

Statement from Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council for the Hearing on 26 May 2022 into the draft
Local Plan

Matter 3, Issue 1, Spatial Strategy,

Q2 The Settlement Role and Function Study Update⁴ scores settlements and groups them together between A and G. Is the methodology used robust and are the outcomes accurate?

The outcome is not accurate. The update (dated February 2021 but consultations with Parish Councils were 30 June -22 July 2020) shows Brenchley village as having

- a convenience store (score 3) which is defined as a larger shop that sells a range of everyday essentials
- a convenience shop (score 1) which is defined as a retail service that also provides for everyday needs but is smaller or more specialised, such as a greengrocer, butcher, bakers, and hairdressers
- a comparison/specialist shop (score 1).

Brenchley has neither a convenience store nor a comparison/specialist shop. In July 2020 it had just two convenience shops, the post office and the butcher (1 – 2 convenience shops score 1 under the updated method). The convenience store referred to might perhaps in the past have been Bourne Stores, but that closed in 2003. Moreover, the butcher's shop has recently closed, leaving Brenchley with just one small shop, the post office (35ft² or 32.5m²), which sells a small number of essentials such as milk along with newspapers, stationery and confectionery.

Therefore the score for Brenchley should be 31, not 35, which should put the village in Group E with Lamberhurst and Speldhurst, which score 33, instead of Group D with Goudhurst, Benenden and Horsmonden. This is important as the grouping is used to assess the sustainability of the settlement and hence its suitability for further development.