



Capel Neighbourhood Plan Visioning and Design Workshop

7pm, 13th April 2022, Capel Village Hall, Five Oaks Green

Introduction

This community workshop built on the work of the Capel Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) working party over the last two years including:

- Capel Vision Survey and Report Autumn 2020
- Policy intentions workshop Summer 2021
- Place making reconnaissance / walkabout Autumn 2021
- Working party evidence gathering Winter 2021/2

The aim was twofold:

- To generate the community's shared vision for the area;
- To discuss the existing character of the settlements and rural hinterland and the implications for the design of future developments.

This report summarises the outputs from the event and makes some recommendations for follow up activities, issues and options for the draft CNP and for Design Guidance or Codes being prepared on behalf of the local community by the design team from AECOM.

Issues and options

The event started with a presentation summarising the issues and options identified by the CNP working party by theme:

Community Facilities

The Vision for Capel questionnaire suggested people want better community facilities:

- Protect remaining pubs
- Provide for health and dental care
- Housing to meet local needs (approx. 105 affordable homes)

Community groups, charities and sports teams – Capel Cricket Club, Five Oak Green in Bloom, Friends of Five Oak Green Recreation Ground – can support this.

Heritage

- 140+ listed buildings and 1 ancient monuments including Castle Hill, All Saints & St Thomas a Becket churches, Somerhill House and historic park and garden
- A local listing scheme – non-designated heritage assets
- Historic farmsteads
- Rural Lanes – Sherenden, Hartlake and Alders Road, Sychem and Church Lanes



Transport and movement

- Walking and cycling along narrow lanes
- Railway and Medway limit north / south routes
- Steptoe stiles on footpaths limit accessibility
- Rat running – including by HGVs – morning and evening peak
- Narrow or no pavements
- Limited off road parking
- Speeding / lack of traffic calming

- Dangerous crossings / junctions
- Traffic and parking around schools

Local Green Spaces

The workshop also gave the opportunity to test with the community whether there were special local green spaces that TWBC hasn't included in its Submission Local Plan that could be designated in the CNP:

- Orchard at Tudeley
- Distinctive verges
- Glebe Nature Area
- Community orchard
- Ellis Close recreation area

Public views to be protected

The CNP working party also wanted to share with the participants an initial short-list of special public views that should be protected by policies in the CNP and whether any key views were missing.

- From All Saints across Medway Valley
- From the top of Sherenden Road
- North from Amherst Bank
- Of Hoppers' Huts (or possibly a non-designated heritage asset)

At the earlier policy intentions workshop, there had also been discussion around biodiversity net gain and protecting ancient woodland, veteran trees and hedgerows that are a particular feature of the parish.



Visioning exercise

Following the presentations, participants sitting at three large tables were invited to imagine themselves in Capel in 2038 (approximately 15 years' time) and what key words or

phrases they might use to describe the parish. To assist them with this a Word Cloud generated at the Annual parish meeting on 4th April was shared on screen:

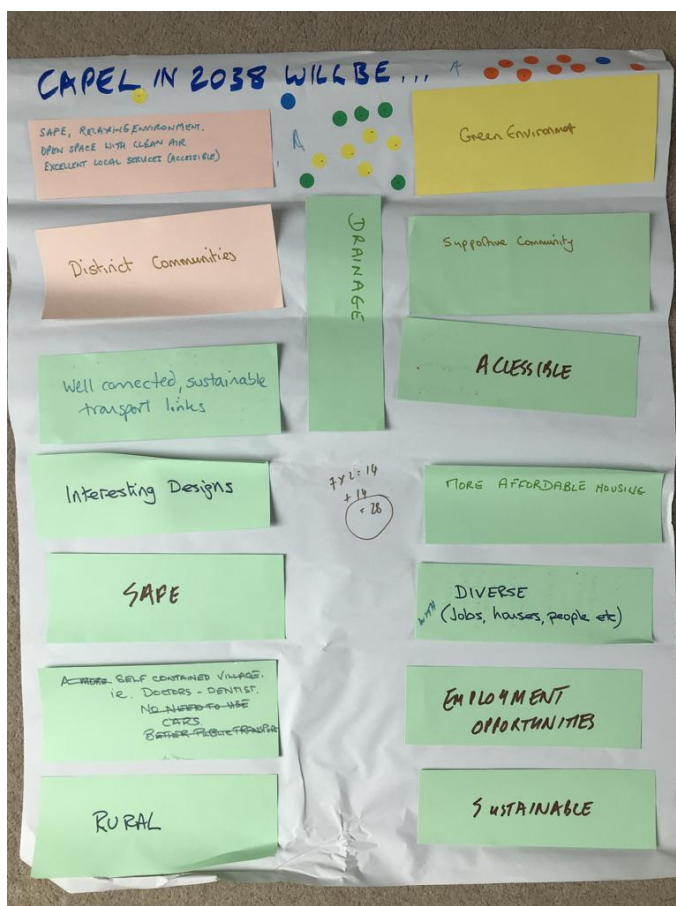
What words would you use to describe your ideal Capel community in 2038?

Mentimeter



10

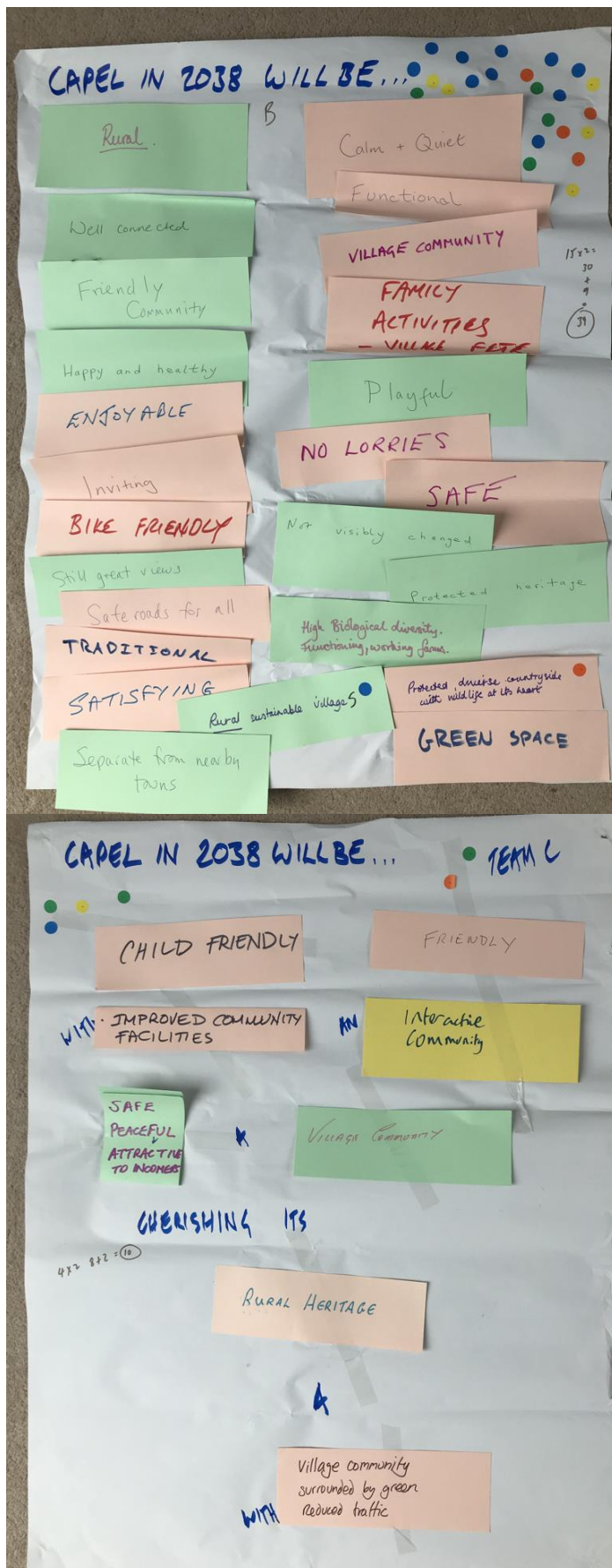
They were invited to re-use or create their own vision words on small pieces of card and then to arrange these in logical order and add in link words. Three alternative visions were generated. These have been edited slightly to remove duplicate words and add in link words [in square brackets]:



Capel in 2038 will be safe [with] a relaxing environment, open space, clean air [and] excellent, accessible local services. Capel [will be made up of] distinct communities [with] well connected, sustainable transport links. [There will be] more affordable housing [with] interesting designs and it will be safe, diverse [in terms of] jobs/employment opportunities, houses and people. Capel will be a rural, sustainable, self-contained and supportive community with a green environment [and a range of essential facilities including] a doctors and dentists.

At the break, participants were asked to vote on their favourite vision. Participants could vote for their own vision. This vision received 7 first choice votes worth 2 points each and 14

second choice votes worth 1 point each totalling 28 points.



The next vision which scored the highest number of points (15 first choice votes worth 30 points and 9 second choice votes totalling 39 points) was:

Capel in 2038 will be rural, calm and quiet. A well connected, functional, friendly village community. Capel will be a happy and healthy community [with] enjoyable family activities [such as the] village fete. It will be playful, inviting, bike friendly [with] no lorries and safe roads for all. [There will] still [be] great views, protected heritage, green space, high biodiversity and functioning working farms. Capel will [remain] separate from nearby towns and be a satisfying, rural and sustainable [community of] villages [including] protected [and] diverse countryside with wildlife at its heart.

The final vision which was much shorter was:

Capel in 2038 will be [a] friendly community [with] improved, child friendly community activities. [It will be] interactive, safe, peaceful village community [that is] attractive to incomers. Capel will cherish its rural heritage, be surrounded by green [countryside and will have] reduced traffic.

This scored the lowest number of votes with four first choice (green and blue) votes worth 8 points and 2 second choice votes totalling 10 points in all.

The working group will now review all the visions to see whether any important words or phrases from the second and third place visions could

be added to the first choice vision. An alternative approach would be to look at the words common to all the visions and make a fourth composite vision to test with the local community.

Character area discussions

The next session was an opportunity for the same groups to discuss character of the existing settlements and rural hinterland and express their thoughts and fears for the design of future developments of all sizes from extensions and single dwellings to larger estates and the proposed 'garden village' and Paddock Wood urban extension. First, Alison Eardley who is advising the parish council on the CNP gave a quick overview of how neighbourhood plans can be used to influence the design of new developments. The government has said that it is committed to a:

- ✓ Stronger role for a national and local design codes and pattern books, which will have a powerful role in decision making in the new planning system.
- ✓ Planning White Paper refers to broad principles set out in the National Design Guide, but which need to be turned into more specific standards.
- ✓ Emphasis on guides reflecting 'local character' and information about the 'form and appearance' of development.
- ✓ Emphasis on environmental performance of buildings and how we can create healthy environments.
- ✓ A national design code underway - local design codes should be prepared in parallel to the new zonal local plans.

This is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) paragraph 127 which states: Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

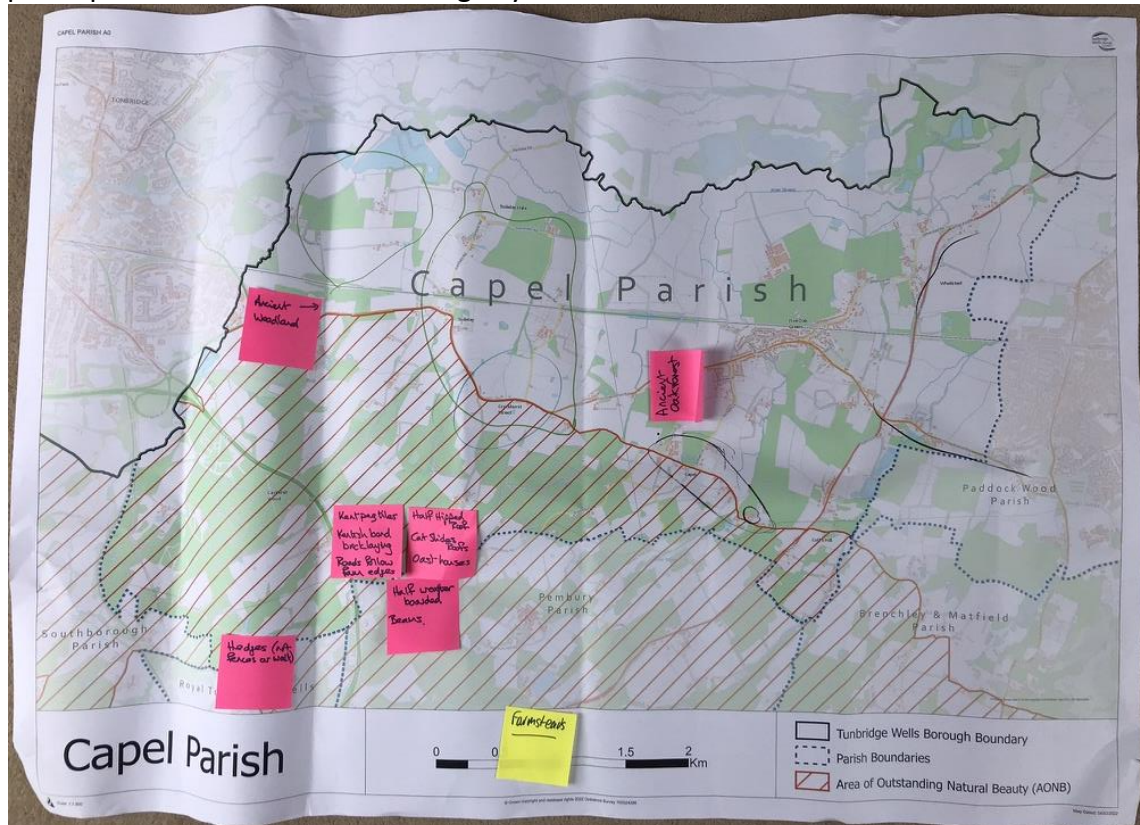
Alison's brief presentation was followed by a much fuller one from Stela Kontogianni from the design team at AECOM of their initial observations regarding Capel's heritage and character including landscape character. The presentation is an appendix to this report. Following the presentation, again at their tables, the participants using large scale maps of the settlements and the rural hinterland were asked to identify key characteristics, issues and ideas for the future of the area. Each table had a theme and after 15 minutes, the

groups were moved to the next table so everyone would have the opportunity to discuss and input on each theme. The themes or broad character areas were:

- Capel and Tudeley,
- Five Oak Green and Whetsted,
- High Weald and Low Weald

Capel and Tudeley

The Capel and Tudeley character areas were roughly drawn out on the map and the participants identified the following key features:



- Ancient woodland (west of parish south of Postern Lane)
- Ancient oak forest (west of Five Oak Green)
- Hedges (not fences or walls – typical boundary treatments)
- Kentish peg tiles
- Kentish bond bricklaying
- Roads follow farm edges
- Half hipped roofs
- Cat slides roofs
- Oast houses
- Half weather boarded
- Beams
- Farmsteads

The facilitator also recorded the following from the conversations:

- Open space is abundant in the parish. It has an open character. Walkable and cyclable.
- The Medway is a really important aspect. It is accessible [but] could be improved.
- Footpaths are well signed – [there are] 12 rural walks.
- Hoppers huts were all over. A few remain (see below)



- Preserve hoppers' heritage.
- Tudeley is lots of separate little communities of farmsteads
- Tudeley has oldest homes in the area
- Tudeley is high up so you can see all the way to Hadlow Tower with view of the Low Weald
- Lanes follow land ownership – traditional routes
- Capel is tiny – 5 houses and a pub.
- Capel – big back gardens, small front gardens
- Capel has more of a high Weald and woodland feel
- Capel is late Georgian
- Different parts [with] different characters – one village [Five Oak Green] with hamlets [ie Tudeley and Capel] with unique character
- Limits to Built Development around Five Oak Green is very tight
- To the west is open countryside. The character is completely different.
- Conversion of farm buildings or farm cottages. Red brick, clay tile hung or barn style.
- Affordable housing could reflect traditional farmworkers cottages
- Postern Lane has its own character as a hamlet – beautiful farmland and views
- Georgian – see Postern House
- Hard to navigate without a car – footpaths are muddy tracks [especially in winter]
- Ability to walk around without getting in the car
- Lots of different styles of buildings / a mix of styles
- Whetsted lots its pub and its heart. Villages need a focal point: a village green, a pond and a bench.
- Pattern is a farm, an oast, a barn and one or two other outbuildings.
- Don't want New England Style.

- Two storeys everywhere except in Ellis Close. Works in Five Oak Green [Ellis Close] but wouldn't work everywhere.
- Five Oak Green needs to be made into a proper place.
- Paddock Wood can accommodate flats because it is a town [particularly] near town centre.

Insert notes for

- Five Oak Green and Whetsted,
- High Weald and Low Weald

Appendix: Presentation from AECOM