


# Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council

## Parish Council Response to the Examiner's Clarification Questions

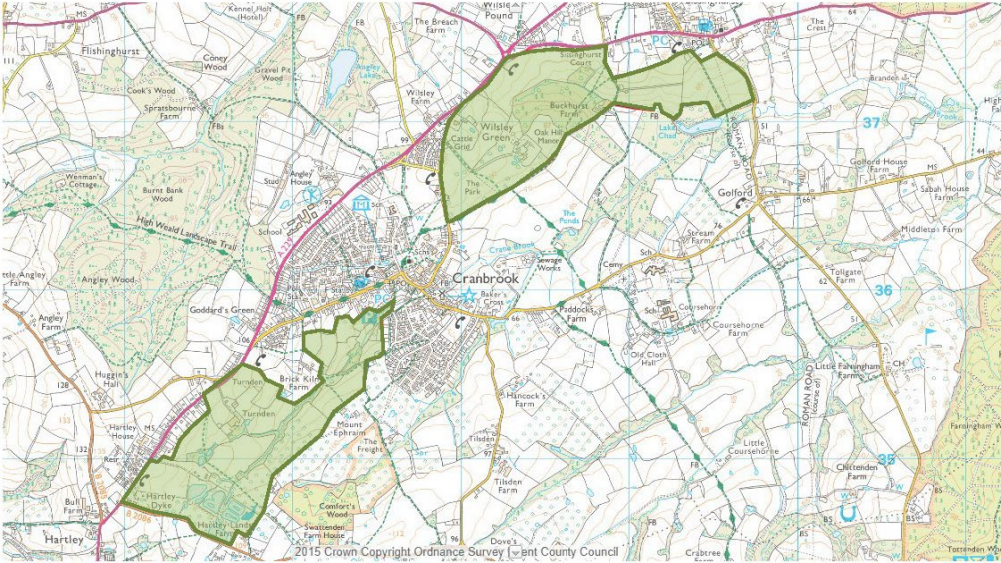
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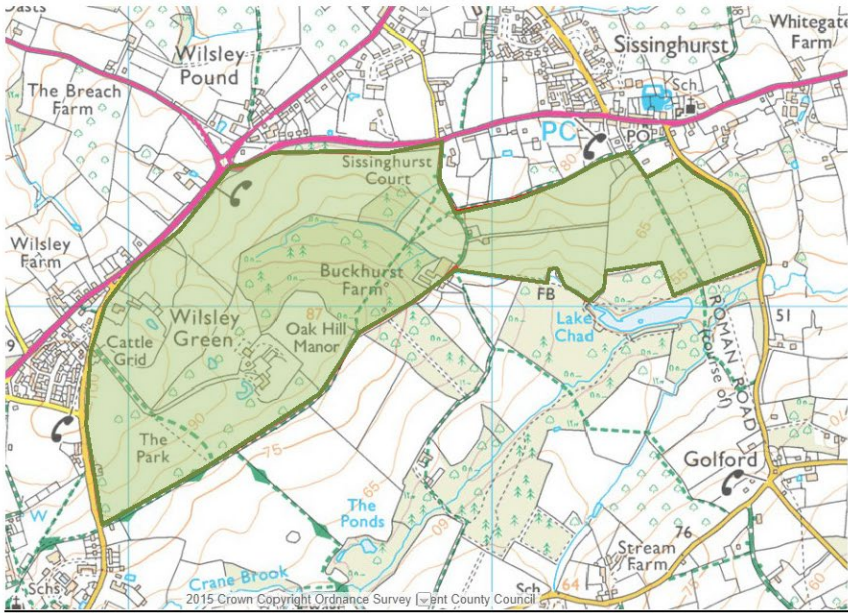
Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner		Response from the Qualifying Body
01	<b>General – Policy Format</b> The policies are generally clear and separated from the supporting text. Nevertheless, I am minded to recommend that they are displayed in policy boxes. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?	<p>The Parish Council is happy for this formatting request to be enabled. Using boxes for policy wording would be clearer, separating out the policy criteria from any supporting text.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the made NDP will be required to meet Accessibility Regulations, as agreed by TWBC.</p>
02	<b>General – Maps</b> I have seen the detailed maps in the submission package and the way in which they support certain policies. In basic conditions terms the Plan will need to include at least a map of the neighbourhood area. It would be helpful if the Parish Council expanded on the way in which it considered this matter and how it anticipates that the maps would feature (if at all) in the final version of the Plan.	<p>The Parish Council is still unsure as to the best way of formatting the final version of the plan. It is expected that most people and/or organisations reading the final plan will be doing so online and/or on screens rather than through printed materials.</p> <p>It has been agreed that there will be continued dialogue between the PC and TWBC to decide upon the preferred way to present the final plan, digitally or physically (or both) and the best way to integrate maps and illustrations.</p>
03	<b>General - Number of policies</b> Several of the representations comment about the number of policies in the Plan. On the one hand the comprehensive nature of	<p>The Parish Council feel strongly that comprehensive neighbourhood plan, with significant coverage of all the issues that affect the parish is the right approach, even if this results in a duplication of policies that can be found at a national and/or local level. There is a widespread desire across the parish to have all the expected planning policies in one place and not be reliant</p>

Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner		Response from the Qualifying Body
	<p>the Plan is a very positive feature and demonstrates the level of work which has been undertaken. On the other hand, neighbourhood plans do not need to repeat national or local policies.</p> <p>Does the Parish Council have comments on the representations which address this matter?</p>	<p>upon other documents that could be rewritten, abandoned, or significantly revised without the involvement of the Parish Council, leaving the parish without the policy coverage it requires. It is therefore the Parish Council's preferred position not to remove policies from the submission plan on the basis of duplication or repetition.</p>
04	<p>On what basis did the Parish Council set out to prepare the Plan to bring distinctive added value to national and local planning policies?</p>	<p>The Parish Council set out to produce a neighbourhood plan using the best local knowledge available to it. It obtained this knowledge through deep and broad consultation and engagement. This created a locally focussed evidence base that was used to inform the development of the NDP. This local information was introduced to a policy framework that uses best practice from a national and local level.</p>
05	<p><b>General</b> – Proportionality and wording of policies</p> <p>Several policies would apply to all development proposals. Plainly a range of proposals will come forward within the Plan period. However, the majority will be small-scale and/or domestic in nature.</p> <p>On this basis, I am minded to recommend modifications to the policies concerned so that they would apply in a proportionate way (based on their scale, nature, and location). Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?</p>	<p>The Parish Council are open-minded about this approach to proportionality but are concerned this may remove the effectiveness of the policy mix. The parish is expected to see significant amount of development over the plan period and the cumulative effect of many small-scale and/or domestic changes could be considerable. The Parish Council wishes to see the benefits of the policy mix being applicable to all types and scales of development across the plan area.</p>
06	<p><b>General</b> – Relationship of the submitted Plan to the development plan</p> <p>The basic conditions test for a neighbourhood plan is against the strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan. Several</p>	<p><i>Question from the Examiner: Does the Parish Council have any comments on the preliminary findings and their potential implications on the content of the neighbourhood plan?</i></p> <p>The Parish Council has no official comment to make about the preliminary Local Plan findings and their potential implications on the content of the neighbourhood plan.</p>

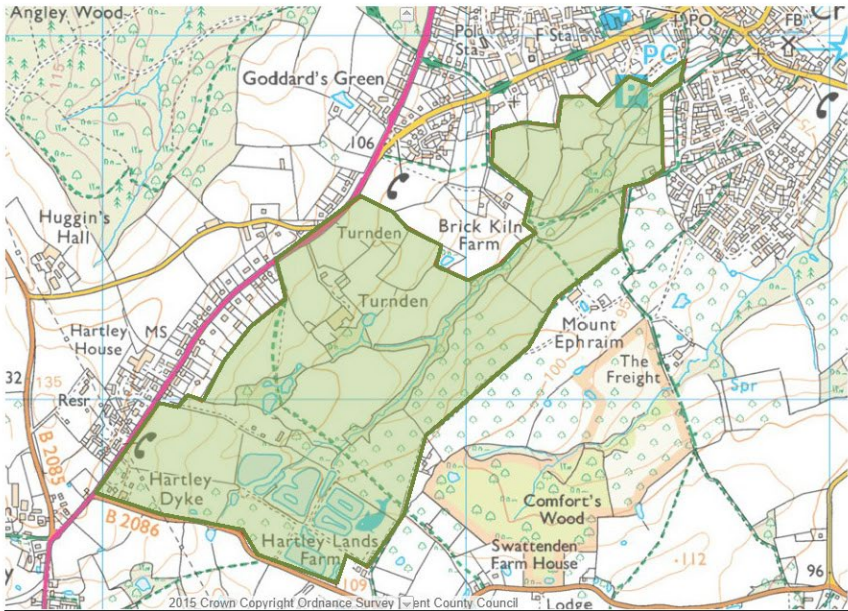
Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner	Response from the Qualifying Body
<p>policies in the Plan have sought to add value to policies in the emerging Local Plan. As the Parish Council will be aware the Planning Inspector has now issued his preliminary findings on the Local Plan. Does the Parish Council have any comments on the preliminary findings and their potential implications on the content of the neighbourhood plan?</p>	
<p>07 <b>Policy LN3.5</b> This policy has attracted several representations. The Borough Council contends that the policy does not take account of existing and consented development and does not conform with the strategic policy for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst in the submitted Local Plan, its allocations, or indeed those in the adopted Site Allocations DPD. It recommends that the policy is revised so that it relates to the promotion of natural flood management of the Crane Brook and to support nature recovery measures as part of developments in the Crane Valley. It also suggests that the buffer zones are deleted. Plainly this matter overlaps with the general questions raised in this note. Nevertheless, on what basis has the Parish Council pursued this policy?</p>	<p><i>Question from the Examiner: On what basis has the Parish Council pursued this policy?</i></p> <p>There is a widespread desire for the Crane Valley to be protected from damaging development. It is a much loved landscape and has long been considered an inappropriate location for new homes. There is a known and experienced risk of flooding in the Crane Valley (see recent photos below taken before any serious development has taken place). This risk extends to the current leisure facilities in the Crane Valley and may have a serious impact on the viability of the much-needed proposed Community and Medical Centre.</p> <div data-bbox="862 900 1742 1225">  </div> <p><i>Crane Valley (left) Nov 7th, 2022 (right) Jan 8th, 2023</i></p>

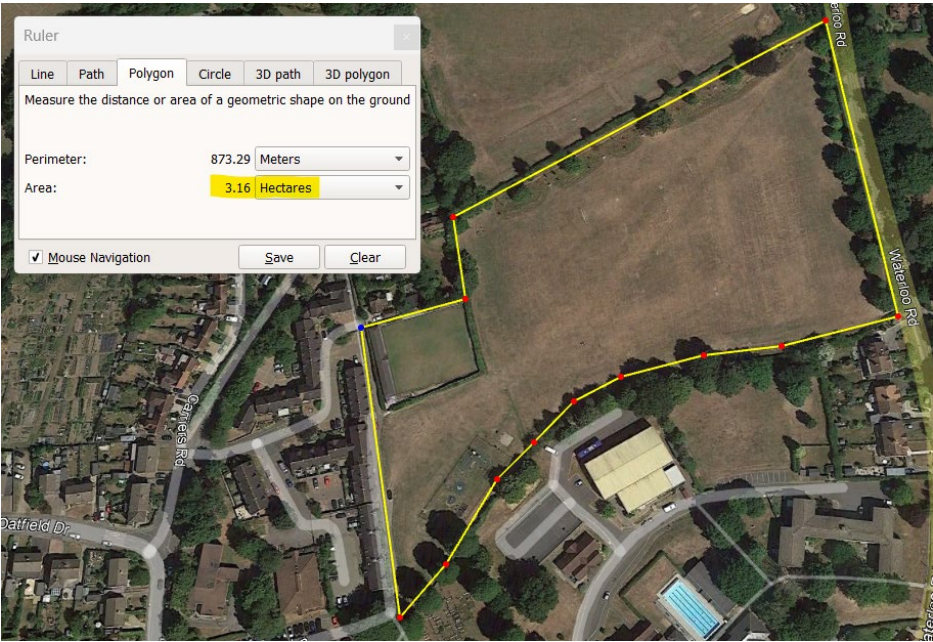
Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner		Response from the Qualifying Body
		<p>The entire town drains through the Crane Valley, with a significant drain running from the top of the High Street into the Crane Valley at the old Gas Works. This has already, on occasion, resulted in the Tanyard Car Park being flooded, with associated damage to cars and property. There are houses on the High Street that have pumps running constantly. The buffer zones as referenced in the policy were in response to advice received from the Woodland Trust on 28th April 2020. Copy of its letter appended to this response table.</p> <p>However, the Parish Council acknowledge that development is already happening in the Crane Valley. Both Brick Kiln Farm and Turnden Phase 1 are currently in development, the latter soon to be marketed as a “gated community”, which is a huge disappointment to the Parish Council. However, the proposed development of Turnden Phase 2 was called in by the Secretary of State following objections by Natural England.</p> <p>We were expecting a decision last July, but it has still not been published. There was a further application submitted for a site called Cornhall between Brick Kiln and the Co-op, but this is currently refused.</p>
08	<b>Policy LN3.8</b> The purpose of the policy is clear. Did the Parish Council consider identifying the Green Gaps on a map base?	Green Gaps were prepared on a map during the preparation phase of plan but were not appended to the Submission Plan. A copies are added to this table, below.

Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner	Response from the Qualifying Body
	 <p data-bbox="1346 834 1541 852"><u>Open Spaces and Green Gaps</u></p>

Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner	Response from the Qualifying Body
	 <p data-bbox="1375 882 1512 900"><u>Eastern Green Space</u></p>



Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner	Response from the Qualifying Body
	 <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Western Green Space</u></p>
<p>09 <b>Policy LN3.11</b></p> <p>I looked carefully at the various proposed local green spaces (LGS) during the visit. The details about the various LGSs are well-considered.</p> <p>In general terms did the Parish Council consider the additional benefit that would be achieved for the proposed LGSs which are within the High Weald AONB (see Planning Practice Guidance ID37: 011-20140306)?</p>	<p>Yes, and that consideration was that a strong element of local control, through the LGS designation, was an important aspect of preparing an NDP and garnering local support, especially at referendum time. There is also the issue of wanting to create a comprehensive “one stop” planning document that is not reliant upon other agencies and their own policies, that could be rewritten, revised, or deleted without the involvement of the Parish Council (see earlier response about duplication, repetition).</p>

Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner	Response from the Qualifying Body
<p>10 What is the size of LGS7?</p>	 <p>3.16 hectares</p>
<p>11 How does the proposed designation of LGS9 relate to Policy LN3.5?</p>	<p>LGS9 is about protecting public access and amenity (e.g. visual beauty, green corridor going through the built development and historic significance) while LN3.5 is about protecting the natural environment and the ecosystem services it provides (e.g. flood attenuation, biodiversity, nature reserve etc). The Parish Council consider the two policies (LGS9 and LN3.5) complement one another and both provide distinct policy coverage.</p>
<p>12 Please can the Parish Council comment on the representation from Mr Mellor on the proposed designation of LGS14.</p>	<p>With regard to the comment from Mr Mellor, we are happy to be guided by his very specific local knowledge and would suggest that the map can be amended in line with his drawing.</p>



Clarification or Question Raised by the Examiner		Response from the Qualifying Body
13	<p><b>Policy H4.4</b></p> <p>Several of the representation from the development industry comment about the evidence for some of the identified views. Please can the Parish Council expand on the way in which it prepared the policy?</p> <p>To what extent would the policy add value to existing national and local policies in relation to the High Weald AONB?</p> <p>Does the Parish Council have any comments on the specific views raised by the development industry in the representations?</p>	<p><i>Question from the Examiner: Please can the Parish Council expand on the way in which it prepared the policy?</i></p> <p>This policy was developed following the Landscape Character Assessment workshop held in the Vestry Hall on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018. The Steering Group produced photographs of all the views identified by the public, which was then made available on the NDP website as an interactive document. We append this background evidence paper to this clarification table.</p> <p><i>Question from the Examiner: To what extent would the policy add value to existing national and local policies in relation to the High Weald AONB?</i></p> <p>See earlier about the need for a comprehensive document that does not reply upon other policies found elsewhere</p> <p><i>Question from the Examiner: Does the Parish Council have any comments on the specific views raised by the development industry in the representations?</i></p> <p>The Parish Council acknowledge the representations from the development industry but have no comments to make.</p>
14	<p><b>Policy HO7.1</b></p> <p>Would this policy bring any added value to national and local (adopted and emerging) policies on affordable housing?</p>	<p>It shows support for affordable housing at a neighbourhood level and endorsement of this approach through a local referendum has value in and of itself. It would be remiss for a neighbourhood plan prepared by the Parish Council to not address affordable housing matters on behalf of local people.</p>
15	<p><b>Policies CC8.3 and 8.4</b></p> <p>In general terms these policies are well-considered. They will contribute to the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development.</p> <p>In both cases should criterion b be supporting text rather than policy?</p> <p>In both cases how would the developer contributions referenced in criterion d be achieved?</p>	<p>We assume this should read CC8.3 and CC8.5? If so, we are happy to accept both comments below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree that criterion b) can become supporting text, not policy</li> <li>• The developer contributions referenced in criterion d) do need to be negotiated as part of the planning application process (e.g. s106 agreement)</li> </ul>



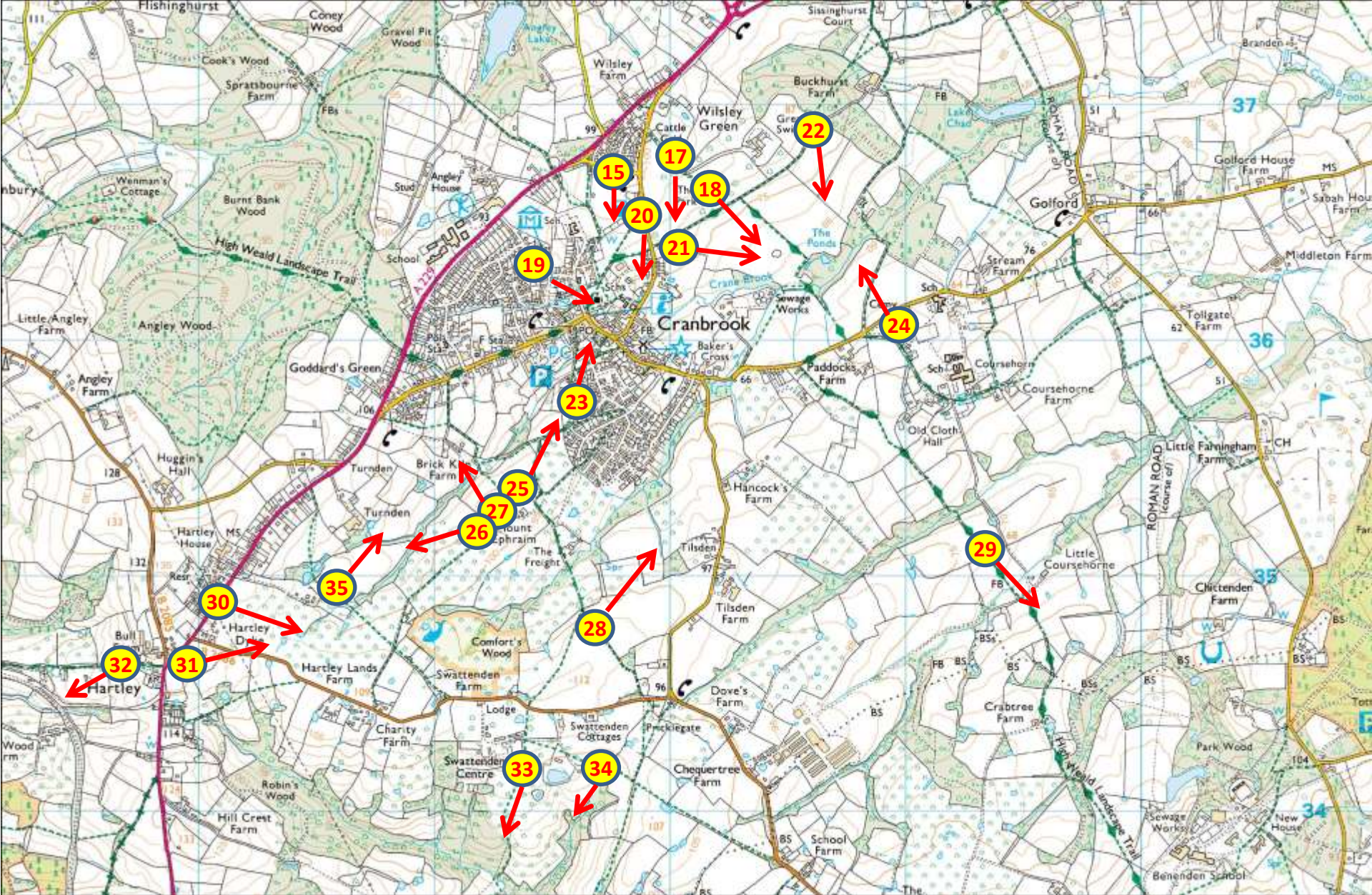
# **Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Plan views to be protected - Draft**

View No.	View Description
1	View from Folly Hill looking north towards Staplehurst and on the ridge Sutton Valence
2	View across Low Weald to Greensand Ridge, from Hartridge Manor Farm looking north
3	View across Low Weald to Greensand Ridge, from Brewers Wood looking north
4	View from Hocker Edge northwest looking towards Snow Hill Farm, end of Starvenden Lane
5	View from Starvenden Lane looking south towards Angley wood
6	Views across fields, from Hazelden Farm looking northwest
7	View across Low Weald to Greensand Ridge, from Sissinghurst Castle looking northeast
8	View from Digdog Lane southwest to Sissinghurst Castle
9	View from Sissinghurst village north to Satins Hill
10	View of open fields from Cranbrook Road, Sissinghurst south across Buckhurst Farm
11	View from Sissinghurst footpath looking south towards Golford and Benenden
12	View from Moss Field looking northeast to Sissinghurst Castle
13	View from Whitegate Farm Biddenden Road, looking northeast to Sissinghurst Castle
14	View across Crane Valley from Biddenden Road footpath looking Southeast
15	View from Big Side looking southwest to St Dunstan's Church and windmill
16	View from footpath east of Snow Hill Farm and lakes
17	View from Great Swifts Farm southwest to the windmill
18	View from Great Swifts footpath looking south towards Benenden
19	View from Oatfield Drive southeast to St Dunstan's Church
20	View of Church and Windmill from the top of Ball Field to Cranbrook town centre
21	View across Crane Valley from Sissinghurst footpath looking southeast
22	View across Crane Valley from Sissinghurst footpath looking south
23	View from St Dunstan's Walk to St Dunstan's Church
24	View from Golford Cemetery looking northwest to Great Swifts
25	View from Mount Ephraim looking northeast
26	View from Mount Ephraim looking west
27	View from Mount Ephraim looking north
28	View from Tilsden northeast to Sissinghurst and greensand ridge
29	View from High Weald Landscape Trail at Little Coursehorne looking south
30	View from the ridge on Hartley Road looking east towards Benenden school
31	View from Hartley hilltop looking northeast towards greensand ridge
32	View from Bishops Lane / Bull Farm looking west over Hall Wood Farm
33	View across wooded hill tops and Robins wood SSSI from Swattenden Centre looking South
34	View from footpath south of Swattenden Lane looking south over Cranbrook wood
35	View from footpath at Turnden Farm looking east towards Cranbrook









**Click on the number to see the view and then the return symbol to return to the map.**







1. View from Folly Hill looking north towards Staplehurst and on the ridge Sutton Valence



2. View across Low Weald to Greensand Ridge, from Hartridge Manor Farm looking north





3. View across Low Weald to Greensand Ridge, from Brewers Wood looking north



4. View from Hocker Edge northwest looking towards Snow Hill Farm, end of Starvenden Lane





5. View from Starvenden Lane looking south towards Angley wood





6. Views across fields, from Hazelden Farm looking northwest



7. View across Low Weald to Greensand Ridge, from Sissinghurst Castle looking northeast





8. View from Digdog Lane southwest to Sissinghurst Castle



9. View from Sissinghurst village north to Satins Hill





10. View of open fields from Cranbrook Road, Sissinghurst south across Buckhurst Farm





11. View from Sissinghurst footpath looking south towards Golford and Benenden



12. View from Moss Field looking northeast to Sissinghurst Castle





13. View from Whitegate Farm Biddenden Road, looking northeast to Sissinghurst Castle



14. View across Crane Valley from Biddenden Road footpath looking Southeast





15. View from Quaker Lane looking southwest to St Dunstan's Church and windmill





16. View from footpath east of Snow Hill Farm and lakes





17. View from Great Swifts Farm southwest to the windmill



18. View from Great Swifts footpath looking south towards Benenden





19. View from Oatfield Drive southeast to St Dunstan's Church



20. View of Church and Windmill from the top of Ball Field to Cranbrook town centre





21. View across Crane Valley from Sissinghurst footpath looking southeast



22. View across Crane Valley from Sissinghurst footpath looking south





23. View from St Dunstan's Walk to St Dunstan's Church



24. View from Galford Cemetery looking northwest to Great Swifts





25. View from Mount Ephraim looking northeast





26. View from Mount Ephraim looking west towards Hartley





27. View from Mount Ephraim looking north



28. View from Tilsden northeast to Sissinghurst and greensand ridge





29. View from High Weald Landscape Trail at Little Coursehorne looking south



30. View from the ridge on Hartley Road looking east towards Benenden school





31. View from Hartley hilltop looking northeast towards greensand ridge



32. View from Bishops Lane / Bull Farm looking west over Hall Wood Farm





33. View across wooded hill tops and Robins wood SSSI from Swattenden Centre looking South



34. View from footpath south of Swattenden Lane looking south over Cranbrook wood





35. View from footpath at Turnden Farm looking east towards Cranbrook



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Royal Tunbridge Wells  
Kent  
TN1 1RS

28<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Mr Hazelgrove,

**Application: 20/00815/FULL**

**Proposal: Construction of 168 new dwellings with associated access, car parking, refuse/recycling storage, landscaping, earthworks and other associated works | Land Adjacent To Turnden Hartley Road Cranbrook Kent TN17 3QX**

**Objection – Impact to ancient woods and trees**

As the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, the Woodland Trust aims to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future. We own over 1,000 sites across the UK, covering around 29,000 hectares (71,000 acres) and we have 500,000 members and supporters.

Ancient Woodland

Natural England<sup>1</sup> and the Forestry Commission define ancient woodland “*as an irreplaceable habitat [which] is important for its: wildlife (which include rare and threatened species); soils; recreational value; cultural, historical and landscape value [which] has been wooded continuously since at least 1600AD.*”

It includes: “*Ancient semi-natural woodland [ASNW] mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural regeneration*

*Plantations on ancient woodland sites – [PAWS] replanted with conifer or broadleaved trees that retain ancient woodland features, such as undisturbed soil, ground flora and fungi”*

The Woodland Trust **objects** to planning application 20/00815/FULL on the basis of potential detrimental impact to an area of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (grid ref: TQ7699135258), designated on Natural England’s Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI).

Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 175 states: “*When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

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[woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk)



*c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>58</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists;*

Footnote 58, defines exceptional reasons as follows: *“For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat.”*

The council should also have regard for **Core Policy 4 (Environment)** of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework (2010) in relation to ancient woodland.

### **Impacts to Ancient Woodland**

When land use is intensified such as in this situation, plant and animal populations are exposed to environmental impacts from the outside of a woodland. In particular, the habitats become more vulnerable to the outside influences, or edge effects, that result from the adjacent land's change of use. These can impact cumulatively on ancient woodland - this is much more damaging than individual effects.

Natural England has identified the impacts of development on ancient woodland or veteran trees within their Standing Advice. This guidance should be considered as Natural England's position with regards to development impacting ancient woods and trees. The Standing Advice states: *“Nearby development can also have an indirect impact on ancient woodland or veteran trees and the species they support. These can include:*

- *breaking up or destroying connections between woodlands and veteran trees*
- *reducing the amount of semi-natural habitats next to ancient woodland and other habitats*
- *increasing the amount of pollution, including dust*
- *increasing disturbance to wildlife from additional traffic and visitors*
- *increasing light pollution*
- *increasing damaging activities like fly-tipping and the impact of domestic pets*
- *changing the landscape character of the area”*

Related to this application the Woodland Trust's concerns also include:

- Development can provide a source of non-native and/or invasive plant species and aids their colonisation of the woodland;
- Where the wood edge overhangs public areas, branches and even whole trees can be indiscriminately lopped/felled, causing reduction of the woodland canopy.
- There can be changes to the hydrological conditions of the ancient woodland. In turn this can lead to changes in soil conditions, thereby affecting the wood's assemblage of flora and fauna.

### **Mitigation**

Natural England's Standing Advice states: *“Mitigation measures will depend on the development but could include:*

- *improving the condition of the woodland*
- *putting up screening barriers to protect woodland or ancient and veteran trees from dust and pollution*
- *noise or light reduction measures*

- *protecting ancient and veteran trees by designing open space around them*
- *identifying and protecting trees that could become ancient and veteran trees in the future*
- *rerouting footpaths*
- *removing invasive species*
- ***buffer zones***

Additional mitigation approaches are also outlined in the Woodland Trust's Planners' Manual<sup>2</sup>, which would help ensure that the development meets policy requirement and guidance, including:

- Non-invasive root investigation for ancient trees and protection beyond the limit of the usual investigative tools.
- Measures to control noise, dust and other forms of water and airborne pollution
- Sympathetic design and use of appropriate lighting to avoid light pollution.
- Producing and funding an access management plan for the woodland, and/or providing alternative natural greenspace to reduce additional visitor pressure.
- Implementation of an appropriate monitoring plan to ensure that proposed measures are effective over the long term and accompanied by contingencies should any conservation objectives not be met.

### Buffering

For large developments, the Woodland Trust advocates **a buffer of 50m** as a precautionary principle, unless the developer can clearly demonstrate a smaller buffer will suffice. The buffer should be planted before construction commences on site, and a fence should also be put in place to ensure that the buffer area does not suffer from encroachment of construction vehicles/stockpiles etc.

This is backed up by Natural England's Standing Advice which states that *"you should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres to avoid root damage. Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, you're likely to need a larger buffer zone. For example, the effect of air pollution from development that results in a significant increase in traffic."* By using the 15m minimum in the Standing Advice, the applicant does not appear to have tailored the proposed buffer specifically for the proposed operations at this site.

### Veteran Trees

The Trust also notes from the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment that there is a veteran tree (T57) located within the site boundary, which has been afforded a Root Protection Area (RPA) that is capped at 15m. However, Natural England's Standing Advice states that *"a buffer zone around an ancient or veteran tree should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5m from the edge of the tree's canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter."* The Trust requests that the applicant's adhere to the Standing Advice, and provide the tree with an un-encroached RPA to ensure T57's long term protection.

### Conclusion

The Woodland Trust **objects** to this planning application unless the applicant is able to provide both the ancient woodland and the veteran oak tree (T57) on site with an appropriate buffer zone as outlined above.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/3731/planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland.pdf>



*If you would like clarification of any of the points raised please contact us via*  
[campaigning@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:campaigning@woodlandtrust.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Hillier  
Campaigner – Woods under Threat