



LAMBERHURST PARISH

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018-2033

TRANSPORT, BUSINESS and LOCAL ECONOMY WORKSHOPS - 8 and 27 NOVEMBER 2018

1. Introduction

Two workshops were held to consider issues affecting transport, business and the local economy in Lamberhurst and how these should be addressed in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). These workshops followed on from the “Visioning Workshop” held on September 27 2018.

The first workshop was open to all with an interest in transport, business and the local economy. It was held at the Elephant’s Head PH in Hook Green, Lamberhurst, on Thursday November 8 2018 from 8.00 to 9.30 p.m. 29 people attended.

The second workshop was arranged specially for local business people who had responded to the Lamberhurst Business Survey earlier in the year. It was held at The Chequers PH in Lamberhurst on Tuesday 27 November 2018 from 6.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. 14 persons attended.

2. Workshop on 8 November at The Elephant’s Head, Hook Green, Lamberhurst



(a) **Graham White** opened the meeting by describing progress so far on the Lamberhurst NDP, including the recent “Visioning Workshop” which had identified a couple of possible visions for the future of the parish which had scored highest with people attending there, which

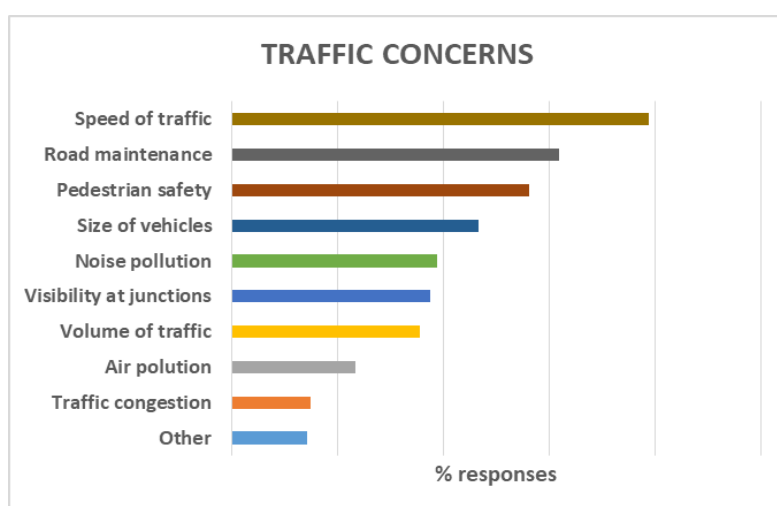
now needed to be aired in the local community and then integrated into a single vision for inclusion in the draft NDP. These are:

Vision A	Vision B
In 2033 (15 years) Lamberhurst will be quintessentially rural and environmentally sympathetic with a diverse community which is well served by pubs, shops, GP etc cultural destination, it will have appropriate housing stock, excellent communication links (e.g. broadband/mobile) and more public transport, traffic management and parking.	In 2033 (15 years) Lamberhurst will be a strong, welcoming, vibrant community with places to live, work and meet, which is both attractive to both residents and visitors of all ages and supported by good local facilities and transport links. We want it to be safe, clean and green and the best place to live in the Kentish Weald.

The meeting was then reminded of the Transport, Business and Local Economy Objectives emerging from the Visioning Workshop which will be further refined as the plan develops to ensure they help to achieve the vision and continue to meet the outputs from the workshops:

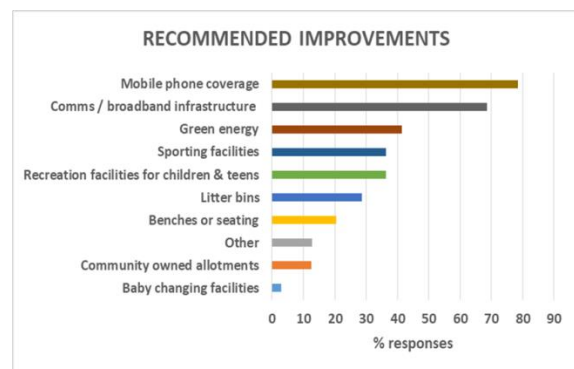
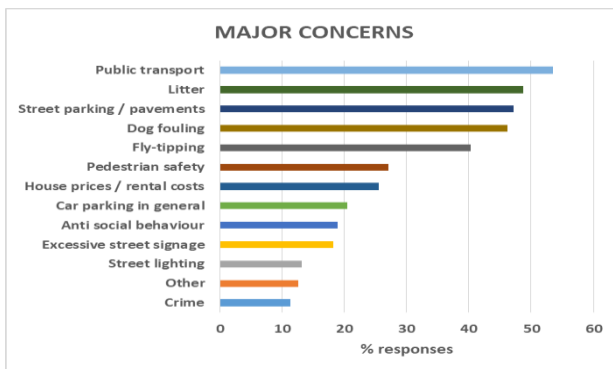
Traffic objectives	Economy objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average speed camera • Abolish traffic calming and speed monitor cameras • Limited time parking bays • Road narrowing at village entrances • Flashing speed signs – if speeding • Traffic lights triggered by speeding cars • Re-site some traffic calming build outs • Remove other build-outs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in improving communication • Affordable housing for local workers • Make space for businesses and easier planning for them • Historic village sign to boost visitors • Advertise local walks / buildings of interest • Lamberhurst pamphlet (is better than Goudhurst)

Graham then picked out some key information from the parish questionnaire



- 43% strongly agree/agree traffic is a problem, equal number strongly disagree/disagree
- Key concerns: speeding, maintenance, safety, size of vehicles

- Roads causing most concern:
 - A21
 - Spray Hill
 - School Hill
 - Town Hill
 - Broadway
 - Furnace Lane
 - Down
 - Brewer St./Hopgarden Close



(b) **David Ward** outlined the work of the Transport Working Group. There was a lot of public concern about speeding and parking on pavements. His presentation suggested three broad approaches in the NDP as a basis for discussion at the meeting, as follows:

1. A Walking community - connecting the various parts of the Lamberhurst community present and future, encouraging walking to the key focus points of the school, surgery, Memorial Hall and local shop. Better pedestrian links to Scotney.

2. A well designed highway network that is safe, encourages low vehicle speeds, visually attractive and accommodates vehicle parking in a controlled manner

3. A sustainable transport community - supporting walking, cycling, seeking to use public transport and new sustainable methods of transport such as car sharing and electric cars.

These ideas were then thrown open to the meeting and the following points came up in a lively group discussion:

A walking community

- Many Lamberhurst residents cannot walk as a normal means of getting around , because of age , infirmity, carrying shopping or children, time pressures (especially for working parents of school children) , or a simple disinclination to do so
- Need better connected and safer paths to promote walking : there are gaps in walking routes or walkers often have to navigate unpleasant traffic conditions
- Need to avoid “suburban” development distant from the village centre and make sure new development has good walking links
- There are particularly difficult conditions near “The Brown Trout” PH and in getting from the village centre to Scotney Castle

- Better signing of walking routes required
- Tourism related businesses would benefit from a better link from the village to Bewl Water
- Places where the rural rights of way network meet busy traffic routes are often unsafe and discourage walking
- More information on local walking routes both for existing residents , and for people moving into the parish

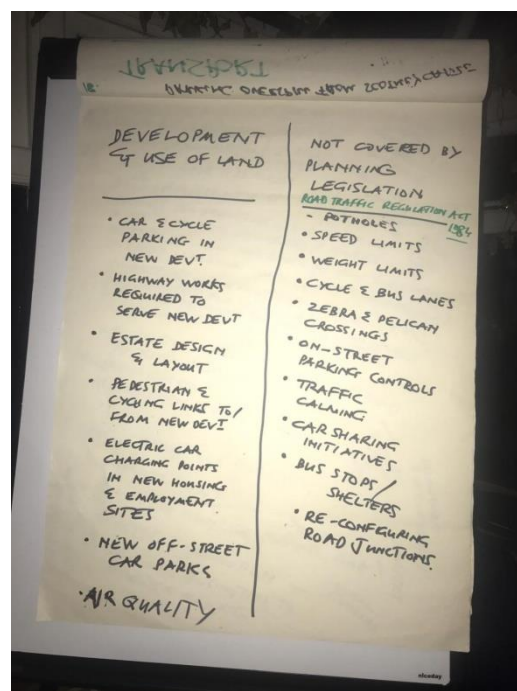
Well-designed highways

- The ambience (look and feel) of too many streets and lanes in Lamberhurst is dictated by the speed of moving vehicles and the preponderance of parked vehicles
- Visitors add to parking pressures in some places
- Car parking on narrow streets and lanes also performs a traffic calming role
- New development needs to provide adequate parking : current maximum parking standards used by KCC/TWBC tend to underprovide and add to on-street parking pressures
- Consideration should be given to new off-street parking provision to ease the traffic congestion / parking pressure on-street.

Sustainable transport

- Need increased bus frequency to Tunbridge Wells generally
- Need more evening services (particularly important for younger residents) and services to Pembury Hospital (especially for older residents)
- Does community transport have a role , particularly if subsidised “traditional “ buses are not possible
- Car share initiatives
- E-bikes and safe parking for them
- Charging points for electric cars in new development
- Partnerships with transport providers

(c) **Lindsay Frost** (planning consultant assisting NDP work) said that in working up the Lamberhurst NDP, it was important to understand those transport matters which were related to the development and use of land , and so could be delivered by planning policy in the NDP , and other matters which were related to management of the existing highway network and would need to be pursued through other legislation (such as the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984) as community projects in the NDP. This was illustrated on a flip chart sheet, as shown below:



(d) David Hurst-Brown made a presentation on the work of the Business and Local Economy Working Group, which had been based on a survey of local businesses. David stressed that there was a misapprehension that Lamberhurst was a dormitory parish with people travelling out each day for work: in fact the parish has a surprisingly broad range of businesses across many different sectors of the economy. He summarised the position as follows;

There are two sorts of Business Activity in Lamberhurst:

1. Home Working.

- 32% of survey respondents, over 100 individuals, who are in work do so regularly from home.
- A mix of home working for employers in London etc and a much smaller number of `own businesses`

2. Businesses and Other Employers.

- Over 90 business organisations identified in the parish
- 56 Surveys completed by local businesses (62% response rate)
- Wide range of activities
- 26 (out of 56) located on 9 separate `farmsteads` outside village. (These farmsteads are at Swan Farm, Little Coldharbour Farm, Pelverers Farm, Forstal Farm, Ridge Farm, Furnace Farm, Little Bewl Farm, Table Top Farm and Dundale Farm)
- Only 12 out of 56 located in village curtilage
- 364 employed by 56 respondents plus 100+ seasonal workers
- Estimate total full time employment 400+

David suggested that discussions at the meeting should focus on the following issues:

1. Desirability of local employment ?

- Environmental benefits
- Economic benefits to Community

2. What are implications for housing development?

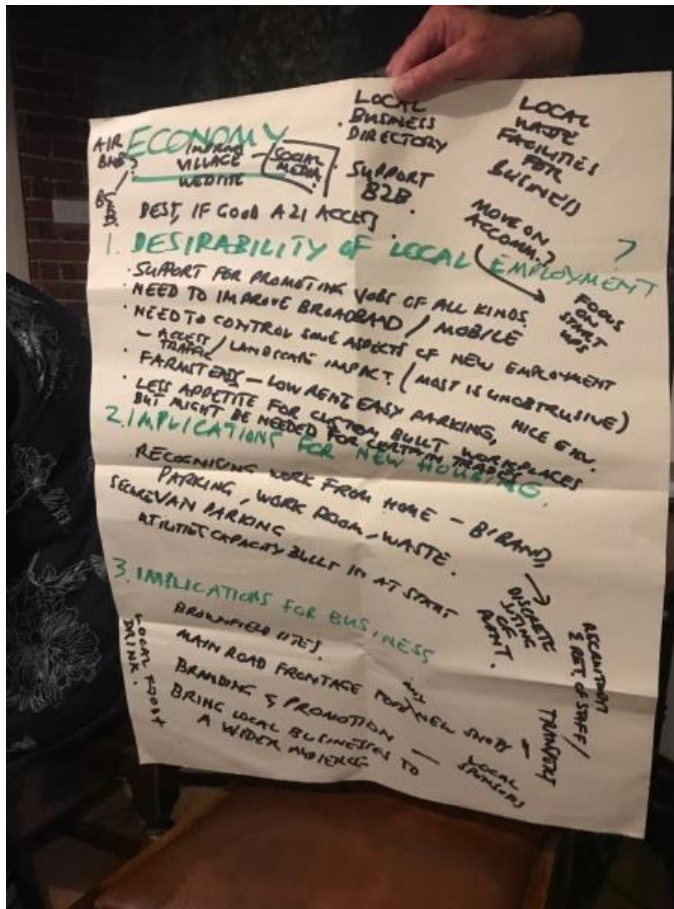
- Wifi and mobile comms
- Shared office space?
- Parking

3. What are implications for Businesses and other Employers?

- Development of Farmsteads for business, not housing?
- Use of any brownfield sites for business

4. The need for a Local Business Directory

Views of the meeting on these issues were captured on flip chart as pictured below and are set out in more readable form in the box below:



The desirability of local employment

- There was general support for promoting the local economy in Lamberhurst , and jobs of all kinds
- Whilst most employment development is unobtrusive, there is a need to consider the access , traffic and landscape impact of new employment development
- Local employment is hampered by poor smartphone and broadband connections in some parts of the parish
- Conversion of vacant farm buildings to employment uses was generally supported as it provides new uses for these buildings, affordable business rents and easy parking. “Brownfield” sites, and sites with good access to the A21, were preferred.
- There was less appetite for construction of new, custom-built, workplaces, but it was accepted that these might be needed for some businesses
- There is a need for “move on “ accommodation , without which successful , growing firms will need to move out of the parish to places such as Tunbridge wells, Tonbridge and Paddock Wood

Implications for housing development

- Recognition that “working from home” is an important and growing part of the local economy, both for small businesses and for employees normally working elsewhere who

work at home on occasions and can cut down on 5 day per week commuting (NDP surveys show that about one third of office workers do some “work from home”)

- Whilst much of this activity can be happily carried on in existing residential properties , there may be planning issues arising from:
 - adaptable residential layouts and service capacity
 - the need for addition of a “work room”
 - parking of work vehicles , especially vans
 - broadband connections
 - handling business waste

Implications for businesses and other employers

- Recruitment and retention of staff is difficult for many local businesses in rural locations , particularly where public transport is poor

The need for a Local Business Directory

- Support for a local business directory, either online or hard copy , which will help bring local businesses to a wider audience and assist “business to business” links
- Need to improve business element of the village website and use of social media
- Scope for better promotion of locally produced food and drink and link this to pubs and restaurants and local tourism
- Branding and promotion of local tourism

Graham White closed the meeting by thanking all present for their contributions and outlining arrangements for the final workshop on “landscape and community” on November 15

3. Meeting on November 27 for local businesses at The Chequers, Lamberhurst

The meeting was chaired by **David Hurst-Brown**, who set out its purposes as follows:

- to explain the relevance of the NDP to the Lamberhurst business community
- to hear the views of the business community on matters affecting them , so as to assist in drafting policies for inclusion in the NDP

David introduced Councillor Edmund Hastie, representing Lamberhurst & Goudhurst on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Lindsay Frost (planning consultant assisting work on the NDP) made a short presentation explaining the role of the NDP; the area it will cover ; the benefits of preparing a NDP; and what it can do for business, in particular:

- make sure that the economic life of the parish , and the needs of business, are taken into account in planning decisions (particularly as the economy is changing rapidly)
- set planning policies for new and expanded business accommodation , or conversion of existing buildings to business accommodation
- relating development to local skills

- identify the local infrastructure improvements needed by local business
- promote tourism and local food and products

He went on to describe the current progress on preparation of the NDP, with the next stage being drafting the NDP documents and then seeking local views on the draft document.

David Hurst-Brown summarised the findings of the business survey and the key issues arising from it, particularly planning for more business development in farmsteads and on brownfield sites, serious issues around infrastructure, and support for a business directory. (see details above at Hook Green meeting)

He suggested that these might be useful points for discussion in inviting comments from the meeting. The following points arose in discussion:

Comments from local businesses

- Useful to know what business support services are available from TWBC (Cllr Hastie will take this up with TWBC officers)
- Strong support for more business development on farmsteads and brownfield sites, but better if in sustainable locations
- Communications and broadband capacity are big issues for local business: broadband speeds are better in the village centre than in the surrounding countryside.
- Phone links need line of sight (difficult in rolling countryside): would satellite wi-fi be possible? Opportunities to lobby BT Open Reach and KCC to get better links? (Goudhurst have an online petition)
- Poor transport links make it more difficult to recruit and retain staff. Most firms would like to recruit locally, if possible
- Local pubs are attracting more people from outside , particularly for walking trips
- There are some big visitor attractions in the area (Scotney Castle 170,000/ Bewl Bridge reservoir 200,000/ Bedgebury 250,000) : could more be done to bring benefits to local businesses?
- General support for a Local Business Directory, but needs to be kept up-to-date and needs “champions” in each business location , as there is a significant turnover of businesses. The Directory must add value to local businesses.

David Hurst-Brown closed the meeting by thanking all present for their contributions and outlining arrangements for the next stage of NDP work.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The two meetings confirmed the broad direction of the community questionnaire survey carried out in the summer 2018 and the work of the two NDP working groups covering transport and the local economy on the following matters:

TRANSPORT

- Whilst , perhaps inevitably , many trips will continue to be made by car, there is support for measures to make the village as “walkable” as possible by linking any new developments to the village centre by safe, attractive walking routes and by improving pedestrian facilities in locations such as around the Brown Trout PH and Scotney Castle
- Parking provision needs to be increased in new development to avoid putting additional pressures on available on-street spaces and more congestion. There is support for more off-street car parks
- More could be done to maintain and improve the rights of way network (public footpaths and bridleways etc.) and the contribution they make to local tourism and related businesses.
- Management of the existing highway network is a big issue with concerns over matters such as potholes, speeding, on-street parking , congestion and junction design. These cannot be the subject of planning policies, but the NDP could lobby for improvements.
- Public transport is also a big concern , both on timing and frequency of buses , and on links to key facilities such as Pembury Hospital

BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMY

- There is support for measures to promote the local economy, as more local jobs will make Lamberhurst a more balanced and sustainable community
- A number of employment hubs have grown up in converted buildings on farmsteads. There is support for this to continue here and on any brownfield sites that become available, subject to the usual planning safeguards (However , the government is making it easier to convert these buildings to residential use without planning permission , which may frustrate some new employment proposals in future)
- Mobile phone and broadband capacity are big problems for local business, particularly outside the village centre. The NDP could be a vehicle to lobby BT Open reach and KCC for improvements.
- Support for a Local Business Directory to promote awareness of local products and services , and “business to business” (B2B) contacts

Lindsay Frost / 19 December 2018