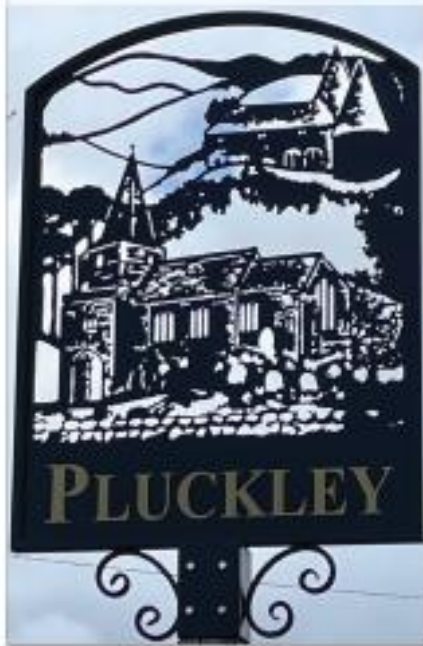




# PLUCKLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW 2023



## Foreword by Chairman, Pluckley Parish Council

This Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has been produced with the contribution of the people of Pluckley. It has offered the community the chance to have a real say in how the parish evolves. This is the first planned Review.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank the Steering Group who have driven the Plan through, Ashford Borough Council for their help and guidance, and all those who participated and gave their opinions. It is our community input that gives us confidence that our parish will continue to develop as a caring community and a good place to live.

*Mark Taylor*

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## **1. List of Policies**

### Managing our Rural Environment

R1 - Landscape Character and Design

R2 - Protection of Views and Rural Setting

R3 - Designation of Local Green Spaces

R4 – Sites for Community Use, Recreation and Nature Conservation

R5 - Renewable Energy

R6 – Addressing Nutrient Neutrality

### Housing and Development

H1 - Windfall Housing Development

H2 - Design Standards for New Development

H3 - Encouraging Sustainable Development

H4 – Lighting

### Economy, Communications and Transport

E1 – Support for Agriculture and Tourism Development

E2 – Seek Better Communications

E3 - Transport Management through the Parish

### Community and Leisure

C1 - Social Interaction and Community Life

C2 - Protection of Community Facilities

## 2. Introduction

2.1 The Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan (PNP) is a planning document. It is part of the Government's approach to planning, which aims to give local people more say about what goes on in their area. This is set out in the Localism Act that came into force in April 2012.

2.2 The PNP provides a vision for the future of the community and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision. The PNP has been developed in liaison with, and with the assistance of, Ashford Borough Council and covers the period from 2016 to 2031.

2.3 The PNP has been shaped by the community, through extensive consultation with the people of Pluckley and others with an interest in the Parish and is based on sound research and evidence, as demonstrated in the supporting documents of the Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement. Details of the consultation have been recorded in a series of reports, which are available to download from the Pluckley website [www.pluckley.net](http://www.pluckley.net) and summarised in a separate Consultation Statement. This ensures that the Plan meets Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

### How the Neighbourhood Plan fits into the Planning System

2.4 Ashford Borough Council approved the designation of Pluckley as a Neighbourhood Area on 12 March 2015. The Neighbourhood Area follows the Pluckley Parish boundary (see Map 1).

2.5 Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with European Regulations on strategic environmental assessment and habitat regulations. They must also have appropriate regard for national planning policy; contribute to sustainable development; and conform generally to the strategic policies in the Ashford Local Plan.

2.6 The PNP has given local people the power to determine where new developments should go, and how the parish should evolve. Without the Plan, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) would make these decisions.

2.7 The policies of the PNP will be made by Ashford Borough Council and become part of the local development plan.

## Parish Plan, Parish Design Statement

2.8 The Plan incorporates aspects of the Parish Plan 2009 and its Update in 2013. The Parish Design Statement (adopted 2003), which retains its relevance and strong support from the community, stands and is referenced in the policies in this PNP.

## How the Plan is organised

2.9 The Plan is divided into eleven sections:

Sections 2-5 set out the background and a vision for Pluckley which sets out how the Parish should evolve.

Sections 6-9 deal with Neighbourhood Plan Policies.

Section 10 sets out Community Projects which seek to support the overall vision and improve the quality of life in the Parish. (This does not form part of the Neighbourhood Plan proposal.)

Section 11 covers monitoring and reviewing the Plan.

The Plan is accompanied by maps showing:

Map 1 The Neighbourhood Area

Map 2 Landscape Character Assessment

Map 3 Parish Views

Map 4 Local Green Space

Map 5 Protected Public Spaces

Map 6 Thorne Garages Site

Map 7 Pluckley Village

Map 8 Pluckley Thorne

Map 9 Pluckley Station

Map 10 Pluckley Village Conservation Area

Map 11 Pluckley Station Conservation Area

Map 12 Station Car Park

Map 13 Transport Management

Map 14 Protection of Community Facilities

Map 15 The Green Heart

2.10 The PNP takes account of and is informed by supporting documents – the Evidence Base. These include the Basic Conditions Statement and the Consultation Statement. These can all be found on the Pluckley web site [www.pluckley.net](http://www.pluckley.net) under the banner Parish Council, Neighbourhood Plan.

### 3. Scope, Methodology and Implementation

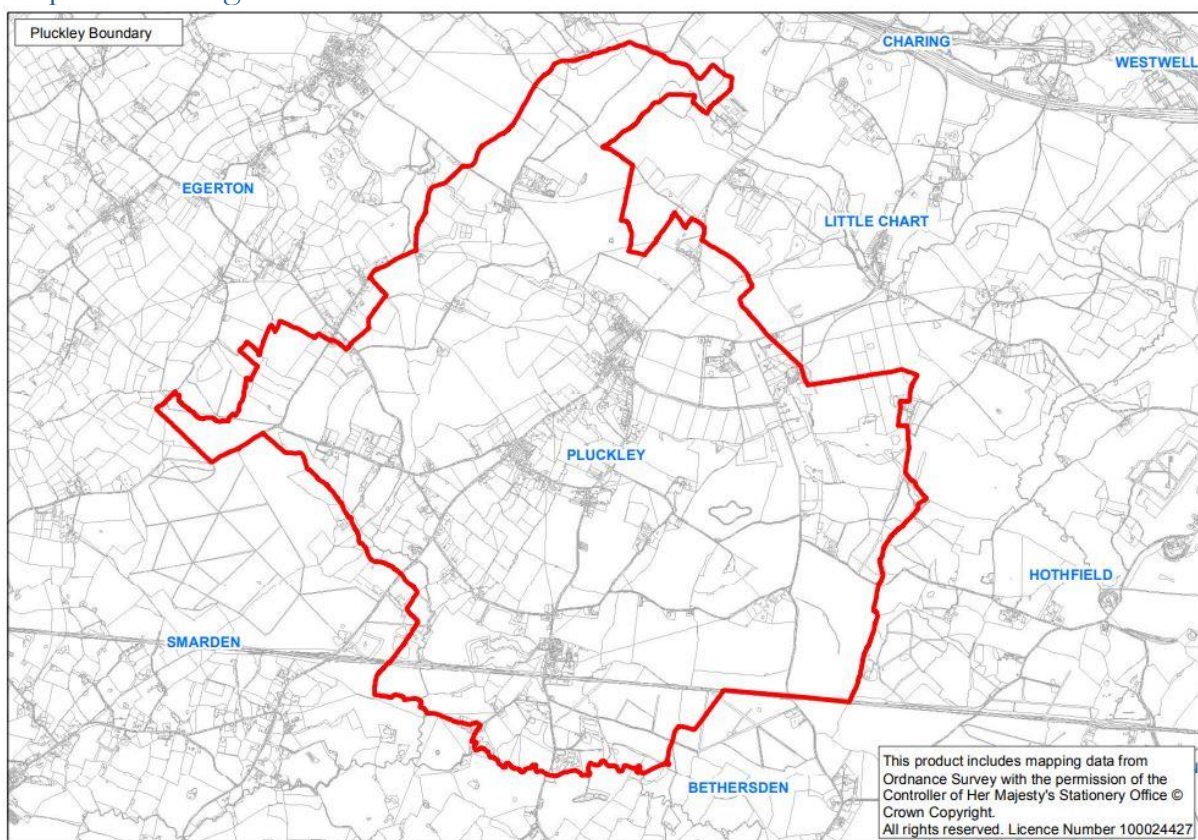
#### The Neighbourhood

3.1 Pluckley is more than its village core – it is a parish. The largest residential concentration is at the village core, where most of the services are located, but this accounts for less than half of the community, given its dispersed nature. So the Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole Parish of Pluckley, as shown in Map 1.

3.2 The Parish comprises three settlement areas: the village core; Thorne/Fir Toll; and the station area. These areas are separated by fields given over to agriculture which is the main land use in the Parish. In addition, there are several outlying dwellings in small clusters or singly.

3.3 The Parish is a rural community, as are all the adjoining parishes. In developing the Plan, the neighbouring parishes: Egerton, Charing, Little Chart, Bethersden, Smarden, Headcorn, have been considered as, to some extent, they have an impact and reliance upon Pluckley just as it does upon them.

Map 1 The Neighbourhood Area



## Consultation and Engagement

3.4 It is not enough to consult and engage – it is essential that such action is documented. The Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement describe the methodology, minutes, notes, meetings (formal and informal), working groups etc. These demonstrate the breadth of engagement and how issues and needs were identified to produce the Objectives, Policies and Actions.

## Implementation

3.5 Pluckley Parish Council will work together with Ashford Borough Council to implement the PNP. Periodic reviews, engaging with the community, will be conducted to ensure that the evolving needs of the Parish continue to be met by the PNP. The intention is to review every five years.



## 4. About Pluckley

4.1 Pluckley is a rural community based on the Greensand Ridge and the Weald below it. It is a long-established community with activity identified from Roman times and mention in the Domesday Book (as Pluchelei), when it was the property of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The parish church of St.Nicholas is Grade 1 listed and has its origins in Anglo-Saxon times.

4.2 As with many villages in Kent, residents of Pluckley took part in peasant uprisings during the Middle Ages. In the fifteenth century, the parish became the property of the Dering family who built Surrenden Manor which stood until its demise in the 1950s. It was a Dering who introduced in Victorian times the distinctive rounded windows which remain today as a feature of properties throughout the parish.

4.3 In 1842, the railway was built and Pluckley station became an important centre for the dispatch of agricultural produce. During the Great War, the station played a key role in moving horses to and from the Front, as Pluckley became a Remount Centre.

4.4 In recent years, Pluckley was the setting for the TV series “The Darling Buds of May”, based on H.E.Bates’s stories about the Larkin family living in a rural idyll of hop farms and orchards in post-war England. H.E.Bates lived nearby and, rumour has it, he based the Larkins on a real-life family he observed in Pluckley. Such is the popularity of the series, and the lifestyle it depicts, that Visit Kent, the body responsible for tourism in the county has launched a Darling Buds tour centred on Pluckley. This, together with Pluckley’s reputation as the most haunted village in England, attracts many visitors who come to enjoy the countryside and its walks. There are many footpaths in and around the parish, the most celebrated of which is the Greensand Way.

4.5 Today, Pluckley is a community of 1,069 residents (2011 Census) spread over the almost 5 sq miles (1,260 hectares). Much of the parish lies within a high sensitivity Landscape Character Area, there are two Conservation Areas and more than sixty listed properties, the earliest of which date from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

4.6 Serving the needs of this community are a general store and sub Post Office, a butcher’s, a farm shop, and three pubs. The village has its own school, Pluckley C of E Primary School, for younger pupils. For all other services, residents are dependent upon facilities in the nearby larger villages of Charing and Headcorn, or more importantly, Ashford (six miles away) and Tenterden(nine miles away).

4.7 Ashford, the Borough town is an important and growing centre. It is an excellent transport centre, with high-speed rail connections to London and the Continent and motorway links to London and to the Channel ports. It offers a wide variety of employment, retail and leisure activities. Pluckley has a regular train service to London (London Bridge, Cannon Street, Waterloo and Charing Cross) and to Ashford and the coast, and a less frequent bus service.

4.8 The dispersed nature of the Parish community is evidenced by the distribution of its 447 dwellings: Village core 45%; Thorne/Fir Toll 30%, Station area 10%; outlying 15%. This dispersed nature is a reflection of the agricultural holdings, which remain the dominant land use within the parish. On the outskirts of the Parish are the station- at one and a quarter miles from the centre, and the industrial estate at Pivington Mill.

4.9 Pluckley has a lower than average proportion of young residents (2011 Census):

	Pluckley	Ashford borough	England
Aged 0-16	18%	22%	22%
16-64	64%	61%	62%
65+	18%	17%	16%

4.10 Those working do so in a wide variety of locations: 23% in Pluckley itself (mostly working from home); 19% in Ashford; 37% elsewhere in Kent; 14% commuting to London and 7% elsewhere. Of those working, 14% do so from home, 13% travel by train, 7% walk or cycle, and 66% travel by car. The dependence on cars is significant - Pluckley has a much higher ratio of cars per household (1.8) than the national average (1.1). This is not unusual for a rural community.

4.11 In modern times, Pluckley has grown with the addition of the Westfields development (about 50 homes) and a number of small-scale developments of 1 to four homes. In the past fifteen years, little more than half a dozen homes have been added, including four local needs homes. Between 2001 and 2011, the population showed a modest increase of 19, probably the result of people living longer.

4.12 The parish is an attractive location for workers, with its easy links to both Ashford and London; and for retirees.

The Parish character remains much as it was when the PNP was made five years ago. Apart from a significant uplift in the number of homes completed or under construction, the social mix is as before. The above average proportion of older residents and the below average proportion of younger residents remain. The

shortage of younger people has been felt in recent years with fewer Pluckley children in Pluckley school, and the closure of the cricket club. The two main housing needs are homes for elderly downsizers and low-cost homes for young families. The PNP catered for both. Down-sizer homes have been delivered. The low-cost homes for young people, supported in the PNP, are not now being delivered and this remains a need.

Following the limited growth in housing numbers in the period leading up to the Neighbourhood Plan 2016 (six new dwellings in fifteen years), there has been a significant increase since. Of the 33 new homes supported in the Neighbourhood Plan, 8 have been completed, and the remaining 25 are under construction. In addition, there have been a further 18 ‘windfall’ homes approved, mostly under Section Q, and all but two of these are either built or under construction. The Local Plan does not allocate more homes to the Parish but accepts what the parishes producing NPs come forward with. In view of this, the PC decided that, while there was no onus initially to seek more homes, as part of the NP Review it would invite parishioners to express their views – to promote continuing community engagement in the planning process.

## **5. Our Vision for Pluckley**

**Our vision is for Pluckley to continue to thrive, meeting the evolving needs of its community while preserving the rural character, natural beauty and views that are what attract its residents and visitors alike.** This vision was formulated from comments at the resident workshops and has been tested through subsequent public engagements.

5.1 Our vision supports the vision of the Ashford Local Plan 2019.

5.2 Each policy in the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan and its Review has been tested to ensure that it meets this Vision and responds to local people’s wishes.

5.3 All sections of the community: young, working age and retired, should expect to live in a community that encourages social interaction and the opportunity for physical exercise, to enhance their well-being.

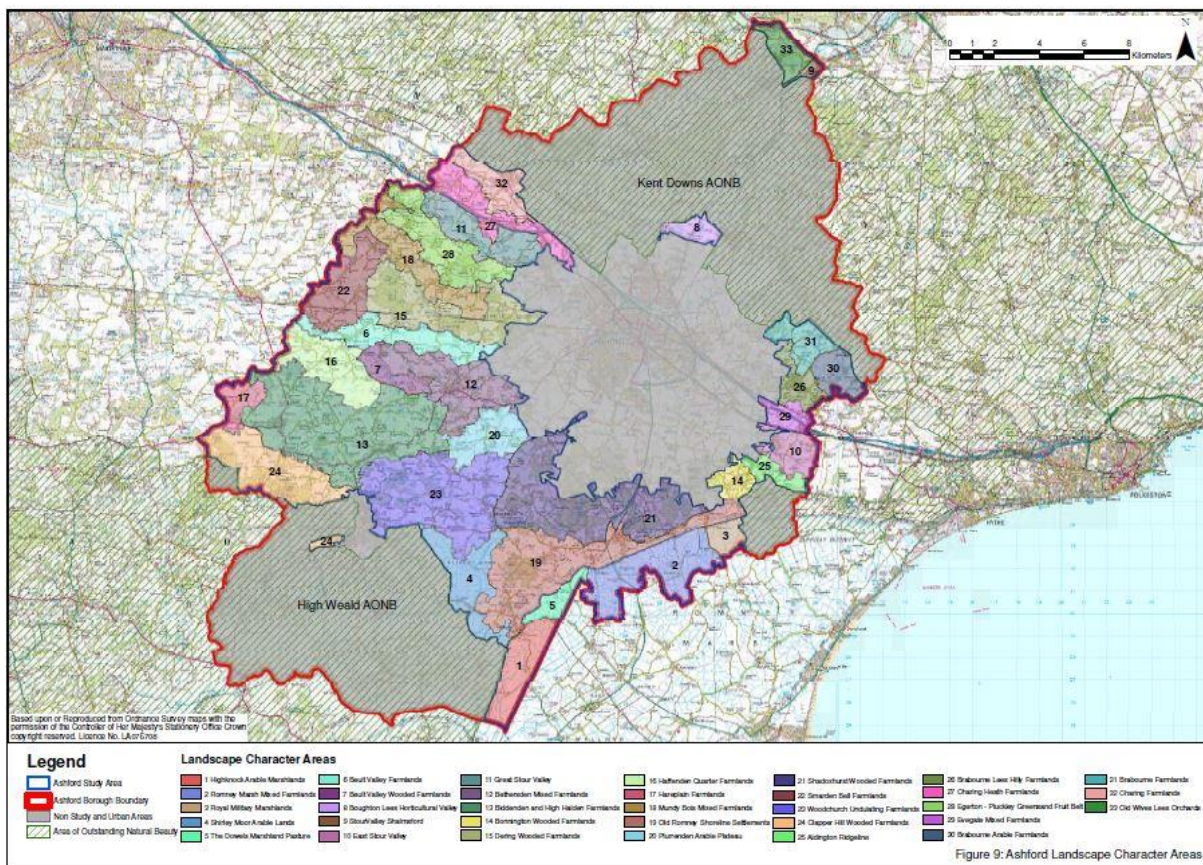
## 6. Managing our Rural Environment

6.1 The environment in which the Parish of Pluckley sits is described in Ashford Borough Council’s Landscape Character Assessment (adopted 2011). The parish occupies three of the areas identified in the Assessment: Dering Wood Farmlands; Mundy Bois Mixed Farmlands; and the Egerton-Pluckley Greensand Fruit Belt (see Map 2).

6.2 The assessment is that the landscape has either a high or moderate sensitivity and the overall guidelines for the three areas are to conserve and reinforce, conserve and improve, and conserve the landscape, respectively.

### Map 2 Landscape Character Assessment

(source: Ashford Borough Council, Landscape Planning Supplementary Planning Document, adopted 28 April 2011)



6.3 The descriptions of the three areas echo that in the Parish Design Statement (2003) adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance: “Pluckley is a parish with distinct characteristics in differing areas – but all linked by a common theme. Almost everywhere views open up to the wider surrounding countryside or into more intimate green spaces close within the road network. This openness is largely



achieved by the fact – part accidental and part by design of planning policy – that almost all roads are only built up on one side for long stretches.... The character of Pluckley parish is defined as much by its openness to the countryside as by its buildings.”

6.4 There are three main settlement areas: along the Greensand ridge towards the northern end of the parish and encompassing the Village Conservation Area; Pluckley Thorne; and the Station area with its own Conservation Area (see Maps 7, 8 and 9). These areas, and additional isolated dwellings are linked, as the Parish Design Statement describes “by linear development – of sufficiently low density not to spoil the openness of aspect... Where infill has taken place, there is usually a richness of trees, which either conceal or shelter houses from view.”

6.5 The policies in this plan ensure that the character of the rural landscape will be maintained.

6.6 The Conservation Areas and the Listed buildings in the parish are already protected by a raft of laws and guidelines at both national and Borough level.

### **Policy R1 – Landscape Character and Design**

**Development will be supported where it is designed in a way that protects, and where possible enhances, the landscape character and complements existing development and meets other policies within this plan. Where appropriate, proposals for new development must be accompanied by a landscape strategy that will incorporate the following details where they are applicable:**

- (i) existing and proposed hard and soft landscaping;**
- (ii) a condition survey of all existing trees and hedgerows;**
- (iii) an outline of the measures to be taken to protect existing trees and hedgerows during construction;**
- (iv) consideration of both near and distant views of the development from the principal public vantage points (see Policy R2) showing the existing landscape and an illustration of how proposed landscaping will have matured after 10 years; and**
- (v) details of how those areas retained for open space and/or woodland will be managed in the future.**

## **Policy R2 – Protection of Views and Rural Setting**

**Development will be supported where it respects the views highlighted in Map 3, as detailed below and accords with other development plan policies. These views are grouped as:**

**V1 a-f. Views of the valley below the Greensand Ridge to the west of the village**

**V2 a-c. The “Green Heart”**

**V3 Malmain Valley**

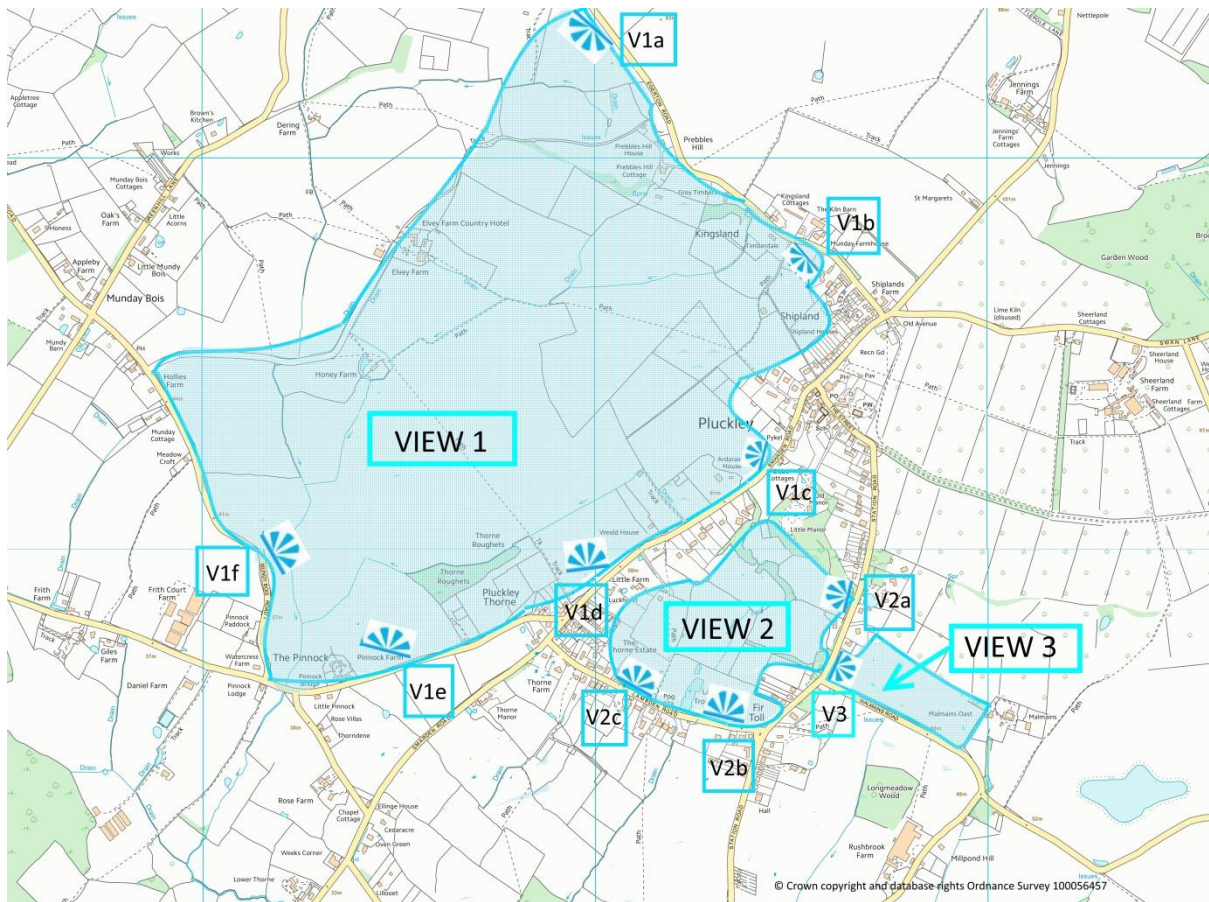
**Development that significantly detracts from these views (shown in Map 3), by failing to respect their distinctive characteristics, will not be supported unless they are required for a statutory utility infrastructure purpose.**

6.7 Pluckley benefits from a traditional rural landscape dominated by farming activity, with fields, woodlands and hedgerows that provide a habitat for a wide variety of flora and fauna. There are several ponds too with resident great crested newt populations. These are important rural features which must be protected for the benefit of the community.

6.8 Justification of Policies R1 and R2. Development must fit within the landscape. The natural features of topography that contribute to the character of the area, which is described in the Parish Design Statement, must be protected and views into and from the village, much valued by residents, should be a significant factor in assessing the impact of a proposal. The pattern and composition of woodlands and field boundaries constitute valuable features in the open, rural landscape. Hedgerows should be maintained to preserve open views.

6.9 The comments made by residents during the consultation show a strong desire to ensure that these characteristics are protected and maintained. The open views, the protection of green spaces and the importance of trees and natural screening are all highly valued for their visual amenity, their leisure offering, and as a habitat for wildlife.

## Map 3 Parish Views



From Map 3, Parish Views, the following pictures are for identification only and cannot be fully illustrative of the panorama of the actual views.

6.10 The Views at V1 are down, along and up the valley below the greensand ridge and across farmland with Elvey oast in the distance. This is a Landscape Character Area of high sensitivity. V1a looks down from the Egerton Road on the Greensand Ridge and the Greensand Way footpath. V1b looks south ten miles distant from Westfields. V1c looks from Forge Hill down the valley to Elvey Oast. V1d looks from Smarden Road across farmland down the valley. A public footpath runs from this point down the valley. V1e looks up from the Pinnock towards the village on the greensand ridge with the spire of St. Nicholas on the skyline. V1f looks from Munday Bois Road up towards the village.





*V1b – Far-reaching view from Westfields looking SW across the Weald, a high sensitivity Landscape Character Area*



*V1c - View from the top of Forge Hill looking SW across high sensitivity LCA*





*V1c - View from Forge Hill looking NW towards Egerton Road and the Greensand Way*



*V1d - View across Elvey valley with oast house up to Egerton Road and the Greensand Way*



*V1e - View of village skyline with spire of St. Nicholas from Mundy Bois road*

6.11 Views at V2 give on to what is described in the Parish Design Statement as the “green heart” of the parish with its fields, trees and ponds acting as a haven for wildlife. V2a looks west from Station Road across the “green heart”. V2b looks north from Lambden Road across the area where there are most of the ponds and a public footpath runs from here across the “green heart” to Smarden Road. V2c looks from the Thorne Estate across the “green heart” towards the spire of St. Nicholas’ Church.





*V2a - View from Station Road looking down into Green Heart in the core of the parish*



*V2 - View from the top of the Green Heart looking West – also shows far reaching views across View 1 area.*





*V2b - View from Lambden Road looking N into the Green Heart toward village core*



*V2c - View from mid Lambden Road looking up into the Green Heart*



View 3 along/across Malmains Valley.



*V3- View from Station Road/Malmains Road looking across to Malmains Oast and Manor*

### **Policy R3 – Designation of Local Green Spaces**

**The following sites are designated as Local Green Spaces:**

- 1. The triangle of land at the junction of Fir Toll and Station Road**
- 2. The area between the station car park and The Grove.**

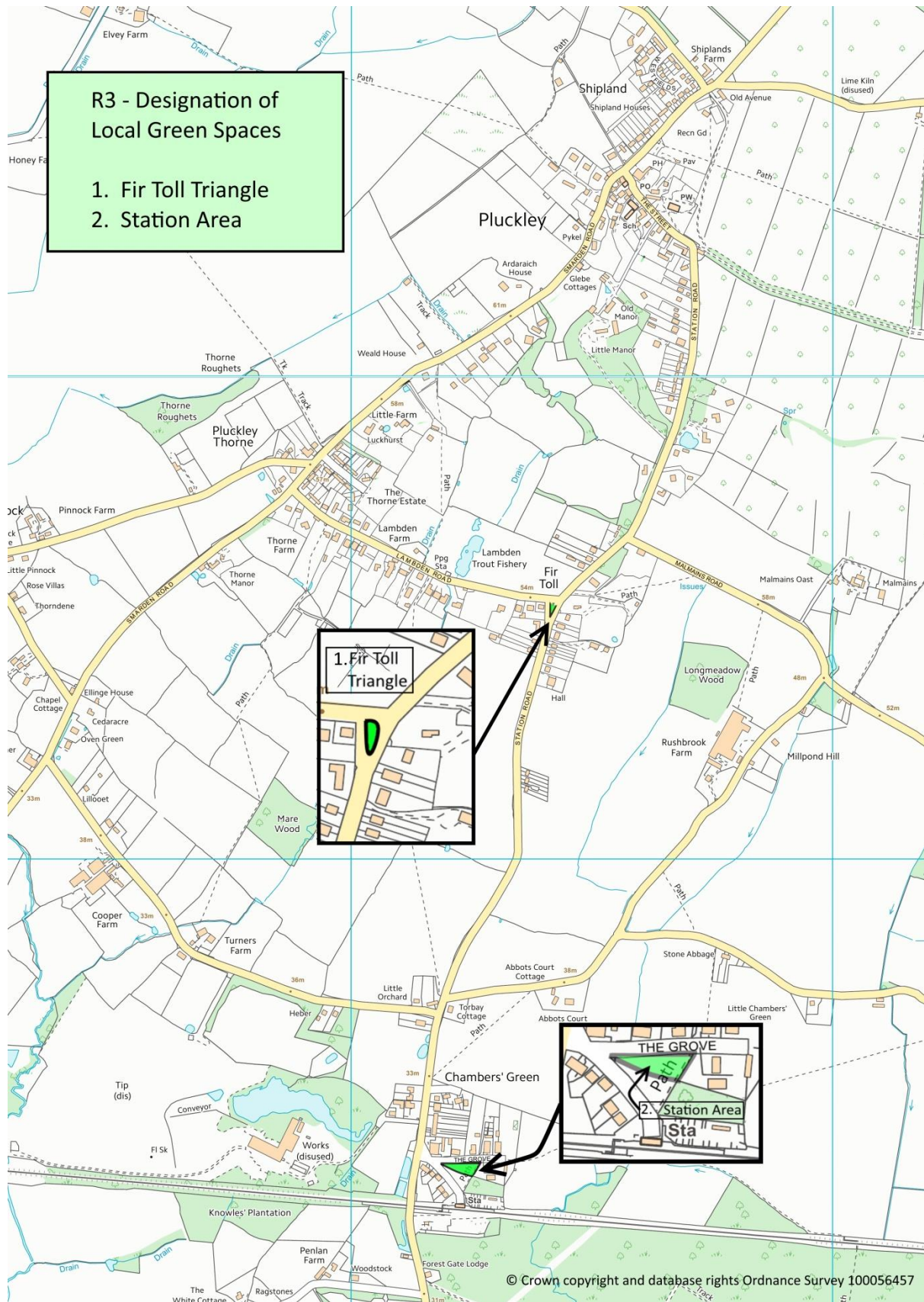
**Development proposals in the designated Local Green Spaces defined on Map 4 will be managed in accordance with national policy for Green Belts.**

6.12 Justification of Policy R3. These spaces meet the requirements of paragraph 106 of the NPPF (December 2023), being reasonably close to the community; demonstrating special local significance in terms of beauty, recreational value, tranquillity and richness of wildlife; and are local in character rather than extensive tracts of land. These spaces within the community are a feature of the parish and allow the countryside to come into the developed areas, affording open views and providing habitats for a variety of wildlife to be enjoyed and yet which are bounded at points by buildings and structures contributing to the particular characteristic of built and natural environment for the village.

6.13 The triangle of land at Fir Toll is a small, tranquil garden area in the middle of the community at Fir Toll providing shaded seating on the route to the station from the village. It has been landscaped and is regularly maintained by the local residents.

6.14 The area between the station car park and The Grove is at the heart of the community by the station, within a Conservation Area. It is local in character, offering an intimate green, wooded introduction to visitors arriving by train, and a recreational facility for dog walkers. It is a haven for bird species such as owls, woodpeckers and nightingales.

# Map 4 Local Green Space





## **Policy R4 – Sites for Community Use, Recreation and Nature Conservation**

**The following sites, which are defined on Map 5, shall be protected from any inappropriate developments in order that they can be retained for their continued community use for sports and leisure, recreation and nature conservation purposes:**

- 1. QEII Recreation Ground**
- 2. Thorne Field adjacent to the Thorne Estate**
- 3. The Street Area**
- 4. The Village Hall and Garden**
- 5. Nature Field, Chambers Green Road**

**Proposals for development at these sites will only be supported if they are related to the existing use of sites. Any proposals which would result in loss or partial loss of the facilities and amenities at these sites must ensure that such a loss is replaced by equivalent or improved provision within the Plan area.**

6.15 Justification of Policy R4. These spaces are key features of life in the parish. In addition to their visual amenity, they allow residents to engage in social activities and take exercise.

1. QEII Recreation Ground. Various sporting clubs use the recreation ground and pavilion as well as the school, and the children's play area is popular. The QEII Recreation Ground is designated as a Field in Trust in perpetuity.
2. The field adjacent to the Thorne Estate is enjoyed by the residents of the estate as a space for children to play rather than having to walk the half-mile to the QEII Recreation Ground, and for dog walkers.
3. The area in The Street in front of The Black Horse is used constantly by residents parking to use the village shops or to drop off and collect children from the primary school, or to attend church services. It is also used as a village gathering place for events such as the Carols around the Tree celebration, Remembrance Day, and Street Parties.
4. The Village Hall and Garden is the principal venue for social meetings in the parish. It is used for elections, by clubs and societies, by the Parish Council, and for informal hire by residents and visitors. It enjoys the facility of its parking area to the front and a garden overlooking farmland to the rear.

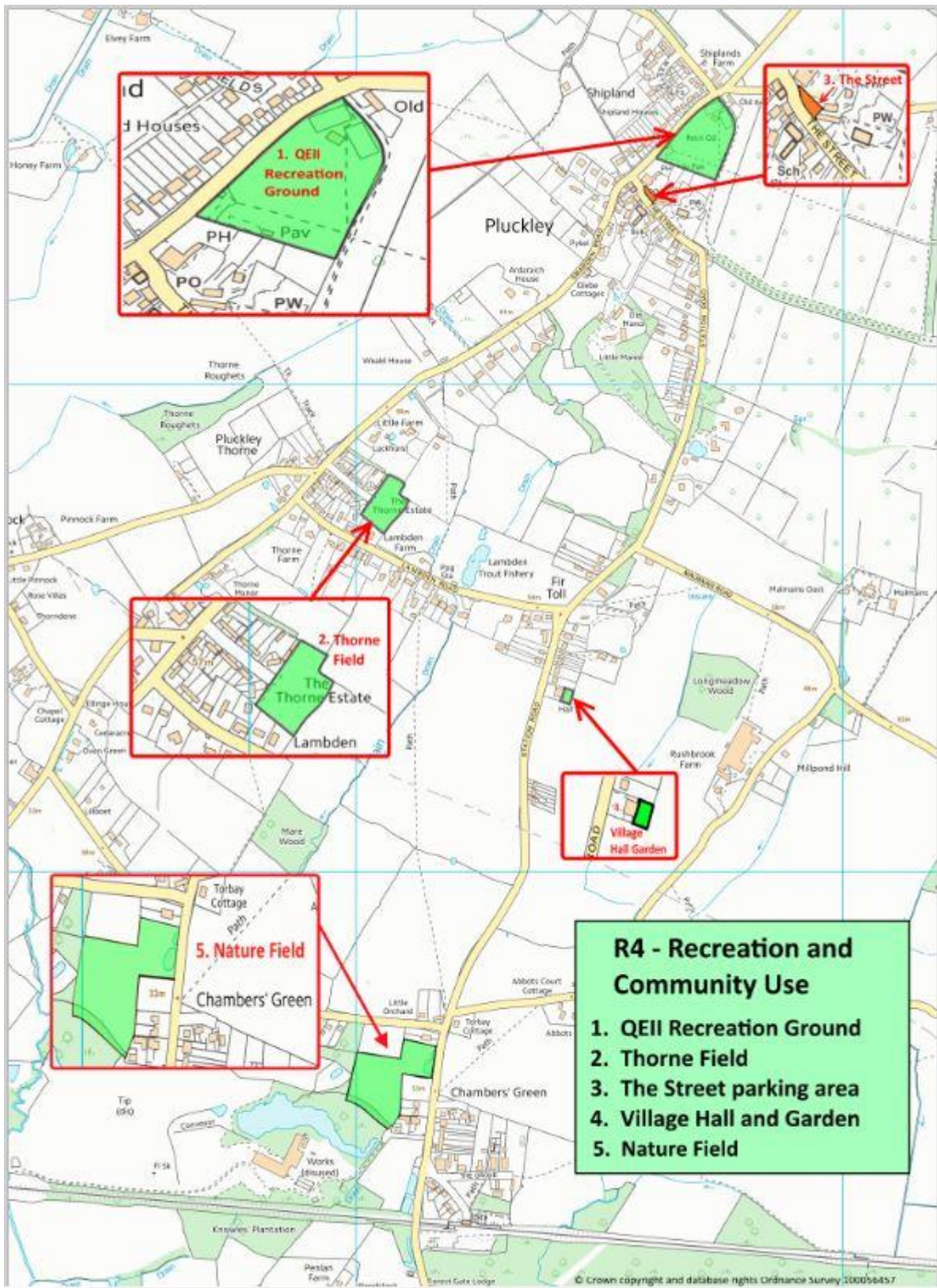


5. Formerly part of the Brickworks holding, this field has been transferred into the ownership of the Parish Council for the establishment of a Nature Reserve as an amenity for the community. It is the ‘receptor site’ for relocated species from the Brickworks development site. The Field is being developed and managed by The Friends of Pluckley Nature to protect and enhance the diversity of the wildlife in the area, and to afford a study facility for residents and visitors. The Reserve has been set up according to the Ecological Management Plan provided by Kentish Stour Countryside Partnerships. Formal Nature Reserve status is being applied for.

*Nature Reserve showing diverse habitats.*



Map 5 Protected Public Spaces





### **Policy R5 – Renewable Energy**

**Renewable energy technology is welcomed in the Parish. Proposals for new renewable energy structures requiring planning permission will be required to demonstrate that they do not have a seriously harmful impact on sensitive landscapes, and do not use the best and most versatile agricultural land.**

6.16 The National Planning Policy Framework includes strong protections for the natural and historic environment and is quite clear that, when considering development proposals, local councils should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

6.17 Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location and this includes the unnecessary use of high quality agricultural land. Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment. The particular factors relating to large scale ground mounted solar photovoltaic farms that a local council will need to consider include making effective use of previously developed land and, where a proposal involves agricultural land, being quite clear this is necessary and that poorer quality land is to be used in preference to land of a higher quality.” (Ministerial paper, 25.3.15)

6.18 Justification of Policy R5. Energy saving is encouraged, and energy generation is welcomed when sited in non-sensitive locations visually. Renewable energy technologies are developing constantly and becoming smaller and more efficient. Large-scale installations, however, have the potential to cause harmful impact on the rural scene. Where applications for large-scale installations are made, they will need to demonstrate that their impact on the rural scene is limited.

### **Policy R6 – Addressing Nutrient Neutrality**

**Proposals for new overnight accommodation within the Stour catchment, or which is served by a wastewater system which discharges effluent into the Stour catchment, will only be supported if they demonstrate nutrient neutrality regarding the Stodmarsh SAC/SPA/Ramsar designated site, in relation to both nitrogen and phosphorous. All such proposals must take account of the guidance on this issue published by Natural England and the Borough Council.**

## 7. Housing

7.1 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.

7.2 Growth to 2016 was limited, with an estimated six new dwellings in the previous 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.

7.3 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 ten years.

7.4 The site selection process, including criteria used, is outlined below and described in detail in a separate document, attached as an appendix to the Basic Conditions Statement.

7.5 The preferred site was selected from a call for sites in 2020 and from those sites that came forward directly to the Parish Council during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan Review. All of the seven sites were tested through methodology supplied by Ashford Borough Council together with locally detailed specifications that came out of the parish consultation. The site chosen met the needs expressed by residents during the consultation and scored higher in the scoring matrix used. It was confirmed through public engagement and consultation.

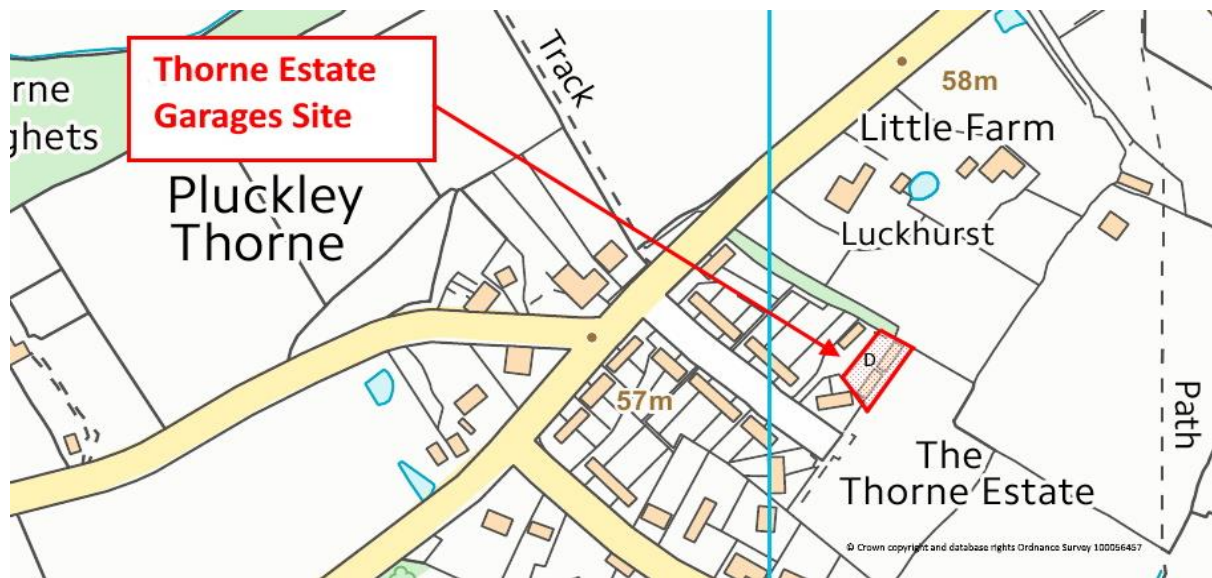
7.6 The other sites submitted scored lower on the scoring matrix used and were discounted for being contrary to the views expressed by residents and the aims of the policies in this plan. (Further information is provided in the Basic Conditions statement on the method of site selection and the reasons for those sites not considered suitable.)

7.7 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.



The consultation and identified need showed a requirement for three further homes, affordable to young families. The best scoring site in the Site Appraisal, land at Thorne Garages as defined on Map 6, meets this need. Ashford Borough Council submitted a planning application in March 2023 (Ref. PA/2023/0424) to deliver these homes, which has a ‘resolution to grant’ by the Borough Council’s Planning Committee subject to the appropriate nutrient neutrality mitigation being identified. Given the progress of the planning application, this Review Plan does not seek to allocate this site, and instead the site will be considered as ‘windfall’ housing and assessed under the relevant planning policies. No further housing sites are allocated in this Review Plan.

Map 6 Thorne Garages Site



### Policy H1 – Windfall Housing Development

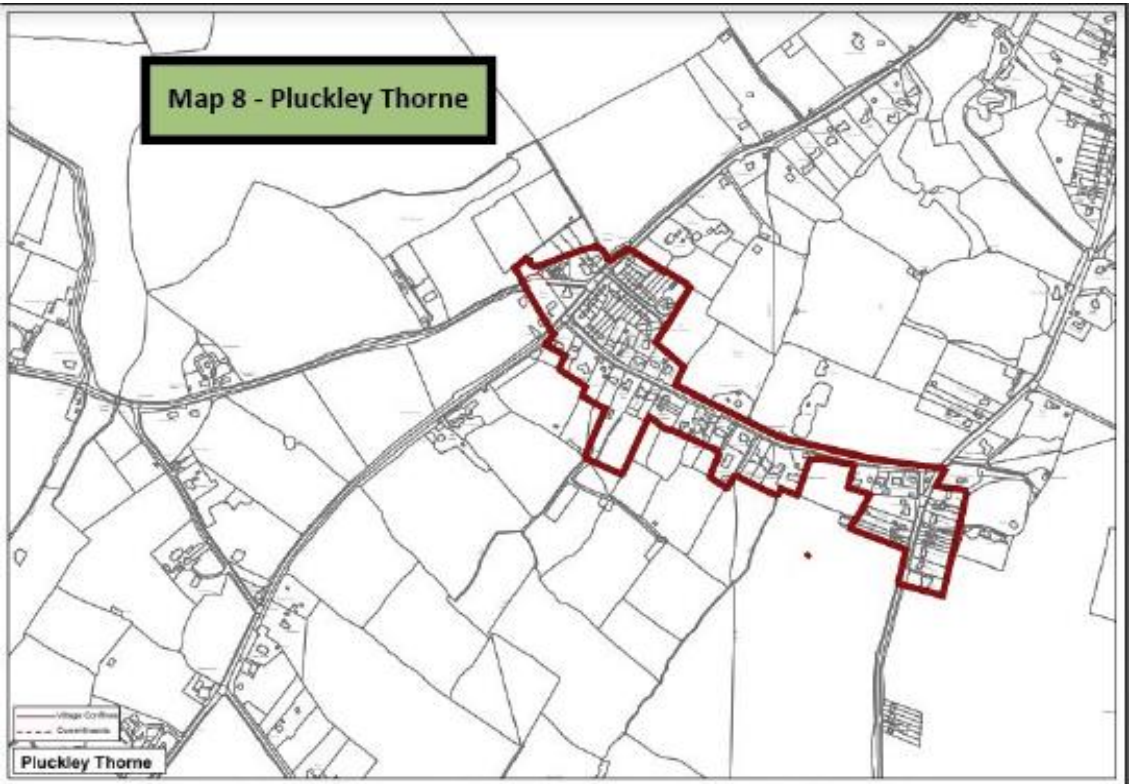
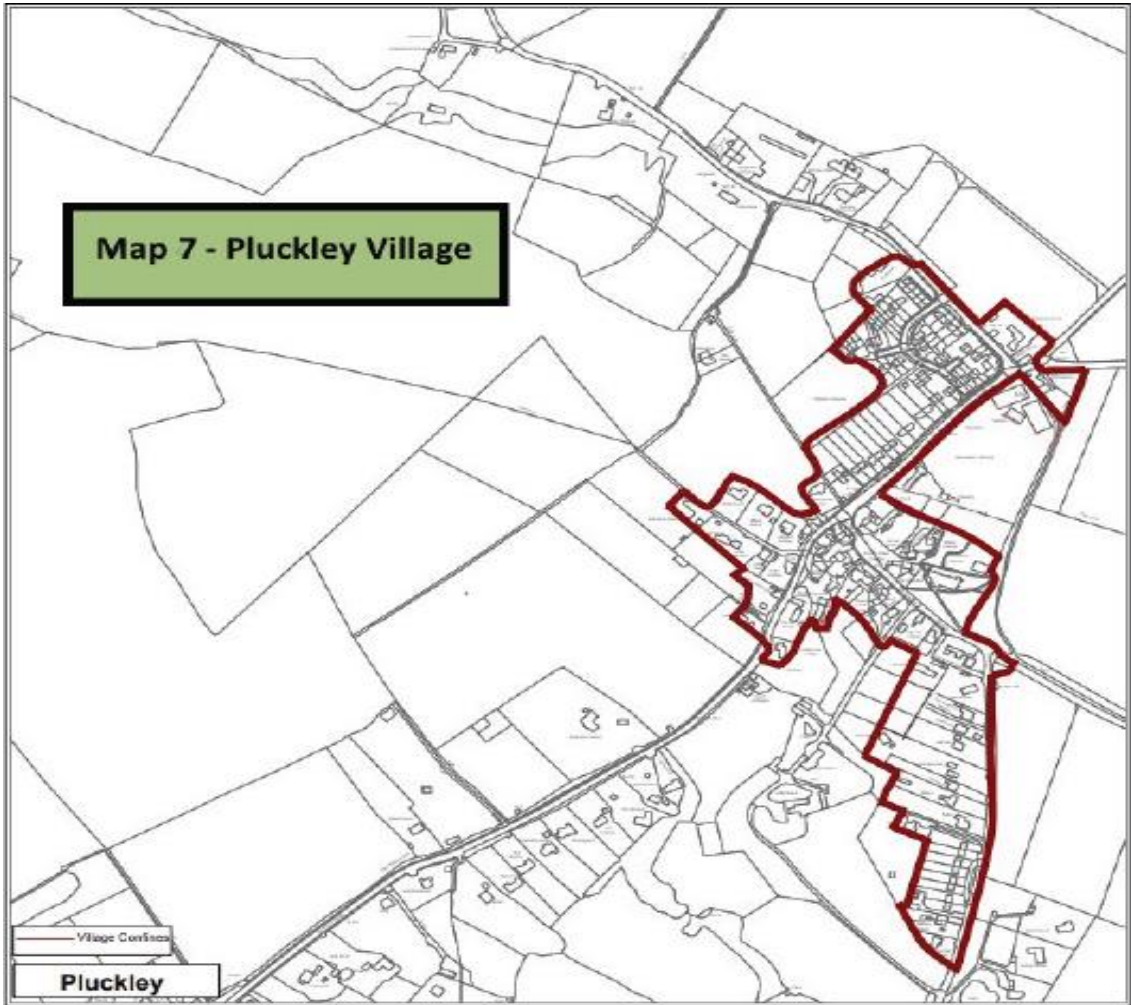
Proposals for new residential development on ‘windfall’ sites within, adjoining or close to the built-up confines of Pluckley, as defined on Map 7, or within the built-up confines of Pluckley Thorne and Pluckley Station, as defined on Maps 8 and 9 respectively, will be supported, where the proposals satisfy the following criteria:

- a. is of a scale, layout, design and appearance that is compatible with the character and density of the surrounding area;
- b. will not have any adverse impacts upon residential amenity in the vicinity of the site;
- c. would not result in harm to or the loss of public or private open spaces that contribute positively to the character of the local area (including residential gardens);

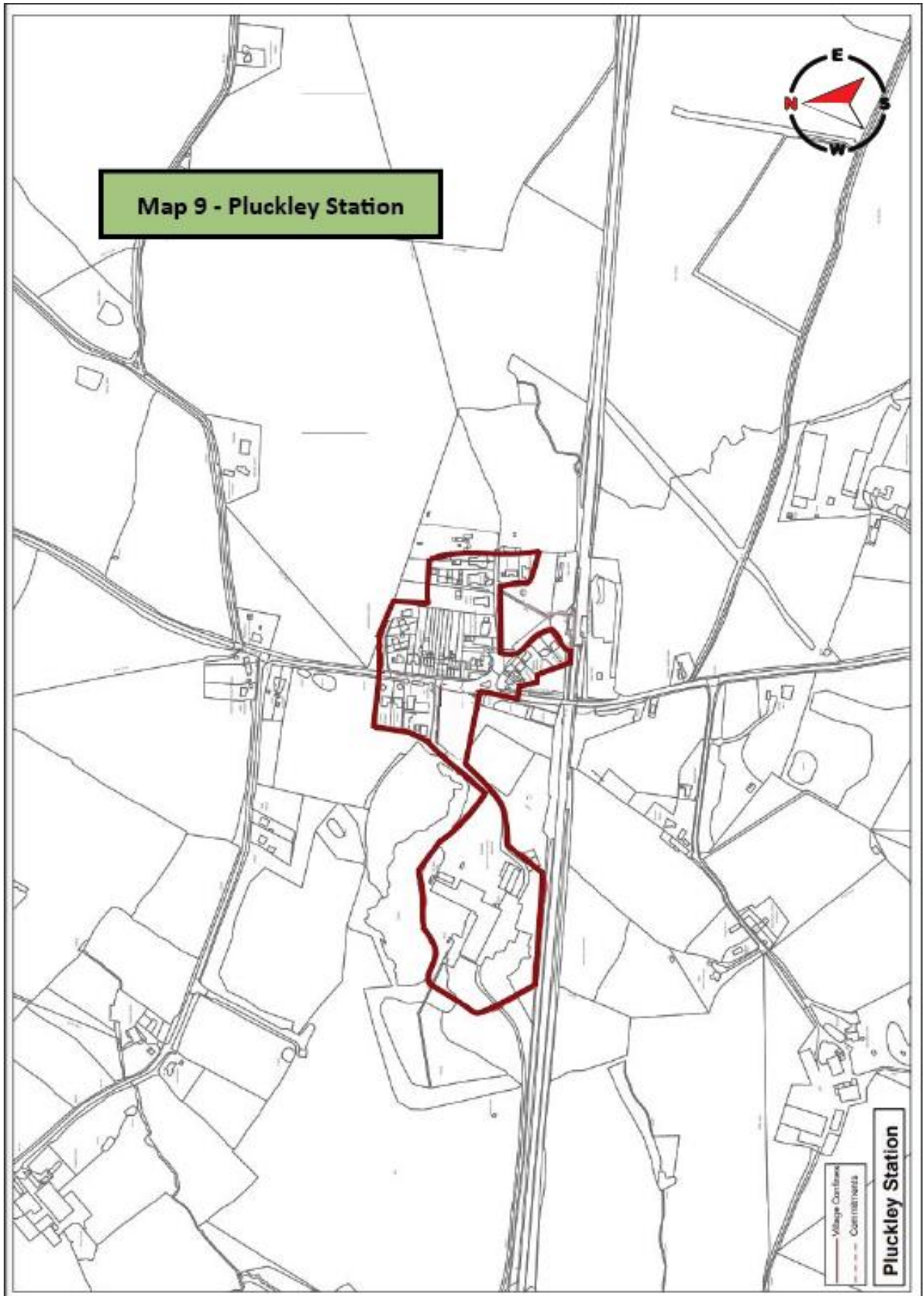
- d. would not result in any significant harm to the surrounding landscape, to nearby heritage assets, nature conservation sites and biodiversity networks and maintains the openness of the wider countryside;
- e. where required, demonstrates nutrient neutrality regarding the Stodmarsh SAC/SPA/Ramsar designated site for the lifetime of the development;
- f. the proposals incorporate safe and suitable access for pedestrians and vehicles in accordance with the relevant policies and standards of Kent County Council as Highways Authority;
- g. safeguards and, where appropriate, enhances existing Public Rights of Way in the vicinity of the site, including Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Byways and Cycle Routes in order to provide sustainable transport choices for new developments;
- h. is located to provide residents with opportunities to use local public transport services;
- i. does not lead to a requirement for substantial new infrastructure or other facilities to support the development;
- j. would not displace an existing active use at the site, such as employment, community or leisure facilities;
- k. has no adverse impacts upon the designated Conservation Areas in the Plan area (as defined on Maps 10 and 11);
- l. takes account of all relevant policies in the adopted Ashford Local Plan 2030 (including Policy SP7) and the guidance contained in Supplementary Planning Documents.

**Proposals which include self-build housing or housing suitable for residents seeking smaller homes will be encouraged.**

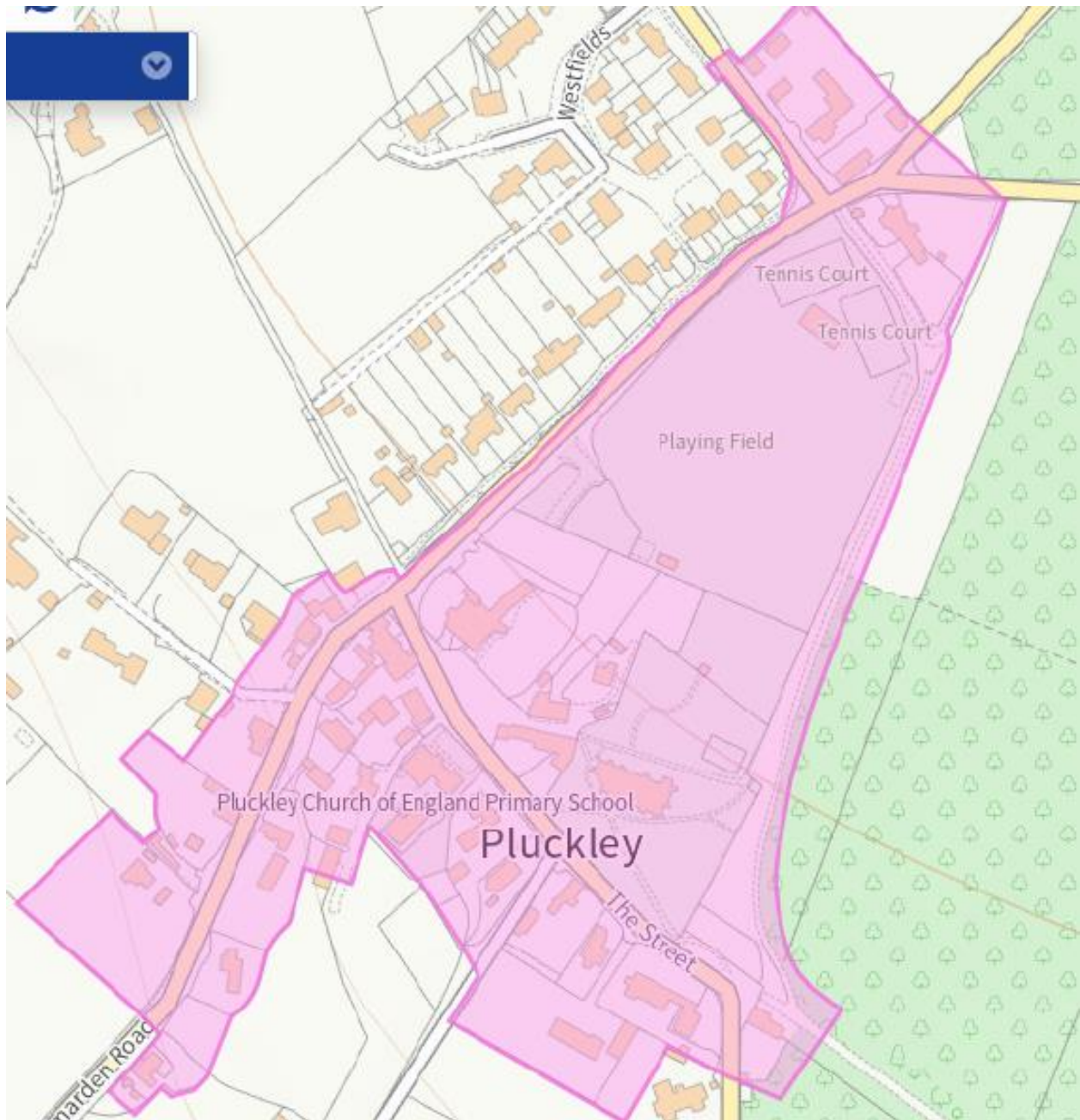
**Within those parts of the Plan area that are situated beyond the built-up confines of the settlements of Pluckley, Pluckley Thorne and Pluckley Station, as defined on Maps 7-9 respectively, proposals for new development on “windfall” or other non-allocated sites will only be supported where their impact, individually or cumulatively, would not lead to the physical or visual coalescence of the settlements and their separate identities and character, or to the significant erosion of a gap between the settlements.**



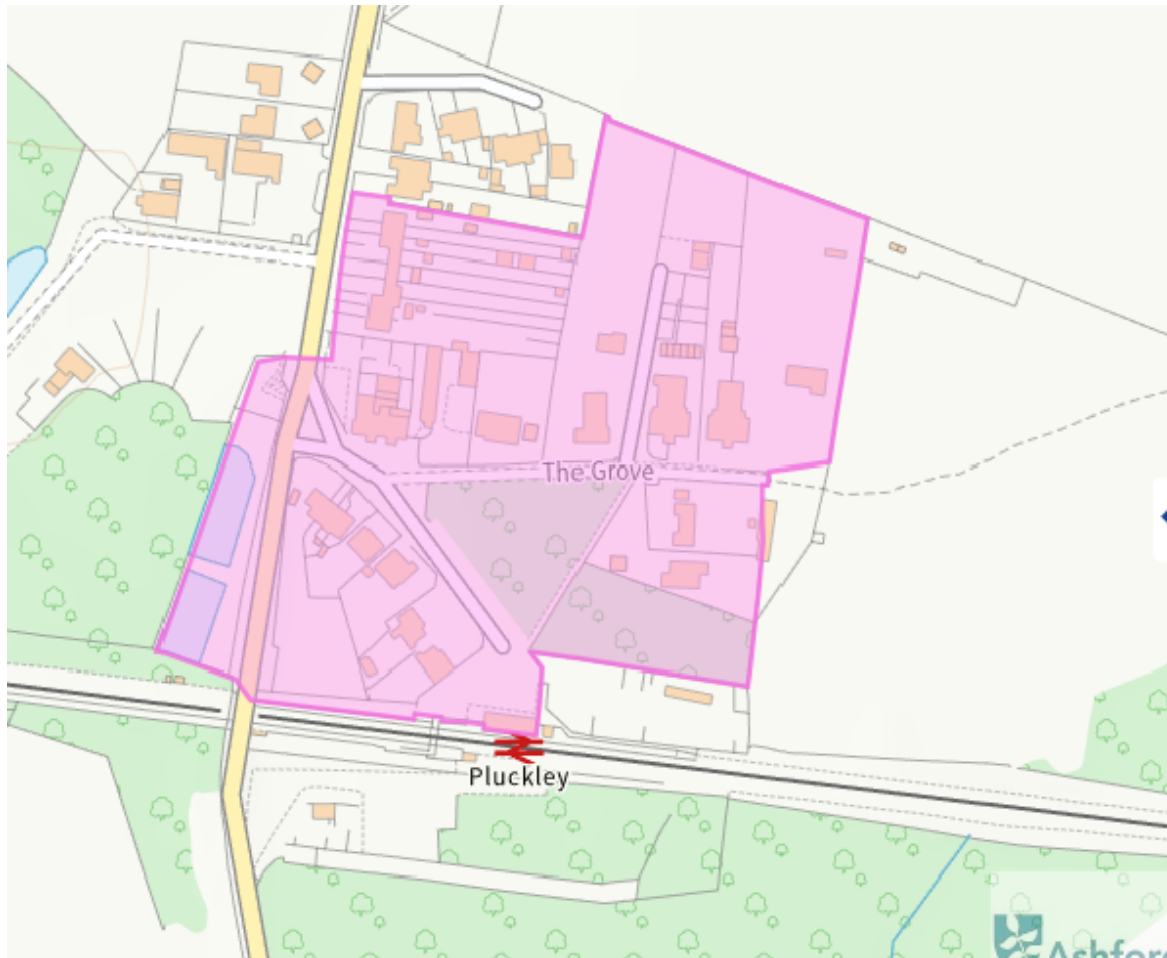




Map 10 Pluckley Village Conservation Area



Map 11 Pluckley Station Conservation Area



### **Policy H2 – Design Standards for New Development**

Proposals for all forms of new development must plan positively for the achievement of high quality design, at the same time demonstrating they have sought to conserve local distinctiveness and the aesthetic qualities of traditional rural settlements and buildings found in Pluckley and take account of the Parish Design Statement (adopted and published in 2003). In particular developments should have regard to:-

- a. The built area, including dwelling, garage, outbuildings and any non-permeable surface, should not dominate the plot. This is so as to maintain the prevailing rural character.
- b. Roof heights should be compatible with neighbouring properties. A maximum of two-storeys, plus roof space, is supported. Homes higher than this are not a feature of the Parish and would not be consistent with the prevailing character.



c. Preference will be given to the use of durable, attractive and locally available or reclaimed materials used in the distinctive Pluckley style, using red and buff stock brick, Kentish ragstone, white or cream painted woodwork and slate or peg roof tiles.

d. Ensuring that openings and boundary treatments reflect their context when viewed from the street, open spaces or the countryside. Developers and owners are encouraged to plant screens of trees and hedgerows, preferably of native species, to soften impact on the roadside frontage.

e. Existing trees and hedgerows should be maintained. Any tree removed must be replaced and all new applications must include a planting plan proportionate to the scale of the development. Close-boarded fencing or panelling and gates and brick walls are not supported on frontages as they do not maintain the prevailing character. Garden fencing should take consideration of wildlife movement.

The NPPF (December 2023) encourages neighbourhood plans to embrace design qualities that reflect local character and design preferences that reflect local aspirations. Fencing should safeguard local ecology, for instance see RSPB guidelines.

### **Policy H3 – Encouraging Sustainable Development**

Development is to be co-ordinated with the provision of infrastructure and will not be permitted to proceed unless it connects to the sewerage system at the nearest points of adequate capacity as advised by the service provider, unless demonstrated to be inappropriate and other adequate means can be found to the satisfaction of the service provider or other appropriate body. Developments will also need to check National Grid capacity (Policy R6).

All major developments within the Plan area must strive to achieve greenfield surface water run-off rates where possible. Where this is not possible, it must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Lead Local Flood Authority that there would not be an increase in flood risk to the neighbouring area.

New developments should put in place Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off. Proposals should ensure that the drainage system constructed is able to operate for the lifetime of the scheme and include appropriate allowances for the future impacts arising from climate change. This must consider the increased frequency, duration and intensity of storms, in line with published guidance.”

#### **Policy H4 – Lighting**

**Proposals for new development in the Plan area should be accompanied by a proposed lighting scheme which meets the requirements set out in Policy ENV4 of the adopted Ashford Local Plan 2030, and the guidance contained in the Borough Council’s ‘Dark Skies’ Supplementary Planning Document.**

**Development proposals within the main settlement areas in the Plan area should seek to avoid the use of external lighting unless it is required for security and health and safety reasons, in order to avoid increased light pollution and a further reduction in the dark skies in those areas. Where external lighting is necessary for the reasons stated, lamps should be of 500 lumens or less for domestic purposes and installed at the lowest possible height to achieve the necessary level of lighting.**

**In all other parts of the Plan area, external lighting schemes should only include lamps of 500 lumens or less for domestic purposes and only use lamps above that level where required for agricultural use or security and where they are installed in suitable fixtures which prevent the upward spillage of light. All external lighting should be installed at the lowest possible height to achieve the necessary level of light.”**

7.8 The Parish Design Statement was adopted in 2003 and has retained strong support in every survey undertaken in the Parish since then. Dark skies are an important part of the rural characteristic of this village. Ashford Borough Council’s Dark Sky SPD does cover the parish of Pluckley. Pluckley has no street lighting and so conforms to a Natural area E1 in the SPD, particularly well placed to benefit from dark skies.

## 8. Economy and Communications

8.1 The local economy is dominated by agriculture and tourism. The greatest land use is farming which covers the bulk of the parish. This is carried out by half a dozen local farmers and is arable, fruit growing or grazing land for sheep, with just a few cattle. There is some light industry, mostly on the Pivington estate, with isolated operations such as vehicle repair at dispersed locations.

8.2 Tourism is important in attracting many visitors who come for the rural environment, as depicted in “The Darling Buds of May” and to explore the haunted reputation of the parish. They are provided for by two small hotels, two public houses, two certified location caravan sites and a number of bed and breakfast accommodations.

8.3 From the responses given to questionnaires distributed in the Parish, most employment in the parish comprises people working from home. Scaled up from the questionnaire response, there could be as many as 100 home workers. Economic activity is, therefore, small-scale, quiet and unobtrusive. Retail activity is confined to the general stores, the butcher’s and the farm shop – all of which are much appreciated. The general store includes a sub-post office which is highly valued by residents.

### **Policy E1 Support for Agriculture and Tourism Development**

**Development related to agriculture, tourism and other business activity will be supported where they comply with other policies in this plan and the benefits to the local economy and any other benefits to the local environment or the well-being of the parish outweigh any environmental harm.**

8.4 Justification of Policy E1. Agriculture and tourism are the core activities of the parish that contribute to the way of life and the attractiveness of the area. Provided that attractiveness is not impaired, initiatives are encouraged.

### **Policy E2 Seek Better Communications**

**Applications for new residential development will only be supported if they are accompanied by a communications statement that demonstrates that the development will be able to connect to the best available broadband network and to take advantage of future improvements to it.**



8.5 Justification of Policy E2. During Consultation, residents called for improved broadband. As well as facilitating the rural economy, for Pluckley's businesses and home workers, this is essential.

The Parish has applied to take advantage of the Government-backed voucher scheme for conversion to fibre broadband. This application has been successful, and the network has been upgraded.

### **Policy E3 Transport Management through the Parish**

**Proposals will be supported that accord with the policies in the PNP and result in improvements to the free flow of traffic in the village.**

**Proposals requiring planning permission and which seek to increase the number of access points or which would involve an increase in traffic generation, particularly increasing the flow of HGVs through the Parish, will need to demonstrate that they do not have a significantly harmful effect on congestion or road safety and do not seriously exacerbate parking conditions, including conflict with larger vehicles, in the following areas: (i) The Street; (ii) Forge Hill; (iii) Smarden Road; (iv) Station Road; (v) Chambers Green Road; (vi) Egerton Road; (vii) Swan Lane, as identified on Map 13. These are the areas most used by HGVs.**

**Development proposals that would generate a significant amount of movement or would potentially affect a known and evidenced traffic hazard must be supported by a Transport Statement or Assessment as appropriate. The Statement or Assessment will set out details of the transport issues relating to the development including the measures to be taken to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the scheme and to take any opportunities as appropriate for improving the pedestrian and cycle connectivity.**

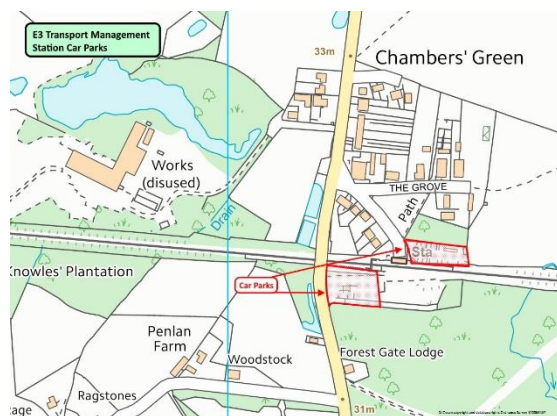
### **To add parking capacity in the vicinity of the station**

Justification. There is a real problem with parking for the station. The existing station car park has a capacity for fifty cars and is routinely full, forcing rail users to park on the streets nearby, creating a traffic hazard, destroying verges and impacting on local residents. As many as fifty further cars can be counted here. Map 12 identifies the options for improving car parking provision at Pluckley Station.

This problem is going to grow. The expansion of surrounding villages that already use this station and the major development at Chilmington will inevitably generate further demand. The former coal yard, immediately adjacent to the station and the

existing car park, is vacant. It is the obvious location for the increased parking capacity needed. The Parish Council has already formally approached Network Rail, the site owners, and indicated their wish for this site to be used for parking. Network Rail are obliged, when considering future use of the site, to take account of the needs of the rail service and to contribute to the development of an integrated system of transport. The Parish Council is in discussion with both Network Rail and Ashford Borough Council to lease and operate a car park.

### Map 12 Station Car Park



The former coal yard on the south side of the railway would also be suitable, provided the access problem of short sight lines could be resolved. This site has the added advantage of offering wheelchair access to the up line, at present only accessible over the footbridge.

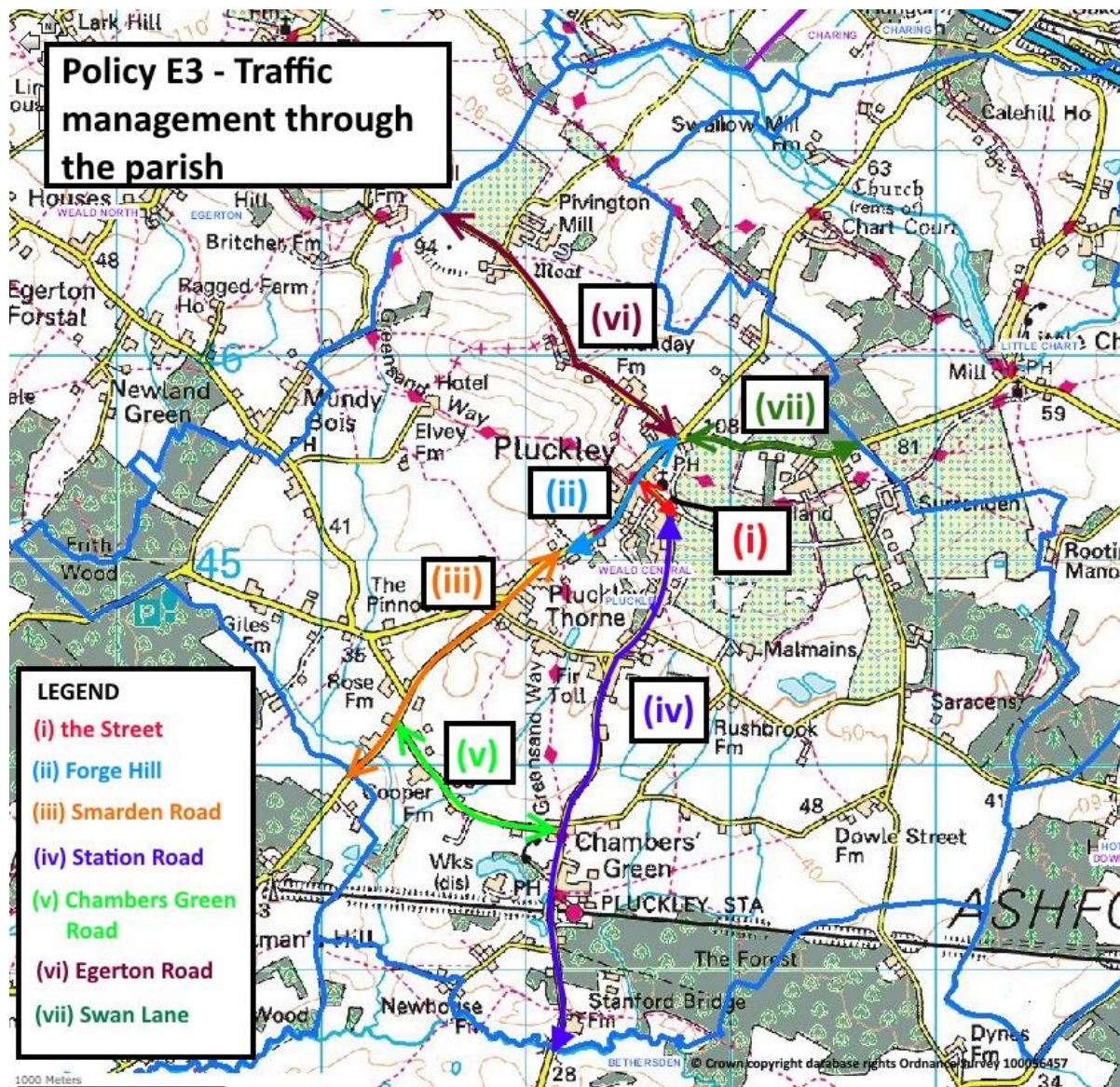
8.6 Justification of Policy E3. The passage of HGV traffic through the parish is seen by residents as the single greatest problem facing the parish. It has been cited repeatedly in consultations undertaken (Parish Plan 2009 and 2013, and this Neighbourhood Plan) as the biggest problem facing the parish. HGV traffic passes routes that fail the Government's minimum width requirement for a HGV and car passing, damages the road surfaces and verges, creates potentially dangerous incidents, and impacts the quality of life of residents. KCC Highways has said of the east-west route through Pluckley "There are, therefore, parts of this route which are unsuitable for HGVs" (Mr. Hogben, May 2009). HM Inspector of Planning, July 2010 "In my view it is reasonable to keep the number of trips by vehicles to a minimum...if there were no limitations imposed, there would be considerable harm to local residents because of the amount and type of traffic." HM Inspector of Planning March 2011 in rejecting a development application "cars will pass HGVs on a daily basis" and because the proposal would "generate the type and amount of

traffic that would be inappropriate to the rural road network that serves it” the proposal was in breach of policy TRS8 of the DPD.

It should be noted that the Parish Council, supported by a grant from Kent County Council, is developing a Comprehensive Transport Plan which is expected to conclude in 2024.

8.7 The speed limit through the Parish has been reduced to 30mph.

Map 13 Transport Management





## 9. Community and Leisure

9.1 Significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve the facilities for leisure and social inter-action in the parish. The QEII Recreation Ground has seen the addition of new children's play park, a multi-games court, a new and extended sports pavilion, a resurfaced tennis court, a petanque piste, and a car park. The Ground is now preserved in perpetuity for leisure as a Field in Trust.

9.2 The field adjacent to the Thorne Estate is also used as a leisure facility by the local residents and is to be maintained as such.

9.3 The Village Hall has also been given a face lift, with new ceiling and lighting, new heating, refurbished floor, new windows, an improved kitchen, redecoration, and a planting scheme in the garden. Further improvements are planned by way of a new entrance foyer, embracing new toilets, disabled facilities, and a new lounge, as soon as funds allow.

9.4 The result has been an increase in social activities within the parish. The Village Hall is now self-funding and no longer needs to rely on annual grants from the Parish Council. The further improvements planned to the hall will enhance its attractiveness and encourage further community activities.

### **Policy C1 Social Interaction and Community life**

**Development related to community use, including changes of use and temporary or permanent structures or alterations to permitted opening hours, where express planning permission is required, will be supported subject to other policies in this Plan.**

9.5 Justification of Policy C1. The Consultation process highlighted the need for basic community services and a wish for greater social action and community life.

### **Policy C2 Protection of Community Facilities**

**Proposals that would allow these facilities to modernise and adapt for future needs are encouraged, subject to the other policies in this PNP:**

- **Parish Church, The Green churchyard and graveyard**
- **Primary School**
- **Village Hall and associated parking**
- **Public Houses and shops**

**(See Map 14 Protection of Community Facilities)**

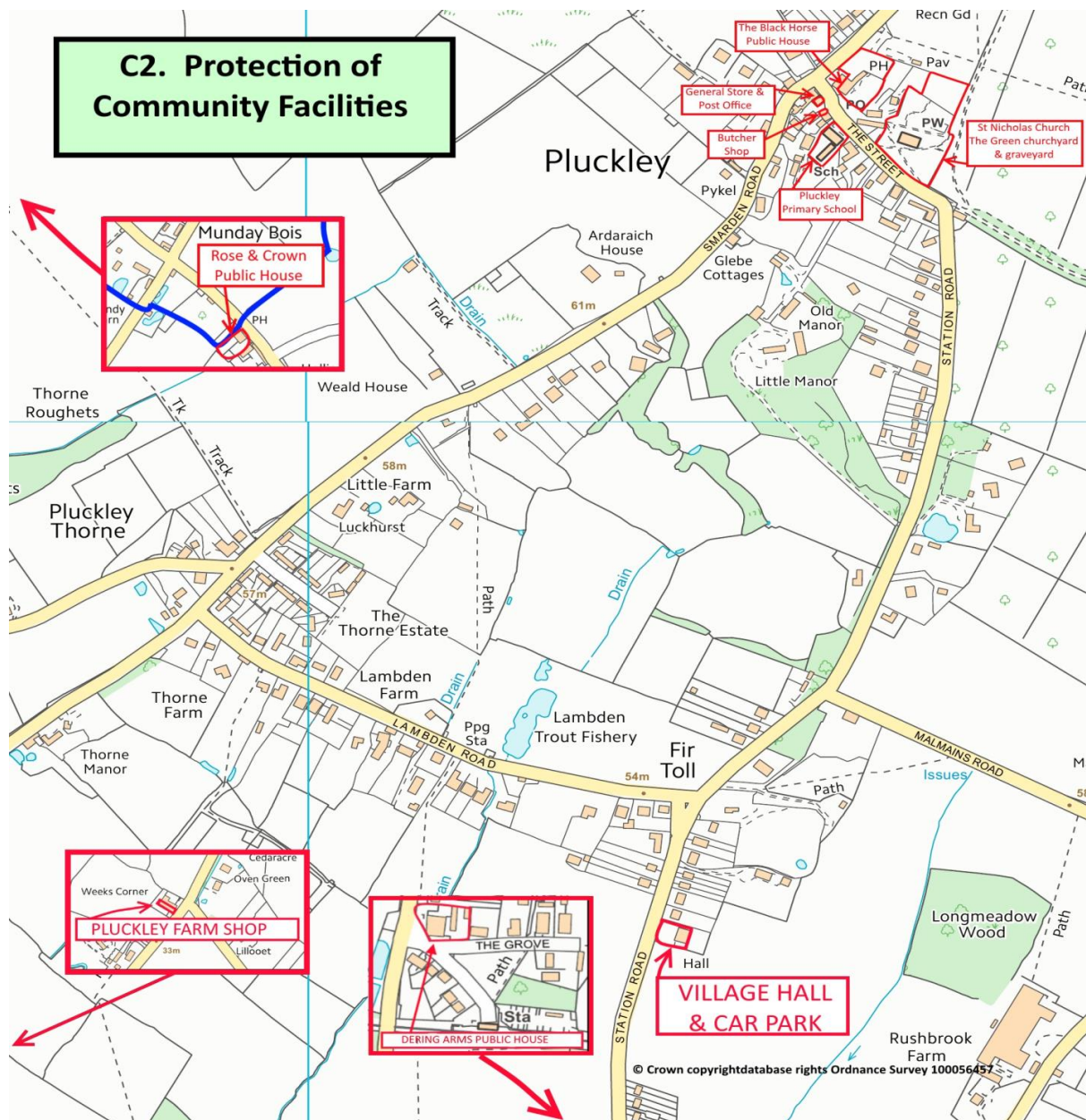
Development of existing community facilities will be supported where they will enhance their community function. Where it is demonstrated that an existing community use is not viable, preference will be given to a change of use or redevelopment to alternative community uses before other uses are considered. Every effort will be made to work with the local community to investigate potential solutions to avoid any unnecessary loss of these valued facilities and services.

Proposals that will result in the loss of an existing community facility will only be supported where:

- a) adequate alternative provision exists or will be provided in an equally accessible or more accessible location within the reasonable walking distance of 800metres; or
- b) all reasonable efforts have been made to preserve the facility but it has been demonstrated that it would not be economically viable, feasible or practicable to retain the building or site for its existing use; in such cases evidence must be provided to confirm that the property or site has been marketed for a meaningful period and that there is no realistic interest in its retention for the current use or for an alternative community use.

Proposals for development which involve the unavoidable loss of community facilities for which there is a proven demand will be required to consider the scope for relocating or re-providing the facility either within the new development or on an alternative site within the locality and to make such provision where feasible and practicable.

Map 14 Protection of Community Facilities



9.6 Justification of Policy C2. The above listed facilities are all valued by residents, as expressed during the Consultation process (see Consultation Statement) and seen as vital parts of the community. Given the importance to the parish of these facilities, their loss would have a detrimental effect on life in the parish and is to be avoided if at all possible. Their maintenance and enhancement will be sought wherever possible through public engagement and support and where they need to evolve to continue to meet the parish's needs, then they will be encouraged to do so.



## 10. Community Projects Management Plan

This section does not form part of the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan Review proposal.

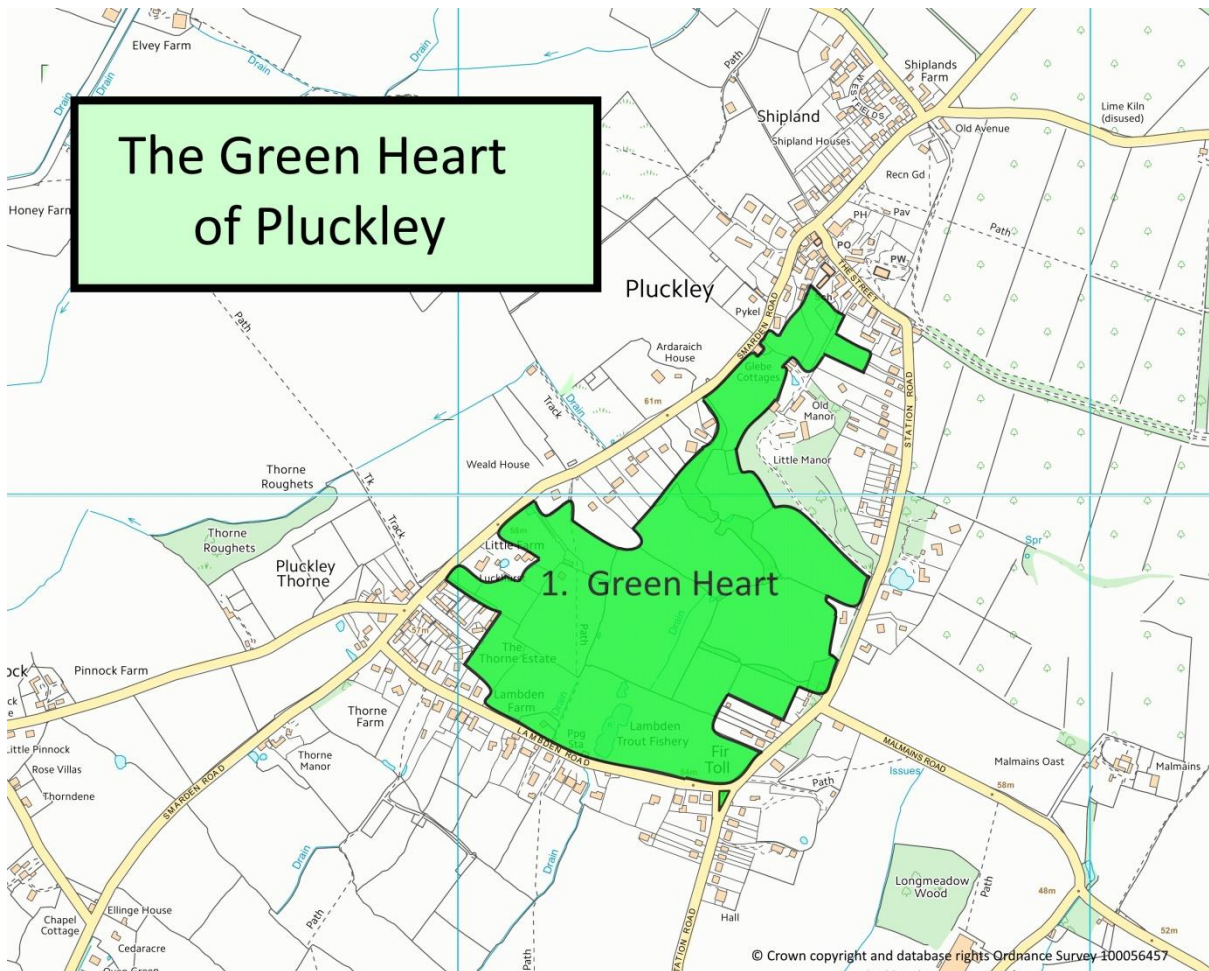
10.1 In addition to the above planning policies that emerged from the Consultation, a number of other aspirations were expressed. Some of these are of a planning nature but are already covered by Ashford Borough Council's Core Strategy or Local Plan, others are not of a planning nature but are designed to improve life in the community. They are expressed here as Projects and the Parish Council will endeavour to deliver them.

### Project CR1 Further designation of Local Green Space

10.2 The "green heart" is referred to in the Parish Design Statement and occupies a notable area of woodland, fields and ponds at the heart of the community between the village core and Thorne/Fir Toll. It is immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area and several listed buildings. It is an area rich in wildlife with a large population of great crested newts and, because of its enclosed nature with varied topography is tranquil. It is clearly defined and bounded within the village. It is crossed by a public footpath. See Map 9.

10.3 It is the intention to add the "Green Heart" to the Local Green Spaces in the Parish. This will be pursued with the relevant landowners, seeking to establish a mutually satisfactory management programme and to protect this important asset.

## Map 15 The Green Heart



### Project CH1 – Local Needs Housing

**Based on surveys, sites for Local Needs Housing will be sought to meet identified demand.**

10.4 This continues a long-standing commitment by the Parish Council to respond to the housing needs of people with a connection to the parish. Following a housing needs survey in 2013, four local needs homes were built adjacent to the Westfields development. They were occupied in early 2015 and exhausted the then identified needs of people with a Pluckley connection. Further housing needs surveys will be undertaken on a regular basis to establish emerging local requirements.

### Project CH2 – Managed homes for the Elderly

**Pluckley supports the ‘village cluster’ approach adopted by Ashford Borough Council.**

10.5 During the Consultation workshops, residents suggested that there is a growing need for housing for elderly residents requiring varying levels of care. This is a need that is likely to increase. Residents feel strongly that this should be provided within a village environment. While the preference is for residents to be able to remain in Pluckley, it is recognised that the advised minimum requirement of thirty dwelling units cannot be met within the parish. The Parish Council has communicated its support for the ‘village cluster’ approach adopted by Ashford Borough Council, and residents support this solution which is likely to be in Charing.

10.6 The ‘village cluster’ is the most sensible means of providing such homes: in a rural environment and yet having the degree of care and supervision called for.

### Project CH3 – Footpaths/pavements

**The footpaths in the parish are to be better maintained. Public rights of way are to be maintained.**

10.7 Many of the footpaths/ pavements in the parish have become overgrown and consequently difficult to use, particularly for pushchairs or wheelchairs. This requires cutting back of hedgerows and verges. Additional footpaths/pavements are not favoured, nor ‘improvements’ that would render the street scene more urban in nature. The existing rural style is favoured. The possibility of installing a footpath linking Fir Toll to the station was raised in the consultation workshops but was rejected on the grounds of visual intrusion and the envisaged limited use given the distance.

10.8 The parish enjoys several public rights of way, many of very long-standing. This enables not only residents but also the many visitors to the parish to exercise and to appreciate the countryside.

10.9 Large areas of the parish do not have a footpath. That is a result of its dispersed nature. Where they do exist, however, they are regularly used and need to be better maintained. The public rights of way continue to be an important leisure feature of the parish and are what attract many visitors. They too must be preserved and managed correctly.

### Project CE1 – Rail Service

**The current rail service to London and to the coast is valued and is to be supported.**



10.10 During Consultation, residents stressed the importance to the village of the rail service and urged that every effort be made to at least maintain the current level of service.

10.11 The parish no longer has a bus service. Wealden Wheels, is a charity based in Pluckley that offers a vehicle hire service (with or without driver) to local groups or families. The Parish Council has, for many years, supported this charity, and will continue to press for the return of a bus service.

#### Project CE2 – Broadband/mobile phones

**Faster broadband has now been installed and is welcomed. The currently poor mobile phone reception throughout the parish needs to be improved.**

10.12 During consultation, residents called for improved broadband and mobile phone reception.

#### Project CE3 – Limit HGV traffic through the parish

**Any development that is likely to increase the flow of HGVs through the parish will be resisted.**

10.13 The passage of HGV traffic through the parish is seen by residents as the single greatest problem facing the parish. It passes routes that fail the Government's minimum width requirement for a HGV and car passing, damages the road surfaces and verges, creates potentially dangerous incidents, and impacts the quality of life of residents.

#### Project CE4 – Contain the speed of traffic through the parish

**The speed limits in the Parish have now been reduced and accord with national guidelines. The Parish Council has prepared a Highways Improvement Plan and is in consultation with Kent County Council Highways Department to effect it. Suitable traffic calming measures will be introduced to encourage the observance of the speed limits.**

#### Project CE5 – To maximise the opportunities of the Public Right of Way network

**To enhance, health, well-being, tourism and local sustainable transport.**

## Project CC1 – Recreation Spaces

**All opportunities are to be taken to manage and improve the spaces available for leisure and sporting activities.**

10.14 Continuing attention will be given to maintaining the QEII Recreation Ground and to encourage its use by the community. The Thorne Estate field will also remain as a leisure facility. The green field off Chambers Green Road will also be maintained as leisure areas for the community.

10.15 All sections of the community should have facilities provided for them that encourage regular exercise. The parish is blessed with several public rights of way that allow for safe walking through attractive countryside. The QEII Recreation Ground, within the constraints of its size, offers the opportunity for various physical activities. The ground is to be maintained and its use by clubs and individuals encouraged.

## Project CC2 – Social Interactions

**Opportunities for engaging with all sections of the community are to be encouraged.**

10.16 New initiatives that bring the community together will be supported. Recent examples include the Arts Festival, the Carols around the Tree, and the re-launched Tennis Club. They are dependent upon volunteers coming forward as ever, but with encouragement and support, can be brought into reality.

10.17 The Primary School is seen as a vital part of parish life and the community will seek to engage with, and support the school and its children. The school has as a policy, priority admission for children resident in the parish, and this is welcomed and supported.

10.18 In a rural community, with some commuters, it is easy for residents to feel isolated and without support, especially the elderly. The provision of a range of social activities helps to bring the community together and enrich life in the parish.

## Project CC3 – Village Hall

**The Village Hall improvement programme is to be pursued with a view to creating a modern, attractive venue that is used by the community.**

10.19 The extension of a new entrance foyer and toilets, including a disabled toilet, has been completed. The further extension planned at the front will be undertaken

to provide a lounge/additional meeting room. This will allow a greater variety of activity. The exterior will also be timber clad to add insulation, improve appearance and encourage further use.

10.20 In response to the need identified at one of the consultation meetings, wireless broadband has now been installed at the village hall. The hall now offers better display facilities and can be used as a co-located working hub. This will allow the many home workers in the Parish to have a break and interact.

10.21 The Village Hall is a focal point for social activities in the parish. These have become more varied in recent years and the improvements to the hall have encouraged more parishioners to take an active part in using it.

### [Project CC4 – Station Parking](#)

**This has moved to E3 Transport Management.**

## **11. Monitoring and Review**

11.1 The PNP will be monitored by the Parish Council and formally reviewed every five years to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the Parish as it evolves. Future reviews of the PNP will take account of the emerging review of the Ashford Local Plan which will cover the period from 2030 up to 2041.

11.2 Through liaison with Ashford Borough Council, the PNP will be checked against emerging planning changes both at national and local levels. It will also be monitored regularly to ensure that it is proving effective in the assessment of planning applications as they arise.