

**“Where the countryside meets the sea”
Ringwould with Kingsdown Neighbourhood Plan – Getting Started Event
Thursday 25th January 7pm, Ringwould Primary School**

Welcome and introductions

Cllr Sharon Hogben welcomed everyone for attending the event. Approximately 120 people attended, possibly up to 150 at the peak.

All about Neighbourhood Plans

Alison Eardley is a planning consultant who has worked on a number of other neighbourhood plans across Kent and further afield. She also provides training to parish councils through the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). Alison started off the event by giving a presentation about how the NP fits in with the government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) and the Dover Local Plan. The full presentation can be found as an appendix to this report. In summary the NPPF:

- Is the high-level policy framework within which the planning system operates
- promotes a ‘plan-led’ approach
- is based on the principles of sustainable development

The Dover District Local Plan is:

- The document developed by a District or Borough Council (or national park authority) setting out how land should be used and developed in the whole district
- The government expects Local Authorities (LAs) to have an up-to-date plan in place

The emerging Dover Local Plan is currently being examined by the Government’s Planning Inspectorate. It is difficult to predict when it will be adopted. In the meantime, the draft housing allocations for Kingsdown just outside the Kent Downs National Landscape (AONB) include:

The map extract overleaf shows the site locations.

Site Name (HELAA ref)	Policy Number	Development type proposed	Indicative Housing Capacity
Land at Woodhill Farm, Ringwould Road (KIN002)	SAP34	Housing	50
Land adjacent Courtlands (TC4S074)	SAP35	Housing	5

A further small allocation for Ringwould within the Kent Downs National Landscape (AONB) is:

Site Name (HELAA ref)	Policy Number	Development type proposed	Indicative Housing Capacity
Land at Ringwould, Alpines, Dover Road (RIN002 and RIN004)	SAP53	Housing	10

While the Local Plan is not yet adopted, it is at a stage where these allocations are likely to stand. It should be noted that Neighbourhood Plans have to be in general conformity with national and local planning policy so it is not possible for the NP to stop these allocation policies. However, new Design Codes that are in train should be able to ensure that these developments are of a high quality and in keeping with neighbouring areas.



Alison then explained that the NP is a planning policy document, comprising a set of planning policies to:

- Establish a vision for the parish
- Set out how land should be used in the parish
- Help to determine planning applications within the parish
- Add local detail to national and Dover Local Plan policy
- It is prepared with the community.
- Valid for 15 to 20 years
- Ultimately it will form part of the Development Plan for the District and **the policies will carry equal weight to Local Plan policies in decision making.**
- It can also contain community aspirations / projects
- It can set out how any developer contributions are spent locally.

Neighbourhood plans have to balance the wants and needs of the community. In terms of needs or what the data can tell us about Ringwould with Kingsdown we are in the fortunate position of having the Census 2021 data available down to parish level as well as other information which Alison will compile into a parish profile. Highlights include:

Demography

- 1,942 residents
- 906 households
- Ageing population

Notable features

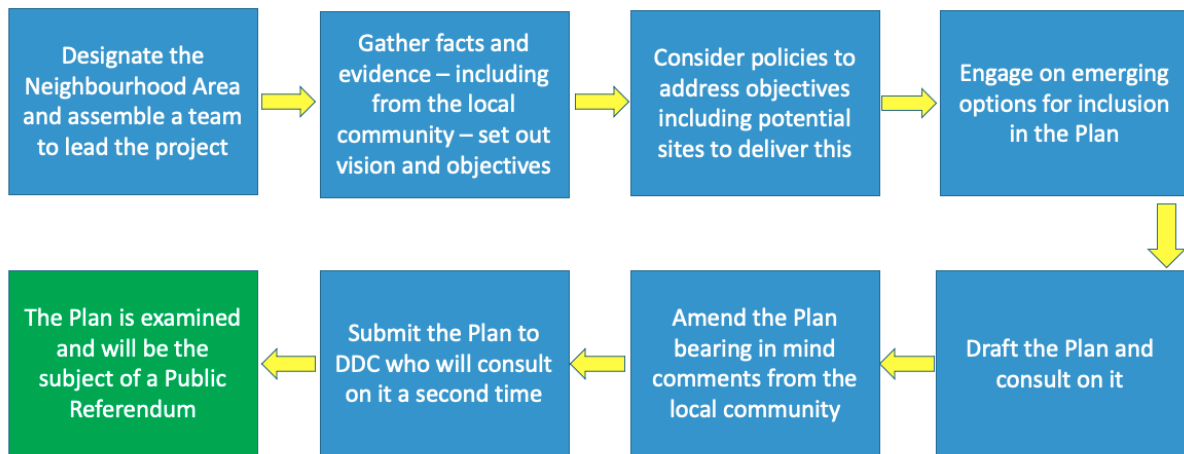
- Partially within the Kent Downs National Landscape
- SSSI (cliffs) along the majority of the coast, some of which is a Special Area of Conservation
- Bowl Barrow is a scheduled ancient monument
- Kingsdown and Ringwould Conservation Areas

Alison then set out the typical topics covered in NPs:

Topic Area	Potential policy areas (not exhaustive, but to give some ideas)
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting out where development should be directed – potential to allocate sites • Housing mix, type, tenure, affordability
The natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying ‘special’ green spaces and protecting them in perpetuity • Mapping out ‘green/blue spaces and corridors’ and identifying areas that should be improved/better linked • Safeguarding special views and viewpoints from development • Tackling flood risk • Promoting ways to help mitigate climate change – e.g. community-scale energy schemes etc.
The built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of development - to reflect local character, include sustainable design features, wildlife friendly features • Identifying buildings/structures that are historically important
Community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying where additional community provision/ expansion is needed.
Getting around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying where improvements might be made to walking / cycling paths to encourage more people to walk/cycle locally – 20-minute village concept • Car parking – provision, electric charging points
Local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village centre regeneration • Promoting sustainable tourism • Safeguarding important employment sites • Supporting opportunities for flexible working / start-ups etc.

Illustrations from other plans showing how these can be evidenced and mapped are also shown in Alison’s presentation in the appendix. Overleaf is a summary of the main steps involved in preparing the plan.

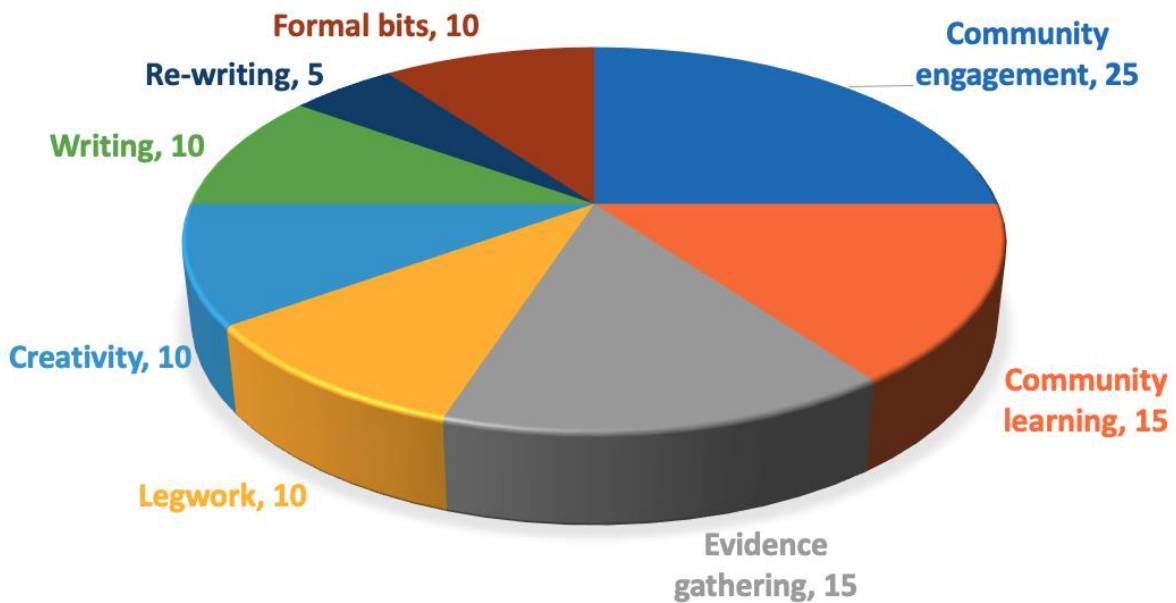
The main steps involved in preparing the Plan...



Typically – depending on complexity of plan and time available – may take 18 months to 2 years.

How to make a NP

Jim Boot is a community planner who will be focussing on community engagement and environmental aspects of the plan. Jim explained the key ingredients in creating the plan:



Specifically for Ringwold with Kingsdown the project plan for the immediate period Jan to end of March 2024 will follow:

Phase 1: Getting started	Output	
Task 1: Review evidence and planning history	Parish profile report	Jan, Feb 24
Task 2: Establish steering group / governance	Terms of reference, steering group - a consultant attends each meeting	Jan, Feb, Mar

Task 3: Apply for and brief Technical Support	Design Codes, Housing Needs Assessment	Dec, Jan, Feb
Task 4: Support and facilitate 'kick off' event	Prepare and facilitate event, event report	Feb-24
Task 5: Briefing and supporting task and finish groups	Work programmes for each of the T&F / working groups	Feb & Mar
Mapping	GIS mapping of local green spaces, heritage assets, views, walking and cycling routes	

As NPs once adopted are statutory documents, they are able to receive financial and technical support paid for by the government:

- All groups undertaking a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order are eligible to apply for up to **£10,000** in basic grant. Groups undertaking design codes or allocating sites can apply for an additional **£8,000**.
- Technical support (which has been applied for including highlighted): **Housing Needs Assessment**, Site Options and Assessment, Site Viability, Environmental Impact Assessment, Evidence Base and Policy Development, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Masterplanning, **Design including Design Codes**, Habitat Regulations Assessment and Plan Health Check Review.

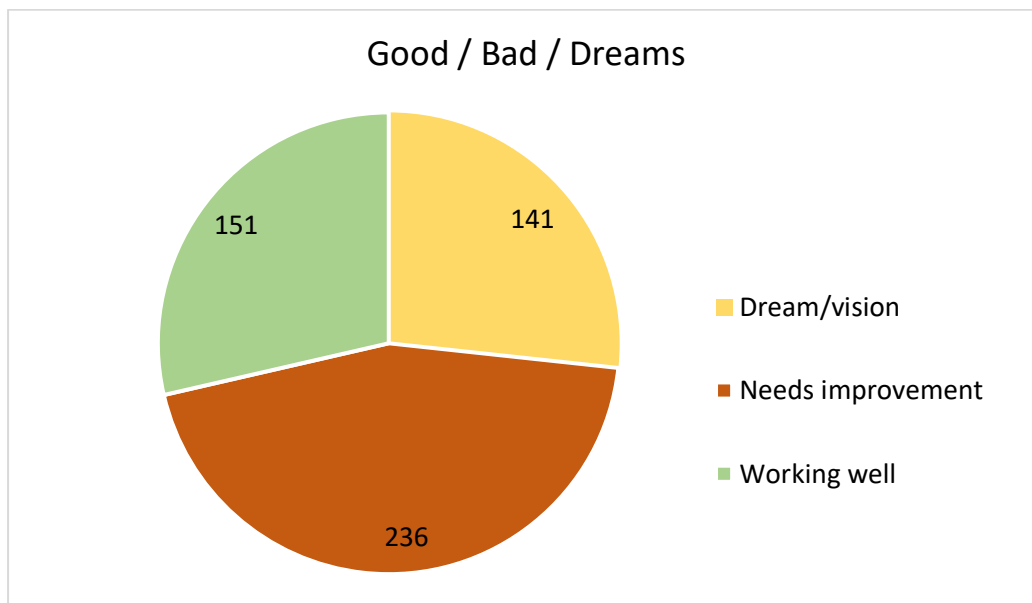
Ringwould with Kingsdown Parish Council have successfully applied for funding for Phase 1; £8,054.00 which they were awarded on 18th December. They have also successfully applied for the Design Codes support package and Housing Needs Assessment, meaning they will be able to apply for an additional nearly £10,000 grant for the next phase (see below) starting in April. As mentioned the Design Codes can be delivered relatively quickly (within 3-5 months) and so should be able to influence the most recent housing allocations. However, there may be a period when the grant isn't available due to the workings of central government and so it would be prudent for the parish council to set aside an amount for any potential shortfall so as not to lose momentum.

Phase 2: Emerging themes and evidence		Output
Task 7: Prepare community survey	Online and paper surveys to every household analysis and report	Apr, May 24
Task 8: Prepare and facilitate round table events	Prepare, facilitate and reports for each event (2-3 events)	Jun, Jul
Task 7: Vision and objectives workshop	Prepare, facilitate and report	Sep
Task 8: Policy Options Workshop	Prepare, facilitate and report	Oct
Task 9: SEA and HRA Screening	Screening report from Dover District Council	Nov
Task 10: Write draft Plan	A draft plan and supporting documents ready for Reg 14 Pre-Submission Consultation	Dec, Jan

Task 11: Support Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation	A statutory six week consultation period for the plan undertaken by the parish.	Feb, Mar 25
Proposals map	GIS mapping of local green spaces, heritage assets, views, walking and cycling routes	

Good, bad, dreams exercise

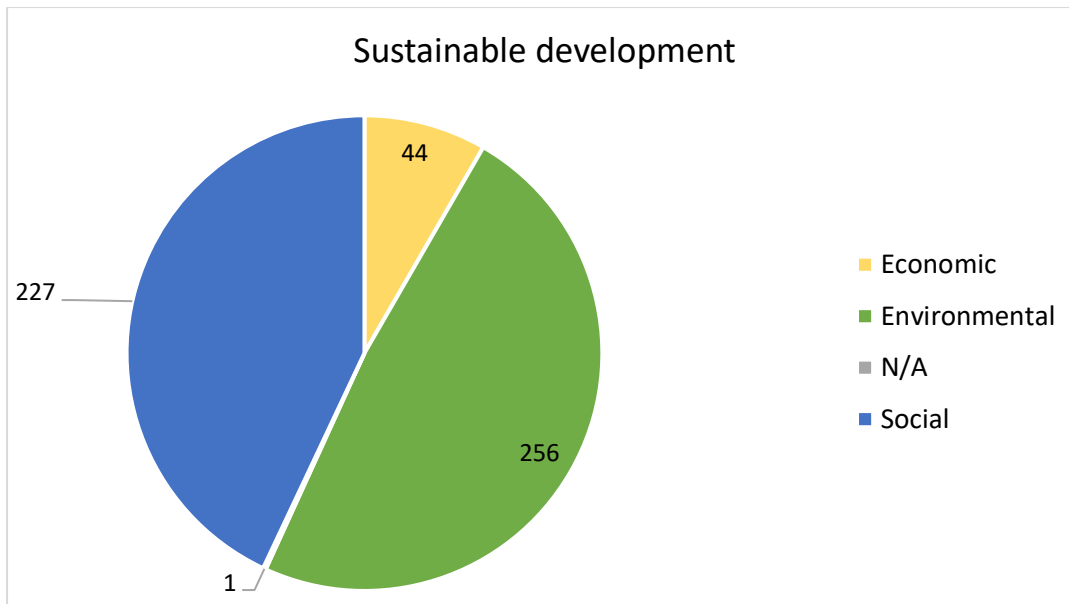
As stated earlier, NPs are made up of the wants and needs of the parish. Needs are what parishioners would like to see kept, changed or improved or new within the parish. As such, consultation – giving local people a voice – is a key part of the NP process. Despite the very large numbers attending this event 120-150 people, Jim then introduced a sticky note exercise asking everyone to write one good thing / working well in the parish, one bad thing / needs improving and one vision / dream or what they would like to see happening in the parish by 2040. Everyone then placed these on the stage / at the back of the hall. These have now been typed up and analysed as follows. A total of 529 issues or ideas were posted (some sticky notes had multiple ideas):



It is a very human tendency to focus on what isn't working in a community and so it is not surprising that there were more "needs improvement" comments than the other two categories. However, it is also important to build on what is working and so those opportunities must be considered too.

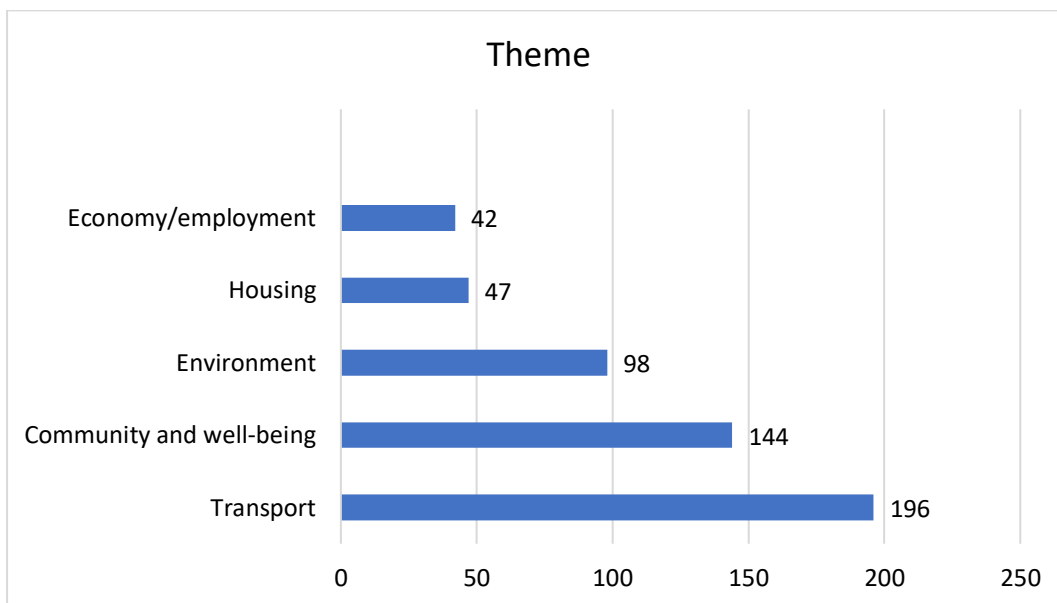
Sustainable development

NPs as with all plans must "contribute to the achievement of sustainable development." "Sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (See National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021 page 5). Therefore it is useful to undertake an analysis of whether the consultation is helping to elicit responses in response to the three key objectives of sustainable development. The analysis shows that the comments received lean towards the environmental objective but as comments on transport were also included in the environment category, including parking and traffic, this has led to the issues / ideas for this objective being larger. However, it is also notable how many related to social aspects including housing, community and well-being, but also to footpaths and pavements.



Themes

Across the themes proposed in Alison’s slides, transport related issues were the highest, followed by community and wellbeing, then environment.



For community and well-being community and village character were important, then facilities, the lack of local GP surgery, retaining or bringing young people in the parish, and improvements to the village hall.

For environment, the protection of greenspaces, views and improvements to walking and cycling routes were all important.

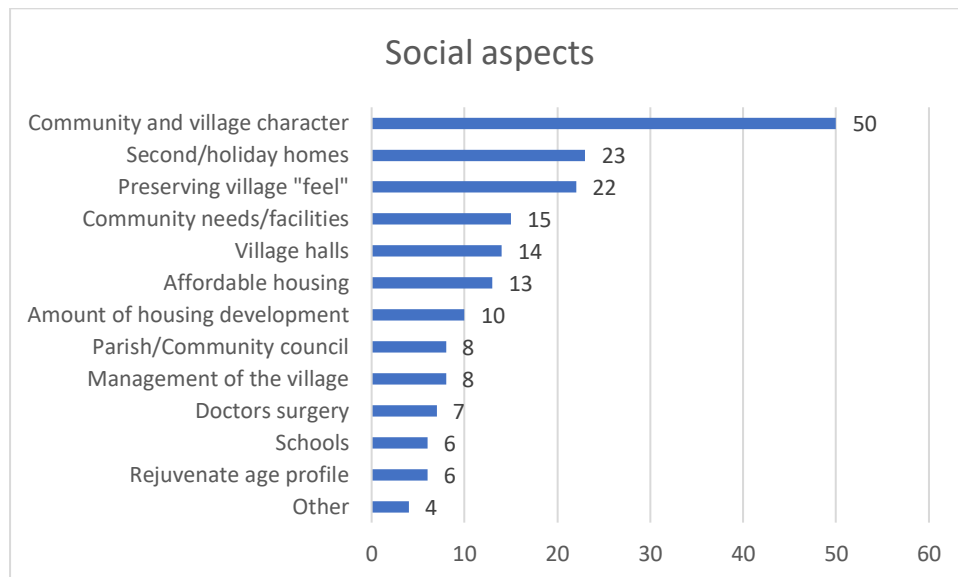
For housing the number of people concerned about new housing development was balance by people wanting affordable housing. An even larger category were concerns over the number of second homes and wanting to see restrictions on these.

For transport, the largest category, public transport was the most frequently raised as “needs improvement” followed by parking and speed limits. Twenty seven people were concerned about footpaths with the majority of these supporting a traffic free walking and cycling route between

Ringwold and Kingsdown Primary School. Traffic congestion and speeding were also frequently raised as concerns.

Sub-categories

An analysis of these sub-categories by theme showed the leading issues / ideas:



Community and well-being

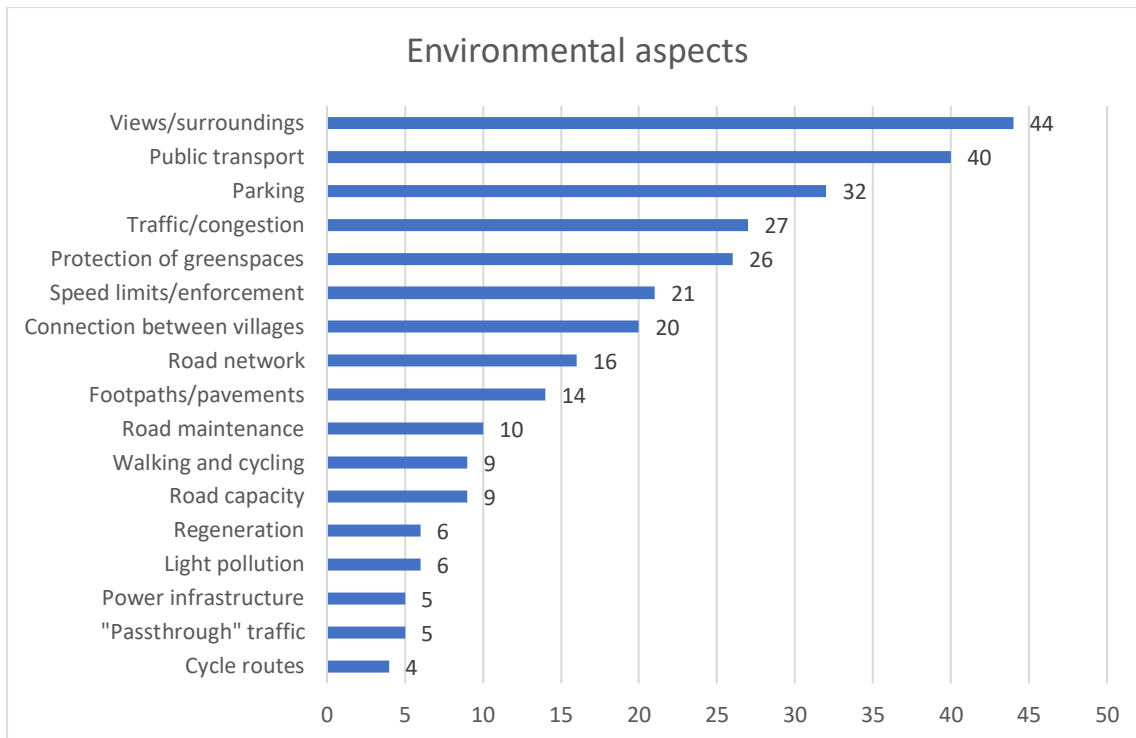
Comments for community and village character included: “Kingsdown is an amazing seaside village with a good mix of residents”, “It is the feeling of living in a small community not overshadowed by a large town”, “Great size community, small enough to know folk, large enough to make things happen” but also “Ringwold - village atmosphere gradually lost in the last 10 years” and another suggesting “opening up the communities - rejuvenation of the age profile” were important. Second homes receive 23 comments including “Too many second homes and Air B'n'Bs mean fewer permanent residents and more pressure for building on green fields.” Other seaside NPs for St Ives and Whitby have developed policies which require new homes to be principal residences only.

For housing in general and affordable housing in particular comments included “more affordable homes in development” and “affordable housing for local people” but also “That it stays the same and is not ruined by housing developments. It is not the right place for more housing.” One person was concerned about “The possibility of joining up with Walmer with housing” while another said “Maybe some bungalows could be built to encourage the older population to move from the family sized homes” and another “We need the right amount of modern housing in the right accessible places”.

Comments for Community needs / facilities showed a desire for more beach huts, but also some improvements to other village facilities such as WCs. The next category village halls shows support for replacing Ringwold village hall.

Economy

For economic aspects, the smallest theme or category, most praised the shops and pubs in Kingsdown but also residents of Ringwold were concerned at the lack of a shop. There was some support for a new café / bakery.



Environmental objective

The environmental objective saw the largest number of comments. Comments on views and surroundings were the most common including “I enjoy the unspoilt seafront and access to the countryside” and “Tranquillity with excellent views between land and sea”. It is quite common for NPs to have policies protecting key views into and out from the community particularly in a seaside or National Landscape context both of which apply here.

Comments on public transport were next most frequent with most of these in the “needs improvement” category with comments including “Bus service needs to be reinstated to enable people without cars/elderly to access town” and “No transport out of the village for secondary age children, means lots of cars leaving the village every day along horrible roads”. Although it isn’t possible for the NP to require KCC or bus companies to reinstate or improve bus services, it maybe that this can be included as a project in the plan, potentially for future developer contributions.

Parking was the next largest category and again this is difficult to address through the NP as much of the problem is pre-existing, but measures can be included to prevent new developments exacerbating the problem by providing adequate parking in new developments and walking and cycling routes to key facilities such as the primary school. Particular issues include parking around the school, overnight parking of camper vans near the beach and “Traffic and parking around the Zetland P.H. and street traffic. Congestion” also common.

Protection of greenspaces was next most frequently mentioned and can be a key policy area for the NP. We will be seeking people’s nominations for designating local green spaces (LGS) for protection in the survey and following these up with assessments to see if they meet the required criteria. Where people have commented “Beautiful places preserved e.g. protected Kingsdown wood and surrounding fields”, ancient woodland already has a degree of protection, as do fields within the Kent Downs National Landscape area (formerly AONB) as does open countryside. LGS protection is for areas of open space with recreation, beauty, biodiversity, heritage or tranquillity close to the two settlements.

However, people also raised “Retention of dwindling natural environment”, “Protection of the natural environment - woods, fields, cliffs and wildlife corridor” and “Awareness of need to protect and preserve adjoining countryside, need to do more”.

Other comments included “Cars and traffic in the village which increases in the summer months due to two holiday camp sites”, “Speed restrictions 20mph on Front street, Back street and Church lane” and “The speed limit in the lanes. 60mph in Sutton Lane’. Road maintenance and potholes inevitably came up including the comment “Road in bad condition, drainage in Upper St”.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the number of people wanting a traffic free walking / cycling route to the school in particular from Ringwold. Comments for the latter included “A safe footpath alongside the road between Kingsdown and Ringwold”, “A proper path between Kingsdown and Ringwold for walking and cycling - with lighting” and “Cycle path from Ringwold to connect to school/Kingsdown and on to beach”. Again while it isn’t possible for the NP to require this – it can seek developer contributions and also identify this as a project to be followed through with local landowners and seek funding ie from the National Lottery.

A crossover area is footpaths / pavements which has a social as well as an environmental aspect / impact “Keeping the paths clear especially in winter when leaves fall” and “No pavements”. While the first comment is outside the scope of planning, the second would be a material consideration when contemplating planning permission.

Visions or dreams included “Sustainable and measured growth in keeping with existing character”, “We retain the village vibe and with good community ethic”, “Sort the bad and keep the good”, “Keeping Kingsdown and Ringwold as rural communities not just a suburb” and “A sustainable community that is carbon neutral and causes zero pollution”. These would all contribute to a good vision statement for the plan, down the line.

Feedback and questions from the floor

Given the large numbers of people attending, and the lack of a PA system, while a few questions were taken, it is probably best if these are dealt with through a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on the website. Key concerns included; would the NP make any difference to the existing housing allocations, what weight did NPs have in planning and would the NP be enforced by DDC officers when it is made.

Next steps

As can be seen, with so many people attending the first event, there has been a significant contribution of ideas for the steering group and potentially working groups to get stuck into. From the project plan the next steps are:

1. Developing and reviewing the parish profile
2. Inviting everyone who has expressed an interest to the first meeting of the steering group (date to be confirmed)
3. Arranging and briefing the main theme working groups such as:
 - Transport
 - Environment (biodiversity and landscape)
 - Design and character (working with design consultants)
 - Housing and community

Jim Boot, Community Planner with Alison Eardley, Planning Consultant

6th February 2024