

Background document BD2 workshop output and community engagement

1 Community Engagement

1.1 The plan has been produced by the Wye Neighbourhood Plan Group (the Group) – a Working Group of the Parish Council – which was set up in spring 2012. It has consisted of 8-12 parish councillors and residents and chaired by a resident. A freelance Community Planner has advised the group. Their work began with the publication of a booklet in early summer 2012, explaining the Plan process which was distributed to every household in the village.

1.2 The booklet set out a number of key issues:

- Wye should aim to develop as a sustainable rural community
- New housing is needed but must not damage Wye's character or compactness as a village
- While new business should be encouraged to keep Wye sustainable and prosperous, how much can be allowed so as not to damage the fabric of the village and the living environment?
- Should we have a clear boundary for Wye itself and get the views into and from Wye protected?
- Are the principles from surveys and the Village Design Statement still good enough?
- New community facilities are needed – especially a new or better community hall.
- Parking and dropping-off facilities are increasingly necessary, but need to be provided carefully and safely.
- Some corners in Wye are congested, there can be long queues around the station and sudden surges of traffic. Pedestrians and especially schoolchildren and older people need to be protected, and traffic managed.
- The village might help to develop a centre to encourage sustainability, perhaps related to the Community Farm?
- What should be included in the Village's list of improvements that might benefit from any levy on new development?

1.3 This was followed by a household survey carried out in July 2012. The aim of the survey was to gather information from residents about their views on current issues and their concerns and hopes for the future. The survey was delivered to all households and collected by 55 patch-workers (all residents). Over 75% of households responded. The survey produced over 10,000 pages of information, and a great many hand written comments. The main highlights of that survey are listed in Chart 1:

Household Survey showed support for:

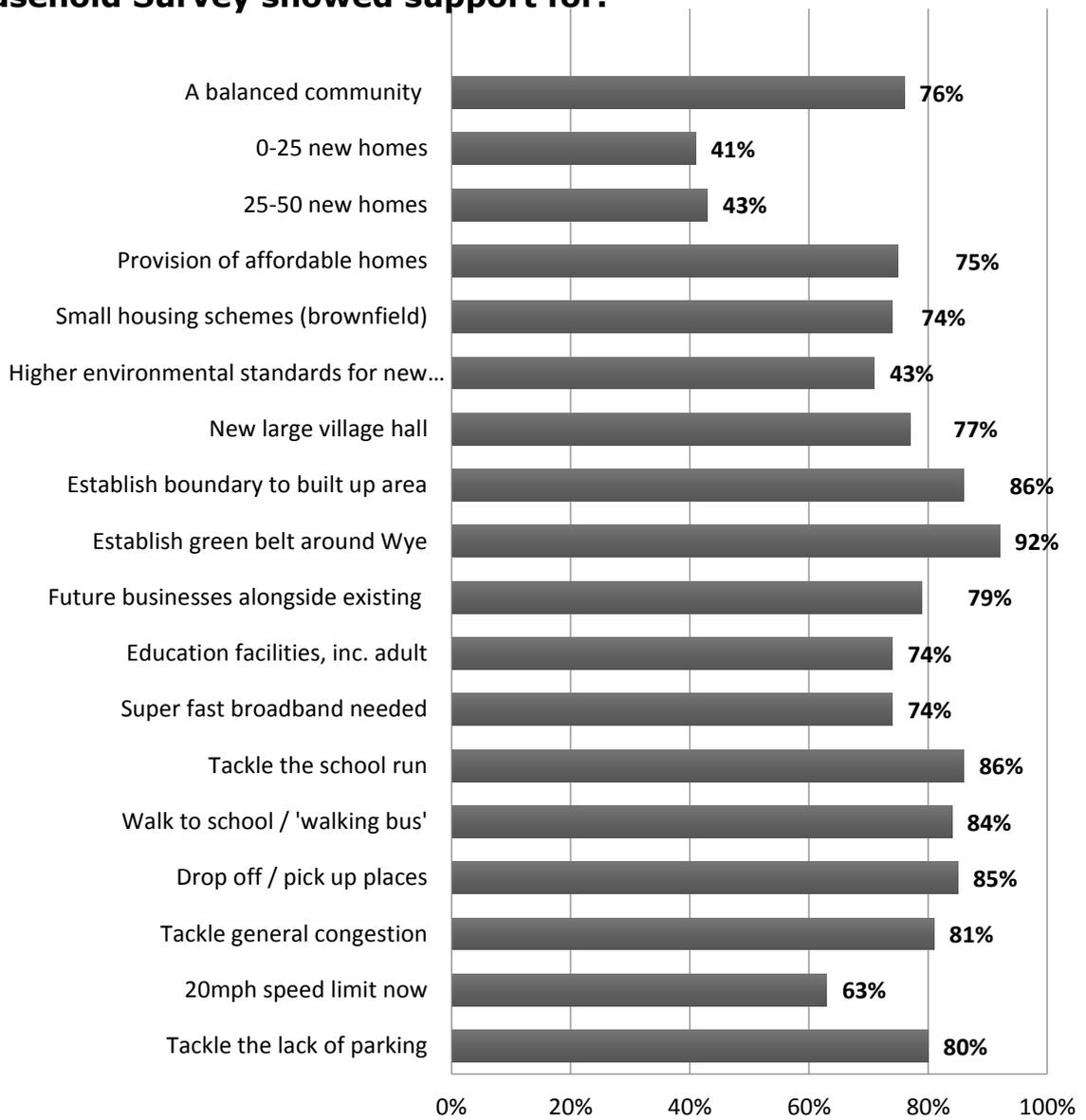


Figure 1

1.4 The information from the survey, as well as the Principles from the Wye Village Design

Statement and other documents, were provided to an Urban Designer, recruited by the Parish Council, to prepare a series of scenarios that future development might take. These scenarios were used to inform the first of a series of five planned workshops, and exhibitions of their results, held between October 2012 and April 2013¹. The scenarios have been adapted and developed during the course of the last two years and form the basis of the final 'proposals maps' that will show which areas of land have been allocated for policies in the Plan, including those areas that are to receive protection from development.

Workshops and exhibitions

Workshop I

1.5 The first workshop held on 6th October 2012 was titled: 'Scoping the future'. Fifty people attended. This looked at the results of the survey and three possible scenarios describing in a visual way the possible scope of future development in terms of quantity and scale, opportunities and constraints, backed up by detailed analysis of physical characteristics of the parish, its development over time, its location in the landscape and street forms. This was followed by a fortnight-long exhibition in the church (7-28th October) that showed the various responses – graphical and written – to the scenarios and their implications. There was a very strong reaction to the two higher development scenarios – considered overdevelopment – and to some ideas that were felt to be out of kilter with the survey results. People liked the idea of a riverside park. These views were then analysed and fed back to the next workshop.

Workshop II

1.6 The second workshop, held on 10th November 2012 looked at a draft Vision (see 4) proposed by the Council and asked for other ideas. It also started to develop a set of Principles that flowed from the Vision. Ideas were sought about how to achieve greater engagement with residents and other interest groups and further volunteers were sought. A follow up exhibition was held in Wolfson Hall on Saturday 17th November with people signposted from the Farmers' Market. Residents were asked to look at and vote on their favourite vision and to consider the principles as well as a spatial analysis developed from the previously mentioned scenarios. A clear favourite vision emerged - that draft vision is reproduced here in its original form:

- Wye should remain a distinct settlement with definite boundaries.
- A balanced community, providing some local employment – not purely residential.
- Respecting the rural landscapes which surround it, maintaining their agricultural character.
- Growth must be in ways that do not spoil its character.
- It should provide an environment in which people continue to feel safe.
- A vibrant community with many activities.
- Respecting its history and historic buildings.
- Having most needed facilities and amenities within the village.

Workshop III

1.7 The third workshop was held on 1st December 2012. This workshop looked at the vision and principles distilled from the views collected at the previous workshop and exhibition

¹ Full reports are available from: <http://www.wyewithinixhillpc.kentparishes.gov.uk/default.cfm?pid=9478>

and showed how they might apply to Wye's future given minimal or modest growth. It also showed examples of the next step, which was to take the principles and examine how these might be applied to areas of potential change. The workshop considered a 'wish list' or potential projects that might issue from the Neighbourhood Plan such as:

- Better recycling opportunities such as a recycling centre or better pickup service
- Shop uses to include: Fish & chips, cycle [hire] centre, farm shop
- Better recreational facilities: MUGA [multi-use games area], outdoor gym, squash, swimming pool, AstroTurf pitch, pavilion on football ground, Trim trail or jogging
- Improved cycle / footpath network (including opportunities to cycle to school) around village and links to Ashford and Canterbury, riverside walk
- More public space especially a new riverside park and possible swimming pond

1.8 The workshop participants also gave general and site specific feedback three different options that were expressed as a series of spatial plans of the village titled 'Do Nothing', 'Minimal Growth' or 'Modest Growth'. The recommendations from the delegates included:

- Diversity of housing type, densities and tenures. Affordable homes.
- Housing densities should be informed by the immediate context and that means more concentrated to the centre and lower to the outskirts
- Design for views
- More employment opportunities - mix of office, light industry
- Balance of housing and job opportunities
- Areas for enhanced recreational, play facilities and local play areas
- Remote parking to reduce congestion
- Improvements to the public realm, protect trees
- No spread south
- Gateways / 20mph zone, enhanced key junctions, retain rural lanes - no to new roads
- If school goes ahead the facilities should be shared with the community
- A gradual increase in housing numbers - 10% appears to be an acceptable figure
- A permanent village boundary. Keep Wye as a village

1.9 This was followed up by an exhibition at Wolfson Hall for the public to see results of the workshop and to seek comments. Housing Needs Survey

Workshop IV

1.10 The fourth workshop in effect became two workshops held in January and February referred to as IVa and IVb. The first looked at:

- Wye 1 and the northern boundary of the village
- Wye 2 and the southern boundary
- Sites either side of the river and adjacent to the railway station
- Wye 13 and the eastern boundary

1.11 Key recommendations included: well-designed access and better connections to the countryside (Wye 1), low density housing to tidy up the village boundary (Wye 2), cycling and walking connections (river and railway station) and opposition to building outside the village boundary on agricultural land (Wye 13).

1.12 Workshop IVb looked at Wye 3 (former Wye College). On the basis of the village survey, the Workshop examined the future development possibilities of Wye 3 assuming that the Edwardian buildings would be used for the Free School and the Grade 1 listed buildings for a Community Use/s. The proposals for the Grade 1 and Edwardian

buildings, the labs along Olantigh Road (re-developed for the Free School were well received with further recommendations for improving access, and maintaining access to the allotments as well as concern over whether a community use would place a financial burden on the community. Considering the area east of Olantigh Road (including the Kempe Centre, Wye Bugs, BCP and glass houses), recommendations included: retaining the existing businesses on their sites and increasing business space around the Kempe Centre. For the eastern section closer to Scotton Street, concerns were raised over traffic [congestion] if access from Scotton Street were permitted, that affordable housing should be 'pepper-potted' rather than concentrated in specific areas, and people liked the idea of 'self-builds'. Finally, Wye 13 was again rejected on the grounds of being outside the village's boundary.

Workshop V

1.13 Workshop V held on 20th April 2013 at the Kempe Centre on Olantigh Road was titled: The Parish and its Landscape. This workshop included speakers from CPRE on the National Planning Framework and from the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) Unit on local countryside policies. Specific break-out sessions were held on 'Agricultural buildings and brownfield; rural lanes, bridleways and the footpath network; dwellings outside the village boundary; and semi-natural habitats – woodland, the river and agricultural land. Break-out sessions also considered the four countryside related Principles (see next section). New recommendations that emerged included:

- Reduce speed limits on lanes (40mph) and 'quiet lanes' on narrow lanes (20mph with priority to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders).
- Need to restore and enhance character features – woodlands, hedgerows – green/blue infrastructure (ie hedgerows, ditches and the river as natural corridors).
- Appearance of outskirts – built edges to be softened with soft landscaping including Naccolt, Sidelands etc.
- Any development [should be of] appropriate height and scale.
- Wye's sense of place ... protected and enhanced including views into [the village]
- Improving landscape maintenance and appearance of approach roads ... hedgerows, existing brick-walls and access to the riverside.
- Appropriately scaled energy production for Wye's needs ie small scale wind, wood fuel or river (for small scale hydro-power).

Workshop VI

1.14 The final workshop, workshop VI was held on 30th November 2013. The aim of this workshop was to recap or confirm the main outputs and recommendations from the previous workshops in response to current or imminent planning applications on Wye 1 and 2 and the Concept Master Plan for Wye 3 and to consider the preliminary results of a transport study commissioned by the parish council from an Ashford based transport consultancy MLM.

1.15 Wye 1 was felt to be the best site for development owing in part to its location close to the station, although the constraints of the junction remained particularly as access would be shared with the bus depot (Poynters Yard). Concerns were raised that the planning application appeared to ignore some of the recommendations from the previous workshops and the Parish Council. It was strongly recommended that development proposals should adhere to the Village Design Statement.

1.16 Residents considering Wye 2 did not want expansion outside the scope of the current allocation/village boundary as set out in the Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan Document (TRSDPD). There was particular concern over the traffic impact on the neighbouring Chequers' estate and Bridge Street.

1.17 The discussions on Wye 3 were tempered by the fact that more detailed consideration had been given to the site at the previous workshops, particularly workshop IVb. However, the following points were re-iterated:

- Natural leaning to business/employment/non-residential to balance residential elsewhere.
- Scale is far too big [and out of proportion to the rest of Wye], and too crude as one site.
- Area needs to be broken into [at least] 3 sites and each dealt with separately.
- Never envisaged as a high intensity housing development [when first designated in 2000 for Wye College-based expansion].
- Educational use to continue, [but expansion must not be compromised by overdevelopment].
- [ICL Concept Master Plan] is contrary to what residents want.
- Needs to be considered in context of whole village.
- 50 houses in total to 2021 [in addition to the 50 houses allocated phase 1 of the TRSDPD]

1.18 The overall point was made that development proposals need to reflect the Neighbourhood Plan. Also, that the amount of growth and speed of development proposed by developers through their current applications and the Concept Master Plan equated to 2000 additional traffic movements a day that would have an adverse impact on the viability of the level crossing and traffic in the village as a whole.

Free school survey

1.19 By the end of 2012, there was growing uncertainty in the community over where the proposed Free School should be located. To clarify the views of the village, a questionnaire was devised by the Neighbourhood Plan Group and the Parish Council's Community Planning Advisor Jim Boot and distributed by the patch-workers to every household in Wye in January and February 2013. The questionnaire was aimed at individual adults over the age of 16 – rather than a household questionnaire as previously undertaken – to allow for differences of opinion within households. There was one substantive question relating to the location of a Free School in the former Wye College buildings. Responders were given the option to add comments and were asked some basic demographic information to check that the questionnaire responses would be representative.

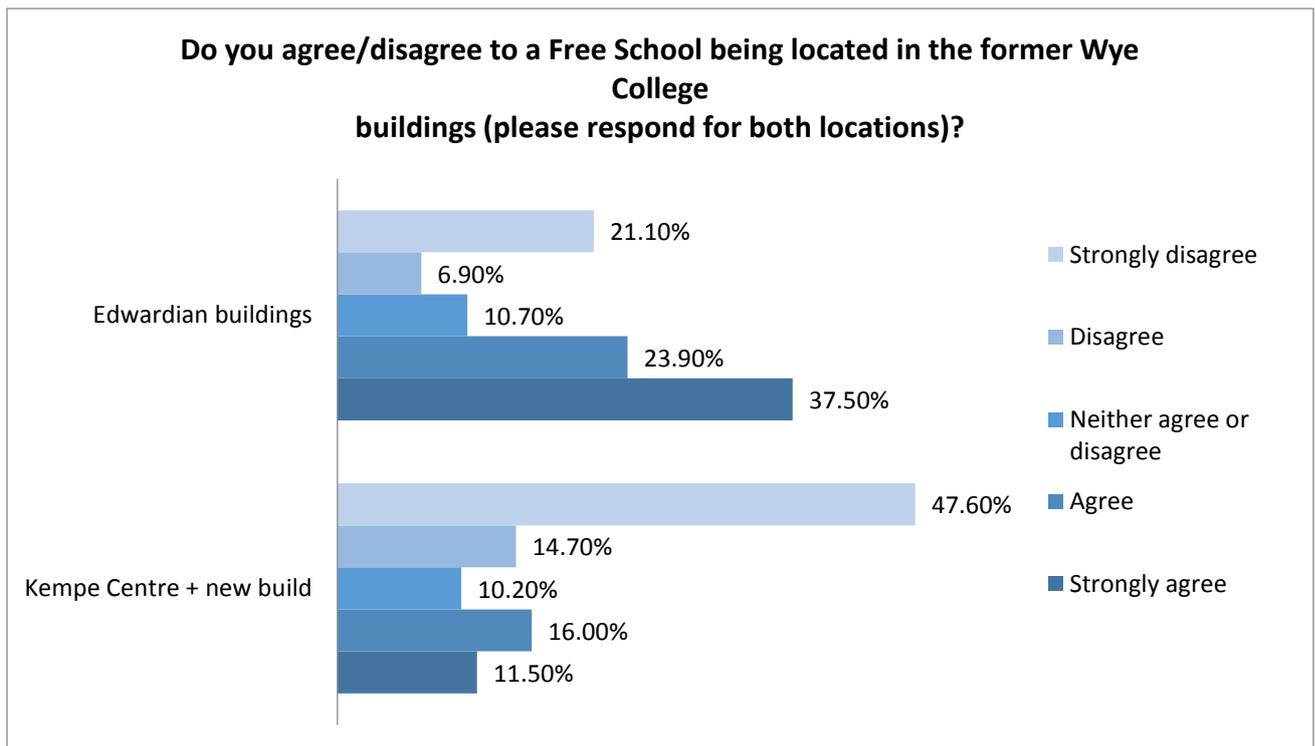


Figure 2

1.20 The survey, responded to by more than 950 adults within the parish, suggested that 62% of adult residents 'strongly agreed' (48%) or 'agreed' (15%) with locating of the Free School within the former college's Edwardian Buildings. A similar number (61%) disagreed with it being located in the Kempe Centre (its current location). It has now been confirmed by both the sponsors of the Free School, United Learning Trust and the Education Funding Agency (the government's agency) that the Free School will now be located within the former college's Edwardian Buildings with a move from the Kempe Centre schedule for September 2015.

Public meetings

1.21 As well as the workshops and exhibitions, and perhaps even more importantly, a series of public meetings have been held to which residents and other stakeholders including landowners, the district council (ABC), Kent County Council (KCC) and developers have been invited to attend. The aim of these meeting was to maintain a dialogue with residents and the other stakeholders to ensure that residents are kept up to date on the plan and also that the plan continues to reflect the views of residents. Unless otherwise stated, these were all held in Wye Parish Church as the largest public venue within the parish:

- Parish Meeting 5th December 2011, WYE 3 Marketing and Parish Plan
- Annual Parish Meeting 30th April 2012, Small Village Hall, Reports including Wye Parish Plan
- Public Meeting 4th July 2012, Planning the Future of Wye/Wye Neighbourhood Plan 2030 (first use of name)
- Public Briefing, Tuesday 18th September 2012, Survey 1st Results
- Neighbourhood Plan Open Days, 17th & 18th October, Vision and Principles
- Neighbourhood Plan Open Days, 15th and 16th December 2012, Wolfson Hall
- Public Meeting 20th May 2013 Imperial's Concept Master Plan

- Public Meeting 14th October 2013, Wye 1, 2 & 3
- Public Exhibition 11th November 2013, Taylor Wimpey's proposals for the development of WYE1
- Public meeting April 23rd 2014 Progress of the plan and WYE2
- Annual Parish Meeting May 1st 2014
- Withersdane proposals meeting June 26th 2014
- Neighbourhood Development Plan Exhibition October 17th, 18th and 19th 2014
- Public meeting October 21st 2014 The draft Neighbourhood Plan
- Public meeting May 26th 2015 Discussion of results of the pre-submission consultation and changes made to the WNP document