



BRENTWOOD AND MATFIELD PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2020 – 2038

Referendum Version, August 2022

*Prepared in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and
Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012-2017*



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COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
HNS	Brenchley and Matfield Housing Needs Survey
HWAONB	High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
HWDG	High Weald Design Guide
KCC	Kent County Council
LBD	Limits to Built Development
NCA	National Character Area
NDP	Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPSG	Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
SLP	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Submission Local Plan
PSNP	Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan
PPS	Brenchley & Matfield Parish Plan Survey
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
TWBC	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Unless indicated otherwise, maps in the document are produced in the Parish Online mapping system licenced by the Parish Council. Documents used in evidence are underlined as hyperlinks.

Acknowledgments

Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council would like to thank the residents of the parish who have contributed to the Neighbourhood Development Plan through their feedback and attendance at public events, helping to define the objectives and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan received financial support from the Parish Council and from government grants administered by Locality, which also provided valuable resources on neighbourhood planning. The work through the early stages and with the public consultations was supported by FERIA Urbanism, a professional design and planning practice. The Parish Council is grateful to parishioners who have provided the photographs to illustrate the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Council is grateful to the members of the Steering Group for their hard work and dedication throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process. The members of the group are: Liz Akenhead, Tina Berry, Jane Buckley-Sander, Lynne Butler, David Goodridge, Simon O'Donnell and Kevin Sparkhall. Thanks also go to the previous members of the group who assisted through the early stages and contributed towards the production of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan in February 2020. These were Ian Clear, Rory Foster, Simon Galwey, Paul Spedding and Christopher Woodley, who also chaired the Steering Group until April 2020.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Neighbourhood planning is a community-led process, introduced by the Government to encourage local people to shape and influence development where they live and work.

1.2 The Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) will contribute to sustainable development by seeking improvements in economic, social and environmental conditions. A separate Sustainability Appraisal assessed how the Regulation 15 Pre-Submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan (PSNP) meets the needs of sustainable development. The Plan sets out a vision and objectives for the parish through to 2038, along with a set of planning policies and specific projects to maintain and improve the quality of life in our parish. Consideration has been given to how any potential adverse effects arising from development proposals may be prevented, reduced or offset.

1.3 As is legally required, this Neighbourhood Plan conforms to national policies and is consistent with the Saved Policies of the TWBC Local Plan 2006 and the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Submission Local Plan (SLP). The Neighbourhood Plan aims to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and is compatible with human rights obligations. It is supported by: a Consultation Statement and Annex that demonstrates engagement with the community and statutory bodies; a Basic Conditions Statement that demonstrated the Plan's conformity with required laws and policies; and other supporting documents.

What you will find in this Draft Neighbourhood Plan

1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan is divided into eight chapters.

- Background information on the main characteristics of the Parish, including its population, landscape and historical contexts, its existing services and facilities, and local economy (Chapter 2).
- Summaries of how the NDP fits into the framework of regional and national planning, policies and law, and the challenges that the parish faces (Chapter 3).
- A statement of the proposed vision for the future of Brenchley and Matfield followed by strategic objectives in six areas (Chapter 4).
- More detailed objectives for each strategic area, with a table linking these to the policies set out in the NDP (Chapter 5).
- Specific policies for each of the six strategic areas (Chapter 6).
- An outline of proposed Community Action Projects and sources of funding (Chapter 7).
- An outline of arrangements for implementation and monitoring of the NDP (Chapter 8).

1.5 There are five Appendices:

- A description of the national and regional planning framework (Appendix 1)
- The Government definitions of Affordable Housing and First Homes Scheme (Appendix 2)
- Brenchley and Matfield High Weald Area of Outstanding National Beauty (HWAONB) Landscape Character maps (Appendix 3)
- Photographs and descriptions of Valued Views (Appendix 4)
- Photographs and descriptions of Local Green Spaces (Appendix 5)

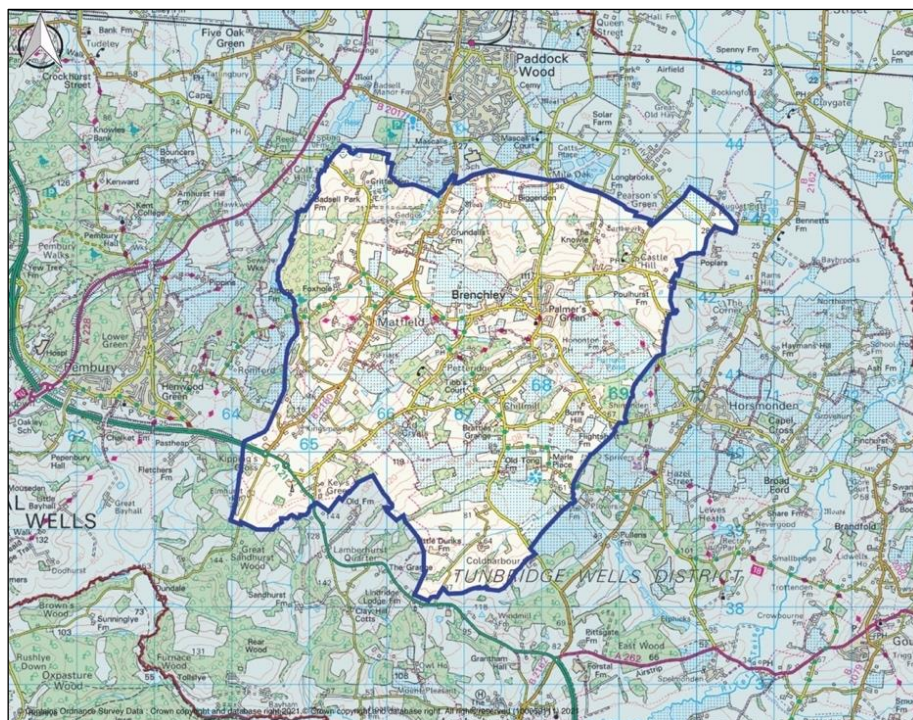


The Preparation Process

1.6 The preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan has been carried out by a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) appointed by Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council, which has overall responsibility for the Plan. The NPSG was supported in the earlier stages of its work by Feria Urbanism, a professional design and planning practice, and by independent planning consultant Lindsay Frost.

1.7 In May 2015 the Parish Council decided to create a Brenchley and Matfield Parish Plan to set out a vision for the future of the parish. Around 200 members of the community attended an Open Day in January 2015, which established the main issues of concern for parishioners. Working Groups were set up, involving over seventy volunteers from the community, to focus on six key areas: Wellbeing; Business and Local Economy; Transport, Highways and Byways; Environment and Sustainability; Planning and Development and Education. The Working Groups created a Parish Plan Survey, which was carried out in November 2016 and generated 554 responses.

Figure 1: The designated Neighbourhood Plan area



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1.8 During the same time period, in order to meet new Government housing targets, TWBC undertook Calls for Sites in February 2016 and May 2017, when landowners in the borough were invited to submit land for residential development. Landowners submitted thirty-five sites in the parish, with a further ten sites in the parish emerging as late submissions. In response to the threat of significant development in the parish, the Parish Council made the decision after the Annual Parish Meeting in May 2017 to embark on a Neighbourhood Plan. The earlier public consultations and results of the Parish Plan Survey were invaluable in creating the foundation for the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.9 Work on the Benchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Plan began in September 2017 with the appointment of the Steering Group. The designated boundary for the Benchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Plan (Figure 1), which coincides with the parish boundary, was approved by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on 30th November 2017. The Plan period is 2020 to 2038.

1.10 The Plan has been prepared through extensive community consultation, in order to benefit from as many ideas and comments as possible. There are areas of divergent views but the aim has been to build as broad a consensus as possible. The Vision Statement, Objectives and Planning Policies for the Neighbourhood Plan have been developed from this process.

Community involvement

1.11 The main events to encourage community involvement have been:

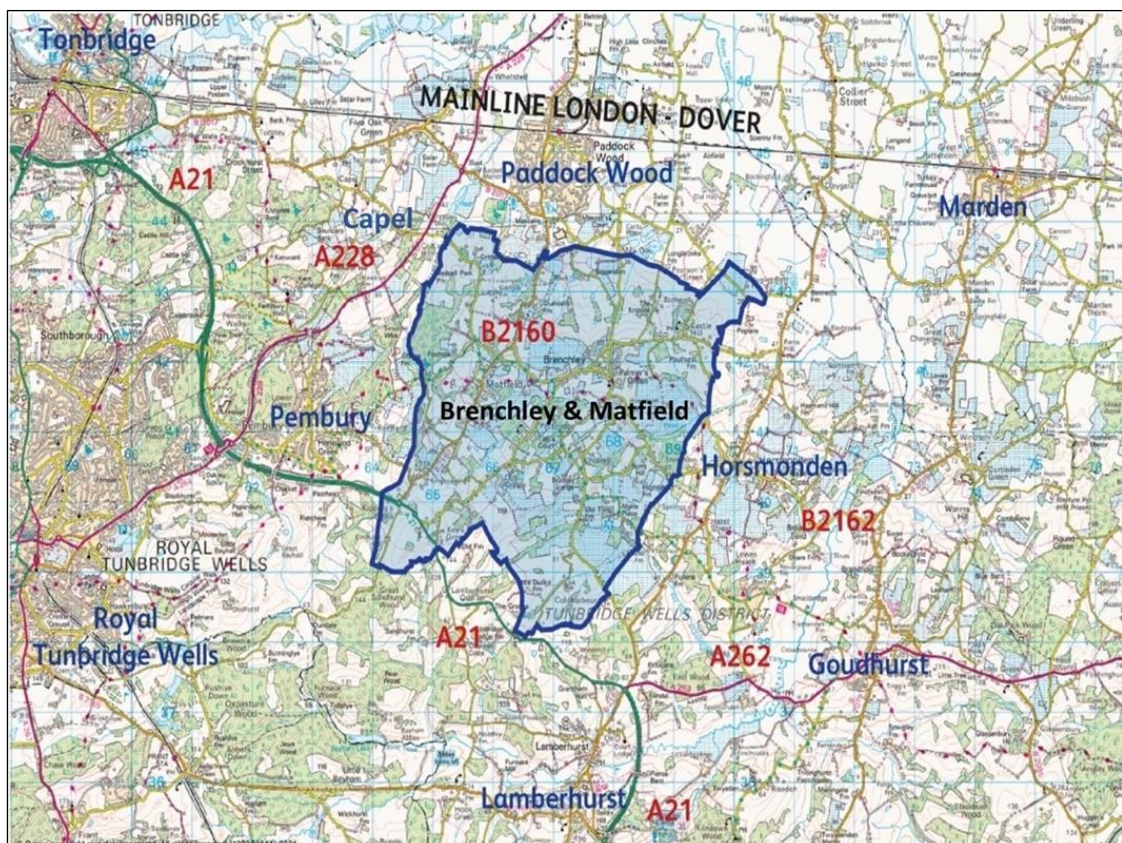
- Two Visioning Events, held on 21st and 22nd February 2018, identified key issues that the NDP needed to address.
- A three-day Design Forum held on 20th -22nd March 2018, explored ideas for future development and their implications for the parish. Displays were mounted each evening and a final meeting summarised the outcomes.
- The publication of an Interim Report by Fera in May 2018, which was a key milestone. This covered the work to date, including the Visioning Event, Design Forum and the work of the NPSG. The report also set out six emerging policy themes.
- An evening meeting held on 8 November 2018 to inform local residents of the work so far, the contents of the Interim Report and to introduce the emerging policy themes. Drop-in sessions were run on the following two days for those unable to attend the meeting. Comments were also sought through online and social media.
- A booklet of Draft Policies for community consultation was produced in November 2018
- Two further community drop-in events held in February and March 2019 to seek further views of the community on the draft work.
- The Draft Neighbourhood Plan, published in February 2020, comments on which were incorporated into a revision of the plan by the Steering Group.
- Consultation and drop-in events held in each village in February and March 2020.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was no opportunity through much of 2020 and 2021 to hold public meetings, but the community was updated through articles in Roundabout, the community monthly magazine.
- A Housing Needs Survey and Business and Employment Survey (tabulations of results and a summary report). carried out in October 2020.

- Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) forms were submitted to TWBC in October 2020 to enable HRA and SEA screening reports to be carried out, which were completed in January 2021.
- Alongside community consultation, regular dialogue was maintained with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to ensure that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan took proper account of national and local policy and that, in preparing its Local Plan, the Borough Council was fully aware of views emerging from the Neighbourhood Plan process.
- The Regulation 14 public consultation was held from 17 May to 27 June 2021. This was advertised through leaflets delivered by post or hand to all households, as well as through notice boards, the parish magazine and social media. The Regulation 14 Plan was posted online and residents were also able to come along and read a paper copy of the draft at drop-in sessions, where they could also discuss any issues with members of the Steering Group. The completion of an on-line survey was encouraged, with the option of paper copies for those who needed an alternative.
- The Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on 4th November 2021 in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). In accordance with Regulation 16 representations on the Neighbourhood Plan were invited for an eight-week period from Monday 29th November 2021 to Monday 24th January 2022.

Chapter 2 – Background on the Parish

Location and Population

Figure 2: Brenchley and Matfield Parish within the district



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2.1 Brenchley & Matfield parish is one of sixteen civil parishes in the borough of Tunbridge Wells. It lies seven miles north-east of Royal Tunbridge Wells, eight miles south-east of Tonbridge and two miles south of Paddock Wood (Figure 2). The parish has an area of 22km² and its 25km perimeter is shared with the neighbouring parishes of Paddock Wood, Capel, Pembury, Horsmonden and Lamberhurst. The A21 crosses the SW area of the parish, providing a road link to London, the coast and the national motorway network. The nearest rail station is at Paddock Wood, two miles to the north, with direct services to London, Maidstone and Strood and the South-Eastern coast, and connections through Tonbridge to the South coast.

2.2 In 2011 the population was 2863 persons in 1164 households, with an average age of 43 years. Brenchley and Matfield are the two main villages. Smaller settlements include Pettebridge, the largest, and hamlets at Castle Hill, Keys Green, Kippings Cross, Market Heath, Mile Oak, Chantlers Hill, Walnut Tree and Tibbs Court.

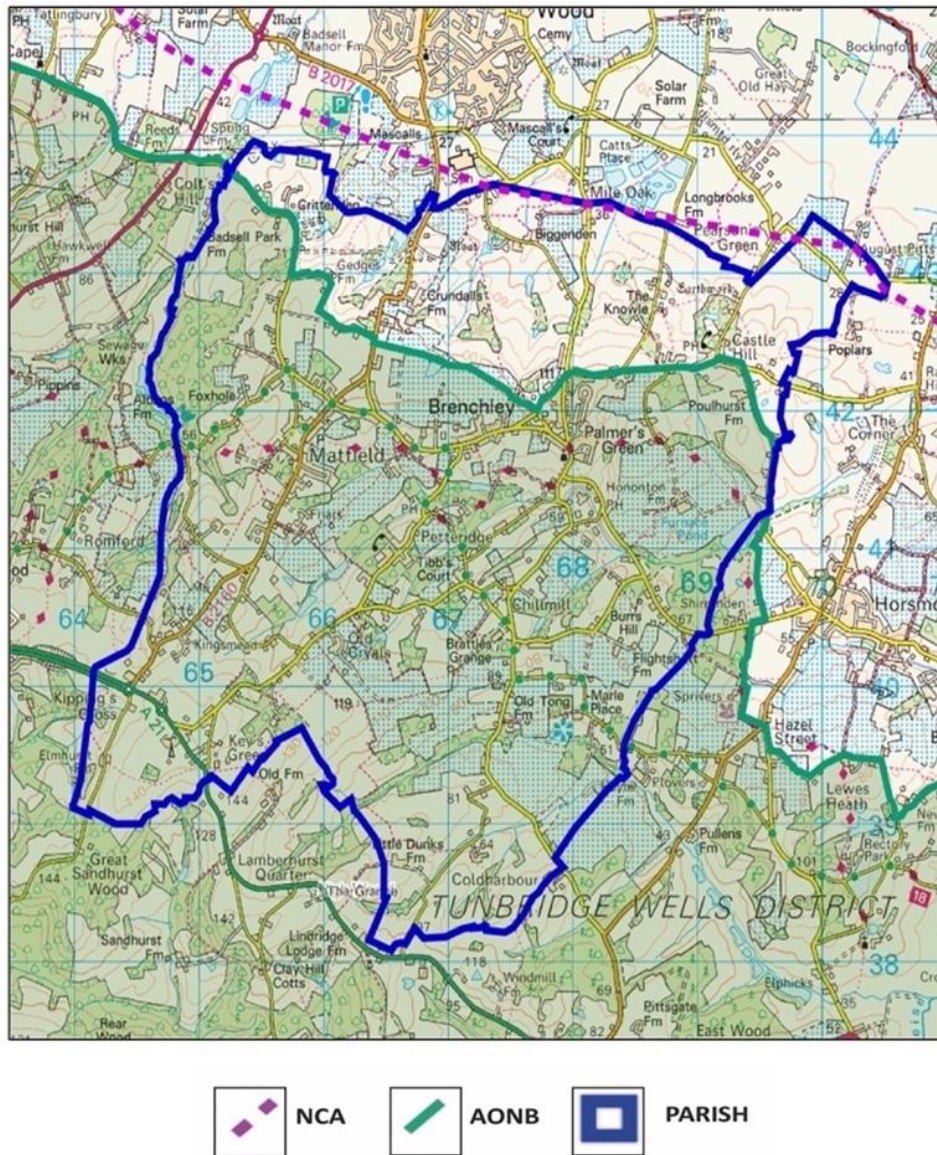
Landscape Context

2.3 The Parish lies in the northern part of the High Weald in gently undulating land, traversed by streams draining north to the Teise or Medway. 78% of the parish lies in the High Weald Area of Natural Beauty (HWAONB) and all but a small north-eastern area lies in the High Weald National Character Area (NCA) (Figure 3). The surface geology consists mainly of Tunbridge Wells sandstone, with the underlying Wadhurst Clay outcropping where it is uplifted by faults and folds in the rocks.

2.4 The settlements of Brenchley, Matfield and Castle Hill follow the sandstone ridgelines of the long northern High Weald slope. The land slopes steeply down through a Transition Zone to the more open Low Weald area, in which lies the hamlet of Mile Oak. Other settlements lie in the broad plateau area of the High Weald and the landscape is dominated by orchards and woods, interspersed with arable fields and pastures. The parish is identified as lying in the Kent Fruit Belt Character Area.



Figure 3: Boundaries of the Parish, AONB and NCA

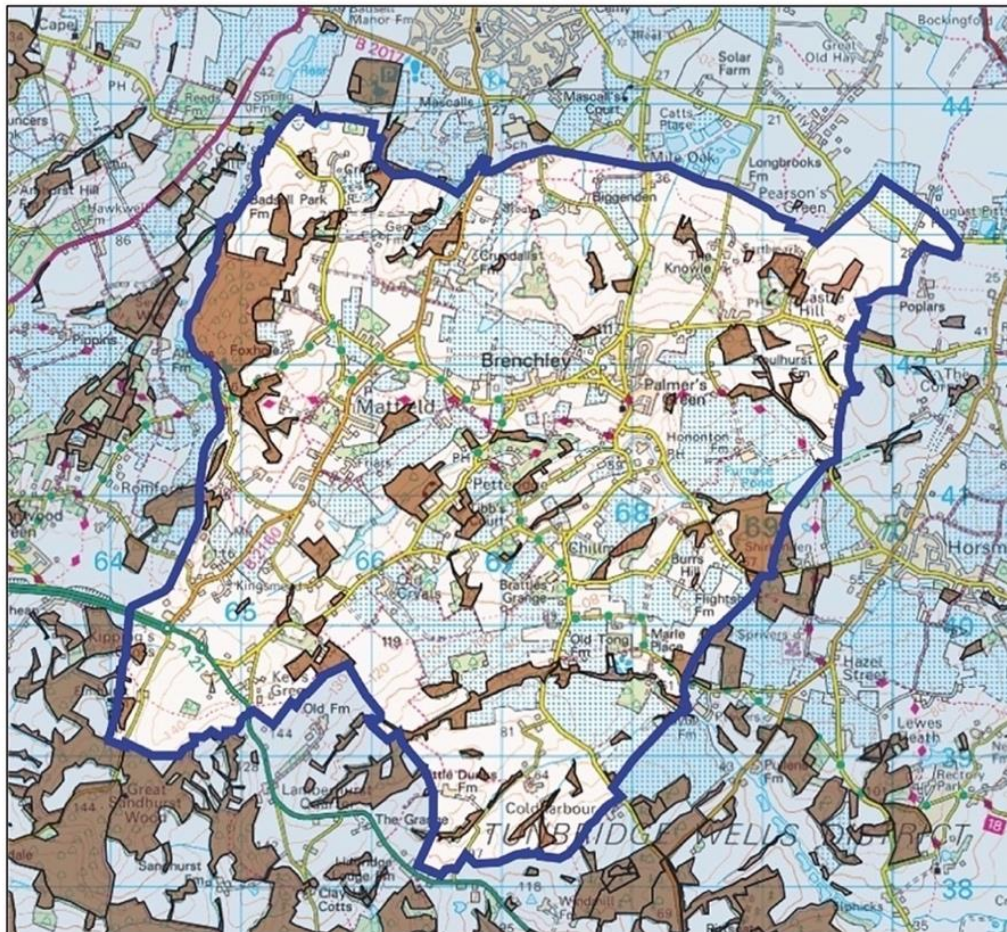


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2.5 Historically the parish was heavily forested, though areas of trees were cleared in Roman times to fuel the smelting of iron deposits in the Wadhurst Clay. Edward Hasted in 1797 described the landscape of the parish as being ‘wooded especially around the edges, with old-fashioned timber farmsteads sited around small forstals and greens, with wide verged and green-swarded bye roads, deep and miry in winter’. Hasted was describing a medieval landscape which had remained relatively unaltered for centuries. Ancient woods and woodlands are still prevalent in the parish today. At least 27 woods are over 180 years old and are mentioned in the Brenchley Tithe Award Schedule of 1838, while another 11 woods feature in the Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of 1888-1913 (Figure 4). In the south of the Parish, a sliver of ancient woodland runs in a south easterly direction from Old Tong Farm to join Brookland Wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest near Lamberhurst Quarter, just outside the Parish boundary.

Figure 4: Map of ancient woodlands in the parish



ANCIENT WOODLANDS



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2.6 Iron working continued on a small and sporadic basis until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when, with the introduction of waterpower, the High Weald became a centre of heavy industry. Furnace Pond, in the east of the parish, was the site of one of the major foundries in the area. The decline of the iron industry, caused by the development of coal-based technologies, coincided with the arrival of Flemish weavers and the introduction of the cloth trade and sheep-raising.

2.7 By the beginning of the 19th century orchards and hop gardens were being laid out across the parish. The coming of the railway to Paddock Wood in 1842 and to Horsmonden in 1892, provided a transport system to mobilise a labour force and deliver fresh fruit to markets. Large groups of irregular medieval and early post-medieval field systems were swept away as regular-shaped orchards and hop gardens were established, strongly shaping today's landscape character. Some of the older orchards were laid out within the existing field patterns, allowing some medieval field systems to survive. In the late 20th century hop gardens had largely disappeared, while many orchards had been grubbed out and replaced by soft fruits, vineyards, grazing pastures or arable land. Modern paddocks are a feature around settlements, together with larger gardens associated

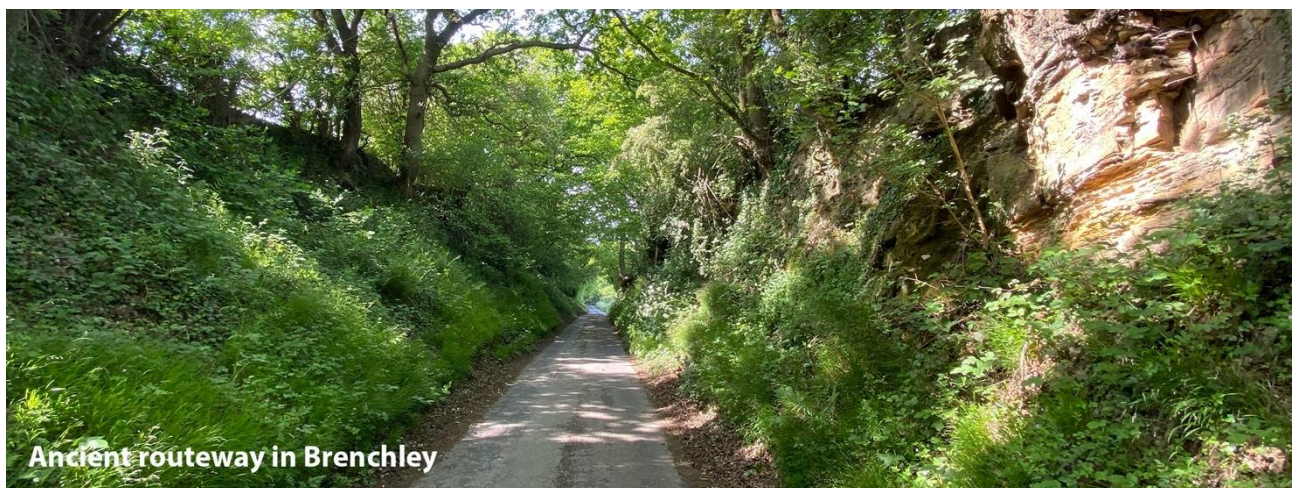
with converted farmsteads or large detached country properties. The HWAONB map illustrating the pattern of field and heath in the parish can be found in Figure 35.

2.8 The plateau area of the High Weald is cut by an intricate system of steep-sided narrow streams (ghylls). The wooded ghyll valleys characteristically support ancient semi-natural woodland vegetation, often with high biodiversity value. The streams were dammed in places, forming numerous ponds, and many of these are now used as fishing lakes.

2.9 The ghyll valleys are crossed by ancient drovers' routes, characterised by sunken lanes with woodland verges. The HWAONB map of the routeways is shown in Figure 36, with a photograph of one of the ancient routeways in Brenchley below. The routeways enabled the seasonal movement of animals for feeding in pastures or 'dens' in the forest, leading to the development of permanent dispersed settlements.

2.10 Between 1709 and 1767 four Turnpike Acts set up trusts which turnpiked the major roads in the parish. Houses, business premises and farms such as the Blue Boys at Kippings Cross were adapted as inns to service travellers on these roads. Tollgates and toll houses were installed, of which Paygate Cottage at the junction of the Horsmonden Road with Fairmans Lane, is a remaining example.

2.11 The landscape of the parish has a mix of historic and more modern farmstead buildings, including former barns and oast houses, reflecting a working and cultivated landscape, as shown in the HWAONB Historic Settlement map in Figure 37. Buildings are generally well integrated into the landscape, in scale with the surrounding mature trees and native hedgerows. Many buildings reflect the local housing character of the Weald, with timber-framed buildings protected by weather boarding, lime render or tiles. Local clay was used to produce bricks and tiles, with Kent peg tiles common on walls and roofs. Tunbridge Wells Sandstone was used as a building material for the more prestigious buildings, such as churches and large country houses.



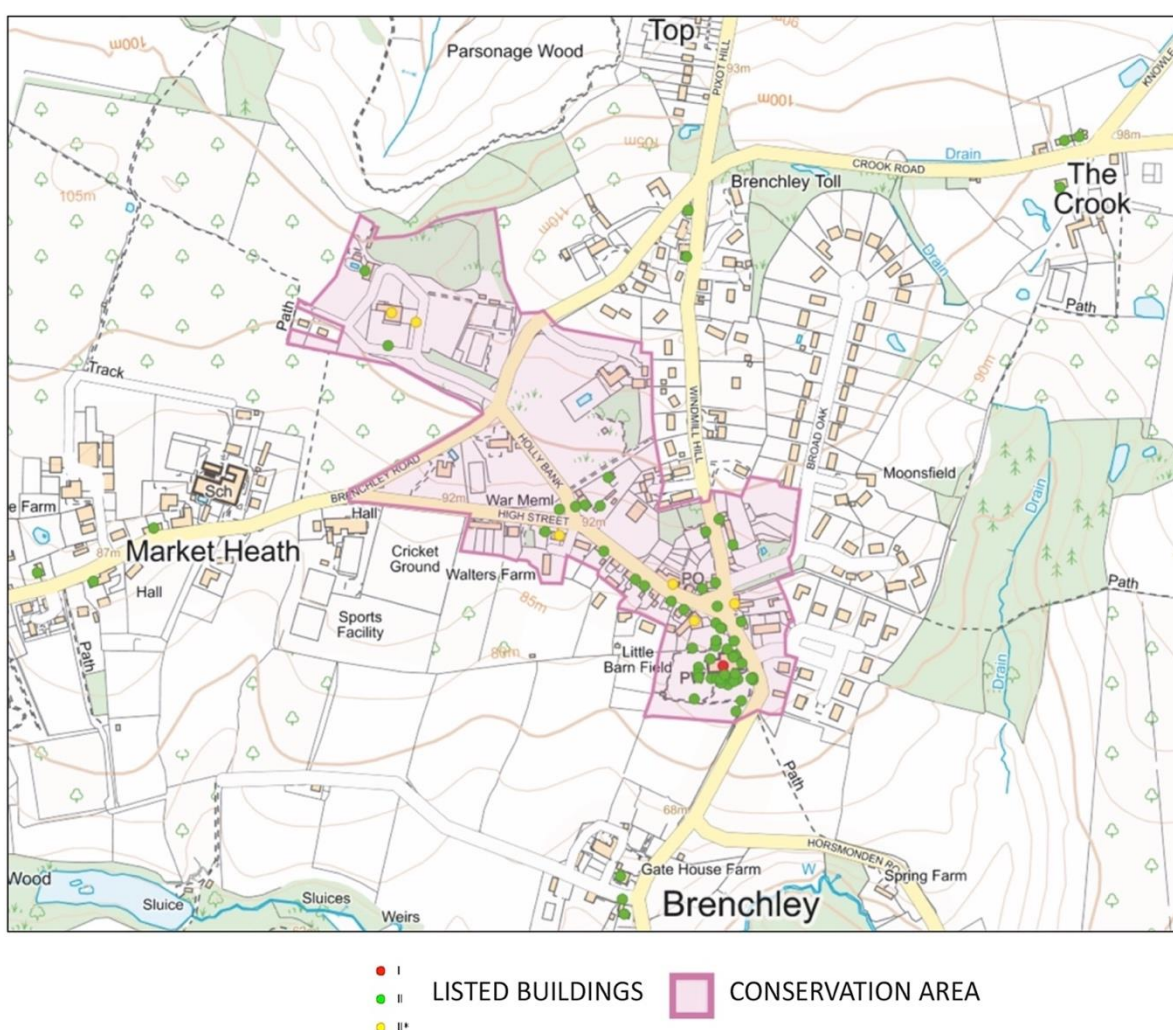
Historical Context

2.12 Although there is evidence of Roman ironworking in the area, the earliest identified settlement in the parish is an Anglo-Saxon ringwork at Castle Hill, protected as a scheduled monument. Brenchley began as a small clearing in the forest, which developed into a hamlet centred on All Saints' Church. All Saints' was constructed in 1233 and is believed to be on the site of a former chapel attached to the Parish Church of Yalding.

2.13 The parish has 166 listed buildings, of which three are Grade 1 and fourteen are Grade 2*. Many of the listed buildings lie in Conservation Areas in the centres of Brenchley and Matfield. In the 19th and early 20th Centuries several gardens and ornamental parklands were created, with Marle Place, Crittenden House, Brattles Grange and Brenchley Manor being listed in the Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Brenchley

Figure 5: Brenchley conservation area and listed buildings



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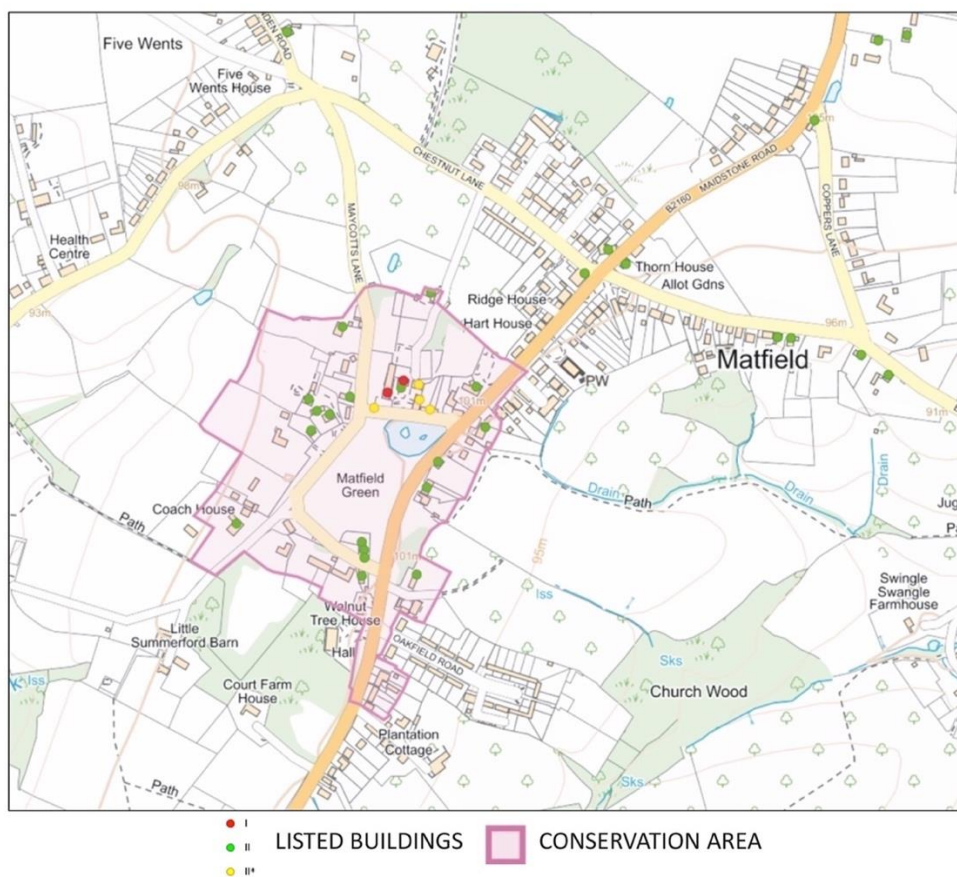
2.14 The small village square in Brenchley is surrounded by picturesque historic buildings, some dating from the 15th century, contained within a larger Conservation Area that includes considerable green areas (Figure 5).

2.15 In the south of the Conservation Area lies the Grade I listed All Saints' Church and its churchyard, containing ancient yew trees and many listed tombs and features. In the north-west lies the 16th Century renaissance archway (Grade 2*) and an ancient oak known as the 'Domesday oak'. Between the grounds of Brenchley Manor and Brenchley War Memorial Green lies an arcadian area on either side of Holly Bank, largely hidden from view by tall hedges. Smaller green areas of landscape importance within the Conservation Area are the garden of the recently built Burford Place, the green area behind the Grade 2 listed Little Broad Oak (Old Broad Oak) and the Jack Verrall Memorial Garden; these frame an important view of the Grade 2* listed Old Palace.

2.16 In the early 20th century, there was just a small amount of new building in Brenchley. Pixot Hill, Porters Wood, Broad Oak and parts of Windmill Hill were developed after 1930, while more recent developments after 1970 included Church Close, The Lawns and Broad Oak Close. The most recent development, a Rural Exception Site, provided seven affordable homes at Market Heath.

Matfield

Figure 6: Matfield Conservation Area and Listed Buildings



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2.17 The original village of Matfield was centred on the village green and around Standings Cross. The historic centre of the village is a Conservation Area, with the largest village green in Kent at its heart presenting highly valued views from all directions (Figure 6). The north-eastern part of Matfield Green includes a large pond and avenue of limes. East of the Maidstone Road, largely opposite the village green, lies The Drying Ground, which is also registered as a village green.

2.18 Surrounding Matfield Green, along Maidstone Road and Maycotts Lane, lie many listed buildings. The most notable are the Grade I listed Matfield House, together with its Grade 1 listed stable block with clock tower. Other buildings are typical of the farms and cottages that grew up around commons, together with the hostelrys and other businesses that served not only villagers but also travellers on roads that were turnpiked. The houses and gardens on the southern and western sides of the village green have been designated as an Arcadian Area in the TWBC SLP.

2.19 Another area of historical importance within the village of Matfield is the area around Standings Cross (shown as Matfield Cross on old maps), which contains several listed buildings and which some residents have suggested should be included in the Conservation Area. Further south is Ebenezer Strict Baptist Chapel, rebuilt in 1937. St Luke's Church, on the southern outskirts of the village, was constructed in 1876 and encouraged further housing development in its vicinity.

2.20 After 1930, the east side of Maidstone Road was further developed and ribbon developments were built along Foxhole Lane and Coppers Lane. Since 1945, houses have been built at Oakfield Road, Chestnut Lane, Birch Close, Central Villas and Webbs Orchard. In the 1970s, planning approval was given for a permanent 6-plot residential Gypsy and Traveller site at Cinderhill Wood. Most recently, Wish Close was built in 2010 as a Rural Exception Site to provide six affordable homes in the parish.

2.21 Standings Cross, a development of 20 homes on Maidstone Road, Matfield, was granted planning permission in May 2018. An adjacent site for 45 dwellings was granted outline planning permission in May 2020 and its Reserved Matters application was approved in March 2021.

Existing Services and Facilities

Introduction

2.22 Brenchley and Matfield Parish has an active community, with more than twenty-five clubs and organisations catering for all ages and interests. The Parish Council website provides information for residents and visitors on the Parish Council, local services and facilities. The Parish Council and both villages have popular Facebook pages, while Roundabout, produced monthly by a team of volunteers, is a printed and online magazine with information on local events and issues.

2.23 There are numerous annual events, including fetes, church festivals, Christmas carols, concerts, the Horticultural Society Spring and Summer Shows and Brenchley Fireworks. Regular activities include monthly Ready Call lunches, coffee mornings, films and talks, walking groups, book groups and knit-and-natter. This wide range of activities and numerous opportunities for social interaction help make the parish a desirable place in which to live, work and visit.

Retail

2.24 Although the number of shops in the parish has significantly declined, Brenchley still has a Post Office/newsagents also selling groceries, while Matfield has a part-time Post Office three mornings a week at Matfield Village Hall. Matfield has a butcher's shop selling meat, eggs, cheese and fresh produce. At Kippings Cross, where the A21 crosses the southern end of the parish, there is a petrol station with a small M&S food store and a fast-food restaurant.

Health services

2.25 There is a surgery/dispensary in the centre of Brenchley and the practice runs a second medical centre in Horsmonden. In October 2021 the practice had four part-time GPs, two practice nurses, a health care assistant and five dispensers.

2.26 Brenchley Dental, offering both NHS and private dentistry, is situated at Market Heath. In October 2021 the practice had five dentists, six dental nurses and three hygienists.

2.27 Volunteers linked to All Saints' and St. Luke's churches provide Ready Call services to take residents to medical and dental appointments in the parish and at local hospitals.

Schools and Nurseries

2.28 Brenchley & Matfield Church of England Primary School is a one form entry school situated west of Brenchley village at Market Heath. Brenchley Pre-School rents premises on the same site and offers nursery and pre-school sessions from two years of age. There is a Day Nursery, based in two rooms at Brenchley Memorial Hall, offering daycare for children aged 0-5 years.



Churches, Halls and Meeting Rooms

2.29 All Saints' Church in Brenchley, Ebenezer Strict Baptist Chapel in Matfield and St Luke's Church in Matfield offer places of worship and venues for concerts, talks and meetings.

2.30 Brenchley Memorial Hall has a main hall in which social events and meetings can be held. Its Meeting Room is available for rental and also houses the Parish Archive, which is open twice a week. The Scout Hut in Brenchley provides a base for scouting activities and is also available for rental, as is the main hall of the Primary School when it is not required for by the school. All Saints' and St. Luke's hold joint Café Church services at Matfield Village Hall. LOGS Youth Group meets weekly either in All Saint's or at Brenchley and Matfield Primary School.

2.31 The more modern Matfield Village Hall offers both a Main Hall and Meeting Room. The WI, Brownies, History and Horticultural Societies meet here regularly. Matfield Pavilion, owned by the Parish Council, is used for Parish Council meetings and as a Parish Office, besides being rented by Matfield Cricket Club, youth groups, Girl Guides and for small community events.

Pubs and eating places

2.32 The Little Bull Café in Brenchley village centre and Grays Café at Brenchley Memorial Hall are open during the day for meals and refreshments. There are five public houses: The Halfway House, just south of Brenchley village centre; The Castle Inn at Castle Hill; The Hopbine Inn in

Petteridge; the Star in Matfield and the Poet restaurant/pub, also in Matfield. Several mobile food vans visit Matfield during the week.

Sports and Recreation

2.33 Brenchley Memorial Hall and Matfield Village Hall both offer a range of exercise classes that promote health and well-being for all age groups. The village halls are privately owned by their respective Charities and administered by Trustees.

2.34 Sports facilities for cricket, football, bowls, tennis and squash are available at sports clubs based at Brenchley Memorial Hall Grounds. The grounds are landscaped, with numerous benches on the Centenary Field to enjoy far reaching views of the High Weald. To the east of Brenchley village is Castle Hill Cricket Club, with a large pitch and pavilion, providing playing opportunities for both adult and youth teams.



2.35 In Matfield, outdoor activities are centred on Matfield Green, which is owned by the Parish Council. The Green is home to Matfield Green Cricket Club and boasts a croquet lawn and stocked pond that provides fishing for the under-12s. The Parish Allotments are situated in Matfield and provide a healthy leisure activity for those parishioners who wish to grow their own produce.

2.36 There is a recreation ground and a small children's play area, owned by the Parish Council, at Market Heath in Brenchley. The play area was renovated in September 2019 and further improvements in play facilities are planned. Porters Field in Petteridge, also owned by the Parish Council, provides a large recreational area with rustic play equipment in a rear wooded area. There is no playground in Matfield.

2.37 Cinderhill Community Wood, approximately a kilometre from Matfield village centre, is leased from TWBC by the Parish Council and managed by the Kent High Weald Project. It offers a 12-hectare area in which to explore heathlands and grasslands, ancient woodland and streams, with a network of paths and permissive bridleways. The football pitch at the entrance to Cinderhill is not currently in use. The adjacent Brenchley Wood Local Wildlife Site is an eight-hectare secluded beech and oak ancient woodland, rich in wildlife and archaeology, managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust.

2.38 An excellent network of footpaths, including the High Weald Landscape Trail, links various parts of the parish and enables walkers to enjoy the landscape, flora and fauna in all seasons. There are only four short bridle paths of total length 1.6 km in the parish, although horse riding and equestrian facilities are a significant feature of the parish. Matfield & District Riders' Association organises permissive rides with local landowners and events for a range of ages and

abilities. Toll Rides Off Road Trust (TROT) ride provides nine kilometres of permissive horse riding routes around private orchards in Brenchley, although access to these cannot be guaranteed in perpetuity.

2.39 National Cycle Route 18, from Canterbury to Royal Tunbridge Wells, runs through the landscape of the High Weald but is entirely on-road as it traverses the parish. It is unsuitable for casual cyclists and horse riders, due to high vehicular speeds, narrow lanes and poor road conditions.

Bus links

2.40 Several bus routes pass through the parish but have limited scheduled services. Bus Route 6 links Matfield to Maidstone, Paddock Wood and Tunbridge Wells, with no services in the evening and only four on Sundays. Bus route 297 links Brenchley and Matfield to Tenterden in the East and Tunbridge Wells in the West, with the last departure from Tunbridge Wells at 19.20 and no service on Sundays. There will be no service linking Brenchley to Paddock Wood from October 2022, due to the cancellation of bus route 296 that had provided a service on three mornings a week. For London commuters, Centaur offers a coach service from Matfield into London, with two services each morning and evening.

Economy

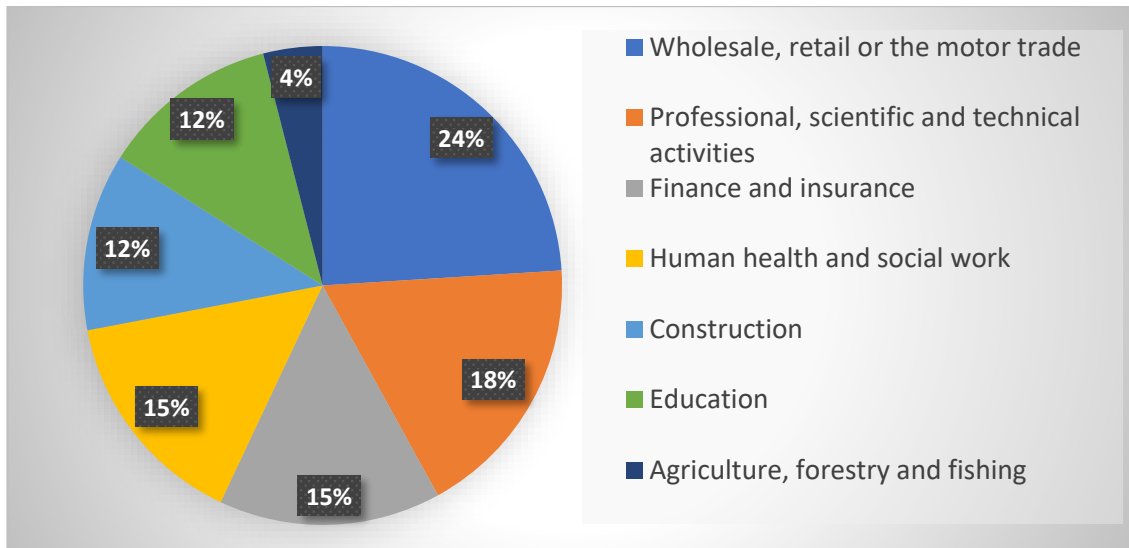
Figure 7: The economic activity of parishioners

Brenchley and Matfield	Source ONS - 2011 Census (KS601EW)	count	%
All usual residents aged 16 to 74		2,129	100.0
Economically active		1,514	71.1
In employment		1,409	66.2
Employee: Part-time		287	13.5
Employee: Full-time		727	34.1
Self-employed		395	18.6
Unemployed		51	2.4
Full-time student		54	2.5
Economically Inactive		615	28.9
Retired		331	15.5
Student (including full-time students)		95	4.5
Looking after home or family		129	6.1
Long-term sick or disabled		21	1.0
Other		39	1.8
Unemployed: Age 16 to 24		13	0.6
Unemployed: Age 50 to 74		13	0.6
Unemployed: Never worked		6	0.3
Long-term unemployed		14	0.7

2.41 From official labour market statistics published by Nomis for Brenchley and Matfield Parish, the 2011 Census indicated a pattern of employment and economic activity in the parish similar to that in other rural English village areas, with the exception of a low unemployment rate of 2%. 36% of those aged 16-74 held Level 4 qualifications or above (which include degrees, NVQ 4 or 5, HND or professional qualifications), while 17% had no qualifications. Figure 7 shows that 71% of the population was economically active in the 2011 Census and 15 % of the population was retired.

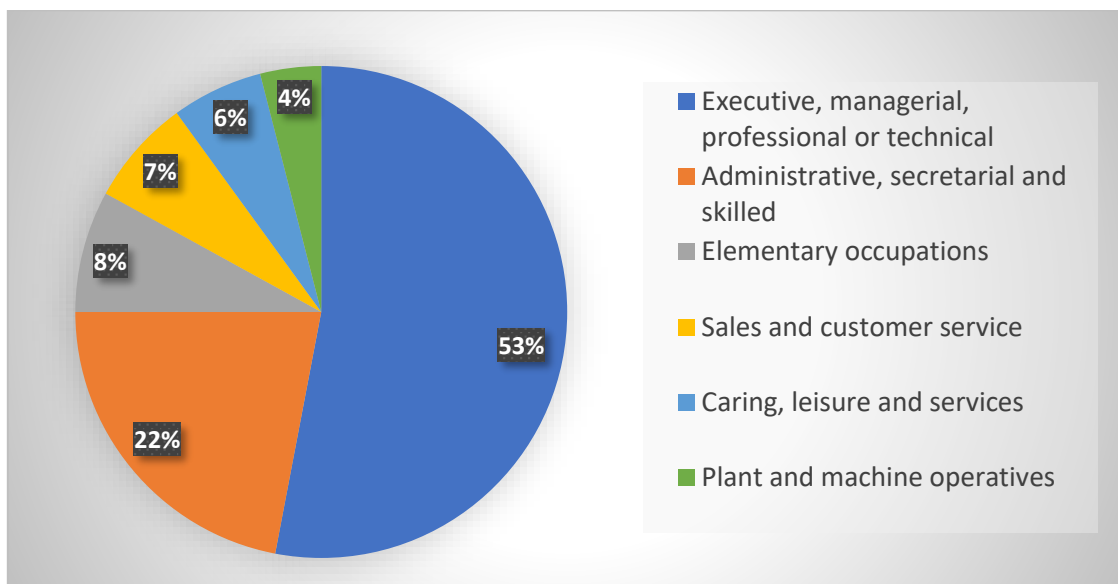
2.42 The pattern of employment categories of residents in 2011 was similar to other English villages, with land-based occupations having declined to only 4% of the population (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Employment categories in the parish



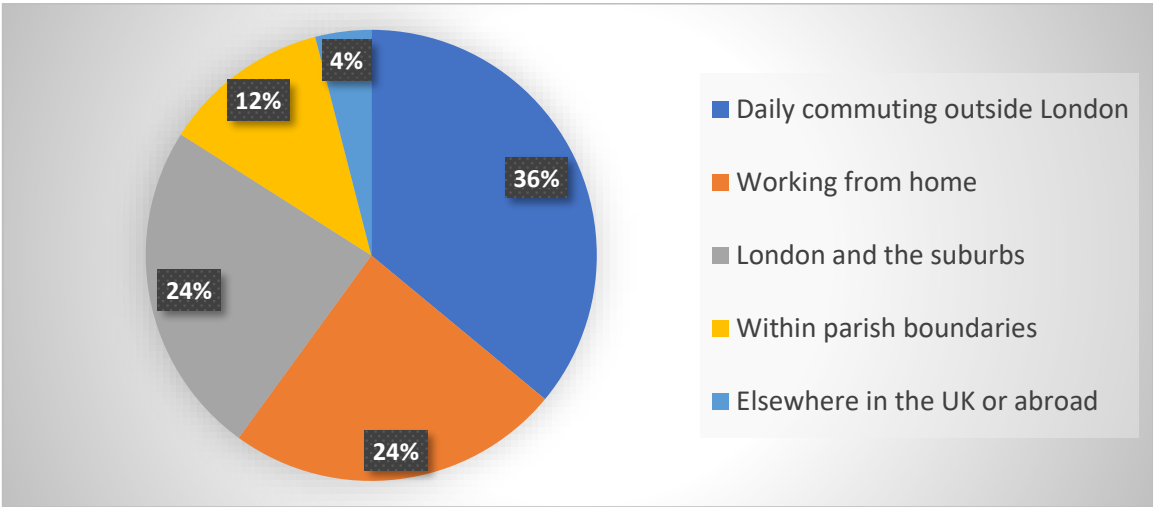
2.43 Employment in executive, managerial, professional and technical roles was 53% in 2011, compared to an average of 47% for all English rural villages (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Occupation categories in the parish



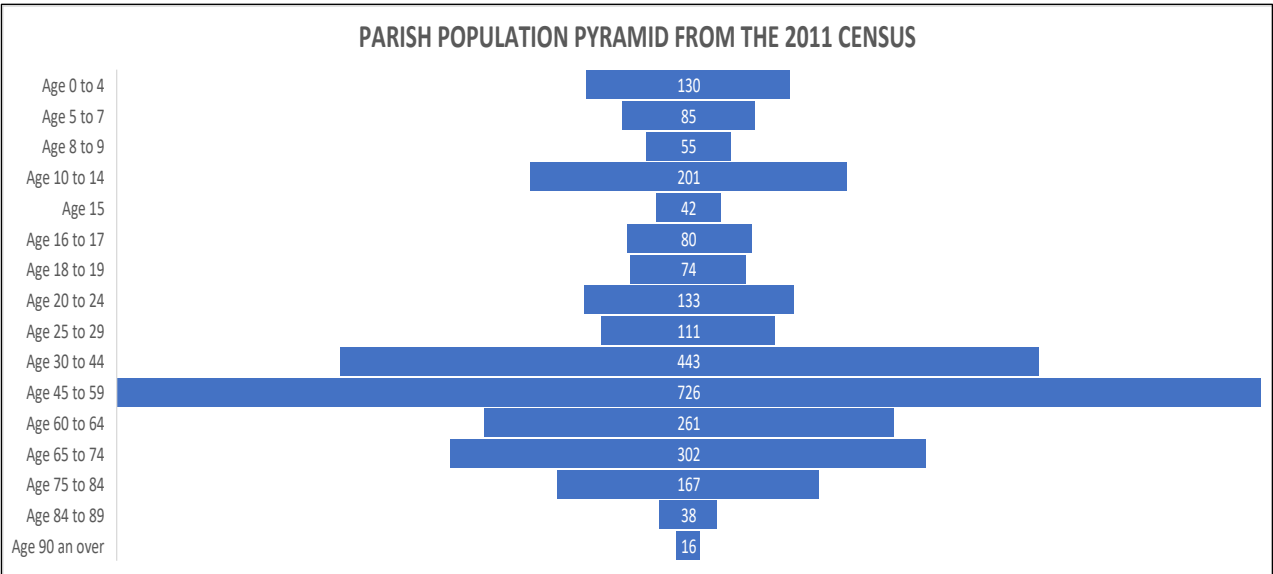
2.44 Figure 10, derived from the Brenchley and Matfield Parish Plan Survey, shows the working locations of the respondents. 61% worked outside the parish and, of those that worked within the parish, 24% worked from home.

Figure 10: Work location



2.45 The population pyramid for the Parish in the 2011 Census (Figure 11) shows that 21% of the population of 2863 was under 18 and 18% of the population was 65 or older, with the 45 – 59 age group being predominant in the parish.

Figure 11: 2011 population pyramid



Chapter 3 – Strategic Context and Challenges

Strategic Planning Context

3.1 The Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan must be prepared in general conformity with both national and local planning policy. At the national level, these policies are set out in the 'National Planning Policy Framework' (NPPF) as amended in July 2021. At the local level, they are the 'Saved policies' of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (2006), Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2010), 'Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Site Allocations Local Plan (2016) and the Kent Waste and Minerals Plan (2013 - 2030). The earlier plans produced by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will be superseded by the submission Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (2020 – 2038) once this has been completed and formally adopted. The Neighbourhood Plan also must take account of a range of statutory planning designations which give legal protection to a number of features of the natural environment and the built heritage in the parish. More detail on this context for planning can be found in Appendix 1.

Strategic Challenges

3.2 The future vision, objectives and policies for the parish were developed in the context of a number of strategic challenges and opportunities, from the global to the local level. These were identified both by reviewing the Strategic Planning Context outlined above and through community consultation, primarily through the Visioning Events, where groups were asked to identify the main challenges faced by the community. In summary, the key challenges include:

Pressure for increased development

3.3 Central Government requirements to accelerate house building are a threat to the rural character of the parish. However, by ensuring that the housing that is built reflects community needs, there is the opportunity to address issues of affordability, starter homes and down-sizing.

Climate Change

3.4 The threat from climate change has emerged as a crucial concern for the future of the planet. The need for urgent action globally and from national governments is reflected in the UK Parliament, KCC and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council recognising climate change as an emergency. But there is also a pressing need for action at the local level, both to do what can be done to reduce our impact on the climate and to respond to the challenges that climate change will bring.

Environmental degradation

3.5 Climate change is not the only environmental challenge. Others include flooding, biodiversity, pollution by plastic and other materials, and increased pressure on natural resources, notably water. All of these are issues where there are opportunities for the community to help tackle the problems at a local level.

Social and Economic change

3.6 Life in the parish has changed considerably, encouraged by technological change. Past trends for people to travel further to work are now offset by greater potential to work at home. Alongside this, greater mobility and online shopping have led to the demise of many local shops, while pubs too are closing as drinking patterns change. The population is ageing and the focus on parish-level community institutions and activities has declined. The future nature of the parish as a community depends on responses to these trends.

Chapter 4 – Vision Statement and Strategic Objectives

4.1 Vision statement

The Visioning and Design Forum meetings helped to identify the main strategic challenges faced by the community. These are: pressure for increased development; climate change; environmental degradation; social and economic change.

Brenchley and Matfield will embrace sustainable change and development that conserves and enhances the special qualities of the parish's landscape and built heritage, promotes the economic and social welfare of the community, encourages demographic balance and recognises the need for action on climate change.

4.2 Strategic objectives

Housing

- encourage a sustainable demographic mix by meeting the needs of families and older residents wishing to downsize
- provide Affordable Housing to enable young people to remain in the parish
- preserve the rural character of the parish by respecting conservation areas and avoiding ribbon development and large-scale developments

Design

- respect design traditions of the area and AONB design criteria, while being open to sympathetic but innovative design
- ensure the highest standards of sustainability

Business and Employment

- support existing and new businesses through continued availability of sites and improved infrastructure
- respond to new ways of working

Landscape and Environment

- conserve natural and historic built environment in AONB and surrounding areas
- promote action on climate change and other environmental challenges

Access and Movement

- encourage active travel, supportive infrastructure and provide sustainable transport options
- improve pedestrian and road safety

Community, Leisure and Recreation

- encourage a local sustainable community by maintaining and improving the availability and quality of community services
- address loneliness and isolation within the community
- provide additional play facilities and activities for young people
- preserve Open Spaces

Chapter 5 – Objectives and their link to policies

5.1 The detailed objectives set out in this section develop each of the Strategic Objectives in more detail. The table in Figure 12 lists these detailed objectives and identifies the policies that will help achieve them. The detailed objectives were identified by the Steering Group and formed part of subsequent consultation with the community.

Figure 12: Objectives and their link to policies

Housing

Objectives	Related policies
1. To ensure that the scale of development is appropriate to the site, complies with the NPPF and respects the HWAONB Design Guide.	H1
2. To focus new development within the Limits of Built Development to limit encroachment into the rest of the AONB.	H1, H2, H3, H8
3. To retain and enhance the character of the parish.	H1, H2, H3, H8
4. To limit coalescence of the villages so as to maintain the character and identity of the villages and hamlets listed in Policy H2.	H2
5. To give priority to smaller units of 1, 2 & 3 bed properties to meet housing needs, rather than larger properties.	H4
6. To meet the housing needs of the increasing population of older residents.	H5
7. To deliver a range of Affordable Housing with priority for local people with family or work connections.	H6, H7
8. To ensure that windfall, infill, conversion and extension developments are consistent with maintaining the character of the parish.	H1, D2
9. To utilise s106 Legal Agreements to mitigate the effects of development within the parish.	Chapter 7

Design

Objectives	Related policies
1. To ensure development that conforms with the rural character of the villages and their positioning within the AONB.	D1, D2, D3
2. To ensure quality development that meets the needs of local people.	D4, D5, D9
3. To ensure development meets the highest standards of sustainability, including the important issues of climate change and environmental degradation.	D6, D7, D8

Business and Employment

Objectives	Related policies
1. To protect and enhance existing employment sites.	BE1
2. To promote new business investment through improved infrastructure, facilities and networks that reflect modern modes of working.	BE2, BE3
3. To encourage diversification in agriculture and land-based enterprise and investment in small-scale tourism.	BE4, BE5
4. To encourage energy efficiency in non-residential buildings.	BE6
5. To allow small scale individual and community renewable energy projects.	BE7

Landscape and Environment

Objectives	Related policies
1. To conserve and enhance the AONB and its setting.	LE1, LE2, LE3, LE4, LE6, LE7, LE8, LE9
2. To conserve historic landscapes, conservation areas and heritage assets.	LE3, LE4, LE5
3. To retain important views	LE4
4. To conserve local greenspaces.	LE5
5. To conserve and enhance biodiversity.	LE5, LE6, LE7, LE8
6. To preserve and to plant trees and hedges.	LE6, LE7
7. To preserve dark skies.	LE8
8. To control advertisements affecting the villages or rural landscapes.	LE9

Access and Movement

Objectives	Related policies
1. To improve sustainable and active travel within the parish, improve Public Rights of Way and create non-motorised routes.	AM1, AM2
2. To reduce the need for private car use by improved transport services and improve pedestrian safety.	AM2
3. To improve road safety by encouraging lower speeds and better traffic management on development sites and in surrounding areas.	AM1, AM2, Chapter 7
4. To provide adequate parking and e-charging points in new developments for bicycles and cars.	AM1, AM3

Community, Leisure and Recreation

Objectives	Related policies
1. To help maintain and improve education, health and care services in the Parish.	CLR1
2. To help improve community health and well-being through support for a wide range of sports, play and leisure activities within the parish.	CLR2, CLR4
3. To provide natural and amenity green spaces in developments and contributions towards equipped playgrounds in the parish.	CLR3, CLR5

Chapter 6 – Neighbourhood Plan policies

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan policies aim to shape future development and use of land through the planning system. Figure 13 provides links to each policy, which is stated in coloured text box. The policy is followed by a text section that explains and justifies the policy.

6.2 Once this Plan is approved by referendum, these policies will form part of the Development Plan for the Borough and be used as a basis for considering planning applications submitted to TWBC, alongside national planning policies in the NPPF, local planning policies prepared by TWBC and other material planning considerations.

6.3 Some desirable actions fall outside the planning system. They may involve lobbying other organisations on issues outside the planning system, for example, KCC on highways issues or TWBC on housing or public health. Alternatively, they may be projects promoted or undertaken directly by the Parish Council or the local community, as with the Community Action Projects set out in Chapter 7.

Figure 13: Policy list with links to the policies

Policy	Policy Title
H1	Scale of housing development
H2	Location of housing development
H3	Density of housing
H4	Housing mix
H5	Housing for older residents and people with disabilities
H6	Affordable housing
H7	Rural exception sites
H8	Site Specific Policies for AL/BM2
D1	High Weald AONB and design standards
D2	Local architectural style
D3	Agricultural and rural buildings
D4	Accessibility and flexibility
D5	Providing an inclusive, safe and secure environment
D6	Climate change, environmental sustainability and resilience
D7	Flood risk management
D8	Surface water management
D9	Utility infrastructure
BE1	Retention or redevelopment of agricultural buildings and commercial sites for residential use.
BE2	New employment
BE3	Infrastructure for business
BE4	Agricultural diversification
BE5	Small-scale tourism
BE6	Energy efficiency in non-residential buildings
BE7	Renewable energy generation
LE1	Conserving and enhancing the AONB
LE2	Development affecting the AONB and its setting
LE3	Historic landscapes and heritage assets

Policy	Policy Title
<u>LE4</u>	Valued views
<u>LE5</u>	Local green spaces
<u>LE6</u>	Biodiversity
<u>LE7</u>	Trees and hedges
<u>LE8</u>	Dark skies
<u>LE9</u>	Advertising
<u>AM1</u>	Sustainable and active Travel
<u>AM2</u>	The delivery of safe and convenient facilities for pedestrians and cyclists
<u>AM3</u>	Parking
<u>CLR1</u>	Education, health and care services
<u>CLR2</u>	Sports and leisure
<u>CLR3</u>	Natural and amenity greenspaces, play areas and playground facilities
<u>CLR4</u>	Facilities for young people and teenagers
<u>CLR5</u>	Open spaces in the Parish



Housing Policies

6.4 The community accepts the need for some increase in the number, type and affordability of housing, to secure the long-term viability of our settlements. It will help retain young people, attract more families and provide accommodation to support an ageing population and those with a disability. It will also provide housing for key workers necessary to support and maintain the local community. However, the scale, type and distribution of this housing should not be to the detriment of the character of the parish, especially the High Weald AONB. The Parish Plan Survey 2017 showed a clear preference for small developments of a high quality of design that would blend in with the existing fabric of the villages and do not impact significantly on the AONB.

6.5 The Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks to balance the need for new houses with ensuring that the size and density of individual developments fit comfortably within the existing type of development in the parish. Although the number of houses proposed in the SLP for the parish is limited, the need for the Neighbourhood Plan is undiminished. It provides an essential framework for any development that may come forward in future.

6.6 TWBC has been set a target of a minimum of 12,200 new homes across the Borough during the Local Plan Period 2020-2038, equivalent to 678 dwellings per year. The TWBC SLP identifies specific sites of 10 or more dwellings in each parish.

6.7 An Allocation of Sites in the parish considered suitable for development in the planning period 2020-2038 was undertaken by TWBC. Their analysis of sites was informed, but not constrained, by local knowledge from the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and has not been endorsed by them.

6.8 The SLP notes that there is limited scope for increasing housing numbers in rural settlements where poor infrastructure exists. In the TWBC Settlement Role and Function Study Matfield was shown as lacking many community facilities and services but development is still being considered there, with its better bus services and proximity to Brenchley.

6.9 The SLP allocates (pages 235 -240) two sites in our parish, totalling 56 - 60 homes, both in Matfield. This is an increase of around 5% over the current 1150 homes. One of the sites is the triangular area between Maidstone Road, Brenchley Road and Coppers Lane (AL/BM1), which was granted outline planning permission for 45 homes in May 2020 and approval of its Reserved Matters application in March 2021. Construction began on the site in Spring 2021 and the first homes were marketed in Autumn 2021. The other proposed allocation is for 11 to 15 houses on a site to the west of Matfield Village Hall (AL/BM2). Specific Policies for this allocated site can be found in Policy H8 of this Plan.

6.10 No sites have been allocated by TWBC in Brenchley. Sites that were submitted in Brenchley in the Call for Sites were rejected in the TWBC Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment due to landscape, biodiversity and/or setting concerns. Other sites submitted within the parish in the Call for Sites were deemed unsuitable for lack of access, uncertainty of delivery and not being logical extensions to the Limits to Built Development (LBDs).

H1 Scale of housing development

Housing developments which would have a net increase of ten or more dwellings will only be supported within the HWAONB and High Weald National Character Area if they are consistent with other policies in this Plan and it can be demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances as prescribed by the National Planning Policy Framework, including:

- a. the development is in the public interest; and**
- b. the visual impact on the scenic beauty of the AONB and High Weald National Character Area and its intrinsic landscape character can be effectively mitigated; and**
- c. the cultural heritage can be conserved; and**
- d. it will enhance or maintain the vitality of the community.**

Small-scale infill sites will be supported within the Limits to Built Development if the site fills in a gap in an otherwise developed frontage or is closely surrounded by buildings, provided that infill development does not compromise the character of the area where gaps between the buildings are important.

6.11 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021 (Paragraph 176, page 51) states that:

‘Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.... The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.’

6.12 NPPF Paragraph 177 states that *‘Planning permission should be refused for major development, other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*

- a. the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; and*
- b. the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c. any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.’*

6.13 In the Parish Plan Survey in 2017 there was a clear preference for small-scale infill developments, to meet identified local needs and minimise the impact on the AONB landscape and its sustainability. Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council’s document *‘Shaping the Future: The Council’s Strategy for the Development of Our Parish (2017)*, also sought to resist developments which ‘are considered too large, in terms of the number of units, having regard to all

circumstances, but particularly the site location'. Under the TWBC SLP, some of the supply of new homes within the Borough will be from small windfall sites. Such developments should comply with all relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

H2 Location of housing development

Housing proposals will be supported for developments which are within the Limits to Built Development (LBDs) as defined by the maps in Figure 14, except as set out in Policies H6, H7, D3 and BE1. Conservation of the character and setting of the Conservation Areas will remain a priority. Proposals should demonstrate how they would conform with the settlement pattern adjacent to the site and have regard to the High Weald AONB Design Guide, as well as complying with other NDP policies.

The character and separate identity of the existing villages, hamlets and farmsteads should be maintained. Development proposals that would result in the merging of settlements (Brenchley, Matfield, Castle Hill, Chantlers Hill, Keys Green, Kippings Cross, Market Heath, Mile Oak, Petteridge, Tibbs Court and Walnut Tree) will not be supported.

6.14 Limits to Built Development (LBDs) are designated to prevent the unrestricted sprawl of towns, villages and hamlets into the surrounding countryside. They are intended to preserve the separateness of communities and character of settlements, to provide opportunities for housing development within established communities and to encourage development in places where active travel to facilities is easiest.

6.15 In its SLP, TWBC proposes to extend the LBDs designated in the TWBC Local Plan (2006) for Brenchley and Matfield, as shown in Figure 14. Matfield's built area is to be increased to include homes in the north of Matfield, more recent development and the two allocated sites. In its 'Limits to Built Development Topic Paper for Draft Local Plan (August 2019)' TWBC proposed a new LBD in Market Heath, west of Brenchley village centre. Development on the brownfield site of Brenchley Garage was subsequently approved in March 2021.

6.16 The aim of Policy H2 is to concentrate development as far as possible within the LBD to ensure sustainability. It allows better connections to main public transport routes; provides easy pedestrian access to village facilities; helps to reduce car use; and helps to build more robust village communities. Limiting development to the two villages and the Market Heath settlement will also help to conserve and enhance the AONB and views of surrounding countryside (see Policies LE1, LE2, LE3, LE4), respecting the rural character of the parish and protecting agricultural land. The NPPF states that:

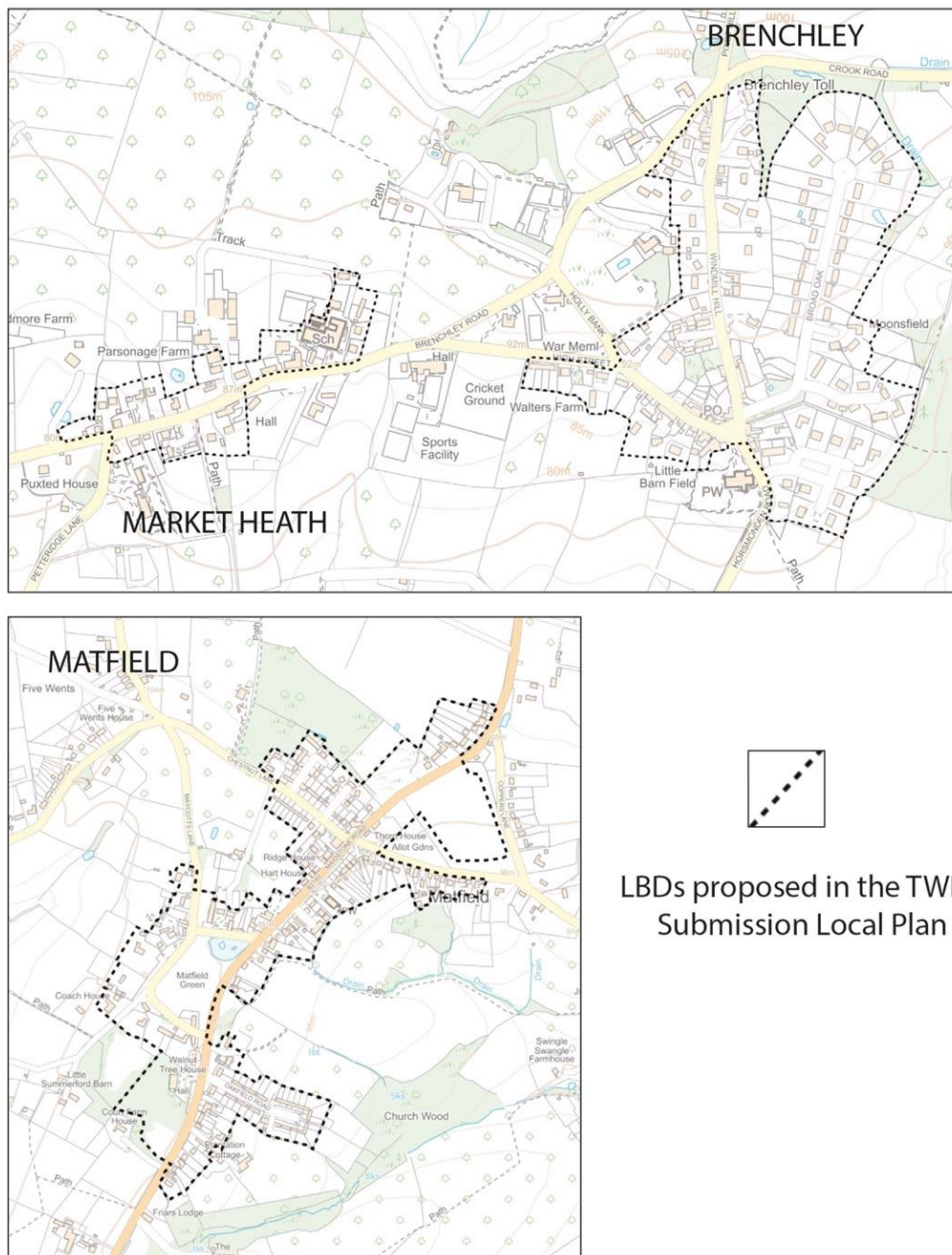
'in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs' (paragraph 78);

'To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive' (paragraph 79); and

'planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside' except in certain circumstances (paragraph 80).'

6.17 The Parish Plan Survey (2017) and the Neighbourhood Plan Visioning and Design Forum consultations in 2018 showed strong support for maintaining the distinctive character of the villages of Brenchley and Matfield and their settlements. There is a danger of settlements losing their identity through ribbon and piecemeal development, particularly between Brenchley and Market Heath, from Market Heath to the Walnut Tree settlement and Walnut Tree to Matfield.

Figure 14: LBDS proposed in the TWBC SLP



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H3 Density of housing

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, new housing development should be of a density which respects the character of the immediate surrounding area, whilst making efficient use of land.

6.18 The 'HWAONB Design Guide' suggests that new development should reflect the historic density of the area in which it is being proposed, so that the distribution of buildings supports the existing pattern of the settlement. It also suggests that a variation of density across the site, in all but the smallest of schemes, will help the character and place-making of the development. Given that the bulk of the parish is within the HWAONB and that the HWAONB Design Guide is informed by the National Design Guide, it is considered that all development proposals should show due regard to the density guidance in the HWAONB Design Guide.

H4 Housing mix

Residential development proposals should provide an appropriate housing mix, which is informed by the most up-to-date local evidence of need for the parish. Unless otherwise specified by the Borough Council in an allocated site-specific policy, and until the present evidence changes, proposals, on sites providing a net increase of six or more dwellings, should provide 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom or 3 bedroom units in at least 70% of the new homes.

6.19 A better balance of house sizes is needed to help to build and sustain a healthier demographic mix for a sustainable community, catering for a range of economic circumstances. It will make it more feasible for younger local people and those on lower incomes to stay within the parish, enhancing the viability of the school and other facilities. It will also cater for the rapid growth of single person households and benefit older residents who would be happy to free up larger properties if there was suitable smaller accommodation.

6.20 This policy seeks to address the current housing imbalance in the Parish. The Brenchley and Matfield Housing Needs Survey (2020) demonstrated the need for 2 and 3 bedroomed properties while, for Affordable Homes, mostly 1 and 2 bedroomed properties were needed. Individuals on the TWBC Housing Register who have expressed an interest in living in the parish, favour 1 or 3 bedroomed homes over larger properties, with 2 bedroomed properties being most popular.

6.21 Brenchley and Matfield Parish has a high percentage of larger homes and a shortage of smaller units (Figure 15), partly because many properties in the village have been extended. The HNS demonstrated that a significant number of elderly households wished to downsize to two bedroomed properties in the parish. TWBC 'Housing Needs Study of 2018' (HNS) provides a comparison with the Borough as a whole, illustrating the need for a higher proportion of 1-3 bedroomed properties within the Parish.

Figure 15: Percentage of the number of bedrooms

Percentage of houses with:	Brenchley and Matfield	Borough
Four or more bedrooms	45%	29%
Three bedrooms	33%	31%
Two bedrooms	17%	25%
One bedroom	6%	15%

6.22 Projections made in 2019 by the Office of National Statistics of the composition of households in Tunbridge Wells Borough to 2041 suggest the current deficit in smaller properties is likely to increase (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Household growth in the borough 2016 – 2041

Category of Households	2016	2041	% Change
One person households	15,000	18,000	20%
Housholds with one dependant child	6,000	6,000	0%
Households with two dependant children	6,000	5,000	-16.67%
Households with 3+ dependant children	3,000	3,000	0%
Other households with two or more adults	20,000	25,000	25%

6.23 In the Parish Plan Survey (2017), 69% of people expressed a preference for building homes of 1 to 3 bedrooms over larger homes. Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council's 'Shaping the Future' supported 'appropriate small-scale developments' in 'sustainable locations, particularly of smaller units suitable for first-time buyers, renters and downsizers.





H5 Housing for older residents and people with disabilities

Proposals for new housing developments or alterations to existing buildings within the Limits to Built Development of Brenchley and Matfield, which provide accommodation for persons 55 years old and over and/or for people with disabilities, will be supported.

Proposals for housing development which incorporate bungalows and/or which are designed to Building Control Part M4(3) (wheelchair users) will be particularly supported).

Housing proposals for older people and disabled people will be supported where:

- a. they are within an LBD in a rural settlement and within easy walking distance of shops and facilities; and**
- b. all homes are specifically designed to meet the needs of older people and those with a disability in terms of ease of access, residential size, form, layout, and support facilities; and**
- c. where appropriate, occupation is limited to older age groups by planning condition.**

6.24 The British Property Federation report 'Housing and Care for Older People 2020' concluded that policy makers must recognise the growing housing needs of older people living in the countryside. It is estimated that 50% of UK rural households will be aged more than 65 in 2039. In Tunbridge Wells Borough the over-65s population is forecast to rise by 41% by 2033 and the over-80s by 73%. The TWBC Housing Needs Survey 2018 found that 30% of households contained at least one person with illness/disability. In the parish, 5% had physical/mobility impairment, 4% visual impairment and 8% had a long-standing illness/health condition.

6.25 In the Parish Plan survey (2017), 65% of the 65 - 74 age group expressed a wish to downsize. The Brenchley and Matfield HNS (2020) showed that 85% of the older respondents wished to remain in the parish and 21 households, of which 13 were couples, wanted to downsize within 5 years. To meet this requirement, 8 homes will be needed by single people, with a preference for one and two bedroomed homes. Thirteen two and three bedded homes will be needed by

couples. For these downsizers, 19 homes will be required on the open market and two will need to be affordable homes.

6.26 At present there are few options for those wishing to remain in the parish but who wish to downsize or may need a degree of support. Specific accommodation for older residents and people with disabilities could include: two and three bedded homes with manageable gardens; bungalows; apartments; an over-55s development (with a minimum age covenant); Sheltered Housing to meet the needs of those capable of living independently; and accommodation with full support on site. The TWBC SLP notes that Tunbridge Wells Borough is relatively well served with residential/nursing care home provision. The requirement for at least 10 percent of homes to be suitable for older people (over 55) in developments of 20 or more homes is based on the TWBC SLP (Policy H6). The needs of older residents and people with disabilities will also be addressed through Policy D4 in this Plan on improving accessibility in all developments.

H6 Affordable housing

Proposed housing developments should deliver affordable housing to the most up-to-date standards operated by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

All forms of affordable housing will be provided on the basis of a 'local connection cascade'. The details of this cascade will be determined on a case-by-case basis, but will follow the general approach of prioritising households with an established local connection (and, for social and affordable rent, in housing need) to the parish through residence or place of work, then households from surrounding parishes in the Borough, and then the wider Borough.

6.27 In order to keep the villages and settlements as vibrant communities, people with a wide range of incomes should be able to live in the Parish. In October 2021 the cheapest property for sale in the parish was a 3-bed semi-detached house for £350,000, requiring a deposit of approximately £70,000 and an income of £80,000. In 2020 the median house price in Tunbridge Wells borough was £385,000 and there is additional premium for new build homes. To afford the cheapest rental property in the Parish, a 2-bed terrace home at £1100 pcm, would require an income of approximately £52,000. The average cost of social rent in the Parish of Brenchley, in the HNS, was £374 a month, which required an income of £18,000. The median affordable rent was £998, which required an income of £48,000.

6.28 The delivery of affordable housing in the parish is influenced by its rural nature. The majority of infill and redevelopment schemes in recent years have come forward at a scale which does not naturally trigger the need for delivery of affordable housing. The majority of the neighbourhood area is within the High Weald AONB. This brings lower thresholds for the delivery of affordable housing. In addition, the wider parish is a designated rural area for the purposes of section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, which also has a bearing on the thresholds for the delivery of affordable housing.

6.29 The TWBC HNS (2017) provided information on the percentage of the population in different salary ranges in the borough (Figure 17). The average salary in Tunbridge Wells Borough in 2020 was £34,868, which makes home ownership a challenge for lower and median income bands.

Figure 17: Tunbridge Wells borough salary distribution

Annual gross salary	Population percentage
< £13,000	16%
>£13,000 and <£26,000	25%
>£26,000 and <80,600	42%
>£80,000	17%

6.30 Appendix 2 lists the government’s definitions of the different types of Affordable Housing and provides details of the First Homes Scheme. The requirements for developers to build or contribute to Affordable Housing are based on thresholds in the NPPF (paragraph 64) for designated rural areas. The TWBC SLP proposes that 40% of the homes on a greenfield site or 30% on a brownfield site should be affordable. The TWBC SLP suggests that 60% of on-site affordable housing should be social rent and 40% should be intermediate tenures or other affordable routes to home ownership.

6.31 The government is proposing that 25% of the affordable homes should be First Homes, which provides a discount of at least 30% from market prices. If need can be demonstrated the First Homes discount can be increased to 40% or 50%. This is likely to impact on the proportion of shared ownership homes, as the priority requirement in the borough is for social housing. The TWBC ‘Review of affordable housing needs in the context of ‘First Homes’ report suggests that the high cost of housing in Tunbridge Wells Borough would require a discount of up to 40%.

6.32 The lowest priced new build home in the parish in October 2021 was a small 3-bedroomed semi-detached property at Rosewood Place in Matfield at £495,000. With new home prices commanding a premium, a First Homes Scheme in Brenchley and Matfield is likely to require a discount of 50%. The table in Figure 18 indicates the salary needed for a new build home at market value £400,000, with a 30% discount unavailable because the house sale price exceeds the £250,000 limit.

Figure 18: Salaries required for a First Homes discount for a £400,000 market value home

First Homes Discount	Sale price	Mortgage value (90% of price)	Salary (Factor 3.5)
40%	£240,000	£216,000	£62,000
50%	£200,000	£180,000	£51,500

6.33 The 2020 Brenchley and Matfield HNS identified the need among respondents for 22 affordable homes within the next five years, with a preference for 1, 2 or 3-bedded homes. All households indicated strong connections to Brenchley and Matfield and expressed a preference

for Shared Ownership or Discounted Market Sale. An analysis of income suggested that seven of the households might be able to afford a Shared Ownership option and the remainder would require social rented housing. The table in Figure 19 illustrates the salary needed to purchase a home at sale price £400,000 under a shared ownership scheme, which appears to offer more opportunity for home ownership than the First Homes Scheme. A 75% share would require a higher deposit in order to comply with the maximum income level of £80,000.

Figure 19: Salary needed for shared-ownership schemes

Share of ownership	Deposit	Mortgage	Rent per annum (3% of unpaid equity)	Salary = (Mortgage/3.5) + (3 x Rent) (AECOM formula)
25%	£10,000	£90,000	£9,000	£34,000
50%	£20,000	£180,000	£6,000	£69,000
75%	£50,000	£250,000	£3,000	£80,000

6.34 TWBC has estimated that there is a net annual affordable housing desire for 13 one to three bedded units in Brenchley & Matfield Parish from residents within the Borough, although in June 2021 only eight households living in the parish were on the TWBC Housing Register. These qualify as having a Brenchley and Matfield connection, of which four are seeking 1-bed, two 2-bedded and two 3-bedded homes. Housing needs assessments take account of the physical, medical and social circumstances of applicants, as well as the suitability of their current accommodation.

6.35 In its response to the Regulation 14 consultation, TWBC stated that the number of households in the Borough on the Housing Register who have expressed an interest in living in the parish was much higher, 147 requesting Brenchley and 172 requesting Matfield; 94% of these were for 1 to 3 bedded accommodations. These numbers include multiple counts, as households are allowed to choose three locations within the borough, but a large proportion of households on the Housing Register have no connection to the parish. The data illustrate that the demand for affordable housing in the parish, particularly for social rented housing, is very high.

6.36 The present income restrictions imposed by the Housing Register and Shared Ownership schemes create a significant gap in the availability of housing. Income is often too high to qualify for schemes but insufficient to afford properties on the open market. House prices in Brenchley and Matfield Parish are some of the highest in the borough and people in lower or median income bands will need access to a range of affordable housing products.



H7 Rural exception sites

Where there is no alternative site to meet a clearly identified local need for Affordable Housing within the Limits to Built Development, rural exception sites for affordable homes for up to ten homes will be supported where they are adjacent to a Limit to Built Development or they are contiguous to a small settlement. The incorporation of a small proportion of market housing within a rural exception site will be supported where it can be demonstrated that such development is necessary to allow the affordable homes to come forward.

6.37 Rural exception sites provide affordable homes permanently on small sites which would not normally be used for housing, in order to meet the needs of the local community. Local planning authorities should therefore only support proposals for rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs. As stated in the NPPF, paragraph 78, consideration should be given to an element of open market housing where it is needed for scheme viability.

6.38 The availability of land for rural exception sites is a continuing problem, dependent upon landowners being prepared to offer land at a price that would make the provision of the site viable.

H8 Site-specific policies for site AL/BM2

Proposals for the development of the site should meet the following criteria:

Design requirements

- a. Provide a new access point off Maidstone Road;**
- b. Deliver a site lay-out which responds positively to the Matfield Conservation Area and the listed buildings on Matfield Green;**
- c. Deliver a site lay-out which conserves and where practicable enhances the character and distinctiveness of the village;**
- d. Safeguard existing trees and hedges other than where their removal is required to deliver a new vehicular access and associated visibility splays;**
- e. Provide appropriate new planting and landscaping using indigenous species;**
- f. Provide high levels of building efficiency using sustainable approaches wherever practicable;**

Development contribution priorities

- g. Provide an area for community use, including an open space behind Matfield Village Hall, an equipped children's playground and a minimum of eight associated parking spaces;**
- h. Provide contributions towards any improvements to the safe and free flow of traffic on Maidstone Road which may be required to ensure that the development can be satisfactorily accommodated in the local highway network**

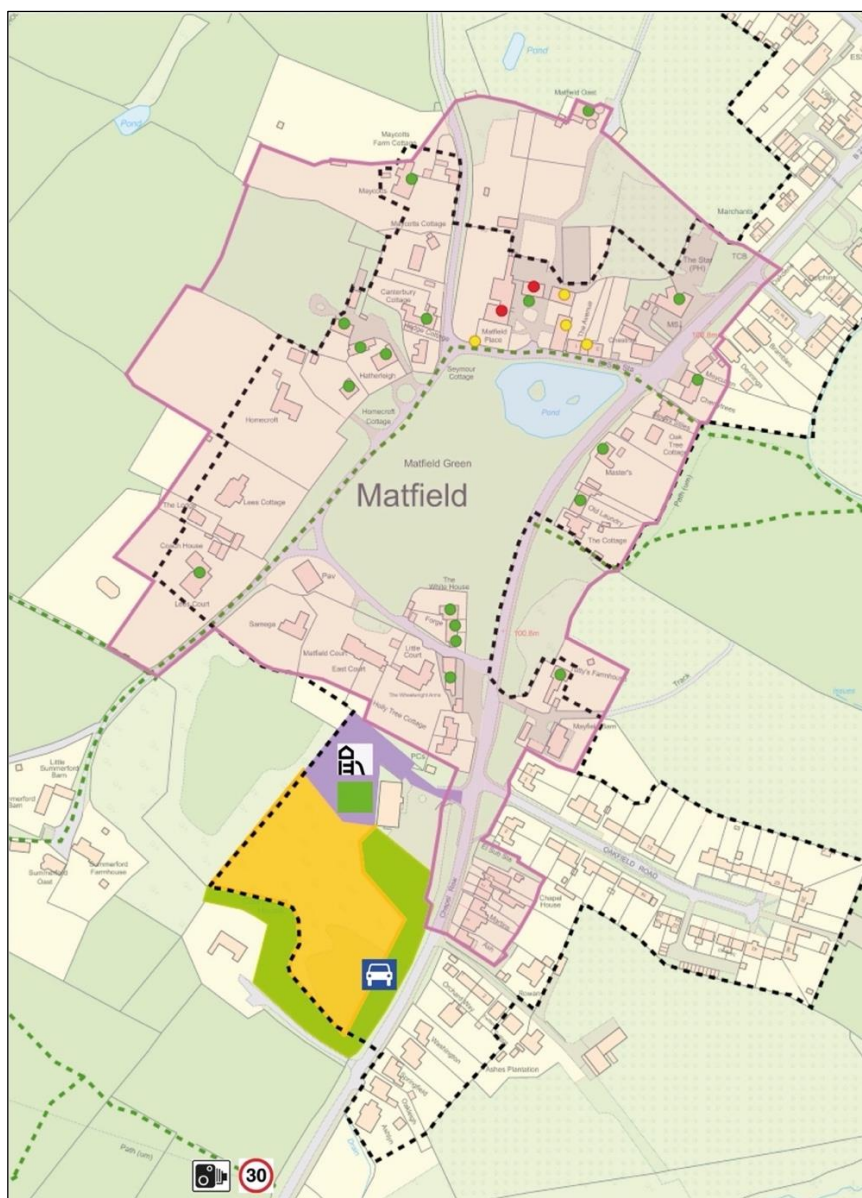
6.39 TWBC's remaining allocated site is identified in the TWBC SLP as a site for a residential development of 11-15 dwellings. An outline planning application was submitted for fifteen dwellings in March 2022, with all matters reserved except for access. The site boundaries are wooded although they do not include any designated ancient woodland. The site is within the High Weald AONB and outside the current LBD, although most of the site is included in the proposed new LBD in the TWBC SLP. The site is partially within the Matfield Conservation Area, on its eastern border with Maidstone Road, and is adjacent to the Conservation Area on its northern border. Parts of the site are subject to legal covenants restricting development and others to affordable housing. Agricultural land is situated to the west and south of the site, with Court Farm House on the southwest border. Policy H8 in this Plan seeks to add distinctive local value to the relevant policy in the Submission Local Plan, which proposes the allocation of the site.

6.40 The site map in the TWBC SLP is indicative in its nature. It has been designed to allow an easier understanding of the approach taken and the location of the various features addresses in that policy. For ease of reference, it is reproduced in this Plan as Figure 20. It shows landscape buffers, residential and community areas, with an access to the south-east on Maidstone Road. An ecological buffer round the perimeter of the site provides a barrier for animals and plants to be sheltered from the development. The access is close to the bend on the Maidstone Road, where traffic either approaches from the A21 or accelerates as it leaves the village centre. Criterion h of

Policy H8 addresses this important matter. The development of the site provides an opportunity to increase the number of affordable homes in the parish. A build to the highest energy efficiency standards would contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change. Proposals which incorporate high energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, electric vehicle charging facilities and cycle storage will be particularly supported. In addition, the new homes should be designed to reduce water usage and to incorporate sustainable drainage measures.

Figure 20: TWBC SLP map of allocated site AL/BM2

	Vehicular Access		Limit to Built Development		Conservation area
	Amenity Green Space		Playground		Speed Camera
	Residential area		Community area		Landscape Buffer
	Public footpath		Listed Buildings		30mph limit



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6.41 It is good practice in a sensitive character area such as the High Weald AONB to assess the effect of developments on the local landscape. As this can vary depending on the seasons, a summer and winter visual impact assessment should accompany planning applications for the development of the site. In a similar way, the Parish Council would expect an agreement to be reached before the development proceeds as to how existing hedges and trees will be maintained in the long-term. Criterion e of the policy requires that a landscape scheme is prepared for the site. This will be a detailed matter for a potential developer and the Borough Council to discuss as part of the development management process. However, as a general guide, at least two native trees or fruit trees should be planted for every house to be delivered on the site.

6.42 The lack of a children's playground in Matfield has been recognized by the community and was highlighted in the 2006 Local Plan. The area designated for community use in the allocation in the SLP provides the opportunity to create an open green space and an equipped playground with associated parking. The details of how this will be achieved will be a matter of future discussion between the Parish Council, the Matfield Village Hall Committee, the Borough Council, the landowner and developer.

Design Policies

D1 High Weald AONB and design standards

Any development within the parish should be of a high design standard. Residential development within the AONB will only be supported where it has demonstrable and satisfactory regard to the High Weald AONB design guidance. The principles of the High Weald AONB design guidance should be applied, as appropriate, to all development proposals within the parish.

6.43 In any new development the Parish needs to have buildings of the highest quality, to create a new legacy that stands alongside our proud heritage. Our historic rural settlements will be enhanced by the careful blending of the old with the new and classic vernacular with creative contemporary design, as well as by encouraging sustainable practices in design and construction.

6.44 The High Weald Partnership and relevant Local Authorities jointly published the High Weald Housing Design Guide in November 2019 as guidance for new builds within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It will be an essential tool for those involved in planning and designing new developments. Elements of the design guidance that are relevant to the parish are reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan and include, but are not limited to, the following:

6.45 Connectivity and Permeability: New developments should be integrated into the settlement so that people can walk through them. Where internal streets do not provide such connections, access to pedestrian routes should be considered (see Policy AM1).

6.46 Site Edges: Boundaries of existing houses, roads and footpaths within the parish are typically soft, with hedges, low walls or picket fences. This should be reflected in new sites and close-board fencing should be avoided (see Policy LE7).

6.47 Green character: Site layout and plot disposition should include open green spaces which are prominent and accessible within the scheme so as to be visible from other parts of the site. There should be space for large scale and replacement trees to grow (see Policies LE5 and LE7).

6.48 Density: New development '*should reflect the historic density and grain of the area in which it is being proposed...*' and have '*a variation of density across the site, in all but the smallest of schemes*' (HWHDG page 26) (see Policy H3).

6.49 Building Design: The HWHDG has an entire section on Local Details which includes comments on Built Details, Boundary Types, Materials and Colour (see Policy D2).



Local architectural styles

D2 Local architectural style

New development proposals, and alterations or extensions to existing buildings should respect local architecture in siting, style, layout, density, height, mass and materials. Imaginative contemporary architecture that respects these criteria will also be supported. Undue uniformity in house design and plot size should be avoided. Any development in the Conservation Areas should be of the highest quality in terms of design and materials and should conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area concerned.

6.50 Though the villages of Brenchley and Matfield have evolved over the centuries and are made up of many types and styles of houses, there is a local style reflected in many of these that uses weather boarding, roofing or half tiling with clay tiles, has consistently well angled roofs with overhangs and avoids strong colours in the external paintwork. The use, where possible, of locally sourced materials would help protect local employment, reduce transport needs and help ensure a local character. Adherence to the HWAONB Design Guide, including its [Colour Study](#) and guidance on materials and suppliers will support such practice.

6.51 While there is a strong local desire for new development to fit in with traditional design, as evidenced by community consultation in the Visioning and Design Forum events, there are also positive views about contemporary design, providing it is aesthetically compatible and sits comfortably with the local architectural style.

D3 Agricultural and rural buildings

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals for new agricultural and rural buildings should be designed to reflect the scale, massing and materials of traditional rural buildings and be located in a way which allows them to be sensitively accommodated in the landscape.

6.52 Permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, allow certain building works and changes of use to be carried out to agricultural/rural buildings without having to make a planning application. They are, however, subject to conditions and limitations to control impact and to protect local amenity within a parish.

6.53 The siting of a new agricultural building can have a significant impact on the AONB and developments should blend into the surrounding landscape. Although design and materials may be constrained by operational needs, the standardization of modern agricultural buildings and economic considerations, it should be possible to reconcile proposals for development with the need to conserve and wherever possible enhance the landscape. New buildings should normally form part of a group of buildings, rather than stand in isolation, and relate to existing buildings in size and colour. Applications for new agricultural and rural buildings within the parish are expected to detail the siting, height, design and external appearance, including colour, of the proposed development. In some circumstances, a visual impact assessment of the development may be required.

D4 Accessibility and flexibility

Proposals for new dwellings, including Affordable Homes, residential extensions and alterations should be designed and arranged in a flexible way to cater for the changing needs of their occupants throughout their lives, and in particular in relation to ageing and the related reduction in mobility.

6.54 Proposals will be encouraged to follow standards that provide for the flexible use of internal space in homes, to meet the changing needs of families and of people with limited mobility. This includes the creation of flexible multigenerational homes and shared living solutions, creating independent and communal space for all ages.

6.55 The TWBC 2018 Housing Needs Survey commented that 'The most frequently mentioned illnesses/disabilities across the Borough of Tunbridge Wells were physical or mobility impairment, at 8.1% of all households.' It is important therefore to support provision of high standards of accessibility. Support will be given to providing lifetime homes using the Habinteg: Lifetime Homes Design Guide (EP100) or the Habinteg Wheelchair Housing Design Guide rather than solely by reference to requirement M4(2) and / or M4(3) in the Building Regulations for the access to and use of buildings.

D5 Providing an inclusive, safe and secure environment

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, developments should be designed to provide an inclusive, safe and secure environment.

6.56 In the NPPF, revised July 2021, paragraphs 92a & 92b state:

92. Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
- b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high-quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas;*

Policy D5 has natural overlaps with Policy D1 (AONB Design Guide) and Policy LE8 (Dark Skies) of the Plan.

6.57 Incorporating measures that reduce crime through design should enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The Kent Design Guide provides authoritative guidance for planning and developers on layout, lighting and public spaces, including recommendations that:

- New developments should have a mix of dwellings and houses should face each other, to encourage community interaction and allow better natural surveillance.
- Open spaces should have a clear structure and ownership to encourage usage.
- Hedges in front gardens should be managed to prevent opportunities for concealment.
- Public spaces should provide a welcoming atmosphere and generate civic pride in a place that is valued.



D6 Climate change, environmental sustainability and resilience

Development proposals which respond positively to mitigating climate change and address environmental sustainability will be supported. Particular support will be offered to proposals which address any or all of the following matters:

- a. Maximising the use of renewable and sustainable energy, designed to fit in with the AONB, Heritage Assets, Conservation Areas and the rural environment.**
- b. Designing and building to a high standard of energy efficiency, to reach a Home Quality Mark of at least 4-Star or the BREEAM rating in the range of Very Good to Excellent.**
- c. Maximising sustainability through building orientation, water and recycling efficiency and sound waste management.**
- d. Ensuring that buildings will have good ventilation and will not overheat in Summer.**

6.58 The serious threat posed by climate change on temperatures, flood risk, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes is now widely recognised. The UK Parliament, KCC and TWBC support this need, all having passed motions declaring an environment and climate emergency.

6.59 In 2017 Kent County Council implemented an environment strategy and, as a result of this, Kent and Medway published its Energy and Low Emissions Strategy in June 2020. In 2019, to combat climate change, the government proposed that the average new-build home in 2025 should have between 75% and 80% lower carbon emissions than one built to current energy efficiency requirements. New buildings should reduce CO₂ emissions to mitigate the impact of climate change and use renewable forms of energy in preference to fossil fuels.

6.60 In accordance with this policy framework and the NPPF, this Neighbourhood Plan takes a proactive approach to mitigating the impact of development on climate change and to adapting to its expected impact.

6.61 There has been a general increase in rainfall in the UK, with climate change producing periods of both high rainfall and drought. The parish lies in a high stress water area and drought conditions will impact upon the supply of drinking water. Design features in developments should incorporate rainwater and grey water harvesting, together with low flow fittings, to mitigate against a shortage in water supply. South East Water recommends a target for water use in new developments of 110 litres per person per day. A shrinkage of soils occurs during drought periods, which is a particular problem in this parish due the predominance of clay soils. Subsidence and structural cracking of buildings could increasingly occur, which could be mitigated by deeper foundations and avoiding sloping sites.

6.62 Climate change will produce higher temperatures, with a need for passive design measures to reduce overheating. These could include better insulation, solar shading and reflective roof materials to reduce a reliance on cooling energy usage. The environmental sustainability of design and construction is a key priority and developments should mitigate as far as possible their environmental impact. Buildings should be designed to minimise the need for energy and 70% of respondents to the Brenchley and Matfield Housing Needs Survey reported that their existing housing required improvement to its energy efficiency. Building Regulations ensure a certain level of sustainability, but more can be done. Designing and constructing to the highest standards of energy efficiency could include eco-build, Passivhaus or zero carbon homes, which will be encouraged.

6.63 Much of the Parish is built on hills and the creative use of the topography in the planning of a new development can ensure more ecologically sustainable practices. These could include: the orientation of housing for solar energy; sound waste disposal; and minimizing visual impact. All developments will be expected to incorporate sustainability features, which should be detailed in a Design and Access statement in planning applications.

6.64 Technologies are available that offer more efficient ways than before of heating and meeting other energy needs. Renewable energy measures appropriate to a site will be supported, such as solar panels and tiles, wind turbines, ground and air source heat pumps. In conjunction with renewable energy sources a provision for energy storage, such as Tesla domestic scale batteries, should be considered. The use of renewable electricity should be preferred over forms of energy with higher carbon emissions, while building in ventilation and air circulation systems can also improve air quality in homes. On 7th March 2019, TWBC approved an [Air Quality Action Plan 2018 – 2023](#).

6.65 The Neighbourhood Plan will encourage at least a 4-Star rating in the [Home Quality Mark](#) scheme for all developments in the parish, though this is currently voluntary for developers and optional for Local Authorities to adopt. The scheme rates a home using three criteria that focus on the needs and expectations of people living in a home: cost, well-being and environmental footprint.

6.66 The climate change challenge has implications for other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. These include encouragement of small-scale community renewable energy schemes (Policy BE7), the provision in parking facilities of electric charging points and bicycle storage (Policy AM3). Suggestions are also made in Chapter 7 for Community Action Projects.



D7 Flood risk management

Development will be required to be located and designed so as to reduce, manage and mitigate flood risk, both to itself and to other land and properties, by:

- a. being sited as far as possible in areas of low flood risk (Flood Zone 1) and avoiding areas of higher flood risk (Flood Zones 2 and 3), utilising information from the Environment Agency and TWBC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019);**
- b. in cases where either the location is in Flood Zones 2 and 3 or the scale of development warrants it, providing site-specific flood risk assessments with the planning application, assessing the risk in detail through the application of the sequential test and exception test where necessary, in line with national guidance;**
- c. identifying appropriate flood reduction, protection, resilience, resistance or mitigation measures, based on the above assessment; and**
- d. using any opportunities arising from flood risk management to improve water quality.**

6.67 The Environment Agency flood maps (Figure 21) indicate that most of the parish lies in low risk Flood Zone 1 due to the absence of major rivers in the parish. The main flood risk from watercourses is confined to the area around the Tudeley Brook in the western part of the parish, east of the A228 at Colts Hill (Flood Zone 2), and to the headwaters of the Teise in the Isle of Wight and Furnace Pond areas to the south of Brenchley (Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3).

6.68 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 & Level 2 in July 2019 was carried out for the Borough Council by specialist consultants. It provides the information to ensure that the sequential and exception tests on flood risk established by the NPPF (paragraphs 160-168) are adhered to. The sequential test steers development initially to the lowest probability of flooding and the exception test is applied if areas in Zones 2 and 3 need to be considered. The exception test requires the proposed development to provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk and not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Figure 21: Areas at flood risk from rivers



Chance of Flood Risk in any given year

- High - greater or equal to a 1 in 30
- Medium - less than 1 in 30 but greater than or equal to 1 in 100
- Low - less than 1 in 100 but greater than or equal to 1 in 1000
- Very low - less than 1 in 1000



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D8 Surface water management

Developments should provide for adequate surface water drainage to manage flood risk, both on the site and within its locality. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be included to manage surface water run-off from the site, unless it can be demonstrated that it is not appropriate.

Parking surfaces should be permeable and methods of recycling, harvesting and conserving water resources should be practised where practicable.

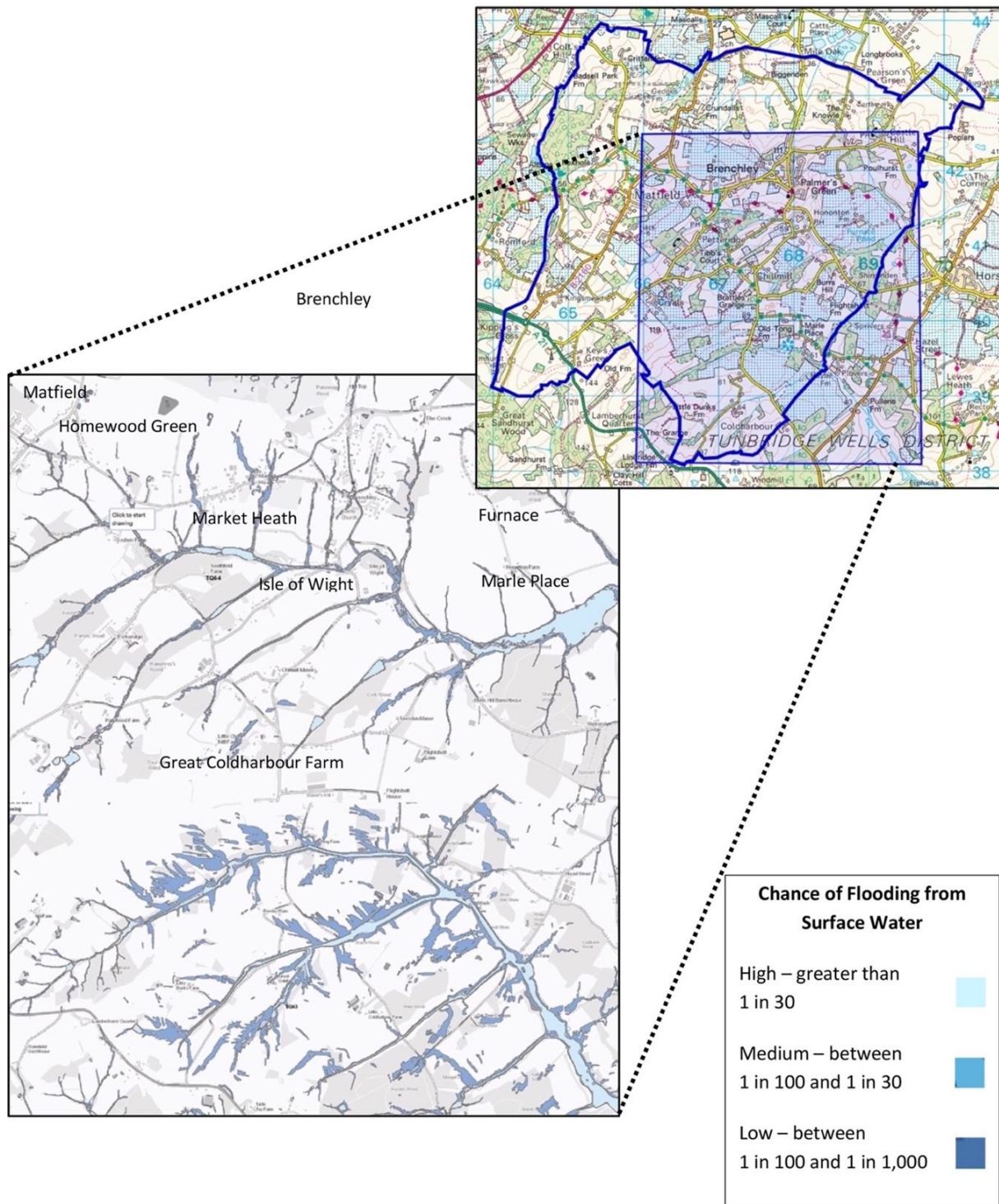
Developments should demonstrate how runoff from the site can be reduced from its pre-development level, together with appropriate arrangements to secure the ongoing management and maintenance of the measures that have been taken.

6.69 This policy seeks to ensure that surface water drainage adequately reduces the risk of flooding and any measures taken should improve the pre-development drainage. Developments must demonstrate the measures that need to be taken to manage and mitigate any flood risk from surface water. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are preferred as they can also provide multi-functional benefits in terms of biodiversity, water quality and amenity. When SuDS are planned, it is important that the potential impact on the historic environment is fully considered and unavoidable damage is mitigated. In October 2013 KCC produced its 'Historic Environment guidance for Sustainable Drainage Scheme developers'

6.70 To improve surface drainage and avoid polluting water sources, the design of SuDS should take account of the geology underlying a development site. The Parish is underlain by sandstones and clays, with a risk of surface water flooding due to the impervious clay. The Ashdown Sands formation underlies the parish, which is a primary protected aquifer for the area and several pumping stations pump water to a reservoir and water treatment centre at Pembury. Perched water tables occur within the sandstone and streams can arise when saturated sandstone is underlain by clay, particularly on the steep slopes in the parish such as Crook Road and on Maidstone Road near Kippings Cross. Sinkholes can also appear on the surface as the sandstone is washed away. Local drainage systems with limited capacity, such as pipes and culverts, can exacerbate surface water flooding.

6.71 The Environment Agency published 'Adapting to a changing climate' in February 2016 on how to use climate change allowances in flood risk assessments. The new allowances for peak rainfall intensities have implications for drainage design and should be included within any drainage strategy prepared to accompany a planning application. As Lead Local Flood Authority, Kent County Council requires that the design accommodates the 1 in 100-year storm with a 20% allowance for climate change. An additional analysis should be undertaken to understand the flooding implication for a greater climate change allowance of 40%.

Figure 22: Areas at risk from surface water flooding



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6.72 The Environment Agency map in Figure 22 identifies several areas in the parish that have a significant risk of flooding from surface water, mainly focused on the numerous small streams. The problem of surface water flooding in medium/high risk areas was highlighted in June 2021, when exceptionally high rainfall caused flooding in areas of the parish that had never previously experienced flooding. The identified ‘wet spots’ in the parish include:

- the junction of Hatmill Lane and Fairmans Lane
- the junction of Kings Toll Road with Maidstone Road

- the hamlet of Mile Oak
- the Market Heath area
- Matfield Green and along Maidstone Road
- the junction of Foxhole Lane and Bramble Reed Lane
- Brenchley Road near Standings Cross and Homewood Green
- Furnace Lane near Wrangling Green



D9 Utility infrastructure

The delivery of new and improved utility infrastructure which is necessary to ensure that development proposals are acceptable will be supported.

6.73 Over the life of the Neighbourhood Plan utility infrastructure providers may need to provide new or improved infrastructure to serve new development, to meet stricter environmental standards or to modernise products. Sustainable development requires adequate utility infrastructure and it is essential that, for example, broadband, electricity supplies, water supply pipes and sewage infrastructure are upgraded where necessary.

6.74 Development proposals should comply with any construction management conditions required by the Borough Council. This will help to manage and mitigate the impacts of construction activity to an acceptable level. Any public rights of way on or adjacent to the site should remain open and unobstructed during construction unless a temporary closure order has first been obtained. Registration with the Considerate Constructors Scheme, or an equivalent

scheme, is strongly encouraged for all development within the parish. Depending on the circumstances of the site concerned possible components of a management plan could include:

- restricting site working hours to normal working hours during the working week and Saturday mornings;
- minimising the risk of flooding of nearby properties caused by the construction process;
- mitigating the spread of mud, dust and other debris; minimising construction noise;
- avoiding deliveries in peak traffic periods;
- minimising waste production and pollution, with every effort being made to recycle and bonfires being avoided;
- avoiding parking that inconveniences local residents; and
- timing of the construction to minimise disturbance of wildlife at critical times in their reproductive cycle.'

Business and Employment Policies

6.75 In recent years a number of shops, pubs and cafes have been lost to the parish, while a rising number of agricultural buildings have been converted to residential use, as have some workshops and light industrial units. There is a need to protect and increase employment opportunities in the parish, in the interests of the sustainability of communities and to minimise outward commuting and road use. This requires infrastructure that meets business needs and robust policies for supporting, enhancing and promoting local business and employment.

6.76 The Brenchley and Matfield Parish 2020 Business and Employment Survey contacted 100 businesses for their views on a range of issues, including infrastructure, planning, the environment and their plans for the future. The survey had a 35% response rate and the results are shown as a tabulation of responses and a summary report. During consultations with children and young people, a requirement for local opportunities for part-time employment was highlighted.

BE1 Retention or redevelopment of agricultural buildings and commercial sites for residential use

Proposals for redeveloping agricultural and other sites in commercial and employment uses for residential use, whether within or outside the Limits to Built Development, should provide independent evidence that there is no market demand for suitable employment uses on the site, either for continuing a similar business or for an alternative commercial use.

In particular development proposals should demonstrate that:

The site has been proactively marketed for similar and alternative commercial uses over a period of at least 18 months. An exception may be made if continued commercial use would result in unacceptable traffic or amenity problems for nearby residents;

Alternative uses that would retain some employment on the site alongside any proposed residential use have been considered;

Any proposal for conversion of buildings to residential use is not exercised for a period of at least ten years after construction and does not entail an expansion in the size of the building.

6.77 Loss of businesses reduces the sustainability of the local community and opportunities for local employment. The justification for every application for change of use of a business site needs therefore to be carefully considered, with every effort being made to continue to provide employment. The conversion of commercial properties to domestic use should be a last resort. There may be alternative business opportunities through the conversion of older facilities, as has happened at the former Bull public house in Brenchley and the former Inn Store in Matfield. Use of redundant agricultural buildings to provide leisure-based employment opportunities will be preferred to conversion to residential use.

6.78 From August 2021, this policy will need to take into account new permitted development rights introduced by Government for converting certain unused commercial properties, though these will not apply in the AONB.

6.79 A restriction on change of use away from commercial within 10 years of construction is intended to minimise the risk that such buildings are constructed in areas where housing is not appropriate, on sustainability or other grounds, with the intention of seeking subsequent approval to convert to residential use. This aligns with the approach set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development [England] Order 2015: SI 2015 No. 596 section Q1).

6.80 Farming continues to play an important role in the economy and character of the parish. The Neighbourhood Plan is looking to ensure that the needs of this type of business and other rural businesses, including equestrian businesses, are supported (see Policy BE4). Policy H8 of the saved Local Plan (2006) provides a planning mechanism to build outside the LBD for rural workers' homes where they are required for the business. By requiring clear evidence, before the removal of conditions restricting the occupancy of rural workers' dwellings, that the housing is no longer needed either for the existing rural enterprise or for another one within the parish, the policy will maintain the provision of such housing for rural employment and enterprises, while limiting the need for new housing located in open countryside.

BE2 New employment

Developments that provide or encourage local employment opportunities, including small-scale social enterprises, small and medium sized businesses and live/work units will be supported where:

- a. they provide additional floor space for existing businesses in the parish, or meet the needs of firms setting up or moving into Brenchley and Matfield; and**
- b. they are for a business use and are of a scale and design which enables them to be accommodated without harm to the rural environment or the amenities of any nearby residential properties, or help to bring suitable vacant rural buildings back in use; and**
- c. there is sufficient on-site parking to meet the needs of the business's staff and visitors, with the provision of e-charging points, bicycle storage and showers if possible; and**
- d. any traffic impacts, including consideration of heavy goods vehicles, are demonstrably acceptable; and**
- e. they have the potential to reduce out-commuting from Brenchley and Matfield and the resulting peak hour pressures on the local road network.**

6.81 In the Business and Employment Survey, of the twenty-five replies to a question asking where and whether more land should be made available for businesses, 17 stated redundant buildings, 13 existing buildings, 12 brownfield sites and only 2 supported greenfield sites.

6.82 Encouragement of small-scale local businesses and capacity for homeworking will provide local employment and contribute to a lower-carbon economy by reducing commuting. Homeworking, hot-desking and co-worker facilities are increasing, especially for young entrepreneurs. New industrial sectors, such as the digital economy and lifestyle service-providers, require different types of facilities and supply-chain arrangements. New developments should take such issues in to account wherever possible.

6.83 As an example, the conversion of a redundant commercial building, such as a public house, to a business or enterprise hub rather than a house could provide valuable support for local businesses. It could provide facilities, such as meeting rooms and printing services, for home-working businesses that only need them occasionally. It could also provide a central collection/delivery point, improving supply chains. It might also provide a central focus for local, home-based businesses through social networking. This could be a key enabler for start-ups, offering advice, potential business synergies and investment opportunities.

6.84 Providing a new commercial centre within a new housing development might achieve the same purpose. To avoid harming the rural character of the parish and inconveniencing residents, any such development should have sufficient parking for its needs. Responses to the Business and Employment Survey indicated that nearly 90% of employees travel to work by car, with only one employee using public transport and one employee cycling to work. 18 businesses reported a need for parking, requiring a total of 58 spaces. Where otherwise feasible, it would be beneficial if location of businesses offering employment took account of proximity to non-vehicular access.

BE3 Infrastructure for business

Developments that help strengthen local businesses through contributing to improvements to infrastructure, such as super-fast broadband, mobile telephony, signage and improved footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways will be supported provided they comply with other Neighbourhood Plan policies.

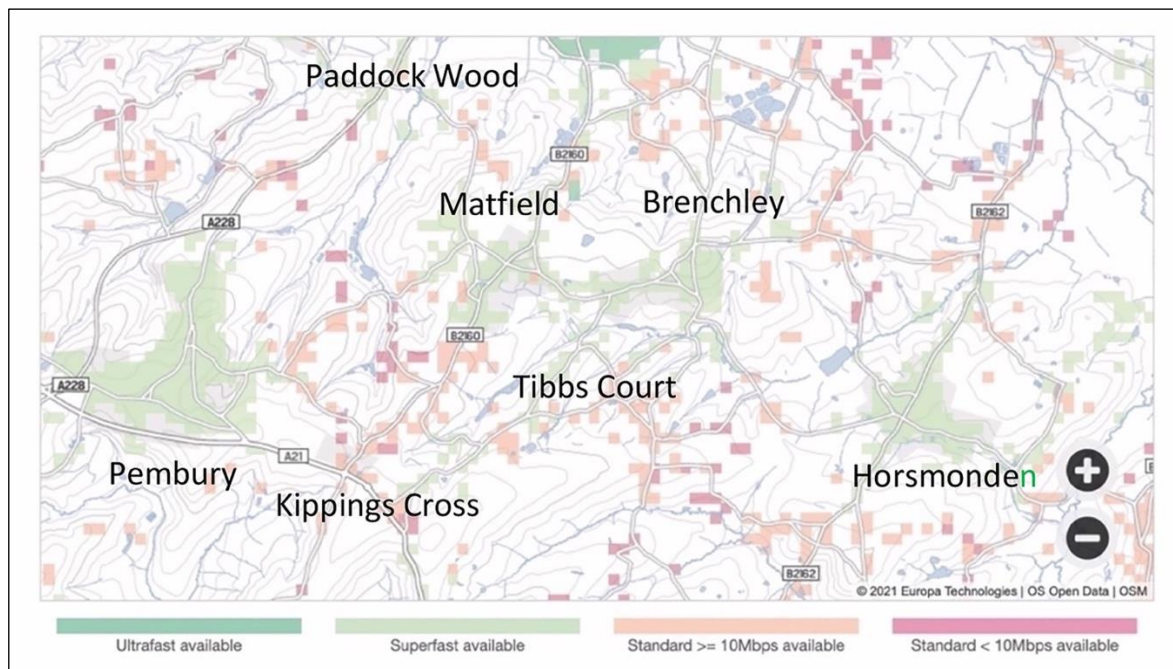
6.85 Adequate infrastructure is a key need for local residents and businesses. The Parish Plan Survey highlighted dissatisfaction with the quality of internet and especially mobile reception in the parish. The 2020 Business and Employment Survey confirmed business concerns with both mobile and broadband services, with 79% reporting mobile signal problems and 61% broadband speed problems. The 2021 OFCOM speed map in Figure 23 shows that although superfast broadband speeds (30 MB plus) are available in the centre of Matfield and Brenchley villages, ultrafast broadband (50 MB plus) is not. In some other parts of the parish, only standard broadband is available.

6.86 KCC has a policy to bring superfast broadband to more than 140,000 homes and businesses. Improved mobile phone reception would be welcomed but any such new infrastructure should respect the rural character of the parish, especially within the AONB. KCC normally requires developers to liaise with providers to ensure an adequate broadband service. Addressing such

issues in new developments would improve parishioners' quality of life as well as supporting local businesses, especially those that work at home.

6.87 Local businesses could also benefit from improved signage on local roads. This could improve logistics for agriculture and commercial industries by guiding delivery vehicles to the most appropriate routes. This is the responsibility of the KCC but developers should also liaise with the Parish Council to identify areas where such signage should be improved. Horse riding is a popular local activity, with several equine businesses in the parish that provide the largest rural employer after agriculture. However, bridleways are very limited and there are no connected routes. New permanent off-road riding routes would support equine businesses by making riding safer and reduce conflict with other road users.

Figure 23: Broadband coverage map



BE4 Agricultural diversification

Development proposals for the diversification of existing agriculture-based enterprise will be supported provided that:

- a. Where appropriate, the proposal properly takes account of the High Weald AONB or its setting; and
- b. the proposal is accompanied by justification, such as a business plan, demonstrating the economic benefits of the proposal; and
- c. the proposal will avoid unacceptable impacts on nearby residential amenity and the highway network.

6.88 A diverse and broad-based agricultural sector is important for the health of the rural economy and community. There is continual change in the methods of farming and the type of produce grown. For example, hops and cherries have been replaced by dwarf root stock apples and vineyards, while equestrian facilities have increased in the parish, offering livery, tuition and

opportunities for riding. Such changes should be supported to encourage a healthy rural economy.

6.89 Purposeful land-management is one of the main drivers for maintaining the landscape character of the area. But the needs of farming and other land-based enterprises must be balanced with conserving and enhancing the AONB. This policy should have the benefit of maintaining biodiversity and minimising any deterioration in the historic landscape qualities of the parish, whilst retaining employment opportunities.

BE5 Small-scale tourism

Insofar as planning permission is required, developments that would help promote small-scale tourism and related businesses will be supported.

6.90 Tourism is a small but important part of parish life and measures to improve infrastructure to support this should be encouraged. The attractive nature of the parish and its AONB status attracts visitors from outside the parish. The extensive footpath network in the parish is well used by tourists, especially in the spring and summer. This benefits local enterprises, including the five public houses, several bed and breakfast businesses, cafes and specialist shops. Such small-scale tourist businesses will be encouraged.

6.91 Measures that might help businesses that benefit from visitors and tourists might include funding for better signage, including brown tourist signs, footpath markers and improving the all-weather quality of public footpaths. Information boards and maps could also be provided.



BE6 Energy efficiency in non-residential buildings

Development proposals, including new build or alterations to existing non-residential buildings, which are designed to maximise energy efficiency will be supported, including those which:

- a. achieve the BREEAM rating in the range Very Good to Excellent Standard for energy efficiency; and**
- b. provide e-charging points in staff and visitor car parks.**

6.92 The 2020 Business and Employment Survey showed that while 85% of businesses thought the environment important or very important for business, very few use renewable energy and fewer than 20% had a strategy on their carbon footprint.

6.93 Businesses need to play their part in improving environmental sustainability and addressing climate change. It is therefore as important for commercial developments to meet as high as possible energy efficiency standards as it is for housing developments. The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) provides a framework for ensuring energy efficient design. Provision of e-charging points for staff would encourage greater use of hybrid and electric cars. Policy BE6 provides a positive context in which such developments can come forward.

BE7 Renewable energy generation

Proposals for small-scale individual and community renewable energy projects will be supported provided that:

- a. The siting and scale are appropriate to the setting and position in the wider landscape; and**
- b. There is no significant negative impact on local residents; and**
- c. There is no unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance**

6.94 The NPPF (paragraph 152) states that the planning system should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Ideas have been put forward for community energy schemes such as small-scale renewable energy generation, solar photovoltaic panels, solar water heating panels and charging points. Inclusion of these in development proposals or through contributions to community schemes will be encouraged, provided that they do not conflict with the AONB. Larger-scale commercial developments such as solar or wind farms will not be supported.



Landscape and Environment Policies

6.95 Around 78% of the parish lies in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with its northern boundary running along the ridge of the High Weald escarpment. The northern area of the parish lies outside the HWAONB but within the High Weald National Character Area and defines the transition zone into the Low Weald Area.

6.96 If the parish is to remain an attractive environment for living, working and visiting, it is essential to conserve and enhance the defining characteristics of its rural High Weald location, which are its landscape, heritage and biodiversity. New development should contribute to this aim. The High Weald AONB is celebrated for its scenery, tranquillity and wildlife and is recognised as one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe, having been a unique, distinct, and recognisable area for at least 700 years. Many of Brenchley and Matfield's landscape features reflect those highly valued in the AONB. They need to be conserved and enhanced when considering any potential development. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council [Landscape Character Assessment 2017](#) and the [Historic Landscape Characterisation 2020](#) for Brenchley Parish are key documents describing the landscape character of the parish.

LE1 Conserving and enhancing the AONB

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals within the High Weald AONB should make a positive contribution towards achieving the relevant objectives of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024 (or successor versions) and have regard to its associated guidance.

6.97 78% of the Parish lies in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 (paragraph 176) states that:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas...'