

Benenden Neighbourhood Plan – Report and Recommendations from the Parish Meeting held on Thursday 25th May 2017

Contents

Introduction 1

Parish Meeting to discuss a Benenden Neighbourhood Plan Thursday 25th May 7.30pm 1

Next steps..... 5

Recommendations:..... 5

Appendix: Good Bad Dream exercise results: 7

Introduction

Benenden Parish Council has started the process of developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). NDPs were brought about by the Localism Act 2011. NDPs are created largely by local residents and set out the future planning policy for where they live. Once ‘made’ the NDP carries the same legal weight as plans drawn up by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. This gives the community a powerful voice that must be listened to when decisions are made about future housing, employment or community buildings, facilities and associated infrastructure. The key steps to develop a NDP are:

1. Seek agreement from residents to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.
2. Set up a group linked to the parish council to take this forward.
3. Register your neighbourhood plan area (generally the civil parish).
4. Apply for funding (up to £9000 is available from the government plus specialist advice or research).
5. Engage and consult with residents on what to include in the Neighbourhood Plan, building on the recent Parish Plan.
6. Write and then consult on a draft Neighbourhood Plan.
7. Have the Plan ‘examined’ by an independent expert to ensure it complies with legislation.
8. Hold a referendum at which every resident (18 and over) gets a vote on whether to agree the plan.
9. If a majority vote in favour, the plan is ‘made’ and becomes part of the overall development plan for Tunbridge Wells District.

Parish Meeting to discuss a Benenden Neighbourhood Plan Thursday 25th May 7.30pm

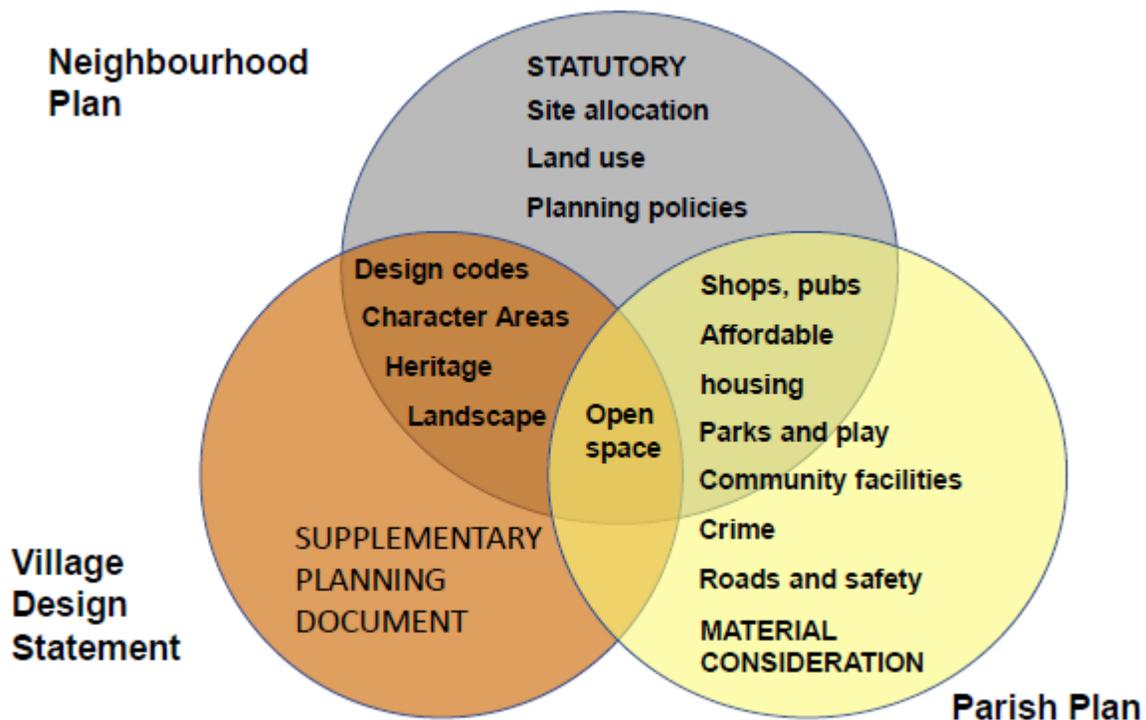
The meeting was advertised on parish noticeboards, in the Village Shop, the Bull and Woodcock Pubs and on Facebook. Approximately 40-50 people attended (a register was taken) and after an introduction from the parish council chair Peter Davies, Sally Marsh from the High Weald AONB Unit give a fascinating presentation on Benenden and Neighbourhood Plannig in the context of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The slides are available from

www.benendenparishcouncil.org but key points included:

- Benenden lies within the High Weald AONB – an outstandingly beautiful medieval landscape

- Protected by law for future generations
- Designated in 1983 as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Covering 1460 square km across the counties of East and West Sussex, Kent and Surrey.
- Advice and guidance provided by a Joint Advisory Committee funded by Defra and 15 local authorities
- AONBs are preserved for the characteristic beauty of their landscape (termed 'Natural beauty' in law)
- All public bodies, including Parish Councils, are required by law to have regard for conserving the natural beauty of AONBs (Section 85, CROW Act 2000)
- The AONB Management Plan sets out the character of the AONB and the objectives for conserving it
- The Plan provides criteria for assessing whether the policies and actions of public bodies meet their legal duty
- There followed a series of slides focussing on Benenden parish's:
 - Geology and water
 - Historic routeways
 - Historic settlements
 - Ancient woodland
 - Field and heath
- The AONB has commissioned consultants to develop a Design Guide with a first draft to be produced early Autumn 2017, consulted on including a Design Conference late Autumn 2017 and launched Spring 2018.

This was followed by a presentation from Jim Boot, a freelance community planner and Associate with Action for Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) who has been appointed by the parish council to help with developing the Neighbourhood Plan. The presentation which is also available on-line focussed on how the NDP fits with the Parish Plan 2015 (see diagram below):



Some of the challenges facing residents on modest incomes from the Housing Needs Survey 2015:

- High property prices and a predominance of privately owned homes means that some local people are unable to afford a home within the parish.
- At the time of writing the report the cheapest property for sale in the parish was a 2 bed apartment for £175,000; to afford to buy this a deposit of approximately £26,250 would be required and an income of £42,500.
- The Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee Scheme may assist some local people if they cannot raise a sufficient deposit but their income will need to be higher in order to afford repayments.
- To afford to rent privately an income of approximately £25,600 would be required to afford the cheapest property which was a 1 bedroom apartment in Iden Green for £640pcm.

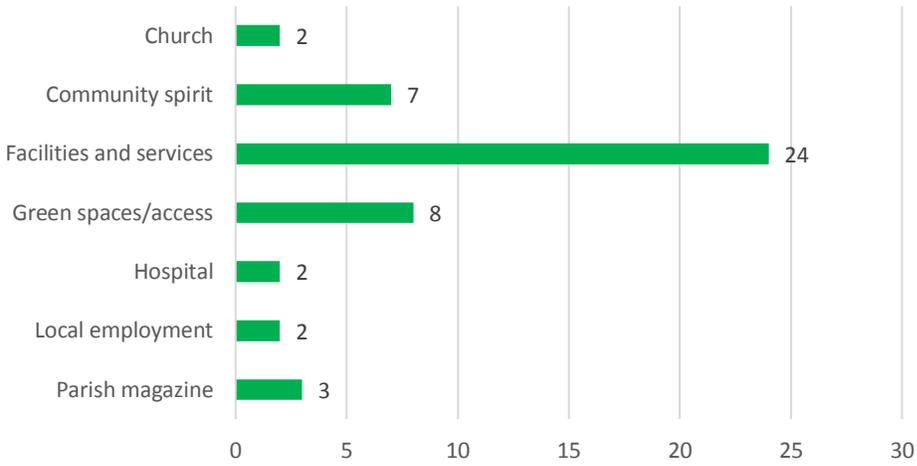
The survey identified a need for up to 21 general needs affordable homes and 13 homes for older people.

There followed a simple exercise to find out if the issues in the village had changed since the Parish Plan 2015 which involved asking residents to write down on post-it notes and share:

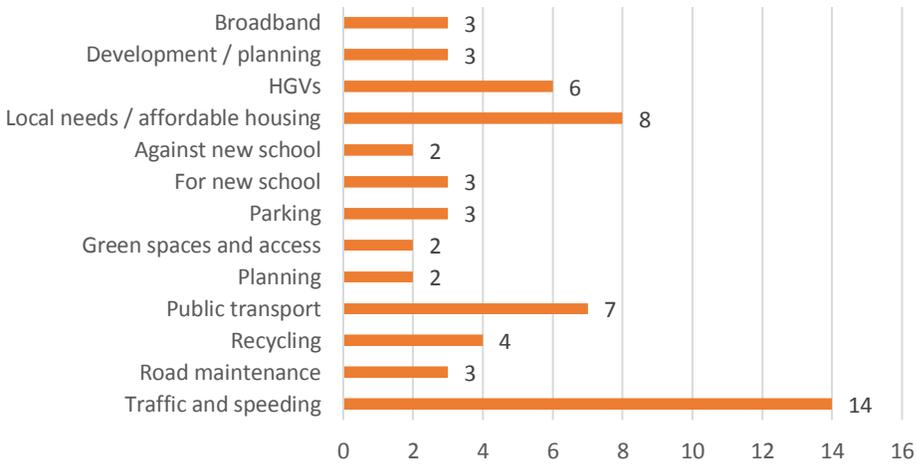
- What's GOOD or working well in Benenden?
- What's BAD or needs improving?
- Your DREAM or VISION for the future of the parish?

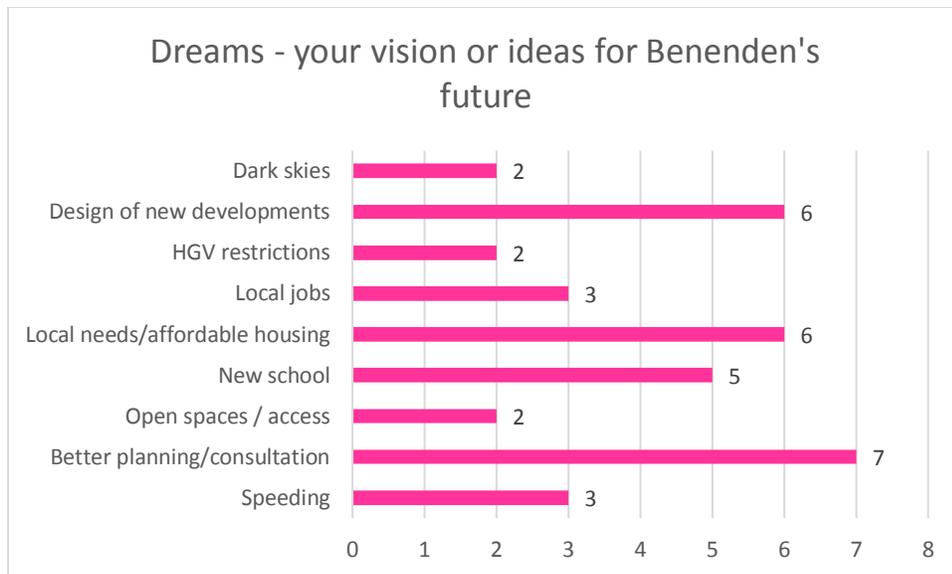
While a full list of the responses is available in the Appendix to this report, the results were sorted into categories to give a flavour of the most favoured issues or ideas:

Good - what's working well in Benenden



Bad - what needs improving in Benenden





The dreams in particular will be used to inform the first community NDP workshop planned for the autumn to help develop a Vision and Objectives for the plan. The exercise could be repeated at village events over the summer, at pub quizzes or coffee mornings in the Village Shop and at the primary school and with staff at Benenden Hospital.

Next steps

Steps one and three have now been achieved and the next step is to set up a steering or working group linked to the parish council to take this forward. The aim is for this group to meet before the summer holidays on either the 14th or 20th June. Smaller groups might then meet informally over the summer to carry out research with the aim of bringing this research to a series of community workshops to be held in the autumn.

At present the following are planned:

- Vision and objectives workshop - Saturday 30th September 2.00-4.00pm
- Workshop 1 - Housing and Community - Saturday 28th October 10.00am -12.00
- Workshop 2 - Environment and Heritage - Saturday 11th November 2.00-4.00pm
- Workshop 3 - Transport and Economy - Saturday 9th December (time to be confirmed).

Recommendations:

- A. Set up a steering or working group linked to the Parish Council to take forward the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) with the first meeting either on the 14th or 20th June 7.30pm.
- B. Encourage small task and finish groups to research key issues and evidence over the summer.
- C. Adopt the model Terms of Reference provided courtesy of Goudhurst NDP Group and Parish Council.
- D. Apply to Locality for funding to pay for costs associated with developing the NDP.

- E. Continue the engagement with residents over the summer using the summary A5 leaflet developed for the launch event using the Village Shop, Village Hall, Iden Green Pavilion, Benenden Hospital Reception/Refectory, Bull and Woodcock Pubs.
- F. Continue the engagement with residents using the Good, Bad, Dream exercise at summer events and activities ie school and summer fetes etc.
- G. Use the engagement activities to promote the four autumn community workshops.

Jim Boot, Community Planner and Associate with Action for Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK), 6th June 2017

Appendix: Good Bad Dream exercise results:

What's GOOD or working well in the Parish	Category
Retains old world charm	Village character
Parish magazine	Parish magazine
Parish magazine	Parish magazine
Parish magazine free to all.	Parish magazine
New school	New school
Local employment	Local employment
Two major employers 8-900 people	Local employment
Development at Benenden Hospital	Hospital
The hospital.	Hospital
Green spaces access to the countryside	Green spaces / access to the countryside
Playing fields and the Glebe	Green spaces / access to the countryside
Footpaths	Green spaces / access to the countryside
Playing fields, Glebe field, children's play areas in Iden Green and Benenden.	Green spaces / access to the countryside
The footpath network	Green spaces / access to the countryside
Maintenance of public spaces.	Green spaces / access to the countryside
The environment as bequeathed to us.	Green spaces / access to the countryside
General upkeep is good. Beautiful countryside.	Green spaces / access to the countryside
Most things are good especially the shop	Facilities and services
Community, pubs and church. Local shop facility with post office. Local butcher, local primary school.	Facilities and services
Village shop and coffee shop	Facilities and services
Post office, shops, halls, Iden Green and Memorial Hall, Benenden village hall	Facilities and services
Community shop, village hall	Facilities and services
Local shop	Facilities and services
Community shop. Social activities, clubs , groups etc.	Facilities and services
Post office, Iden Green pavilion, Benenden village hall, Benenden shop.	Facilities and services
The community shop and village halls.	Facilities and services
Local pub.	Facilities and services
Community shop.	Facilities and services
Village shop and coffee shop	Facilities and services
Community shop, clubs and societies	Facilities and services
Community shop contributes to this	Facilities and services
The community shop. The village pub.	Facilities and services

Community shop.	Facilities and services
Community shop and café. Community activities, clubs and societies.	Facilities and services
Village shop.	Facilities and services
Village shop.	Facilities and services
Pubs, shop, butcher helps keep community together.	Facilities and services
Facilities, church, shops, school, pubs and clubs.	Facilities and services
Village shop	Facilities and services
Community shop and café.	Facilities and services
Community shop and post office. New primary school may be on the way. 2 pubs, butchers, garage etc.	Facilities and services
No street lights.	Dark skies
Community spirit.	Community spirit
Good sense of community	Community spirit
Fairly high social capital.	Community spirit
Community working too.	Community spirit
Quiet, small integrated community.	Community spirit
People help each other	Community spirit
Village events	Community spirit
Active church	Church
Church is widening its different services for different demographic sections.	Church

What's BAD or needs improving	Categories
Speeding	Traffic/speeding
Volume of traffic, speed of traffic - this is spoiling our quality of life and is dangerous	Traffic/speeding
Traffic speeding through Iden Green	Traffic/speeding
Speeding	Traffic/speeding
Traffic too fast through villages	Traffic/speeding
Speeding	Traffic/speeding
Traffic and speeding	Traffic/speeding
Roads too busy	Traffic/speeding
Cars too fast through village	Traffic/speeding
Traffic	Traffic/speeding
Too much through traffic	Traffic/speeding
Traffic/speeding	Traffic/speeding
Roads are dangerous for riders/cyclists/walkers	Traffic/speeding
Speeding	Traffic/speeding
No shop in Iden Green	Shop
Narrow roads off main road and poor road maintenance	Road maintenance
Condition of local roads is poor	Road maintenance

What's BAD or needs improving	Categories
Roads	Road maintenance
Glass recycling	Recycling
Recycling facilities for glass	Recycling
Recycling and renewable energy	Recycling
We need increased recycling facilities	Recycling
Poor public transport	Public transport
Iden Green transport	Public transport
Bus service	Public transport
Better public transport	Public transport
Transport - more buses Iden Green	Public transport
We need better public transport	Public transport
Public transport	Public transport
Lack of response of TWBC planning department	Planning
Not being heard by TWBC	Planning
Playgrounds	Green spaces / access to the countryside
Rather over tidy - more wild places	Green spaces / access to the countryside
Insufficient car parking	Parking
Parking from village shop to cross-roads	Parking
Parking	Parking
Lots of people come in from other areas to school and hospital	Other
New school needs to be built	For new school
Need new primary school	For new school
Lack of progress on new primary school	For new school
Site of new school	Against new school
School primary expected to increase capacity from 176 to 225 capacity	Against new school
Mobile phone coverage	Mobile signal
Lack of affordable rural housing	Local needs/affordable housing
Need more small houses for new buyers and the retired	Local needs/affordable housing
Housing more	Local needs/affordable housing
Low provision of affordable housing	Local needs/affordable housing
Too much development as 'affordable housing' sold off, becoming unaffordable	Local needs/affordable housing
Affordable housing (housing association/renting)	Local needs/affordable housing
More affordable housing is needed	Local needs/affordable housing

What's BAD or needs improving	Categories
More residents in 20-40 years demography ie affordable / low cost [housing]	Local needs/affordable housing
not enough local (small) employment	Local jobs
Too much heavy traffic through the village	HGVs
Too many large lorries and white vans going too fast	HGVs
Oversized lorries on narrow roads	HGVs
Too many HGVs	HGVs
Too many heavy lorries on narrow lanes	HGVs
HGVs driving through village	HGVs
No GP surgery for local people	Lack of GP surgery
No doctor or medical centre	Lack of GP surgery
What point is a referendum as the one held here about the school site was totally over ridden by the school governors !??	Governance
Sports, social facilities	Facilities and activities
Forest Farm development!?	Development
Over development of new housing in village	Development
Increasing suburbanisation eg road signage	Development
Increasing light polluted	Dark skies
Lack of safe cycle paths	Cycling
Broadband	Broadband
We need better and faster internet	Broadband
Broadband	Broadband

DREAMS or VISIONS for the future	Categories
Parish wide speed limits	Speeding
20 mph speed limits 40 mph	Speeding
Quiet roads	Speeding
Small shop in Iden Green	Shops
To keep the village a quiet rural idyll	Rural aspect
New houses to have solar panels and other renewable energy. New houses to have greywater recycling.	Renewables/sustainability
Better local transport	Public transport
Planning authority to hear and act on local views	Planning
Flexible approach to future planning ideas which take into account the need to protect the AONB ye allow some quality development.	Planning
Better advice from planning department	Planning
Less bureaucratic approach from TWBC	Planning
Only small developments	Planning
Real say in how Benenden moves forward	Planning
A neighbourhood plan which matches our spirit, history and aspirations.	Planning

DREAMS or VISIONS for the future	Categories
New community woods, village allotment, tree planting for every new home, nature, hedging	Parks and open spaces
Maintain local green spaces. Maintain fields with livestock.	Parks and open spaces
An attractive place to live for all age groups - flourishing school, good facilities for youth and good provision for workers and retired.	Overall vision
New primary school	New school
New village schools	New school
New school	New school
We need in the village - medical support, dental support a new school	New school
New primary school built and open	New school
Mobile phone network works	Mobile signal
Good quality housing to meet local need	Local needs/affordable housing
The almshouses are the only low cost affordable (to rent) housing not subject to right to buy. This sector can and should be extended.	Local needs/affordable housing
There are up to 100 businesses and possibly 1000 jobs in village, so we need employees to live in the community.	Local needs/affordable housing
A more balanced provision of housing catering for every sector for the community	Local needs/affordable housing
Get rid of houses of poor / low quality only replaced by houses that stay in housing association ownership	Local needs/affordable housing
More affordable social housing	Local needs/affordable housing
More local employment	Local jobs
Strong local business presence	Local jobs
Small businesses encouraged on a site	Local jobs
Width and weight restrictions! [HGVs]	HGV restrictions
Ban vehicles above 7.5 tonnes on lanes including Swattenden Lane	HGV restrictions
People don't know their neighbours. We need a much better sense of community.	Foster community spirit
Small 'patches' of well designed developments - no large 'estates'	Design
Good designs of new housing / office / factory	Design
Any new housing not crowded and of good design	Design
Affordable housing of good design	Design
Small developments of well designed housing	Design
New houses blending in with existing buildings	Design

DREAMS or VISIONS for the future	Categories
Dark skies	Dark skies
Diminution of light pollution	Dark skies
Greater community involvement across all groups - a few people seem to do a lot of the work	Community spirit
Far better internet	Broadband speed