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AND
TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC CONSULTANCY**

**CHAMBERS GREEN / PLUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL
POSSIBLE TRAFFIC HIGHWAY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPROVEMENTS**

DISCUSSION DRAFT

BY

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Figure 2: Hinterland of Chambers Green and Pluckley Station

Figure 3.1: Possible Traffic and Environmental Improvements – Northern Section

Figure 3.2: Possible Traffic and Environmental Improvements – Southern Section

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 John Elliott Consultancy and Traffic and Transport Consultancy (Chris Veasey) have been appointed by Pluckley Parish Council to review the traffic, highway and associated environmental conditions for Chambers Green sub village and the associated railway station – Pluckley. The understood objectives of Pluckley Parish Council are to address any potential safety issues, devise measures to better manage the parking mainly with the station and limit and control potential damage to verges and green spaces in this sub village.
- 1.2 A fundamental part of any review is to ensure that any measures suggested should have the full support of the local residents and any businesses associated with the immediate area. The outcome of any suggested measures are intended to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan and hence in the Ashford Borough Council Development Plan. This document is thus written to suggest what may meet the initial requirements of the local sub village modified accordingly after discussion and then discussed with Kent County Council as the Highway and Traffic Authority, Ashford Borough Council as the Planning Authority and Southeastern Rail as the responsible body for the Station and rail services.

2 CHAMBERS GREEN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The sub-village of Chambers Green and Pluckley Station is about 1 mile south of Pluckley Village itself. They are both part of the Hinterland containing several villages and other settlements between Ashford and Maidstone, all located on a road network of basically Country Lanes many too narrow for full two-way traffic without vehicles finding passing places or driving partly on the verge to pass by each other. This hinterland is bounded by four classified A roads, the A20 (and M20 following a very similar line) the A28 a short section of the A262 and the A274. The area is shown in Figure 1 and the immediate sub-village and surroundings in Figure 2.
- 2.2 As in much of the South-East of England villages in the hinterland are expanding fast. This includes a substantial new housing development on the west side of this sub-village, off Otium Lake (road).
- 2.3 The most important part of its Transport Infrastructure is undoubtedly Pluckley Station on Ashford – Tonbridge - London Victoria line. The immediate neighbouring stations are Ashford to the east and Headcorn to the west. With the expanding developments and population in the surrounding villages, and indeed the western expansion of Ashford, the importance of Pluckley Station will only increase.
- 2.4 There are no longer any bus routes serving the village or station. The station could readily be accessed by foot from all properties in the surrounding sub-village, but for any other settlement access to the Station is likely to be mainly by car especially during the dark winter months, although cycling is reasonably possible in daylight. The land is quite flat but traffic speeds on the country lanes will put many cyclists off.
- 2.5 Most available employment for local residents is likely to be in London, Ashford, Maidstone and other medium sized towns in Kent or East Sussex. Canterbury, Ashford, Folkestone and Tonbridge can be readily reached by train. There are some local businesses in the hinterland but residents in the area are more likely to travel to such places of work by car. Nevertheless anything that can be done to make rail travel easier could help the sustainability of the area even if this means travelling to Pluckley Station by car.

3 EXISTING CONDITIONS AND PRESENTLY IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS

- 3.1 It is notable that Central Government has now adopted a hierarchy where pedestrians should be top of the priority and government funding should also prioritise pedestrian improvement for Local authority schemes and funding. At present a number of properties in Chambers Green, even, have far from satisfactory or safe pedestrian routes even to their very convenient station. Footways and verges are far from satisfactory, non-existent, sloping, blocked by parked cars or very muddy - even towards the centre of the village.
- 3.2 There is a 30mph limit in the core of the village but this doesn't go to the full extent of the sub-village and drivers often do not reduce their speed until after they have passed the 30 limit signs - see also comment in paragraph 3.8 below on the recorded serious accident.

- 3.3 Towards the southern end of the village there is a humped back bridge that is perhaps just wide enough for two cars to pass but no pedestrian space whatsoever. The hump bridge itself is also a vehicle hazard unless drivers slow right down.
- 3.4 The situation for the physically disabled is even worse especially as not only is there no satisfactory way of moving about except via the road carriageway itself. They also can't even access the westbound rail services as the only way of getting to the platform is over a stepped footbridge.
- 3.5 There is a pay and display car park at the station with 46 spaces including 3 disabled spaces. These can be fairly well used by commuters. There is however land adjoining the car park in railway ownership which would allow significant expansion.
- 3.6 There are continuous 'Any time' double yellow line waiting restrictions on both sides of Station Road from and including Otium Lake (Private road) to a point some distance south of the railway bridge, including all around the junction with Station Approach. The existing yellow lines are in poor order and sometimes obscured by mud.
- 3.7 Unfortunately on the verge on the west side of Station Road northwards from Otium Lake where there are no waiting restrictions considerable station-related parking takes place which results in a muddy mess, insufficient room for two cars to pass and increased risk to pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3.8 The most recent 5 years personal injury road accident data for the area, from the national Crashmap database, is presented at Appendix A. This shows that there has been only one accident, albeit resulting in a serious injury, in the whole area in those 5 years. This involved a two-car shunt on Station Road, apparently at or near Dering Close. While detail is not available this accident did occur just inside the 30mph limit and it is possible that the vehicle causing the accident and serious injury was still exceeding the speed limit.
- 3.9 This accident record confirms that the local roads in the Chambers Green/ Pluckley Station area are generally safe – which does not however mean that the situation is satisfactory with no scope or need for improvement.

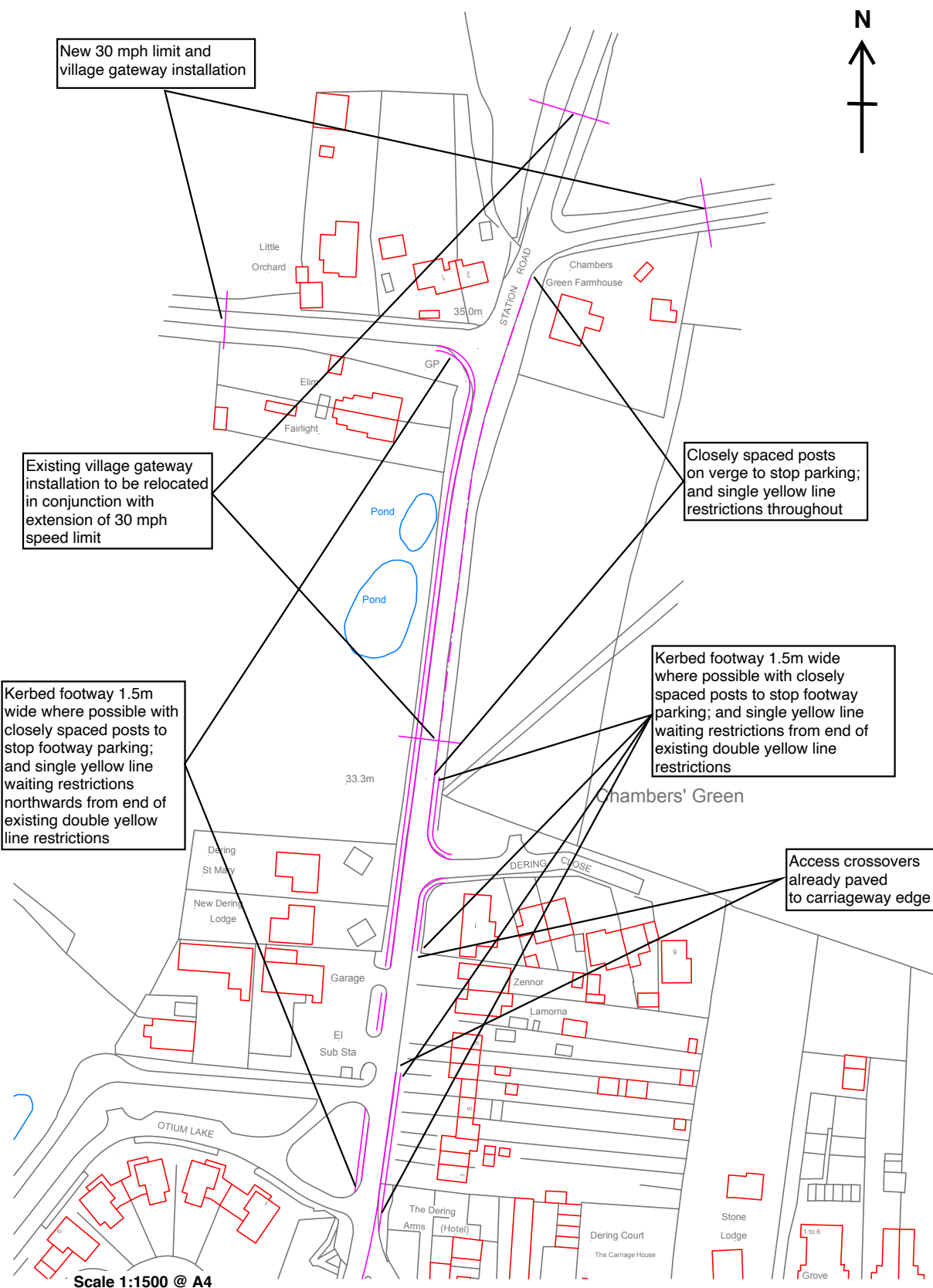
4 POSSIBLE MEASURES TO MITIGATE/SOLVE PROBLEMS

- 4.1 It is suggested that a combination of measures could provide environmental and traffic/ transport improvements to the village as follows:
 - I. Speed limits moved to the extremities of the village at the junctions of Station Rd with Chambers Road/ Dowle Street in the north and New House Road in the south, and village gateway installations provided there. This is shown in Figure 3.1.
 - II. Provision of a marked footway over the hump backed bridge with visible passing places each side of the bridge with signed priorities and traffic calming. This is shown in Figure 3.2.

- III. Marked parking spaces in Station approach together with an extension of the station car park. Such an extension would need to be sufficient to accommodate the parking displaced from Station Road as well as the possible increase in demand from the extra developments in the wider Pluckley hinterland. It should be noted that a facility for disabled/ wheelchair users to cross to the West/London bound rail services needs to be provided; it would also be highly desirable for South Eastern rail to provide free or cheap parking for non-commuters visiting the village for say 3 hours during the day or in the evenings.
- IV. A new footway to be provided on the east side of Station Road on the verge in front of the properties. The verge north of this point would need to be protected from parking by controls/yellow lines and stones or lightweight reflective posts. On the west side the muddy verge, presently used for mainly station parking, should be upgraded to a surfaced footway, again with parking control. it may also be necessary to place more substantial bollards on the footways if it seems as if the controls/yellow lines would not prevent illegal parking on the footways. These measures are shown in Figure 3.1.
- ✓. It has been suggested that the junction of Station Road and Station approach could be modified to slow up traffic entering Station Approach and improve sightlines for traffic leaving Station Approach. This could be achieved most readily by closing the 'sliproad' to the northeast of the island and using the link to the south of this green for two way access to the station area, as shown in Figure 3.2. This road closure would also give the opportunity to provide an enhanced amenity area incorporating the existing triangular green.

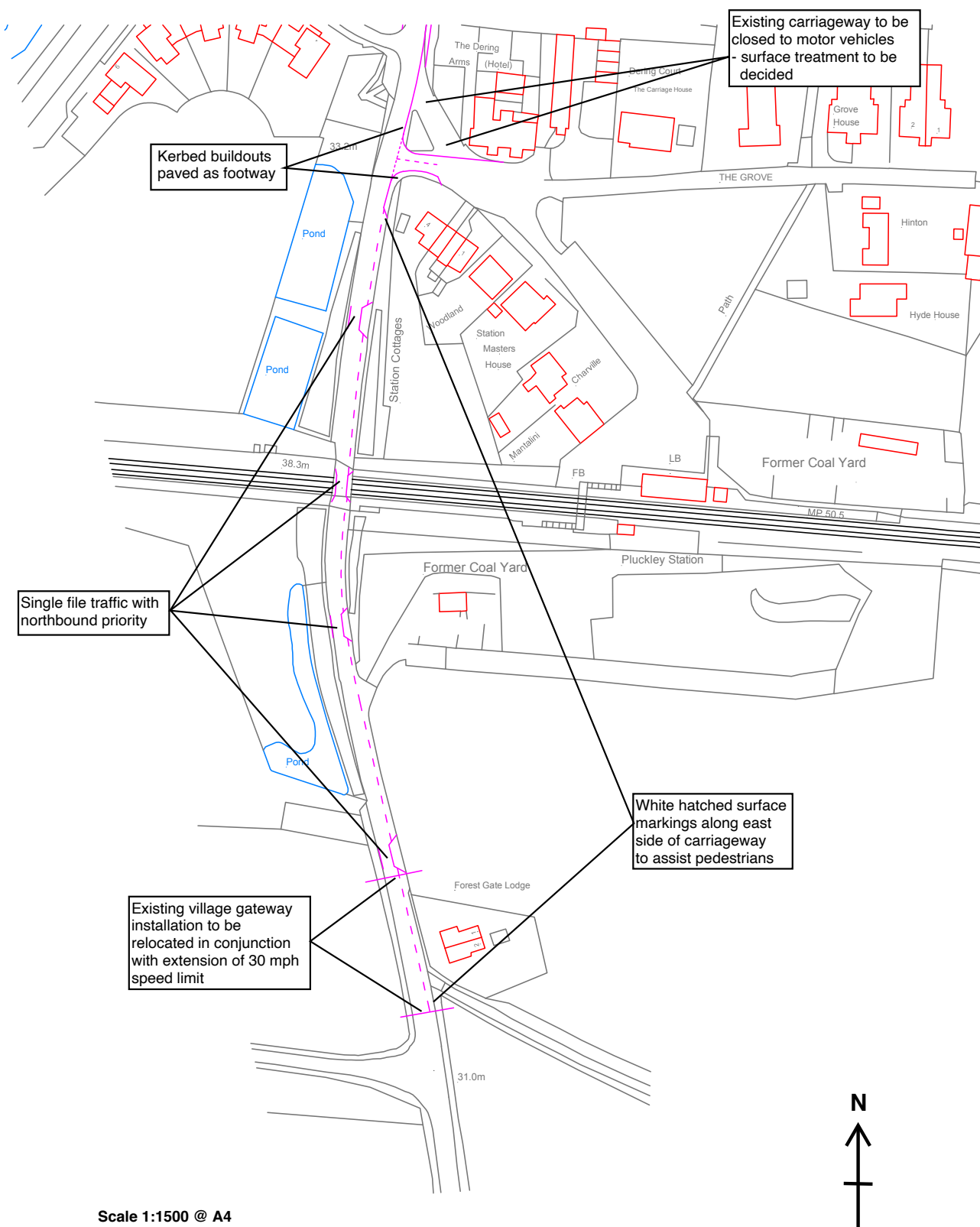
5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 It is suggested that this report be circulated to the villagers and other interested parties to precede a public meeting to be held in a convenient place. It is hoped/expected other ideas or possible modifications may be suggested at such a meeting or in writing before or after such a meeting. Following this the report and proposals would be modified to reflect local wishes.
- 5.2 Discussions would be opened with Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council on how best the measures could be implemented and funded. Similarly discussions would be held by the Parish Council with South Eastern Rail on extra parking provision, charges and disabled access. The Parish Council would also incorporate the proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan as mentioned in paragraph 1.2.



**Possible Traffic Highway and and Environmental Improvements
– Northern Section**

FIGURE 3.1



Scale 1:1500 @ A4

**Possible Traffic Highway and and Environmental Improvements
– Southern Section**

FIGURE 3.2