

Tenterden Selective Neighbourhood Plan steering group

Vision and objective setting event

24th October 2019

Jim Boot, Community Planner
11-22-2019

Tenterden Selective Neighbourhood Plan – Visioning and Objective Setting Workshop

Date: Thursday 24th October 2019

Venue: St Mildreds Church Hall, Church Road, Tenterden, TN30 6AT

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this visioning event was to develop a vision and set of objectives for the Tenterden Selective Neighbourhood Plan (TSNP) – what residents and businesses would like the area to look and feel like in 10, 15 or 20 years’ time – as a result of the TSNP. Once a favoured vision was short-listed by those participating, the next step was to develop objectives or principles to achieve the vision. These then would become the basis for a working vision and set of objectives to inform the next steps in developing the neighbourhood plan.
2. Invitations were sent out to everyone who had expressed an interest in being involved in the TSNP as well as steering group and working group members. In the end 30 people took part. The intention following the workshop was to share the results at the TSNP exhibition taking place at St Mildred’s Church on the following Saturday 2nd November and ask for feedback from the general public and other stakeholders who might attend. There will be a separate report on the exhibition to follow.

Welcome and introduction

3. Cllr John Crawford welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. He explained the scope of the TSNP:
 - a. Produce a Selective NP, that defines a coherent and forward-looking plan for Tenterden.
 - b. To promote health and wellbeing of its residents, indigenous wildlife, protect its environment and continue to attract visitors to the town.
 - c. Identify:

- i. Sites with rich biodiversity
- ii. Valued landscape and views
- iii. Interconnecting green routeways
- iv. Local Green Spaces

Context setting

4. Richard Masefield, Chair of the TSNP steering committee then set out in a series of slides (see Appendix A), the work undertaken by the four working groups as set out at 3c above, the evidence they have gathered and their initial findings but summarised as follows:
 - a. In the past four years almost 20 acres of green space in Tenterden has been lost to development with a further 40 acres earmarked for building and at least another 60 acres of green space know to be at risk.
 - b. A steering group has been formed under the auspices of Tenterden Town Council including: Kent Wildlife Trust, Tenterden and District Residents Association, Tenterden Schools Trust, Weald of Kent Protection Society, St Mildred's Church, the William Judge Trust, NHS Ivy Court and Sport Tenterden.
5. The focus of the TSNP reflects the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 99 and 100: 'The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.' The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:
 - a. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - b. demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
 - c. local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
6. Paragraph 101 continues: 'Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.'
7. The mission statement for the steering group is to: Produce a selective NP in conformity with the Ashford Local Plan to:
 - a. Define a coherent and forward-looking plan for Tenterden
 - b. Establish a network of valuable green space (designated as Important Green Space), with interconnecting green passageways where possible.
 - c. Promote the health and wellbeing of residents and indigenous wildlife, enhance biodiversity and provide environmental protection
 - d. Continue to attract visitors to the town.
8. Consultation and engagement so far has included a series of presentations in May to 600 + residents and four training workshops in June to members of the working groups in particular to address the five criteria for LGS in the NPPF that they must be 'demonstrably special' for:
 - a. Their historical significance
 - b. Their beauty
 - c. Their tranquillity
 - d. Their recreational value
 - e. Their richness of their wildlife

9. The Landscape Character group focus has been to: capture through research and observation the evolving characteristics that through time have contributed to Tenterden's unique identity within its landscape; involving natural, cultural and social histories and aesthetic perception – including mapping.
10. The Routeways working group: research and explorations of existing routeways including footpaths, brideways and cycle routes, have revealed a need for policies within the Neighbourhood Plan to protect and enhance the many benefits they offer our community.
11. The Biodiversity and wildlife group aims to:
 - a. Contribute to the conservation of sites considered for Local Green Space designation, by providing evidence of their ecological value.
 - b. Develop additional policies within the Neighbourhood Plan to help conserve priority habitats and species.
 - c. Provide a baseline for monitoring the ecological health of the parish through future years:
 - i. including ancient woodland, wooded gills unique to the region, 10 designated Local Wildlife Sites, 2 'traditional orchards' and 4 private nature reserves
 - ii. 915 plant and animal species have been recorded for the Group by local residents, with 820 photographs, all map-referenced, for a parish data-base shared with iNaturalist and Kent and Medway Biological Records (KMBRC)
 - iii. Highlights include 2 rare bats, 20 birds on the BTO red list, dermalona mushrooms, polecats and Clifden Nonpareil blue underwing moth found at Kench Hill
12. In July the Group commissioned an assessment of 8 green sites in Tenterden from Dolphin Ecological Surveys. Their report concluded that: *'The survival on the edges and even within the town of such a rich array of ancient habitats is unusual and a feature of ecological and historical importance.'*
13. The Green Space Group has been OS mapping and surveying and photographing green spaces in or near the communities of Tenterden, St Michaels and Smallhythe. A Long List of 100 + green sites in or near the town are now categorised for potential LGS designation or other protective policies within the NP. These have been slowly whittled down to

Visioning exercise

14. Now with the context firmly in their minds, the participants sitting at four tables were asked to try to imagine the kind of place they want Tenterden, St Michaels and Smallhythe to be in 2036. Initially they were asked to write key words or short phrases on strips of coloured card, then to try and put these in order on a large sheet of paper, add in link words to create a single coherent statement. The results were as follows:

Table 1

In 2036 (15 years) Tenterden and St Michaels will be ... interweaving nature through the town, interconnecting pathways for all users between all settlements of Tenterden Breathing, thriving and green space for the community [where] local people of all ages able to live locally, reduce traffic, [be] proud of the quality of its old and new historic appearance [and] remain the Jewel of the Weald.

This vision scored 30 points from the participants.

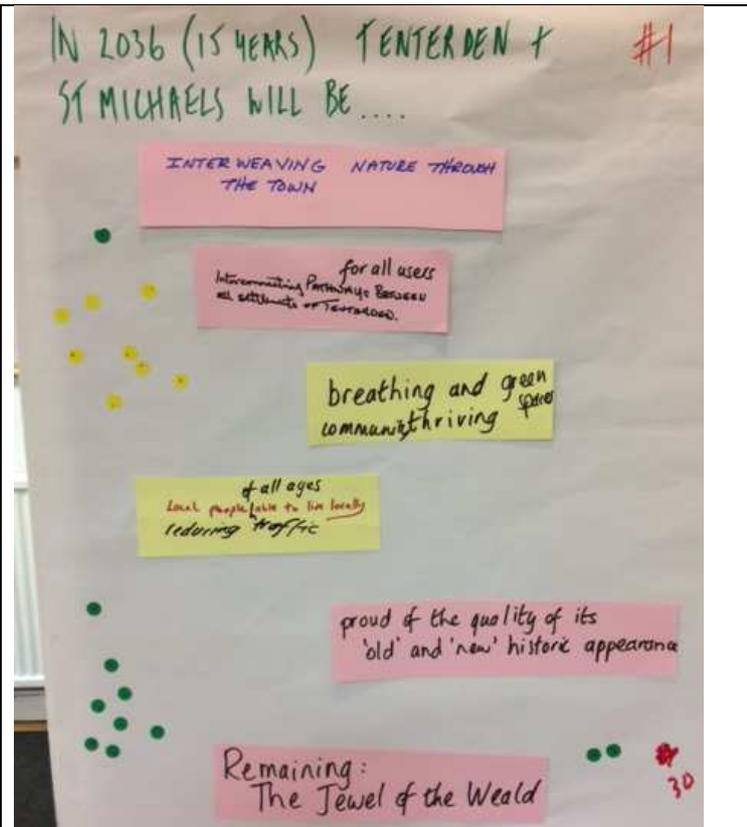


Table 2

In 2036 (15 years) Tenterden and St Michaels will be ... unique, friendly, thriving; [a] safe community, peaceful and coherent, retains[ing] its traditional character. [There will be] sports facilities for all ages, vernacular integrity and style, retention of dark areas, [an] enhanced streetscape. [Tenterden will be known for its] clean air, [being] sustainable, bustling [with] green accessibility.

This vision scored 27 points from the participants.



Table 3

In 2036 (15 years) Tenterden and St Michaels will be ... Green within the town and around [with] places to chill. [It will] keep agricultural connections, retain trees on [the] high street, accessible ancient woodland, fresh air [and be] clean.

All ages [will be able to see / and] access green spaces, [enjoy] improved public transport, cycle pathways, [there will be] no cars (less driverless) [and] improved street crossing facilities.

[Tenterden will have enhanced] community spirit, [be] vibrant but traditional, [have a] pollution free high street, cultural and community activities. [It will have a]:

- Peaceful high street
- Playgrounds for all ages including 60+
- Child friendly and safe from traffic hazards
- Attractive setting
- Where people of all ages can find a place
- Healthy walking
- Preserve railway countryside surrounding

This vision scored 27 points from the participants.



Table 4

In 2036 (15 years) Tenterden and St Michaels will be ... [a] green, vibrant, exciting, interesting, energy efficient [yet] traditional market town [with diverse] community markets, thriving shops [and] development in keeping with [the] town's green and pleasant [reputation] and with access to all.
With Trees
With Flowers
Peaceful open space
Safe for pedestrians
reduced traffic noise
with electric cars
plus cycling, walking and exercise
which will help to keep Tenterden as the jewel in the weald



15. A revised draft based on key words from all the visions was put together by one of the members of the steering group ready to share with members of the public and stakeholders who attended the exhibition at St Mildred's Church on 2nd November:

Revised draft vision

In 2036, Tenterden, St Michaels and Smallhythe to be a safe, friendly, healthy and socially cohesive community centred in a thriving, culturally rich market town, where people of all ages can enjoy accessible, welcoming and peaceful green spaces together with recreation facilities for all ages.

The high quality Weald countryside will be protected and enhanced to preserve and sustain the unique environment. This will allow a peaceful and cohesive open space flowing seamlessly between the town and countryside, via interconnecting routeways for walking and cycling.

Our parish will be a vibrant tourist attraction with a pedestrian-safe high street with many traditional shops and markets, steam railway and other appealing historic sites. New developments will be designed to maintain the vernacular integrity and style of a historic town, whilst preserving the harmony with the countryside and minimal destruction of nature and intrinsic beauty.

Initiatives will be considered to improve air quality, reduce pollution emissions such as CO2 in accordance with climate change targets to ensure Tenterden remains "green and sustainable".

The aim is to honour Tenterden's title of the "Jewel of the Weald".

Objective setting

16. Following the visioning exercise, the participants were asked to develop a set of objectives 'to achieve the vision' based on the current TSNP topics:
 - a. Biodiversity
 - b. Routeways
 - c. Greenspaces
 - d. Landscape character
17. Sitting in topic tables, the participants were asked to: *Imagine yourself in the Tenterden Vision in 2030. 'What has happened in your theme to achieve the vision?' Write down a key word or short phrase on the cards provided using marker pens (no sentences or paragraphs). Once you have approximately 8-12 key words (or less short phrases) try and place these in order on your sheet. Objectives should be active and be positive (not passive and negative). Discuss and if necessary discard words/ synonyms. Write filler words on the sheet to make a sentence or short paragraph. Use sticky tape and / or glue stick to stick strips of card to your sheet.*
18. Some of the draft objectives were more like sub-objectives, policy intentions or potential projects which will need further work by the steering and sub-groups prior to being incorporated into the plan. Some groups went 'off-topic'.

Biodiversity

We will ... open working community garden to encourage all age groups, education to schools, will include swift boxes, bird nesting boxes, bat boxes and insect hotels. There will be sympathetic management by community groups; combat loneliness or isolation in the older community or people with learning disabilities or mental health issues (eg Mens' Shed, birdboxes, bughouses, wildlife garden, flowers for sale). We will have additional, accessible allotments, green corridors, planting more trees, manage / plan wildlife meadows and verges to address [the] climate crisis.

Greenspaces

Promoting Tenterden as a historically green town and a 'green town' in the future:

1. Planning policy – reframe tree protection policy to acknowledge role in environment;
2. Campaign including a joined coherent sustainable transport network based on green spaces and corridors
3. Greener use of High Street, less parking, more community activities on green space
4. Preserve woodland / trees, plant more – re-wooding, reforestation, each tree reduces CO2 emissions.
 - Use cleaner (electric / cycle) transport to maintain green space.
 - Improving and (available at weekends) advertising Public Rights of Way (PROW) network, improving signage on network and generally so it get it used.
 - Knowing what we've got and promoting it.

Landscape character

We will maintain our existing beautiful views, which encourages wildlife, view of church from all quarters, educational paths / knowledge trails, protect and enhance, linked pathways, reinforced "lanes" with access to "country", street edges – hard urban edges (town) – soft screen landscape [with] hedgerows. We will refer projected development to the photographic archive of the Tenterden landscape, 1-2 storey development. Landscape edges – urban edges:

- Planned

- Hard / soft
- Urban / screened

[Also]

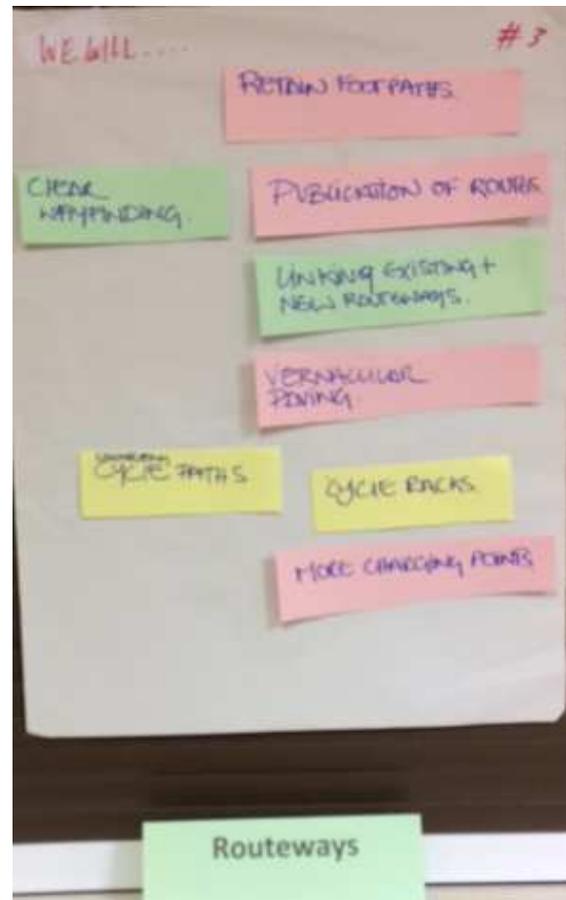
- Street trees
- If we must have cars, blend the parking of vehicles into the landscape – green car parks.
- Formal forum or liaison group, facilitation between TTC and public interest groups to create / preserve landscape.

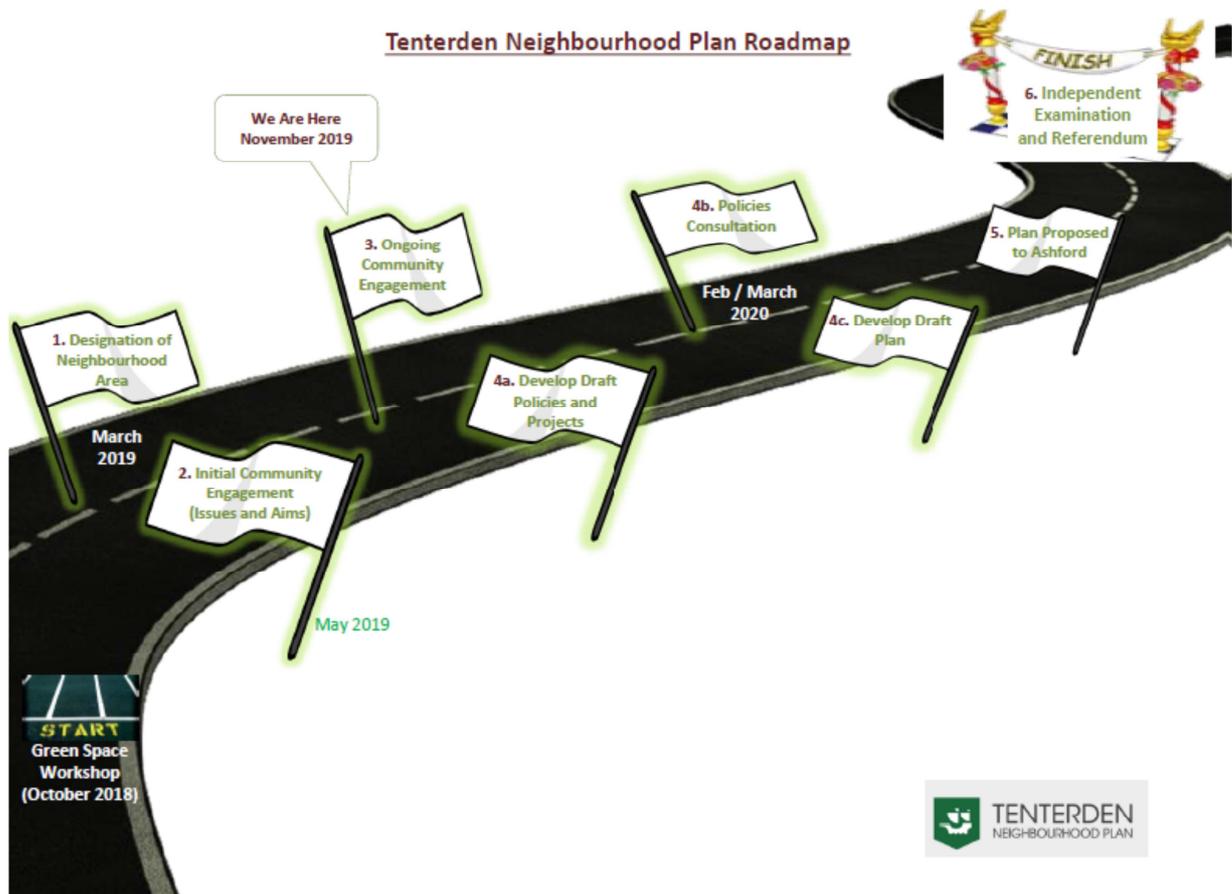
Routeways

We will ... retain footpaths, clear wayfinding, publication of routes, linking existing and new routeways, vernacular paving, connecting cycle paths, cycle racks and more [e-bike] charging points.

Road-map

19. Cllr John Crawford then wrapped up proceedings by thanking everyone for attending, their hard work and contributions and encouraged them to promote and attend the exhibition on 2nd November. He finished by sharing a 'road-map' for the remaining stages of the NP:





Summing up and recommendations

The event was an important milestone in the development of the TSNP. The working groups who have now made strong progress with their research and evidence gathering, were able to present these to their peers at the pre-workshop meeting held on 17th October, pull together a summary to share at this event and use both to create their displays at the public exhibition held on 2nd November. This puts the TSNP in a strong position as we move into the New Year ready to start on the process of drafting the TSNP and its policies. Here are a small number of recommendations for the steering group to consider:

- A. This report should be reviewed and then published on the TSNP website as a record of the event alongside a report of the exhibition. The reports will be used to demonstrate the extent and nature of the consultation that has taken place and provide the basis for the Consultation Statement that is required to be published with the Submission Neighbourhood Plan at Regulation 15 / 16.
- B. The presentation from the chair of the TSNP setting the context for the workshop should also be published on-line as an appendix.
- C. The participants at the event preferred the Table 4 Vision, which was also amongst the shortest and clearest. These factors should be considered when drawing up the final draft Vision for the TSNP. More detailed aspects should not be lost but can be included in the Topics: Objectives, policy intentions or projects.
- D. For the Objective Setting exercise, some groups went into the minutiae of what they would like to see happen under their topic and / or strayed off topic. The Routeways Objective was a good example of what was intended and could be used as a template for the others: *"We will ... retain*

footpaths, clear wayfinding, publication of routes, linking existing and new routeways, vernacular paving, connecting cycle paths, cycle racks and more [e-bike] charging points.” The Topic Objectives should set out how the Vision can be achieved, and together with policies and projects act as a ‘golden thread’ in the plan: Vision – Objectives – Policies. This approach should be used as a template for revising the other Topic Objectives.

- E. Next steps – the next steps should be for the Working Groups to continue / complete their work programmes and then to start to consider their priorities in terms of policy intentions for the draft TSNP. To assist with this technical aspect of the TSNP, the intention is to access the Technical Support Package (TSP) available to NP groups from Locality / AECOM for Evidence Base [review] and Policy Development. Before or in tandem with that, it is now intended to access their TSP on Design including Design Codes with the intention to get to policy writing in February or March.

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25th November 2019