



PLUCKLEY PARISH PLAN

UPDATE 2013



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1. Executive Summary

In 2009, Pluckley produced its first Parish Plan. This followed a number of meetings and communications within the village to ascertain residents' views on key issues affecting the village. Principal among these were a questionnaire sent to all households, and a Workshop to discuss and enlarge upon the findings. That was the first review of the village since the Pluckley Village Appraisal 1999.

This year, we have carried out a formal review and update of the Plan. As before, input from residents has been obtained through a questionnaire sent to all households, supplemented by a Workshop.

This report contains the Input made by the village in the form of questionnaire responses and workshop attendance. Clear views were expressed about, the scale and type of development acceptable in the village, support for the Parish Design Statement, the issue of traffic, and the improvements wanted in amenities and social activities in the village. These views have been incorporated into the Action Plan. Some of these aims will be deliverable very shortly, indeed some are already being met; others will take rather longer; and some may require further consultation within the village.

The Plan has now been formally adopted by the Parish Council and, as such, it forms a remit for the Council in representing the village, and will drive our thinking and policies over the coming years. The Working Groups, drawn from the village, are assisting the Parish Council in executing this programme.

I would like to thank everybody who has had, and continues to have, an input to the Parish Plan. The Plan is the property of the whole community and it is only by such involvement that we can all ensure our community is as we would wish. It is our intention to repeat the exercise, starting in 2017.

Martin Newman

2. What is the Parish Plan?

The Parish Plan sets out a vision for the village of what is important, how new development can best be fitted in, the design and quality standards it should meet, how to reserve local features and to map out the facilities which the community needs to safeguard for the future.

The Plan should identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved.

The Plan should link closely with the local development plans produced by the Borough Council and can be adopted by the Local Authority as official "Supplementary Planning Guidance".

Many Parish Plans include a Design Statement. Pluckley is fortunate in already having its Parish Design Statement. This was produced in 2003 and describes admirably the setting and character of Pluckley, the nature of its buildings, and sets out design principles based on the local character. The Design Statement has stood the test of time and was strongly supported during the Input made by the village in the preparation of this Plan.

The Parish Design Statement was formally adopted by Ashford Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance and as such, is taken into consideration when planning decisions are made. The Parish Design Statement is a key part of our Parish Plan.

A Parish Plan influences the future. There are four links in the chain. First, the Plan influences the Local Development Framework (LDF). Second, it influences the Borough's Community Strategy. Third, it influences the medium-term (13 years) horizon represented by the Ashford's Future project and RPG9.

Fourth, it influences the long-term (20+year) horizon of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South East. It should be added here that much of the Plan is about self-help. As well as giving a steer to the Parish Council, most of the projects will be carried out within the parish and will require on-going effort from volunteers, as well as support from residents in order to ensure their success.

What the Parish Plan should do for Pluckley is:

- Voice our needs, concerns, hopes and desires
- Give us the initiative in setting the agenda for our future
- Enable facts to be presented from Pluckley’s perspective
- Give our community a sense of ownership of the planning process at the local level
- Be a route for winning grant funding for local initiatives

3. Input from the Village – Questionnaire and Workshop

3.i. The Response

The questionnaire was based on a standard “Village Appraisal” software package. A few of the questions were amended and others added. 126 households with 317 inhabitants completed the questionnaires. (This is disappointingly lower than the 2009 survey when 266 households with 632 inhabitants replied). It is possible that residents were less motivated to respond to updating a Plan than they were to creating the original Plan.

The age breakdown of respondents is shown below:

Q. Please enter the number of people in your household in each age group:

0-4	11	3%
5-10	21	7%
11-17	26	8%
18-24	23	7%
25-44	47	15%
45-64	117	37%
65-74	47	15%
75+	25	8%

The only significant difference since 2009 is that more middle-aged residents (45-64) responded, and fewer younger and older residents.

Q. Where does your household live?

Village centre & Westfields	42	33%
Thorne to Fir Toll	40	32%
Station	10	9%
Other	34	27%

These figures reflect the dispersed character of Pluckley.

Respondents were asked about their housing:

Q. Is this dwelling?

Private rented	9	7%
Local authority rented	7	6%
Housing association rented	5	4%
Owner occupied	105	83%

Again, these figures are very similar to previous returns.

Q. Is any member of your household currently in need of...?

Local Needs Housing	8
Purpose built housing for elderly or disabled	3

The response for Local Needs Housing requirement endorses the Parish Council support for four more homes, for which an application has now been approved.

Q. How long have you lived in Pluckley?

Less than a year	10	4%
1-5 years	48	17%
6-15 years	91	33%
16-25 years	62	23%
26-50 years	50	17%
50+ years	16	6%

There are no significant differences from the 2009 survey.

Q. Are you at present...?

Employed	100	37%
Unemployed	10	4%
Self-employed	33	12%
In training/full-time education	31	11%
Housewife/husband	23	9%
Retired	76	28%

Q.If you work, where is your main place of work?

Pluckley	32	23%
Ashford	26	19%
Maidstone	10	7%
London	20	14%
Other-within Kent	41	30%
Other-outside Kent	9	7%

The Workshop was comprised of 40 villagers. All residents were invited and some volunteered. The remainder were selected to form a representative cross-section of the village in terms of age, sex, and geographical distribution within the village.

The workshop split into four groups, each with a table leader, to facilitate discussion and to give every attendee a better opportunity to make their input. Each group discussed all the subject areas of interest and was required to give their views/make suggestions on each issue and also to weight each issue in terms of its relative importance to the village. The issues discussed took advantage of the questionnaire findings and some of the issues were developed more fully, and possible solutions to problems identified. This provided a matrix of scores, making it is easy to see how strongly the village feels about each issue and giving us a priority list for action.

3.ii. Development

This section covers the issue of development in Pluckley, including villagers' views about the level and nature of future development.

Residents are divided over new housing for Pluckley.

Q. Do you think Pluckley can accommodate more new housing?

Yes	115	42%
No	105	38%
Don't know/no reply	57	20%

Of those who favoured new housing, the most support was for small family homes and sheltered housing for the elderly.

Q. What kind of accommodation?

Small family homes	95	34%
Large family homes	33	12%
Local authority homes	23	8%
Local Needs homes	75	27%
Sheltered housing for the elderly/or disabled	63	23%
No further homes are needed	93	33%

The divided response over new homes is expressed again over the question of what type of housing Pluckley might accommodate. The homes that get the most support are small family homes. This is backed up by the Workshop finding, where this received the high rating of 4.5/5. Local Needs housing also attracted support, though at the Workshop this was downgraded since, in the period between the Questionnaire and the Workshop, a scheme for four homes had progressed to final approval stage. Approval has since been given, and there is limited support for further Local Needs units for the time being.

In the Workshop, Sheltered housing for the Elderly received 3.5/5 support. This recognised that a development of 30+ houses was not viable in Pluckley and that the village is 'clustered' with others in seeking a site. Support was strong, however, for finding a site within the cluster.

The other key question related to the nature of development:

Q. What types of housing development would be acceptable in Pluckley?

Conversion of redundant dwellings	110	40%
Small groups of less than 5	107	39%
Single dwellings in controlled locations	95	34%
Larger groups	9	3%
None	87	31%

As in previous surveys, the picture is clear: villagers prefer any development to be small-scale and scattered. This was borne out at the Workshop where 'small groups of fewer than 5 houses on a site' was the biggest response, scoring 4.75/5, while 'single dwellings' attracted 4.5/5. Both Questionnaire and Workshop agreed strongly that development of redundant dwellings was preferable to building on an undeveloped site.

As regards business development, there is support for small business development, particularly related to tourism. Large business development would not be welcome.

Q. Should the following be encouraged in and around Pluckley?

Small business development	152	54%
Large business development	9	3%
Tourism developments/attractions	92	33%
None of these	70	25%

Q. Should there be development of?

Camping sites	65	24%
Sites for touring caravans	41	15%
Sites for permanent holiday caravans	7	2%
Bed & breakfast	121	44%
Hotels	22	7%
More open space/nature reserve	161	58%

The Workshop endorsed the Questionnaire responses. Small business development was given 4.25/5 as residents felt that we should encourage visitors to help local traders. The tourism favoured was of The Darling Buds of May type, rather than Ghost hunters. Encouragement of Open Space was given a maximum 5/5 rating and Bed & Breakfast 4.0/5.

The Workshop went further than the questionnaire by asking about protecting specific aspects of the village listed in the Design Statement. Very strong support was given for Maintenance of open views 5/5; maintaining key open spaces (green heart, Thorne, station) 5/5; Hedgerows to be encouraged 5/5; Street lighting discouraged 5/5; and Planting to soften and screen any development 5/5. The active management of woodlands was endorsed as long as they are not over-managed and retain a natural feel.

Finally, in development terms, the Workshop gave maximum support of 5/5 to the Parish Council policy of opposing any planning application likely to generate HGV traffic (see Traffic below).

In conclusion, there is support for small-scale, dispersed development. This is akin to the 'windfall' development Pluckley has seen to date. Smaller, family homes are preferred. Given the likely addition of four Local Needs homes shortly, further units are not felt to be required. There is also support for B&B and the encouragement of tourism.

Recommendations

1. Continue to support only small-scale, dispersed development
2. Defend the village Design Statement
3. Continue to resist developments of 5 or more houses
4. Continue to seek secured housing for the elderly within the cluster of villages
5. Encourage tourism, particularly B&B

3iii. Transport in Pluckley

This section of the study asked villagers for their views on the transport they use and traffic through the village.

Q. Which of the following transport services do you use?

Train	153	56%
Bus	18	6%
Wealden Wheels	28	10%
None	88	32%

The extensive use of the train service shows its importance to the village. Residents were asked about how they get to the station and the ease of parking there.

Q. If you use the station, do you usually?

Walk, get a lift, cycle	101	52%
Park in the station car park	63	32%
Park on the road	31	16%

Q. If you don't use the station car park, why not?

No space	7	9%
Parking charge too high	69	85%
Other – please specify	5	6%

It is clear that the high parking charges deter residents of the village from parking in the station car park. This could explain why so many walk or get a lift; or park on the road along with many other commuters.

The station area is not the only part of Pluckley with parking issues.

Q. Is there anywhere in Pluckley where you experience parking problems?

Outside home	32	12%
The Street	133	48%
Village Hall	10	4%
Recreation Ground	8	3%
Station	71	25%

The Street, or village centre, is the area where parking is most difficult. The installation of parking on the Recreation Ground has eased the problem there and, to some extent, also helped the village centre.

Parking though is not the biggest traffic issue facing the village.

Q. Which of these traffic issues do you think are a problem in Pluckley?

Number of HGVs	181	66%
Speed of vehicles	180	65%
Size of HGVs	180	65%
State of road surfaces	150	55%
Parking	99	34%
Visibility	89	32%
Snow & Ice	69	25%
Running water	51	18%
None	2	1%

The number and size of HGVs passing through the village, and the speed of vehicles are seen as major issues. The Workshop endorsed this with maximum 5/5 ratings. The Workshop also gave 4.75/5 for the state of road surfaces. The HGV traffic is seen as exacerbating the condition of the roads, though Lambden Road, which receives little or no HGV traffic, is cited as particularly bad. Snow and ice were seen by the Workshop as more significant problems 4.0/5, though improvements in winter road management were appreciated. The running water relates primarily to Forge Hill.

A number of locations in Pluckley are seen as 'danger spots'.

Q. Do you think there any 'danger spots' on the roads in Pluckley?

Junction of The Street/Forge Hill	198	72%
Junction Egerton Road/Charing Road	160	58%
Railway bridge	117	43%
Forge Hill	82	30%
Junction for station	76	27%
The Street	50	18%
Junction at Thorne	46	17%
Junction at Fir Toll	25	9%
Other	8	3%

The widespread concern about ‘danger spots’ and speeding prompted the Parish Council to undertake a Speed Review in 2011. Some of its recommendations have been accepted and implemented recently. The remaining recommendation to reduce the 40mph limit area to 30mph would ease some of the danger spots listed above. The railway bridge and station area have also recently had parking restrictions and a 30mph limit imposed with the attention of alleviating the risks there.

Various options for traffic calming were raised. In the questionnaire:

Q. Would you like to see the following in Pluckley?

Speed ramps	67	24%
Gates on verges at village entry	56	20%
Chicanes	50	18%
Pedestrian crossings	50	18%
Yellow lines	43	16%
Other	10	4%
None	51	19%

The Workshop called for the use of inter-active speed signs 4.25/5 and gave most support to gates at the village entries 3.5/5 and the use of a Speedwatch 3.5/5. It was felt that any speed ramps should be longer to mitigate the noise. An Open Day in the village in 2012 had favoured gates at the village entry and chicanes. The Workshop expressed the view that much would depend on where each calming measure was to be implemented. A further Open Day exploring specific locations in the village and the most appropriate solution for each was called for.

Q. Would you like to see the following in Pluckley?

More pavements	72	25%
More footpaths	66	24%
Street lights	29	10%

This lack of support was endorsed by the Workshop. Little support was given for more pavements 2.25/5, though it called for the existing ones to be maintained better; pedestrian crossings 2/5; more yellow lines 1.25/5; and street lighting 0.75/5.

Recommendations

1. To press for 30mph limit to replace the current 40mph limit zone, as recommended in the Speed Review.
2. To look at specific village locations and identify the best calming solution for each.
3. To give Speedwatch a proper trial.
4. To address the running water on Forge Hill
5. To press for surface repairs
6. To seek to control the numbers, size and speed of HGVs passing through the village.

3.iv. Social Activities

This section looks at the provision of leisure activities in Pluckley – what people do now, and what they would like to do.

Good use is made of the various ‘meeting points’ in the community.

Q. How often do you use the following?

Pluckley shops	231 regularly or occasionally	84%
Pluckley pubs	164	59%
Village Hall	128	48%
Recreation Ground	112	41%
St.Nicholas church	105	38%

Residents feel that more could be done to improve social inter-action in the village.

Q. What are your views on social facilities in Pluckley?

For young people aged up to 11	good or about right 54 v 53 poor.
For young people aged 11-18	good or about right 13 v 97 poor.
For senior citizens	good or about right 41 v 55 poor.

The better showing for infants and juniors probably reflects the active role provided by the school, and the play facilities installed by the Parish Council on the Recreation Ground. The pressing need is to provide more social activities for the village’s teenagers. The Workshop endorsed this 5/5 and also called for more activities for senior citizens 5/5. The Workshop gave 3.5/5 support for more activities for young people aged up to 11.

Residents were asked which activities they might be interested in.

Q. Which of the following activities would you, or your family, be interested in if they were organised at the Recreation Ground?

Tennis	56	20%
Petanque	32	12%
Table Tennis	32	12%
Junior football	26	9%
Multi-games wall	20	7%
Junior Cricket	11	4%
Other	2	1%

The Workshop called for all of these to be encouraged. Already, the defunct Tennis Club is being revived and a multi-games area has been installed on the Recreation Ground. Table Tennis tables have also been acquired for the Village Hall.

Residents would like to see a wider programme of activities offered at the Village Hall.

Q. Which of the following activities would you, or your family, be interested in if they organised at the Village Hall?

Musical events	88	32%
Cinema	81	30%
Wine tasting	67	24%
Art group/show	62	22%
Computer help	55	20%
Language course/conversation	46	17%
Table Tennis	44	16%
Chess	16	6%
Other	14	5%

The Workshop also called for more activities with strongest support for table tennis 5/5; art group 4.5/5; wine tasting 4.25/5; and musical events and cinema, each 3.75/5.

Residents said they would use the Village Hall more if it was further improved.

Q. Would any of the following encourage you to use the Hall more?

Smarter external appearance	74	28%
New kitchen	59	23%
Lounge area, with bar	58	23%
New toilets	53	20%
Internet/WiFi	24	9%

All of the above were supported by the Workshop which gave maximum 5/5 ratings for all except for internet/WiFi which received 3.25/5. The favoured language for the language course or conversation group was French.

Residents were asked how they liked to receive information about the village.

Q. How would you prefer to receive information about the village?

e-mail newsletter	123	45%
Communicate	119	44%
Notice boards	90	33%
Local paper	78	29%
Pluckley.net website	64	23%

The range of media favoured suggests we should continue with all. Setting up an e-mail newsletter needs to be explored.

Recommendations

1. Continue to support the range of sports on the Recreation Ground.
2. Encourage the newly formed Pluckley Festival of Art, and table tennis at the Village Hall.
3. Explore further the setting up of musical events, cinema, wine tasting and language groups at the Village Hall.
4. Continue to seek funds to enable phase 2 of the Village Hall improvement programme providing new lounge, kitchen, toilets and refurbished exterior.
5. Consider developing an e-mail newsletter.

4.Action Plan

This is drawn from the list of the recommendations included at the end of each section in the Plan. This Plan will act as the brief for the Parish Council and act as a management tool in organising how we set about improving life in our village.

1. Continue to support only small-scale, dispersed development
2. Defend the village Design Statement
3. Continue to resist developments of 5 or more houses
4. Continue to seek sheltered housing for the elderly within the cluster of villages
5. Encourage tourism, particularly B&B.
6. To press for 30mph limit to replace the current 40mph limit zone, as recommended in the Speed Review.
7. To look at specific village locations and identify the best calming solution for each.
8. To give Speedwatch a proper trial.
9. To address the running water on Forge Hill
- 10.To press for road surface repairs
- 11.To seek to control the numbers, size and speed of HGVs passing through the village.
- 12.Continue to support the range of sports on the Recreation Ground.
- 13.Encourage the newly formed Pluckley Festival of Art at the Village Hall.
- 14.Explore further the setting up of musical events, cinema, table tennis, wine tasting and language groups at the Village Hall.
- 15.Continue to seek funds to enable phase 2 of the Village Hall improvement programme providing new lounge, kitchen, toilets and refurbished exterior.
- 16.Consider developing an e-mail newsletter.

5.Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the Funding Support received from our sponsor:

Pluckley Parish Council

HOUSING/DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation	Action	Partners	Priority	Timescale	Resource Implications	Lead responsibility
Support small-scale, dispersed development only/resist developments of 5 or more houses	Ensure this is recognised in Core Strategy	ABC, Planning Inspectorate	High	12 Months and ongoing	none	Parish Council
Defend Village Design Statement	Link with Parish Plan	ABC	High	Immediate and ongoing	none	Parish Council
Continue to seek sheltered housing for elderly within cluster of villages	Ensure this is recognised within Core Strategy	ABC	High	12 Months	none	Parish Council
Encourage tourism, particularly B&B	Media contact	ABC, KCC, Media	Medium	Immediate and ongoing	none	Parish Council

TRAFFIC

Recommendation	Action	Partners	Priority	Timescale	Resource Implications	Lead responsibility
Secure reduction of 40mph area to 30mph	Liaise KCC member, Highways, Police, JTB, Assist with funding	KCC, ABC	High	6 months	Medium	Parish Council
Propose calming for specific locations	Identify locations, identify possible solutions, Open Day.	Residents, Highways, Police	High	24 months	High	Parish Council
Speedwatch	Secure and train volunteers. Liaise Police	Residents, Police	Medium	12 months	Medium	Parish Council
Running water on Forge Hill	Liaise Highways	Highways	Medium	Done-solution 9/13	none	Parish Council
Road surface repairs	Liaise Highways	Highways	Medium	On-going	none	Residents, Parish Council
Control HGV traffic	Oppose relevant planning	ABC	High	On-going	none	Parish Council
	Speed limit, calming, Speedwatch initiatives above	KCC	High	12 Months		
	Explore weight limit					

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Recommendation	Action	Partners	Priority	Timescale	Resource Implications	Lead responsibility
Support sports on Rec.	Support clubs, school. Maintain pavilions, ground, equipment	Sports clubs, school, contractors	High	On-going	Low	Parish Council
Encourage Festival of Art at Village Hall	Organise, promote	Hall Trustees, art groups, schools, tutors, KCC, ABC, media	Medium	Annually, on-going	Low	Organiser
Set up Music, cinema, table tennis, wine tasting, language co	Organise events, promote	Hall Trustees, suppliers, volunteers	Medium	12 months	Low	Leisure Work Group
Phase 2 of Hall development	Seek funds, brief and oversee work	Funders, ACRK, KCC, architect, contractors	High	24 months	High	Hall Trustees
Explore e-mail newsletter	Consider format, obtain addresses, secure writer	Residents	Low	12 months	Low	Parish Council