



## Housing and Design Workshop

1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 Report

### Introduction

This workshop held at the Memorial Hall was organised by the Lamberhurst Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as a follow up to the Visioning Workshop – “What do you want Lamberhurst to look like in 15 years’ time?” held on 27<sup>th</sup> September. The workshop aims were to consider the:

- Results of the questionnaire held in the summer;
- Draft vision and objectives emerging from the last workshop;
- Findings of two working groups who had been looking at:
  - Potential sites for new housing,
  - What kind of housing might be required,
  - The character of the parish and,
  - Future design considerations.

The findings would then be discussed by small groups of residents working at ‘topic tables’ with a session for feedback at the end. The topics were:

- Affordable housing
- Downsizing / housing for older people
- Market housing including self-build
- Traditional design and materials
- Layout and size of sites (scale)
- Low carbon building
- Housing mix (size, type and tenure)

### Presentation 1: Update on Neighbourhood Plan, Survey Results (housing), Visions, Housing & Design Objectives

Graham White, Chair of the LNPSG kicked off the workshop by setting out the topics for discussion (above) and stating that there is: ‘No right or wrong answer, everyone’s view is important. Key is to have an agreed way forward!’ He then recapped on the two visions that scored highest with the attendees at the previous workshop:

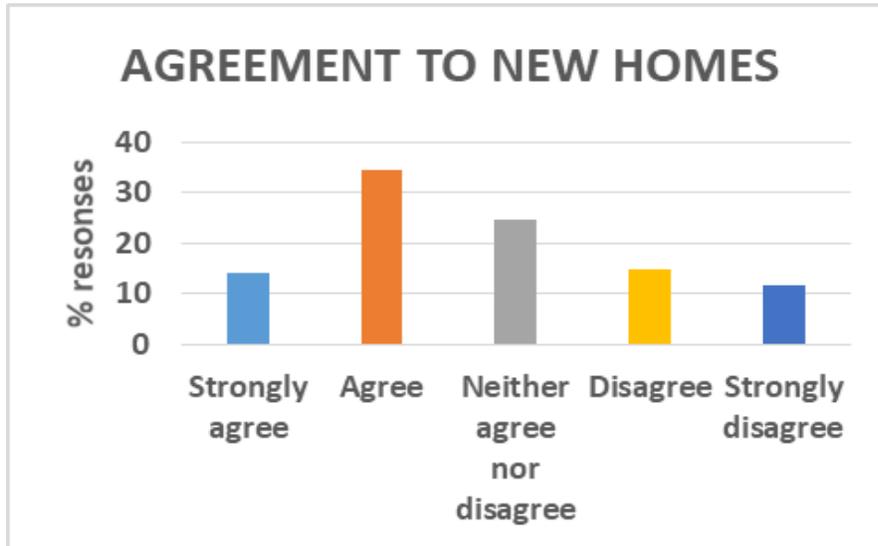
Vision A	Vision B
<p>In 2033 (15 years) Lamberhurst will be quintessentially rural and environmentally sympathetic with a diverse community which is well served by pubs, shops, GP etc cultural destination, it will have appropriate housing stock, excellent communication links (e.g. broadband/mobile) and more public transport, traffic management and parking.</p>	<p>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.</p>



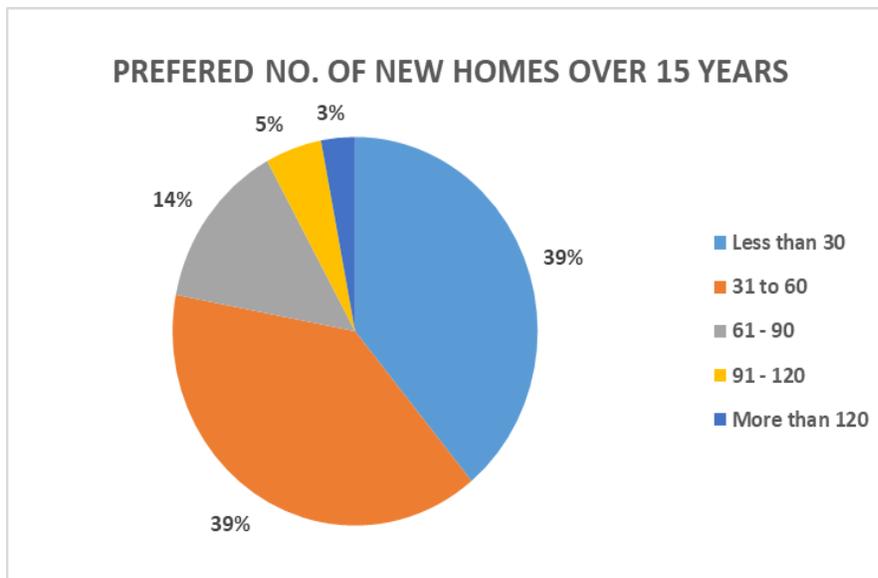
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These have been published in the November edition of the Parish magazine to invite further feedback and reflection from parishioners.

Next Graham shared the housing themed results from the parish questionnaire:



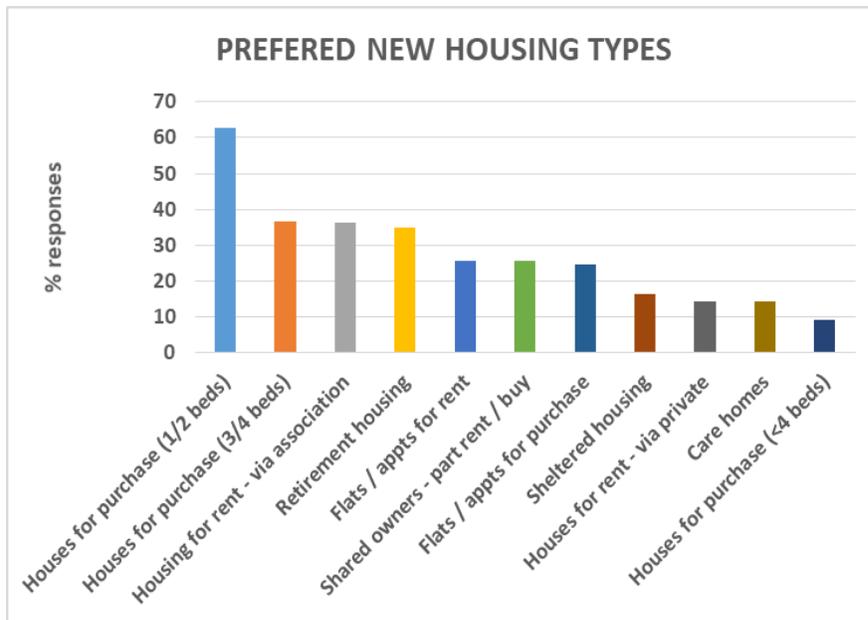
- 48% strongly agree/agree
- 27% strongly disagree/disagree
- 25% neither agree/disagree
- Balance in favour of some form of new development but conditions attached.



- Strong preference for the two responses up to 60 new homes in the next 15 years
- The Parish currently has 702 “household spaces”
- In 644 properties (67% owned, 33% rented)



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- Majority agreement to need for smaller homes and flats, social housing for rent and retirement.
- General agreement to build affordable housing for people with local connections and modest incomes.
- Parishioners, in general felt housing development should be through a range of small scale developments
- Suggests mixed low density small development may be the best way forward

There was very broad agreement to the design criteria detailed in the survey. Namely that development should be:

- Sympathetic to its surroundings
- Landscaping should be in harmony with surrounding area
- Adequate parking is provided
- Dark skies are important
- The size and mix of buildings are important
- Infill development should respect / maintain space between existing housing
- Provide adequate external amenity space for refuse and recycling storage

Graham shared some quotes from the survey (see attached presentation) but felt that a couple summed up people's feelings:

- "I am in favour of planned development within Lamberhurst, Village we have to constantly evolve to survive. And it will hopefully benefit the local businesses and school. Any development must be generous with parking or the village will become choked with cars, added to which it can cause huge disaster"
- "We have a beautiful village that could benefit from sympathetic expansion retaining the character, views, community, architecture and wildlife. New blood and commerce should be encouraged but Social Housing should be included...."

He concluded by sharing the Housing and Design Objectives worked up by the groups at the previous Visioning workshop:



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<p><b>Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social housing to be kept available for rent ie no right to buy</li><li>• No barriers between communities</li><li>• Social housing – local nomination rights</li><li>• Build along sides of roads and not in estates</li><li>• Housing to avoid large estates but develop in small areas / small developments (not estates) designed to suit environment</li><li>• Good parking facilities / ensure it has adequate parking provision</li><li>• Space for home working</li><li>• Ultra modern green housing to bring a new dimension rather than replicating the old</li><li>• Flexible adaptable housing to enable your home to be viable through all stages of your life</li></ul>	<p><b>Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buildings in local vernacular</li><li>• Sympathetic materials (preferably local) in keeping with existing properties</li><li>• Scale of buildings in keeping with existing</li><li>• Environmentally friendly housing</li><li>• Use of traditional local designs wherever possible</li><li>• TPOs on veteran and ancient trees</li><li>• Retention of hedgerows and greenspaces</li><li>• Dark skies</li><li>• New builds must have soft verges and natural lines with traditional, living boundaries</li></ul>
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### Presentation 2 Housing Needs and Site Assessments

Lindsay Frost RTP<sup>1</sup> an independent planning consultant who is advising the LNPSG and Parish Council then gave an overview on the work that had been carried out to assess potential new housing sites in the parish and housing numbers (see separate presentation). He started by giving some background on the government's new (July 2018) National Planning Policies for housing development:

- Government wants a significant increase in the amount of house building in England and the pace at which it is delivered.
- It also wants to promote a **wider spread of sites** ( more small sites) , meet **different types of housing need** ( more affordable housing ,renters, housing for families, older people, students , people with disabilities, travellers) **and diversify suppliers of housing** ( more regional and local builders , self-build , community housing).

Then the implications for Tunbridge Wells:

- Earlier assessment was around 15,225 new homes needed over 2013-2033 period
- Some of this is already met by completions since 2013, existing unimplemented planning permissions and allocations, and a continuing supply of small sites through planning applications (“windfalls”)
- However , likely that there will still be a need to find sites for a further **9,000 + houses** and allocate land in the new Local Plan

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Town Planning Institute – a chartered town planner



## Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018-2033

TWBC “Call for sites” and the SHELAA:

- TWBC required to make a “**call for sites**” to landowners and developers who want their sites to be considered for development
- **Sites must be “suitable”, “available” and “deliverable”**
- TWBC have done two “calls for sites” in 2016 and 2017. Further sites still being put forward in 2018. No need to do separate call for NDP.

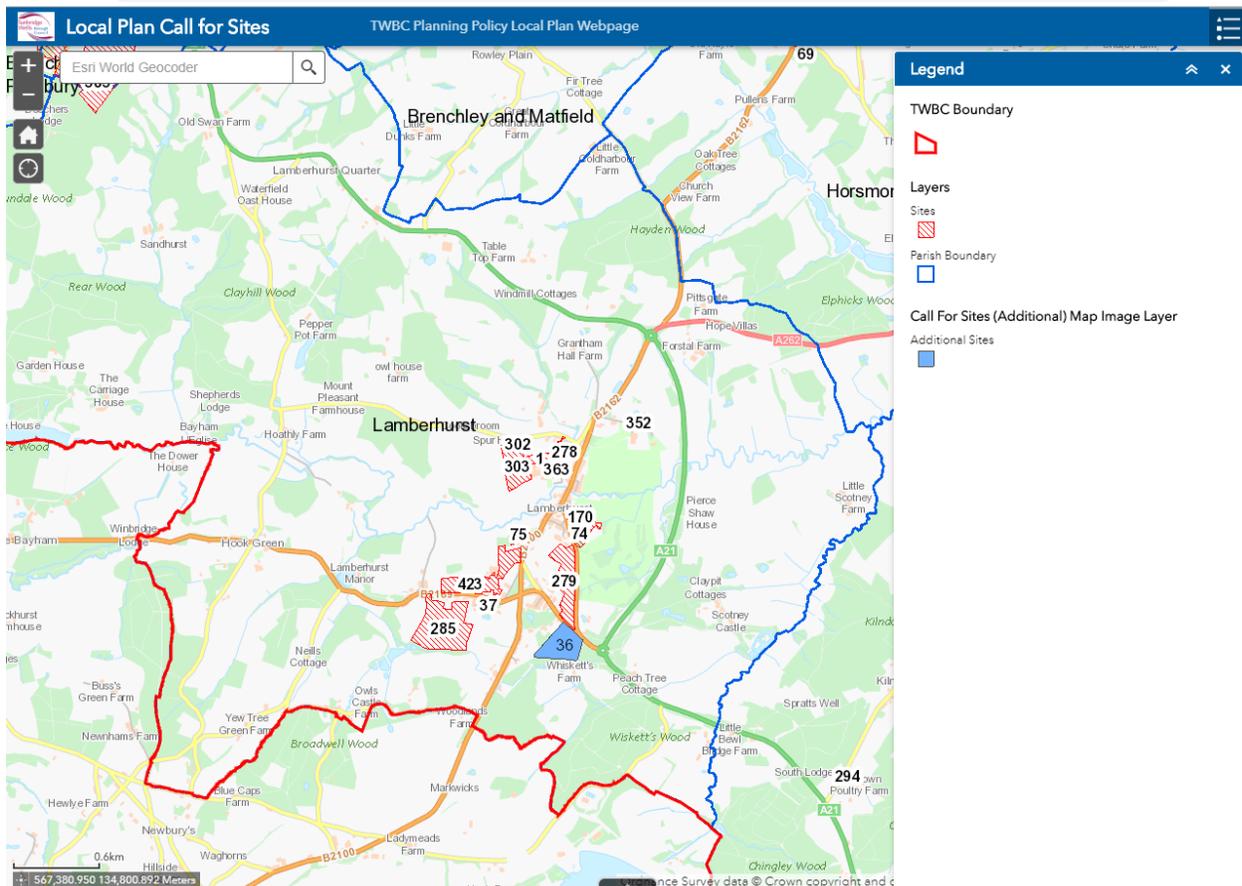


Figure 1: Sites proposed by landowners / developers

Work by the Lamberhurst Neighbourhood Plan team on sites:

- All submitted sites visited by NDP team in August 2018
- Meeting held with TWBC officers to discuss initial views
- Assessment continuing , along with further liaison with TWBC
- **More work needed: including feedback from this workshop**

Planning issues that apply to all potential housing sites in the parish:

- Impact on the character and appearance of the High Weald AONB landscape



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- Capacity of sewage works to serve new development
- Capacity at the primary school for expanded rolls
- Provision of primary health care for an expanded population
- Effect of potential development sites on the character and morphology (shape) of the village and its “built development limits”
- Type of housing development for which a site may be suited: density , housing type and design
- Access and local road capacity

### Presentation 3: TWBC Housing Needs Study and Lamberhurst Survey

Samantha Nicholas a parish councillor and member of the LNPSG then gave a short presentation on the HNS carried out by Tunbridge Wells last year:

Figure 3.1 Median house price trends 2000 to 2016: the Borough of Tunbridge Wells, the South East and England

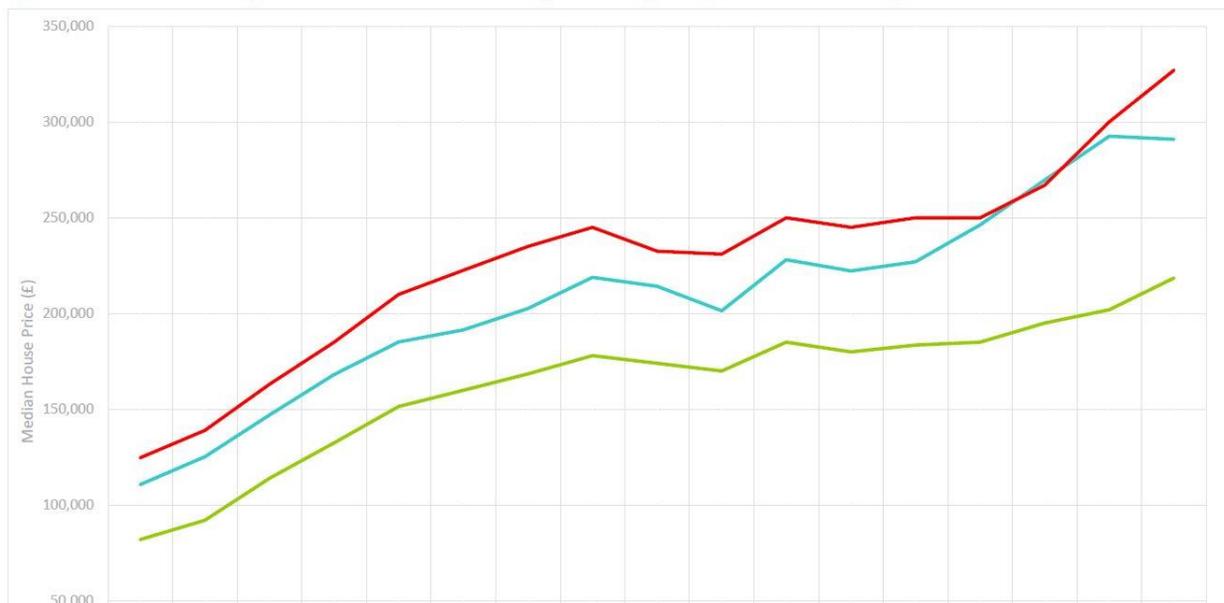
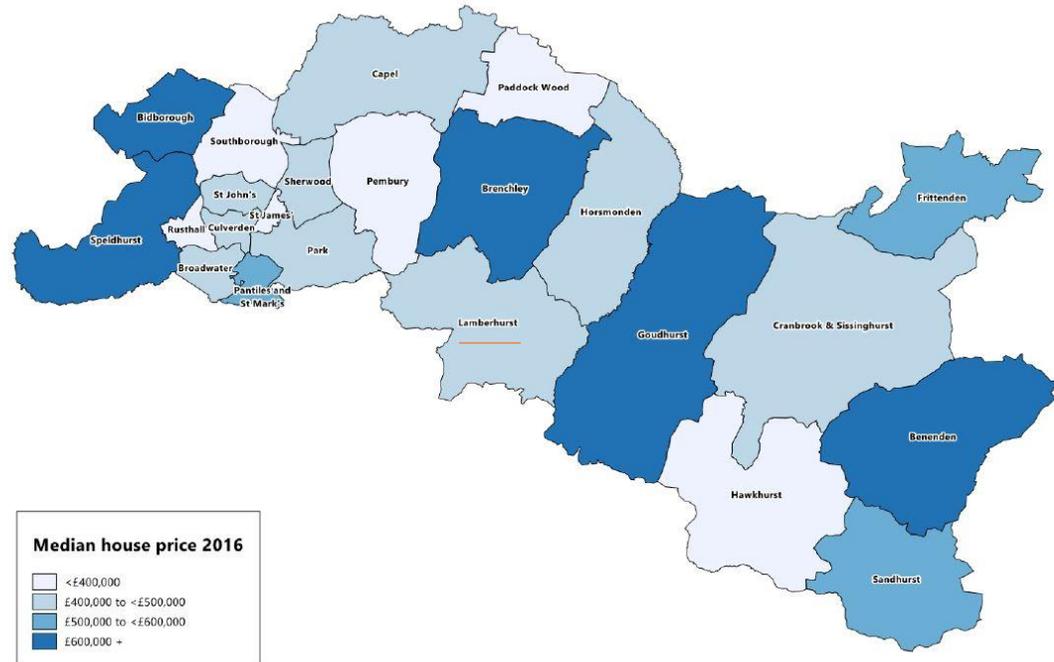


Figure 2: Recent housing price trends



Map 3.1 Median house prices 2016 by local analysis area



- The Household Survey found that 64.7% of moving households intend to move within the Borough of Tunbridge Wells
- 11,064 (23.2%) households plan to move in the next five years.
- A further 2,540 (5.3%) households would like to move but are unable to.
- Around 44.0% of these households said that this is because they cannot afford to move.
- Within this forecast, there will be significant growth (40.7%) in older age groups (65+ years). The 80+ age group shows a 73.1% growth over the plan period

Table 4.4 Property type by analysis area

Analysis area	Detached house	Semi-detached house	Terraced/ town house	Bungalow	Flat/ Apartment/ Maisonette	Other	Base
Lamberhurst	31.9%	30.5%	18.4%	7.9%	11.3%	0.0%	668
Rural Parish Total	32.6%	31.9%	15.7%	7.0%	12.1%	0.8%	27204
Borough Total	26.6%	29.2%	16.0%	4.8%	22.7%	0.7%	49442

Figure 3: Properties currently in Lamberhurst, rural area and borough

Analysis area	One bed, bedsit / studio	Two bed	Three bed	Four or more bed	Base
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Lamberhurst	11.7%	18.4%	33.4%	36.4%	668
Rural parish total	10.4%	21.4%	35.5%	32.7%	27,204
Borough total	14.7%	24.9%	31.3%	29.1%	49,442

Figure 4: Number of bedrooms by area

Analysis area	Owner occupied	Private rented	Affordable	Base
Lamberhurst	65.1%	21.9%	13.0%	668
Rural Parish Total	69.8%	13.6%	16.6%	27,204
Borough Total	65.6%	18.3%	16.0%	49,442

The report concludes by stating that 35 households in Lamberhurst are in need of housing support (affordable housing). However, there is only limited detail of what type of housing is required. To

**A commonly used definition of Affordable Housing:** Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provide to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

overcome this, the parish council intends to carry out its own detailed Housing Needs Survey jointly with the rural development charity Action for Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK):

- Action with Communities in Rural Kent have supported the Parish to receive a grant from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to manage a bespoke housing need survey;
- This will give Lamberhurst Parish greater detail on type of housing and the needs of support required for affordable and other housing;
- This will support our evidence base on why we need affordable housing in the Parish and could lead to community led housing projects in the future;
- This survey will be sent to households in January 2019;
- As part of the changes to the NPPF there will be a requirement for having self-build properties built into small housing schemes.

#### Presentation 4: Character and Design Presentation

Andrew Cotterill from the LNPSG gave a presentation on behalf of the Character and Design Working Group. The group's role is to:

- Survey and examine our existing architecture and surrounding Medieval landscape;
- Develop Design Codes for new buildings to consider parking, landscaping, building, design and density, lighting;
- Record and list our outstanding views.



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Figure 5: Members of the Character and Design Working Group

Andy gave an overview of the 'designed landscape':

- Many landscape features have remained since Medieval times such as hedge boundaries, ditches and moats.
- It is estimated that we have 16.27% of our total area covered by ancient woodland.
- Estates such as Scotney Castle, Bayham Abbey and Court lodge cover a large part of the parish.

And gave an overview of the Lamberhurst Conservation Area:

**High Street:** Since the conservation area appraisal was written in 2002 there is only one shop remaining in the High Street Victoria House Stores.

**The Broadway:** The centre of the village. Traffic calming measures introduced after the bypass was completed, realigning the Green have altered the streetscape. Ample seating adds to the street scene. Possibility of reinstating humpback single carriage to slow traffic

**Brewer Street:** Parking issues dominate the street scene. The local gaol can be found here

**School Hill:** More Traffic calming measures. Historic assets such as the Clock Tower, War Memorial and mile stone can be found here. Iconic view from the top of the hill

**Town Hill:** There has been some recent development Speed humps and parking issues



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And the Down Conservation Area:

- **The Down:** Little has changed since the 2002 survey except traffic calming measures which were introduced after completion of the bypass. The vineyard which is adjacent to the conservation area retains the characteristic of this area.
- **The Slade:** Apart from traffic calming measures remains largely unaltered with limited new development.
- **Down Farm:** Retains much of its character. However it is perceived by many that some improvement to the infrastructure is required.
- **Gravel Pit:** With ample parking and interpretation has become an excellent visitor attraction.

And the Lamberhurst Quarter:

- Characterised by a series of farmsteads
- The main feature is the single carriageway of the A21
- Other than historic landscape features there are no community assets.

Andy's group have added to the design recommendations from the household survey:

- Palette of colours on new builds to reflect existing buildings - predominantly black white red-brick and sandstone
- The type of building materials used
- The building density: should reflect the requirement to include enough space for parking and amenities.
- The scale of new developments: Smaller developments
- Housing design: Modern
- Types of boundary: native hedges benefits wildlife.
- Preserving our outstanding views for future generations

### Topic Workshops

The next part of the evening aimed to 'workshop' some of the key topics emerging from the questionnaire and follow up research undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Groups. Each table provided with a flip sheet with a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) matrix marked out. Steering group members acting as facilitators invited participants to fill each quadrant for their theme with:

- **STRENGTHS** – what's good or working well in Lamberhurst
- **WEAKNESSES** – what's bad / not working in Lamberhurst currently
- **OPPORTUNITIES** – what might work to improve Lamberhurst in the future
- **THREATS** – what might make things worse / impact negatively on Lamberhurst in the future

As previously mentioned the emerging topics for discussion were:

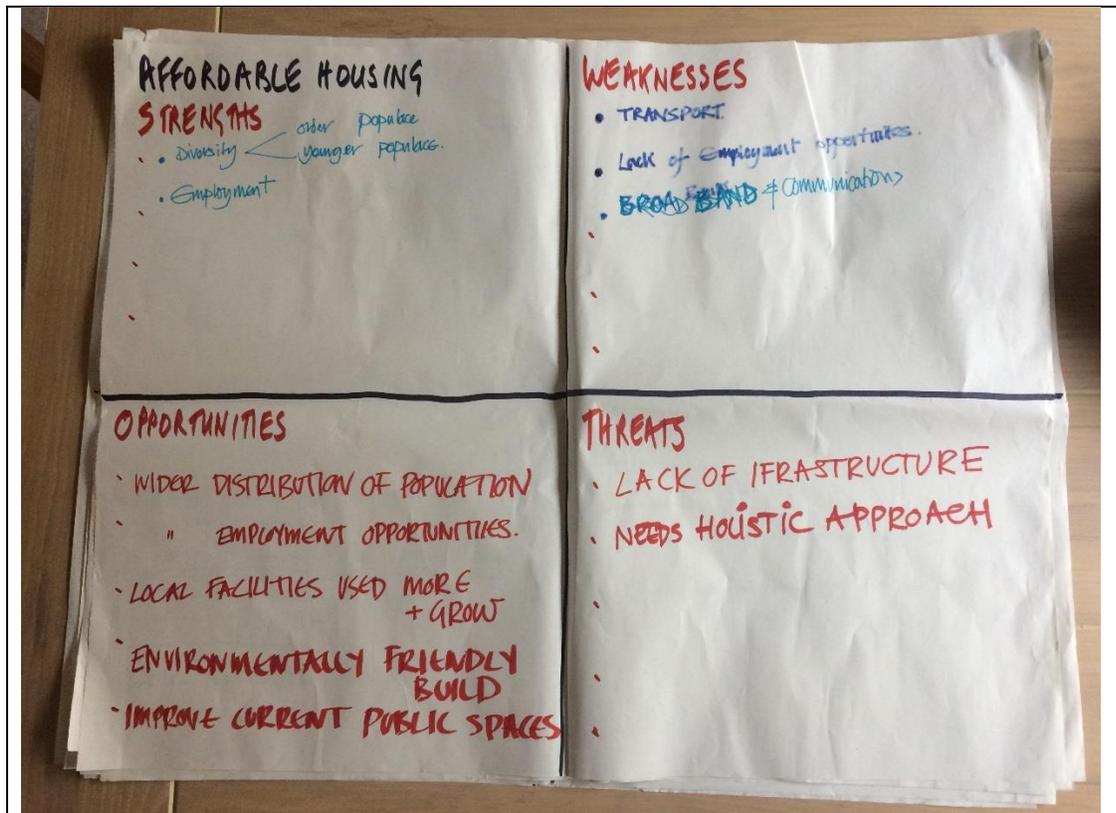
- (i) Affordable housing
- (ii) Downsizing / housing for older people



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- (iii) Market housing including self-build
- (iv) Traditional design and materials
- (v) Layout and size of sites (scale)
- (vi) Low carbon building
- (vii) Housing mix (size, type and tenure)

In the last five minutes, each topic group was asked to underline their two top Opportunities and Threats. Here are the results:





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### LOW CARBON HOUSING

#### STRENGTHS

- Some renewable energies are discreet eg air source
- Global sustainability. Local sustainability <sup>Replace oil</sup>
- Change in perception. Modern renewable looks good!

#### WEAKNESSES

- Not necessarily in-keeping eg. Solar Panels, Wind Turbine!
- Conservative attitudes to planning may compromise design

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Headline "The low carbon village" <sup>raise pricing</sup> <sub>positively</sub> <sub>reduce quality</sub>
- Combining renewable energy vehicles + housing eg Electric cars
- When built close to amenities, natural reduction in need for cars + increase of public transport or increased walking
- Reduce running costs
- REDUCES DRAW ON INFRASTRUCTURE

#### THREATS

- Cost. Construction
- General lack of knowledge and know-how
- To build attractive / in-keeping at low cost.

### MARKET HOUSING INCLUDING SELF-BUILD

#### STRENGTHS

- MORE AFFORDABLE?
- QUICKER BUILD DELIVERY

#### WEAKNESSES

- QUALITY
- LONGEVITY OF BUILDINGS
- INCENTIVES OF BUILDERS

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- RULES AROUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- DEVELOPMENT GAIN

#### THREATS

- HIGH DENSITY
- LACK OF CHARACTER.



TRADITIONAL DESIGN + MATERIALS	
<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>FIT IN WITH LOCAL STOCK CHARACTER</li><li>WE LIKE IT ON OLD BUILDINGS</li></ul>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>EXPENSIVE</li><li>EFFICIENT - INALATION</li><li>NEW TECHNOLOGY (MAY NOT BE GREEN)</li><li>NOT MODERN WAY WE LIVE</li></ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OLD TRADITIONAL "SENSE OF PLACE"</li><li>MODERN BUILDINGS WITH BETTER TECHNOLOGY</li></ul>	<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>FAKES MORE EXPENSIVE HOUSING</li><li>USE TRADITIONAL WORKSHOPS + PRACTICES</li></ul>

LAYOUT + SIZE OF SITES (SCALE)	
<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>EXISTING LAYOUT + DESIGN OF VILLAGE</li><li>FOLLOW EXISTING HISTORIC LINEAR/RIBBON DEVELOPMENT</li><li>OVERDEVELOPMENT IS CONTROLLED BY OUR LIMITED INFRASTRUCTURE</li></ul>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>PROXIMITY TO T. WELLS + CURRENT WELL KNOWN COMMUNITY IN VILLAGE RISES UP DEVELOPMENT HERE</li></ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 We have a voice</li><li>2 reuse of existing brown field sites improve environment and provide housing</li><li>2 empty buildings being brought back into use</li></ol>	<b>THREATS</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Large scale would be threat to existing character of village large in terms of how many in one place in total</li><li>2 connection of all existing separate settlements</li></ol>



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DOWNSIZING + HOUSING		FOR OLDER PEOPLE	
<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Safe places to live</li><li>- Community groups including church</li></ul>		<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lack of shops</li><li>- Poor transport</li><li>- Poor communication links eg broadband</li></ul>	
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* <u>Better transport</u></li><li>- More housing options</li><li>* <u>Warden assisted housing</u></li></ul>		<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <u>Traffic volume including rat running</u></li><li>- <u>Speed of traffic</u></li><li>- Loss of G.P. practice</li></ul>	
HOUSING MIX (SIZE, TYPE, AND TENURE)			
<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- COMMUNITY.</li><li>- AGREEMENT OF HOUSING NEEDS VIA DEVELOPMENT PLAN</li></ul>		<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- DENSITY: TOO MANY HOUSES IN SMALL SPACE</li><li>- SOCIAL MOBILITY.</li><li>- <del>ENVIRONMENT</del></li><li>- OVER DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ROAD/ONE AREA</li><li>- INCREASED PRESSURE ON ROADS</li></ul>	
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <u>HOUSING IN PERPETUITY FOR FAMILY CONNECTION</u></li><li>- 1/2 BED. FOR AFFORDABLE.</li><li>- PARISH COUNCIL HAS CONTROL OVER (SIC PAYMENTS?) BUILDING.</li><li>- <u>RETIREMENT HOMES</u></li></ul>		<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <u>OUTSIDE INFLUENCES</u></li><li>- <u>BUILDING FOR GREATER PROFIT.</u></li><li>- BUNGALOWS IN BACK POCKET</li><li>- INCREASED RISK OF FLOODING.</li></ul>	



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Each table then fed back their findings to the rest of the room.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

This seemed a well-attended, lively and stimulating session that threw up some really interesting ideas, but also that fitted in well with the general direction of travel from the questionnaire and the working groups.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** The group acknowledged that affordable housing was required to meet the needs of the younger and older populace but that poor transport, lack of employment opportunities and poor broadband and mobile signal made it challenging. On the plus side keeping young families in the area would mean that local facilities were supported and potentially grew. There were also opportunities to build environmentally friendly (cheaper to run) housing and improve public spaces. Threats included lack of infrastructure and the need for a holistic approach.

**LOW CARBON HOUSING:** Strengths included the possibility for more discreet technology (air source heat pumps) and that modern low carbon housing can be made to look good – although concerns were raised about the unsightliness of solar panels and wind turbines. Also that conservative attitudes to planning may compromise design. On the plus side the idea of an exemplar or headline low carbon village development of (eg) 30 houses built close to amenities with reduced running costs was also seen as an opportunity. This needed to be balanced though with the cost of construction, lack of know-how and keeping it attractive while keeping costs low.

**MARKET HOUSING INCLUDING SELF-BUILD:** It was hoped that this would offer 'more' affordable housing and that there would be quicker delivery [compared to building on exception sites]. But there were concerns over quality, longevity of buildings [durability] and the [profit] incentives of builders. There could also be so called 'development gain' including affordable housing [currently 35% of houses in a development over 10 houses have to be affordable]. But it was again recognised that they could be built at a higher density and lacking in character [than smaller bespoke developments].

**TRADITIONAL DESIGN AND MATERIALS:** It was felt that building this way would fit in better with the existing local [housing] stock and character but that it could be an expensive and inefficient [energy / heat conservation] way to build, that it might not incorporate modern / green technology or fit in with the 'modern way we live'. Positively it would provide a greater 'sense of place' and could incorporate modern buildings using better technology. There was a concern about producing pastiche or 'faker, more expensive housing'.

**LAYOUT AND SIZE OF SITES (SCALE):** This needed to follow the existing layout and design of the village – its linear development either side of the river and over-development would be constrained by the limited infrastructure but that the proximity to Tunbridge Wells would make the parish attractive to developers. On the positive side, it was felt that parish had a voice, could re-use brownfield sites to improve the environment and bring empty buildings back into use. There were concerns over large scale development would threaten the existing character of the village and there was a danger of connecting all the existing separate settlements.



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**DOWNSIZING AND HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE:** The parish is a safe place to live with community groups and the church providing activities and support but the lack of shops, poor public transport and communications (including broadband), made it more challenging for older people to live in the area. The answers could include better transport [outside the direct scope of the NP] and warden assisted or other forms supported housing. However, rat-running from the A21, speed of traffic and the loss of the GP practice were all concerns that needed to be addressed to make this a reasonable option.

**HOUSING MIX (SIZE, TYPE AND TENURE):** There is an opportunity to identify housing needs through the forthcoming housing needs survey [January] and eventually the plan. Concerns were over density, social mobility, narrow lanes and resulting pressure on roads. But people welcomed the idea of affordable housing being kept affordable 'in perpetuity' and for those with a family connection to the area and for retirement homes. All this had to be weighed up against the need for market or volume builders to build at a profit. There is also the concern over flood-risk.



Jim Boot MSC, Community Planner, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018



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