

PARISH COUNCIL OF
WADHURST

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Clerk

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Dear Marina Briggshaw

Application for a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Wadhurst Parish

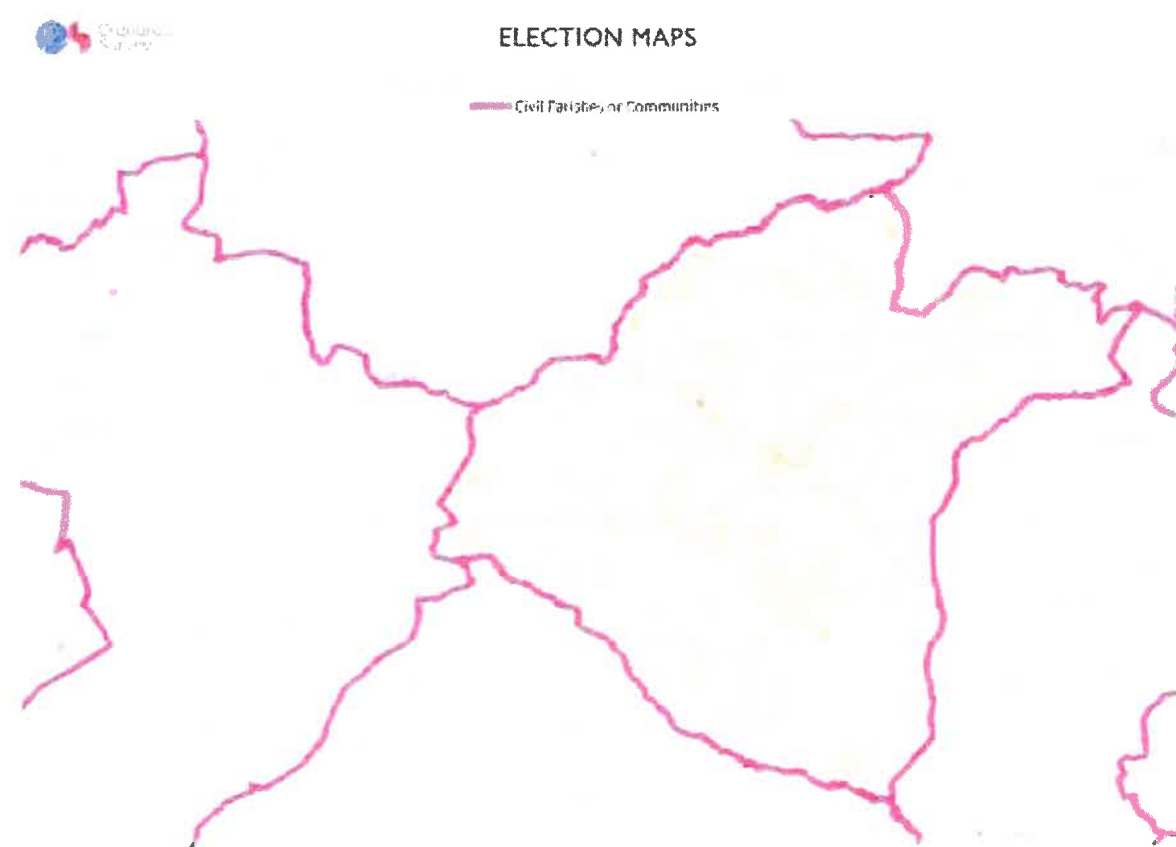
Wadhurst Parish Council announced its intention to undertake a Neighbourhood Development Plan at its Annual Village Meeting on 25th May 2017, and confirmed its intention to move forward at its meeting on 13th July 2017. The Plan is intended to cover the whole of the parish of Wadhurst, as shown on the attached map (Annex A). A supporting statement outlining the rationale for the area is also attached (Annex B).

Wadhurst Parish Council is a relevant body for the purposes of section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Please accept this letter as a formal application to designate Wadhurst Parish as a Designated Neighbourhood Area, under the Localism Act 2011 as governed by Part 2, Section 5 of the 2012 Regulations.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Barlow
Parish Clerk

Annex A – Boundaries



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Annex B: Supporting Statement

Selection of Area

The area selected is coterminous with the Wadhurst Parish Council boundaries. This is a recognised administrative area, and there are no strong arguments for selecting an area larger or smaller. The parish is bounded on one side by the County boundary with Kent, and on another by the District boundary with Rother. The other boundaries are with the parishes of Mayfield, Rotherfield and Frant, all of which have their own clear identities as communities, and their village centres. Frant has already embarked on the process of producing their own neighbourhood plan. As explained below, the village centre of Wadhurst has many facilities and those living in the outlying areas of the parish closely identify with it. We can see no argument for selecting alternative boundaries.

Geography

Wadhurst is a rural parish covering an area of 4682 hectares in the north-east of Wealden District Council, bordering on Kent County Council and Rother District Council.

Most of Wadhurst's population of 5181 is concentrated along the two B roads which intersect the parish, the B2099 and the B2100. The village centre of Wadhurst is at the eastern end of the B2099, and merges to the west with the settlements of Sparrows Green and Durgates. To the north on the B2100, Cousley Wood again merges into the other settlements, and there is a further concentration of housing to the south along Mayfield Lane and beyond Best Beech. The station lies to the west of the settlement, down a steep hill about a mile from the village centre. The north eastern boundary of the parish runs through Bewl Water, a large reservoir and recreational centre.

Community

Virtually all the parish's facilities are concentrated in Wadhurst village centre. There is a large secondary school, Uplands Community College, with about 920 pupils, and a primary school, Wadhurst C of E Primary (with nursery) at the Sparrows Green end of the village, next to the Fire Station. Both schools are regularly involved in community activity, and provide a venue for various local events. The residents are actively involved in the community with over 50 clubs and societies, U3A groups and an extensive adult learning programme.

The main venue for local events is the Commemoration Hall, which is run by its own trust, and shares its building with the Library and the History Society. It is regularly used for theatrical presentations, sales, and social events and is the venue for the September Art Fair. Behind it there is a football field, a cricket field and the bowls club. Plans for the replacement of the hall are under development, which may also include a new doctor's surgery, to replace the existing.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul is just to the north of the High Street, and also runs a drop-in centre on the High Street, Carillon Cottage, which acts as a sign posting centre in the heart

of the village, from which many community volunteering activities are run. The church also has St George's Hall in Sparrows Green, which is extensively used as a community hub for that part of the village. There is a Catholic church with associated private primary school on Mayfield Lane.

There are two pubs in the village centre, the Greyhound and the White Hart, and several cafes including Wealden Wholefoods, the Cottage Tea Room, Jempsons and Delicatus, plus a Kebab takeaway and two Indian restaurants. Wadhurst High Street is unusual locally for having an extraordinary range of shops, including two small supermarkets (one of which houses the Post Office), a butchers, a greengrocer, a dress shop, an outdoor wear shop (Paramo, who also manufacture their products in and around the village), a florists, two charity shops, an off-licence, a bookshop, and many more. The maintenance of the vitality of this High Street will be a major feature of the plan.

Outside the village centre there is a small trading estate next to Wadhurst Castle (which also functions as a wedding venue), and small industrial estates in Durgates and Faircrouch Lane. There is a pub, The Old Vine, plus a florists a cricket Club pavilion and a Caravan Club site, in Cousley Wood, and the Parish Council's own pavilion and Recreation Ground, with football fields, the Tennis Club and a children's playground is on the edge of Sparrow's Green. There is a Chinese takeaway in Sparrow's Green.

The concentration of so much activity in the village centre means that there is a real sense of community in the parish, since almost everyone, even those who live in the many outlying hamlets or isolated dwellings use the village for some purpose, be it to attend the schools, go to the doctors, change library books or get their hair cut.

There are also a huge number of community organisations. Many are based on social care and community action, such as Friends Across Wadhurst which runs a befriending scheme for vulnerable people, others are more concerned with culture and recreation – there is an active Community Cinema which runs a programme throughout the winter months, and a Community Choir, as well as many sports clubs. Annual events, such as the summer show, bonfire night, Christmas late opening and the open gardens help to create a sense of community.

Housing

The 2011 census recorded a population of 5181, in 2156 households. 67.6% of these households are family households, and 27.9% are single-person households, housing predominantly older people. The demand for housing in Wadhurst is high with the population rising year on year. This is not only putting pressure on the availability of development land but also on the need to improve the community infrastructure and support services including sewage and broadband. Wadhurst is just over one hour by train from central London, and attracts commuters. This has a huge influence on the type of housing that is built in Wadhurst, with developers preferring to create "executive homes" with 4 bedrooms and above. This means that young people wishing to stay in Wadhurst, older people wanting to downsize, and people working in the local schools and businesses, have a huge problem in finding affordable housing. A quick glance at one of the major property websites on the day

of writing reveals only 4 properties out of 51 which fall into the government's definition of affordable, £250K.

There is a higher proportion of WDC owned social housing in Wadhurst than in most of the rural parishes, concentrated to the north west and south of the village.

Built Environment

There are conservation areas in both Wadhurst (covering most of the village centre) and Cousley Wood. The village centre retains many of its medieval buildings, and there are some fine ironmasters houses – there are buildings from almost every era, in fact, though there is little evidence of the Victorians in the centre. A listed former school building has recently been converted to residential use in Mayfield Lane. There are many large farm buildings and manor houses scattered throughout the parish, and one notable modernist building at Wadhurst Park.

Though there are honorable exceptions, recent developments have not been distinguished by their design, relying largely on pastiche “off the shelf” suburban solutions rather than responding to the local environment. We will want to look at how the quality of design can be improved, and used to improve and enhance the environment, include the best of modern architecture alongside the historical high weald built form

Natural Environment

The parish lies completely within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. While there are no formal Nature Reserves or SSSIs within the parish, there are approximately 70 miles of footpath which are maintained by the Wadhurst Footpath Society. The area is typically made up of grazing land or parkland, with some ancient woodland. It is within the area in which all planning applications have to be screened for their impact on the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area.

Wadhurst has particularly dark skies, and the Parish Council has a dark skies policy, aiming to make this situation even better. It is currently embarking on a programme of replacing those street lamps that are light-polluting, based on a study by the local Astronomical Society.

We wish to use our hedgerows, public spaces and ‘road triangles’ to support biodiversity.

Transport and other Infrastructure

As referred to above, the parish is crossed by 2 B roads, both of which are heavily used, and the passage of the B2099 through the village centre causes particular problems, with articulated lorries, delivery vans, and farm machinery trying to make their way through the village. The fact that Uplands Community College is at one end of the settlement, and the Station at the other, means that many local people drive through the village several times a day. It is not uncommon for an accident on the A21 or the A267 to mean that all traffic is diverted through Wadhurst, which can cause gridlock for hours. We would like to develop

solutions to maintaining a free flow of traffic through the village centre while accommodating shop deliveries, public transport and school busses.

Parking is a major issue in the village and so far no real solution has been found, though the Commemoration Hall initiative, if it goes ahead, may offer a considerable number of extra parking spaces.

The village is well served by Wadhurst Station, just outside the village, with half-hourly trains to and from London and Hastings in the daytime, and hourly in the evening. There are regular local bus services to the station, to Lamberhurst and to Hawkhurst (and on to Hastings) to the east and south, and to Tunbridge Wells to the North West.

Most properties are served by both mains water and mains electricity. However, the mains gas infrastructure does not extend throughout the parish. A telephone exchange in Durgates supplies the parish. Fibre broadband is available to much of the parish, but those beyond its reach have broadband speeds comparable with the very worst in the UK.

There is a household waste recycling facility in Faircrouch Lane.

Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework put significant emphasis on sustainable development, ensuring growth caters for the needs of the current generation while ensuring that future generations are not negatively impacted. This is a major consideration for us, and we will be seeking ways to bring the various strand of the plan together to help to create a healthy village economy and environment well into the future.