

# Future Local Plan - Draft report of the Parish Council's Housing Advisory Sub Committee

This report is informed by

- Residents' comments on 4 shortlisted sites (WS25 WS27 WS69 & WS28 (2 parts)) expressed in a series of public meetings
- Analysis of a resident opinion survey
- Examination of the G L Hearn Report - January 2014 - Housing Market Assessment for Ashford Borough Council
- Woodchurch community's experience of planning law relating to site WOOD1

## 1) Introduction

In addition to the public response in May/June 2014, 72 residents attended recent meetings of the Housing Advisory Sub-Committee to comment on the 4/5 shortlisted sites and the future direction of the village. Additionally, 144 responded to a housing impact opinion survey (26% return rate)

An full analysis of the survey is contained in Appendix 1

Woodchurch Parish Council has, so far, resisted the need to develop its own Neighbourhood Development Plan and accepts that sites are currently allocated through the local plan process alone. This exercise has suggested that may need to change.

In general the Woodchurch community was happy with the last Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan which, as far as the village was concerned, accommodated new housing on a single allocated site - a minor mixed, infill development of up to 10 homes.

However, not only has the site not delivered the housing it promised, but also the Parish Council and residents have been alarmed

a) by the degree to which the applicant and his agents have ignored community views in drawing up detailed plans

b) by the degree to which the applicant and his agents have arbitrarily reduced the site footprint to below the affordable housing trigger to circumvent the need for a much-needed affordable component

c) by an Inspectorate report which criticised Ashford Borough Council for not clearly specifying controls and conditions over the intended mix of properties on WOOD1.

This experience has left many residents feeling nervous about a process that appears to offer greater opportunities for developers to achieve their plans than it offers The Parish Council, The Local Planning Authority and the community to oppose them.

It has led residents to question how they can better control the property mix in the village, which in recent years appears to have been heavily biased towards larger detached family homes in the centre of the village. (eg The Paddocks, Front Road, Garden Close and various recently approved planning applications) Had WOOD1 been approved in the current 5 year housing supply period, it would have added to that imbalance.

Additionally, some residents have been alarmed by general assertions made in the public meetings that the Borough Council could impose sites on the village and define densities against local wishes and opinion. The Housing Advisory Sub Committee realises the Borough Council may have the power but sincerely hopes that if sites are included in the

2015-29 plan, the criteria for their inclusion and clear controls and conditions, which were omitted five years ago, can be agreed between the Parish and Borough.

To address the feeling of “powerlessness”, the Sub Committee is now firmly of the opinion that the Parish Council should at least examine the costs and benefits of a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act which would not only help communication between the Parish and the Borough planners but more importantly would direct the village’s future planning policy.

A similar issue is the Right to Buy which potentially erodes the affordable housing stock.

There is nothing the Parish Council can do to change this law apart from support an ongoing campaign against Right to Buy for Local Needs housing. However, community control over social/affordable/local needs housing came up in the consultations several times such that the Sub Committee believes the time is right to explore different mechanisms to mitigate that problem - including modern almshouse developments and the role/benefit of Community Land Trusts (CLT’s) which are non-profit organisations that develop and steward affordable housing on behalf of the community

The Sub Committee sees these two initiatives as a key first step in reclaiming some control.

## **2) Purpose of the report**

1. This report not only summarises residents’ opinions and presents them as opportunities and risks for the village, but it also recommends actions we can take with Ashford Borough Council’s support to seize the opportunities and mitigate the risks.
2. A public meeting with the Borough Council has been provisionally organised for the mid/end August 2015 to explore how that might be achieved. (as per Rob Woods/Simon Cole(ABC) telephone conversation, Friday 17th July)
3. The Sub Committee has suggested a draft agenda for that meeting, the details of which are in Appendix 2

## **3) Summary of the key findings**

1. Taking all the evidence together, the overwhelming view is that Woodchurch has no wish to become a closed community but it should actively seek to address a perceived tenure imbalance and infrastructure weaknesses in a controlled way in conjunction with the Borough Council and in such a way that the essence of the place is not compromised.
2. Residents have clearly indicated they would be more amenable to future development that could deliver a healthy mix of tenures including starter homes and more manageable accommodation to enable young local singles and families to get on the housing ladder and the elderly to downsize, freeing up family homes in the process.
3. Residents have reported feeling frustrated and nervous about a long term planning process that appears to offer greater opportunities for developers to achieve their objectives than it does for the community to oppose them. Doing nothing about this, presents an ongoing risk to our community in the opinion of the Sub-Committee.
4. The Sub Committee feels this exercise has demonstrated sufficient public support to grasp a major opportunity to at least examine the mechanisms available for enhancing community control.

5. In so far as the submissions are concerned the Housing Advisory Sub-Committee believes there are solid reasons for recommending the Parish Council to request Ashford Borough Council to exclude 4 of the 5 submissions on purely planning and environmental grounds - but we are not planning experts and feel we need to discuss/ agree that further in an open way with residents, applicants and the Borough Council.
6. - Rectory Close & Bournes Place sites principally on grounds of inappropriate location, impact on open countryside, access, loss of amenity due to traffic movement and public safety
7. - Lower Road/Kirkwood Avenue site principally on grounds of its impact on the Conservation Area, access, loss of amenity due to traffic movements and possibly public safety if it is developed in conjunction with with the Front Road site
8. -Front Road Site (rear) principally on the grounds of inappropriate size and location, impact on open countryside, access , traffic movement and public safety
9. The fifth (The Front Road site - front) is currently subject of a planning appeal but if rejected, the Housing Advisory Sub-Committee believes the Parish Council should also ask the Borough Council to remove or suspend its inclusion in the future plan until we have a clearer picture of the controls and conditions the Borough Council is able to place on the development given that the plans as submitted would in the view of the sub-committee, add to the tenure imbalance and circumvent the need to deliver an affordable housing component both of which are contrary to the majority community view as expressed through this consultation.

#### **4) Public meetings - Key recurring questions**

1. In the meetings, several questions were posed about Ashford Borough Council's position on a range of fundamental matters. The Sub Committee generally felt unqualified to respond and could only draw their attention to the G L Hearn report (ABC Consultants) findings and request that these items are clarified at a future meeting.
2. This list of "frequently asked questions" and what we believe to be the relevant references in the GL Hearn report are identified in Appendix 3

#### **5) Local issues identified as potential risks for the village**

A key concern was that the Borough Council's criteria for including submissions in the current round of consultations are vague, unexplained and tend to focus on objective measures based on simple metrics such as distance from the school or surgery and do not reflect residents' (more subjective) local concerns about the impact on those facilities. The following matters were of particular concern.

## **1) The risk of treating each site separately without regard to the cumulative impact on the village itself, local highways, motorway and rail infrastructure and other local facilities**

- If all 4/5 sites are approved, it would lead to development that is out of scale with the existing pace of development in the village which has averaged 3 new homes a year for the last 5 years
- If the Front Rd and Lower Road/Kirkwood Avenue sites are developed together there is a potential maximum of 49 new homes in close proximity to each other potentially (depending on the access/egress) creating significant road traffic movement exiting on to a blind bend on the minor, Front Road- at the exact point where at least 2 serious road traffic collisions requiring emergency service interventions have occurred in the last 3 years
- The cumulative impact of new developments coming forward in other nearby towns and local villages (Tenterden, Chilmington Green, Hamstreet, Bethersden and Shadoxhurst) in terms of e.g. future traffic projections for the key A or Trunk routes to Ashford and the motorway and rail/bus interchanges.

### **Risk mitigation -**

A better understanding of the Borough Council's 5-year supply target and how it relates to Woodchurch with reference to its organic growth rate and the scale of applications/approvals coming forward in nearby areas,

An undertaking from the Borough Council that an assessment of the cumulative impact of the 4/5 submissions will be undertaken before decisions are taken

Given the critical mass of Woodchurch and evidence that at least one new "hub" business has been created in the village and key facilities have experienced continued demand in a period when no new planned housing was delivered- there is agreement that under section 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework the mix of organic growth and the Borough Council's history of successfully facilitating development in other villages have sustainably supported services in Woodchurch such that new allocated development sites should reflect the community's needs

## **2) The risk of setting planning precedents by permitting development beyond accepted building lines**

The submissions for Rectory Close and Bournes Place especially have been criticised for their locations outside or beyond recognised building lines and for adding additional layers of housing. The Front Road site (rear) also falls in to this category.

### **Risk mitigation -**

Agree criteria with the Borough Council that any proposed development that is not contiguous with the substantive element of the settlement of Woodchurch is removed from the shortlist. These developments also represent a significant protrusion into open countryside beyond the building line and the extent of the Woodchurch settlement. The proposals would result in incongruous development which fails to protect the character and distinctiveness of the built and natural environment and as such cannot claim to represent high quality development-

regardless of the quality of the buildings proposed or the applicant's intention to create an affordable element.

### **3) The risk to the village of developments which protrude into, and impact on, open and valued countryside**

All the shortlisted sites protrude in to the open countryside in varying degrees.

#### **Risk mitigation -**

Agree criteria with the Borough Council that developments which fail to recognise and protect the character of a valued landscape which should be protected according to the National Planning Policy Framework, are removed from the shortlist.

### **4) The risk to the village, residents and visitors of developments which create significantly increased risk of environmental pollution, road traffic accidents and public safety problems.**

Front Road and Lower Road/ Kirkwood Avenue sites - this point was covered in 1) above

Rectory Close and Bournes Place sites - there is significant opposition in the village to providing homes which are likely to significantly increase the number of vehicles and traffic movements

The most obvious is Rectory Close where the local primary school is located, where there is already heavy congestion at times and where the Police have intervened recently to avoid an escalation of complaints about noise and insensitive parking from existing residents, reduce the risk of road traffic collisions and injury to young children crossing the road.

Additionally, egress from Rectory Close to Front Road, is generally dangerous given a concealed dip in the road there and especially dangerous at school drop-off and collection times given the number of parked cars on the roadside which extend to a blind bend at the junction of Susans Hill where a number of serious road traffic collisions have occurred in recent years.

The Parish Council notes that 2.69 miles is the furthest distance a pupil in the 2014/15 intake of 20 needs to be transported to school and that the School has worked with the Police and KCC to alleviate some of the problems.

Bournes Place site - there would be an increase in traffic accessing and exiting from and to a narrow road bordering the The Green which is the village's prime recreational space where young people play and where pedestrians often walk in the road as there are no pavements abutting The Green.

#### **Risk mitigation -**

Given that there have already been a number of serious collisions recorded, to agree a criteria with the Borough Council (via KCC) that until applicants can provide objective evidence that predicts the impact of their development on future traffic flows and distribution, the sites should be not be automatically included in the final plan.

Rectory Close, Bournes Place and Lower Road sites - In these cases, the proposed accesses, by virtue of their relationship to the existing dwellings, which they also serve, are likely to

give rise to significant and unacceptable levels of increased traffic movement thereby increasing the noise, danger and disturbance to the occupiers of the existing dwellings. On the grounds they would be severely detrimental to the amenities of the existing properties, the Parish Council feels there should be a presumption against them.

### **5) Risk of compromising the green heart of the village within the Conservation Area, the extent and approval of which was agreed several years ago and adopted in the Village Plan/Design Statement**

The Front Road (front & rear) and Lower Road/Kirkwood Avenue sites sit inside the Conservation Area boundary. It is accepted that there is an already established principal of development on the Front Road site (front) and that sympathetic development would be acceptable if the site is included in the future plan but that is not the case with the Lower Road site where a succession of previous applications on the site have been refused partly because planners and The Inspectorate have recognised and supported the community's wish to retain an unalienable "green heart" in the village.

#### **Risk mitigation -**

Any proposed development that affects the "the green heart" of the village as identified and agreed in current supplementary planning documents is considered unjustified and will neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Any proposal must by definition, be harmful to the amenities of the area and in our view cannot be considered as a high quality development and should be rejected.

### **6) Site-specific themes (not covered elsewhere)**

#### **Rectory Close and Bournes Place submissions**

Query over deliverability of the schemes due to potential ownership disputes. (NB Bournes Place - This was not brought up at the public meeting but the Parish Council has been aware subsequently of correspondence between different parties this subject)

#### **Resubmission of Front Road site (WS28 front) -**

##### **Comments**

- a) the site plan submitted with application would suggest a development area of circa .57 ha, not .47 ha which is below the affordable housing trigger
- b) the site has not contributed to the Borough Council's 5 year housing supply target in the previous 5 years
- c) The Parish Council will be asked not to support the development of the rearmost part of the site for up to 24 homes and the Sub Committee believes the submission has little chance of success - leaving only the frontage where the developer, once again, is attempting to circumvent the affordable housing trigger
- d) Ongoing problems of design and layout caused by cramming could lead to another vicious cycle of consultation - application- decision- appeal which the Sub Committee feels is in none of the stakeholders' interests.

The land on the WS28 frontage is now subject to a second planning appeal which will determine the way forward but if the appeal is rejected, the Parish Council should seriously urge the Borough Council not to include this (or any other) site in the future plan until such time that it is satisfied the housing supply is deliverable\*, that it is needed in the light of Section 55 of the NPPF and that it is prepared to define the controls and conditions relating to the housing mix

*\*NPPF definition - To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable.*

## **7) Recommendations**

1. The Parish Council should explore the costs and benefits of developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan in conjunction with Ashford Borough Council and report back at the next Annual Parish meeting
2. The Parish Council should explore the benefits of alternative ways of providing and managing affordable accommodation in conjunction with Ashford Borough Council including almshouse projects and Community Land Trusts
3. The Parish Council endorses the list of items for discussion with the Borough Council at a future meeting in August 2015
4. Subject to the outcome of the above mentioned meeting, the Parish Council should request Ashford Borough Council to exclude 4 of the 5 site submissions (WS25,27, 28-rear and 69) not only on planning and environmental grounds but also on the grounds they jointly or severally present an unacceptable risk to the future direction of the village
5. Subject to the outcome of the above mentioned meeting, the Parish Council should request Ashford Borough Council to exclude the re-submitted WOOD1 (WS28 frontage) submission until such time that the development area is clarified, the Borough Council is satisfied that the site is deliverable and that it can put acceptable controls and conditions in place relating to the housing mix
6. The Parish Council endorses this report and now asks the parish to comment on its content and to make any further representations in writing or e-mail by Friday 14th August 2015

Rob Woods

Chairman - Housing Advisory Sub Committee

## **Appendix 1 - Analysis of the responses to the Housing Impact Opinion Survey**

550 opinion surveys were delivered to homes in the village. Approximately 60% were delivered to those in the areas most affected by the site allocations. (Rectory Close area, The Green, Bournes Place, Lower Road, Kirkwood Avenue, Six Bells Park and Front Road) The remainder were issued to areas on the periphery of the village including Shirkoak Park (130) Brattle/Bridge Close/Appledore Rd (92) and a small, representative number on Susans Hill, Georges Hill and Redbrook Street.

The overall response rate was 26% which is generally acceptable for hard-copy opinion surveys.

The Housing Advisory Sub Committee thanks everyone who took the time to complete the survey. However, it recognises that 74% did not respond and as such, feels the data can only provide a snapshot of the residents' views, not a scientific reading of the Parish's preferences. It does, however, feel justified in using the general trends to support key themes identified in the public meetings and a list of criteria for discussion with the Borough Council.

In interpreting the responses and the associated comments (attached) the following general trends have emerged

- Respondents would be more amenable to new development if it included a healthy mix of starter homes and small bungalows or similar to enable young singles and families to get on the housing ladder, the elderly to downsize and free up family homes.
- There is a presumption against new developments of only high end market housing
- There is strong feeling that the Borough Council should prioritise allocated sites as close to the areas of employment growth as possible.
- The relatively high number of "Not sure" responses to Statement 5 suggests there are mixed views and/or insufficient information about the value to the local economy of building up to 72 new homes. A larger percentage feel more certain that the essence of the village would be negatively affected if housing was not controlled and an even greater number were concerned about the loss of the countryside amenity, including wildlife and ecology.
- Although the vast majority felt that unsustainable pressure would be put on the School and GP Surgery, a smaller number of respondees, who are known to have connections with these institutions, tend to disagree. Clearly more work needs to be done to establish the true position such that the Parish Council feels confident about its position.
- That is not true of transport and drainage issues. The Sub Committee accepts the overwhelming consensus that the existing highways infrastructure is inadequate to service a high number of additional houses at the moment and is not surprised by the clear response on the inadequacy of the village's water and drainage systems. 93% agreed or strongly agreed \*\*
- The high number of "Not sure" responses to Statement 11 suggests there are mixed views and/or insufficient information available about the use of public transport services. Interestingly, residents of Shirkoak Park had a different perspective to those in the village centre. It may also denote that a high number of respondees tend not to use public transport and feel unqualified to respond. More needs to be done to assess this.
- Respondents felt broadband speeds needed to be improved. However there was a high level of "not sures" on this as well, which could suggest a low use of IT/internet in some demographic groupings. The statement relating to broadband provision may however be superfluous given that it was recently announced BT would be installing an upgraded service for the village in the near future.

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In *Barrow-Upon- Soar Parish Council v (1) Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, (2) Charnwood Borough Council, (3) Jelson Limited* [2014] EWHC 274 (Admin) the Parish Council challenged the Secretary of State's decision to grant planning permission to Leicestershire housebuilder, Jelson Homes, on the basis that Jelson had not satisfactorily demonstrated that a major sewerage problem could be sufficiently overcome to allow its 300 house scheme to proceed promptly. The Parish Council had argued that there must be a realistic prospect that housing could be delivered

on the site within that period if Jelson were to benefit from the presumptions in both NPPF paras. 14 and 49. Accordingly, the Secretary of State's Inspector should have examined the issue more rigorously and not simply accepted Jelson's word that the problem would be solved. However, Mr Justice Collins decided that the imposition of a planning condition, at the request of the Environment Agency, restricting the development from starting until the issue had been addressed was an adequate safeguard. and did not warrant the outline permission being quashed.

<b>STATEMENTS</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
There is a need for 72 new homes in Woodchurch between now and 2029 in addition to those approved in the normal planning process	7	21	28	20	68
The priority for the village is for affordable or smaller, more manageable properties	70	29	18	10	17
We should encourage more high-end market homes in Woodchurch to attract affluent buyers and commuters	4	5	23	25	87
New homes in the Ashford area should be built where the highest number of jobs have been (or are in the process of being) created	60	57	10	9	8
Additional housing in the village will be good for the economy of the village	18	22	34	28	42
Additional housing in the village will have a positive impact on the spirit of the village and its rural sense of place	14	13	30	30	57
Additional housing in the village will have a positive impact on the local countryside and wildlife	15	7	20	23	79
New houses in the village will place unsustainable pressure on the local school	78	35	14	11	6
New houses in the village will place unsustainable pressure on the surgery	89	32	12	6	3
New houses in the village will place unsustainable pressure on the highway infrastructure	95	29	13	4	2
New houses in the village will place unsustainable pressure on local transport services i.e. bus service	43	29	36	21	15
New houses in the village will place unsustainable pressure on drainage/water utilities	111	21	7	1	4
Current Broadband service speed is inadequate	73	26	33	7	5

## WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL FUTURE HOUSING IMPACT SURVEY COMMENTS

### Housing Mix

1. Woodchurch is unsuitable for a development of general housing as it has poor transport links - rural bus service and poorly maintained roads and not near a station. Currently the village has a well-defined envelope with many properties either facing or backing on to open space. Each of the proposed sites will adversely impact on this unique feature of the village.
2. Woodchurch was a farming community orientated village at one time but this has changed with fewer small farms and higher mechanisation. The village is now a mix of locally employed persons, retired and commuters. Woodchurch is attractive place to live as it has The Green and reasonable local amenities and many active social clubs. Presently there does not seem to be problems with younger people(!). To maintain the sense of village needs very sympathetic development with an emphasis of supporting local working people to live in the village in affordable housing.
3. Very important that affordable housing is available for young families – this village needs such people.
4. Managing growth in Woodchurch to ensure the quality of life that the villagers currently enjoy is kept within the future vision and planning objectives of the village
5. We are in full support of new housing development within the village as long as it is of an affordable price to the younger generation. My son was offered a Housing Association house in Bridge Close a year ago but it was still too much money for him @ £130K. The younger generation simply cannot get mortgages at the present time. We also disagree that Housing Associations have the right to build on conservation land!!
6. Years back a lot of villagers agreed to a new proposal for small affordable housing at Vicarage Close. The result was a much smaller number of executive homes. The younger generation need small affordable houses to allow them to stay in the area close to their families. I await with interest to see whether this questionnaire proves equally as pointless as those taken before the development of Vicarage Close.
7. I think some bungalows should be built in the village for elderly people who are at present in larger family homes and want a smaller more manageable home.
8. Current residents cannot decide who comes to live in Woodchurch and/or why they come. Some new housing, both high end and affordable, will be good for the village – it will encourage new infrastructure. F) & G) are leading questions.
9. Woodchurch needs more affordable housing (bungalows for the aged populous). Higher speed broadband would have a positive effect. Buying a home for my family to live in Woodchurch is almost impossible ie. Every time a house/bungalow with potential comes up for sale, a local developer buys it, knocks the property down and erects 3 properties on the site. We don't need five bedroom executive homes, we need two and three bed family homes with gardens bigger than a postage stamp.
10. The village needs more smaller affordable housing for the next generation of families who live in the village
11. These types of developments, particularly on Front and Lower Roads, will destroy the nature of the village by infilling open green spaces within it's environs. Front and Lower Roads are already congested by parking and over used as "rat runs" between Tenterden and Ashford, these can only be exacerbated by these developments. Woodchurch does not have the facilities. These will probably be "executive style" developments whereas Woodchurch requires more affordable housing for local people.
12. Additional housing is required for the sustainable future of the village. Any new housing should consist of a mixture of affordable and private 2, 3 & 4 bedroom homes. 72 homes over a 15 year period is only a minor increase on the total number of homes in the village.
13. Woodchurch is a lovely village and it is entirely understandable that more people would like to live here. However it is important to maintain the balance between different types and ages of people, houses, activities and facilities as well as the rural feel of the village if we are not to lose the very qualities which we all value. New housing should develop gradually and 'organically' with each proposed new building considered on its merits and its impact upon the village. The normal planning process currently delivers sufficient new housing stock. Any additional 'development' should only be considered if it can be shown to deliver a positive benefit to the community such as providing the smaller, more affordable homes which so many people feel are needed.
14. Houses need to be built where people want to live. Woodchurch has an ageing population because young people cannot afford to live in the village. If there are no young families we will lose our school as has happened in other villages. Affordable homes need to be built to

encourage young village people to stay. There also needs to be more bungalows or smaller homes so older people can downsize and stay in the village.

15. Strongly agree that there is a need for affordable smaller properties to encourage the growth and development of the village. We should be encouraging the younger generation to form strong family/village connections. There are ample facilities/provisions for the elderly/high end market within the village area.
16. Houses need to be where the jobs are i.e. Ashford or Maidstone not in a rural village where people need to commute - not good for the environment or people
17. The idea of building properties with little red bricks is positively antediluvian - reconstructed wood frame buildings are far superior in every way, far better insulation quick to erect and a fraction of the cost of old fashioned building methods. Thus speeding up the process of buying houses and making them very affordable for first time buyers - so why on earth not build them????
18. There are plenty of brownfield sites that developers could use (despite them saying it's too expensive) Instead of concreting over beautiful areas of countryside and destroying wildlife
19. Extra housing should be built where there are jobs - there are no additional jobs in Woodchurch
20. There are enough brownfield sites where new development will benefit those areas

### Infrastructure

21. Drainage should be sorted out before any more building takes place plus a new sewerage treatment works. "Site W.S.28" extra traffic on a already busy road. "Site W.S.27" extra traffic around the school. "Site W.S.25" traffic using Kirkwood Ave as a cut through to Lower Road disable people who use a electric buggy at risk from fast cars being in danger of getting knocked over will need road calming and reduction of speed limited "5mph"
22. Should major investment in road, school and surgery, the score would change
23. There will be a need for new homes in the next 15/20 years. A small village does not currently have the infrastructure in place to accommodate 72 new homes FACT
24. New homes are needed in Woodchurch but before any major development takes place drainage sewage and water utilities surgery and all subjects mentioned in Para H must be dealt with first
25. Parking – there has been a marked increase in parked cars in both Front Road and Lower Road making driving through difficult. The car park is nearly always full, so users of the Hall are parking on the road. The area near the school is particularly dangerous especially near the bend to Susans Hill (have had had several near misses at school times). It needs double yellow lines in this area! More traffic here would be unacceptable. Drainage is already a problem in the lower part of the village. More housing would cause more problems in this area.
26. Both foul and surface water drainage issues must be addressed before any additional building takes place in both the Beult and Rother catchment areas. With the large number of units already permitted but not yet implemented in Ashford (Chilmington) and Tenterden I fail to see why any extensive development is needed in any of the villages. There is no requirement for additional labour for management of the rural area and to develop the rural area increases traffic movements to work outlets elsewhere.
27. More traffic past the school is not a good idea. Think of the children.
28. Mobile networks need improving, only Vodafone works properly and that's not all the time!
29. Drainage and sewerage treatment is already inadequate and any additional building will add to the problem. Road access to any of the proposed building sites cannot be safely made.
30. What are KCC proposals for infrastructure upgrades, highway drainage, soil drainage, road improvements, footway improvements if these future housing impact proposals are to be considered
31. On street parking is already a problem on Front Road – more houses would add to that. Drainage system may be overloaded on Front Road – already a problem. WS28 would develop one of the two only green spaces remaining on the road and destroy the natural rural environment.
32. G) How can anyone say it will have a positive impact? Extra housing puts extra pressure on road, schools, water shortages, pollution, less greenfields and is not good for the village/country as some would want us to believe. However, local housing for local children is needed (or in Bridge Close)
33. It is quite possible for the school to expand its premises and water/drainage to be upgraded
34. Not many people buying a £500,000+ house will be using the bus (we suspect).
35. If houses were built in Lower Road abutting Kirkwood Avenue inevitably a linking road would be requested between the two roads. This would be a disaster, completely alter not only the layout of the village but its character – turning it into a small town crisscrossed with roads. It should be established that a linking road never be permitted.

36. The state of the current telephone (landline) system and broadband service is absolutely dreadful and needs a radical overhaul whether or not any new properties are built
37. Road surfaces must be improved from butchers to store
38. Mobile phone service - Shirkoak Park area is totally useless
39. Not only is the broadband speed inadequate Here on Shirkoak Park it is almost non-existent. Most of us have no signal for mobile phones which is very inconvenient when there is a power cut and I need to contact family for help

#### Sense of Place

40. Keep Woodchurch as a village + retain its integrity
41. The addition of many houses in Woodchurch would change the whole village atmosphere into a small town. We lack the amenities and roads to cope with more people and cars.
42. With the proposed developments the village is in danger of losing its identity.
43. We feel Woodchurch must maintain its identity as a unique village. We would not like to experience the creeping encroachment from Ashford, Chilmington Green, Shadoxhurst etc
44. Why is it necessary to discuss again as 'clear opposition' was shown last year. Our opinion certainly hasn't changed. In the light of the fact that nearby Chilmington Green is to be developed providing around 6000 new houses, surely there is no need for additional development, particularly in our village which at present is an attractive, unspoilt place to live with some green spaces which provide an open aspect of parts of the village. This must be preserved otherwise we will eventually be swallowed up in the sprawl of housing which is slowly devouring our countryside.
45. Further development to the village would defeat the reason to live in a village in the first place. There is already a problem with too many cars parked on Front Road – it's a health and safety hazard. Site WS28 would destroy one of the only two green spaces on the road. WS27 is an area of natural beauty in the heart of the village with a public footpath running through it and would ruin one of the benefits of living in a rural location.
46. It is not necessary for more housing in Woodchurch, other than to accommodate the needs of the villagers. Let us strive to keep our village peaceful, green and rural with a community feel. Do not let the developers take over!
47. Any new houses built in the village should be for village people and not for Ashford overspill etc
48. If we are to have some homes they should be local and look in keeping with village cottages (ie like ones by post office in Aldington). If we build more homes it will not be a village it will become small town before we know it, then more people. ITS LOVELY THE WAY IT IS. Peaceful!!!!
49. The Windmill at Woodchurch is a major asset to the village. Speaking as a long term welcomer to the windmill I notice that visitors invariably spend a lot of time admiring the rural and extensive views to the south. This view would be irretrievably spoilt if building occurred on Bourne Field. The situation around Willesborough's windmill in Ashford, now being surrounded by housing, should act as a warning
50. Why build houses towards Chilmington Green, Shadoxhurst and Ashford? Surely we must avoid the march of housing towards Chilmington Green to preserve any green space left. A precedent would be set which could ultimately result in the merging of Ashford with Woodchurch. Don't let's encourage this!
51. This is a village - not to be a small town

#### Conservation Area

52. We strongly consider that the conservation area should be protected. Already a trickle of homes are approved for building in the conservation area – if 15 more are now allowed you might as well scrap it entirely. Conservation – the act of conserving or keeping from change – protection, preservation and careful management of natural resources.

#### General

53. There is a number of homes in the village empty of weekend property which could be used better and there are properties which go onto the market large and small which take a while to sell so maybe this indicates the demand is not so high.
54. I have answered the questions objectively, BUT they are presented in a biased way, leading people overall to a 'no' answer to more homes. Such questionnaires MUST be phrased in a non-partisan way, otherwise the other side can always say "foul, disregard the results".
55. Question D: Having worked in the Employment Service for many years there are many factors to be considered in relation to housing and people and jobs, eg type of jobs, qualifications required, interest in that particular job, attitude

56. I understand that when the Bourne family requested permission to erect a converted barn on Bournes Field (previously acknowledged to be agricultural land and not residential) the family gave assurances to the council that they would not seek permission for further development. The parish council accepted their assurances and gave exceptional permission
57. We have enjoyed a village life since 1968, the last 12 years in Woodchurch, There's not much wrong with Woodchurch although a far greater involvement from the 30-50 age group will help to maintain the pleasures and privileges of the local community in say the next 10 to 15 years

## **Appendix 2**

### **SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE BOROUGH COUNCIL AT A FUTURE MEETING**

An understanding of the Borough Council's 5-year supply target and how it relates to Woodchurch with reference to its organic growth rate and the scale of applications/approvals coming forward in nearby areas

An undertaking that an assessment of the cumulative impact of the submissions will be undertaken before decisions are taken

An agreement that the mix of organic growth and the Borough Council's history of successfully facilitating development in other villages have sustainably supported services in Woodchurch such that any new allocated development sites should focus on the community's needs (Section 55 - NPPF)

Agree criteria with the Borough Council that any proposed development that is not contiguous with the substantive element of the settlement of Woodchurch is removed from the shortlist on the grounds that incongruous development which fails to protect the character and distinctiveness of the built and natural environment cannot claim to represent high quality development- regardless of the quality of the buildings proposed or the applicant's intention to create an affordable element.

Agree criteria with the Borough Council that developments which fail to recognise and protect the character of a valued landscape which should be protected according to the National Planning Policy Framework, are removed from the shortlist.

Given that there have already been a number of serious collisions recorded, to agree a criteria with the Borough Council (via KCC) that until applicants can provide objective evidence that predicts the impact of their development on future traffic flows and distribution, the sites should be not be automatically included in the final plan.

A presumption against developments where proposed accesses, by virtue of their relationship to the existing dwellings are likely to give rise to significant and unacceptable levels of increased traffic movement thereby increasing the noise, danger and disturbance to the occupiers of the existing dwellings.

A proposal that any proposed development that affects the "the green heart" of the village as identified and agreed in current supplementary planning documents is considered unjustified and will neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

To request the Borough Council's advice on how Neighbourhood Planning can be facilitated and Community Land Trusts could help to balance the needs of individuals with the community's need to maintain affordability.

Express our view that the Borough Council should not include the site WS28-front) in the future plan until such time that it is satisfied the housing supply is deliverable, that it is needed in the light of Section 55 of the NPPF and that it is prepared to define the controls and conditions relating to the housing mix

**Appendix 3 - How do we know what ABC think the right balance is between the type and scale of new housing and the conservation of the essence of the place?**

*G L Hearn - Tentatively, we consider there to be some indication of a need for diversification of the housing offer in Ashford. There is some evidence of a need to provide small and medium-sized homes, both within the most accessible parts of the Ashford town sub-area as well as in some of the larger villages. This would not only support a reduction in under-occupation (and thus greater liquidity of larger properties) but would also ensure that “accessible” options exist for small/newly forming households. In the more rural sub-areas, we consider this provides a continuing rationale for rural exceptions*

**What would ABC want to see developed or prioritised in Woodchurch ?**

*G L Hearn - For market housing, we recommend that the focus of new provision is on larger properties (3 and 4 bedrooms) properties to serve the continued demand for family properties arising from existing growing households and those migrating into the borough.*

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*(there is) some variation amongst the four rural sub-areas with two having a reasonable balance, in terms of property mix (Rural South and Rural North); whilst the others (Rural East and Rural West) are far less diverse and focussed heavily on large detached properties*

**If the requirement is for around 725 houses a year, how many do ABC think Woodchurch should contribute when there are already thousands of homes planned for Chilmington Green and 500 in Tenterden?**

*G L Hearn - Drawing the range of evidence together, we conclude that a requirement of 720-730 homes per annum would be a reasonable objective assessment of need. This figure meets demographic needs, enables an ambitious level of economic growth (consistent with the PROJ 2 scenario) and is consistent with the growth which would be expected given the market dynamics and signals. An overall requirement at this level would also enable the Council to address tenure imbalances in the affordable sector and reduce reliance on the private rented sector.*

**Does ABC know we have 60 names on our Local Needs register and there are local people who can't even afford Housing Association homes in Woodchurch ?**

*G L Hearn - In following this approach, we have identified a net affordable housing need in Ashford of 6,253 households over the period from 2013 to 2030, equivalent to 368 households each year (reducing to 335 if we include the affordable housing development pipeline). There is thus a significant need for new affordable housing in Ashford and we therefore consider the Council is justified in seeking to secure the maximum viable level of affordable housing.*

*Addressing the housing needs of older people will be a matter of some considerable scale in Ashford given the significant projected growth in the over 65 population over the plan period. The overall housing mix recommendations reflect this, account of this, particularly in respect of delivering smaller units to encourage downsizing and enable older people to move into more manageable accommodation, however; it will be important to consider the quality and type of smaller units if this provision is to meet the specific needs and demands of this group*

**Woodchurch has accommodated an 80-place residential home recently which must have released housing elsewhere. Is that taken in to account in the targets?**

*G L Hearn - Our assessment also identifies a requirement for around 120 specialist sheltered or extra-care housing units per annum over the period to 2030, particularly in the affordable sector, to meet the needs of this group as well as a large registered care requirement (particularly owing to the growth in older people with dementia or mobility problems) which although distinct from conventional housing, could serve to release properties for occupation by other household*

