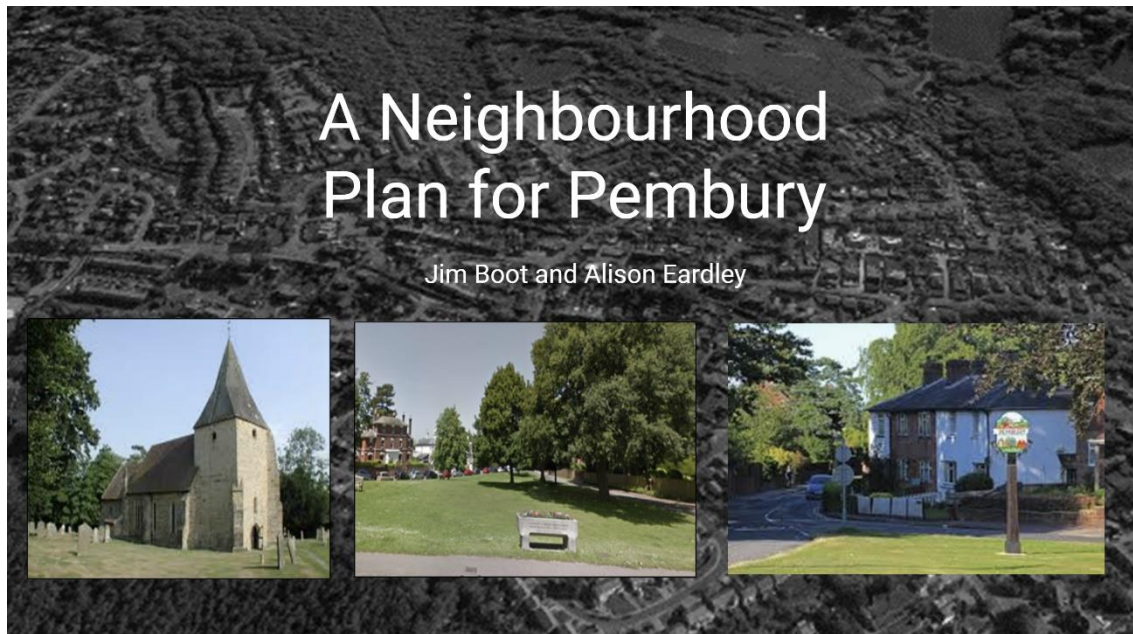


Pembury Neighbourhood Plan

Towards a Vision and Objectives



Pembury Parish Council

Summary Report

May 2021

Alison Eardley, PGDip, BSc, AssocRTPI
Alison Eardley Consulting
M: 07930 325965
E: ajeardley@btinternet.com
W: www.yourfriendlyplanner.co.uk



Jim Boot, MSc, Freelance Community Planner
Associate with Action for Communities in Rural
Kent (ACRK)
Planning for Real Consultant
M: 07732 393780
E: jimbootcp@gmail.com

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Initial Community Survey	4
Question 1: What do you like most about living in Pembury?	4
Question 2: What do you think needs to be improved in Pembury?	5
3. Community Visioning Event	7
Housing, Heritage, Design and Character	9
Environment and Green Spaces	11
Transport and Movement	12
Community facilities	14
Employment and local economy	16
Conclusions from the Visioning Event	18
4. Agreeing the draft vision and objectives with the community	19

1. Introduction

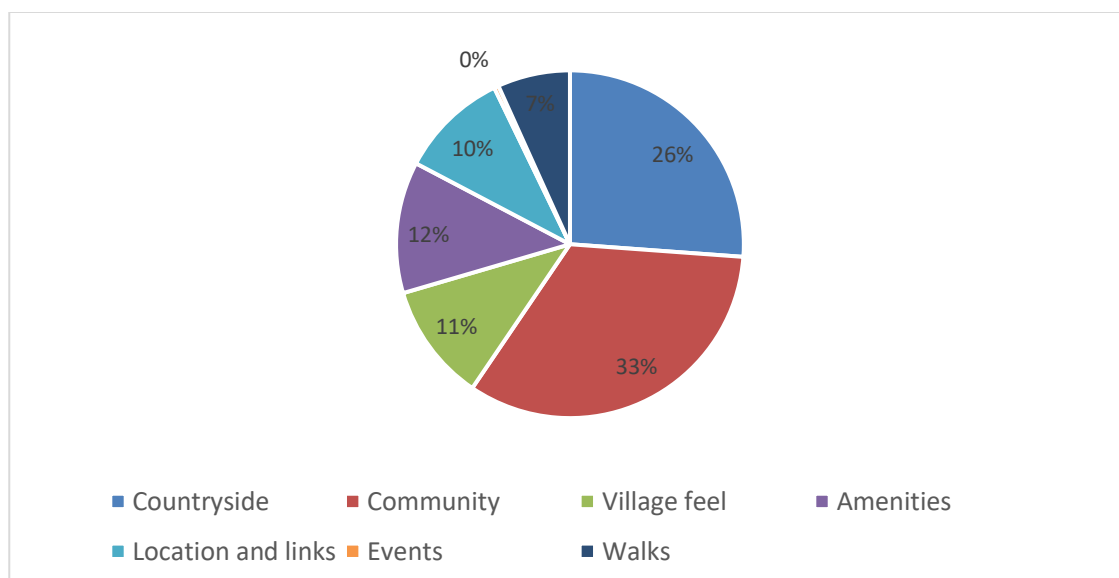
- 1.1. The Pembury Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) process was started in 2020 with the creation of a Steering Group comprising local councillors and volunteers from the community.
- 1.2. An important step in the process is the development of a vision to set out how the community would like the village and wider parish to develop over the next 15 years or so. This vision will lead to the identification of a series of objectives to prioritise the key activities that will most effectively deliver the vision.
- 1.3. The following activities have taken place in order to formulate a shared community vision:
 - i. **Initial Community Survey** – to gather views from the community about what they like about the parish and what could be improved.
 - ii. **Online community visioning event** – to consider the findings of the survey and discuss, by theme, potential important aspects to include within a vision for the future.
 - iii. **Drafting a vision and objectives** - the findings of steps (i) and (ii) were discussed at the Steering Group meeting and a draft Vision and Objectives were developed.
 - iv. **Agreeing the draft vision and objectives with the community** – The draft vision and objectives were presented back to the community for feedback and to gain buy-in.
- 1.4. This report provides a summary of the findings of the first two steps, to present back to the Steering Group, to crystallise a draft vision and objectives that might deliver that vision. This will then be presented back to the community to gain buy-in.
- 1.5. Following this, the report will be updated to summarise what happened at Steps (iii) and (iv).

2. Initial Community Survey

- 2.1. In light of the ongoing Covid-19 situation, it was not possible to hold traditional ‘in-person’ events to officially launch the plan. This would have provided, for instance, an opportunity to introduce neighbourhood planning and undertake activities with the local community to gather their high-level views about the parish.
- 2.2. Instead, an editorial about the plan was placed in the community newsletter, the Pembury Village News, which was delivered to every household. This included an invitation to complete an online survey, incentivised with a prize draw, inviting local people to share what they like most about living in Pembury and what could be improved. The survey received 140 responses, and an analysis is provided below.

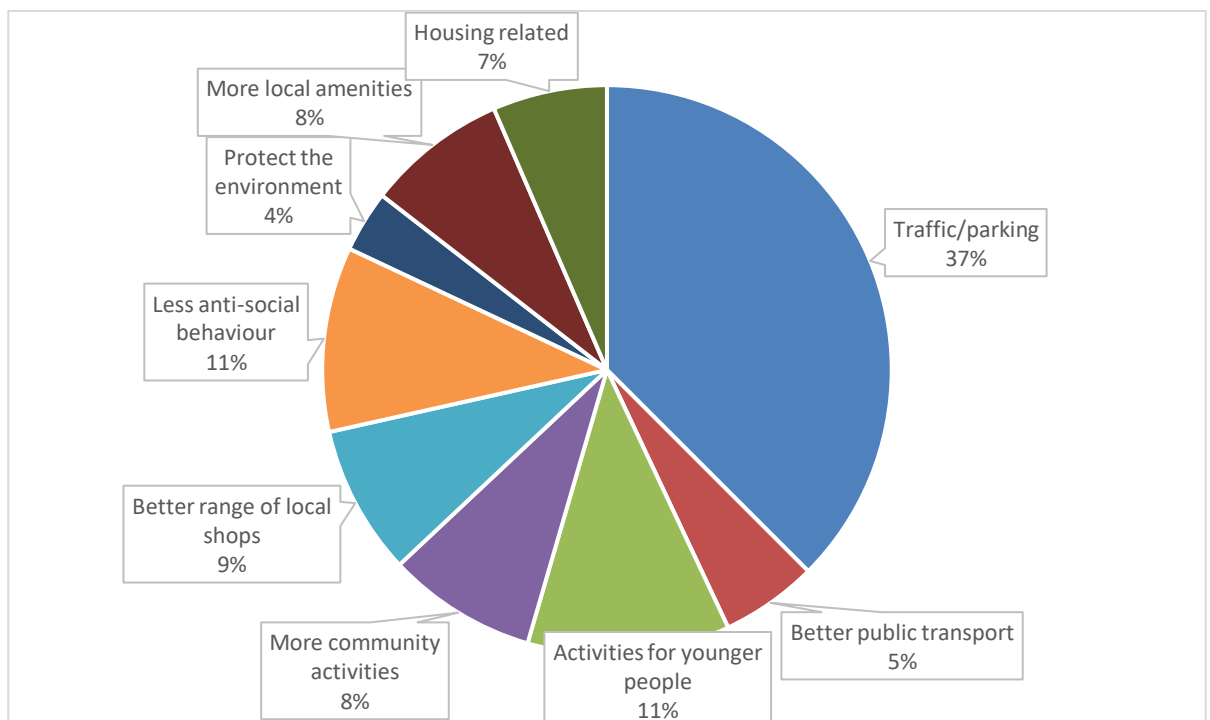
Question 1: What do you like most about living in Pembury?

- 2.3. The question attracted over 250 individual comments. The large majority related to the sense of community and the attractive and peaceful rural location. The friendly local population was commonly mentioned, alongside the range of clubs and events that are available.
- 2.4. The fact that Pembury is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was cited, along with many comments about the amount of woodland and open spaces, directly accessible from the doorstep. This supported further comments about the range of attractive walking routes available in the parish.
- 2.5. Many respondents commented about the village feel that Pembury has, with numerous people emphasising its distinctiveness from Tunbridge Wells, contributed to by its rich history. The village benefits from a range and quality of facilities available locally, with mention of the school, the shops (including Tesco), GPs, public houses and the recreation ground. The ability to access facilities locally negates the need to travel further afield, although the location of Pembury – close to the A21 and nearby railways stations, means that travel further afield is easy.



Question 2: What do you think needs to be improved in Pembury?

- 2.6. The second question attracted over 200 individual comments. By far the largest commentary related to traffic and transport, with key concerns being:
- The need to reduce traffic speeds in the village – traffic calming was mentioned, for instance the 20s plenty scheme and speed cameras
 - A desire for fewer cars
 - A call for fewer cars to be parked on/overlapping pavements, which was felt to cause difficulties for pedestrians and poor visibility for other road users, especially at junctions
 - Surfacing of some of the roads, pavements and footpaths was cited as poor in areas
 - Improved signage for footpaths
 - More cycle paths through the village, to discourage people riding on pavements
- 2.7. Better public transport too was noted, in terms of greater frequency of services. Some respondents felt to be too reliant on their cars.
- 2.8. 11% of respondents noted the lack of facilities for children and notably teenagers. This included a call for more play equipment to suit a range of ages, a skatepark area, off-road cycling area, graffiti wall, places for teens to meet and more youth groups. To a lesser extent, more facilities for all age groups was cited, including shelters, café (perhaps using the pavilion) and a toilet at the rec, an enhanced village events programme, resurfacing the tennis courts, new and stronger basketball nets and better use of the green spaces for community.
- 2.9. The tackling of anti-social behaviour – littering, graffiti, vandalism, dog mess – was the next largest area of concern, with solutions cited included better lighting, CCTV on the rec and a greater police presence.



- 2.10. The range of shops was considered to be in need of improvement, with a desire for more independent stores. One respondent mentioned the untidiness of some shop frontages while others floated the idea of a Farmer's Market. A greater range of community events, focussing on the village centre and public spaces was cited, with comments suggesting that the village centre should accommodate seasonal lights over winter.
- 2.11. A number of respondents mentioned their desire for the countryside and Green Belt to be safeguarded. Others called for local initiatives to encourage biodiversity, such as planting wildflowers and installing wildlife friendly features into development, such as hedgehog holes. Some people were keen to ensure that views across the High Weald were protected.
- 2.12. Increased local amenities were mentioned as needed, including GP surgeries, a post box outside the post office and better parking at the village hall. The lack of amenities at the lower green end of the village was noted.
- 2.13. Finally, a number of comments were received relating to housing and future development. In particular, a desire to retain the village-feel, perhaps by restricting larger scale and dense developments. Suggestions were made about the potential mix and tenure of future housing developments: housing suited to older people and those wishing to downsize (including bungalows); and affordable housing to help younger people onto the housing ladder.

3. Community Visioning Event

- 3.1. On 21 April 2021, an online, interactive visioning event was held with the local community. It was promoted through the village magazine, via social media and on posters and banners throughout the village. Over 80 people signed up to take part in the event, which was recorded and shared on the Parish Council website, with the findings included in the spring edition of the village magazine.
- 3.2. The event provided an opportunity to share with the community the purpose of the neighbourhood plan and to introduce members of the Steering Group. Attendees were also given an explanation of how the emerging Neighbourhood Plan would relate to national and local strategic planning policy. Feedback from the community survey was revealed, to give a flavour of local views to date.



- 3.3. The attendees were invited to take part in an interactive poll to submit words and phrases describing what they would like Pembury to be like in 2036. The findings very much chimed with the feedback from the community survey to date: the importance of the rural location, valued for its beauty, tranquillity and village atmosphere; the friendly community spirit; sustainability, clean air and access to nature; and local facilities.

What word or words would you use to describe your ideal Pembury in 2036?



Wordcloud produced at the event (note 'ev' stands for electric vehicle; and 'village with 27 mls footp' relates to 27 miles of footpaths)

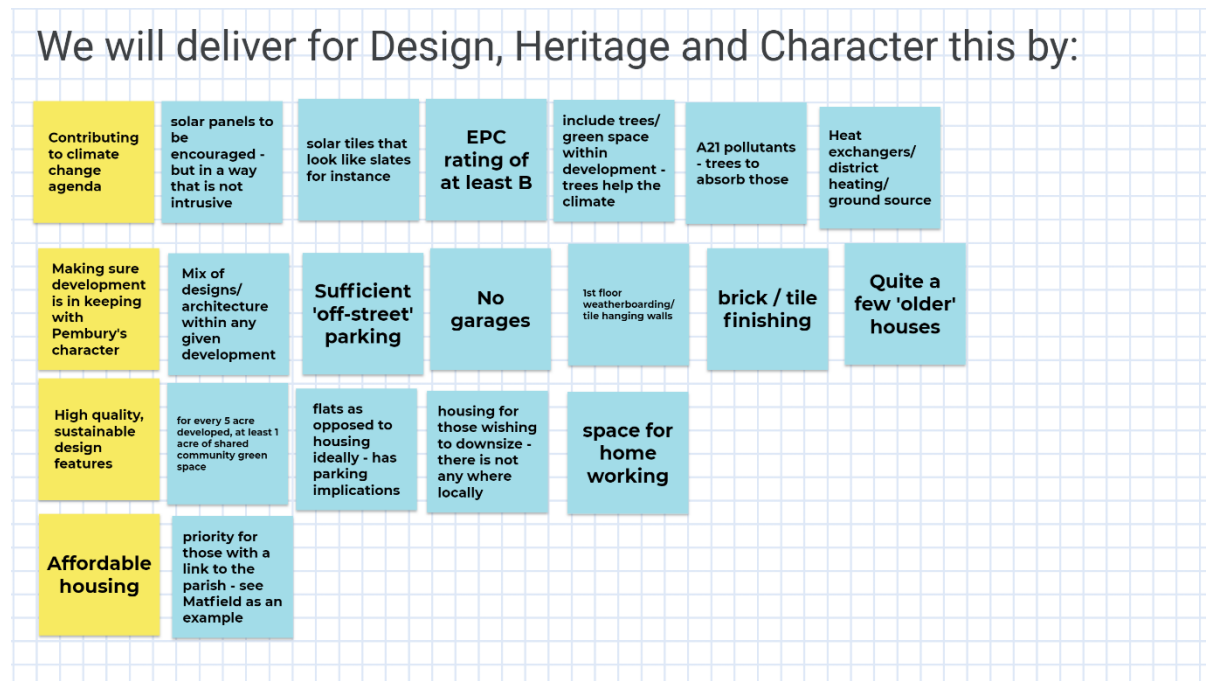
- 3.4. The group was then divided into five breakout rooms to discuss particular elements of the emerging vision in more detail. These elements mirrored the Working Group topics that are being explored:
- Housing, Heritage, Design and Character
 - Environment and Green Spaces
 - Transport and Movement
 - Community facilities
 - Employment and local economy
- 3.5. Each group first undertook an exercise to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of their particular topic in relation to Pembury. They were then encouraged to pick out the key overarching themes, using post-it notes, to consider which elements might be most salient within an overarching vision statement. Delegates could then discuss how those themes might be delivered, with a view to beginning to set out some overarching objectives for each topic area. An opportunity to flag ideas and thoughts related to other topics was also provided, to ensure that attendees felt able to fully contribute their views. The findings for each group are summarised below.

Housing, Heritage, Design and Character

3.6. The SWOT analysis revealed the following:

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide variety of housing - terraced, 14th century, bungalows - all designed differently. • Most houses have greenery - in front for instance, or as part of development - need to have gardens at the front. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No car park for the village hall • Roads currently have cars on-street - not enough parking. E.g., Hastings Road • Speed of traffic - and impact of this - could we have a 20mph limit? lots of thru traffic (e.g., from Paddock Wood. Hasting Road 'car park'. • Pavements too narrow in areas – danger for pedestrians • Do we have enough schools/ GPs etc.? What about water? Sewage? Road infrastructure?
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we explore EPV ratings for housing? • Make sure affordable housing is well integrated into market housing • Minimise impact of views of the housing from the surrounding countryside - we don't want it to be a 'mass' development 'blot' • Refuse - opp. to ensure storage is provided • If Plan runs to 2036, we- need to encourage proposals that have EV charging/ solar panels/ thermal insulations 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't want 'identikit housing' here – Pembury has a mix of styles and features • Need to ensure density not too high/ not 'boxy'/ concerns about lack of green space between homes • Need sufficient car parking space - esp. for homes with more than 2 cars. • Will developers cite 'viability' issues, making housing too expensive

- 3.7. The group then picked out some of the main themes and developed these into potential objectives:



- 3.8. The group considered it important to ensure that development should be undertaken in such a way as to mitigate, as far as possible, its impact on climate change. This includes considering incorporating features such as solar panels ground source heating as ways to generate energy more efficiently, with less reliance on non-renewables. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to more people working from home and it was considered that this trend may continue. Therefore, homes should have dedicated workspace, beyond the conversion, for instance of a needed bedroom.
- 3.9. There was a discussion around the need to ensure that the right mix of housing is delivered, to cater for the needs of those wishing to downsize (lack of availability of such properties at the moment) as well as those wishing to step onto the housing ladder – either to buy or to rent. There was a desire to seek to enable those with a local connection to the parish to gain access to the housing.
- 3.10. Finally, the character of Pembury was discussed including the fact that there is a mix of styles, eras and architecture. This should be reflected in new build – identikit housing estates, that would 'stick out' were not welcomed. Parking too should be considered, even in light of the desire to encourage more walking and cycling, with garages felt to be less useful, and instead a more efficient off-road solution.

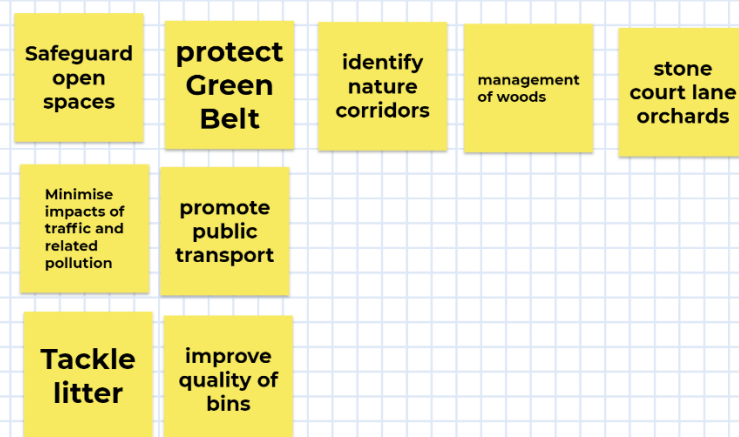
Environment and Green Spaces

3.11. The SWOT analysis revealed the following:

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recreation ground • cricket • woodside football • woods, ancient woodland, tree protection orders • walks • footpath network • working farmland, orchards • Farm shop • Attractive views • Position of Pembury on the old coach road • Village green 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the woods (lack of?) • Busy roads, noise, traffic and speeding • Incidents of flooding and its impact on the landscape and local amenity
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage wildlife e.g., by incorporating wildlife friendly features • Connecting green infrastructure / wildlife corridors • New technologies could assist in reducing air and light pollution 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing developments not considered how to tackle the weaknesses • Density/quantum of housing – adding to traffic • Cumulative impacts of development

3.12. The group then picked out some of the main themes and developed these into potential objectives:

We will deliver for Environment and Green Spaces by:



- 3.13. The group were keen to ensure that open space – a key feature of Pembury – should be retained where possible, not only those spaces accessible to the public, but also the wider network of green infrastructure that provides important corridors for wildlife movement and habitats for flora and fauna. The management of such environments, notably the woodland, was considered to be very important, to ensure its vitality.
- 3.14. Other issues discussed related to the desire to tackle anti-social behaviour that is impacting the environment, for instance litter, as well as the need to reduce car usage in order to tackle air pollution.

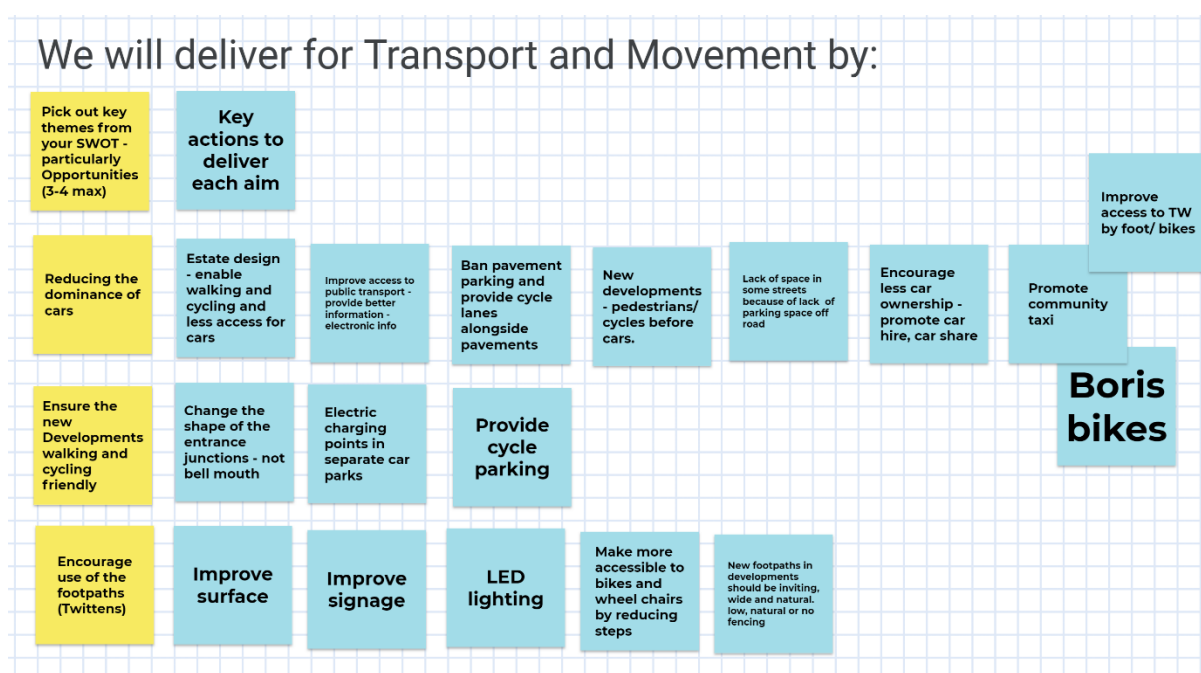
Transport and Movement

- 3.15. The SWOT analysis revealed the following:

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undiscovered footways - need signing • Lots of pavements – can accommodate plenty of foot traffic • Pembury has good access to major routes 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very poor access to Tunbridge Wells • Poor state of the pavements • Pavement parking/ vegetation - difficulty for wheelchair users/ pushchairs • Cycle use is often on the pavements
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to provide better signage • Reutilise those footpaths, incorporate cycleways - encouraging more cycling • Cars not to dominate in the new developments. Especially need to address the 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ?

<p>parking issue. Electric vehicle charging points in numerous locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building 'better' - more greenspace - less roads/ access for cars 	
--	--

- 3.16. The group then picked out some of the main themes and developed these into potential objectives:

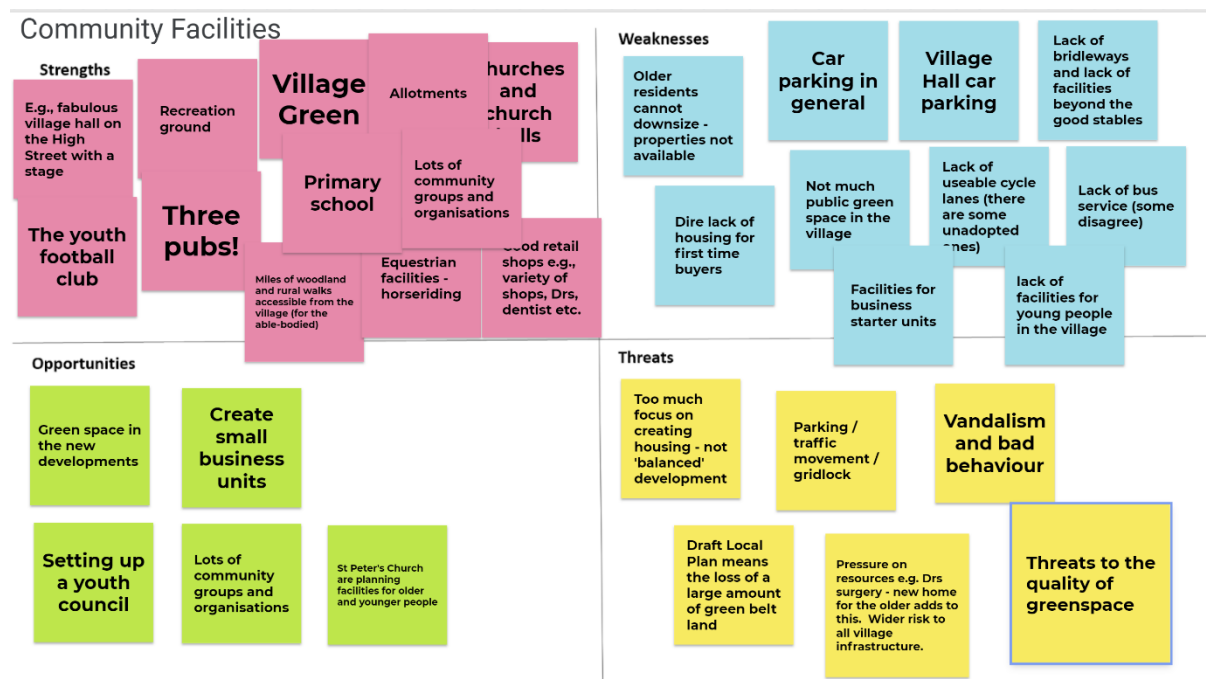


- 3.17. The group was keen to look for ways to support active travel locally – walking and cycling – to try and reduce the number of people using their cars, particularly for shorter journeys. Not only would this help the environment, reduce air pollution and congestion, but it would also benefit people’s health and wellbeing as well as encourage social interaction (something that the survey and wordcloud exercises have revealed is important to those living in Pembury).
- 3.18. Car parking along pavements was raised as a concern, impacting on the ability for pedestrians to safely access local facilities. This is exacerbated in areas where housing has few off-road parking spaces, perhaps because of the age of the housing and it being constructed at a time when cars were fewer. Some community schemes – including car sharing and a community taxi – were noted.

- 3.19. Provision of infrastructure to encourage more cycling was flagged, for instance safe storage and cycle parking – both in public spaces and in new homes. Electric charging points were also mentioned, again in both public and private areas.
- 3.20. The footpath network within Pembury is well-used and these footpaths should be maintained and improved to make them safer, better waymarked, more accessible and pleasant, using natural materials and planting to enhance them.

Community facilities

- 3.21. The SWOT analysis revealed the following:



- 3.22. The group then picked out some of the main themes and developed these into potential objectives:



- 3.23. Access to green space was a feature of the discussion. The desire to ensure that adequate green space is planned within new developments was raised. This was felt to be important, given the rural nature of the village and the need to retain that feel, even as the population continues to expand. Such space would provide access to fresh air, important for mental health and exercise, as well as potentially incorporating facilities for community use. Particular spaces mentioned were the space in front of the church, spaces planned within the emerging sites and perhaps edge of village sites. Equally, the need to ensure better access to existing space, for instance the woodland. There has been support, through the community survey, for off-road biking in one of the woodlands, and this would merit further discussion with Pembury's younger population.
- 3.24. Business starter units were discussed – particularly in light of the increased numbers of people working from home and/or looking to continue to work in the local area. It could be helpful to discuss supply and demand for such sites with local agents, to get an idea of the current market.
- 3.25. Facilities for younger members of the community – particularly teenagers – was discussed. The church has recently undertaken a survey of children and teenagers to support their plans for increased clubs and activities at the church. There is also an emerging Youth Council, and it was felt that that could be used to try and understand more fully the needs and wishes of young people living in Pembury.

Employment and local economy

3.26. The SWOT analysis revealed the following:

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 businesses • Many self-employed people • Small businesses • Small retail • Hospitality – pubs • Farms / agricultural jobs inc. farm shops • Hospital – including teaching 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband and communication patchy • Transport getting into Tunbridge Wells • Gridlock • Lack of car parking • Not much scope for new offices in central Pembury
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offices in former farm buildings • New vets – but where to park? • New care homes (jobs) • New university facility next to the hospital • Development on North Farm • Upgrading of the broadband 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accidents on the A21 divert traffic through Pembury and the bypass too (A267) • Parking taken up by long-term parkers/commuters • New businesses taking up parking spaces needed by shoppers • Derelict land – what will it be used for?

3.27. The group then picked out some of the main themes and developed these into potential objectives:



- 3.28. The quality of the broadband connection was raised by the group, felt to be more important than ever given the number of people working from home, largely as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Equally, it is a vital part of social and educational life. Whilst difficult to address through the planning system, it was felt that developers should ensure linkages to the broadband infrastructure from the start.
- 3.29. For those working from home, could a location for a shared serviced business hub be found? Perhaps at the library or as part of one of the emerging sites?
- 3.30. Car parking was discussed at length, with a concern about the general lack of parking in the village, particularly those accessing the centre. It was considered that some spaces – the edge of the village green mentioned - were, prior to the pandemic, being used by commuters to access trains, leaving their cars for the whole day, thus taking up space for those wishing to access the local shops. Could a parking restriction be enforced? Also noted that some public parking spaces had been lost over time – the Whitbread (Camden?) site noted (which also saw the loss of the public toilet). Underground parking was discussed but considered that it may not be cost effective for most schemes.
- 3.31. Environmentally sustainability was raised, in terms of how development (in its broadest sense) could contribute to climate mitigation. Should electric vehicle charging points be installed within new developments?
- 3.32. The final discussion point was the need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place before development happens. This includes the provision of leisure facilities, e.g., open air table tennis, additional outdoor gyms, café and toilet in the rec – to cater for homeworkers but also the wider community. This chimes with the discussion that took place in the community facilities group.

Conclusions from the Visioning Event

3.33. The event provided a useful and interesting platform for members of the community to discuss key issues of importance to them and the future of Pembury village and wider parish. Particular themes that stood out, which might be incorporated into a vision for the parish include:

- **Pembury as a community that people will feel happy to be part of:** retaining the village feel of Pembury, distinct from Tunbridge Wells, and welcoming newcomers (as the village expands) into community life. Within the parish, the smaller 'hamlets' too retain their own feel, as well as looking to the village as the focus for community activity and events.
- **The village green and village centre are at the heart of the village:** safeguarding valued facilities and amenities will mean that everyday needs are catered for locally. There will be a full programme of local events celebrating village life, utilising shared spaces around the parish.
- **Pembury reflects the beauty and character of the High Weald:** both in terms of its landscape – orchards, woodland, agricultural fields, ponds – and its built environment – a mix of styles and materials and colours. New developments are well-designed, high quality and sustainable.
- **The parish has retained its rural feel:** The green infrastructure underpinning the parish plays an integral role in the future of the parish: the contribution, maintenance and expansion of green spaces, wildlife corridors, landscape features, waterways and woodlands is central to any development in Pembury.
- **Pembury as a home for life:** new housing meets the needs of local people, meaning that those who live here, or choose to live, can continue to do so for as long as they wish including downsizing in later life.
- **People will be able to work locally, without the need to commute if they wish:** by encouraging new developments to support home-working and providing start-up units and flexible shared space for co-working and other leisure uses.
- **A parish that offers something for everyone:** children and teenagers are involved in determining what they want and need for the village as they grown up; workers can access fresh air and leisure facilities while working from home; and older people feel included.
- **A walkable and cyclable parish:** A cared for and well-promoted network of twittens and cycle paths means that local people can get from home to work, to the local facilities and amenities easily and safely.

4. Agreeing the draft vision and objectives with the community

4.1. In consultation with the community, the vision agreed for Pembury up to 2038 is:

In 2038, Pembury Parish will continue to be an engaged and inclusive community, offering a range of facilities and recreational opportunities for all ages, underpinned by an active volunteer base.

It will have retained its rural feel, remaining distinct from neighbouring settlements, including Tunbridge Wells. The new housing developments that have emerged will have been sympathetically and sustainably designed and will have provided a range of housing opportunities and prices for those wishing to buy or rent in the Parish, whether newly arriving or relocating locally.

The attractive High Weald setting will be safeguarded, including the features that are typical to Pembury, such as the trees and woodland, ponds, orchards and hedgerows. Treasured green spaces and views will be retained for the future. Equally, the history of the Parish will be celebrated through the preservation of historic assets, the features of which will be perpetuated through new developments.

The Parish will continue to offer a range of work opportunities, both for those commuting out to work, but also those wishing to work locally or from home.

Pembury will be a very walkable and cyclable Parish, with additional footpath connections and improvements to the main paths. Opportunities to improve road safety for all users will have been integrated.

4.2. The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

Objective 1: Pembury as a community that people will feel happy to be part of: retaining the village feel of Pembury, distinct from Tunbridge Wells, and welcoming newcomers (as the village expands) into community life. Within the parish, the smaller 'hamlets' to retain their own feel, as well as looking to the village as the focus for community activity and events.

Objective 2: The village green and village centre are at the heart of the village: safeguarding valued facilities and amenities and enabling access to them will mean that everyday needs are catered for locally. There will be a full programme of local events celebrating village life, utilising shared spaces around the parish.

Objective 3: Pembury reflects the beauty and character of the High Weald: both in terms of its landscape – orchards, woodland, agricultural fields, ponds – and its built environment – a mix of styles and materials and colours. New developments are well-designed, high quality and sustainable. Local heritage is conserved and opportunities to celebrate it are sought.

Objective 4: The parish retains its rural feel: The green infrastructure underpinning the parish plays an integral role in the future of the parish: the contribution, maintenance and expansion of green spaces, wildlife corridors, landscape features, waterways and woodlands is central to any development in Pembury.

Objective 5: Pembury as a home for life: new housing meets the needs of local people, meaning that those who live here, or choose to live, can continue to do so for as long as they wish including downsizing in later life.

Objective 6: People will be able to work locally, without the need to commute if they wish: by encouraging new developments to support home-working and providing start-up units and flexible shared space for co-working and other leisure uses.

Objective 7: A parish that offers something for everyone: children and teenagers are involved in determining what they want and need for the village as they grow up; workers can access fresh air and leisure facilities while working from home; and older people feel included.

Objective 8: A walkable and cyclable parish: A cared for and well-promoted network of twittens (a colloquial term for a narrow path or passage between two walls or hedges), footpaths, cycle paths, and bridleways, means that local people can get from home to work, to the local facilities and amenities, and to pursue leisure, easily and safely.