



Rolvenden Parish Council

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018

REPORT ON TRANSPORT AND PARKING, 2017

COMPILED BY:

**NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
AND ROLVENDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

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1 Introduction

Transport and parking issues were identified as key areas of concern in the *Community Planning Workshops 2012*, particularly parking, congestion and speeding. Road safety (specific locations) and road deterioration - caused in part by heavier traffic and compounded by volume - were also issues emerging from the Public Consultation 2015 and individual landowner interviews.

Road systems around the parish remain practically unchanged since early settlement days (<http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/parish-information.html>). The generous width of the main thoroughfare along the A28 in particular allows for some parking but this is insufficient for present modes and volumes of traffic. The rural location and lack of public transport compound the issue.

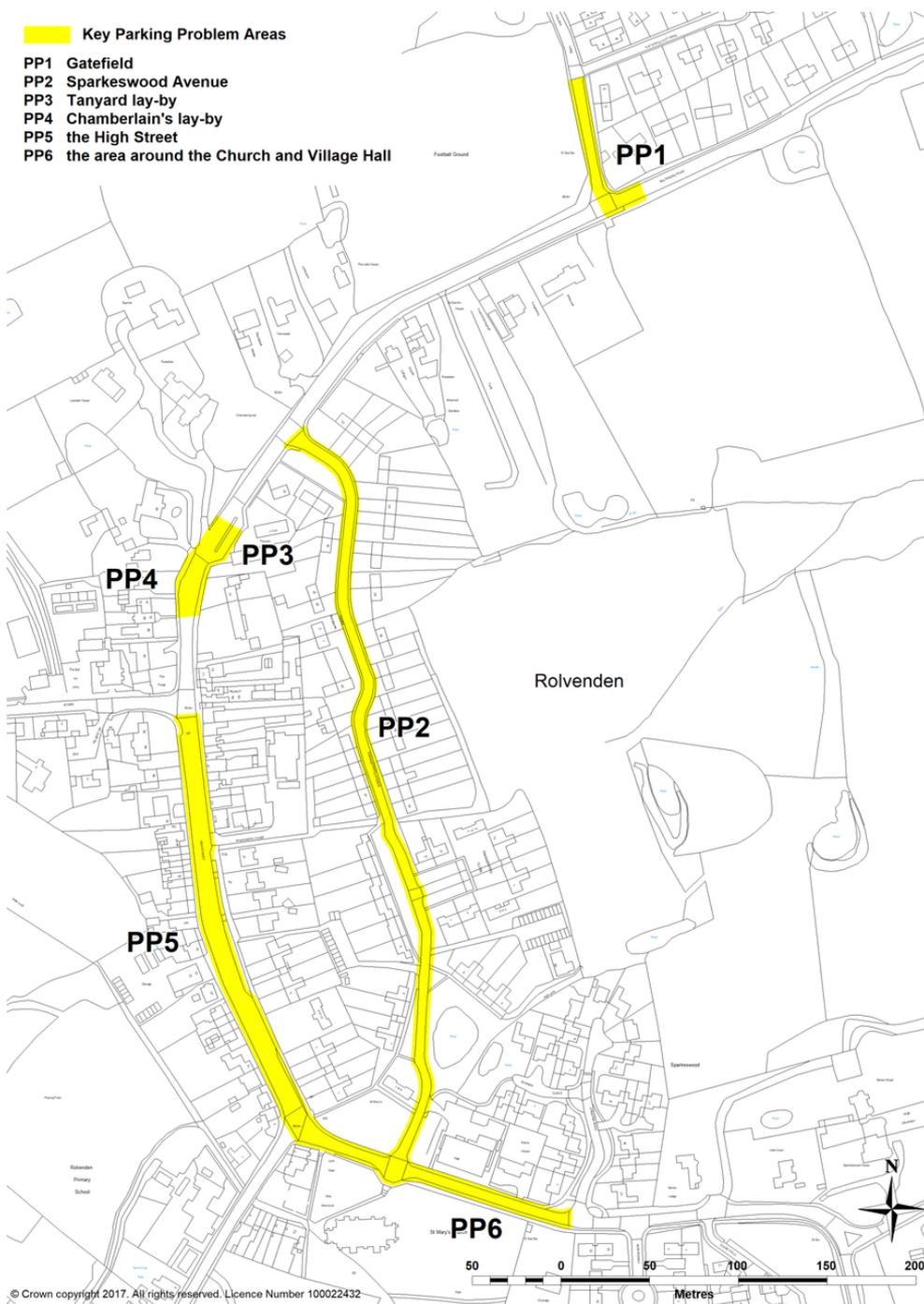
2 Parking

2.1 Parking Issues

The peak parking times in the village centre are mornings and mid-afternoons (during school term time) and evenings. The Thursday morning village markets, weddings, funerals and other various social activities in the Hall generate a demand for parking greater than the spaces available. In addition, there is insufficient off street parking to serve the Sparkeswood Avenue estate which results in on street parking along the narrow highway.

Significantly, there is concern that due to parking issues, emergency vehicles may not have easy access in certain locations.

The key problem areas are within Rolvenden village as shown on Map 1 below: Gatefield (1); Tanyard lay-by (2); the length of Sparkeswood Avenue (3); the High Street (4) and the area around the Church and Village Hall (5)



Map 1 - key parking problem areas in Rolvenden

2.2 Additional parking provision to serve Rolvenden Village Centre

The retention and, if feasible, the enhancement of parking provision within walking distance of village amenities for use by visitors and to encourage tourists is a priority.

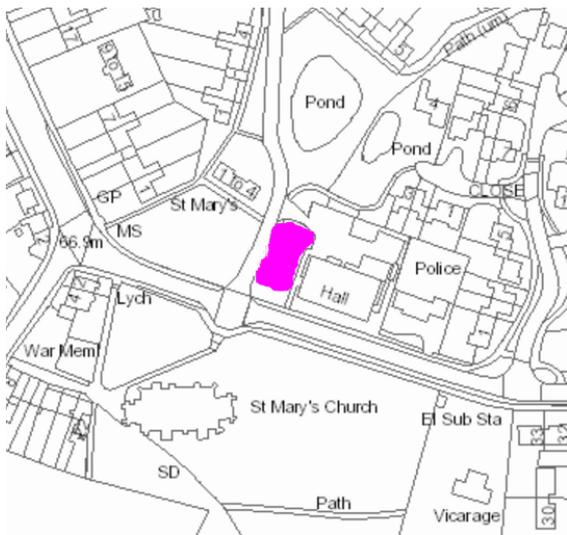
Increasing car parking facilities around the Village Hall is also a priority.

Verges and grass margins are invariably damaged and larger vehicles often mount the kerbs, breaking up edging stones and pavements. This creates further safety issues for pedestrians particularly after dark in areas where there is no or limited street lighting. Lack of 'close' parking facilities have meant that people park on the grass in the High Street or cross pedestrian pathways to park in their front gardens. Parking on green spaces along the A28 is generally considered unsightly, damaging to the fabric and the attractive appearance of the High Street, out of keeping with the character of the village and in some circumstances, unsafe where access is straight out onto a main thoroughfare. Regular parking on grass verges compacts the soil which can adversely affect tree roots and the resulting damage and mud in winter especially looks unsightly. Any plans to replace grass verges with concrete or tarmac should be resisted. Where parking on verges cannot be eradicated or avoided, the use of reinforcement mesh or matting or similar for protection should be supported.



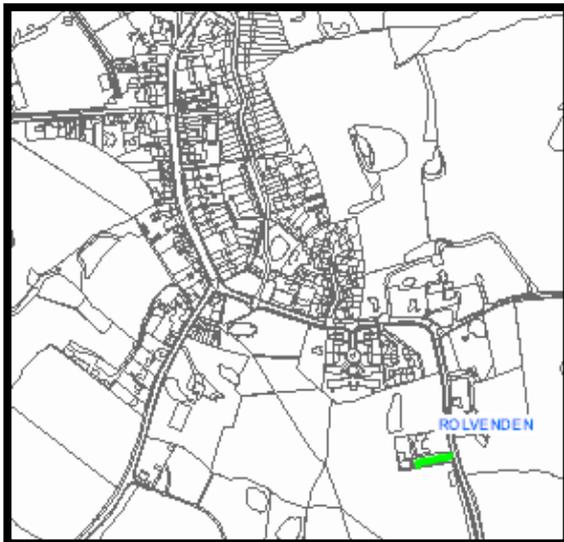
Vehicle damage to the green adjoining Nos 1 - 28 High Street

The grassed area to the west of the Village Hall, bordering Sparkeswood Avenue (Map 2 below) has been identified by both the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee and the Village Hall Committee, as a possible location for additional spaces but may require removal / replacement of part of the mostly beech hedge, removal of at least one tree (acceptable to the Tree Warden as the tree is not a native species) and levelling of the site. The land belongs to Kent County Council and this needs to be investigated, relevant agreements would need to be reached and finances for the work secured.



Map 2 – Location of Village Hall Car Extension

To date, no other suitable locations for further car parking close to Rolvenden village centre have proven practical. A large public parking area is available at the Village Club in Maytham Road (see Map 3) but, given the distance, topography and connectivity on foot, has rarely been used as an overspill for the Village Hall or Church - nor for access to the High Street. It is currently kept locked against recent incidences of fly tipping in the area.



Map 3 - Location of the possible 'overspill' carpark at the Village Club

2.3 On Street Parking Restrictions

In the absence of practical locations for additional parking provision in the village centre, it is important that existing parking facilities are retained.

Public consultation indicated that yellow lines and/or parking meters are strongly considered out of keeping with the character of a Wealden Village. Introductions of traffic calming measures into the High Street would restrict parking availability further and adversely affect local businesses. The number of cars parking in the High Street has the beneficial effect of slowing down traffic contributing to the safety of pedestrians. Parking on green areas or Local Green Spaces in the

High Street and on St Mary's Green is not welcomed and the Parish Council have recently installed wooden posts, in keeping with the rural aspect, to restrict vehicular access from the road onto the grass verges and greens.

2.4 Residential parking facilities

There is high car ownership in Rolvenden Parish reflecting its rural location and limited public transport provision.

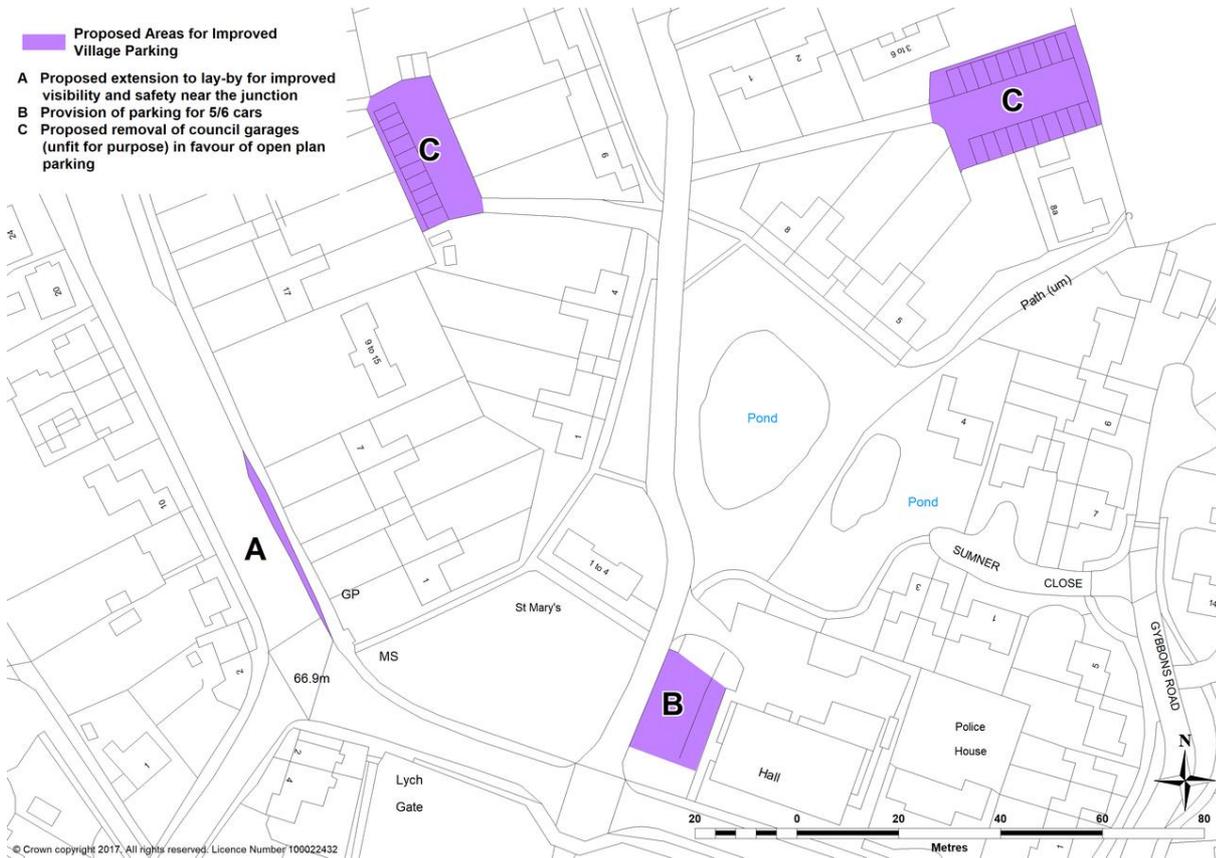
Applications for improved residential parking facilities which do not intrinsically alter the character and appearance of the historic village are consistent with environmental objectives and therefore can be supported. However, proposals for off-road parking which have a detrimental impact on the street-scene especially in the historical centres of Rolvenden village and Rolvenden Layne would not meet with local environmental objectives and are unlikely to be supported. In addition, it should be noted that where on-street parking is already limited, at least one on-road public parking space is lost with each new access to a private driveway.

Other applications, including change of use of garages etc. to holiday lets and granny flat/annexes should also allow for sufficient off street parking.

The NPPF 2012 does not refer to specific maximum or minimum car parking standards for new development but instead promotes a flexible approach - recognising (in paragraph 39) there will be different requirements in urban and rural areas. There is a need to meet at least the minimum parking standard set by Kent County Council.

There are two blocks of garages in Sparkeswood Avenue. The individual garages are small and often used for more general storage. These areas should be reappraised to ensure fuller use can be made of them for parking vehicles with a view to protecting the Local Green Space which is such a characteristic feature of the layout.

Map 4 (below) summarises the proposed areas for improved parking within Rolvenden.



Map 4 - Location of proposed areas for improved parking in Rolvenden

3 Traffic Management

It is recognised that traffic management within the highway is not a land use matter and therefore, cannot lawfully be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.1 Congestion

There is not significant traffic congestion within either of the villages or rural lanes of the parish.

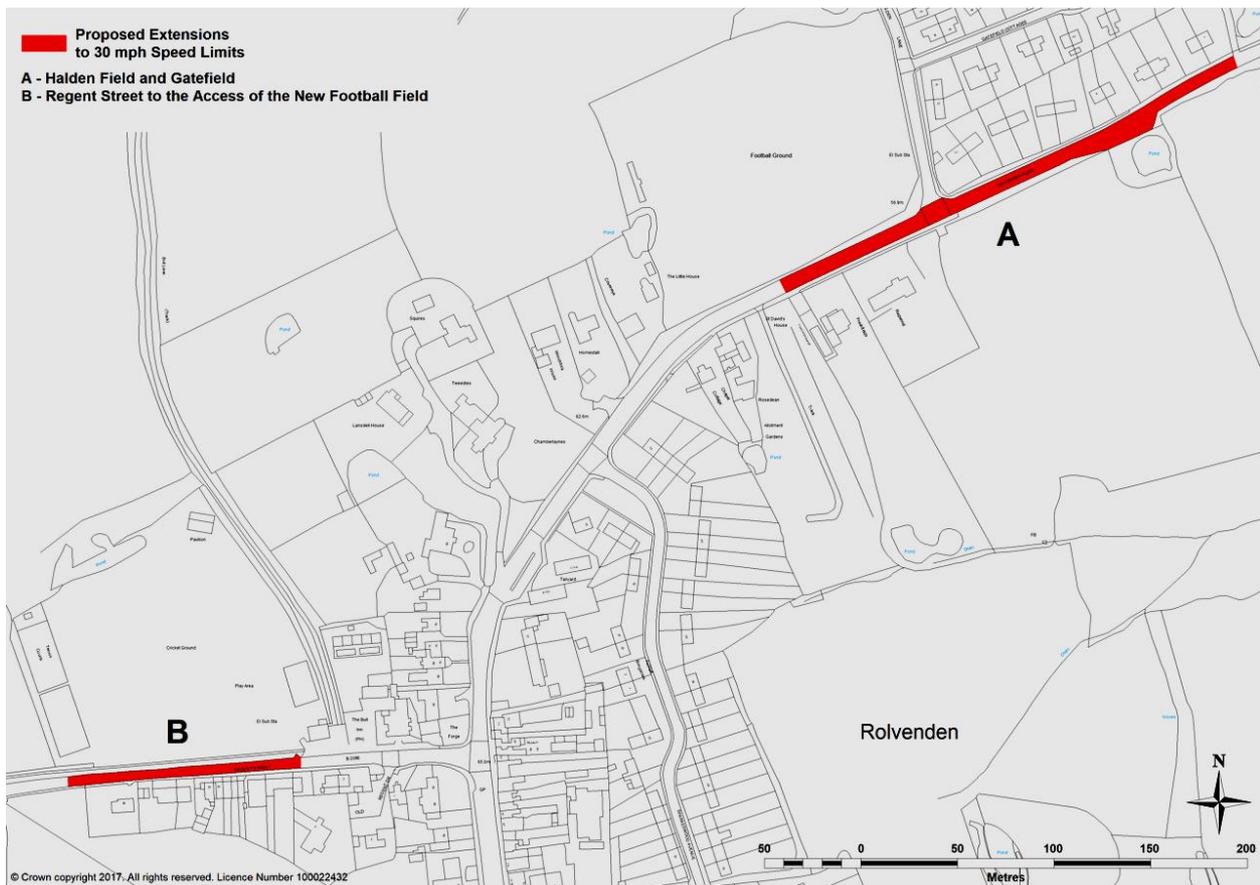
It is important that new developments are well located close to services and are well connected by footpaths and safe streets to enable people to walk or cycle safely. In accordance with the NPPF, development proposals should demonstrate an effective plan to promote access by sustainable transport and that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all people. These options promote health benefits, reduce carbon emissions and improve road safety. They also encourage visitors to the area, notably the cycling clubs which sometimes meet at the village hall.

3.2 Speed Restrictions to improve road safety

The speed hotspots are considered to be the High Street, Tenterden Road by Halden Lane, Hastings Road by the primary school and Maytham Road through Rolvenden Layne, from both directions.

For safety reasons, the NDP Steering Committee propose that: the 30mph limit be extended:

- i) to include Gatefield and the new housing development at Halden Field and**
- ii) to the vehicular entrance of the new Football field on Regent Street. [map vii].**



Map 5 Suggested areas for extension of 30 mph limits.

The Public Consultation 2015 revealed a wish amongst some residents to introduce a 20mph limit through the High Street particularly during peak pick up and drop off times at the school. A similar scheme has been implemented and deemed successful along a particularly busy stretch of the A21 at Hurst Green in East Sussex. The issue would need to be investigated further but in the short term, the volume of parked cars in the High Street appears to provide a natural speed restriction.

Speed restrictions and road improvements are considered necessary along the A28 Hastings Road in the region of *The World of Water*.

3.3 Roundabouts

Several suggestions received during the Public Consultation 2015 concerned instating a mini roundabout in the High Street – particularly at the junction of the High Street and Maytham Road (by the Church) but also at the T junction of the High Street and Regent Street. Turning around in the High Street is difficult and most people appear to utilise the width of road at Branns Drive or the entrance to the Bull Inn car park for this purpose. Whilst the introduction of a mini roundabout might facilitate turning and ease peak time congestion, the policy, as above, should be to resist any parking restrictions along the A28 for the immediate future.

Additionally, mini-roundabouts are deemed an ‘urbanisation’ and out of keeping with the character of a Wealden Village but a solution to this issue is likely to require further investigation as volume of traffic increases.

3.4 Noise Levels

A key feature of living in an AONB is the enjoyment of tranquility. Speeding vehicles during the hours of darkness and weekend mornings are not uncommon and cause annoyance to residents along the High Street and along Maytham Road in Rolvenden Layne. It is proposed that quiet road surfaces would be welcome in these locations.

3.5 Street Clutter

Highway signs, if poorly located and designed, can detract from the attractive appearance of the village or the surrounding countryside. Street clutter should be avoided or minimised. The use of traffic signs should be reduced to a bare minimum. The design and location of any signage and street furniture should be carefully controlled and agreed by the Parish Council. It is proposed that wooden finger posts are most attractive and appropriate for the village.

4 Public Transport

Whilst acknowledged as effective and efficient modes of transport, bus services are limited in

our rural environment due to relatively low usage and rising running costs and some have recently been withdrawn – notably that which served Monypenny, the sheltered housing facility. Although only a few minutes' drive from the High Street the impact on the elderly and less able-bodied is considerable.

The time table is limited and is currently understood to be as follows:

No. 2 to Tenterden and Ashford Mon - Fri only 06.45 and 09.00

No. 297 to Tunbridge Wells from the Bull

Mon - Fri 06.53 09.08 10.38 12.38 14.08* 17.02 17.48 (*14.40 on Wednesday)

Sat 07.06 09.08 10.28 12.38

Rolvenden Layne shares its service to Tenterden with the school bus. On Tuesday it picks up in Rolvenden High Street at 9.18 and at Monypenny at 9.20. The Rolvenden Layne service is Wednesday, collecting from Monypenny at 10.13, Gt Maytham Hall at 10.15 and Rolvenden Layne at 10.17. The service costs £1 and the driver will set down at any safe location on route.

The community led workshops in 2012 noted requests for Sunday buses, night services, local volunteer services, car sharing initiatives and free school transport to all schools, but again, low demand and levels of public funding mean they have stayed on the wish list and the limited new housing and business development will not generate sufficient interest to improve the situation. In all cases, there is recognition that timetables and services need to be marketed better by the village and where finances allow, improvements could be made to bus shelters. The long standing suggestion for a shelter to be built at the junction of Monypenny and Maytham Road – if only now for the *Jempson's* supermarket bus, is not an apparent priority for the short term.

Limited availability of public transport compounds the problems of congestion, parking and access.

5 Conclusion

Many of the transport issues in the Parish are not strictly land use issues and therefore legally cannot be issues for the Neighbourhood Plan. Rather, these are matters which can be pursued independently with Kent County Council and others by the Parish Council.

Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan is able to allocate land for additional parking provision and a site adjoining the Village Hall is identified for this purpose. The garage courts in Sparkeswood should be reappraised to ensure more efficient use is made of the space for parking vehicles – though as this is not a land use matter it cannot be part of the Neighbourhood Plan. The need to be well connected to village facilities has influenced the selection of housing allocations in the Plan. Furthermore, the Neighbourhood Plan contains a policy which seeks to retain existing off street parking and ensure adequate parking facilities within new development.