

Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan

Appendix 3. Site Appraisal Document:

Date: 19 August 2016

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Household questionnaire

1.0 Introduction and background

This report sets out Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan's (PNP) approach to selecting the sites for development within their neighbourhood plan. An important task of the PNP is to allocate sites for development that meet local and wider needs informed by local consultation and the requirements of the current Ashford Borough Local Plan, in this case being under review also mindful of the emerging Local Plan which at the time of writing this Appraisal is at Reg. 19 Stage.

In 2011 Pluckley had 427 households (Office of National Statistics). Since the second World War, there has been significant growth. After the war, council houses were built at Shiplands, south of the village hall on Station Road and the Thorne Estate. A number of individual cedar 'Colt' houses followed and, in the early 1990s, the Westfields estate was built, containing owner-occupied, tenanted

from housing associations and homes sold with shared equity. In the 1990s too, a number of larger, detached homes were built along Forge Hill and Lambden Road.

Growth in recent years has been limited, with an estimated six new dwellings being built in the past fifteen years. As with many villages in the south east, there is a significant elderly population and a shortage of young people. The high cost of housing locally is a contributing factor. The rationale and type of dwelling supported are outlined below.

33 additional homes is the proposed total number of new dwellings in PNP policy H1. This number reflects the amount and rate of houses built over the last 40 years and to meet the perceived pressures on the Parish from existing residents and to utilise a brown field site. The total of new dwellings is supported in views expressed by residents during the consultation period.

These supported numbers of dwellings balance the need for the parish to evolve, meeting the needs of residents with the desire to retain the rural character that makes the parish attractive. Residents specifically asked for two/three-bedroom homes designed either for young people seeking their first home, or for elderly residents looking to downsize. See page 38 Consultation Strategy.

It is recognised that some housing growth is desirable for the community to ensure a sustainable future. At the same time, the community wishes to preserve its existing characteristics. In determining the number of homes to be delivered, the following have been taken into account: the views expressed by parishioners during Consultation; past trends in the Parish; and the envisaged future need over the next fifteen years.

In 2014, Ashford Borough Council held a “call for sites” in preparation for its revised Local Plan. Five landowners with sites in the parish of Pluckley responded to this. When Pluckley Parish Council announced in March 2015 that it was preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and that the parish had been granted Neighbourhood Area status, three further landowners came forward with four sites.

All of the ten sites that came forward were tested through the methodology supplied by Ashford Borough Council together with locally detailed specifications that came out of the parish consultation and research into what other neighbourhood plans were considering in their site selection criteria. The sites chosen meet the needs expressed by residents during the consultation and scored higher in the scoring matrix used. They were confirmed through public engagement and consultation.

The other sites submitted scored lower on the scoring matrix used and were discounted for being contrary to the views expressed by residents and the aims of the policies in this plan. This is described in more detail in sections 3 and 4 of this document.

In the case of all new developments, a Contribution may be sought from the developer, to address the projects in the Community Projects Management Plan.

1.1 Consultation

Consultation with residents took the form of formal questionnaires to every home and a series of workshops as described in the Consultation Statement. In both the questionnaire and the discussions, the scale and nature of development required by the parish was discussed in detail. The Steering Group was also mindful of the NPPF in its discussions and the types of housing development that might be required in a rural area such as Pluckley parish.

The consultation gave the Steering Group a clear picture of how many dwellings were needed, their distribution, and their style. It also gave a clear idea about what would make an acceptable development site in the parish. Various qualitative features were explored in the questionnaires and the discussions. Pluckley is fortunate in having its Parish Design Statement, adopted in 2003, and several qualitative aspects of development are covered in that. The consultation was at pains to determine the continuing relevance of the Design Statement and it showed that support for it within the Parish remains very strong. There was strong consensus on many of the qualitative issues.

The questionnaire included the question ‘How many new houses would you like to see built over the next fifteen years?’ Of the 96 respondents, 10 said none and 7 said more than 30. The modal group was 6-10 houses with 37 respondents and 1-5 and 11-15 each received 12 responses. The average of all responses was 11.3 houses. See Appendix 3, Consultation Statement, p. 40.

The subsequent workshops again asked how many homes residents thought Pluckley needed over the fifteen years. The range of responses was between nil and one resident who called for 100. Most called for around ten and the average of all responses was 11.5 homes, showing good consistency with the questionnaire responses. The one additional comment agreed by many consultees at the workshops was that, should the former Brickworks site be developed for housing rather than its existing industrial permit, then a larger number would be supportable. Up to twenty homes on the Brickworks site was seen as a preferable alternative to industrial use.

2.0 Process

In August 2015, the Steering Group met with each of the landowners and/or their nominated agents individually. One of the landowners who had responded to Ashford Borough Council's 'call for sites' wished to propose two alternative developments on the same large L-shaped site, so this site was treated as two sites. This gave a total of ten sites for consideration.

Discussions with the site owners sought to establish what it was they wished to develop. Knowing from the consultations with residents what the parish wanted, the Steering Group was able to explore the flexibility of each site and the site's capacity to adapt to the needs of the community. This process left the Steering Group with a clear picture of each site's character and the aspirations of its owner.

The assessment of the sites sought to identify those sites that best met the requirements advised by residents, married to meeting the aspirations of the owners. To achieve this, the Steering Group drew up a matrix of criteria. These criteria were arrived at by adopting the sustainability matrix supplied by Ashford Borough Council. To these were added certain local criteria that had been expressed as important during the consultation process. Finally, from the Steering Group's research into how other public authorities were assessing sites, two further criteria were identified. This produced a total of twenty three criteria.

Each site was then assessed against each factor by all members of the Steering Group, first individually and then collectively so that a consensus was reached. The scores for each factor were then totalled to arrive at an overall score for each site.

Afterwards the Steering Group suggestions for preferred sites and reasons, together with the non-favoured sites and reasons, were consulted upon in a parish-wide consultation event in February 2016, see page 8 and 9 of the Consultation Statement and subsequently supported by the public.

2.1 Site selection criteria and scoring explained

In order to assess the sites that came forward in the Parish for development, the Steering Group used a sustainability matrix. This was comprised of criteria supplied by Ashford Borough Council as used in their Borough-wide selection process. Added to these were additional local criteria that had emerged from the consultation within the parish, and a couple of other criteria used in the preparation of NPs by other parishes and planning authorities.

The local criteria identified as key during consultation with residents were: that the proposed development should be small (defined as fewer than 5 homes - this is the definition used for many years by Ashford Borough Council and it has therefore been adopted in successive surveys within the parish); that open views be preserved; that the “green heart” of the parish be protected; that trees, woodland and hedgerows be maintained; that any development fitted appropriately into the surrounding area; and that the impact from the roadside frontage be minimal.

The two criteria adopted from other planning authorities were landform and impact on habitats: landform variation that rendered the site more able to contain visual impact; and landscape with different habitats that rendered the site more sensitive.

The following criteria were given a weighting of 0-5 (5 being the most positive), reflecting the importance that consultation had accorded them:

1. Small development (fewer than 5 homes)
2. Offers small, affordable homes for young people
3. Offers smaller homes for downsizing elderly residents
4. Does not impact on open views
5. Not situated within the ‘green heart’ of the parish (as defined in the Parish Design Statement and protected in Policy R3 of the NDP)
6. Fits into the pattern of development and landform of the surrounding area
7. Does not impact on trees, hedgerow and woodland
8. No impact on roadside frontage
9. The landform allows screening
10. Limited impact on different habitats
11. Must not be prone to flooding
12. Easy access and limited danger to highway impact
13. Preservation of agricultural use
14. Previously developed land favoured

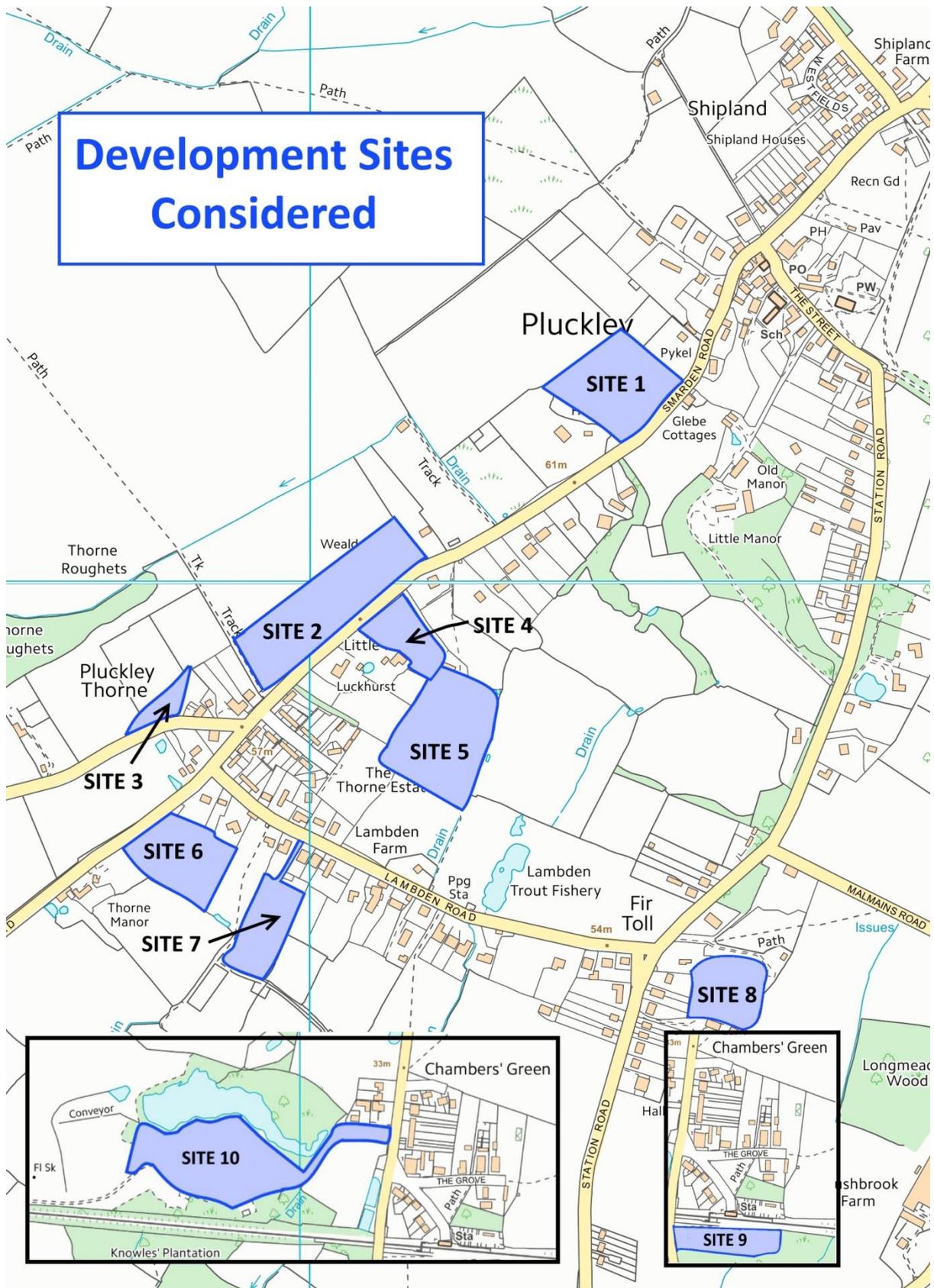
The following criteria were accorded a weighting of 0-3 (being the most positive):

1. Not within a Conservation Area
2. No close proximity to Listed buildings
3. Accessibility to open space
4. Accessibility to equipped play area
5. Presence of footpath
6. Availability of public transport (bus or train)
7. Proximity to shops
8. Proximity to school
9. No adverse impact on employment.

Each site was assessed by each factor and the resultant 'scores' totalled. A site was allocated a score of 5 if it fitted the criteria in the most positive way, and 0 if it fully failed the criteria. Interim scores of 1-4 were awarded where the site was considered to partly meet the criteria.

2.2 Sites considered

1. W of Forge Hill
2. W of Smarden Rd
3. Thorne Yard
4. Adj Little Farm
5. Adj Thorne Estate
6. E of Smarden Rd
7. Lambden Rd
8. Parsonage Cottage
9. Old Coal Yard
10. Old Brickworks



2.3 Initial short-listing

Factor/site	4.adj Little Farm	5. adj Thorne Estate	3. Thorne Yard	7. Lambden Rd	6. E of Smarden Rd	2.W of Smarden Rd	1. W of Forge Hill	8. Parsonage Cottage	10.Old Brickw'ks	9.Old Coal Yard
Less than 5 home	5	2	5	5	5	2	5	5	-	3
Small,affordable	-	4	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Suit downsizers	-	-	-	5	5	2	4	4	3	-
Impact open views	2	2	4	3	1	1	-	4	5	5
Green Heart	-	-	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Fits surround area	2	1	4	2	2	-	-	3	4	3
Impact trees,woodland	2	3	5	5	4	3	4	4	5	1
Impact from road	-	4	5	5	2	3	-	5	5	5
Landform	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Impact habitats	-	2	5	3	3	4	3	3	1	3
Not flood prone	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5
Highway impact	4	1	3	4	3	2	2	1	2	-
Preserves agric	2	2	5	2	2	2	1	2	5	5
Previously developed	-	-	5	2	-	-	-	-	5	5
Prox. Cons.Area	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3
Prox.Listed	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Open space nr.	3	3	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	-
Equipped play nr.	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Footpath	3	2	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-
Pub transport	2	2	2	1	2	2	-	1	3	3
Shop prox	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	-	-	-
School prox	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	-
Loss empl site	3	3	-	3	3	3	3	3	-	-
TOTAL	40	44	69	58	49	47	46	52	53	49

A score of 1 = low and 5 = high. A blank indicates that the site did not meet the criteria at all.

3.0 Sites not selected

1.Site west of Forge Hill

This is a large, open farm field of 60 acres., currently used for grazing sheep. The owners suggested developing within 3 acres of the field, at the southern end. They did not have pre-determined views as to what they might develop but would not wish to go against what the parish was seeking. On this basis, a small development (fewer than 5 homes) suitable for down-sizers, was the proposal assessed. On both these counts, therefore, the site scored well, as it did for not being in the ‘green heart’ nor prone to flooding. It also scored well for having footpath access and its proximity to an equipped play area and not displacing an employment site. It scored poorly for its impact on open views, fitting within the surrounding area, its impact from the roadside, loss of agricultural land and proximity to public transport.

The location in a landscape character area of high sensitivity would mean a severe impact on views which would change the character of this part of the parish. Access too, even if placed to best advantage, would be onto a busy route with limited sightlines. These factors combined to render the site unsupportable.

2. Site west of Smarden Road

This site is part of a large farm field. It represents a strip of the field, fronting the road behind a hedge, of approx.4.5 acres. The owners’ proposal was to build six 4-5 bedroom homes for family members. Alternatively, three 4-5 bed homes and three 2 bedroom bungalows. Access would be by the existing field entrance with a slip road behind the hedge providing access to the homes which would be built along the Smarden Road.

The site scored well in terms of providing (potentially) some homes for down-sizers, not being in the ‘green heart’, not being prone to flooding, not being in a Conservation Area, or impacting listed buildings, there is footpath access and it does not displace employment. The site scored poorly for not being a small development, the impact on open views, it would not fit easily within the surrounding area, it does not use previously developed land, and there is no easy access to an equipped play area.

The scale of the development, its impact on the character of this part of the parish, the loss of open views with a public footpath at the edge of the site combine to render the site unsupportable.

4. Site adjacent to Little Farm, Smarden Road

This is part of a 7.5 acre site designated for agricultural use. The site owner proposed separate development on two areas of the site – the NW corner adjacent to Little Farm, and the SW corner adjacent to the Thorne Estate. This could be as one or two schemes.

Two to three large, 4-bedroom, homes were proposed for the NW corner; and an unspecified number of affordable homes at the SW corner. Should the NW corner not be supported, then the SW corner would need to add two to three large, 4-bedroom homes to the affordable ones. Should the SW corner not be supported then the number of larger homes at the NW corner should increase to four to five.

Both the areas were considered. The NW site adjacent to Little Farm scored well in terms of being a small development, not being prone to flooding, using an existing access onto the highway, not being in a Conservation Area or affecting a listed property, having open space nearby, and a footpath, and not displacing an employment site. It scored poorly in terms of offering small, affordable homes, down-sizer homes, being in the ‘green heart’ of the parish, its visual impact from the road, disruption of the landscape pattern, not using previously developed land, not having easy access to an equipped play area.

The failure to meet the stated needs of the community (affordable or down-sizer homes), the adverse impact on open views, and the intrusion into the ‘green heart’ of the parish with its sensitive habitat combines to render this site the least supportable of all the sites.

5. Site adjacent to Thorne Estate

This site is the SW corner of the site referred to under 4. above. The site scored well on providing affordable homes, visual impact from the road, not being prone to flooding, not being in a Conservation Area or affecting listed buildings, nor displacing an existing employment site. It scored poorly in terms of not providing homes for down-sizers, not being a small development, being in the ‘green heart’ of the parish, requiring access through an already difficult route, not utilising previously developed land, and not having easy access to an equipped play area.

The scale of the development, its location in the ‘green heart’, and the need for access through the already difficult Thorne Estate contributed to this site receiving the second least supportable of the sites assessed.

6.Site east of Smarden Road

This is a 2 acre site, farmland used for occasional grazing. The owners proposed a development of four self-build homes for elderly downsizers, including themselves. They envisaged 2-3 bedroom homes.

The site scored well for the size of development, for providing homes for downsizers, not being in the 'green heart', not being prone to flooding, not being in a Conservation Area, and not displacing an employment site. It scored poorly in terms of its impact on views, not utilising previously developed land, not having a footpath or easy access to the school or an equipped play area.

Although offering the scale and purpose of development the parish is seeking, the location with its impact on views and the character of this part of the parish was enough to render this site not supportable.

8. Site at Fir Toll

This is a 2 acre enclosed field behind Parsonage Cottage. The owner proposed two 3-bedroom homes for elderly downsizers, one of which would be for himself, and a 2-bedroom home, possibly bungalows. The access would be through the existing entrance of Parsonage Cottage.

The site scored well for the size of development, providing homes for downsizers, not being in the 'green heart', preserving trees, no visual impact from the roadside, not being prone to flooding, not being in a Conservation Area or affecting listed properties, and not displacing an employment site. It scored poorly for access onto the highway, not being land previously developed, not near an equipped play area, school, or shop, or having a footpath.

Overall this site offered the scale and type of development the parish needs. It is also screened with minimal impact on the surrounding area. This gave the site a score which meant it could be supported for development. Kent CC Highways, however, advised that the sightlines at the point of access were inadequate and they would not support it. On this basis, the site is not supported.

9.Old Coal Yard site

This site is a former coal yard, adjacent and with access to the up-line at Pluckley Station. It is 2 acres in total and has stood unused for many years. Half of the site has a concrete base and half is woodland. The agent for the owner proposed use of

the site as a car park for station users, with the possibility of housing in future. At this stage, no proposals were to hand as to the type of housing development.

As a potential housing site, the site scored well for its minimal impact on views, its use of developed land, and not being in the 'green heart'. It does not impact on listed properties and it has excellent access to the rail service. It scored poorly for its impact on woodland, its road access, its access to school, shop, play area and open space. It would also entail the loss of an employment site.

On balance, the road access, the loss of woodland, and access to amenities deliver a score that renders the site unsupportable for housing.

This site is, however, supported, for the development of a car park as a solution to the car parking problems at the station. The key issue is to overcome the access difficulty, the present access having limited sightlines.

All of these sites have been presented to the parish as not supported in the Neighbourhood Plan. The landowners have been notified and the Borough Council advised. The draft NDP, reflecting this, has been available for several months, including a formal six-week consultation period. There has been no objection received regarding any of these sites. On the contrary, public meetings in the Parish have shown strong support.

4.0 Sites selected

Four of the sites scored better than the others, and these were recommended for support and endorsed at the public engagement event in February 2016. KCC Highways subsequently ruled that the sight lines for one of the sites, Parsonage Cottage, which had been assessed as marginal, were inadequate. This left three sites which, between them, more than delivered the need expressed by the Parish. They also delivered more than the estimated need advised by Ashford Borough Council.

These selected sites comprise:

Site 3. Thorne Yard

Site 7. Lambden Road

Site 10. Old Brickworks

These sites are supported in Policy H1 of the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan.

Site 3. Thorne Yard

This site is an existing builder's storage yard. The owner proposes developing four 2-3 bedroom homes, affordable for young people from the parish. Access would be from the two entrances already on site. The site scores well for the size of development, offering affordable homes, not being in the 'green heart', not involving the loss of trees, not having an adverse impact from the roadside, not being prone to flooding or using agricultural land, or being in a Conservation Area or impacting listed buildings. It also uses previously developed land. Although technically an employment site, nobody has been employed from this site for more than twenty years. The site scores poorly for its limited access to an equipped play area, footpath, school and shop.

This use of an untidy, developed area to provide housing of the type the parish needs and fitting well into the character of the area gives this site the strongest score of all the sites proposed.

Site 7. Lambden Road

This site is a 1 acre site behind Lambden Road, currently a field used for occasional grazing. The owners make the same proposal as for the non-supported site 6, i.e. for four 2-3 bedroom homes for elderly downsizers. The proposal is that they would be high quality, self-build homes, one of which would be for themselves. Access would be through the existing entrance to the field. The site scores well for the size of development, providing homes for elderly downsizers, not being in the 'green heart', having minimal impact on trees, not being visible from the road, not being prone to flooding, not being in a Conservation Area, and not displacing an employment site. The site scored poorly for using agricultural land, not being on previously developed land, not being near an equipped play area, not having footpath access or near the school.

Although using agricultural rather than 'brownfield' land, this site is limited in scale and offers the type of housing required by the parish. It would be visually unobtrusive and fit into the surrounding area well. It scored very highly in the assessment.

Site 10. Former Brickworks site

This site is a 6.5 acre site within a 32 acre holding comprising the former brickworks and surrounding lake, field and woodland. It has been unused for some thirty years. It has, in 2016, received outline planning approval for the proposal to build twenty five homes, four of which would be suitable for elderly downsizers. The adjoining lake and woodland would be preserved as leisure features for the parish, and the field maintained for grazing.

The site scored well for not impacting open views, not being in the 'green heart', not impacting on woodland and not visible from the roadside. It does not use agricultural land and does use previously developed land. It does not impact on listed buildings and is convenient for the rail service. The site scored poorly for its size, for not being near an equipped play area, school or shops or having a footpath.

While this site proposes a development larger than the parish wanted, this was seen as an acceptable alternative to industrial development (the site previously had been granted a waste disposal certificate.) The carefully negotiated agreement between owner, Borough Council and Parish Council, now given outline planning approval, is supported.

The three supported sites have been presented to the parish at public meetings, through the formal consultation, the quarterly newsletter to all homes, and on the parish website. Just one objection was raised, during formal consultation, to site 7, by the resident living next door. Otherwise, all comments have been supportive.

Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan – Questionnaire

Please indicate how far you agree with the following from the Parish Plan and Design Statement.

10 = completely agree to 1 = completely disagree.

1. Any development in Pluckley should be small-scale (i.e. 1 – 4 houses) and dispersed.

Avg. Score 8.2

2. Developments of 5 or more houses should be resisted.

Avg. score 7.9

3. Sheltered housing for elderly residents should be provided by the village cluster (*The village cluster is an agreement by six neighbouring villages to cluster together to find a site able to take the minimum 30 dwelling units necessary*).

Avg. Score 7.5

4. We should seek to control the volume and speed of traffic, particularly HGVs.

Avg. Score 9.5

5. We should encourage Leisure and social interaction.

Avg. Score 8.6

6. We should protect open views as a defining aspect of the village character.

Avg. Score 9.4

7. The 'green heart' of the village should be retained, *i.e. area of fields/ woodland at the heart of the village, bounded by The Street, Station Rd, Lambden, Smarden Rd.*

Avg. score 8.9

8. Trees and woodland should be protected.

Avg. Score 9.5

9. Open spaces within groupings of houses should be retained *e.g. the triangles of green by the station car park, Fir Toll, and the land at the end of the Thorne estate.*

Avg. Score 9.0

10. Uniform layout of houses is to be avoided.

Avg. Score 8.9

11. The scale and size of any development should fit into its surroundings.

Avg. Score 9.6

12. Owners or developers should plant hedgerows, native trees or picket fences to soften impact on roadside frontages.

Avg. Score 9.1

13. Should the village encourage commercial activity? (tick all you agree with)

- Manufacturing **12%**
- Agriculture **71%**
- Logistics/wholesale/distribution **5%**
- Business Services (accountancy, marketing, legal firms etc.) **43%**
- Tourism **64%**
- Retail **51%**
- Other please specify... **2%**

14. To what extent do you think it is critical for the village to retain the following? Please answer using a scale of 1 – 10 where 10 is critical and 1 is not important at all.

- Shops **Avg. score 9.9**
- Pubs **Avg. Score 9.6**
- Post office **Avg. score 9.8**

15. Do you think the on road parking around the station is a problem for the village?

- Yes **76%**
- No **13%**
- Not sure **10%**

16. You've indicated that you consider on road parking is a problem for the village. Which of the following would you like to see introduced to help address the problem? (tick all you agree with)

- Additional "charged for" parking facilities **53%**
- Double yellow lines Station Rd **33%**
- Single yellow lines Station Rd **32%**

17. Would you like to see street lights installed in the village ?

- Yes **8%**
- No **79%**
- Not sure **14%**

18. Do you think that the maintenance of pavements in the parish needs to be improved?

- Yes **50%**
- No **25%**
- Not sure **23%**

19. Over the last 15 years Pluckley has seen about 10 new dwellings in the village. Over the next 15 years do you think there should be: more, fewer, or about the same number of new dwellings built?

- More **22%**
- Fewer **21%**
- About the same **57%**

20. How many houses would you like to see built over the next 15 years?

None	10
1 – 5	12
6– 10	37
11 – 15	12
16 – 20	9
21 – 25	5
26 - 30	3
31 +	7

Avg. score 11.3