

Sevenoaks Weald Village Design Statement



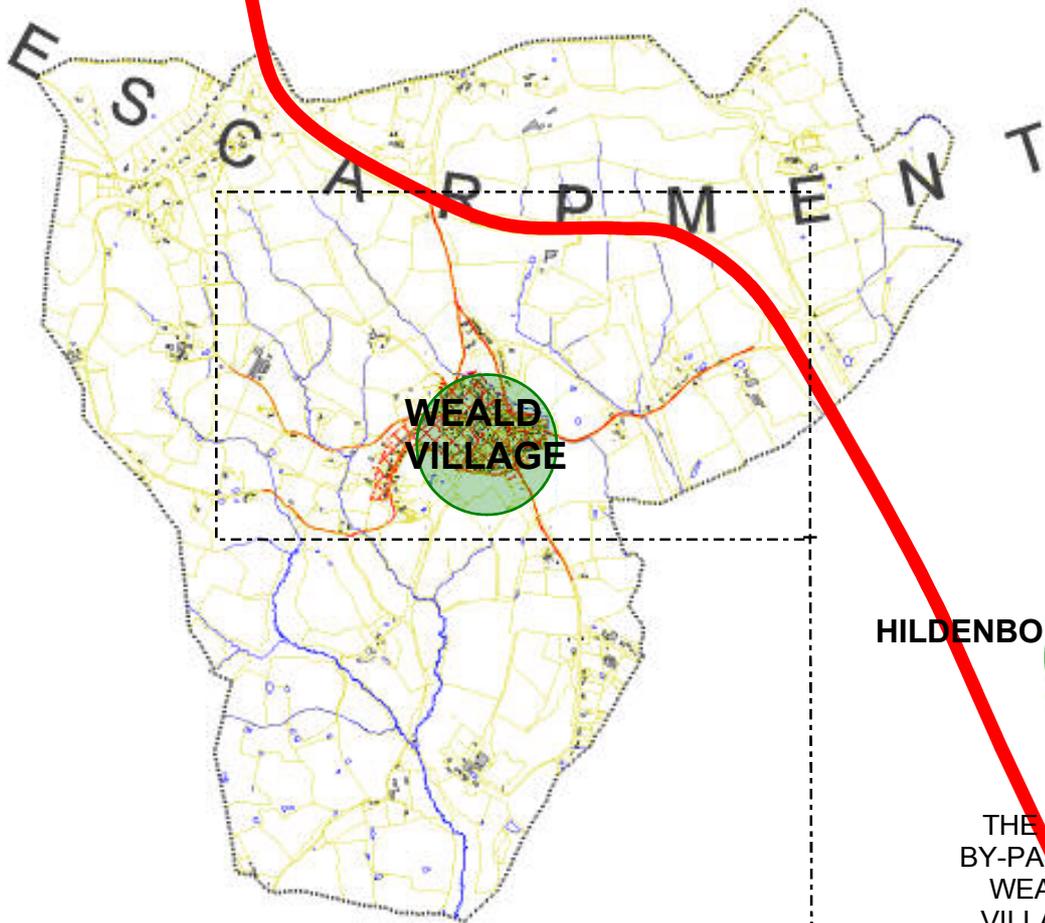
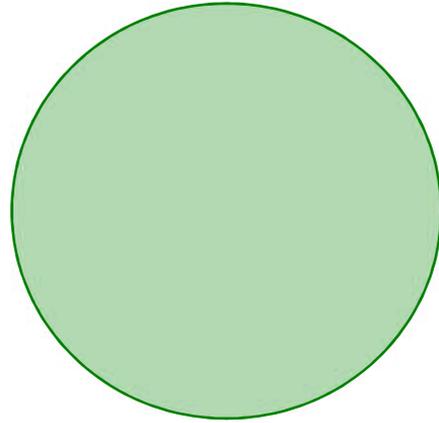
Weald is great!

Ellen Thomas.

The Parish of Weald

THE PARISH OF WEALD
IS SET IN
'AN AREA
OF OUTSTANDING
NATURAL BEAUTY'

SEVENOAKS



HILDENBOROUGH



THE A21
BY-PASSES
WEALD
VILLAGE

NORTH



Weald from the air



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Introduction



Why have a Village Design Statement?

The Town Planning process is undergoing the greatest change since its introduction over 50 years ago. The Government said in July 2002, "For too long, people have been alienated by a planning system which has acted in the community's name but without its support. Our proposals will open up the planning system and increase participation right from the start of the process. People must engage with plans for development in their area." **The Village Design Statement is part of this process and enables the community to have some input into local planning matters.**



What is a Village Design Statement?

A Village Design Statement has to be broadly in accordance with the advice and objectives of the Countryside Agency and an effective Village Design Statement:

- is developed, researched, written and edited by local people;
- is representative of the views of the village as a whole;
- has involved a wide section of the village community in its production;
- describes the visual character of the village;
- demonstrates how local character and distinctiveness can be protected and enhanced in new development;
- draws up design principles which are compatible with the statutory planning system and the local planning context and are suitable for approval as supplementary planning guidance;
- is applicable to all forms and scale of development;
- is about managing change, not preventing it.

How the Village Design Statement was produced

The village design statement covers the whole of the parish. In compiling this Statement all of the village were invited to give their views and all opinions were taken into account. These views and opinions were gathered through questionnaires, meetings, presentations and discussions. The statements and conclusions set out here represent the views of the majority of the community.

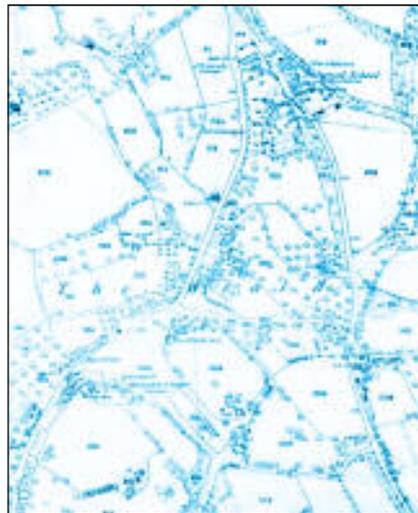
The consultation with the residents of the village took place during 2002/3.



History of the village



The oldest part of this building is from the 15th Century.



Map of village from 1889.



Parish Church.

Weald village and its surrounding parish lies on the southern side of the Greensand Ridge on the edge of Kent/Sussex Weald. The village is built on a knoll formed by the flow of two streams.

Occupation by man and the start of agricultural practices resulted in substantial tree clearance, leaving small areas of copse, a system of hedges, and some trees. The field pattern has remained unchanged for over 500 years.

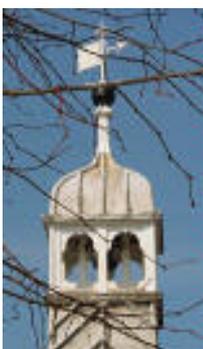
The clay soil made travel very difficult in winter, and only the important routes between London and the coast were maintained. Weald did not have an ancient route passing through it to be developed into a major road and this is one of the reasons why the village has managed to preserve its rural character.

The earliest buildings in the village are over 600 years old.

The village developed slowly and randomly until the end of the First World War. Since then large areas of land have changed hands as well as farms and smallholdings. Small housing estates were built on some of this land. Ribbon development and infilling took place. The village primary school which opened in Victorian times is a focal point in the village.

The parish church started its life as a chapel in 1822 and since 1896 has remained substantially the same. The railway and the Sevenoaks tunnel were completed by 1868 but no station was built to serve the village. Shops, garages and public houses developed and, although fewer now, they are still an integral part of village life.

After the Second World War the housing in the village was increased substantially and by the late 1970's the 'Village Envelope' was defined. The purpose of this was to stop the spread of buildings on Green Belt land.



Catholic Church



The Village Today



The parish is within the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) and entirely within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which is equivalent to a National Park in terms of landscape quality. It is also defined as a Special Landscape Area (SLA). Within the parish there is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. (SNCI)

The parish is mainly mixed farmland with the village of Weald placed within it. Field sizes still remain relatively small although a number of hedges have been removed in the past to enlarge them. This has often left isolated trees marking the original hedge line. Farms have become larger and many farmhouses, once each the centre of a small farm, are now private houses unconnected with the surrounding farmland. Farm buildings in many instances have been converted for private dwellings or commercial use.

Since the end of the Second World War the spaces between houses have gradually been filled in. Orchards and farmland within the village envelope were developed in the 50's and 60's to form mainly cul-de-sac developments of 20 or so houses. Infilling continued regularly and most of the available land has been developed.



The Village of Weald: Amenities



1
Pub



2
Post Office



3
Garage



4
Butcher



5
Church



6
Tennis Courts



7
School



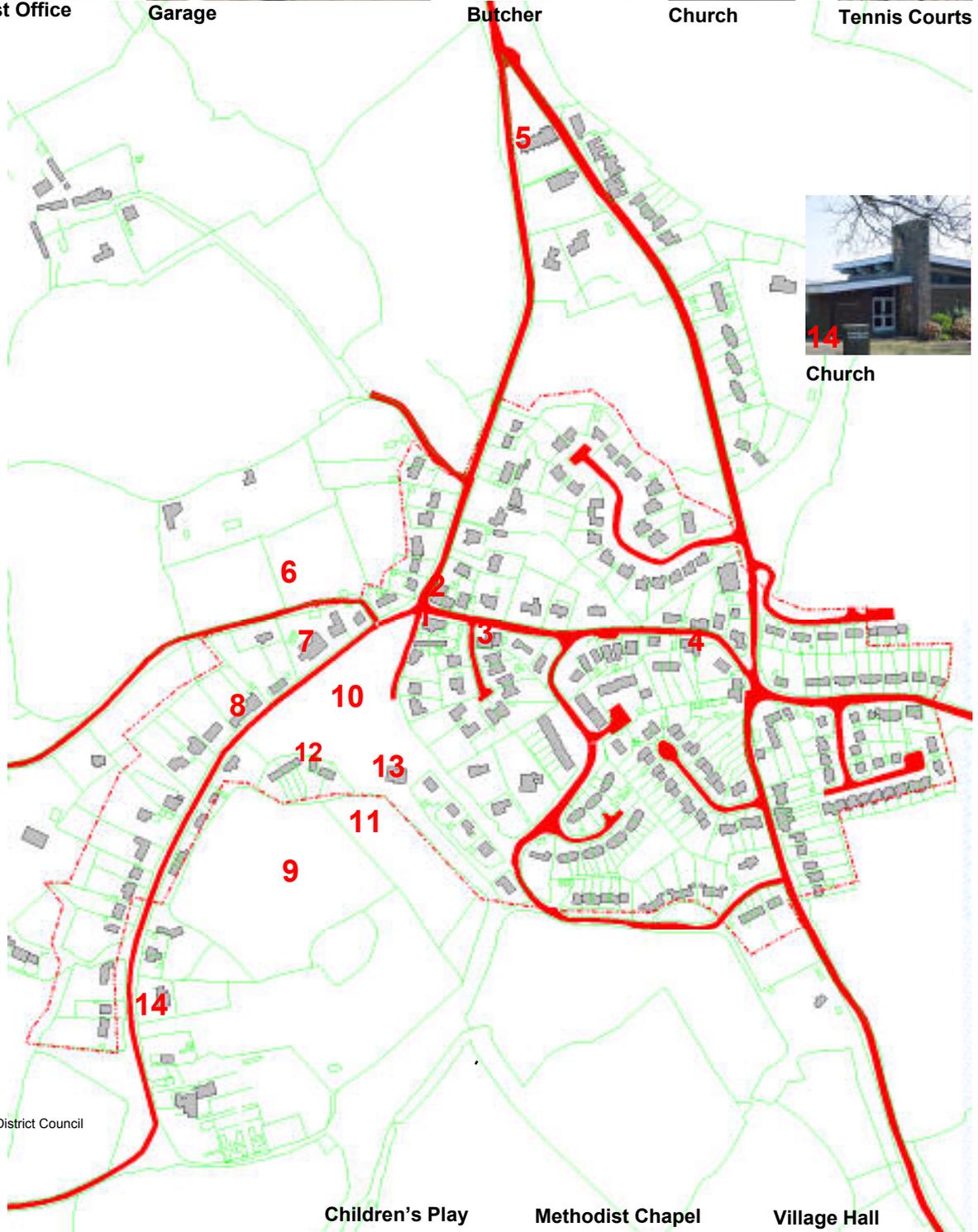
14
Church



8
Shop



9
Allotments



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Village Green



Children's Play



Methodist Chapel



Village Hall



Residents' Views



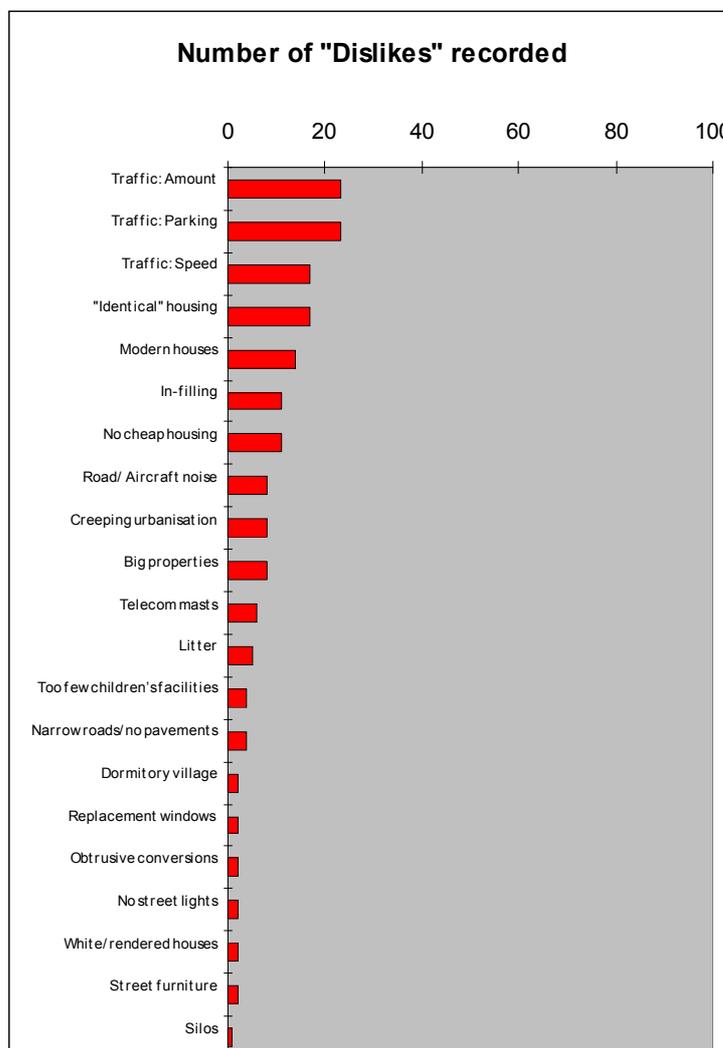
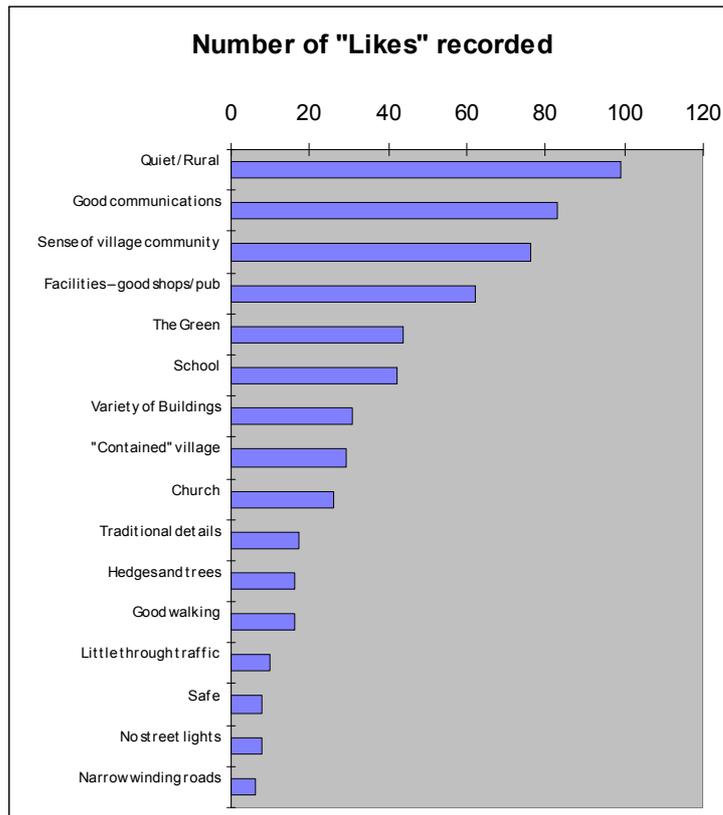
A questionnaire was made and distributed at various functions held in the village. Functions included Jubilee Day picnic party (the Village Design Statement launch day), the PTA fete, and End of Jubilee Year show. Questionnaires were also distributed to individuals whenever the opportunity occurred.

The questionnaire was designed to find the "Likes" and "Dislikes" residents might have of the village and attempted not to lead the recipients too much by asking specific questions. The questionnaire asked:

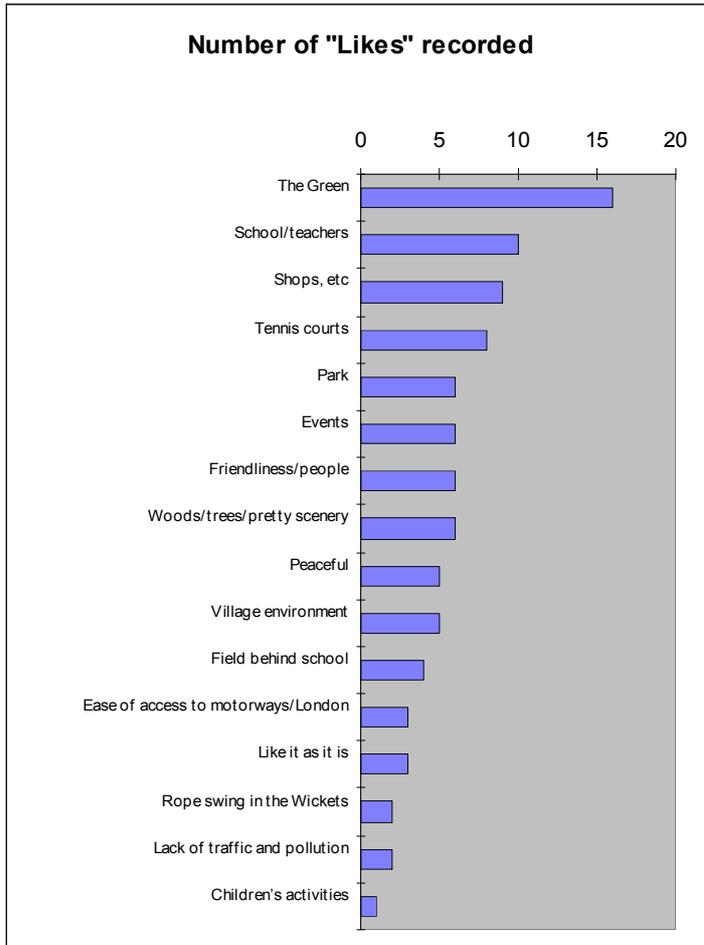
What is it about the village that made you decide to live here? For example, it is a quiet and pretty village; it is close to Sevenoaks yet is clearly in the country; it has good access to motorway and rail systems.

What aspects of the village and its surroundings do you like and what do you dislike?

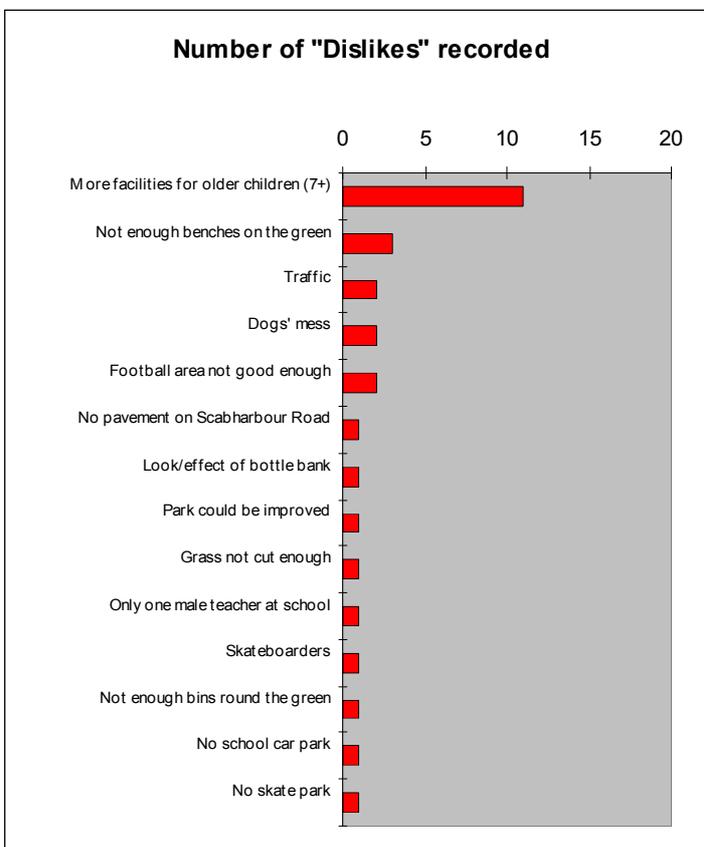
What are the things that particularly represent the character of the village? What aspects of design are there that should be preserved, or examples of development that should not be repeated?



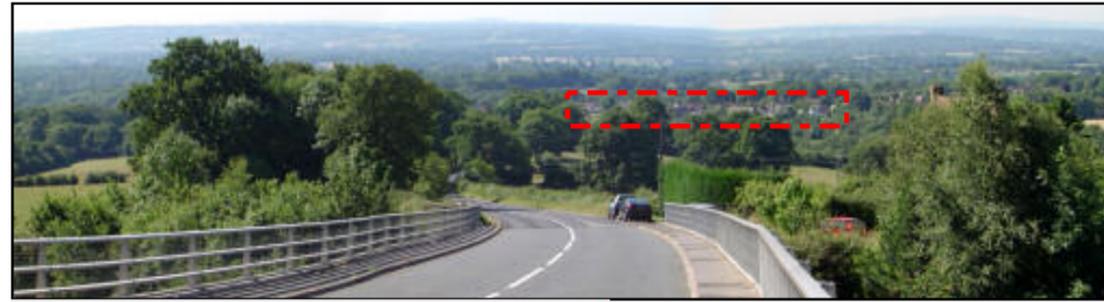
Children's Views



The schoolchildren were also asked to write their "Likes" and "Dislikes" of the village. Thirty-eight children aged 7 to 11 responded with a total of 91 likes and 29 dislikes.

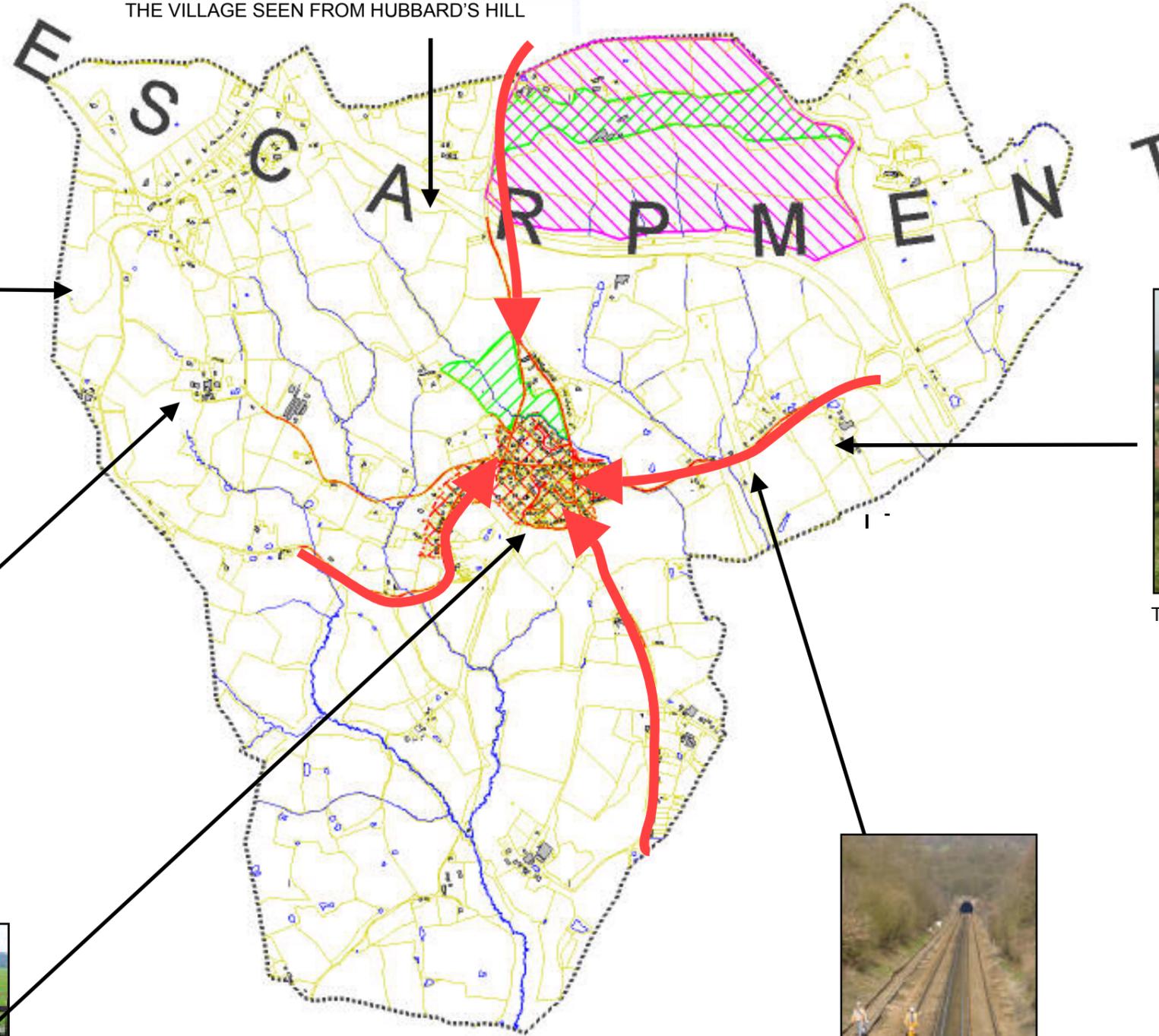


The Village Context



THE VILLAGE SEEN FROM HUBBARD'S HILL

DESIGNATION	Hatch colour
SSSI	= Mauve
SNCI	= Green
THE VILLAGE ENVELOPE	= Red
'WAYS IN' TO VILLAGE	= 



THE TOPOGRAPHY HIDES THE VILLAGE FROM THE WEST



THE VILLAGE SEEN FROM MORLEY'S FARM



PICTURESQUE FARMS CLOSE TO THE VILLAGE



FOOTPATHS



THE RAILWAY SKIRTS THE VILLAGE

The Village Environment



Weald village is set in gentle, hilly, attractive countryside which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Landscape Area. There are beautiful views both from within the village and from many points round it. Preservation of the surrounding countryside and its status is of paramount importance and great care must be taken in any changes made.

The feature of trees dotted about fields, small copses randomly placed around the village and hedged fields are well-liked and adds to the overall beauty of the area. Walking in the area is enjoyed not only by the residents but by numerous visitors. There are many excellent foot paths and bridle ways in the parish.

The village is a properly functioning one. It has evolved in an unstructured way as a place for ordinary people to live. There is no "High Street" as village shops and other facilities are dotted around the village. This lack of structure or formality in the layout is well-liked and should be preserved. Modern housing developments have deviated from this unstructured arrangement and detract from the character of the village.

- The status of AONB, SLA, Green Belt, and the present village envelope must be preserved as must the SSSI and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.

- The countryside, featuring hedges, dotted trees and copses, should be preserved.
- Consideration should be given to preserving individual trees, belts of trees and hedges which are particularly important to the village setting.

- Any addition to the building stock in the village must recognise the informality of layout of the village.



The Green and its surrounding buildings, trees and views epitomise the character of the village. Wherever one looks in and around the village the view may be described as very pleasant. It is not necessarily spectacular but quintessentially English and residents do not want it changed. Similarly, views of the village from vantage points around show the village, in general, to be well shielded by trees and unobtrusive.

Views towards the ridge are important but are in danger of being spoiled by inappropriate building on the ridge.

The village is not a suburb of Sevenoaks as it is surrounded by countryside. It is self contained and entirely distinct from any other settlement. This is well-liked.

The village boundary may be reviewed during preparation of the new Local Development Framework.

- The character of the Green must be preserved.
- Development in the village should take into account the effect it might have on views from the ridge and steps taken to lessen any visual impact.

- Any development on the ridge must be unobtrusive as views from the village, especially towards the ridge may be destroyed by additional or changed buildings on it.

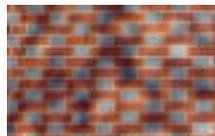
- Any ribbon development along roads outside the village envelope must be resisted to preserve the self contained effect.
- The village envelope is to be preserved as it is.

The Village Buildings



Houses

There is a wide range of housing in the village and residents span all ages. This helps the village exist as an entity. It is a very attractive village to live in and being in the Southeast, these factors cause house prices to be above average. As time passes this will count against people with young families, first or second-time buyers and those looking for cheaper rented accommodation. As time passes this will change the mix of people and alter the character and indeed the viability of the village.



Details

Houses in the village are an eclectic mix ranging from fifteenth century houses, Victorian cottages, 60's culs-de-sac and modern constructions.

There is no single style of house to represent the village, however, there are features which are traditional in the Kent style. These include the use of mellow red bricks, use of blue brick-ends to make patterns in the walls; weatherboarding and wood cladding; tile-hung walls, gables, and small-paned windows.

- The mix of housing in the village must be preserved.



- Design of new buildings and alterations should recognise the local characteristics for buildings.



Most buildings, ancient and modern, are buildings of their time. Changes to existing buildings should maintain the original character. New buildings need to fit into the existing village environment and not detract from or overwhelm surrounding buildings.

Some residents consider that houses such as the 60's developments did not take heed of the village structure at the time and changed the existing village character.

The village was originally stocked with smaller houses and cottages and careful consideration should be given to the size of house that might be permitted. Developments have tended to increase the average size of houses either by extensions or by building large properties which are out of character. Smaller houses are attractive but many of these have been extended or rebuilt. Therefore, in order to maintain balance of property in the village it is felt that developments of smaller housing units would be preferred.

Developments must be good, modern design but sympathetic to the village environment. Larger buildings are not natural to the village and may change its character.

- Developments should not detract from or overwhelm existing buildings. The rural and random characteristic must be preserved.

- Alterations to existing buildings must preserve their original character.

- The village should continue to offer a wide range of buildings from small to large and from old to new.

The Village Community



Many residents comment on the considerable community spirit within the village and there are many well-supported village organisations both social and sporting. This community spirit is encouraged by residents' living in a pleasant environment with a number of amenities including allotments and tennis courts which are conducive to engendering personal contact. There are a number of riding stables situated in the parish. Adding to this there is a good social mix with no overt village hierarchy.

Residents with young children remark upon the suitability of the village for bringing up children and they generally consider it safe. The school is held in high regard and is an essential part of the community.

While it is accepted that the viability of any shop, pub, garage and similar in the village is the responsibility of the owner these places form an integral part of the fabric of the community. Contact between villagers is made at these places, all adding to the sense of community. Loss of any such enterprise would undermine the conditions for maintaining a community spirit. Any development or change should take into account the effect on present businesses.

The churches are active and many events and activities are organised by them.



- The conditions and environment for shops, pub, Post Office, garage, school and similar should be such that they can remain serving the community.

Village Urbanisation



Many people of the village came to escape from the urban environment. Others who were either born here or have been here a long time feel that it has changed too much and the rural character is being eroded. Once urbanisation of any village occurs it is very difficult to reverse. Residents did not come here to be in an urban environment.

The village retains a traditional rural atmosphere. There is not an overwhelming feeling of being back in time but there are many aspects which remain and modernising them is not seen as any great advantage.

The village grew out of a collection of farm-workers' houses placed in close proximity to orchards and fields which in bygone times were bounded by hedges and trees and, with the coming of the railway, railway workers' houses. Hedges remain in many places in the village and many are ancient and are a distinct and well liked feature of the village. They are in preference to walls and fences. This aspect and the lack of hard kerbs and harsh paving in most parts of the village adds to the country feel.

Some items of street furniture may be described as too harsh for the environment they are in. Although this street furniture is needed for the public there is scope for rationalising it or softening its impact.

There are no street lights in the village. In general this is seen as an advantage in that it gives a country feeling at night. Too bright privately installed lights appear to be disliked by many residents as they tend to spoil this country feel.

Telecommunications masts are disliked.

- The rural character of the village must be preserved.
- Statutory Utility providers should consult the parish before carrying out works contrary to the general wishes expressed in this Statement.

- Hedges containing traditional bushes and trees of local native species should be encouraged.
- Boundary walls and fences are to be discouraged, particularly high and aggressive security fencing.
- Soft verges should be retained.
- Harsh paving should be discouraged.

- Street furniture, notices etc should be strictly controlled and rationalised.
- Street lighting should be resisted and care should be taken with the installation of private lighting.
- Telecommunications masts are to be discouraged or sited and camouflaged sympathetically.

Traffic



Communications

The village is within striking distance of the M25 with its relative ease of access to airports and other parts of the country. It is also close to Sevenoaks for the facilities of a larger town. This, along with convenient rail travel to London, provides residents with all urban based necessities while still living in a rural community.

However, closeness to airports and major roads has the drawback of noise from aircraft, both commercial and recreational, and passing traffic on the A21. Commercial aircraft noise may have to be tolerated and this is outside the scope of this Statement. Recreational aircraft noise should be subject to the representation to the specific clubs or organisations.

Road traffic noise from the A21 has increased firstly through increased traffic and secondly as a result of tree loss in the 1987 Great Storm. Tree replacement could alleviate this problem to some extent.



Traffic

The greatest concern of the residents is the traffic in the village: amount; speed; and parking.

The village has a number of commercial enterprises including farms, Gaza industrial estate, small workshops as well as the garage, the Post Office and other shops. All these enterprises need to be serviced with goods coming in and product or bought goods going out. All cause traffic and the modern trend is for larger lorries to be used for economy. The heaviest vehicles allowed on British roads regularly come through the narrow streets of the village and they frequently use roads which are indicated as being unsuitable for heavy vehicles and cause obstruction and damage to verges. The school in the village takes a number of children from outside the village and, with little public transport, they are brought by car.

- Tree planting to reduce the noise from passing traffic on the A21 is to be encouraged.
- Acceptance by the authorities of development of airfields must take account of the added noise which may be inflicted on the village.



- Full recognition must be made of the incremental amount of traffic caused by any new enterprise.
- Commercial enterprises are to be welcomed but all add traffic.

Roads and Pavements



There is a shortage of public and private parking in the village and little opportunity to provide it. This means that many cars are parked outside the owners' houses. Infill means that any spare space for parking is denied to present residents thereby aggravating the problem.

All roads into the village lend themselves to vehicles' speeding because the approach is down hill or roads are perceived as "quiet and little used" where excessive speed is considered by drivers as acceptable. The roads into the village are narrow, winding and have no pavements. This is seen by many residents as adding charm to the village but when combined with speeding traffic it can be dangerous.

Some parts of the village are more affected than others by passing traffic and although there are no major routes to any distinct destination through the village a considerable amount of traffic passes along most village roads. The roads are being used as a back route to other villages including Edenbridge. Footpaths away from roads within the village are beneficial in separating pedestrians from traffic and give pedestrians access to other parts of the village.

- The residents feel that adequate parking should be considered when infilling takes place.
- Ensure vehicles can easily clear the road when parking or delivering by, for example, setting back entrance gates from the road.

- Measures should be implemented to promote road safety to account for volume and speed.
- Means have to be provided to reduce the speed of traffic in the country roads and in the village.

- Consideration must be given to re-routing traffic to various destinations (e.g. Gaza estate).
- Any development should take into account the need for pedestrians from it to reach other parts of the village without using village roads.

Recommendations

Prevent developments spoiling valuable views by:

- Preventing obtrusive development on the ridge
- Minimising the effect of development in the village on views from the ridge
- Minimising the visual impact of telecommunications masts

Preserve the environment round the village by:

- Preserving the status of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Landscape Area, Green Belt, Site of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.
- Maintain the present village envelope.
- Preserving the countryside, featuring hedges, dotted trees and copses.
- Preserving individual trees, belts of trees and hedges which are particularly important to the village setting.

Control development in and around the village by:

- Ensuring Utility Providers consult the parish before carrying out works contrary to the general wishes expressed in this Statement.
- Encouraging sympathetic commercial enterprises.
- Promoting the conditions and environment for shops, pub, Post Office, garage, school and similar to thrive.

Maintain the village environment by:

- Maintaining the informality of layout of the village.
- Preserving the mix of housing in the village.
- Preserving the character of the Green.
- Preserving the allotments as a village amenity.

Maintain and respect the village character by:

- Preserving the rural character of the village.
- Keeping new buildings and extensions in scale with existing buildings.
- Ensuring alterations and extensions of buildings maintain their original character.
- Discouraging walls and fencing, especially security gates and fencing, in favour of preserving and encouraging hedges containing bushes and trees of traditional local native species.
- Not installing street lighting and minimising private lighting.
- Discouraging harsh paving and kerbs in favour of retaining soft verges.
- Rationalising and minimising the amount of street furniture, notices and advertisements.

Limit the impact of parking congestion by:

- Fully recognising the incremental amount of traffic caused by any new enterprise.
- Recognise full parking need for development and taking account of parking space reduction caused by infilling.
- Providing means to park off the road when making deliveries etc.

Recognise the need for pedestrian safety by:

- Controlling traffic speed in the country roads and in the village.
- Re-routing traffic away from the village.
- As far as possible, providing pedestrians from new developments with the opportunity to reach village amenities without using village roads.

Reducing environmental pollution by:

- Reducing the noise from passing traffic on the A21.
- Reducing the noise impact of any airfield development.