ways to improve their safety.
- Identify and protect key green spaces and significant landscape views within the parish, to enable and promote continued community access to the countryside and recreational green space and give greater protection to the most sensitive sites.
- Protect and enhance the landscape heritage within both the AONB and its setting, by giving great regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Establish and preserve green gaps between settlements (town, village, hamlets, and farmsteads) to avoid the destruction of the distinctive historic settlement pattern through urban sprawl and coalescence of settlements.
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity through:
  1. The protection and enhancement of designated sites, including the SSSIs of Robins Wood and Saw Lodge Wood, the Local Wildlife Sites of Angley Woods, the Crane Valley and the Copse Local Nature Reserves, Comforts Wood, and Biodiversity Priority Habitats, such as Mill Farm. Write separate policies for each of these.
  2. The identification, protection and enhancement of protected and priority species and habitats and ecological networks.
  3. New developments should incorporate biodiversity considerations from the earliest stage for the good of both nature and people.
- Promote economic, social, and environmental sustainability through supporting farm diversification and other schemes which are sensitive to the landscape, which seek to promote and enable local employment and the use of local resources, and which positively enhance the relationship between people and the countryside.

To support the cultural and community life of the parish the neighbourhood plan will need to:

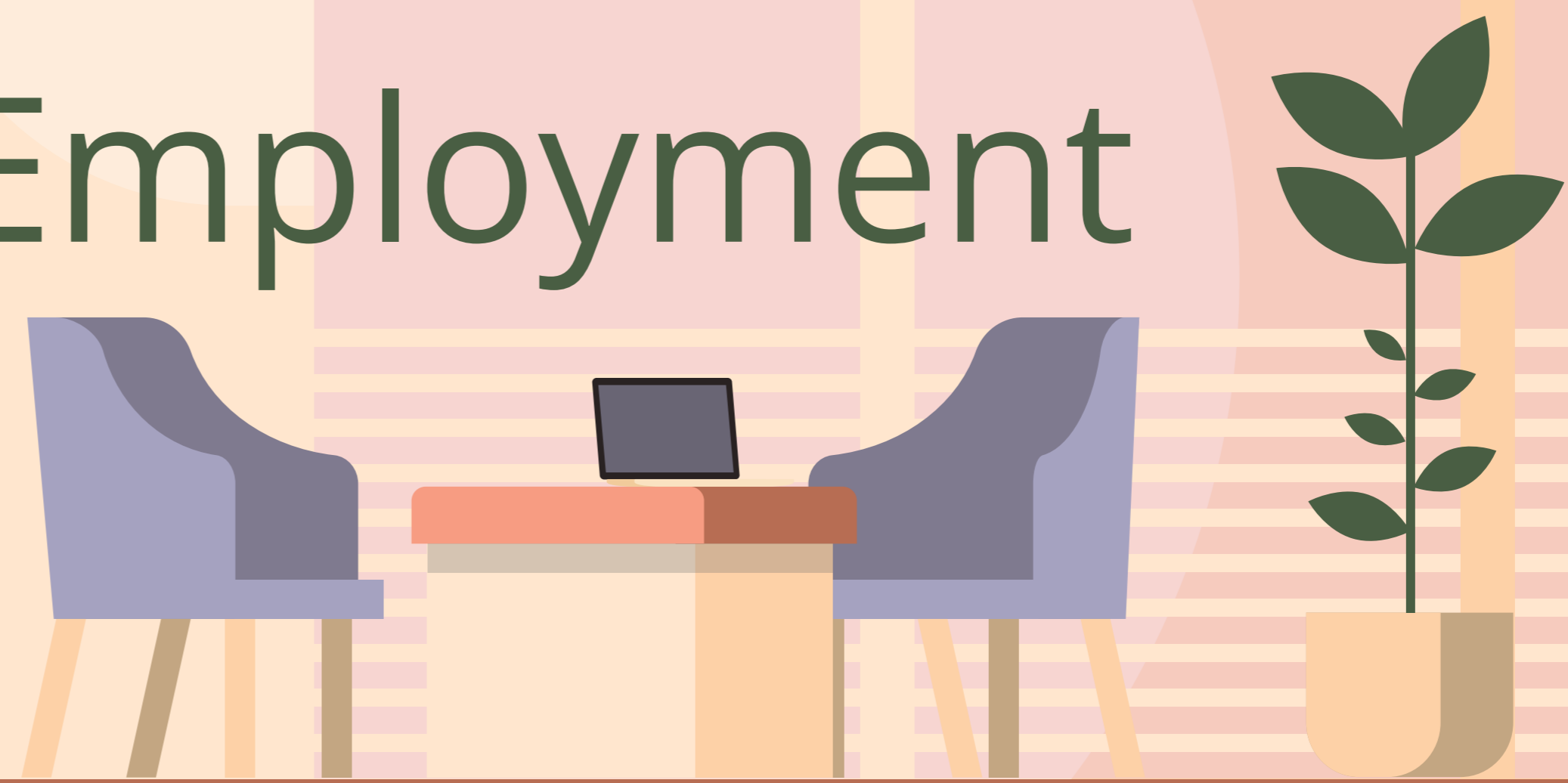
- Preserve and enhance a sense of community within the parish, through the activities of local groups.
- Enhance evening and night time economy.
- Improve the situation for parking and introduce traffic-calming measures in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst.
- Improve footfall outside the main shopping areas.
- Use the neighbourhood plan to allocate land for a community space in Cranbrook and a new village hall in Sissinghurst.

## Draft Policy Headings

- The neighbourhood plan will seek to enhance and encourage cultural activities in the parish by working with various amenity groups to provide good communication and support. This includes whole town and village events such as street markets and fairs as well as daytime or evening drama and music events.
- It will support the renovation and refurbishment of the Providence Chapel as a cultural and community venue.
- It will include policies to encourage a central point of information for venues, events, local pubs, and restaurants.
- The plan will contain ideas to improve the evening and night time economy in the parish including encouraging new and existing pubs and restaurants.
- There will be improvements to security and safety at night using better street lighting to discourage anti-social behaviour.
- Policies in the plan will make appropriate provision for car parking across the parish.
- There will be a promotion of active ground floor uses along the high street as these can enliven Cranbrook town centre. They can create activity and interest to passing pedestrians through the life and activity of shops, restaurants, bars, brew pubs, art and craft studios.
- The opening of shops across the parish on Wednesday afternoons will be encouraged, helping to improve footfall in Stone Street, the High Street, and Main Street.
- Meanwhile, the use of empty retail premises as pop-up shops or business accommodation will also be encouraged.
- A revised plan for the site already allocated for a Community Centre in Cranbrook will be supported. This will allow for a new town square or market place to be located behind the High Street and Stone Street, to act as a new civic focus for Cranbrook.
- Plans for a new Sissinghurst Village Hall will be supported.

# Business & Employment

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To support business and employment within the parish the neighbourhood plan will need to:

- Create living and working environments that respond to the landscape setting and the need for sustainable development, whilst supporting existing businesses and their aspirations.
- Safeguard and enhance the area's employment base by providing new training, educational and tourism opportunities through the creation of new activities.
- Create a diversity and vibrancy of land uses by providing opportunities for a range of different business types throughout the neighbourhood area.

## Draft Policy Headings

- Identify and allocate suitable sites for new small-scale business development clusters.
- Planning applications will be supported if they propose the redevelopment of previously developed land, are proportionate in scale, protect and enhance existing buildings and do not negatively impact on the landscape and the wider environment.
- Explore and support options for conversion of redundant retail spaces into business and employment uses to improve viability and mix of uses in Cranbrook High Street.
- Support applications for small-scale mixed-use developments for business, residential and community use.
- Identify opportunities for multi-use flexible working space (i.e. "hot-desking").
- Support for applications which seek to address the lack of adult education and employment opportunities within the parish.
- Support for the provision of housing which is affordable to local workers.
- Ensure sustainability of employment sites through supporting schemes which find solutions to parking constraints, such as those that demonstrate a commitment to active travel modes (i.e. walking and cycling) car-sharing, driveway-sharing, improving public transport and the provision of dedicated mini-bus services.
- Support farm diversification that promotes local employment and the use of local resources, and which positively enhance the relationship between people and the countryside (see also, section on Landscape).
- Support the tourist economy through an integrated policy for all the parish's heritage buildings, landscapes, and public rights of way (PROWs) to enable greater coherence to their offering, enabling the parish to maximise its opportunities in a sustainable way.
- Support the relaunch of the Cranbrook Business Association.
- Tourism should be encouraged, and it should be made easier for visitors to the town by replacing or restoring the coach spaces in the Co-op car park and providing public toilet facilities near to the town centre. Brown tourism signs should be brought up to date and tourist maps should be replaced.

# Land Use & Social Infrastructure

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To deliver the right mix of land uses and social infrastructure, the neighbourhood plan will need to:

- Create a diversity and vibrancy of land uses by providing opportunities for a range of different community uses throughout the neighbourhood area.
- Provide the right mix of services for a growing population, with particular regard for working life, business and employment and an ageing population.

## Draft Policy Headings

- Maintain the distinctive characteristics of the historic gateway approaches to both Cranbrook and Sissinghurst.
- Support for micro-generation of renewable energy where a positive environmental impact can be demonstrated.
- Protect and enhance sports and recreation provision, through the identification of sites throughout the parish for protection and investment.
- Identify and allocate a suitable site for Cranbrook Town Football Club.
- Support a revised master plan for the allocated new Community Centre site which allows for the establishment of a new pedestrian-focused civic square behind the High Street.
- Support a new primary care facility to provide sufficient medical capacity for growing demand.
- Identify and allocate a suitable site for children's activity area, catering for all ages with easy access and visibility.
- Planning applications should include a water management plan, considering the environmental impacts both up and downstream.
- Identify suitable sites and options for new Sissinghurst Village Hall.
- Support applications which seek to encourage flexibility in existing buildings to enable the enhancement of public amenity provision.
- Support new developments which allow flexible use of space.
- All new application for development will be required to ensure access to superfast broadband at the Ofgem target levels of 30mb/s.
- Support the provision of public electric vehicle charging points.
- Make a commitment to public toilets in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst.



To ensure that the neighbourhood area is a safe and pleasant place to move around, the neighbourhood plan will need to:

- Provide a range of movement choices that are convenient, sustainable and safe and which enable healthy lifestyles and well-being.
- Support changes to streets, spaces and the public realm that can deliver lasting benefits for the local economy, the local environment, and local communities.

## Draft Policy Headings & Draft Projects

- Support for traffic management projects including better pedestrian and disabled access facilities, at the following locations:
  - Stone Street, Cranbrook
  - The Street, Sissinghurst
  - Common Road, Sissinghurst
  - Colliers Green Road, outside the Primary School
  - Hartley Road, through the hamlet of Hartley
- Support restricted access for routes where a reasonable alternative route can be demonstrated.
- Create a traffic-free cycle route from Sissinghurst Castle to Bedgebury Forest, via Sissinghurst Village and Cranbrook Town Centre.
- Support applications that identify creative solutions to parking issues.
- Protect and enhance Public Rights of Way (PROWs) to encourage non-vehicular access to walk in the countryside for the benefit of public health and well-being.
- Support applications that would provide additional tourism services and facilities, including the provision of coach parking and improved public transport.
- Explore ways to improve availability of parking in the town and village centres, that do not negatively impact on protected green spaces.
- In order to improve access to community facilities and enable greater inclusion in community life, we would support developments which could provide community transport within the parish, especially for the elderly and less mobile.



# Development Opportunity Sites

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To ensure that the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the regulations and will pass examination, it needs to promote sustainable development. To do this, the neighbourhood plan will need to:

- Provide a range of housing types and tenures as part of mixed use environments, to support delivery of area wide objectives and to redevelop sites no longer suitable for other uses.
- Create living and working environments that respond to the landscape context, the demands for high-performing standards of sustainable development, whilst supporting community groups, businesses, and their aspirations.
- Create a diversity and vibrancy of land uses by providing development opportunities for a range of different land uses throughout the neighbourhood area.

## Draft Policy Headings & Draft Projects

- All developers will be required to engage and fully consult with the community at the pre-application stage, to enable the development of a shared vision for mutual benefit.
- Support “brownfield first” developments which seek to enhance and improve previously developed sites.
- Design & Access Statements (DAS) will be required in support of all planning applications.
- Support small-scale schemes which can demonstrate a sensitivity to and understanding of the characteristics of their built and natural environment.
- Support schemes which can demonstrate a commitment to Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council’s Eco-Design Code for new buildings.
- Planning applications will be supported which can demonstrate that they are providing housing which is an accurate reflection of local requirements.
- Initiate dialogue with developers to help provide a solution for a community needs e.g. dedicated day care for the elderly.

## Likely development projects in Cranbrook

- Continue to engage and consult with Cranbrook School and High Weald Academy in the production of design frameworks and master plans for their respective sites.
- Support Cranbrook Rugby Club’s application for a new clubhouse which will provide additional community facilities.

## Likely development projects in Sissinghurst

- Continue dialogue with the developer of Crossways to maximise benefit to the village.
- Identify clear design preference for land behind the Street near St. George’s Institute.
- Support a mixed-use development of light industrial, small-scale residential and community use at Collins Farm, should the site come forward for consideration. Establish master plan and associated design principles with the developer to maximise benefit to the community.

# What Happens Next?

Through this exhibition, and the events held earlier this year, the steering group is building up a wealth of information to use as it begins to prepare the first full draft of the Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Plan.

Further public exhibitions of this type are planned for early in 2018 to help refine and agree the full range of planning policies and the land use allocations.

The draft neighbourhood plan will be subject to further consultation with the local community before it is submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the local planning authority.

Following submission to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, an independent planning inspector will be appointed to examine the plan. Should the independent planning inspector find the neighbourhood plan to be in conformity with the basic conditions, then it will go forward to be the subject of a referendum, to be voted upon by the residents of the neighbourhood area.

## Thank you

More information about all the neighbourhood plan events, past and present, can be found on the dedicated Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Development Plan website:

<https://cranbrookandsissinghurstndp.co.uk/>

If you wish to stay informed about progress on the neighbourhood plan and contribute further ideas, then please get in touch via the Contact Us page on the website or writing to:

Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council  
The Old Fire Station  
Stone Street  
Cranbrook  
Kent TN17 3HF

### Steering Group:

Cllr Nancy Warne (Chair)  
Cllr Tim Kemp (Co- Vice Chair, Cranbrook)  
Cllr Brian Clifford (Co-Vice Chair, Sissinghurst)  
Annie Hatcher (Secretary)  
Matt Warne (Treasurer)  
Jeremy Boxall  
Cllr David Cook  
Liz Daley  
Cllr Kim Fletcher  
Nem Goodman  
Cllr Matt Hartley  
Lee Hatcher  
Annie Hopper  
Cllr John Smith  
Cllr Bridget Veitch  
Tally Wade